

## TOWARDS A THOMISTIC THEORY OF INTENTIONAL (“FICTIVE”) INDIVIDUALS (I)<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Following Aristotle's stimuli, the medieval scholastics produced the theory of beings of reason (= intentional beings), i.e. beings that can only exist as an object of our reason (and in no other way). It is remarkable that an important component was omitted by the scholastic scholars, namely the teaching of intentional (nowadays called “fictional” more frequently) individuals, e.g. Sherlock Holmes, Hamlet, Hephaistos etc. This issue was dealt with later by A. Meinong, E. Mally, T. Parsons and E. N. Zalta. This contribution strives to propose an alternative theory founded on the scholastic, specifically Thomistic thought. The author distinguishes 1) individual description of intentional individual; 2) this individual itself, and 3) its “representative” existing in the real world. An intentional being, in this conception, has only the properties ascribed to it by its description and the property of individuality (and no other property). Nevertheless, an intentional individual bears these properties differently from the real individual. Therefore, the author distinguishes two kinds of predication, the real and the intentional one. In: this context, other logical problems of intentional individuals are addressed. By the “representative” of an intentional individual (e.g. Sherlock Holmes) the author means e.g. its image made by the reader of A. C. Doyle in his (reader's) fantasy, or a real picture (illustration) in the Hound of Baskerville book, further the actor who plays the role of famous detective in the film adaption of the novel etc. The goal of the contribution is to show that if existence is the first-level predicate, it can be predicated informatively, for as such it is able to distinguish the individuals that exist really from those that do not.

### Key words

Thomism; fictional individuals; predication

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## 1. Some preliminaries

I am taking as real those beings, which exist independently of whether they are or are not the object of some of our cognitive abilities. In: the context of scholastic philosophy one can speak, besides real beings, also of beings of reason (*entia rationis*), or intentional beings (*entia intentionalia*). Unlike real beings, intentional beings are marked by the fact that they exist only as an object of our rational cognitive potency (on the basis of this it is said that they do not exist at all as real beings but rather as *intentional*).

In the context of Aristotelian-oriented scholasticism, the most remarkable development of the teaching dealing with intentional beings occurred in the seventeenth century; nevertheless, its achievements sank later into oblivion within the main stream of Modern Period thinking.<sup>2</sup> The scholastics distinguished various kinds of intentional beings, one of which, surprisingly enough, was left aside their systematic concern: This kind concerns the intentional (“fictive”) individuals such as mythological individuals, (e.g. Phoenix), the invented novel or theatrical figures (Sherlock Holmes, Hamlet) etc.

I hold the philosophical principles of the nowadays more or less forgotten scholastic theory (mainly the thesis that all our knowledge is genetically sensitive) for correct. Therefore, I shall try to complete the scholastic teaching in accordance with its own principles and to outline a theory of intentional (“fictive”) individuals.

I mentioned above that knowledge of intentional beings fell into oblivion in the main current of Modern Period philosophy. It has to be added that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a particular parallel to the doctrine of intentional beings appeared in the context of this current. I have in mind the well-known contributions on non-existing objects by the Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong († 1920), his pupil Ernst Mally († 1944)<sup>3</sup> and their mainly American contemporary followers, especially Terence Parsons<sup>4</sup> and Edward N.

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel D. Novotný. *Ens rationis from Suárez to Caramuel: A Study in Scholasticism of the Baroque Era*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. doi: 10.5422/fordham/9780825244768.001.0001.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Mally. *Gegenstandstheoretische Grundlagen der Logik und Logistik*. Leipzig: J. Barth, 1912.

<sup>4</sup> Terence Parsons. *Nonexistent Objects*. Yale: University Press, 1980.

Zalta<sup>5</sup>. The teaching of the Meinong followers on non-existing objects is concerned partially with the same themes as the scholastic doctrine on intentional beings; there are however essential differences in the two theories, both in the field of philosophical principles and in the theoretical structure built on them. Along with the differences one can of course come across partial correspondences. Here however, for the reasons mentioned above, I will leave the teaching of the Meinong adherents aside.

## 2. Are there any intentional individuals?

When (as in the title of this paragraph) we ask about the existence of intentional individuals, we are obviously thinking in this case of existence expressed in logic by the existential quantifier (symbolically: “ $\exists$ ”). So our question can be expressed as follows: Is the extension of the concept “intentional individual” a non-vacuous set?

This question has to be answered positively: We can affirm this on the basis of the fact that we directly encounter such beings. There is no sort of “proof” for the existence of intentional individuals, if by “proof” we mean an intellectual procedure issuing from something known and advancing to something originally not known. Such proof is in this case impossible, but is not even necessary. Just as we do not prove the existence of birds (for example) simply because we are coming across them in our surroundings, in the same way we do not prove the existence of intentional individuals, because we come across them, not in our material world but, for example, when we listen to made-up stories, fairy tales, legends, and so on, or when we ourselves invent (“fabricate”) persons who appear in such stories. The latter is done mainly by those who work in literature.

We can love or admire intentional individuals whom we come across and even (as, mostly, young people sometimes do) imitate them in our own lives. It is known that a particular kind of literary work is based on this fact, using it for pedagogical purposes. Because we encounter intentional individuals, we also talk about them among ourselves in certain circumstances. Let us imagine that, a father is walking in a forest with his small daughter Annie. The little girl bursts into tears

<sup>5</sup> Edward N. Zalta. *Abstract Objects*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985.

because, as she explains, she is “afraid of Cormoran the giant”. We would expect her father to calm his daughter down, saying:

Cormoran the giant exists in stories, but he’s not real.

Regular users of natural language will certainly think this sentence is true (it is a compound sentence consisting of two phrases linked by the conjunction “but”). This however indicates two things: *First*: that the occurrence of fairy-tale individuals is admitted alongside real existing persons. “Cormoran” is the subject of the first sentence, and a subject which is a proper name commonly indicates an individual about whom the predicate tells us something. In: addition to this, the word “indicates” expresses a certain (binary) relationship and a necessary condition of every relationship is the existence of its second member. And *secondly* the fact that regular users of natural language believe that the given sentence is truthful suggests that they distinguish the two kinds of existences ( $\exists$ ) which can be predicated of an individual, one which characterises the real individual ( $\exists_r$ ), and another which is characteristic of an invented – for example, fairy-tale – being ( $\exists_i$ ). The example given indicates what regular users of language see as the difference between the two: if they say that some individual exists only in fairy tales they apparently mean by this that, unlike real persons, he/she exists only as an object invented (fabricated) in people’s minds, but not independent of their thinking. Clearly one need not be afraid of the invented object (in our case the person Cormoran) in the real world because such an object (person) is not him or herself able to have any effect here. In: invented stories, it is natural to speak of not only invented persons but also invented things. So for example in fairy stories we hear about living water, magic pipes, etc. We will therefore call all such invented things collectively intentional individuals.<sup>6</sup> A characteristic feature of the intentional individual is that properties can be ascribed to it in a given context, although that individual cannot, him or herself, be in the same context ascribed to something else.

Intentional individuals are reflected on not only in the context of everyday life, but sometimes in academic research as well. For example,

<sup>6</sup> In the Meinong school tradition, the individuals are called “fictive”. I decided to retain the expression “intentional” so that the terminology was clear, i.e., that the naming of these entities is not the same in scholasticism and with the Meinong disciples.

historians pose the question as to “whether King Arthur existed only in ancient legend or whether he was a real person”, that is, whether he “actually” was a real tribal leader possessing at least some of the important properties legend ascribes to him, or whether he was only invented. In: similar cases (including for example a question frequently discussed by Bible scholars concerning the historical existence of biblical persons such as Abraham, Melchisedech etc.), specialist scholars proceed in such a way that, with the help of data contained in literary documents, they create around the relevant person a special concept into whose scope only this individual falls,<sup>7</sup> and then on the basis of particular criteria examine what existence this individual has, whether real or only “invented”. Their procedure is not in fact essentially different from the little girl afraid of the Cormoran the giant that calms down when, by using particular criteria (in this case her father’s reliability), she finds out that it is only an invented being.

Based on the above, it seems that invented individuals each live their own existence; Cormoran lives a fairy-tale existence, Sherlock Holmes a novelistic existence, Hamlet a dramatic existence, and so on. If we disregard the diversity of literary kinds in whose context these individuals appear, we can gain a general understanding of the special existence in which each of them is found and in every case speak of “intentional existence”. The common property of all intentional objects is that they exist as objects in our minds only, and not otherwise.

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Intentional individuals (and intentional beings in general) have long since had their deniers. These have occurred even among scholastics; one of the important authors often quoted is Duns Scotus’s direct pupil, Franciscus de Mayronis (before the mid-fourteenth century),<sup>8</sup> but so far we know little about them. More is known about the critics of the Meinong theory, which is somewhat different from

<sup>7</sup> This concept is not, in spite of the given characteristic, an individual’s description but rather a predicate (from which it was however possible to create an individual’s description with the help of the relevant operator). See on this issue: Pavel Cmorej. *Od deskripcí k ich referentom [From Descriptions to their Referents]*. *Filozofia* 68, 10 (2013), pp. 825–848.

<sup>8</sup> See Franciscus de Mayronis. *Quodlibeti quaestiones VI et VII, De entibus rationis* [Nora Cuhrová and Lukáš Novák (eds.)]. *Studia Neoaristotelica* 3 (2006), pp. 198–239.

the Aristotelian-scholastic theory espoused by us, but whose adverse judgment relates *mutatis mutandis* to the theory we espouse as well.

Opponents of intentional beings for the most part sincerely acknowledge that the grammatical construction of natural language is evidence of the existence of intentional individuals, but they are convinced that in this case “logical explication must replace the superficial use of words so that we can pursue logical analyses”.<sup>9</sup> The pursuit of these analyses then leads them to an effort to paraphrase natural language sentences by some method that makes them correspond more closely to the results of their “logical explication”. These paraphrases (whether in natural language or in some artificial language of logic) do not then give anyone who understands them an incentive to assume the existence of intentional individuals. The earliest example known to me of such a paraphrase was that provided by Bertrand Russell in his famous article “On Denoting” (1905), based on the example of the sentence “the present King of France is bald”. Because France is at present a republic, this sentence seems to testify by its grammatical structure that there exists some sort of (only one) intentional individual who is (e.g. in the context of some invented story) the present King of France, and that he is bald. Russell paraphrases this sentence so that the expression “the present King of France” ceases to be its grammatical subject and in this way the reason to assume that there is an intentional individual corresponding to him disappears. This specific analysis by Russell has been criticised many times but its basic idea – to get rid of evidence in favour of the existence of intentional individuals with the help of a paraphrase of the linguistic configurations – was widely circulated and still has its adherents today. Followers of Pavel Tichý’s “transparent intentional logic” effectively belong to them.<sup>10</sup>

How can we answer the arguments of these critics? In: the first place, we have to accept their standpoint that the grammatical structure of natural language can in some cases be misleading and that therefore from a logical point of view – if there are serious and inter-subjectively intelligible reasons for it – it is necessary to amend this. Therefore it depends on whether we acknowledge that, in the specific

<sup>9</sup> Pavel Materna. Znovu o existenci [More on Existence]. *Organon F17* (2010), pp. 355ff.

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this logic: Marie Duží, Bjørn Jespersen and Pavel Materna. *Procedural Semantics for Hyperintensional Logic. Foundation and Applications of Transparent Intensional Logic*. Berlin: Springer, 2010. doi: 10.1007/978-90-481-8812-5.

case we are considering, there are indeed “serious and intersubjectively intelligible reasons” for the proposed amendment. As to Russell, he seems to be quite stingy in giving such reasons; he only says (as far as I know) that to allow something such as the intentional individuals here defended by us is in conflict with “that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies”.<sup>11</sup> This reason does not sound intersubjectively intelligible to me. For my part, I do not see why the assumption that some invented person called “Cormoran” does exist, is evidence of the inadequacy of a sense of reality. If I calm down a child frightened by Cormoran with the information that, as a particular intentional individual, Cormoran exists only in fairy tales, it seems to me it is evidence rather of the contrary. The founder of transparent intensional logic, Pavel Tichý (d. 1994) himself attempted to formulate a standpoint negative to the opinion of the user of natural language (according to which intentional individuals exist because they are referred to as, *inter alia*, the subject of truthful sentences). In: my opinion, not even he gave any truly serious reason for the paraphrase of natural language that *de facto* he proposes.<sup>12</sup>

I do not deny that sentences that in my opinion confirm that we encounter intentional individuals can be paraphrased (though not perfectly faithfully!) in such a way that the lessons about their existence I derive from them do not follow. I do not rule out that such a paraphrase is perhaps always possible (nevertheless, I do not know how, by any guidelines known to me, I could acceptably paraphrase the sentence: “Little Annie is more afraid of Cormoran than of evil people who really could hurt her.”) My argument against critics of intentional individuals is not to deny the possibility of paraphrase but rather that I do not see “a serious and intersubjectively intelligible reason” for it.

<sup>11</sup> Bertrand Russell. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919, ch. XVI, p. 169.

<sup>12</sup> Pavel Tichý explained his standpoint in an extensive essay originally published in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* 9 (1987). The essay is today easily available in a reliable English translation: Individuals and Their Roles. In: Vladimir Svoboda, Bjørn Jespersen and Colin Chene (eds.). *Pavel Tichý's Collected Papers in Logic and Philosophy*. Prague – Dunedin: Filosofia – University of Otago Press, 2004. I had the opportunity to formulate my negative standpoint towards Tichý's arguments in a dialogue with the leading expert and disciple of Tichý's transparent intensional logic, Pavel Materna (see primarily *Organon F* 17 (2010), *passim*).

### 3. The existence of intentional individuals

In the preceding passages I dealt with that kind of existence ( $\exists$ ) of intentional individuals, which is expressed in logic by the existential quantifier. I tried to make clear, that the extension of the concept “intentional being” is a non-vacuous set.

Now two further questions arise:

The first question: Besides the existence expressed by existential quantifier (which is a second-level property), is it possible to consider any further existence (symbolically E) predicated of individuals as their first-level property? Following Gottlob Frege, many contemporary theorists deny that. They hold that existence is not a property of an individual but rather of the concept which has this property, in case that at least one individual falls under it. Therefore, according to them, existence is exclusively a second-level property. I dealt with this thesis more thoroughly on another occasion, so I will be very brief here.

The supporters of this position seem to forget that “to fall under” is a relation. Every relation presupposes necessarily the existence of (at least) two terms. This means in this case, firstly, the existence of concept F; secondly the existence of an individual x, “falling under” this concept F. To avoid the infinite regress, the existence in the second case must be considered as a property ascribed to individuals (i.e. a first-level predicate). However, this means that the thesis of the existence being only the property of the concept F, presupposes what is denied by the same thesis, namely the existence of individuals (which is obviously a first-level predicate).

The other question mentioned above: Is the existence ascribed to intentional individuals (symbolically:  $E_i$ ) some sort of existence different from real existence (symbolically: “ $E_r$ ”)?

We will start from a principle (let us call it “P”), which is self-evident for the person who understands the terms correctly:

If I verify the statement that individual x has a property F by the way radically different from the way whereby I verify the statement that individual y has a property G, then the properties F and G cannot be identical.

A few notes on understanding the P principle: *First and foremost* we remind ourselves that if the meaning of a statement is known to us, a way of ascertaining its truth value (“verification”) is necessarily



known to us, as well. *Next*: If I say that two ways (A, B) of verification are *radically* different, I mean that: *a) A, B have no step in common, and b) A is usable for the verification of p, if B is unusable for it.* So if I verify e.g. the arithmetical proposition that “7 is a prime number” I can be certain that the property “to be a prime number” is different from the property e.g. “to be a red”. We will now apply the P principle to a conjunctive sentence, e.g.:

Phoenix<sup>15</sup> exists in legends and/but Phoenix does not exist in reality.

Here it is clear that I can verify the first part of the sentence by a non-empirical method (e.g. by looking at the works of some of long-ago author who wrote about Phoenix), whereas I can verify the second part of the sentence on the basis of empirics.<sup>14</sup> The word “exists” (E) consequently has a different meaning in the first and second partial statements of the given sentence (namely E<sub>i</sub> in the first case, E<sub>r</sub> in the second one).

Contemporary Meinong disciples use the phrase “fictive individuals” instead of “intentional individuals”. According to their interpretation, these individuals are “non-existing objects” and differ in this way (*inter alia*) from our intentional individuals; those are (intentionally) *existing* objects. So that the difference between the Meinong and the Aristotelian concept is clear, I will remain terminologically with the earlier nomenclature of scholastic origin and speak not of fictive but of intentional individuals.

#### 4. The nature of intentional individuals

We can create (fabricate, conceive) an individual in two ways. On the one hand actively in the role of the author we can “invent” a character (as Arthur Conan Doyle did with Sherlock Holmes); on the other passively, as listeners to (or readers of) an invented story, we can

<sup>15</sup> I point out that “Phoenix” is used here as a proper name, not the name of a legendary species of bird.

<sup>14</sup> I write “on the basis of empirics” (not simply “empirically”) because we usually verify a sentence of the type mentioned based on specialist literature (in our case ornithological); data contained in this literature however counts in the last instance always on empirical observation. Nothing such applies in any of the authors who record legends about Phoenix.

“evoke” an individual invented by the author in accordance with the description provided. The author first invents the intentional individual and then describes him/her; the audience approaches from the opposite direction. First, they become familiar with the description of the intentional individual and then in their minds “evoke” it. Sometimes if the invented story is written down and published in book form, the text is accompanied by illustrations in which the artist captures certain characters and events described in the story. If these illustrations are by different artists (the same literary work can be published by different publishers), it can be observed that the appearances of individual characters in the illustrations sometimes differ considerably. That is made possible by the fact that the description of the characters (individuals) in the text is not (and cannot be) so detailed as to make it impossible for the illustrators to complete their own idea of the characters in different ways. It is the same in other fields; for example, in dramatic art, the director can cast different “performers” in the title role of a production of *Hamlet*, so that the Hamlet invented by Shakespeare may be presented by actors of a (to a certain extent) different physical appearance. One thus has to be careful in distinguishing the intentional individual from its possible performers, pictures, or generally: representatives. There is always only one intentional individual, but its presenters can be countless.

It is plain from the above that, in connection with intentional individuals, we must distinguish three different things: (A) the description of the intentional individual (§ 5), (B) this individual itself (§ 6), (C) its representative (§ 7). We will now deal with these factors in particular. It will allow us to expand more systematically on the introductory and merely orientating exposition given above.

## 5. Description (A)

The word “description” has at least two meanings. First, one can mean by it a statement (or a sequence of statements) describing some event (e.g. a battle). Secondly one can mean by it (not a statement, but) a term referring to only one individual. In: this second case, we speak about “definite description”. From roughly the beginning of the last century, definite descriptions of individuals have been the object of previously unprecedented interest from logicians and authors concerned with the philosophy of logic. Logicians express the form of definite

description sometimes by the formula “the only *x* such, that *x* is *F*”. In: this formula, the letter “*F*” is understood as variable; its value ought to be a property that belongs exclusively to the individual described. Let us allow the value *F* to be the “current US President”. The description, “that only *x* such, that *x* is the current US President” then refers to Barrack Obama. This statesman is today (and in the actual world) the only individual who can be referred to by the given expression (or, who is its “referent”).

How does the creator of an intentional individual, e.g. the author of a fictional (not historical) novel, proceed in formulating his/her descriptions? The author first thinks up a certain intentional individual and then formulates its definite description. Here, we must distinguish two kinds of definite descriptions, the minimum and the redundant one. The author of the novel acquaints the reader (usually right at the start) with a minimal description, sufficing to distinguish the individual described from others who appear in the novel. In: the course of the development of the action, the author ascribes more and more properties (including relationships) to this individual. Thanks to this, in the course of the author’s narration a definite description of that individual (let us say the hero of the novel) can be formulated with an *F* including more and more properties (already superfluous for the identification of the individual and from this point of view redundant). By attributing them gradually, a good author knows how to evoke interest, tension, even emotion, in the reader. The number of properties ascribed to the hero of the novel closes at the moment the novel ends and the reader (and author) can formulate what I have called “maximum description” of the hero. We call all the properties the author ascribes to the intentional individual *intrinsic properties*. To simplify the exposition, we will in future concern ourselves only with maximum descriptions.

Let us now look in what definite descriptions of real individuals match descriptions of intentional individuals. Insofar as matching is concerned, we will again remind ourselves that no one, not even the most creative author, is able to endow an individual created by her/him with any elementary properties other than those real individuals can possess.<sup>15</sup> It is possible to encounter real individuals with all

<sup>15</sup> I understand elementary properties as those, which are not composed from other more simple logical symbols (negation, propositional connectives). The well-known

the elementary properties with which Shakespeare endowed Hamlet, for example. This limitation of our creativity has its origin in the fact that all our knowledge has its origin in sensory knowledge, so that even common properties (insofar as they are elementary) we gain (by abstraction) from empirical beings.<sup>16</sup>

The definite description of an intentional individual also matches the description of a real individual in that it is never complete, differing from it in that it is “closed” or, to use the technical term, has “closure”.<sup>17</sup> What does that term mean? I partially touched on it earlier. The description of a real individual includes only some (not all) the properties of its referent (in the above-mentioned example, the definite description characterises its referent, Barack Obama, only through the property “the current President of the US”), but does not exclude the fact that this referent – as a completely defined real being – has numerous other properties. We will say of such a description that it is “open”. A description of an intentional individual is not complete either; but its invented referent, the intentional individual, has only those (intrinsic) properties the author has ascribed to it in the course of the narrative and no others (that is, *not even any properties which could be by logical means derived from those the author has “explicitly” ascribed*). Just the words “and no others” then form that “closure”. Unlike the description of a really existing individual, the description of an intentional individual is not “open”, but as a “closure description” is on the contrary “closed”. The representative of an intentional individual (an actor representing Hamlet for example), naturally has many other properties besides the intrinsic ones ascribed to him by the author. He is after all a real individual and therefore completely defined. This does not apply to the intentional individual. Literary historians correctly (although, from our point of view, a little imprecisely) say that “a character in a novel differs from a historical figure or a figure in real life. He is made only of the sentences describing him or put

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Aristotelian teaching on categories can be understood as an attempt to give an ordered enumeration of the elementary properties of empirical beings.

<sup>16</sup> Adherents of what is known as Platonism are owed an answer to the question as to why we know only such elementary properties that we are in their predictive use to verify by an account of the empirical world and do not have others at our disposal, where it would not be possible.

<sup>17</sup> On the issue of “closure” see Čmorej. *Od deskripcii k ich referentom*, pp. 825ff (esp. pp. 839–842).

into his mouth by the author. He has no past, no future, and sometimes no continuity of life.”<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned closure, a description of an intentional individual differs from a description of a real individual in that the author can in describing an intentional individual ascribe to it opposite properties, whose concrete counterparts could not (at the same time and in the same regard) occur in one and the same real individual. This is the case for example if an author like Beatrix Potter ascribes the property “rabbit” to an intentional individual called “Peter Rabbit”, and at the same time ascribes the property “talking” to it. If we accept the plausible assumption that no rabbit can talk, that leads to an apparent contradiction.<sup>19</sup> A particular question is whether an intentional individual with opposite properties such as Peter Rabbit can have a representative in the real world. It does not seem to be possible because no actually existing individual can have opposite concrete properties. There is the problem however that Beatrix Potter’s story has frequently been dramatized and staged for children. What happened to Peter Rabbit’s representative in the course of the production? Does he/she maybe have opposite properties? And if he/she does not have them how can he/she be the presenter of an intentional individual who does have them? We will return to this later. For the time being, we will leave the question open.

There is still one matter, quite an important one, by which a definite description of a real individual differs from a description of an intentional individual. It follows from the form of a definite description D (“the only x such, that x is F”) that it is possible to predicate F contained in it of the referent of D (for example, it is possible to ascribe to the referent of the definite description “the only x such, that x is the current US President”, that is, in the case of Barrack Obama, the property “to be the current US President”).

However, as we shall see later, because an intentional individual acquires properties by a way different from that of a real individual, it is impossible to ascribe the property F contained in its definite description in the same way to the real individual as to the intentional one. For the time being, we will accept that as a fact whose clarification we

<sup>18</sup> René Wellek and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> We will show later why this is only an apparent contradiction.

will negotiate in the next paragraph. However (if the description of the intentional individual does not contain evidently opposite properties) it is not usually obvious in natural language whether it is the description of a real or intentional individual. This explains for example the hesitation of historians as to whether the figure of King Arthur is legendary or real. We will see later why this hesitation (after carrying out a particular linguistic distinction) is irreprehensible.

## 6. The intentional individual and its properties (B)

### *a) Intrinsic properties*

An intentional individual has to be, in accordance with the shown above, *incompletely* defined, that is, it possesses all and only those properties ascribed to it by its description. I shall call such properties *intrinsic*. Here, however we immediately hit on a difficulty. If we ascribe a particular property, for example “being green”, to some *really* existing individual, we can in principle always decide by looking whether we ascribed it to that individual correctly or incorrectly. Obviously, this does not apply with intentional individuals. For example whether the statement “Cormoran the giant is green” is true or not cannot be ascertained by looking (Cormoran and other intentional individuals should not be confused with their e.g. fanciful representatives!) We recognise the properties of an intentional individual e.g. Cormoran, only by examining, whether the author of the tale has ascribed “green” to Cormoran or not, i.e. through rational activity. This is why the intentional beings are called “*entia rationis*” within the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition.

This leads to the assumption that intentional individuals do not possess the properties ascribed to them by their description in the same way as real individuals. To say about some *real* individual that it possesses the abstract property “green” means affirming that this individual possesses its concrete counterpart, that is, a particular concrete property, with the help of which (in this case by looking) we are convinced whether we attributed greenness to it correctly or incorrectly. Let us agree that we will use the letters F, G, and so on as variables for abstract properties and the letters  $\Phi$ ,  $\Gamma$ , as variables for their concrete counterparts (= concrete properties) corresponding to them. Using this terminology we can say that if we ascribe to a really existing *individual x* the (*abstract*) *property F*, it means (if our statement is true) that *x* possesses

*the (concrete) property  $\Phi$* . In: the case of intentional individuals it is otherwise. If we ascribe to the intentional individual  $x$  the property  $F$ , it does not thus mean that  $x$  possesses the concrete property  $\Phi$ , but rather that  $x$  “possesses” the *abstract* property  $F$ . To “possess” the abstract property  $F$  thus means for the intentional individual that it is we who associate  $F$  with the individual fictively. We can figuratively compare this association of properties with the intentional individual (if I can borrow someone else’s simile, but in a different connection) to associating a coat stand (the intentional individual) with the coats hanging on it (representing its abstract properties). The individual itself (i.e. the “coat stand”), does not “possess” any *intrinsic properties* (i.e. such that would be expressed by its author’s description).

Therefore, since the intentional individual “possesses” properties by a completely different way from that of a real individual, it is appropriate to distinguish terminologically the two meanings of the verb “to possess”. It is not however easy to find suitable non-violently operating terms. In: case of need we will nevertheless say that intrinsic properties are “hung” on the intentional individual, or “hang” on it (alternatively, that the individual is their “bearer” or “coat stand”), whereas we can say in the usual way about the real individual that he/she “possesses” the properties we ascribe to him/her.

***b) The intentional individual and its extrinsic properties***

Up to now, we have reflected only on those properties of the intentional individual we have called “intrinsic”, that is, those which the author explicitly ascribed to it and which we give in its maximum description. Alongside these intrinsic properties, the intentional individual has a number of properties we could call “extrinsic”. For example, Hamlet has the property of being invented by Shakespeare, but Shakespeare did not ascribe this property to Hamlet, and this property of Hamlet does not play any role in the drama of the same name (it could play a role in some literary historical debate about the authorship of *Hamlet*). I shall call this kind of property of the intentional individual “extrinsic”. To a certain extent, an author ascribes intrinsic properties to an intentional individual freely, but that does not apply to the extrinsic ones. If Shakespeare invented Hamlet, Hamlet has the property of being Shakespeare’s creation whether Shakespeare likes it or not. The property “more popular than any real Danish prince” is a similar case. This property too is extrinsic because it does not belong

to the properties that Shakespeare ascribed to Hamlet. We observe that the intentional individual has extrinsic properties (apart from constitutive, about which more later) in relationship to really existing beings and that (unlike its intrinsic properties) their number is unlimited and can change. We said earlier about intrinsic properties that an intentional individual does not “possess” them, unlike the way real individuals possess them, but rather that they are hung on him/her (that the individual is their “coat stand”). Insofar as the extrinsic properties of intentional individuals are concerned however it has to be said that the intentional individual does indeed “possess” them, just as real individuals “possess” their own properties. If therefore we say about an intentional individual, that it “possesses” some extrinsic property, we are stating that it has its corresponding counterpart. In: this point, intentional individuals match real ones.

Some properties of intentional individuals are especially significant for us and we must devote special attention to them here. I consider such properties to be, first, the *existence* (*E*) of intentional individuals; secondly, their *modal* properties; and thirdly, their “constitutive” properties.

### *c) Modal properties of intentional individuals*

Modal properties of intentional individuals – contingency, necessity – can also be either intrinsic or extrinsic. The *intrinsic* ones are those which the author explicitly ascribes to the intentional individual. No examples of literary works in which they can be observed come to mind, but it would probably be possible to discover some. Regardless of this, each of us would certainly be able to devise a simple story whose hero would be ascribed a property “a logically necessary being”. In: our context it is sufficient that the (internally) necessary or (internally) contingent individuals are at least – and there can be no possible doubt about this – conceivable.

If the *extrinsic* modal properties of intentional individuals are concerned, the only property that can belong to them is contingency. Why? The reason is that these individuals are the products of human understanding: The creation of these products depends more or less on the free – and thus contingent – decision-making of their creator, a person who is moreover a contingent being him/herself. If the creator of an intentional individual is a contingent being, the result of his/her activity, in our case an intentional individual, must be too.



Connected with the fact that intentional individuals are contingent is the fact that they only exist if their creators, or someone acquainted with their description (the “perceiver”, i.e. listener or reader) has them in mind. If all such persons turn their attention to another object, the intentional individuals cease to exist. Some kind of trace of them however remains in the memory so that they can be returned to in time. Of course, their definite description, if the creator of these individuals creates it in linguistic form, operates more reliably than traces in the memory. If however no one is thinking about the intentional individual whose description is somehow expressed in language, this individual does not actually exist. They only exist, we would say, “latently” (like an image on a photographic plate before it is developed), that is, as some kind of trace in the memory from which it can be evoked under certain conditions (if he/she has a knowledge of the language at his/her disposal). Intentional individuals thus have some sort of “intermittent” (interrupted) intentional existence depending on contingent human operations.

From what has been said it follows that intentional individuals are, thanks to linguistically expressed description, intersubjectively accessible. If a random number of persons reflect on Shakespeare’s Hamlet, they are all reflecting on the same individual. It is generally possible to say that *intentional individual x is identical with intentional individual y iff x is the bearer* (“coat stand”) of some intrinsic *property F precisely when y is its bearer* (the “coat stand”) i.e., loosely speaking, when x, y, have all the properties in common). Leibniz’s Law of Identity applies here too.

However, in my opinion every intentional individual is intersubjectively accessible even if its creator, after having created the intentional individual, would never say anything about its description. Let us imagine that Shakespeare invented his Hamlet but left him to himself, and died without even leaving any record of him. I think that even under these conditions, the character of Hamlet is intersubjectively accessible because it is possible (though unlikely) that someone else invents the tragedy of Hamlet independently of the secretive Shakespeare (only in such a case it would be impossible to ascertain that the two Hamlets were identical). It is otherwise clear that there is a big difference between the objective idea of an intentional individual and some kind of purely private “non-objective” mental state, for example, a headache: my headache is accessible to another only from how I behave, but with the intentional individual it is different.

**d) *The constitutive parts and properties of the intentional individual***

In its original sense, the Latin word “*constitutio*” means “constitution”, i.e. “order (organisation) of the parts” of something. If we now speak of the constitution of the intentional individual, we are concerned roughly speaking with the parts from which such an individual is constituted and how these components are “organised” in it. We already know something of that from what was said earlier. We know that the individual is a bearer (“coat stand”) of properties, and that it is necessary to distinguish between something which has the property of “being a bearer” and that which is borne on it, that is, the properties hung on the “coat stand”. The properties that are borne by that individual are – as we know already – its intrinsic properties. The property of “being a bearer” is however its extrinsic property. The intentional individual or, more exactly determined, its constitutive part (the “coat stand”), possesses the property without the creator of the intentional individual having explicitly ascribed the property to the individual. We shall call this constitutive part (the “coat stand”) “pure substance”. By the word “substance”, I mean that the “coat stand” is connected with the intentional individual’s intrinsic properties (as their bearer); these, however, as we already know, in the course of this connection remain abstract. By the word “pure” I mean that the “coat stand” in itself *possesses* only a fairly limited number of extrinsic properties, namely: a) properties known as trivial (it is identical with itself and distinct from every other such “coat stand”) further b) the property “to be able to be the bearer of the intrinsic properties of the individual” and c) “to be able to be the bearer of extrinsic properties”. Among the extrinsic properties possessed by the pure substance necessarily (i.e. if it exists), the pure substance still has a number of other extrinsic properties contingently. For example, the pure substance known as “Hamlet” has contingent properties – e.g., that it was invented by Shakespeare; that on 5 January 1937 at the Old Vic in London its representative was Laurence Olivier etc. I summarize: The constitutive parts of an intentional individual are 1) pure substance and the intrinsic properties *hung* on it, and 2) the concrete counterparts of some extrinsic properties, which the pure substance possesses.

The exposition about pure substance explains to us how we can attribute opposite properties to intentional individuals without transgressing against “common sense”. Opposite properties cannot (if we are to be truthful) be attributed to a really existing individual because

that individual cannot, at the same time and in the same sense, have the concrete properties corresponding to them; for example, no shirt can at the same time and in the same sense be black and non-black (e.g. white). If however an intentional individual is concerned, nothing is against us hanging on it the abstract property “(to be) white” and at the same time and in the same sense “(to be) black”. This applies however only to the intrinsic properties of the intentional individual. Concerning the extrinsic properties, the same applies to the intentional individuals as to the real ones; one cannot truthfully say that “Hamlet was and was not invented by Shakespeare”.

*e) The external and internal existence (E) of intentional individuals*

I pointed out earlier that intentional individuals exist intentionally ( $E_i$ ). We now pose the question as to whether the intentional existence of individual  $x$  is its intrinsic or extrinsic property. It is easy to show that it is an extrinsic property. We consider the intrinsic properties of individual  $x$  to be those which the author explicitly ascribed to the intentional individual. Intentional existence, however, plainly does not belong among these, on the contrary; some kind of existence for the most part distinct from intentional, in the most usual case real, is among the properties ascribed by the author to the individual. Fairy stories often begin with the words “Once upon a time there was ...”. By this “was” the author (narrator) plainly means real existence; he/she wants to give the impression that the story narrated really did happen. However, even when the author does not explicitly say, “Once upon a time there was ...” (or the equivalent), he/she assumes a real existence for the hero (for example, Shakespeare does so for Hamlet). We then see that the real existence the author ascribes to the intentional individual (to the hero of his/her work) is only internal property. It is evidence only of some invented (fictive) reality about the individual, which is not inconsistent with the fact that the intentional individual still has, above that internal existence, the extrinsic property that it exists intentionally (just as the object of an invented narrative). The invented individual has its *internal* existence from its author; but from a certain point of view, its intentional existence it has independently of the author’s decision. That is, if the author invented the hero of his narrative, then that hero already exists intentionally whether the author likes it or not.

The intentional individual thus has intentional existence as its own extrinsic property and real existence as its intrinsic property. We can therefore distinguish this inner real existence from the existence of truly real individuals (such as Shakespeare for example); we can call it “intentionally real existence”. Shakespeare exists (more precisely: existed) in a real way; however, his Hamlet exists only as “intentionally real”. We now recall that Shakespeare incorporated another play, one performed at Hamlet’s request by strolling players visiting Elsinore, into the action of his tragedy *Hamlet*. A “theatrical king” appears in this “play within a play”, so that there are actually two kings in *Hamlet*, Hamlet’s uncle Claudius, and another (unnamed) theatrical king.

How does it now stand with the existence of these individuals? As far as their external existence is concerned, they all exist intentionally. As far as their internal existence is concerned, distinctions have to be made; the existences of most – Prince Hamlet, King Claudius, etc. – are “intentionally-real” existences. Some characters possess this intentionally-real existence for the whole of the drama’s action, others only for a certain part (for example Polonius loses his real-intentional existence in Act Three, when Hamlet kills him with a rapier). After these characters (including Hamlet, who dies – almost – at the end of the last act) cease to exist in the drama, they *have* for the most part<sup>20</sup> an intentional existence (without attributes). As well as the characters who have an intentionally-real existence, characters occur in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* who obviously have a different existence. The “theatrical king” (who appears in the play invented by Hamlet) is such a character.

What Shakespeare ascribed to the theatrical king was plainly not an intentionally-real existence, but something else, which I call “intentionally-intentional”. If, for example another play within a play occurred within a play staged by Hamlet, we could speak of intentionally-intentional existence of the second degree, and so on.

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<sup>20</sup> I write: “for the most part” because the dramatic characters who die in the course of the action have an intentionally-intentional existence after death as long as one of the still living dramatic characters remembers them after their death. An extreme case of this kind is Hamlet’s father who dies before the play even begins.