

17 Bare and Indexical Existence: Integrating Logic and Sensibility in Ontology

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Different ways of answering existential questions can be characterized by the weight they assign to two aspects: the logical and the sensible. These aspects concern the role of logic and sensory experience respectively. Arguably, some kind of balance between them is necessary to give satisfactory answers, but there have been widely different opinions on what weight distribution results in such ‘balance’. The common sense view heavily prioritizes the sensible aspect, for example – I perceive this book, therefore it exists. Within philosophy, on the other hand, the logical aspect has often (but not always) been dominant – what can be logically proven to exist exists – and many kinds of common sense objects have been proclaimed non-existent. Nevertheless, any approach to ontology (including common sense and folk-ontology) combines both the logical and the sensible aspect to at least some degree.

By defining ‘existence’ in terms of the existential quantifier \exists , the priority of the logical aspect has reached its pinnacle in contemporary mainstream analytical metaphysics, the foundation of which is generally attributed to Quine, but which is most influentially formulated by Peter van Inwagen. Such a notion of existence is an absolutely ‘bare’ existence – it does not come with properties or implications, it does not come in different versions. And of course, van Inwagen is right – plain, unqualified existence is bare existence, is \exists , is univocal (*i.e.* has only one meaning). However, even though van Inwagen thinks otherwise, that does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to make sense of a notion of qualified or ‘clothed’ (non-bare) existence, just that that notion would not be identifiable with a *plain* \exists . And such ‘clothed existence’ is not (necessarily) univocal, and may leave more room for the sensible aspect in ontology.

This chapter consists of 3 sections. Section I discusses the foundational theses of mainstream analytical metaphysics as those are formulated by van Inwagen, focusing on the notion(s) of ‘existence’ involved, and points out an inconsistency therein. Moving away from the purely logical interpretation of ‘existence’, section II proposes a notion of non-bare, or *indexical existence* that extends bare existence by adding a restricting property. It is argued that the ontologically most interesting varieties of indexical existence are dependent on status ascription(s), which leads to two kinds of ontological questions: those concerning ‘independent’ existence (that is, independent from such status ascription), and those

concerning the kinds of statuses involved. Section III suggests objective perspectivism as an approach to answering these questions, and ontological questions in general, and argues – albeit briefly – that objective perspectivism integrates logic and sensibility in ontology where other approaches lean too much in either direction and thus lose balance.

I. Bare existence

In his paper ‘Meta-ontology’ (1998) or the most recent update thereof (2009), van Inwagen presents five theses that provide a (widely, but not universally accepted) foundation for contemporary mainstream analytical metaphysics. Van Inwagen attributes their content (but not their form) to Quine, but there is reason to doubt the validity of that attribution (*e.g.* Price 2009). We will ignore such historical matters here, however, and focus on the content (and consequences) of van Inwagen’s theses. The first four theses are about the meaning of the terms ‘being’ and ‘existence’.

- (1) *Being is not an activity.* That is, ‘being’ is not something someone or something does. If there is a most general activity of someone, it would be something like ‘getting older’, but that is not ‘being’. ‘Being’ as activity implies a *thick* conception of being, a conception of ‘being’ that has implications; different implications, moreover, for different kinds of beings such as tables and persons. However, ‘the vast difference between me and a table does not consist in our having vastly different sorts of being (...); it consists rather in our having vastly different sorts of nature (...)’ (2009, p. 477). Hence, by extension of ‘being is not an activity’: being does not involve aspects of something’s nature (or other properties) – being is empty, or bare (the latter are not van Inwagen’s terms, however, although van Inwagen does approvingly misquote Hegel’s description of ‘being’ as ‘barren’ (2009, p. 473)¹).
- (2) *‘Being’ is the same as ‘existence’.* ‘To be’ is ‘to exist’ and vice versa.
- (3) *‘Existence’ is univocal.* There are no different kinds of existence. If something exists, then the number of that something is not zero, and because it makes no sense to say that number is equivocal (*i.e.* has multiple meanings), ‘existence’ cannot be equivocal either (and is thus univocal). ‘Existence’ could only be equivocal if it would be some kind of ‘thick existence’, if being would be an activity and/or if existence would inherently involve some kind of aspects of the nature of the existent (or some other properties), but that has been rejected in thesis (1); therefore (3).
- (4) *The single sense of ‘existence’ is adequately captured by the existential quantifier \exists .*²

These four theses together (we will turn to the fifth below) can be regarded van

¹ It needs mention that this is a misquote, not a misattribution. Hegel did not write that ‘being is the most barren and abstract of all categories’ (van Inwagen 2009, p. 473), but did write that ‘being’ is a ‘barren abstraction’. See chapter VII, ‘Being’ of the *Shorter Logic*.

Inwagen's definition of 'existence'; they can be summarized as 'being' = 'existence' = \exists . The four are not independent theses; rather they form a single argument with (4) at its core. Much of the argument for (1), for example, is based on a substitution of 'not everything not' for 'exists', hence on the equivalency of $\neg\forall\neg$ and \exists in formal logic, which is an acceptable argument only after a prior acceptance of theses (2) and (4) (together: 'being' = 'existence' = \exists). Furthermore, if 'existence' is 'adequately captured by the existential quantifier \exists ' (4), then 'existence' is univocal (3) because unrestricted \exists is univocal. If 'existence' is \exists (4) and is univocal (3), then 'being' (as an ontological concept) is either (a) synonymous with 'existence' (thesis 2), or (b) is a property of some 'things' that exist. Such a property would have nothing to do with 'existence', however, glaringly contradicting normal word use of 'being' and 'existence'. Therefore not (b) and thus (a), which is (2). And because \exists is not an activity, and 'being' = 'existence' = \exists (theses 2 and 4), neither is 'being' (1). This does not exhaust the logical relations between these four thesis (in (1998) van Inwagen suggests that (3) follows from (2), for example), but it does illustrate the centrality (or fundamentality) of thesis (4).

Van Inwagen's fifth thesis is of a very different nature: rather than defining 'existence', it proposes a methodology for resolving metaphysical debates – hence, for deciding what exists – based on Quine's notion of 'ontological commitment', and contrary to thesis (1) to (4), thesis (5) does not come with a catchphrase or handy summary. Van Inwagen's proposal is essentially the following:

(5) Metaphysical debates are to be resolved by specifying the (minimal) ontological commitments implied in everything the debaters want to affirm. This is done by means of formalization in first-order logic and discarding the alternative formalizations that quantify existentially over more 'things' than necessary. Only if it cannot reasonably be avoided to existentially quantify over x (by reduction to something more primitive that is accepted as existing, for example), then x exists. *Existence is quantificational unavoidability.* ('Quantificational unavoidability' is not a term van Inwagen uses, but is my attempt to capture the essence of his thesis (5) as clearly and briefly as possible.)

Superficially, it may seem that (5) forms the foundation under theses (1) to (4): what can be quantified over existentially exists, therefore 'existence' = \exists (thesis 4). However, 'quantificational unavoidability' is a restriction.

² This claim (4) that 'existence is \exists ' has two possible implications / explanations. (i) \exists is commonly understood to be of a purely formal nature (it is syntactic more than semantic). By implication then, 'existence' too is a purely formal category, and to say that ' x exists' means exactly the same as $\exists x$. That is, *it does not really mean anything* unless it is followed by a formula in which x is a variable. Alternatively (ii), there is 'something more' than that to 'existence', and by implication, there is (the exact same) 'something more' to \exists , which therefore, is *not purely formal*.

In the conference that lead to this book (4) proved difficult to explain. The apparent reason for that was that (some) audience members grasped these two options (i) and (ii), and rejected both as defensible claims. In a sense, much of section I of this chapter is an explanation of why those audience members were right.

Restricted quantification limits the domain of the quantifier. In case of existential quantification, this means that the domain of the restricted quantifier \exists_R is limited by the property R, such that everything that \exists_R quantifies over must have that property R.³ Hence, by definition:

$$\exists_R x[Px] \equiv \exists x[Rx \& Px] \tag{a}$$

Unrestricted quantification is negatively defined as quantification that is not (somehow) restricted. Consequently, an undetermined existential quantifier \mathcal{E} can either be unrestricted \exists , or restricted \exists_R in which case there is some restricting property R. Given that restricted and unrestricted quantification are (obviously) mutually exclusive (even contradictory), if ‘existence’ is definitionally associated with the existential quantifier, then two notions of ‘existence’ must be distinguished: *bare existence* is unrestricted existential quantification \exists , and *R-indexical existence* is restricted quantification \exists_R (where the property R is the restriction).

Restriction is often hidden in implicit background assumptions, but from definition (a) methods to determine the nature of an undetermined or uncertain existential quantifier \mathcal{E} can be derived. Any restriction on a quantifier is a rule imposed by a theorist, although that imposition may be implicit, unconscious, even accidental. A restriction is a rule specifying that only that what has the restricting property R may be quantified over with that specific quantifier. For any \mathcal{E} , there must be such a rule – and thus a restriction – if the set of things that have some property P in the domain of \mathcal{E} , $\{x|\mathcal{E}y[Py \& x=y]\}$, is a proper subset of the extension of P, $\{x|Px\} = \{x|\exists y[Py \& x=y]\}$, and *vice versa*:

$$\text{For any } \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{E} \text{ is restricted iff } \exists P [\{x|\mathcal{E}y[Py \& x=y]\} \subset \{x|Px\}] \tag{b}$$

In other words, if there is some property P for which there are some ‘things’ in its extension that are outside the domain of \mathcal{E} , then \mathcal{E} is a restricted quantifier; or if some ‘things’ are excluded from some quantifier \mathcal{E} , but those can be quantified over with the unrestricted existential quantifier \exists , or with some other existential quantifier,⁴ then \mathcal{E} is restricted. (And if \mathcal{E} is restricted, then there is some restriction R.)

From (a) it also follows that iff anything that can be quantified over with some \mathcal{E} must have some property F, and thus that $\mathcal{E}x[\neg Fx]$ is inconsistent, then that \mathcal{E} is the restricted quantifier \exists_F :

$$\text{For any } \mathcal{E}, (\exists F [\mathcal{E}x[\neg Fx] \text{ is inconsistent}]) \leftrightarrow \mathcal{E} = \exists_F \tag{c}$$

Both (b) and (c) may serve to identify the nature of an existential quantifier, depending on available information (and (c), contrary to (b), also identifies the restriction). There is a

³ See, for example, the *Encyclopedia of Mathematics* (<http://eom.springer.de/tr/r081650.htm>). Restriction works similarly for universal quantification: $\forall_R x[Px] \equiv \forall x[Rx \rightarrow Px]$.

⁴ From (a) it follows that anything that can be quantified over with *some* restricted existential quantifier \exists_R , can be quantified over with the unrestricted existential quantifier \exists .

complication, however: definition (a) assumes that P and R are *independent* properties, which is not always the case: some properties are *productive* in the sense that they enable attribution of other, *dependent*, properties. We will turn to this complication in section II.

Van Inwagen's thesis (5) excludes what is quantificationally avoidable from the domain of the existential quantifier, but what is quantificationally avoidable is not quantificationally impossible; that is, it *can* be quantified over, and van Inwagen indeed says so explicitly: thesis (5) instructs to *select* from alternative formalizations. Hence, thesis (5) distinguishes between what can be existentially quantified over, and what can *and must* be existentially quantified over (that is, what is quantificationally unavoidable), and only grants 'existence' to the latter category. Given (b), it should be clear then, that the quantifier used to define 'existence' is restricted \exists_{QU} (in which QU stands for quantificational unavoidability), not unrestricted \exists ; and consequently that the associated notion of 'existence' is QU-indexical existence. This means that van Inwagen's theses (1) to (4) and thesis (5) involve two different definitions of 'existence': bare existence (in 1 to 4) versus QU-indexical existence (in 5).

A similar inconsistency can be found in the approach of Theodore Sider (2003; 2009), the other main proponent of 'existence' as unrestricted quantification. Borrowing Lewis's notion of 'natural meaning', Sider argues that unrestricted quantification is the natural meaning of **existence** (in boldface), but he also frequently refers to what **exists** as being 'real' and explicitly distinguishes what is 'real' (or what really **exists**) from 'mere projection of our conceptual apparatus' (2009, p. 416). Apparently, **existence** implies (or involves) being 'real' (see also Schaffer 2009). However, 'mere projections' can be existentially quantified over, and thus the 'real' criterion excluding them from **existence** is a restriction. Consequently, **existence** is a variety of indexical existence.

Sider's argument that unrestricted quantification is the natural meaning of **existence** is somewhat similar to the argument that van Inwagen gives for his thesis (4), and they have a point. The versatility of the verb 'to exist' in ordinary language indeed suggests that it stands (or *can* stand at least) for bare existence (hence, for unrestricted quantification). However, in many – perhaps even most – occurrences of variants of 'to exist' in ordinary language use (especially in negations), its meaning is more specific: 'being in the world', 'being real', 'being fundamental', and so forth, but that is (or those are) a kind of *indexical* existence, and that is a fundamentally different (kind of) notion.

Perhaps at least part of van Inwagen's argument can be saved by reinterpreting his five theses as being about only one of the two notions of 'existence' involved. Reinterpreting all five theses as being about bare existence is closest to what van Inwagen claims to be arguing for. However, bare existence is by definition non-restrictive, and is thus inconsistent with the methodological proposal of thesis (5). Instead, reading the whole set of theses as being about bare existence results in a radical permissivism: anything exists (with a possible exception for the self-contradictory or otherwise incoherent). Although such a reading is possible, it is in direct contradiction with van Inwagen's other metaphysical writings (which are rather selective about what exists and what does not), and would therefore not be a very charitable reading. It would not be a very useful reading either, because the existence it grants to everything is bare existence, which is causally and explanatory inefficient. Explanation and causation depend on things as something, on properties of things, while bare existence is

absolutely property-less. Bare existence does not explain, cause, or imply anything; it merely is, barely.

The second option would be to leave thesis (5) intact and to try to reinterpret (1) to (4) as being about QU-indexical existence. Thesis (4) (but not the argument behind it) is mere definition and could easily be changed into ‘existence’ is \exists_{QU} , and (3) would remain valid: if by definition (4) ‘existence’ is \exists_{QU} then ‘existence’ is univocal because ‘QU-indexical existence’ is univocal (but much of the argument for such a reinterpreted thesis (3) might have to be rewritten and the argument for (4), which shows that unrestricted quantification is rooted in natural language, would then be completely besides the point). Theses (1) and (2) are (even) more problematic, and seemingly irremediably so. QU-indexical existence may not be an activity, but contrary to (1), it surely does involve a property, namely ‘being quantificationally unavoidable’ (van Inwagen does not use that term, but that does not change the fact that the quantifier on which the relevant notion of ‘existence’ is based is restricted, and that any such restriction is a property). And in case of thesis (2), if ‘existence’ is \exists_{QU} , then in addition to the above mentioned options of ‘being’ (as an ontological concept) being the same as ‘existence’ (\exists_{QU}) and ‘being’ being some property that has nothing to do with existence, there is a third option that ‘being’ is (based on) some other restricted existential quantifier, and there is no convincing argument that no other restricted existential quantifier *could* be an acceptable basis for ‘being’. This, of course, changes (1) again, because (1) was about ‘being’ rather than ‘existence’, but also hollows out (3) and (4), by eliminating the special status of ‘existence’ (as \exists_{QU}). What we are left with is a definition of ‘existence’ as QU-indexical existence (4), the obvious statement that what does not match the definition is not ‘existence’ (thesis 3; it is obvious because that is what definitions are for), and the methodological criterion in thesis (5). That seems even further removed from van Inwagen’s intentions than the radical permissivism of the first option (not in the least because it involves scrapping most of van Inwagen’s arguments for the theses, even for those that are kept), and reduces the notion of ‘existence’ involved to just an alternative among many possibilities, which is exactly what van Inwagen is arguing against.

Perhaps, a third option would be to resolve the inconsistency by replacing the implicit identity relation between bare and QU-indexical existence in the original theses with some other kind of relationship. Such a reinterpretation would have to overcome three major difficulties, however: (i) contrary to (3), ‘existence’ is then no longer univocal, (ii) there is no *obvious* relationship between the two notions of ‘existence’ (at least not within van Inwagen’s argument), and (iii) there is no decisive argument for preferring this particular restriction (QU) over any other. Overcoming these difficulties requires significant amendments, and may not leave much intact of van Inwagen’s original argument(s) and idea (although probably more than the previous two options).

Ultimately, despite contrary appearance, what matters to van Inwagen and Sider is not bare existence, but specific varieties of indexical existence, QU-indexical existence and *real*-indexical existence respectively; not the empty ‘existence’ of the unrestricted quantifier, but the restriction of being quantificationally unavoidable (QU) or being real. And therefore, rather than trying to save van Inwagen’s argument, it seems more useful to redirect attention to indexical existence. Furthermore, according to (among others) Kit Fine (2009) and

Jonathan Schaffer (2009), ontology is not about ‘existence’ (either boldface or not), but (respectively) about being real or fundamental (or something similar); *and so is QU- or real-indexical existence*. Essentially, indexical existence is bare existence plus a restricting property, and considering that bare existence is empty and causally and explanatory inefficient (see above), focusing attention to indexical existence means focusing attention on that restricting property. In case of Sider, being real is that restricting property; in case of van Inwagen, it is being quantificationally unavoidable (QU), which appears to be a variety of being fundamental. Consequently, van Inwagen’s and Sider’s (meta-) ontologies are *already* about being real or fundamental.

Defining ‘existence’ as \exists takes the logical aspect too far. Serious existential questions cannot be questions about bare existence because of the permissivism implied in that notion (see above): if anything can be said to exist (barely), there is no point in asking. Therefore, existential questions are questions about indexical existence, and ‘bare existence’ has no direct relevance for ontology. As a purely formal notion, it is a logical necessity, however: there can be no indexical existence without bare existence.

II. Indexical existence

Indexical existence is often expressed informally either by means of ‘exist as’ or through adverbial modification – Sherlock Holmes exists *as* a fictional object, but does not *really* exist, the number 5 exists *as* an abstract object, wholes exist *conventionally*, but not *ultimately*, elementary particles exist *as* fundamental constituents of (physical) reality, and so forth. Formally this can be represented by means of a restricted existential quantifier where the restricting property is symbolized by means of an index. For example, $\exists_{\text{FOX}}[x=\text{Sherlock Holmes}]$ can be read as ‘there exist some x as a fictional object (FO), and x is Sherlock Holmes’, or shorter ‘Sherlock Holmes exists as a fictional object.’

Restricted quantification was defined in (a) above by means of the equivalence $\exists_{\text{R}}x[\text{P}x] \equiv \exists x[\text{R}x \& \text{P}x]$, but it was also mentioned that there is a complication: (a) assumes that P and R are *independent* properties, which is not always the case. Some properties enable the attribution of other properties. The former (enabling) properties will be called *productive properties* here; the latter *dependent properties*. The properties of being a whole, composition, or fictional object are among the most common examples of such productive properties within metaphysics. These are also exactly the kind of properties that serve as the common indexes in indexical existence. Ontologically relevant notions of ‘existence as’ are existence as fictional object, as composition, as whole, and so forth, not existence as building, animal, or blue thing.

Dependent properties are properties something can only have under description as having the relevant productive property (or as being of the productive kind). An apple and an ocean have the dependent property of being a singular object – an ‘apcean’ as Eli Hirsch would call it – only (under the description) as a composition (the productive property); and Sherlock Holmes has the dependent property of living in Baker Street only in dependency on the productive property of being a fictional object. An apple and an ocean are not

together a singular object *independently* (from an appropriate description), and Sherlock Holmes does not live anywhere *independently*. It may be objected that the theory of ‘unrestricted composition’ claims otherwise, but that would be a misunderstanding. Unrestricted composition does not claim that an apple and an ocean are together a singular object *independently*, but rather, that composition always occurs, that therefore, there is a composition of any apple and ocean, and that such a composition as a composition (hence, dependently) is a singular object.

If R is a productive property and P is an R-dependent property, such that $P_{R}x$ (‘x has property P under the description R’, ‘x is a P as an R’, or ‘x has R-dependent property P’) is true, but not Px (as is the case in the two examples in the previous paragraph), then (a) and (b) do not apply. In such a case, $\exists_{R}x[Px]$ should not be understood as $\exists x[Rx \& Px]$ as in (a), but as being equivalent to $\exists x[Rx \& P_{R}x]$. (For example, *not* ‘Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character and lives in Baker street’, *but* ‘Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character, and lives-as-a-fictional-character in Baker street.’) However, given that restriction is *defined* by (a), either this latter variant is not restriction, or restriction needs to be redefined. Since ‘existence as a fictional object’ (or as a whole, etc.) has the appearance of restricted quantification, and there is no obvious answer to the question what else it could be if not restriction, the following adjustment of (a) seems the better option:

$$\exists_{R}x[Px] \equiv (\exists x[Rx \& Px] \text{ or } \exists x[Rx \& P_{R}x]) \quad (d)$$

The standard version as defined in (a) is *regular restriction*; the cases that are covered by (d) but not (a), hence by $\exists x[Rx \& P_{R}x]$, could be called ‘*super-restriction*’.⁵ As in (d), super-restriction will be understood here as a variant of restriction, not as a wholly different notion, and consequently, a quantifier is unrestricted if it is neither regularly restricted nor super-restricted.⁶ With the two kinds of restriction come two kinds of indexical existence: *weakly* and *strongly indexical existence*. The former is based on regular restriction and the index can thus be replaced with a one-place predicate; the latter is based on super-restriction and the index is thus ineliminable (hence, the qualification as ‘strong’). In other words, the restricting property in strongly indexical existence is productive, and as mentioned above, that is the kind of ‘existence as ...’ that is generally most relevant for ontology.

Van Inwagen tried to eliminate productive and dependent properties from his ontology in two different ways (*e.g.* 1977, 1990, 2003): in case of wholes and compositions, by claiming that those do not exist (except when they constitute a life); but fictional objects do exist according to van Inwagen, because in formalization of agreed upon sentences about literary matters (a.o.) it cannot reasonably be avoided to quantify existentially over such fictional objects (see thesis 5 above). Fictional objects, however, do not (and cannot) have many of the properties humans do (‘literary properties’ particularly), but merely *hold* them (or are

⁵ Considering that restriction R in case of super-restriction is much stronger than in regular restriction – it not just affects the domain of the quantifier, but also the nature of some property or properties – that seems an appropriate term.

ascribed them). ‘Holding, like having, is a two-place relation’ (2003, p. 146n); these are relations between properties and variables: $\text{has}(x,F)$ and $\text{holds}(x,F)$, but the former is more commonly written as Fx or $F(x)$. ‘Sherlock Holmes is a detective’ can then be formalized something like:

$$\exists x [x=\text{Sherlock Holmes} \ \& \ \text{FO}(x) \ \& \ \text{holds}(x,\text{detective})]$$

If ‘ Fx ’ or ‘ $F(x)$ ’ can be rewritten as ‘ $\text{has}(x,F)$ ’, then ‘ $\text{detective}(x)$ ’ (‘ x is a detective’) is the same as ‘ $\text{has}(x,\text{detective})$ ’ (‘ x has the property detective’). In ‘ $\text{detective}_{\text{FO}}(x)$ ’ (‘ x is a detective as a fictional object’) predication is relative to FO (or dependent on the ascription of FO), and since ‘has’ or ‘holds’ signifies the predication relation (the relation between property and variable) that is where the index moves: ‘ $\text{detective}_{\text{FO}}(x)$ ’ is equivalent to ‘ $\text{has}_{\text{FO}}(x,\text{detective})$ ’, which can be read something like ‘ x has-as-a-fictional-object the property detective’. That, however, is exactly the same as ‘ $\text{holds}(x,\text{detective})$ ’: ‘ x has-as-a-fictional-object the property detective’ is what ‘ x holds the property detective’ *means* ($\text{holds}(x,F) \equiv \text{has}_{\text{FO}}(x,F) \equiv F_{\text{FO}}x$). Hence, rather than eliminating it, van Inwagen’s holding relation only masks the dependency; it merely moves the index (the dependency) out of sight, and in that way does ultimately obscure more than clarify.

Dependent properties can only be eliminated by eliminating productive properties; by eliminating wholes, compositions, fictional objects, and so forth from one’s ontology. Whether that is a feasible strategy is questionable, not in the least because productivity may be more common than just the three categories mentioned here. Probably the most rigorous attempt to rid metaphysics of all dependencies can be found in some branches of Indian Buddhist philosophy that reduce ultimate reality to absolutely unique and spatially and temporally non-extended atoms called *svalakṣaṇa*. Dependent properties are not easy to get rid of, however, and therefore, we need to have a clearer understanding of their nature.

Aside from what was already mentioned above, dependent properties have two key features: asymmetry, and non-subjectivity. If dependent properties would be symmetrical, then Sherlock Holmes would have the property of being a (fictional) detective dependent on him

⁶ As mentioned above, (b) does not apply to super-restricted quantification. Iff $\{x|\mathcal{E}y[\text{Py}\&x=y]\}$ is a proper subset of $\{x|\text{Px}\}$, then \mathcal{E} is regularly restricted; iff the intersection of $\{x|\mathcal{E}y[\text{Py}\&x=y]\}$ and $\{x|\text{Px}\}$ is empty, then \mathcal{E} is super-restricted. If P is ‘being a singular object’, and this intersection is empty, then there must be a super-restriction that makes some ‘things’ that are not normally considered to be singular objects (that is, ‘things’ that are not in the extension of P) singular objects (P) under that description (that is, elements of $\{x|\mathcal{E}y[\text{Py}\&x=y]\}$). Nevertheless, in both cases, iff there is some set X that is a subset of $\{x|\text{Px}\}$ and *not* of $\{x|\mathcal{E}y[\text{Py}\&x=y]\}$, then \mathcal{E} is restricted, and X is what is excluded from the domain of \mathcal{E} .

$$\text{For any } \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{E} \text{ is restricted iff } \exists P \exists X [X \subset \{x|\text{Px}\} \ \& \ \neg(X \subset \{x|\mathcal{E}y[\text{Py}\&x=y]\})]$$

In other words, if there is some property P for which there are some ‘things’ in its extension that are outside the domain of \mathcal{E} , then \mathcal{E} is (super- or regularly) restricted; or if some ‘things’ are excluded from some quantifier \mathcal{E} , but those can be quantified over with the unrestricted existential quantifier \exists , or with some other existential quantifier, then \mathcal{E} is restricted. Changing (b) accordingly does not affect the argument in section I, however.

being a fictional object, *and* real detectives would have the property of being a (real) detective dependent on being real. In other words, in case of symmetry, F_{Dx} and Fx would be equally dependent, only on different kinds of domains: D in case of F_{Dx} , and some domain D' that excludes D in case of Fx . That, however, would amount to asserting that being a detective is dependent on being a living, breathing human being, or that being a cow is dependent on being an animal. The relationship between F and its 'domain' is a species - genus type relation, and D' only reconfirms the limits of the genus: fictional objects are not included in the genus of the species 'detective'. The dependent property F_{Dx} depends on an implicit ascription of D to some x that does not belong to the genus G of species F , such that D is like G in some contextually relevant respect(s), particularly the possibility of having property F , but because that possibility depends on that ascription, so does the actual attribution of F . Thus, while F_{Dx} depends on the description of x as D (which is relevantly similar to G), having property F proper (Fx) necessarily implies belonging to genus G ($Fx \rightarrow Gx$).

The ascription Dx is automatic and often implicit; it cannot be separated from attributing F , or actually F_D . By asserting that Holmes is a detective or that an apcean (an apple and an ocean) is a single object, the relevant statuses (productive properties) of fictional object and composition are automatically, implicitly, and inevitably ascribed (although in the latter case it is not unlikely that that status ascription would be explicitly mentioned given its non-salience). Furthermore, such status ascriptions are not subjective or metaphorical, but dependent on and limited by the objective characteristics of the object: a status (productive property) D can only be ascribed to x if x (already) objectively has the characteristics that define D . For any property F , if x not being a G and therefore not able to have property F -proper is nevertheless truthfully ascribed F , or strictly speaking F_D , then x (already) has the characteristics implied in a status D that makes such ascription of F_D possible (but there may be more than one status D that enables F_D). (If an apple and an ocean are truthfully said to be a single object together, then they must objectively have the necessary characteristics for ascribing a status D that makes it a single object under that (status) description. Being a composition (apcean) satisfies that requirement: an apcean objectively has the defining characteristic(s) of that property, and it enables ascription of singularity.)

As mentioned, the ontologically interesting kind of indexical existence is the strong variety involving productive properties as restriction: existence as fictional object, as whole, as composition, and so forth. Although such notions can be formally represented by means of an indexed existential quantifier (as done here), these are not formal (logical) categories like bare existence (unrestricted \exists). Essentially – as noted in section I – indexical existence is a property, and in case of strongly indexical existence that property is productive. This notion of 'productive properties', and its counterpart 'dependent properties', raises two kinds of ontological questions, however: (1) are there 'things' that exist completely independently (that is, independently from any productive property); and (2) what kinds of productive properties are there, which are metaphysically most interesting, and – given that they are based on objective characteristics – what do they tell us about those 'things' (and reality in general)? These questions will not be answered here, but the next (and last) section will offer some suggestions on how to approach them.

III. Integrating logic and sensibility in ontology

While the logical aspect in ontology primarily concerns the logical deducibility of (candidate) beings, the sensible aspect concerns the role of the senses or sensory information. In its most radical form, an ontology prioritizing the sensible aspect would bluntly assert that what we perceive exists. This ‘blunt assertion’ raises numerous questions, however. Indeed, what we perceive exists, but how does it exist? Or as what? And which of the things we perceive – if any – exist independently (from status ascriptions), and which exist dependently?

Answers to such questions vary considerably between metaphysical theories, but there are common themes. Most metaphysical theories either adhere to, or explicitly reject a form of metaphysical dualism, although such (anti-) dualism comes in many variants and guises (Brons 2012). Most famous and influential Western variant of metaphysical dualism is Kant’s opposition of appearances and things in themselves, or phenomena and noumena, the former being dependent on our perception and conceptualization, the latter being independent. In some Indian Buddhist philosophy a similar distinction is made between conventional and ultimate reality (*saṃvṛtīsat* and *paramārthasat*) and the former is (usually) explicitly defined as being dependent (on convention).⁷ Often, the dependent reality (the reality of ‘things’ that exist dependently on some status / productive property) is considered to be in some sense unreal or less real, or otherwise inferior or of lesser significance. This sentiment seems to be born from a prioritizing of the logical over the sensible aspect: much of what we perceive exists in some sense, but logical analysis shows that it is mere appearance, and not ultimately real. Thus wholes such as chairs are mere dependent phenomenal appearance, and only the part-less parts (simples, atoms, *svlakṣaṇa*) they are ultimately composed of are ‘really real’.

Van Inwagen’s metaphysics – as expressed in thesis (5) and his other work on metaphysics, but not thesis (1) to (4) (see section I) – falls within this class of metaphysically dualist theories (although he would undoubtedly reject this classification). Van Inwagen’s dualism is merely a (rather deceptive) change of terminology – ‘existing’ versus ‘not existing’ instead of ‘noumenal’ versus ‘phenomenal’, with the obvious implication of the insignificance of the latter – and a redefinition of independence (the ‘existing’/‘noumenal’ side of the dualism) as quantificational unavoidability. Thus, what is quantificationally unavoidable / irreducible / independent ‘exists’ (is noumenal), and what is reducible / avoidable / dependent does ‘not exist’ (is mere phenomenal appearance). The same is true for Sider, who explicitly distinguishes what is ‘real’ (or what (really) **exists**) from ‘mere projection of our conceptual apparatus’ (p. 416); hence, the noumenal from the phenomenal.

⁷ This *metaphysical dualism* should not be confused with the *epistemological dualism* that is one of the defining characteristics of Buddhist philosophy: the distinction between conventional (or phenomenal) *truth* (*saṃvṛtī*) and ultimate truth (*paramārtha*). The two dualisms are related, however: ultimate truth was often conceived as truth about (a.o.) the nature of the relationship between the noumenal / ultimate / independent and the phenomenal / conventional / dependent, and metaphysical dualism is one of the answers given to questions about that relationship.

Anti-dualism, the rejection of metaphysical dualism, can take two forms: it can either collapse the noumenal into the phenomenal (*i.e.* identify everything as (mind-) dependent), leading to (a variant of) absolute idealism; or it can collapse the phenomenal into the noumenal (*i.e.* identify everything perceived (under the right conditions) as ultimately real), leading to (a variant of) direct realism. In either case, the balance between the logical and the sensible aspect shifts the other way: the sensible determines what is real, and logic takes the back seat (or is drastically reformed in an attempt to solve the various paradoxes resulting from giving up (a version of) the noumenal - phenomenal distinction).⁸

Integrating (or balancing) logic and sensibility within ontology – assuming that that is a desirable goal – would require some kind of intermediate position between the extremes of (predominantly logical) metaphysical dualism and (predominantly sensible) anti-dualism, between the strict separation and/or opposition of the noumenal and the phenomenal of the former, and the identification or reduction of the latter. *Objective perspectivism* provides that intermediate position by combining identification and separation without ending up with paradox.

Variants of objective perspectivism (the term was introduced in Mou 2008) have been attributed to philosophers as far apart in time and tradition as Heraclitus, Zhuang Zi (莊子), Dōgen (道元), and John Searle (see also Brons 2011); and regardless of whether those attributions are correct, all of them offer important insights on the basic idea of objective perspectivism (but none developed a complete and rigorous theory on the matter). That basic idea is probably presented most briefly in Heraclitus' assertion that 'the way up and down is one and the same' (fr. 60/108).⁹ Our descriptions of 'things' are perspective-dependent, but that does not make those descriptions (or perspectives) untrue (or less true). The road is ultimately real; its angle is ultimately real; it is only whether we call it upward or downward which is perspective-dependent, and calling it differently does not (ultimately) make it a different road. What we call the road is, moreover, *not just* perspective-dependent: a perspective does not create reality, but merely determines how we perceive, classify and label parts or aspects thereof. 'We do not make 'worlds'; we make *descriptions*', and 'from the fact that a *description* can only be made relative to a set of linguistic categories it does not follow that the *facts/objects/states of affairs, etc., described* can only *exist* relative to a set of categories' (Searle 1995, p. 166; emphasis in original).

The phenomenal is ultimately real; in Dōgen's words: 'Opening flowers and falling leaves (the phenomenal world) is nature (such) as it is. However, fools think that there are no opening flowers and falling leaves in the world of Dharma-nature (ultimate reality)' (in the

⁸ Rejecting metaphysical dualism implies giving up the possibility that some referents are (called) F on one 'level' of reality (such as the phenomenal) and not-F on another 'level' (such as the noumenal) and that (at least some) conceptual classifications are phenomenal constructions. Without such 'levels' and conceptual construction(s), some things turn out to be simultaneously F and not-F, which is an obvious contradiction. A sometimes proposed solution to the consequent problems and paradoxes (such as the sorites paradox or the metaphysical problem of the statue and the clay) is a drastic reformation of logic (*e.g.* dialectical or paraconsistent logic(s)).

⁹ ὁδός ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡστὴ

chapter Hossbō 法性 of the Shōbōgenzō 正法眼藏).¹⁰ Nevertheless, phenomena and noumena are not identical; each perspective offers just part of the full picture.

Are there many ways of seeing one object, or are many images mistaken to be one object? (...) Although it can be said that there are many kinds of water, there may seem to be no original/fundamental water, and no water of many kinds. Rather, the many (kinds of) water(s) according to (following) the types [of seeing beings] (...) have the illusion-transcendent state of dependence on [ultimately real] water itself. (Dōgen in the chapter *Sansuigyō* 山水經)¹¹

What then, is that (ultimately real) water-itself that the many different phenomenal waters are dependent on? And how does this dependence work? Dōgen does not offer clear and unambiguous answers to these questions, but neither do the other (alleged) objective perspectivists.

The second question, on the nature of the dependence of phenomena on their noumenal causes ('water itself'), or on the origination of conceptual classifications and the construction of phenomena, I attempted to answer elsewhere (Brons 2012). A central idea in that paper is that conceptual classifications, and therefore phenomena, involve two kinds of boundaries: boundaries of types and tokens. The first are the boundaries of the extension of a concept; the second of an individual object that is supposed to be an instantiation of a concept. Both types of boundaries can be fuzzy or crisp and purely conventional or noumenally real. What matters here, is that a perspective involves a way of classification in these two senses. Water-in-some-perspective is classified as water by means of the classification 'rules' (whatever the exact nature thereof) of that perspective, and the same is the case for water in other perspectives. However, all of these perspectives depend on the ultimately real nature of water-itself (see also the quote from Searle above). Perspectives are not creative but *selective*; they bound and group together objects by selecting some and ignoring other ultimately real (differences and similarities between) characteristics. Perspective 1 bounds and classifies *x* as A based on some real characteristics; perspective 2 bounds and classifies it as B; perspective 3 as C; and so forth. And if *x* is an element of the extensions of A, B, C, and so forth, then it is an element of their intersection. Adding (non-identical) perspectives shrinks that intersection, and hypothetically, the intersection of all possible classifications would be the ultimately real nature of *x*.¹² This, of course raises the question what (kinds of)

¹⁰ しかあれば、開花葉落、これ如是性なり。しかあるに、愚人おもはくは、法性界には開花葉落あるべからず。

¹¹ 一境をみるに諸見しなじななりとやせん、諸象を一境なりと誤錯せりとやせん、(...)。 (...) 諸類の水たとひおほしといへども、本水なきがごとし、諸類の水なきがごとし。しかあれども、隨類の諸水、(...)、依水の透脱あり。

¹² Whorf (1956) made a similar point in a passage that is often quoted to summarize the core idea of his linguistic relativism. The key sentence that reveals the objective perspectivist nature (or leaning, at least) of his relativism is nearly always omitted, however, leading to misinterpretation of his theory (see also Brons 2011). Whorf wrote that 'no individual is free to describe nature with absolute impartiality but is constrained to certain modes of interpretation even while he thinks himself most free. *The person most nearly free in such respects would be a linguist familiar with very many widely different linguistic systems*' (p. 214; my emphasis).

classifications are possible and whether it is possible to come to know all possible classifications.

Zhuang Zi wrote that ‘a path is created by walking it, a thing is (called) as it is by it being called so’ (2.6).¹³ Conceptual classifications originate in social processes of communication about shared experiences of real ‘things’. Many other philosophers, including thinkers as far apart in time, space, and tradition as Donald Davidson and Dharmakīrti (see Brons 2012 for a comparison), made a similar point. ‘A thing is called as it is by it being called so’, and by implication, a possible classification has to be communicable (‘it being called so’) and grounded in shareable, ‘real’ experiences (of ‘a thing’). Although that considerably narrows down the range of possibilities, it does not necessarily limit the possible to the humanly possible. Dōgen repeatedly pointed out that understanding ultimate reality implies transcending anthropocentrism; one cannot fully understand the ultimately real nature of something if one only takes human perspectives into account. ‘Although people now have a deep understanding of the contents (heart) of seas and rivers, we still do not know how dragons and fish understand and use water. Do not foolishly assume that all kinds of beings use as water that what we understand as water’ (*Sansuigyō*).¹⁴ In this respect, Dōgen takes the sensible aspect in ontology one step further than most other perspectivists (or even most philosophers): not just human sensibility grants (true) existence, but *all sensibility*. Although communicability and shared grounding imply a limitation to the sensibility of beings that have some ability of communication, Dōgen’s point is valid: possible classifications are not necessarily limited to the humanly possible; and consequently, in addition to human cognition and category formation, animal cognition and category formation need to be taken into account.

The suggestion of objective perspectivism as an approach to ontology that integrates logic and sensibility is obviously in need of further elaboration. Providing a complete and rigorous theory of objective perspectivism is not the main purpose of this paper, however, and would require considerably more space than is available here. ‘Sensible ontology’ implies granting ‘existence’ to what is perceived by the senses, and then asking the question how that (what is perceived) exists, or as what. The main point of this paper is to show that such an approach to ontology is not inconsistent with a logical perspective on the notion(s) of ‘existence’. Rather than being incoherent with ‘bare existence’, the kind of ‘existence’ expressed by the logical quantifier \exists , ‘existence as’ or ‘indexical existence’ *extends* that notion by adding a restricting property.

Such ‘existence as’ is dependent existence, which raises questions about (among others) the existence, nature, and accessibility of (a realm of) *independent* existents. Objective perspectivism was suggested as an approach to answer such questions and ontological questions in general: any perspective fills in the dots after ‘existence as’, and because these classifications in part depend on the independent (ultimately real) nature of that what is said to exist,

¹³ 道行之而成、物謂之而然

¹⁴ いま人間には、海のころ、江のころを、ふかく水と知見せりといへども、龍魚等、いかなるものをもて水と知見し、水と使用すといまだしらず。おろかにわが水と知見するを、いつれのたぐひも水にもちみるらんと認ずることなかれ。

intersecting all possible classifications uncovers that independent nature, or brings it closer at least. Such an approach integrates logic and sensibility in ontology without prioritizing one of the two. Perspectives, points of view, or ways of seeing are sensible by definition; analysis and ‘intersection’ add the logical element. Neither aspect is dominant: the sensible aspect grants existence, but the logical aspect determines as what.

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