

Existence, Noneism, and the varieties of worlds

by

Carolyn Garland
B.A., University of Manitoba, 2012

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Mike Raven (Department of Philosophy)
Co-Supervisor

Dr. Audrey Yap (Department of Philosophy)
Co-Supervisor

Abstract

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Dr. Audrey Yap (Department of Philosophy)
Co-Supervisor

Intentionality is a feature of mental states that are directed towards objects. One puzzle of intentionality is that mental states can be directed towards nonexistent objects. We may relate to fictional characters, or worry about events that never take place. However, if these objects do not exist, then it is difficult to make sense of how it is that we bear these relations towards them. In this thesis I outline Graham Priest's world-based semantic and metaphysical theory of intentionality intended to accommodate these intentional relations born towards nonexistent objects. Priest supposes that this theory is compatible with any conception of worlds. I argue that this is not the case. Within Priest's framework merely possible worlds should be understood as existent genuine worlds, and impossible worlds can be neither existent genuine worlds, nor should they be conceived of as nonexistent objects. Instead impossible worlds must be something quite revolutionary.

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Dedication

For Sarah.

Introduction

In *Towards Non-Being* Graham Priest presents a semantic and metaphysical framework for intentionality – a feature of certain mental states in virtue of which they are directed towards something. Priest calls this view ‘Noneism’. The three tenets of Priest’s variety of Noneism (referred to within this thesis as ‘Priestly Noneism’), which I will make clearer through out this thesis are as follows:

- 1) The use of: (a) an existentially neutral version of quantification and, (b) a primitive existence predicate.
- 2) An endorsement of the Modal Characterization Principle, according to which nonexistent objects bear their characterizing properties at *some* world.
- 3) A denial of the existence of abstract objects.

Priest’s variety of Noneism relies on the resources of modal semantics and modal metaphysics. Modal semantics have been used to analyze such things as possibility, necessity, knowledge, and belief. These semantics make use of the notion of *worlds*, for instance, an object is possibly blue just in case there is some world in which that object is blue; an agent believes a proposition just in case her belief state is directed towards a world in which that proposition is true. One job for modal metaphysics is to give an account of these worlds – what sort of things they might be. Priest maintains that his variety of Noneism is compatible with any metaphysical account of worlds. I will argue that this is not the case.

In Chapter One of this thesis I outline Priest’s motivation for Noneism, his semantic framework, and his introduction of the Modal Characterization Principle. In

Chapter Two I outline the three tenets of Priestly Noneism, and develop an argument for the conclusion that the possible worlds of Priestly Noneism must be existent genuine worlds, and the impossible worlds can be neither ersatz nor genuine worlds. Thus, Noneism is not metaphysically neutral regarding the status of possible worlds, and requires a theory of impossible worlds that would be quite revisionary. In Chapter Three, I discuss an objection to my argument that I will argue is under-motivated, and evaluate a rival theory of modality, modal fictionalism.

Chapter One – *Towards Non-Being*

1.1– Quantification and Existence: the first tenet of Priestly Noneism

In *Towards Non-Being* Graham Priest develops a semantic and metaphysical framework for intentionality. Roughly, intentionality is the feature of certain mental states in virtue of which they are directed toward something. Intentional attitudes are often expressed by intentional verbs. Examples of intentional verbs include ‘...fears...’, ‘...hopes...’, ‘...wishes...’. Intentional verbs can function either as intentional operators or intentional predicates. Intentional operators take a sentence as their complement. Examples of intentional operators include ‘...fears that...’, ‘...knows that...’, ‘...believes that...’, ‘...desires that...’. Examples of phrases involving intentional operators include ‘I fear *that* someone is hiding in the closet’, ‘I know *that* 2+2=4’, ‘I believe *that* the North Pole is north of Victoria’. Intentional predicates take a noun phrase as their complement. Examples of intentional predicates include ‘fears’, ‘seeks’, ‘desires’. Examples of phrases involving intentional predicates include ‘Voldemort fears death’, ‘Le Ponce sought the Philosopher’s Stone’, ‘James Franco desires Seth Rogan’.

Some intentional verbs can be used both as an intentional operator and as an intentional predicate. For instance, in the above examples ‘fear’ is used both as the intentional operator ‘fears that’, as in ‘I fear *that* someone is hiding in the closet’, and as an intentional predicate, as in ‘Voldemort fears death’. An intentional verb that can be used both ways is ambiguous, but the operator ‘fears that’ and the predicate ‘fears’ are to be taken as distinct.¹

¹ Priest (2005) p. 8

One puzzling feature of intentional attitudes is that it seems they can be directed towards objects that do not exist – for instance, I can identify with Hermione Granger, I can fear the Grim Reaper, and I can worry that there is a man with a knife under my bed (when in fact there is no such man!). This phenomenon might motivate one to admit nonexistent objects into philosophical discourse and to deny the orthodox position that only existent objects may bear properties.² In *Towards Non-Being* Graham Priest takes this consideration seriously and does just that. Insofar as relations are properties, if these nonexistent objects can participate in intentional relations, these objects can bear properties.

If it is false that only existent objects may bear properties, then the way we formalize sentences regarding nonexistents needs to be adjusted. According to the old, orthodox view of quantification the proposition expressed by “A boy wizard went to Hogwarts” is equivalent to the proposition expressed by “There *exists* a boy wizard who went to Hogwarts”. But, if the wizard in question is Harry Potter, then the latter sentence is false, since *nothing* that exists went to Hogwarts, in fact, Hogwarts itself does not exist. More formally, the sentence:

(1) A boy wizard went to Hogwarts

is to be translated as

(2) $\exists x(\text{Boy-wizard}(x) \text{ and } \text{Went-to-Hogwarts}(x))$.

However, according to orthodoxy, (2) just means.

(3) There exists a boy wizard who went to Hogwarts.

² For proponents of this view see Quine (1948, 1951) and van Inwagen (1998).

(3) is false, since neither Hogwarts, nor any of its students exist. That is, there exists nothing that fits the description of being a boy wizard and going to Hogwarts. Still, at least according to the stories, Harry Potter went to Hogwarts, so it is true that a boy wizard went to Hogwarts. On the other hand, according to the stories, it is false that a blonde boy named Dudley Dursley went to Hogwarts. But, the orthodox quantifier results in the same truth-value for both sentences. One might desire a way to account for the difference in truth-values. The orthodox semantics do not allow us to do so, since both sentences are false. In *Towards Non-Being* Graham Priest develops a semantics that is able to account for these differences.

Priest suggests that particular quantification (traditionally represented by ‘ \exists ’) should not be understood in the orthodox way, as existentially loaded. Instead, existence should be understood as a property of individual objects – one that some objects bear and some objects do not, just like being red or being a wizard. This is *not* just the property of being identical to something, for given that everything is identical to itself, this is a property that all objects have (I will discuss this interpretation of ‘existence’, and its limitations, shortly). On the orthodox interpretation of ‘ \exists ’ only existent objects are the bearers of properties. They must be, since in order to claim that an object bears any property, one first asserts that that object exists. In so far as relations are properties, then, only existent objects can be involved in relations, including intentional ones. Priest denies the orthodox position and maintains that nonexistent objects *do* bear properties, but that nonexistent objects do not *exist* in so far as they fail to bear *existence*.

To avoid confusion with the orthodox quantifier ‘ \exists ’, Priest introduces a new quantifier ‘ \mathcal{G} ’ that is existentially neutral. ‘ $\mathcal{G}x(\text{Dog}(x))$ ’ just says that something is a dog,

and remains silent as to whether or not that dog exists. ' $\exists x(\text{Dog}(x))$ ' is to be understood as shorthand for ' $\exists x(\text{Dog}(x) \text{ and } \text{Exists}(x))$ '. Similarly, the orthodox universal quantifier ' \forall ' quantifies over all *existent* objects, and Priest introduces the existentially neutral ' \mathcal{U} ' to quantify over *all* objects, regardless of their existential status. ' $\forall x(\text{Dog}(x))$ ' is to be understood as shorthand for ' $\mathcal{U}x(\text{Dog}(x) \text{ and } \text{Exists}(x))$ '. With the use of the existentially neutral quantifiers, (1) is now translated as:

$$(4) \mathcal{G}x(\text{Boy-wizard}(x) \text{ and } \text{Went-to-Hogwarts}(x))$$

which just means

$$(5) \text{Something is a boy wizard that went to Hogwarts.}$$

(5) remains silent as to whether the object in question exists or not, it merely states that some object went to Hogwarts, leaving open the question as to whether or not that object exists. This provides us a way to capture, for instance, alleged truths regarding the stories of Harry Potter.

By maintaining that existence is best understood as expressing a property of individuals, rather than as asserted by the use of a quantifier, Priest's semantics provide a way for us to bear relations to nonexistent objects. Since nonexistent objects are still objects – that is, still bearers of properties and relations- when I fear the Blair Witch I *do* fear something (i.e. some *object*). The Blair Witch is still a thing, an object, that I fear, albeit one that does not exist. The introduction of existentially neutral quantification, and the primitive existence predicate together are what I have deemed tenet (1) of Priestly Noneism.

While I will focus on Priest's semantics for intentionality and intentional objects, I am interested in any semantic account that allows nonexistents into the domain of objects. Even without the considerations of intentional attitudes, I think there are other compelling reasons to allow nonexistents into the domain. First, it seems true that some things do not exist. Round squares do not exist, unicorns do not exist, my younger brother does not exist. However, according to the orthodox position, to say that something exists is just to say that there is at least one object it is identical to – namely itself. This is why earlier I had stipulated that the existence primitive Priest introduces is distinct from the property of being self-identical. According to orthodoxy, 'y exists' is translated as:

$$(6) \exists x(x=y)$$

(6) is read as 'There is something to which y is identical'. However, 'y does not exist', is translated as

$$(7) \neg \exists x(x=y).$$

(7) tells us that there is nothing to which y is identical. This does not seem like the correct translation. If there is nothing to which y is identical, then y is not even identical to itself. However, all things are self-identical, and it seems that anything will be self-identical regardless of whether it exists or not. To suppose that Harry Potter does not exist, then, would be to deny that Harry Potter is identical to himself. But, Harry Potter *is* self-identical, as is my (nonexistent) brother, and (presumably) so are some round squares. Harry Potter and my younger brother differ from other, existent objects, but they do not differ from themselves!

In contrast, allowing existence to function as a property of objects allows us to easily say that something does not exist. It is just the sentence:

(8) $\mathcal{G}(x)(\neg\text{Exists}(x))$.

(8) just says that something does not exist. If we treat existence this way, there no longer remains any formal problem distinctive to denying the existence of an object.

Finally, the introduction of existentially neutral quantification and an existence predicate has the benefit of preventing validation of the controversial Barcan Formula.³

The Barcan Formula, formally, is presented as: $\forall x\Box Fx \rightarrow \Box\forall x Fx$. In English, this schemata reads “If everything is necessarily F, then necessarily everything is F”.

Equivalent to this sentence is: $\Diamond\exists x Fx \rightarrow \exists x\Diamond Fx$. The latter sentence tells us that if it is possible that something is F, then something is possibly F. Given the orthodox interpretation of ‘ \exists ’, this sentence tells us that if it is possible that there exists an F, then there *exists* something that is possibly F. This is a theorem of constant domain modal logics that make use of existentially loaded quantification.

Suppose it is possible that something is F ($\Diamond\exists x Fx$). If it is possible that something is F, then at some world, some object is F. Call one such world w_1 and one such object a . Since a is at a w_1 , there is an object that is possibly F. So, something is possibly F. However, on an orthodox understanding of ‘ \exists ’ this tells us that there *exists* something that is possibly F.

The above consequence, however, is bizarre. I do not actually have a younger brother, but it is possible that I could have one. That is, it is possible that my younger brother exists. But, according to the orthodox interpretation of the Barcan Formula, if that is the case, then there actually exists something that is possibly my younger brother. Yet, nothing that we take to exist seems to be the right candidate for that position. That is, the

³ See Barcan (1946, 1947)

merely possible existence of an object seems to be a sufficient condition for the actual existence of an object that we believe not to exist.

In Priest's system the existentially loaded Barcan Formula does not come out as a logical truth. It is possible to provide a model in which this schema is false. Suppose it is possible that something is F. $\diamond \exists x Fx$ in orthodox semantics is $\diamond \mathcal{G}x(Ex \wedge Fx)$ in Priest's semantics. It is possible that something both exists and is F. Then at some world, some object exists and is F. Call one such world w_I and one such object a . $\neg \exists x \diamond Fx$ in orthodox semantics is $\neg \mathcal{G}x(Ex \wedge \diamond Fx)$ in Priest's semantics. Suppose this is so, that is, suppose that no object is such that it both exists and is possibly F. This is easy to model. Let a be the only object in the domain. Let a fail to exist at the actual world. Then, no existent object is possibly F, though some nonexistent object is. Thus, the existentially loaded Barcan Formula is not a logical truth in Priest's semantics.

In Priest's system another, existentially *neutral* version of the Barcan Formula is a logical truth. That is, $\diamond \mathcal{G}x Fx \rightarrow \mathcal{G}x \diamond Fx$ is a theorem of Priest's system. Suppose it is possible that something is F ($\diamond \mathcal{G}x Fx$). If it is possible that that something is F, then at some world, some object is F. Call one such world w_I and one such object a . Then, as before, a is possibly F. So, something is possibly F. But, unlike the existentially loaded Barcan Formula, however, this consequence does not commit us to the *existence* of any such object. There may well be an object that is possibly my younger brother, however, that object needn't exist. This consequence coincides nicely with the first tenet of Priestly Noneism – nonexistent objects may still bear properties, all the while failing to exist. Thus, Priest's system validates only the harmless existentially neutral version of the

Barcan Formula, the version that does not commit one to the existence of any surprising objects.

While Priest takes considerations of intentionality to motivate the inclusion of nonexistent objects, I hope I have shown that there are other considerations that may also tempt one away from the orthodox position. While this thesis will be focused on the semantics that Priest develops in *Towards Non-Being* I think much of what I have to say will be relevant to anyone who desires to treat existence as a first order predicate and the particular quantifier as existentially neutral. In the following section I will present a simplified version of Priest's semantics, and in Section (1.3) I will introduce the second tenet of Priestly Noneism – an endorsement of the Modal Characterization Principle.

1.2 - Priest's Semantics

In *Towards Non-Being* Priest develops a semantic and metaphysical theory of intentionality that makes use of possible, impossible, and open worlds. For the purposes of this thesis I am concerned only with Priest's semantics for possible and impossible worlds. In accordance with this, in what follows I have eliminated those parts of Priest's semantics that are concerned with open worlds. The semantics I present is a simplified version of Priest's which makes use of only the information relevant to my discussion of worlds within this thesis. I have footnoted those areas in which I have eliminated some of Priest's more sophisticated additions.

The semantics for possible and impossible worlds as developed in *Towards Non-Being*, and simplified for the purposes of this thesis, is as follows:

A Priest Model is a structure $M = \langle \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{I}, @, D, g \rangle$ such that:

- \mathcal{P} is a set of possible worlds: these worlds are those in which the laws of classical logic hold.
- \mathcal{I} is a set of impossible worlds.

Impossible worlds are just what they sound like –impossible. Many impossible worlds are those in which non-classical logics hold.⁴ Some may be ones in which classical logic holds, but objects bear impossible properties. These are just the worlds in which impossibilities occur. Impossible worlds are introduced in order to have a means to model our thoughts about non-classical logic and impossible objects. For instance, we may be reasoning about such worlds when we consider alternative logics and objects with logically or mathematically impossible properties, such as round squares.

- \mathcal{W} is the totality of worlds and $\mathcal{W} = \mathcal{P} \cup \mathcal{I}$
- $@$ is the actual world and $@ \in \mathcal{P}$
- D is a set of objects⁵
- g is a function such that:
 - If c is an individual constant, then $g(c) \in D$
 - If f is an n -place function, then $g(f)$ is an n -place function on D
 - If P^n is an n -place predicate (including intentional predicates), and $w \in \mathcal{P}$, then $g(P^n, w)$ is an ordered pair $\langle g^+(P, w), g^-(P, w) \rangle$ such that:
 - $g^+(P, w)$ is the extension of P at w – that is the $d \in D$ of which P is true at w . $g^-(P, w)$ is the coextension of P at w – that is the $d \in D$ of which P is not true at w .

⁴ Priest (2005) p. 15

⁵ This is simplified from Priest's semantics in which there is another set, Q , of something like identities, and $d \in D$ are functions that map from a world to the identity of an object in that world. Q is introduced in order to solve the failure of the substitutivity of identity in intentional contexts. Because I do not consider these paradoxes I have left out this modification for simplicity's sake. For details on this see Priest (2005) pp. 43-50.

For any predicate, P , and for any $w \in \mathcal{P}$, $g^+(P, w)$, $g^-(P, w)$ are exclusive and exhaustive. That is, $g^+(P, w) \cap g^-(P, w) = \emptyset$ and $g^+(P, w) \cup g^-(P, w) = D$. This need not be so at $w \in \mathcal{I}$.

- ‘E’ designates the primitive existence predicate.

Some predicates may be existence entailing. That is, some predicates are such that in order for an object to bear the relevant property, that object must exist. For predicates that are existence entailing in their i -th place, the semantics can be augmented so that:

$$\text{If } \langle q_i, \dots, q_{ii}, \dots, q_n \rangle \in g^+(P, @), \text{ then } q_i \in g^+(E, @)$$

Priest wishes to leave open the question as to whether existence entailment is world invariant, but suggests that at least across possible worlds, it is. If existence entailment is possible world invariant, then this clause may be altered: If $\langle q_i, \dots, q_{ii}, \dots, q_n \rangle \in g^+(P, w)$, and $w \in \mathcal{P}$, then $q_i \in g^+(E, w)$.

- ‘=’ is a binary identity predicate, g assigns = an extension and co-extension such that:

At $w \in \mathcal{P}$:

$$g^+(=, w) = \{ \langle d, d \rangle : d \in D \}$$

$$g^-(=, w) = \{ \langle d, d \rangle : d \in D \}$$

Across possible worlds, identity is world invariant and, $g^+(=, w)$, $g^-(=, w)$ are exclusive and exhaustive. If $g^+(=, w)$ expresses those $d \in D$ between which the identity relation holds, $g^-(=, w)$ expresses those $d \in D$ between which the identity relation does not.

At $w \in \mathcal{I}$:

$$g^+(=, w) \subseteq D^2$$

$$g^-(=, w) \subseteq D^2$$

At impossible worlds, identity can behave arbitrarily. There is no requirement that identity remain world invariant, nor that identity statements behave consistently.

- If Ψ is any intentional verb $g(\Psi)$ is a function that maps each $d \in D$ to a binary relation on \mathcal{W} . Write $g(\Psi)(d)$ as R^d_Ψ .

This clause tells us that for any intentional verb Ψ and object d , R^d_Ψ is a binary relation on \mathcal{W} . This might be thought of as an accessibility relation between worlds, relative to intentional verbs. Thus, if Ψ is ‘imagines’, $@$ is the actual world, d is me, and w is some other world, if $@R^d_\Psi w$ then w is a world that realizes all the things I imagine at the actual world.

- s is an assignment of values to variables, and the denotation function with respect to M, s , is such that:
 - If c is a constant, then $g_s(c) = g(c)$
 - If x is a variable, then $g_s(x) = s(x)$
 - If f is an n -place function and $t_1 \dots t_n$ are terms, then $g_s(ft_1 \dots t_n) = g(f)(g_s(t_1) \dots g_s(t_n))$
- Truth in a world with respect to s, M (indicated by \Vdash_s^+ or \Vdash_s^- , where $w \Vdash_s^+ \Psi$ indicates that Ψ is true at w , and $w \Vdash_s^- \Psi$ indicates that Ψ is false at w):
 - For atomic formulas:
 - $w \Vdash_s^+ Pt_1 \dots t_n$ iff $\langle g_s(t_1) \dots g_s(t_n) \rangle \in g^+(P, w)$
 - $w \Vdash_s^- Pt_1 \dots t_n$ iff $\langle g_s(t_1) \dots g_s(t_n) \rangle \in g^-(P, w)$
 - For non-atomic formulas:
 - $w \Vdash_s^+ \neg A$ iff $w \Vdash_s^- A$
 - $w \Vdash_s^- \neg A$ iff $w \Vdash_s^+ A$
 - $w \Vdash_s^+ A \wedge B$ iff $w \Vdash_s^+ A$ and $w \Vdash_s^+ B$
 - $w \Vdash_s^- A \wedge B$ iff $w \Vdash_s^- A$ or $w \Vdash_s^- B$
 - $w \Vdash_s^+ A \vee B$ iff $w \Vdash_s^+ A$ or $w \Vdash_s^+ B$

- $w \Vdash_s^- A \vee B$ iff $w \Vdash_s^- A$ and $w \Vdash_s^- B$
- If Ψ is an intentional operator and t is a term:

$w \Vdash_s^+ t\Psi A$ iff for all $w' \in \mathcal{W}$, such that $wR^{gs(t)}_{\Psi} w'$, $w' \Vdash_s^+ A$

$w \Vdash_s^- t\Psi A$ iff for some $w' \in \mathcal{W}$, such that $wR^{gs(t)}_{\Psi} w'$, $w' \Vdash_s^- A$

A

Recall that intentional operators take a sentence as their complement. Let $t\Psi A$ stand for the sentence ‘Carolyn imagines that apples are blue’. This is true in w just in case for all $w' \in \mathcal{W}$ that realize my imaginings, or accessible from my imagining state, in w' apples are blue.

- $w \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x A$ iff for some $d \in D$, $w \Vdash_{s(x/d)}^+ A$
- $w \Vdash_s^- \mathcal{G}x A$ iff for all $d \in D$, $w \Vdash_{s(x/d)}^- A$
- $w \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{U}x A$ iff for all $d \in D$, $w \Vdash_{s(x/d)}^+ A$
- $w \Vdash_s^- \mathcal{U}x A$ iff for some $d \in D$, $w \Vdash_{s(x/d)}^- A$
- $w \Vdash_s^+ a=b$ iff $\langle g_s(a), g_s(b) \rangle \in g^+(=, w)$
- $w \Vdash_s^- a=b$ iff $\langle g_s(a), g_s(b) \rangle \in g^-(=, w)$
- If $w \in \mathcal{P}$, then:

$w \Vdash_s^+ \Box A$ iff for all $w' \in \mathcal{P}$, $w' \Vdash_s^+ A$

$w \Vdash_s^- \Box A$ iff for some $w' \in \mathcal{P}$, $w' \Vdash_s^- A$

$w \Vdash_s^+ \Diamond A$ iff for some $w' \in \mathcal{P}$, $w' \Vdash_s^+ A$

$w \Vdash_s^- \Diamond A$ iff for all $w' \in \mathcal{P}$, $w' \Vdash_s^- A$

$w \Vdash_s^+ A \rightarrow B$ iff for all $w' \in \mathcal{I}, \mathcal{P}$, if $w' \Vdash_s^+ A$, then $w' \Vdash_s^+ B$

$w \Vdash_s^- A \rightarrow B$ iff for some $w' \in \mathcal{I}, \mathcal{P}$, $w' \Vdash_s^+ A$, and $w' \Vdash_s^- B$ ⁶

- If $w \in \mathcal{I}$, then sentences of the form: $A \rightarrow B$, $\Box A$, $\Diamond A$ that meet these conditions: i) all free terms are variables; ii) no free variable has multiple occurrences; iii) and the free variables that occur in it, x_1, \dots, x_n , are the least variables greater than all the variables bound in the formula in some canonical ordering in ascending order from left to right, are assigned a denotation: $g(\varphi, w) = \langle g^+(\varphi, w), g^-(\varphi, w) \rangle$. These formulas are then treated as atomic so that these may behave arbitrarily at impossible worlds:

$$w \Vdash_s^+ \varphi t_1 \dots t_n \text{ iff } \langle g_s(t_1) \dots g_s(t_n) \rangle \in g^+(\varphi, w)$$

$$w \Vdash_s^- \varphi t_1 \dots t_n \text{ iff } \langle g_s(t_1) \dots g_s(t_n) \rangle \in g^-(\varphi, w)$$
⁷

Thus far I have presented some motivation for the introduction of existentially neutral quantification and a primitive existence predicate into our vocabulary. I have presented Priest's semantics for modality and intentionality across possible and impossible worlds. In the following section I will elaborate on Priest's account of intentionality. Specifically, this will focus on one aspect of intentionality. We are, it seems, able to think about many objects: round squares, pink elephants, dancing dinosaurs. If we are able to think about such objects, then these objects bear properties, at

⁶ I am following Priest in defining the strict conditional over that of the material conditional. The truth conditions for the material conditional would be as follows:

$w \Vdash_s^+ A \rightarrow B$ iff either $w \Vdash_s^- A$ or $w \Vdash_s^+ B$;
 $w \Vdash_s^- A \rightarrow B$ iff $w \Vdash_s^+ A$ and $w \Vdash_s^- B$

⁷ For details on this see Priest (2005) pp. 17-19

the very least, they participate in intentional relations with us. In addition, we attribute properties to the objects that we bear intentional attitudes towards. In the next section I will discuss Priest's account of the way in which these objects may be said to bear the properties we attribute to them.

1.3 - Characterization principles and tenet two of Priestly Noneism

The semantic theory just presented is intended to model our ability to talk about, think about, and in general *characterize* objects that do not exist. Treating existence as a predicate, rather than as asserted via quantification over objects, allows the semantics to:

a) express sentences like 'Carolyn is thinking of something that does not exist' ($\exists x(\text{Thinking-of}(c, x) \wedge \neg E(x))$), without committing ourselves to the existence of any such thing and b) provide a way to evaluate the truth of these sentences. ($\exists x(\text{Thinking-of}(c, x) \wedge \neg E(x))$ is true just in case there is some $d \in D$, some object in the domain, such that I am thinking of it, and it does not exist. In contrast, when using the orthodox semantics, 'Carolyn is thinking of something that does not exist' will always be false, since that sentence takes something to exist while at the same time claiming that it does not. Thus, any orthodox translation will yield that the above sentence is a contradiction.

In the example used above, Carolyn was thinking about an object that does not exist. That is, Carolyn was characterizing an object as being a certain way – as not existing. Given that we can characterize an object in any way, it seems that we can bear intentional attitudes towards objects with any variety of properties. If that is so then there must be *some* object with those properties that we bear these attitudes towards. Call this

view the ‘characterization principle’. One version of the characterization principle is as follows:

The Naïve Characterization Principle (NCP): If an object o is characterized as F , then o is F .

According to the Naïve Characterization Principle, any characterized object has all of its characterizing properties. The Naïve Characterization Principle is subject to two problems. First, the NCP implies that for any object, if that object is characterized as existent, then that object exists. This is troublesome. We can characterize an object as both existent, round, and square. But, we know that round squares do not exist, so there is no object that is an existent round square. As another example, suppose that Sherlock Holmes is characterized as existing. If the NCP is correct, then Sherlock Holmes *actually* exists, but, Sherlock Holmes does not exist, at least not in the way he is said to within the fiction.

Secondly, the NCP allows us to prove any arbitrary sentence, S . Let a characterization C be the condition that $x=x \wedge S$. We can characterize object o as $o=o \wedge S$. But, according to the NCP, object o has those characterizing properties. So, o satisfies $o=o \wedge S$. So, S is true. For instance, if I characterize an object o as ‘ o is self identical and pigs fly’, then according to the NCP there is something that is self-identical, and pigs fly. So, pigs fly.

Typical responses to the above problems stipulate that the properties deployed in the NCP must be of a certain kind, and existence is not one of those properties, nor are properties expressed in conjunction with a proposition. So, the Naïve Characterization Principle becomes the less Naïve Characterization Principle: For any characterized

object, that object has those properties it is characterized as having, given that those properties meet condition *X*.⁸

The challenge for the above is to give an account of what condition *X* is. Without a principle to explain why some properties may be deployed in the characterization, and some may not – without a principle explaining what condition *x* is – this response seems mildly ad hoc.

Even if a satisfying account of condition *X* were given, Priest points out that we are able to consider objects satisfying *any* predicate. And, there may be no detectable difference in our thoughts about those objects that satisfy only properly characterizing properties, and those that do not. Even the non-properly-characterizing properties seem relevant to our thoughts and attitudes about an object, and the identity of that object. For instance, suppose I fear an existent teenage mutant ninja turtle. The reason I fear this object is precisely because I have characterized it to exist, and if I had not characterized it to exist, I would not fear it. However, if existence cannot be included in the object's characterization, then I do not fear an existent ninja turtle, since there is no object that is both existent and a ninja turtle. But, I *do* fear an existent ninja turtle. So, it seems that even the properties that do not satisfy condition *X* are relevant to our intentional attitudes towards objects, and so they too should be included in the characterization.⁹

Priest responds to the troubles for the NCP by suggesting his own version of the characterization principle, the *modal characterization principle*:

⁸ For examples of philosophers who choose to take this route see Meinong (1960), Parsons (1980), Routley (1980), Zalta (1983).

⁹ Priest 2005, pp. 83-84.

The Modal Characterization Principle (MCP): Where F is any property or set of properties, an object characterized by an agent as being F is F in all the worlds (partially) described by the agent's representation.

When I am characterizing an object, as, for instance a pink elephant on parade, I am representing a world to be a certain way – namely, one in which there are parading pink elephants. According to the MCP, the object I have characterized *is* a pink elephant at those worlds that realize the way I have characterized the world as being in my representation – namely, the worlds in which there is a parading pink elephant. That is, I am bearing an intentional relation to an object that at some world *is* a parading pink elephant. In contrast with the NCP, in which the actual world is the world that will realize objects' characterizations, the MCP allows that characterizations (or representations) may be realized (a) at multiple worlds and (b) need not be realized at the actual world. Thus, the object I have characterized as a parading pink elephant is not a pink elephant at *this* world, the actual world, but at some other nonactual worlds that realize my representation.

The Modal Characterization Principle links together the *modal properties* of an object with the *intentional properties* of that object. An object's intentional properties are those properties an object has in virtue of standing in some intentional relation to an agent in a world. Thus, when I, in the actual world, characterize an object as a pink elephant on parade, the worlds that realize my representation are the worlds in which that object is a pink elephant on parade. If at least one of those worlds, w , is a possible world, then it is possible that there are parading pink elephants.

The Modal Characterization Principle avoids the problems associated with the Naïve Characterization Principle. First, an object characterized as an existent no longer satisfies its characterizing properties at the actual world, but only at those worlds that realize the way the world is represented as being when an agent is considering that object. When an agent is reading *Hound of the Baskervilles*, and represents Sherlock Holmes as existing, the object that is Holmes *does exist*, but only at those worlds that realize the relevant story - of which the actual world is not one. The existent round square has the property of existence only at those worlds that realize that representation – first, the impossible worlds, as these are the worlds in which certain varieties of entailment fail (so that being round no longer entails being non-square), and only those impossible worlds where there is a round square that exists.

Secondly, it is no longer the case that characterizing an object will allow us to prove that any arbitrary sentence S is *actually* true. Suppose I were to characterize an object as $o=o \wedge S$. o has those properties at the worlds that realize the way I have represented the world as being in my characterization. If the actual world is one in which arbitrary S is false, then the actual world is not one of the worlds that realize the way I have represented the world as being. So, o will not satisfy $o=o \wedge S$ at the actual world. Instead, o satisfies $o=o \wedge S$ at the worlds that do realize the way I have represented the world as being – those worlds in which S is true. As mentioned in the introduction, an endorsement of the Modal Characterization Principle is, I believe, the second tenet of Priestly Noneism.

Thus far I have intended to present a motivation for the admission of a notion of existence that treats existence as a property of objects. This is a two-part motivation,

stemming from concerns regarding objects of intentionality, as well as technical concerns regarding how we are to express with coherence negative existential sentences. I have presented Priest's semantic framework for intentionality concerning possible and impossible worlds, and have explained the motivating factors behind Priest's Modal Characterization Principle. In the following chapter I present what I think the third tenet central to Priest's (2005) account of intentionality and modality. Following that, I argue that given a plausible understanding of the existence of objects, the possible worlds of Priestly Noneism ought to be understood as genuine worlds, and that there is no adequate theory of impossible worlds that is able to accommodate Priestly Noneism.

Chapter Two – Noneism and Worlds

2.1 – The third tenet of Priestly Noneism; abstracta and existence

Graham Priest has suggested that his version of Meinongianism, coined ‘Noneism’, is compatible with any account of worlds. In this chapter I argue quite the opposite, that Priestly Noneism is compatible neither of the two competing theories of worlds: ersatz worlds and genuine worlds.

To begin this argument I will highlight what I think are three tenets central to Priest’s version of Noneism. The first two are familiar from the preceding chapter:

- 1) The use of: (a) an existentially neutral version of quantification and (b) a primitive existence predicate.
- 2) An endorsement of the Modal Characterization Principle.
- 3) A denial of the existence of abstract objects.

Tenets (1) and (2) are familiar from Sections (1.1) and (1.3), respectively. The first is introduced in part to accommodate the intuition that we bear intentional attitudes towards nonexistent objects, and the second is introduced to avoid problems surrounding the Naïve Characterization Principle. The second tenet is, plausibly, what distinguishes Priestly Noneism from other varieties of Noneism, according to which objects bear their (properly) characterizing properties at the actual world.

The third tenet I have yet to discuss. This is the denial of the existence of abstract objects. This tenet is what distinguishes Priestly Noneism from another variety of Noneism. Call this ‘Platonic Noneism’. Noneism, broadly, or at least given tenets (1) and (2), does not immediately commit itself to a denial of abstracta – for instance,

mathematical objects, and types.¹⁰ Thus, it is entirely plausible that one might choose to be a Platonist about abstract objects and take at least some of them to be actually existent entities, while maintaining that other abstract objects do not actually exist. For instance, one might be a Platonist about the number two, and believe that this object actually exists, while maintaining that the number that is identical to both two and pi exists only at impossible worlds.

Priest, on the other hand, takes a nominalist position regarding the existence of abstracta. As existence is understood on Priest's view, it is truly difficult to say (with intelligibility) that an object is both abstract and exists. For Priest, existence, while primitive, implies being concrete.¹¹ So, if an abstract object were to exist, it would have to be both concrete and abstract. If these categories are understood as mutually exclusive as is usual, then it is not possible for an object to both exist and be abstract. So, on Priest's understanding of existence, abstract objects do not (actually, or even possibly) exist.¹²

2.2 – What worlds are these?

Keeping tenets (1)-(3) in mind, I will now begin a brief discussion regarding Priest's views on the status of worlds. Priest notes that there is a need to distinguish between worlds themselves, and the mathematical representation of them within the semantics.¹³ The set-theoretical devices of the semantics are mathematical objects, but

¹⁰ Priest ((2005), p. 137) defines abstract objects as those objects such that if they *were* to exist, we would not causally interact with them. On the other hand, concrete objects are those objects such that if they *were* to exist, we would causally interact with them.

¹¹ Priest (2005), p. 136

¹² It is also not possible for an abstract object to exist, so there is no possible world in which abstract objects exist. There may, however, be an impossible world in which they do.

¹³ Priest (2005), p. 138

the worlds and objects are not. Worlds and objects are what the mathematical machinery represent.¹⁴ Formulas in the semantics are intended to represent language (sentences or propositions), the extralinguistic (objects and worlds) and the relationship between them.¹⁵ For instance, ‘Red(*a*)’ might represent the proposition ‘Alice is red’; a model for that in the semantics is one in which there is some $o \in D$ such that $o \in (\text{Red}, @)$ and $g_s(a) = o$ – this represents the object named ‘Alice’ being red at the actual world. Finally, the definition of truth in a world, for instance $@ \Vdash_s^+ (\text{Red}(a))$, is given in terms of objects in the world: $@ \Vdash_s^+ (\text{Red}(a))$ iff $g_s(a) \in (\text{Red}, @)$, similar to how a proposition is true (with respect to a world) just in case it corresponds (roughly) to the way that world is. The semantics also represent worlds as having properties. In the following paragraphs I discuss some of the properties of worlds, and after that I will narrow down on one specific property of worlds: the sort of objects they might be.

Priest recognizes that worlds have properties. As in the semantics, these worlds may be either possible, or impossible. In addition to these properties, ‘ \Vdash^\pm ’ represents a property of worlds, it represents the ‘__ is true in __, with respect to __’ relation. This is a three-place relation between a world, a function, and a sentence.¹⁶ ‘ $w_1 \Vdash_s^+ A$ ’ represents that ‘sentence A is true in w_1 with respect to s ’, where s is an assignment of values to variables. The properties of being possible, or impossible, Priest claims, are not existence-entailing properties of worlds, nor does Priest believe that \Vdash^\pm is an existence-entailing property of worlds (I will discuss this further in Section 2.4). In the next

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Priest (2005), p. 139

paragraph, I discuss Priest's views regarding other properties of worlds – specifically, what types of things worlds might be, and their existential status.

The actual world ostensibly exists. But, the question of whether nonactual worlds - possible and impossible - exist remains open. To answer this question, one might first consider the kinds of things that nonactual worlds have been thought to be. Worlds, generally, are thought to be one of two varieties. They are either *genuine* worlds, these worlds are the same general type of thing that we take the actual world to be; or they are *ersatz* worlds, representations of *genuine* worlds, but they are not genuine worlds – these worlds are distinctly different types of objects from the way we suppose the actual world to be. Priest suggests that his metaphysical framework is compatible with any way that worlds might be: genuine or ersatz.¹⁷ I disagree with this. I think that tenets (1)-(3) of Priestly Noneism are compatible with neither conception of worlds. I will explain why this is so shortly, but first I would like to highlight a difference between the Noneist understanding of genuine and ersatz worlds.

As I mentioned, ersatz worlds are understood as *representations* of genuine worlds.¹⁸ According to ersatzism, nonactual worlds are representations of ways the world might be, or states of affairs. There have been several suggestions as to what these representations might amount to, and so several suggestions as to what ersatz worlds might amount to. On one view, possible worlds are states of affairs, generally explained as set-theoretic constructions of propositions (see: Adams (1974), Fine (1977)), or

¹⁷ Priest (2005), p. 139

¹⁸ Or at least one genuine world, namely the actual world.

sentences (see: Melia (2003), Sider (2002))¹⁹. Lewis (1986) considers another version of ersatzism, pictorial ersatzism, but says that he knows of no philosopher who holds this view,²⁰ and I have similarly failed to find one.

What these ersatz worlds have in common is that they are *abstract*. Each of these worlds is a set-theoretical entity. As they are set-theoretic, they are mathematical objects, and so are abstract. Thus, given tenet (3) of Priestly Noneism – the denial of the existence of abstract objects - ersatz worlds are nonexistent objects.²¹

On the other hand, genuine worlds are not abstract objects. These worlds are understood to fall on the same side as the abstract/concrete distinction as the actual world. Thus, if the actual world is concrete, and worlds are genuine in the sense that they are the same general type of thing as the actual world, then genuine worlds are also concrete. So, Noneism is not committed to a denial of the existence of genuine worlds, though as it stands for the moment, it is not committed to the existence of genuine worlds either.

Mark Jago (2013) has argued that *impossible* worlds, at least if they exist, cannot be *genuine* worlds. That is, impossible worlds cannot be worlds of the sort that we take the actual world to be. In the next section I discuss a few varieties of genuine worlds, and then explain Jago's (2013) argument against taking impossible worlds to be genuine worlds.

¹⁹ While propositions and sentences might be distinct entities, I've grouped them together here for simplicity's sake.

²⁰ Lewis (1986), p. 141

²¹ Ersatz worlds may also be defined as properties or bundles of properties. Insofar as properties are abstract, these will also be nonexistent objects.

2.3 - What if impossible worlds exist? Jago on genuine impossible worlds

What if impossible worlds exist? If what I have said regarding the Noneist position on abstract objects and ersatz worlds is right, then these worlds must be *genuine worlds*, at least if Priestly Noneism would like to remain neutral regarding whether they exist. Genuine worlds are worlds of the same sort as the actual. Differences arise in determining what sort of thing that is. Jago considers three distinct theories of worlds: the first is that of Lewis (1986) according to which worlds are maximal sums of spatio-temporal entities; the second view is from Yagisawa (2012) according to which worlds are modal indices, similar to the way that times and locations are temporal and spatial indices, respectively; and the third is from McDaniel (2004), according to which worlds are regions of space-time. I will elaborate on the differences between each of these understandings of worlds, and present Jago's argument that impossible worlds are neither Lewisian, Yagisawian, or McDanielian, worlds, in what follows.

According to Lewisian modal realism, worlds are mereological sums composed of spatiotemporally related objects. When any objects are spatiotemporally related, they are worldmates. Worlds are maximal, in that any object that is a worldmate of a part of a world is also part of that world. Thus, if I am spatiotemporally related to your left pinky, then your left pinky is a worldmate of mine, and since I am part of this world, and your left pinky is a part of you, then you are part of this world as well.²² A consequence of this view is that any object exists at one and only one world. To see this, suppose that I existed at two worlds. Then, I am spatiotemporally related to two worlds. But, if I am spatiotemporally related to two worlds, it would turn out that what seemed like two

²² Lewis (1986), pp. 69-70

worlds is actually one, as the worlds would share a part (me!). The totality of worlds includes all worlds, and all objects at each world.

The problem with Lewisian worlds, Jago argues, is that Lewisian worlds obey the principle of exportation. If an object is F at a world, then the totality of worlds includes an object that is F. Thus, if there exists a world in which there is an object that is round and square, then there is an object that is round and square, simpliciter. For an object to bear a property at a world is just for there to be an object with that property, simpliciter. If that is so, then reality will contain contradictory objects,²³ and so reality will be contradictory.²⁴ But, this is unintuitive, so, impossible worlds cannot be Lewisian worlds.²⁵

Yagisawian (2012) modal indices are another account of genuine worlds. On this account, reality contains a modal dimension, just as it contains a spatial and temporal dimension. Worlds are modal indices, just as locations and times are spatial and temporal indices, respectively. Worlds are also primitive – they cannot be analyzed in terms of any other object or concept. Objects have their modal properties in virtue of having world-stages with those properties. For instance, I am actually wearing a green shirt because I have a green-shirted actual-world-stage, I am possibly wearing a blue shirt because I have a blue-shirted possible-world-stage, and I am impossibly red and blue all over because I have a red-and-blue-all-over impossible-world-stage. Reality contains both worlds and world stages.

²³ Here I am assuming that the totality of worlds is itself part of reality.

²⁴ One way to avoid this would be to deny the principle of exportation. This, however, will detract from modal realism's explanatory power, since, according to the modal realist, the fact that I could have worn a blue shirt today, although I did not, is meant to be explained by the fact there *is* an object just like me in the relevant ways that *did* wear a blue shirt today. But if one were to deny exportation, one could no longer appeal to there being such an object.

²⁵ Jago (2013), p. 4

Jago argues that modal indices, like Lewisian worlds, also fall subject to the problem of exportation. Jago considers Bertie the beagle. Bertie is possibly portly because Bertie has a portly possible-world-stage somewhere out there in modal space. This world-stage is intrinsically portly, and out in reality there is a portly-beagle-stage. Bertie is impossibly portly-and-not-portly, so there is an impossible world in which there is a portly-and-not-portly-beagle-stage, and thus, if reality includes all worlds and world stages, then reality includes a contradictory object, as it includes the portly-and-not-portly-impossible-world-stage. Then as is the problem with Lewisian worlds, there exist in reality inherently contradictory objects.

Another option for genuine worlds comes from McDaniel (2004). This view is referred to as Modal Realism with Overlap (MRO). On this account, worlds are regions of space-time. Because according MRO, worlds are regions of space-time, rather than sums of the objects occupying them, an object may exist at a world without being a part of that world. Just as I can be wholly present in the region that is Victoria without being part of Victoria, an object can be wholly present at a world, that is, exist at a world, without being a part of a world. Worlds may be individuated by their parts, but it does not follow that an object that exists at a world is a part of that world – if worlds are regions of space-time, then perhaps parts of worlds are merely other, smaller, spatiotemporally related regions of space-time (so that every part of a world is still spatiotemporally related to all of its other parts, and no part of a world is spatiotemporally related to anything that is not part of that world). To exist at a world, on this view, is just to be wholly located at that world. If that is the case, then the fact that an object exists at two

worlds no longer implies that those worlds are identical.²⁶ However, there is no notion of existence *simpliciter* – only relative to a certain area of space-time.

According to MRO, objects bear their properties relative to worlds.²⁷ Thus, there are objects that are *F-at-w₁* and *not-F-at-w₂*, with nothing being both *F* and *not-F* simpliciter. This is similar to the way in which I might be tall in a kindergarten classroom, but fail to be tall in a WNBA team huddle – without relativizing to a context, there is no way in which I am either tall or not tall. The impossible world that contains round squares is a world in which an object is both round-at-*w* and square-at-*w*, but has this property only relative to the world in which the round square exists. That being the case, the round square is not round and square, simpliciter. So, MRO worlds avoid the problem of exportation common to both Lewisian and Yagisawian worlds.

Still, Jago provides a convincing argument that MRO, like Lewisian modal realism, cannot provide us with a coherent account of impossible worlds. Since Richard Routley is identical to Richard Sylvan, it is impossible that Sylvan and Routley be identical while Sylvan is a logician, and Routley is not a logician. Since that is an impossibility, there is an impossible world in which Sylvan and Routley are identical, and Sylvan, but not Routley, is a logician. Consider a model in which:

$$\mathcal{P} = \{w\}$$

$$\mathcal{I} = w_i$$

$\mathcal{D} = \{d_1, d_2\}$ such that:

$$g(s)=d_1, g(r)=d_2$$

²⁶ Well, at least it won't imply that the worlds are not identical *if* it is possible for objects to be multilocated. This, not surprisingly, is a contentious point, but I will not discuss the issue further here.

²⁷ McDaniel (2004), pp. 147-9

$$g^+(=, w_i) = g^+(=, @) = \{ \{d_1, d_1\}, \{d_2, d_1\}, \{d_2, d_2\} \}$$

$$g^+(L, w_i) = d_1$$

$$g^-(L, w_i) = d_2$$

Given this, it is true that Sylvan is a logician-at- w_i : $w_i \Vdash_s^+ L(s)$, since $g(s)=d_1$, and $d_1 \in g^+(L, w_i)$. It is also true that Routley is *not* a logician-at- w_i : $w_i \Vdash_s^+ \neg L(r)$, since $g(r)=d_2$, and $d_2 \in g^-(L, w_i)$. Since at @, $d_1=d_2$, we should expect these to bear the same properties. But, since Sylvan bears a relation to w_i that Routley does not, they do not bear the same properties. So, by Leibniz's law, they are not the same object. However, they actually are. This is an absurd consequence. So, impossible worlds cannot be of the modal realism with overlap variety.²⁸

I think there is another reason that MRO worlds are not the best candidates for Priestly impossible worlds. According to MRO (roughly), an object is possibly F just in case there is a possible world, w , in which that object *exists* (according to MRO, an object exists at a world when it is wholly present at some region R that is part of that world), and that object is F-at- w . This ties possible property bearing right into possible existence. Thus, any object that possibly bears properties is also a possibly existent object – but this seems to be in tension with the Noneist tendency to separate existence from property bearing. Even if it is the case that at possible worlds nonexistent objects bear no properties other than certain logical properties, for instance, self-identity, at impossible worlds we might expect this sort of rule to fail. For instance, we might expect there to be some world, w , in which an object fails to exist-at- w , but is also golden-at- w and is a

²⁸ Jago (2013), pp. 5-6

mountain-at-*w*. If we expect property bearing to be the same across the totality of worlds, then this account of property bearing will not do.²⁹

If Jago's arguments are successful, then impossible worlds cannot be genuine worlds - or at the very least, they cannot be *existent* genuine worlds. In a footnote, Jago mentions that he is bracketing one stance regarding the existential status of worlds – namely the stance that worlds are nonexistent objects.³⁰ This is the stance that Priest suggests,³¹ and perhaps this is for good reason. If the above worlds do not exist, then there may be a solution to each of the above problems: the worlds in which there is an existent round square itself does not exist, and since that is so, reality contains no existing contradictory worlds – nor will it contain existent world-stages, nor existent worlds to relativize contradictory properties to. The above problems may arise only if impossible worlds are understood as existing parts of reality, so that a contradiction is exported from an existing impossible world into reality. So, if impossible worlds do not exist, then perhaps no such problems will arise.

2.4 - What if worlds don't exist?

Even if the Noneist desires to claim that impossible worlds do not exist and that move provides an adequate solution to the problems that Jago raises, I think that there is at least one further complication for this view. To draw this out, I will return to Priest's discussion of worlds and their properties. Priest takes his semantics to represent language,

²⁹ I'd like to leave it open here whether we should, or ought, to expect property bearing to be the same across the totality of worlds.

³⁰ Jago (2013), p. 3

³¹ Priest (2005), p.139

the extralinguistic, and the relations between them. Worlds and their properties are one of these extralinguistic objects that the semantics purport to represent.

As I mentioned in Section (2.2) worlds have properties. Some of the properties of worlds are the sorts of things they are – possible, impossible, open, genuine, or ersatz. The relationship represented by ‘ \Vdash^\pm ’ in the semantics is another property of worlds, a ternary relationship of the form ‘ $w \Vdash_s^\pm \varphi$ ’, between a world, w , a function, s , and a formula, φ . Priest claims that the relation \Vdash^\pm is *not* an existence entailing property of worlds.³² I suppose that, generally, this will be correct. Just for a sentence to be true at a world should not entail that that world exists. For instance, when considering an impossible world, w , such that $w \Vdash_s^+ (\varphi \wedge \neg \varphi)$, this alone should not suggest to us that there *exists* such a world in which a contradiction holds, otherwise it seems that we run into the sort of problems that Jago has raised: Priest suggests that the properties of nonactual worlds are properties they have at the actual world. If that’s so, then at the actual world there would *exist* something that verifies a contradiction.

However, in some cases it seems to me that certain instances of $\Vdash^\pm \varphi$ will be existence entailing. Whether or not an instance of \Vdash^\pm is existence entailing, will, I think depend on what the formula φ is. I think that there is one compellingly intuitive instance in which this is the case, and that to deny otherwise would result in some form of absurdity. To see what this absurdity would be, consider the following:

Neptune is a planet that does not support life. Now, suppose I were to tell you that some creature lived on Neptune. I think you would be confused, especially if, after telling you about that creature, I continued to insist that Neptune does not support life. You

³² Ibid p. 139

would probably think something had gone wrong, that I did not understand what I was talking about. To be clear you might ask me if I am using ‘Neptune’ to refer to the same object in both my assertions. Upon assuring you that I was, you would probably think that I was wrong about either: a) the fact that Neptune does not support life, or b) the fact that a creature lives on Neptune. That is, you would probably think that either Neptune supports life, or nothing lives on Neptune. To maintain otherwise would not make sense. I think there is a similar problem for existence. Suppose I were to tell you that Heaven does not exist, but that the angels exist in Heaven. Again, this makes little sense. If Heaven does not exist, the angels do not exist there. If the angels exist in Heaven, then Heaven exists.

This is the problem I see with existence at nonactual worlds. Suppose I were to tell you that some nonactual world, w , does not exist. Suppose further that I maintained that a purple dog exists at w . Again, this is absurd. If w does not exist, then the purple dog does not exist at w . How could it? The purple dog has nowhere *to* exist, if it exists at w and w does not exist itself. If w does not exist, then it seems difficult to say that there is a world such that $w \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(\text{Dog}(x) \wedge \text{Purple}(x) \wedge \text{Exists}(x))$.³³ That is, it seems strange to say that there does not exist a world in which $\mathcal{G}x(\text{Dog}(x) \wedge \text{Purple}(x) \wedge \text{Exists}(x))$ is satisfied, but that $\mathcal{G}x(\text{Dog}(x) \wedge \text{Purple}(x) \wedge \text{Exists}(x))$ is satisfied at a world. Existence as we normally understand, seems to be existence in within the realm of another existent

³³ It has been pointed out to me that if worlds and times are analogous, then if it makes sense to say that in 1800 Napoleon exists, but the time 1800 does not exist, as a presentist might, then this should not be a problem for worlds either. However, I will not investigate the analogy between times and worlds further in this thesis.

object.³⁴ It seems that at least part of the reason we suppose that the actual world exists is because we know ourselves and other objects to exist at the actual world – it is the world that we engage with in our daily lives, and for this reason we have no *prima facie* reason to doubt its existence. If existence at nonactual worlds is to be understood as literal existence, then for similar reasons we should also suppose that those worlds exist as well.

If existence at nonactual worlds is something distinct from literal existence, then objects of Noneism will fall into several categories. There are objects that exist in the actual world, in the way we normally understand existence, objects that fail to exist at the actual world, and objects that exist at nonactual worlds. The first and last of these categories are not mutually exclusive – some objects may exist at both the actual and nonactual world, may exist at the actual world, but at no nonactual world, or may exist at nonactual worlds while failing to exist at the actual world. However, if existence at nonactual worlds is not *literal* existence, then this is another category of, for lack of a better word, being. That is, objects that exist at nonactual worlds have a different sort of existence from objects at the actual world.

The addition of this additional category of objects begins to blur the line between Meinongianism and Noneism. Both the Meinongian and the Noneist agree that at the actual world, any object either exists or fails to exist. The Meinongian and Noneist agree that only concrete, spatio-temporal entities exist. They agree that abstract objects fail to exist – the Meinongian calls these subsistent objects, for the Noneist they are just called nonexistent. Finally, the Meinongian has another mode of being – the Meinongian calls

³⁴ This raises the question of whether we ought to make the same considerations for worlds – if a world exists, then there must be something else, a world* in which that world exists. That is, whether there is an infinite regress of existence, or whether there will be a bottom level. I will not investigate an answer to this question here.

these objects that lack being. Included in this category are the objects of thought. For instance, actually nonexistent objects that have been characterized to exist.

If the Noneist wishes to treat existence at nonactual worlds as something other than literal existence, then nonactual existent objects seem to be objects with another mode of being as well. These objects do *not* exist, but they are not abstracta, either. Instead, these objects just exist *differently* than the actually existent objects. However, here it seems that the dispute regarding the status of nonactual existents has become merely verbal. The Meinongian says that these objects lack being, the Noneist attributes them a different sort of existence, but they remain in the same, third, category. They are in the category of objects that have no sense of literal existence. If the dispute is merely verbal, then Noneist will then be put to task to further distinguish her view from that of the Meinongian.³⁵ The addition of this halfway category of being then, is not a desirable addition to the Noneist view. In order to keep Noneism clearly distinguished from Meinongianism, then, it is best to maintain that existence at nonactual worlds is literal existence.

To return to existence-entailing properties and worlds, given what I have said about existence at nonexistent worlds, it shouldn't come as a surprise that I, contra-Priest, think that $w \Vdash_s^\pm \exists x(Ex)$ is an existence-entailing property of worlds. Recall that for predicates, if a predicate, P , is existence entailing in its i -th place, then:

$$\text{If } \langle q_i, \dots, q_n \rangle \in g^+(P, w), \text{ then } q_i \in g^+(E, w)$$

³⁵ David Lewis (1990) has a similar argument to the effect that the dispute between a Noniist and an Allist, according to whom *all* objects exist, is a merely verbal dispute.

Now, $w \Vdash_s^\pm \mathcal{G}x(Ex)$, I believe, is existence entailing in its first, or left most, place. That is, $w \Vdash_s^\pm \mathcal{G}x(Ex)$ is an existence-entailing property of w . The existence-entailment here does not result from \Vdash^\pm alone, but from another object within the relation, the sentence $\mathcal{G}x(Ex)$. What one relata is, in this case, determines whether or not another of the relata exists. $w \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(Ex)$ just in case there is some $d \in D$ such that $d \in g^+(E, w)$. I believe that if there is some $d \in D$ such that $d \in g^+(E, w)$, then w exists, that is, then w is an actually existent object.³⁶ Here the existence of w is implied by the existence of an object at w . This implication, I think, is similar to the way in which an object being a member of the set of things that I kick at the actual world ensures that that object actually exists. Just as I cannot kick a nonexistent object, an object cannot exist at a nonexistent world.

Now, if it is correct that an object cannot exist at a nonexistent world, then it must be the case that for all nonexistent worlds w , $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$. That is, for an object to exist at a world, that world must also exist, if not, then the extension of *exists* must be empty at that world. The sentence $w \Vdash_s^\pm \mathcal{G}x(Ex)$ tells us that $g^+(E, w) \neq \emptyset$, and so tells us that *something* exists at w . If that is so, then to make sense of that claim w itself ought to exist. With this consideration in mind, and a Noneist denial of the existence of nonactual worlds, to capture these intuitions using Priest's semantics any model will have to be such that for all nonactual worlds, w , $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$. This consequence informs us of the sort of object we can or cannot expect worlds, possible and impossible, to be. In Section (2.6) I suggest what sort view of merely possible worlds this consideration commits us to.

³⁶ Note that in the object language, there is no way to say that worlds do or do not exist. Exactly how desirable it is for a semantics to be able to express such things is an open question. For the purposes of this thesis I take $w \Vdash_s^\pm \mathcal{G}x(Ex)$ and $g^+(E, w) \neq \emptyset$ as a way to assert that a world exists.

In Section (2.7) I explain the consequences this consideration has for impossible worlds. However, before moving on with these considerations, I would first like to discuss a potential counterexample to the above absurdity.

2.5 – Middle Earth and counterexamples from fiction

In the previous section I attempted to draw out the absurdity of affirming that an object exists at a world, while at the same time denying that the world at which it exists does so as well. In doing so, I used two non-world examples: the first was the example of a dog living on a planet that does not support life, and the second was the apparent absurdity which results from asserting that angels exist in heaven, while at the same time denying that heaven exists. As absurd as these might sound, a Noneist hoping to avoid this move might point to examples from fiction in which we affirm the existence of an object existing *somewhere*, while at the same time denying that the place that object exists at exists as well. In some of these instances it is not evident that there is such an absurdity. For instance, consider:

I) Frodo exists at Middle Earth, but Middle Earth does not exist.

(I) seems true. (I) could be a counterexample to my position - that objects do not exist at nonexistent worlds - just in case there is a world in which Frodo exists at Middle Earth, but Middle Earth does not exist at that world. If the latter is not absurd, then neither is the former. However, I do not think that a Noneist analysis of (I) will give this result. (I) seems true, it is a conjunction of two seemingly true sentences:

I.a) Frodo exists at Middle Earth

I.b) Middle Earth does not exist.

However, these sentences seem true for different reasons. (I.a) seems true in virtue of facts regarding a certain fiction, and (I.b) seems true given how things actually are. Thus, (I.a) tells us:

I.a₁) According-to-*Lord-of-the-Rings*-(Frodo exists at Middle Earth)

and (I.b) tells us:

I.b₁) Actually (Middle Earth does not exist).

The Noneist framework provides a way to analyze (I.a₁). When writing *Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien characterized a world to be a certain way. According to the Modal Characterization Principle, this characterization should be realized at *at least* some world. That is, there are worlds in which Frodo exists at Middle Earth. Truth within a fiction just amounts to truth at these worlds. Thus, (I.a₁) tells us that:

I.a₂) At the *Lord of the Rings* worlds, Frodo exists at Middle Earth.

Call one such *Lord of the Rings* world w_L . If w_L realizes the relevant fiction, then w_L is a world in which *both* Frodo and Middle Earth exist. Within the fiction, Middle Earth is the region of space that Frodo engages with, battles orcs in, and wanders around pointlessly for far too long for my liking. Middle Earth is not a world, but is part of a world. Within the fiction, Middle Earth surely exists. In contrast with (I.a₁), (I.b₁) tells us how things are at the actual world, it tells us that:

I.b₂) At the actual world, there exists no spatial region that is Middle Earth.

So, we were right to think that (I) is true. It is a shorthand way of asserting both (I.a₂) and (I.b₂). That is, (I) tells us that at some world, Frodo exists at Middle Earth, and at the actual world, Middle Earth does not exist. However, it should be noted that when we identify the worlds in which *Lord of the Rings* is realized, we identify a world in which

Middle Earth, the place that Frodo exists at, exists as well. If Middle Earth is meant to be analogous to worlds, this counterexample seems to have just strengthened the point that wherever an object exists *at* exists as well. If worlds are analogous to fictional realms, and if fictional realms exist whenever a character exists at them, as seems to be the case with Middle Earth in the *Lord of the Rings Worlds*, then similarly worlds should exist whenever an object exists at them. If analogous, and if the actual world is one in Frodo and Middle Earth exist at some world, w , it seems that w should exist as well. In light of this, it is my contention that the alleged counterexamples from fiction are not counterexamples after all.

2.6 - Are impossible worlds and possible worlds alike?

I have so far attempted to show that for all nonexistent worlds, w , $g^+(E, w) \neq \emptyset$. This, I believe, can inform us as to what sort of objects we can expect worlds to be. For Jago's reasons impossible worlds cannot be existent genuine worlds. Then, they must be nonexistent worlds – either ersatz or genuine. Before further addressing the issue of impossible worlds, I would like to discuss the existence of merely possible worlds. Should we expect possible and impossible worlds to have the same existential status? I agree with Priest when he says that if there are no known arguments for distinguishing between the status of nonactual worlds, a uniform understanding of nonactual worlds – merely possible, and impossible – is recommended.³⁷ However, as Jago has demonstrated, impossible worlds cannot be existent genuine worlds. In the next few paragraphs I will argue that in light of the considerations from Section (2.4), a Noneist

³⁷ Priest (2005), p. 139. Here, actually, Priest is discussing the sorts of thing that worlds might be – genuine, ersatz, etc. However, I think it is fair to say that this consideration can be applied to the existential status of worlds as well.

should understand merely possible worlds to be existent genuine worlds, and thus, for the Noneist, there will not be uniform understanding of the status of all the varieties of worlds.

Suppose one wished to deny the existence of merely possible worlds. And, suppose it is correct that for nonexistent worlds, w , $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$. If there are multiple worlds, and of these only the actual world exists, then objects that exist at the actual world fail to exist at all other $w \in \mathcal{P}$, since those worlds do not exist and so, if I am correct, $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$. Thus, any actually existent object will be such that it exists at at least one possible world, but fails to exist at any other world. Since this will be so for *all* actually existent objects, there will no longer be a difference between objects that are often considered to exist necessarily (suggestions here might include God, numbers, types)³⁸, and those that are thought to exist only contingently (woodchips, bowls, broccoli). On this view, if God and woodchips both exist, then both are only contingently existent, for both exist at one and only one possible world amongst many possible worlds. However, I think this is something that many would find strange. If God exists, then given common theistic conceptions of God, God exists necessarily. But, given what we know about wood chips, it seems that they exist only contingently. Thus, denying the existence of merely possible worlds results in the claim that everything that actually exists does so only contingently. This consequence will shut the door on any debates regarding the potential necessary existence of objects.

Whether or not there are any necessary existents, I think that most would agree that there are some contingently nonexistent objects. For instance, a baker might bake

³⁸ Well, nominalists like Priest would deny the existence of the latter two, and maybe the first.

just a dozen loaves of bread, instead of a baker's dozen, still, it seems like one extra loaf of bread could have existed – its nonexistence is merely contingent. However, this view says otherwise. Again, suppose it is correct that for nonexistent worlds, w , $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$. If that is so, then for any object o such that $o \in g^-(E, @)$, that is, for any object that does not actually exist, necessarily that object does not exist. This object does not exist at the actual world, and since for all nonexistent, merely possible worlds, w : $g^+(E, w) = \emptyset$, o does not exist at any merely possible world either. So, for all $w \in \mathcal{P}$, o does not exist. So, necessarily, o does not exist.

The above result implies that for every actually nonexistent object, that object could not have existed. There could not have existed an extra speck of dust, puppy, or flower more than there actually is. If I were to drop a glass, it could not shatter into any more smithereens than it actually did, for if that were the case then there would have been one extra smithereen, and this is not possible, for in no merely possible world is there an existent smithereen extra. So, anything that does not actually exist, necessarily does not exist. Thus, denying the existence of merely possible worlds not only results in the claim that everything exists only contingently, it also results in the claim that everything that does not exist *necessarily* does not exist. To avoid this result, Priest ought to endorse the claim that merely possible worlds exist. And, since, given tenet (3) of Priestly Noneism, if these merely possible worlds were ersatz world they would fail to exist, these worlds must be genuine worlds.

The preceding paragraphs illustrated that we ought not assume that possible and impossible worlds have the same status. If impossible worlds exist, then they are subject to the worries that Jago raises, so, impossible worlds must not be existent objects. But, if

possible worlds do not exist, then we are given counterintuitive results regarding merely possible existence and necessary existence, so, possible worlds probably should exist. And if they exist, they cannot be ersatz worlds, as these are abstract objects, and so, for the Noneist, nonexistent. So, possible worlds must be genuine worlds. However, even if we assume that possible worlds do exist, and impossible worlds do not, the Modal Characterization Principle, at least in its application to impossible objects, will fail to hold in full generality, and thus is false. In the next section I will explain why this is so.

2.7 - What about impossible worlds? What could they be?

Recall that according to the Modal Characterization Principle, for any object o represented by an agent as being F , o is F at all of the worlds that realize that agent's representation. Priest says himself that in order for the MCP to hold in full generality, for any characterization, there must be worlds in which this characterization is satisfied.³⁹ Thus, if the MCP holds in full generality, then if an object o is characterized as being F , there is some world in which o is F . Given a denial of the existence of impossible worlds, and the claim that objects do not exist in nonexistent worlds, for all impossible worlds, w_i , $g^+(\text{Exists}, w_i) = \emptyset$. This will drastically limit the number of characterizations that are satisfied at impossible worlds.

To see how the Modal Characterization Principle will be limited, consider the sorts of objects that can be characterized. One object we can characterize is an existent round square. According to the MCP, this characterization is realized at some world. Round squares are impossible objects, so this characterization will be realized at an impossible world. So, there should be some impossible world, w_i , in which there is an

³⁹ Priest (2005), p. 86

object o such that $o \in g^+(\text{Round}, w_i)$, $o \in g^+(\text{Square}, w_i)$, and $o \in g^+(\text{Exists}, w_i)$. But, $g^+(\text{Exists}, w_i) = \emptyset$, so there is no such world that will satisfy this characterization. Thus, the Modal Characterization Principle fails to hold in full generality. This is a big hit to tenet (2) of Priestly Noneism – an endorsement of the Modal Characterization Principle.

So, if one wishes to endorse Priestly Noneism, for the reasons Jago presents, impossible worlds cannot be existent genuine worlds, nor can they be nonexistent worlds – either of the ersatz or genuine variety. Given that ersatz worlds and genuine worlds are the two main theories of worlds, it seems that impossible worlds would have to be something quite revisionary. Priest believes that his particular version of Noneism is compatible with any theory of worlds.⁴⁰ I believe that I have shown that this is not so.

What I have attempted to show thus far is that possible worlds, for Priest, must be existent genuine worlds. On the other hand, impossible worlds cannot be existent worlds (for if they were, they would be genuine and subject to Jago's argument), nor, I hope I have shown, can they be nonexistent objects, otherwise the Modal Characterization Principle will fail to hold in full generality. In the next chapter I consider an objection to this argument, and discuss a further way one might attempt to deny the existence of impossible worlds, while continuing to make use of the established modal framework.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 138

Chapter Three – Loose Ends

3.1 – The Purpose of Chapter Three

I have titled this chapter ‘Loose Ends’ as the purpose of this final chapter is just to discuss two views that have been lurking in the background since I began writing. In Section (3.2) I consider an alternative understanding of existence-entailing properties of *impossible* worlds. Even if it is a mistake to suppose that an object can exist at a nonexistent *possible* world, impossible worlds, this objection goes, may be ones that bear impossible properties, and so there is no reason to suppose that these worlds do not exist. I do not believe that this objection works. In section (3.3) I consider one final account of modality that I have not yet mentioned. This is the stance of the Modal Fictionalist, according to which nonactual worlds do not exist, but there is a fiction of worlds that can be used to accommodate our modal (and perhaps intentional) reasoning. If the Noneist is able to use a fiction of worlds, impossible or possible, to explain intentionality, then perhaps they are able to coherently deny the existence of nonactual worlds. However, whatever promise that route has, there is still much work to be done in developing a relevant fiction.

3.2 – Objection: impossible existence

The first objection is that we should not expect the existence of objects to have the same existence-entailing effect on impossible worlds as it does on possible worlds. What one property entails at possible worlds may vary at impossible worlds. Perhaps at the actual world, being a square entails being non-round. However, we know that there is at least *some* impossible world in which this entailment fails, for according to Priestly

Noneism, there is a world in which an object is both round and square. Thus, being impossible, impossible worlds behave differently with respect to what certain properties of objects entail. For instance, at the actual world, the kicking of an object entails the existence of the object being kicked. Perhaps at impossible worlds that is not so, thus, there may be an impossible world in which an object is kicked, although it fails to exist. Similarly, at the actual world and possible worlds, the existence of an object at that world entails the existence of that world. Perhaps at impossible worlds this is not the case – there may be an impossible world at which an object exists, although the world itself does not. Perhaps those are just the worlds that impossibly existent objects exist at.

Though it might seem compelling, I find the above objection ad hoc. By definition, impossible worlds are worlds in which impossibilities occur. For instance, some may be worlds in which the principle of the excluded middle fails, but the law of non-contradiction holds. There is nothing to this definition of impossible worlds that suggests that the laws of existence entailment (for lack of a better phrase) likewise fail at these worlds – at least not at all of them. There might well be worlds in which this is the case, but to merely stipulate that this is so for all impossible worlds without explanation, is not a satisfying response. Just as we might expect some impossible worlds to be ones in which being round does not entail being non-square, there will also be impossible worlds in which being roundness does entail non-squareness. Why the existence of an object at a world should fail to be an existence entailing property of *all* impossible worlds, but being round remain a non-square entailing property of at least *some* objects requires further motivation.

In addition to the above, treating impossible worlds this way seems to make impossible worlds themselves impossible objects. To see this, suppose that a Priestly Noneist wished to treat impossible worlds as ersatz worlds⁴¹. These worlds are mathematical representations of impossibilities. Given tenet two of Priestly Noneism, these worlds are nonexistent objects that represent impossibilities. Of these worlds, one is such that it represents something being an existent round square. So, we have an impossible world, w_i , such that $w_i \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(\text{Exists}(x) \wedge \text{Round}(x) \wedge \text{Square}(x))$. If this world is one in which conjunction elimination is permissible, then we have $w_i \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(\text{Exists}(x))$. Then w_i bears an existence entailing instance of $\Vdash_s^+ : w \Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(\text{Exists}(x))$. However, if $\Vdash_s^+ \mathcal{G}x(\text{Exists}(x))$ is an existence entailing property of worlds, and w_i fails to exist, then w_i is a world that bears impossible properties.

Given that Priest believes that the properties of nonactual worlds are properties they have at the actual world, if we treat impossible worlds this way, then at the actual world there will be objects with impossible properties. If that is the case, then these worlds seem equally as problematic as the existent genuine worlds from Section (2.3). The trouble with treating impossible worlds as existent genuine worlds was that if we were to do so we would be able to import contradictions from these worlds into the actual world. If nonactual worlds have their properties at the actual world, and impossible worlds are objects that bear existence entailing properties while also failing to exist, then the actual world contains inherently contradictory objects. Here we do not even have to

⁴¹ Or as nonexistent genuine worlds, either one will do here.

make use of the principle of exportation – in virtue of containing objects with contradictory properties the actual world itself will just *be* an impossible world.

I do not think it is wise to expect impossible worlds to be worlds that themselves bear impossible properties. On the one hand, I think that to suppose this is so for certain properties, and not others, is ad hoc. We have reason to believe that all impossible worlds contain impossibilities, but no reason to suppose that *every* impossible world contains impossible objects, or that they must *be* impossible objects. On the other hand, even if there was better motivation to do so, this would result in the actual world containing contradictory objects, and so the actual world itself would have to be an impossible world.

3.3 - Modal fictionalism: one more option and its struggles

Finally, there is one further account of modality and modal truth that I think is worth mentioning. This is the stance of modal fictionalism, according to which modal claims, while not literally true, are true according to a modal fiction. Similar to the way that we might think that Harry Potter is a wizard in virtue of a fiction of wizardry, claims of modality, such as the claim that possibly, there is life on Mars, are true in virtue of a fiction of possible worlds. For instance, it is possible that there is life on Mars if and only if, according to the fiction of possible worlds, there is a possible world in which there is life on Mars. A proposition is necessarily true, if and only if, according to the modal fiction, that proposition is true at all worlds. What I present will not be a conclusive argument against the fictionalist approach, but instead is intended only to highlight some of the difficulties that will face the fictionalist about impossible worlds.

The main benefit of the fictionalist approach seems to be that we are given an account of modal truth without ontological commitment to any numerous entities, such as a literal plurality of worlds. Instead, we are committed only to a fiction that tells us what worlds, if they were to exist, would be like. A fictionalist about impossible worlds would benefit from this, as she would no longer be required to give an account of what impossible worlds *really* are, but can instead refer to the relevant fiction in order to answer questions about worlds, modality, and perhaps intentionality.

While the above approach may have some promise, it is not without its own difficulties. Nolan (2011) presents a robust explanation of the difficulties that face a fictionalist about possible worlds. Some of difficulties are technical in nature. For instance, the modal fictionalist must provide a theory of fictionalism that does not commit one to the existence of a plurality of worlds. Fictionalist paraphrases of necessary truth tell us that a proposition is necessarily true just in case, according to the modal fiction at all worlds that proposition is true. However, according to the modal fiction, at all worlds there is a plurality of worlds, so it becomes a necessary truth that there is a plurality of worlds. If one of the benefits of modal fictionalism is to avoid commitment to a plurality of worlds, then modal fictionalism is self-defeating.⁴²

Less technical worries are concerned with providing an adequate account of the modal fiction. On one hand, the fiction must be well motivated in order to avoid complaints of arbitrariness. On the other hand, it will take time and effort to develop a complete modal fiction without truth-value gaps regarding certain topics – for instance, no modal fiction may tell us the shape and size of worlds, and we may wonder whether it

⁴² This is known as the Brock/Rosen objection and can be found in Brock (1993) and Rosen (1993). Menzies and Pettit (1994) offer some response to this objection.

is possible for a world to be completely two-dimensional. I will come back to these less technical concerns shortly.

One way to avoid the concerns for fictionalism about *possible* worlds may be to be a realist about possible worlds, but a fictionalist about impossible worlds. Unfortunately, this route will involve complications for Priestly Noneism. Within Priest's framework, fictions are realized at worlds.⁴³ If that is so, then, likewise, the fiction of *impossible* worlds should be realized at some *possible* world. However, if that is the case, then there will be some possible world in which there are impossible worlds, and so impossible worlds will be part of the domain of objects. These worlds, if they exist, will be subject to Jago's worries discussed in Section (2.3). Possible worlds will contain contradictory objects, and so, using exportation, reality itself will contain contradictory objects. If these worlds do not exist, then there is still the concern regarding how to understand literal existence at these worlds, and the limitations this places on the modal characterization principle. Without resolving this issue, the fiction of impossible worlds will not be a fiction amenable to Priestly Noneism.

In light of the above problems for one who is a realist about possible worlds, but a fictionalist about impossible worlds, it might be better to be a fictionalist about worlds in general. This view will remain subject to the problems elaborated in Nolan (2011), especially those concerning what the relevant fiction of worlds now amounts to. There have been various suggestions regarding what we are to take as the fiction of possible worlds: Rosen (1990), (1995) proposes using Lewis's (1986), (1968) theories of worlds as the relevant fiction, respectively; Armstrong (1989) elaborates his own version of the

⁴³ Priest (2005) p. 87

modal fiction; One challenge facing the modal fictionalist about merely possible worlds is not only to decide upon which fiction is most adequate for evaluating modal claims, but to provide reasons as to *why* that fiction is *more* adequate than its competitors.⁴⁴ The challenge facing a fictionalist about impossible worlds is more difficult. The literature currently lacks *any* robust theory of impossible worlds to be taken as *the* relevant fiction. The theory of worlds presented by Yagisawa (2010) is one example of a unified account of both possible and impossible worlds. However as we saw in Section (2.3), if these worlds were not fictional, but were genuine worlds, it would result in an inconsistent reality. If that is the case, then if Yagisawa's theory were taken as the relevant fiction, the fictionalist would be committed to using an inconsistent fiction regarding possible worlds. This is probably not the best option, as we expect the fiction to inform us about the status of the actual world. And as Jago's arguments have shown us, the fiction from Yagisawa would tell us that there are contradictory objects at the actual world. Thus, it seems that the fictionalist about possible and impossible worlds would be burdened with the project of writing a completely new modal fiction, in *addition* to explaining why *that* fiction is the most adequate for its purposes.

I admit that this section contains no knockdown argument against the fictionalist position. Instead, I intended only to illustrate that the project of fictionalism is not without its own difficulties. In light of these complications, it is not clear that fictionalism about impossible worlds is a readily available alternative to understanding impossible worlds as either genuine or ersatz. However, perhaps what I have said throughout this thesis constrains the project of developing an adequate fiction of possible and impossible

⁴⁴ Nolan (2011).

worlds: if they can be neither genuine nor ersatz worlds, impossible worlds must be something completely new to us.

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters I believe myself to have presented an accurate representation of the theory of intentionality presented in Graham Priest's *Towards Non-Being*. I have shown that if one wishes to endorse the three tenets of Priestly Noneism while also avoiding the absurdity of having an object exist at a nonexistent world, then possible worlds must be understood as genuine, existent worlds. In addition to this, I have shown that there is no readily available, satisfying account of impossible worlds. If impossible worlds are existent genuine worlds, then each theory of genuine worlds will yield a contradictory class of objects. If impossible worlds are nonexistent objects, then the Modal Characterization Principle will fail to hold in full generality. As a result, possible worlds and impossible worlds will have to be different sorts of objects. While Priest believes his theory to be compatible with any conception of worlds, I believe I have shown this is not so. Possible worlds should be understood as genuine existent worlds, yet impossible worlds must be something quite revisionary. Finally, I have made mention of considering a fictionalist stance about impossible worlds, and have noted some considerations to be kept in mind should one so desire to be a Modal Fictionalist about impossible worlds.

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