'EU NON CREO NAS MEIGAS, MAIS HABEILAS, HAINAS!' ('I Do not Believe in Meigas, but There Are Such!') A Meinongian Empirical Case Based on Galician 'Meigas'

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Abstract: This paper aspires to meet a philosophical challenge posed to the author to give treatment to what was seen as a particularly nice Meinongian case[2]; namely the case of Galician Meigas. However, through the playful footpaths of enchanted Galician Meigas, I rehabilitate some relevant discussion on the justification of belief formation and come to some poignant philosophical insights regarding the understanding of possibilities. I hope both the leading promoter of the challenge and, of course, other philosophical readers are satisfied with the outcome.

Keywords: Fiction, Virtue Epistemology, Possible Worlds, Numbers.

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[2] *The paper builds upon a conference held by Timothy Williamson at the Complutense University (30-31/10/ 2019) in Madrid and playfully uses some distinctions made by him on that occasion. For example, that between 'ontological' and 'epistemological' aspects of a question (not referred to Meigas in his talk), or in the consideration of pragmatic arguments. The motivation to write the paper was an informal conversation about magical figures with some of the participants, where I was encouraged to write about Galician Meigas. I started writing it previous to the reading of Williamson's Tetralogue (2015) and ended after, so some points were already developed in an independent, though, given the topic, related way. I pursued independent treatment despite the connections as planned.*

Meigas[3] are said to live deep in the forests of Galicia, in a Celtic foggy atmosphere fertile for haunting creatures. Meigas come in different forms and sub sorts, but all are enchantresses of a wicked kind. Meigas make pacts with the Devil, conjure spells to wrong and damage other people´s lives, kidnap children to suck their blood, damage crops, and can perform many other malignant acts.

As to their existence, of course, 'I do not believe in Meigas, … but there are such!' (*'Eu non creo nas Meigas, mas habeilas hainas'*). This is what any proper Galician will tell you. Furthermore, inference to the best explanation cannot but support this claim. As it happened on its date with neutrinos and other serious candidates to scientific beings, there is a bunch of behaviour in Galicia, or so they say, that can't be explained if we don´t take it to be the case that there are such beings as Meigas. Actually, there is a whole ceramic tradition of characteristic amulets, burning alcoholic beverages drunk in clay pots and accompanied by spells (the so-called *Galician Queimada*),[4] together with other various protective rituals, like hanging a horseshoe or a broom on the back of your front door, carrying a horse chestnut with you, or several stones and amulets – all of which make absolutely no sense in their absence!

However, we might be better counselled not to simply embrace Galician's world as it is, despite all its charms, but enter its epistemic forest with a sharpened philosophical machete, able to safeguard us against the unforeseeable powers of its seducing logic.

1. The Meiga-Sentence: Two Readings

In approaching the matter, we might distinguish an epistemological and ontological version of the Meiga-Sentence. The first we might call the 'Epistemological Meiga-Sentence' (EMS); the second the 'Ontological Meiga-Sentence' (OMS). EMS responds to our original Meiga-Sentence in the title:

(i)   EMS: 'I do not believe in Meigas, but there are such!'

The sentence would express something like the acknowledgment that although one lacks the necessary proof to believe in Meigas, one is convinced that there are such.[5] OMS, on its part, is derivable from a second version of the Meiga Sentence, which was actually the one first transmitted to me.

(ii)   OMS: 'As to their existence, they do not exist, but there are such!'

This puts forward what we can see as a Meinongian case, following Meinong (1904) since beings denied existence are nevertheless considered to have independent objective (external) being.[6]

We will take a look at both the epistemology and the ontological side of Galicians' views.

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[3] *See, for example, Lison Tolosana (1992) for a good history of the Galician Meigas. A summary (in Spanish) can be found at https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meiga . An excellent reconstruction in video format is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNKGd-0RuIE. This explains a more extensive number of magical creatures, contemporaries of the Meigas.*

[4] *The amulets detailed at http://www.detectivesdelahistoria.es/brujas-meigas-y-hechiceros-ii/ provide further information about the Galician drink 'Queimada' and other rituals.*

[5] *In its actual Galician use, it tends to be asserted about all kinds of things to express (ironically) that one is far from daring to believe such bad things (corruption, bad intentions, etc.) …how could one? but 'they are certainly the case'.*

[6] *Meinong (1904, §4, 9)*

GALICIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

When taken at face value, the epistemic attitude exhibited in EMS, if it should happen to generalise as a human tendency, poses a worrying threat. How do we dare to be convinced in the absence of proof? Can we, do we, don´t we do that? Are not all the evils of humankind, Meigas aside, tied to such epistemic forming attitudes? Are not the threats of expansive fake-news waves carried away through such believers? Aren´t there serious possibilities to harm not just ourselves (jumping through a literal or metaphoric window we were convinced was there) but also others (inciting them to jump through it)? Do we have a duty, a moral responsibility, as W. Clifford (1876) urged, to form appropriate well-grounded beliefs? Could we believe the ship's journey[7] to be safe without submitting the ship to the needed exhaustive controls? Is it even dangerous, not just to act upon, but even to keep in mind a belief based on non-ratified rumours?[8] As Clifford argued, new information will then be taken as added evidence to the first (which we forgot was no evidence at all), and then further information to the second and so forth. Might we not expand the social web of belief with such information, with a false sense of increase, that others will take for granted?[9] These are no light issues. They belong to the now flourishing field of Virtue Epistemology[10] in which Clifford ought to be considered a relevant predecessor.

Quantitative questions concerning how much evidence is evidence enough, or even when something is to be taken as evidence at all, as well as issues such as the reliability of testimony and its grounding basis, are all relevantly connected with the concerns posed by EMS.

2.1 How much evidence is evidence enough?

Focusing on this first issue, in a famous controversy, William James (1896) objected to Clifford's demands as being excessive and the evidential requirement unreachable. He thereby sided with Blaise Pascal (1610) on the acceptability of pragmatic justifications to believe. According to James, Clifford's requirement brings life to an unrealistic impasse, while awaiting the required evidence to come. In reality, we do not have the luxury of eternal waiting and are compelled to act whether or not there is available evidence. As an example, he brings the doubts

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[7] *Clifford (1876, 289–290)*

[8] *Ibidem 290–291.*

[9] *To this purpose:*

> *If a belief is not realised immediately, in open deeds, it is stored up for the guidance of the future. It goes to make part of the aggregates of beliefs which is the link between sensation and action at every moment of all our lives, and which is so organised and compacted together that no part of it can be isolated from the rest, but every new addition modifies the structure of the whole. No belief, however trifling and fragmentary it might seem, is ever truly insignificant: it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirm those who resembled it before and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts which may someday explode into some overt action and leave its stamp upon its character forever. (…) It is not only the ruler of men, statement, philosopher or poet, that owes this bounden duty to mankind. Every rustic who delivers in the village alehouse his slow, infrequent sentences, may help to kill or keep alive the fatal superstitions which clog his race. (Ibidem, 292–293)*

[10] *For an overview, see Turri, John, Alfano, Mark, and Greco, John, 'Virtue Epistemology'. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/epistemology-virtue/ .*

of a young man who ponders whether or not to believe that the girl he likes corresponds to him. That is, whether he should believe the sentence (i)

    (i)   Lisa loves me

If he would hold to Clifford's advice, he should do nothing, losing the possibility of waging (as in Pascal´s 'Wager') that she does love him, for example, and in that way handling and finding out more about it; maybe with luck. The complaint, however, is not really fair since Clifford does contemplate that believing must often go beyond experience precisely as a means to guide action. As he posits, the question is not if we should believe beyond experience, because these would belong 'to the very nature of belief', but the occasions and extent to which it should be alright to do so (Clifford, 1876, p.289). Among the three occasions he considers are a) inferences based on the assumption of the Uniformity of Nature;[11] b) Testimony (when trust in the character and reliability of the acquisition process is given) and c) probability. In this last case, he directly responds to James' complaint:

Moreover, there are many cases in which it is our duty to act upon probabilities, although the evidence is not such to justify present belief; because it is precisely by such action, and by observation of its fruits, that evidence is got which might justify future belief. So that we have no reason to fear lest a habit of conscientious inquiry should paralyze the actions of our daily life. (Clifford 1876, p. 296)

This leaves no doubt regarding the unfairness of the complaint, often alleged against Clifford by those who do not read him to the end, attesting to the fact that he is more subtle a thinker than usually acknowledged. Accordingly, it is acceptable to act upon insufficient evidence (in the knowledge of it, one might add and with the needed care) to acquire further belief. In such a case, we are not simply believing but relying upon the factual evidence already acquired (that on which we do believe), however little this might be, to act. There is, nevertheless, an important point of discrepancy with James, since James assumes (as Pascal does for the case of believing in God) that it is acceptable to believe *in the absence* of evidence on mere pragmatic grounds: something Clifford is absolutely against.

There are a few issues to consider here.

1) Believing as you please: whether we can simply make ourselves believe whatever is convenient.

2) Desirability of Pragmatic Beliefs: whether it is desirable that we believe on mere pragmatic grounds.

3) Believing or Hoping: whether handling, in the absence of evidence, is a matter of belief or, rather, of mere hope.

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[11] *A few notes on the other aspects he considers: a) 'Assumption of a uniformity in nature' (p.307): We are driven to assume that equal things will behave equally in equal circumstances and thereby to infer general rules beyond available evidence, a process whose reliability is attested upon proved results. Since this would not free us from the responsibility to always prove further, on the basis of experience, the rightness of the thereupon based conclusions. b) Testimony: transmitted knowledge is to be believed just when we can trust b.1) the character of the transmitter (has no self-interested reasons to lie or conceal aspects of the truth) that he b.2) was really in a position to know and b.3) had the means required for a human being to acquire such knowledge (pp.303, 308).*

1) Believing as you please.

It is presumed that believing is a matter of desire, that we can simply decide to believe and, *voila*! - we do. There are at least clear cases where this won´t do.

    a) When there is evidence to the contrary. No child can go back to believing in Santa Claus once he knows better, no matter how convenient that might be; nor could I decide to believe that there is a hole in the wall, simply because it would be of advantage for me not to walk all the way to the door through a tedious airport building.

    b) When there is no evidence to the contrary and there are also no epistemic reasons in support (however bad these are, whether gained through testimony, logic or whatever else hallucinations, maybe). I cannot just start believing that an invisible friend is accompanying me everywhere, just because it would be helpful to have someone to trust. If I could, I would be considered insane (if my reasons are based on hallucinations, of course, too).

I actually do not think it strictly possible to bring oneself to believe on mere pragmatic grounds, although pragmatic grounds, wishful thinking, best interests and the like do indeed relax our standards and our openness to believe what best suits us on shaky reasons and without a further exam. Sometimes, though, I suspect, even on such occasions, when unexamined weak reasons are relied upon as enough, and pragmatic grounds do take the lead, there is no real belief at stake. It is, rather, more like a decision to do 'as if something were true', a hope that one can make it externally look as if true, an obscuring of what might speak against it, etc., while intimately knowing that it is not true or, at least, that one doesn´t know it to be true, or that one's eyes are closed to really examining whether it is. One might be hoping that, somehow, somewhere, there might be some reasons in support of what one *would want* to be true. One is deceiving oneself, but unfortunately, this never works completely. Fears at moments betray those 'quasi-beliefs' since, rather than beliefs, these are self-defensive manoeuvres; sometimes complete fortified castles that dig down possible unbearable truths but give no true peace of mind. If all this is right, we are left with only one case where believing 'on (semi) pragmatic grounds':

    c) when there is no evidence to the contrary and there are reasons in support of it (however faulty these might be), plus it would be helpful. For example:

        c.1   where convenience is accompanied with unexamined grounds obtained per testimony, plus trust.

Believing, for example, some rumours accusing a political adversary on transmitted unexamined grounds because they justify self-interested actions against him that favour the believer.

2) Desirability of Pragmatic Beliefs.

Independent of the extent to which we might be able to make ourselves believe on mere pragmatic grounds, or 'pragmatic plus defective grounds', the problem posed by Clifford is whether *we should*. Let´s consider how this applies to our Meiga case. Take a parallel example to William's 'love case'. The issue now is whether or not to believe the sentence

    (ii)   A Meiga is responsible for a series of misfortunes, evils or illnesses you have experienced.

Imagine you come (as in 3.1. a) on pragmatic grounds (some testimonies delivered through the centuries plus hopeless despair) to believe (ii). Believing this, as James argued, will bring action forward. I can, for example, then hire an old Galician lady known to have beverages to fight Meigas' evil influences and trust that this will have some effect. The contrary would have left me with no explanation for my misfortune and a lengthy wait for some other evidence to appear. However, since the Meiga issue gives quick closure to my worries and provides possible counteracts against it, I pragmatically (and partially supported on grounds) opt to believe in Meigas and, thus, in (ii)[12]. What could speak against it, there being no better solutions at hand? In this instance, consider a third case: the homoeopathic cure. What we are asked to believe now is (iii).

(iii) Taking a herbal supplement daily made out of potato shell[13] will cure your cancer.

Imagine your cancer has no known cure, so far. You consider it helpful to believe in the potato shell supplement story (plus some reasons, testimony, *YouTube* videos on the internet, etc.), since it gives you some hope, even if you have no epistemic evidence of its curative powers. Hope does good and that, in itself, will help you feel better and who knows…get cured. What could be said against that? It does no harm whatsoever.

Well, in a sense. Again, the question is, whether, even on pragmatic grounds, I did bring myself to truly believe it or just hope it. Because if I truly did, and later some new cure or scientific trial comes along with good prospects of really curing me, but with many side effects, I will want to stick to my potato supplement, since it has no side effects whatsoever. I won't have to suffer horrible surgeries, get bald or poison my body with the new chemotherapies. So, does it matter that I believe what is not true if it is helpful? Of course, it does, and precisely because it is not true. There is an important connection between belief and truth: beliefs are supposed to guide us through the world safely. The very purpose of belief is to inform us of how things are. Believing something false (though pragmatic) might, in the long run, kill us, making us behave and act as trusting, relying on things that could lead us seriously astray, preventing us from trusting true remedies or finding true causes or culprits. Some might hesitate here and consider cases where believing that they will be cured helps people to heal, while those who don´t (with equal lack of evidence) fair worse. So, you lie to them, they trust, believe and do better. However, it is important to notice that favouring such false beliefs is just safe when someone else knows the truth. If I let you believe you will be cured through that remedy, knowing it is not true, I still have in my hand the possibility to change the course of action if some true remedy comes along, precisely because I know your hollow belief won't do, while you might have taken it to heart that it will. False 'pragmatic beliefs' are safe just parasitic on truly informed believers. If it is really a belief, you think it is true. If you are ready to let it fall, it was no belief but just hope. Through this, we come to the last question above.

3) Believing or hoping.

When we act on the basis of insufficient evidence, are we really believing or just hoping? Following what we just said, I think it is mere hope. I think it is hope, too, that moves the lover

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in James' case and often the terminally ill patient who has hope in the possibility of a cure. Yet hope is not a belief. Hope is ready to be shown otherwise: a belief isn't. Finding things are not as we believed them to be is not merely a disappointment but disconcerting. Occasionally, though, as discussed before, we might have to do with hopes turned into 'quasi beliefs': unexamined, fortified and defended versions of stories that please the mind. These are also (if not dropped when no longer convenient) shifted or modified at will for suitability purposes when finding they clash with reality, without being disconcerted. A true belief is much more recalcitrant and won't usually move unless more dependable evidence comes along.

In the light of all this, it seems that our Galician expert won't have it so easy either if appealing to pragmatic justifications in his favour. Nor do I think that that would be the best line of defence for him to take.

2.2 Exploring other paths

Admittedly, it might well be that convictions regarding Galician Meigas slowly softened in the fog of the XIII-XV centuries, but the mechanisms at play in their formation could be much too deeply entrenched into our cognitive propensities to erase with equal ease. Among our Meigas of today are a bunch of, maybe not all,[14] so-called 'spiritual beliefs', the homeopathic cures, blind confidence in the leadership of inept representatives, and even heartily unquestioned and inquisitorially imposed 'moral beliefs'. Perfectly rational people (whose existence I can testify) will seriously vent their conviction that there are human beings (somewhere in India, it is said) that survive by breathing alone: 'there would be someone somewhere possessing proof of this', while others might come to be convinced that 'Foreigners are responsible all the evils in their society' and so on. All will attest to such in perfectly rational terms.

The paths through which these diverse beliefs, or 'quasi-beliefs' or mere hopes, are formed are also varied. We have examined the possibility of basing beliefs in pragmatic justifications and the often-accompanying role thereby played by self-interest, deception, etc., but there are other ways one might come to such beliefs. I am now going to consider the already mentioned process of 'inference to the best explanation' with more care.

Inference to the Best Explanation

Narrowing our topic to the more literal Galician type case again, all that could have been provided in support of corresponding beliefs, such as (ii), could have amounted to:

a) secondary evidence of some observable non-standard behaviour (since we could hardly observe pacts with the devil and supernatural powers)
b) a (somehow associated) experience of harm for which an available natural explanation is lacking (possibly the existence of some relation between the person in a) and the person having the harmful experience).
c) *inference to the 'best' explanation*, driving to the conclusion that the person so behaving is causing the harm and, thus, is a Meiga.

'Best' is derived through coherence with a web of beliefs of the aforementioned 'Anti-Cliffordian' sort; that is, unjustifiably kept beliefs inflating the imaginary with the likelihood

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[14] *I exclude from here aspects such as mindfulness, some yoga practices and others whose effect is well attested today through serious scientific studies with proven results, referring to the more esoteric 'theories' sometimes mixed up with these.*

of the proposed explanation (in this particular case, the likelihood of such evil sources of power of a non-natural sort causing the damage).

In fact, Galicians enjoy a whole cohort of related powerful creatures lending coherence to the Meiga beliefs. Among these are the 'Santa Compaña', and the 'Mouros' and 'Mouras': invisible but powerful beings, whose real presence on earth is testified by strange circular stone constructions, the 'Castros' and the 'Petroglyphs' (carved images on stone) underneath the earth of which the Mouros and Mouras[15] would live in sumptuous richness (the remains of which, it was said, have been found in datable archaeological excavations[16]). Once such beliefs are in place, of course, others also fit in nicely. This schema:

> (SCH) unconventional behaviour + b) associated experience of harm + c) inference to the best explanation in coherentist terms (what fits with other legitimate or illegitimate previous beliefs)

might not require many transformations, and may be just skimmed from the supernatural, to serve to account for more mundane cases of illicitly acquired but coherently supported beliefs. Think of some anti-emigrants-foreigners beliefs as just one example. Maybe the reason is that it actualises a much too usual propensity of the mind to find explanatory closure, even where none is found. This is something that Kant (1871) brought to its limit of possibilities with his paralogisms of pure reasons, to which we might add other (detectable or undetectable) emotional underpinnings, such as fear, desire, etc. Actually, a more careful study of how regular human beings come *de facto* to form this kind of belief, instead of the way they should, could create understanding regarding how the most bluff and falsely based ideas may repeatedly find their way into rational people's minds.

But aren't we basing ourselves in the same propensity of the mind, to think that every effect must have a cause, in postulating theoretical particles in science? Well, in a sense, but there are important differences: first, theoretical particles would produce the effects we see them as causing according to natural laws and not in some other unexplainable way. We can explain backwards how the postulated particles can exert the force needed to produce the observed effect; second, there is a question regarding the reliability of the web of beliefs lending coherence to the inferred postulate in each case. This is definitely more questionable in the Meiga case.

Finally, despite the apparent plausibility of the initial story, the protective practices and amulets Galicians exhibit, are, of course, not effects caused by the actions of Meigas, since Meigas are not properly causing such actions. They are more a consequence, not necessarily of there being Meigas, but of people believing in them. There is an important difference between reasons and causes: (i) the rain causing the flood in the house, and (ii) the rain being the reason why I do not leave the house. Just in (i) it would be appropriate to speak of causing.

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[15] *These have nothing to do with the words 'Moro' and 'Mora', traditionally used to refer to Arabs. 'Mouros' and 'Mouras' would refer to mythological creatures of enormous size. For example, Mouras are said to be beautiful blonde women with blue eyes.*

[16] *Of course, such excavation funds are now known to have had different and more down-to-earth ancient owners.*

II. PART

GALICIAN LOGIC

It is possible that reflecting upon our reconstruction, our Galician-Meiga authority[17], conscious of potential deficiencies in his available proofs and reasoning, takes the realist line of defence: 'Well, even if it is granted that this line of reasoning might be insufficient or deficient as evidential support of the existence of Meigas, it does not prove the "non-existence" of Meigas either. Somewhere, somehow there might be such creatures. To that, of course, we could say this much: "To think that there should be this or a million other strange creatures inhabiting the earth is an option of the imagination but since it contravenes all humankind, has come to know up to date about how nature works, unless all that knowledge is false, from an epistemic point of view their existence is impossible". Our Galician-Authority, who will not let the mysteries of his charmed world be so easily dispelled, radicalises now with the tactics of the perfect sceptic: 'But indeed it could be false; it all could be different from what we think'. Pushed into a Wittgensteinian[18] tour de force, we retort: 'Well…but proving this would require doing so with the very same cognitive capacities whose sound track of the world you are questioning'. *Galician*: 'I cannot prove one thing or the other, but it might be'. *We* (with a gesture of philosophical superiority) now go Kantian: 'If you are talking about a noumenal world beyond what could ever be accessible to our cognitive powers, then it is nothing of the sort we could come to see as existent…' and so on…

Now the Galician changes strategy and, with an almost unnoticeable twist, adopts a subtle manoeuvre in which he delineates his Meiga in such a way that is perfectly compatible with natural forces and human recognition capacities. The powers concerned would be akin to ours but larger, the capacities extensions of our own, and so forth. On this basis, he reaffirms his previous claim that there might be such creatures even if we have not yet detected them. We reply (adopting a most prudential epistemic attitude): 'Fine, when we come to detect *them*, we can speak of their existence. Correspondingly, the sentence "There are Meigas" is from a verificationist point of view (up to now) untrue'. The sentences "There are no Meigas (of the sort) is (to our knowledge) neither true nor false. But this, again, does not allow us to speak about the truth of their existence". The Galician smiles.

Second Assault

Not completely satisfied, however, he retires for a while, drinks some water, consults the Stanford Encyclopaedia and then comes back, meditatively satisfied. 'Have you heard of Wittgenstein?' he asks. 'Now… of course, we reply.' 'Well', he proceeds, 'how do you think we learned the word "Meiga"? You see, just as with any other word in the learning situation, we were given some cases of application; the apprentice then….' he continuous in an unbearable hyper-intellectual tone. *We*: 'Stop, stop, stop...! This is now enough! 'Don't pretend to tell me that because there is a use of the word there must be *real* Meigas'. *Galician*: 'Well….' *We*: 'But don't you realise that we have no *experience* of Meigas', *Galician* (with a long sigh): 'But how can you expect that we recognise at a natural level what is common to all beings to

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[17] *This section makes a nod to Williamson's (2015) Tetralogue since witches appear to spread all over the territory. You won´t believe it, but it is through a spell that my hand was driven to pursue their case and prove their story further for the eyes of the philosophical world. I, however, imbued of the spirit, let myself free coming to some connected points. I am indeed indebted to Williamson, but, I do not make him responsible for the course this talk ends up taking.*

[18] *See, for example, Wittgenstein (1969)*

which that word 'Meiga' applies?! At such a level, of course, it is not to be found, you have to be appropriately encultured to see it! We live in a human, cultural world… don´t you understand?' *We*: 'For God's sake: Shut up, Galician! (rolling eyes) Please do not tell me that there are thick and thin Meigas, too…'

Our patience with this now overtly preppy Galician has come to an end. We take an ultimate weapon: Russell! 'Now, my dear Galician… It happens that we, philosophers, have our ways to capture your Meigas in flagrant non-existence!!' *Galician* (defyingly): 'How?' *We*: 'Well, look - the word "Meiga" is actually a definite description and what we are actually saying is that there is some individuum that is a woman with supernatural powers, etc., etc. So, if you cannot find an individuum satisfying those descriptions, there are *no* Meigas!! End of story.' *Galician*: 'Hmm…' *We*: 'I can point out further that "Meigas" are non-harmonic.' *Galician*: 'What?' We: 'Yes, non-harmonic. You apply the concept to a woman with strange behaviour and then you pretend you can conclude alone, on that basis, that she has further supernatural powers.' *Galician*: 'Hmm…' The Galician turns around meditatively again, and when we are about to drop the case with satisfaction, he returns. 'Let me tell you something', he begins, articulating a short discourse: 'Even if you could say that we cannot find women who could be proven to satisfy the description (the "extensive natural powers one"), you have still not proved that it is *impossible* that there are such. Unlike the case of mere fiction, there is an epistemic possibility that both sentences

1. "There are Meigas"

2. "There are no Meigas"

are justified'. We can simplify this suggestion and talk in terms of *p* for the sentence in 1 and *not p* for the sentence in 2. We would then be saying that both *p* and *not p* may be justified. We are equally justified in believing that *p* and *not-p* might be the case. So, I am as much justified in defending the possibility of 1 as you could be in defending that of 2.

We: 'As we saw before, Galician, believing exhibits an important connection to truth.' *Galician*: 'I am talking about the *possibility* of either sentence being justified and thus being epistemically justified in so believing. You should at least be able to concede that even if I do not know, it is *permissible* for me to believe 1 might be justified as well as 2.' *We*: 'But Galician, you clearly haven't heard about the "Lottery Paradox". Let me put it in the words of Thomas Kroedel (2013, p.2):

> (1-J) For each ticket, I'm justified in believing that it will lose.
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> (2-J) If for each ticket, I'm justified in believing that it will lose, then I'm justified in believing that all the tickets will lose.
>
> (3-J) I'm not justified in believing that all the tickets will lose.

If we understand epistemic justification in terms of permission, we obtain, according to Kroedel, this:

> (1-Pe) For each ticket, I'm permitted to believe that it will lose.
> (2-Pe) If, for each ticket, I'm permitted to believe that it will lose, then I'm permitted to believe that all the tickets will lose.
> (3-Pe) I'm not permitted to believe that all the tickets will lose.

Clearly, if we were to reason this way, we would be trapped in a paradox. The same goes for Meigas! However, Kroedel's proposal is that there is a given reading of the premises from (1-Pe) to (2-Pe) that can escape the paradox. In short: even if I should concede (what I do not) that it is permissible for you to believe in the justification of either sentence, 1 or 2 separately, it

does not mean that it is permissible to believe the aggregate of both. According to Kroedel (2012, p.59), the heart of the matter is that on a narrow scope reading of (1-Pe) and (2-Pe) permission referrers to each singular case and permissions, he argues, do not aggregate. Even if I should concede (what I do not) that it is permissible for you to believe in the justification of either sentence, 1 or 2 separately, it does not mean that it is permissible to believe the aggregate of both.' *Galician*: 'But that doesn´t make any sense! Of course, I do not want to say both are true at the same time. Just that it is permissible to believe that both *could be* found to be the case. Just as it is permitted to believe that each lottery ticket will lose. And, by the way, I do not buy the anti-aggregation story! If there are reasons for permission (justification for it, call it J), then if J makes it permissible to believe 1 and J makes it permissible to believe 2, unless my justification for 1. is such that it excludes justification for 2. (and the other way around) and, if this has anything to do with classical logic, I am permitted to believe the conjunction as well! On the other hand, if the problem is that my justification for 1. excludes justification for 2., then the problem lies in the incompatibility of justifications. Maybe Kroeder has a better line of defence following that path.

Let me put it this way:

1. $P(bl1) \rightarrow J\_bl\ 1 \rightarrow 1$

2. $P(bl2) \rightarrow J\_bl\ 2 \rightarrow 2$

That is, if I am permitted to believe 1. and if believing is a matter of having J (where J = having the required type of justification), then I am supposed to have the required justification to be permitted to believe that 1. is the case. The same with 2. (The last step in each case, 1. and 2., simply expresses what follows from my belief, what it says). If, as just stated, I am justified to believe that 1. is the case, and I am justified to believe that 2. is the case, then why on earth am I not justified to believe that 1. and 2. are the case? Even in your verificationist logic, conjunction of justified sentences must be right, isn't it? Therefore:

3. PE (bl1)
4. PE (bl2)
5. J (bl1)
6. J (bl2)
7. J ((bl1) ∧ (bl2))
8. 1 ∧ 2

If we have permission to believe, it is because there is a previous epistemic justification. So, I can also infer that, given that permission was granted, the justification was there, the rest follows. One last thing: that is precisely the reason why permission to believe is not the same as permission to eat a piece of cake. The latter is merely a matter of arbitrary authoritative permissions.

We: 'What on earth…!? What were you consulting back there?' *Galician* (with wide eyes): 'What?' *We*: 'Never mind. But let´s go slowly… You got high in the abstraction and forgot what we are talking about. Our Meiga sentences 1. and 2. contradict each other. How could you believe the conjunction of both?' *Galician*: 'Hmm… well, I see. But there is something fishy here, I tell you. It all comes down to the "could-be issue"…'

We: 'Exactly! You are making the same failure as Kroedel: he is not distinguishing between 'believing in the possibility of φ' and 'believing in φ'. As you said at the very beginning, you

are permitted not 'to believe in 1', but to believe 'in the possibility of 1.' and that is something completely different. To believe something *is possible* is not the same as believing that something *is* (takes place). It doesn't amount to taking there to be a state of the world where φ happens, since this need not be the case at all. A possibility allows for φ not ever being found justified at all, one way or the other. Kroedel does distinguish between being "permitted to believe" and "believing", but in both cases, the content of the belief is the same: that some state of affairs is the case. In my view, your premises should rather include a possibility sign, such that

$$PE\ (bl(\Diamond 1)) \rightarrow J(bl(\Diamond 1)) \rightarrow \Diamond 1$$

Here, the very content of the belief would include the possibility too. Still, you might be justified in believing something is possible or not and thus be permitted to do so. You should not be permitted to believe in the possibility of supernatural Meigas: you have no justification to do so, and even in your 'natural Meigas', I would say there is no real justification to grant permission so far. However, being permitted to believe φ, and believing in the possibility of φ are clearly not equivalent. On the other hand, I think you are right, that if we understand the problem as Kroedel does, and there is a justification not "to believe in the possibility of 1.", but permission "to believe in 1.", and the same for 2. (in the absence of excluding reasons) the conjunction should be allowed. However, there is a difference between our case and the lottery case that might be seen to speak in favour of Kroedel. This concerns the amount of probability that supports his justification.' *Galician*: 'Well…is God not playing dates, too? I mean…' *We*: (a bit exasperated) 'Yes, Galician, but if we are to calculate the probabilities of God's lottery, nature or whatever, we have a hopeless case don't you think?' *Galician*: 'No, its 50%-50%: there are or there aren´t Meigas.' *We*: 'Not so easy. In the lottery case, we know for sure that one ticket will be chosen, and therefore that 99% won´t. Although it is true that these probabilities will change once the lottery has started affecting what we are permitted to believe.[19] In that sense your Meiga case is not equivalent, even if you might have more reasons in favour of one of the possibilities. But in this case there is no reason why either option should ever be found justified.' *Galician*: (illuminated): 'Now that you put it that way. I just had an idea to solve the lottery paradox or rather to deconstruct it. Since it seems to be a failed construction, indeed. Should we not put it, rather:

1 For one ticket, call it *'x',* I am justified in believing that it will win.

2 For each ticket except one, *x*, I'm justified in believing that it will lose.

3 If for each ticket except *x* I'm justified in believing that it will lose, then for all tickets different from *x*, I'm justified in believing that they will lose.

4 For all tickets different from x, I am justified in believing that they will lose.

5 Not for all tickets (indiscriminately), I am justified in believing that they will lose.

Clearly, paradox dissolved! Actually, the point is one about abstraction. Since each ticket could be in the position of either the one or the many, think about it…'. I mean, when I am talking about one ticket, x, by which I am not justified in believing that it will lose, I am not talking about any concrete one (a, b, c, d,…n) of which I could not know, of course, whether they will win. I am talking about an abstract placeholder of the winning one. Since I know in advance,

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[19] *As Littlejohn, C. (2012) argues, quoted by Kroedel (2012, p. 5) in 'Lotteries Probabilities and Permission' Logos and Episteme, 3, 512-513.*

before the lottery takes place, that one ticket will win, I know too, that there is one, x, that won't lose. Since I know that one of the concrete ones (a, b, c, d, ...n) will occupy the space of x, I know too that I am not justified to assume by the concrete ones that each of them will lose but just conditional to them not being identic to the winning one.

We: 'Hmm… Not bad, Galician! You exhibit the talents of a logician and I can see your point. There is something there. But, defenders of epistemic justification will tell you that you are justified to hold a believe if there is a high probability in its support, and that is the case for each and all the tickets. I, however, think the problem lies somewhere else. Despite the higher degree of probability, I think the difficulty still relies on the fact that what you have is a justification for believing in the '(strong) possibility of each of the tickets losing' and not for 'each of the tickets losing'. The amount of probability doesn´t change that. Let's use the sign $\nabla°$ for strong possibility (or probability); we could vary the little index as we please.

$$1 . J\big(bl(\nabla°1)\big) \wedge J\big(bl(\nabla°2)\big) \wedge ... J\big(bl(\nabla°n)\big)$$

$$2. \; bl(\nabla°1) \wedge bl(\nabla°2) \wedge ... bl(\nabla°n)$$

$$3. \; \nabla°1 \; \wedge \nabla°2 \; \wedge ... \nabla°n$$

Since the content of our believe includes the probability, its truth is just the truth of the probability and not of a reality. To hold the probability of all tickets losing together does not raise the paradox.

Galician: 'If you say so…' *We*: 'Let's see what Kroedel thinks about this. But I am afraid that you cannot do away with the charms of a dear philosophers' paradox just like that, either! However, this is not our primarily concern here (however interesting), that does not make your claim in the Meiga case any better that it should be permitted to believe 1, believe 2 and therefore 1 and 2.

Third Assault

Our Galician gets suspended in the fog for a while, consulting who knows which enchanted creature of his. As he reappears to consciousness, he has world-changing news! *Galician*: 'You might think I am crazy, but I just imagined that there could be a different number of possible worlds, then, what we are saying is that, at least in one of them, sentence 1. is found justified and at least in another sentence, 2. is found justified. Maybe that is what we mean when we speak of possibilities (?!) Accordingly, there is at least one world where… there *are* Meigas! Therefore, OMS is right: they have *being* in some other world, even if they do not exist in this one! You can´t say no to that.' *We*: 'Now, Galician, we have reached it! I always suspected you Galicians have true metaphysicians' soul and I just confirmed that that's truly where your rationality ultimately leads. We have, thus, to take a more careful look at all this from an ontological perspective. Maybe, that way, we approach the coherence of your Ontological Meiga Sentence, too. You might allow that for simplicity matters, I proceed in solitude now. However, in the process, I will take your suggestion into consideration.

III PART

GALICIAN ONTOLOGY

Let us now, then, concede deserved seriousness to the Galician authority. If we are to be fair, the puzzling thing here is that if, instead of talking in terms of 'what we can believe to be possible', we unconsciously change to an ontological (though verificationist) representation of what such a possibility amounts to if it is realized (as both the Galician and Kroeder do), things appear different. It is as if we could figure out that in a projected future reality each one of these sentences can be equally pictured as having justification. However, clearly, in a posterior time, just one of these sentences could be found to be justified; that is, looking backward from such a future reality, and the way we will find it to be (in this sense, I mean 'an ontology' from a verificationist perspective), it is not accurate to say that in our Meiga example both sentences could be found to have justification. Both realities being opposed, one of them understands there is a future reality where it would be justified that won't take place.

Therefore, what we mean with the claim that each is likely to be justified is nothing like saying that both could be found to have justification; if so, we would be saying that two opposed realities could be found to be the case in the future. The problem here is not one about which things we are permitted to believe, but about what our beliefs amount to. It is because both would be incompatible that we tend to go into imagining two possibly realised worlds delivering opposing justifications for *p* and *not p* and, thus, we appeal naturally to the possible world strategy, as our Galician authority did. These possible worlds cannot be equivalent to the future one since the future one is singular.

Now, if we consider that a possibility is a non-realised reality, it amounts to a description whose variable is not saturated by any real object. The realization of the possibility of a positive statement, such as "There are Meigas", is equivalent to its saturation. It's denial, if "It is not the case that there are Meigas", is tantamount to the sentence remaining non-saturated. Therefore, what we are, actually, taking to be possible are not two different (contradictory) justificatory ontologies. Rather, what we are saying is that the possibility of Meigas that we already count with, that we could represent as a 'minus object' (since we found them not to exist so far) could remain in such a status (not pertaining to reality) in a future singular world. Or, alternatively, that that world saturates our sentence and turns our representation of a 'minus object' into a positive one. That is, when considering both claims 1. and 2. possible, since 2. is just the non-saturated sentence, we are not contemplating some real negative fact satisfying it, but just the absence of the needed reality, the mere possibility or, otherwise, its realization (turning 1. justified). So, it is not two contradictory realities we are contemplating one providing facts that saturate the negative sentence, and the other providing facts that saturate the positive one, but a remaining possibility and the prevalence of the status quo, or a 'turning into reality'. There is, in truth, just one alternative: the possibility of positive existence or of things remaining as they are. Therefore, the claim at time t^1 is not about two possible justificatory realities: it is just one reality in which our Meigas remain possibilities or become actualised. This might seem like wordplay, but it is not. It is precisely the difference between acknowledging and denying reality to negative facts. So, either our 'Meigas' keep their status as a mere possibility, or they upgrade to realities. But, isn´t there something like finding facts justifying us in claiming to have a proof that would justify a corresponding negative sentence? Yes, but that is something different, that

would amount to a proof of its impossibility. A proof of such an impossibility amounts to denying the sentence asserting its possibility[20] in the first place.

(i) $\Diamond Ex\,(Mx)$

(ii) $-\Diamond Ex\,(Mx)$

The truth of (i) requires merely there to be no impediment (no proof of impossibility) to think that the existence Meigas could be the case. That the hope to find proof for the sentence is either physically or logically impossible.

But in the projected reality that the possibility recreates, we are dealing with the truth of the sentence

(iii)   There are Meigas

like in reality (iii) is true *iff* there are objects satisfying the description. If there aren't, it is simply not satisfied, simply not finding any saturation for our sentence does not amount to proof of impossibility in a future evolving reality. But, should we find proof of impossibility, we are forced to retreat in our initial attempted projection of a reality in which there were some and assert (ii).

To elaborate, Frege's (188, §46) brilliant insight was to realise that it is only relative to a concept that we can count existent unities: we can further imagine whichever future unities there are; for example, unities of Meigas and count them, too. However, if we are entertaining the mere possibility of there being some such countable individuals, we must make a difference to when we understand there is *de facto* such a number of them. We must represent this differently, so if positive numbers of Meigas would amount to positively countable individuals, the merely entertained but also countable ones might be represented as negative numbers 'of Meigas'[21] (our minus objects of before) and thus, relative to that concept too. Let us represent this as follows:

Figure 1

Figure 2.

Figure 1 does not represent a reality but is a negative representation, a world of negative numbers relative to some concept. Figure 2, on the contrary, *represents* a reality, not a possible one, but a factual and singular one.

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[20] *I will be speaking of 'possibilities', however if there should be a high probability we could, as before, change our diamond into an inverted triangle with an index.*

[21] *Compare Ramirez (2020).*

I have defended that in cases regarding the possibilities of there being Meigas (in the modified compatible, though expansive way, with natural laws), and the possibilities of both sentences *p* and *not-p* being justified, the claim is not one about two incompatible justificatory ontologies but between retaining a mere possibility or upgrading to a reality. But, then, how do we make sense of other non-future claims, where we cannot pretend to put together satisfaction of our statement of possibility with an 'upgrading to a reality'? For example, cases where our claims about the realization of possibilities refer clearly to the past; where we want to attribute truth values to modal claims about (possible) 'realities' that could have been' but did not become realities? For example, if I now make a conditional claim of the sort below:

(iv)   'It is possible that Hilary Clinton became president in 2016, then there is a possible world where Hilary Clinton becomes president',

how could we explain this in our terms? I would say that what we are doing is advocating for the transition at the representational level from reference to negative numbers (Figure 1) in the antecedence, to referring to a positive number in the consequent. Let us explain this: in the antecedence, the existential reading of the sentence 'Hilary Clinton became president in 2016' remains a possibility, which can be represented, if we wish, as if it were satisfied by a 'minus object' as I first called it, a negative number, a mere negative representation, an imagination, of an individual satisfying the name 'Hilary Clinton' and 'becoming president'. While in the consequent, we take there to be a positive representation satisfying our sentence – not a reality, but a positive 'representation of reality'; that is, positive countable individuals, positive numbers, since a reality would require such a positive representation of reality to have further a well-grounded justification in experiential terms. The gain of this reconstruction is thus, to be able to attribute existential representations to our sentences, both when they are mere possibilities and when they are representations of reality that did not happen to occur, something useful in modal logic. The difference between so-called 'possible worlds' - not understood as possibilities but as a representation of *de facto* realities (that could have been), something like fictions - and the actual world is a matter of experiential well-groundedness. Possible worlds, unlike the actual world, lack it. To some extent, this might satisfy Lewis's (1986) modal realism, in conceding that it is not possibilities (mere descriptions or sentences) but realities that we are talking about when we discuss the possible worlds that make our modal claims true. However, it is just *representations of realities*: the difference with the actual reality is not merely that we happen to inhabit this one, as he says, but that the actual one requires experiential well-groundedness. Nonetheless, this would not be a form of abstractionism in Plantinga's (1974) sense either, since it would be wrong to say that such representations are states of affairs that are existent but not actual, since that very much comes down to something similar to acknowledging them having 'being' but not 'existing' by way of a transmutation, where 'existence' goes for *being,* in Meinongian terms, and 'actuality' for Meinongian *existence*. It requires that they somehow exist at a different level, but since existence from my point of view can merely be experiential, I cannot support that. Kripke's (1963) intended models would come a bit closer to our picture, although they keep an ambiguity regarding the status of the domain of objects of a given possible world. Actually, I do see a point in Lewis's (1986, §1.7) claim that the difference between concrete and abstract is not clear. In the sense that also when we talk about the actual world, given its transient nature (where it all together becomes past while we are speaking), this requires us (or so I take it to be) to keep its representation stable, too. Even so, it is our experience that makes a difference and gives such representations a justification beyond themselves.

According to the proposals made, we have three states to consider: negative numbers, positive numbers and fleshed-up countable entities. When our talk of possibilities is a matter of

entertaining existence in a future reality, we are considering the transition directly from possibilities to experientable reality; that is, from negative numbers to fleshed-up countable entities. When we are talking about situations that could have been realities, we are rather making the transition merely from negative numbers to representations of reality; that is, to positive numbers.

Landing back again in our initial territory, with all these new 'petroglyphs' for some 'to be' superhumans excavators to decipher, we can now at least respond to our Meiga-expert that either Meigas exist in some future reality (the only reality there is), or they remain in their *possibilia* status of negative numbers, or they are proven impossible, or we can imagine them to have existed and thus represent them as having been or being in some future true realities. That way, of course, there are such! That is all the sense we could obtain from OMS. I am afraid there is not more to it. I wonder what our Galician expert would say about this. I find it mysterious enough.

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