

RE-EXPLORING ITEM-THEORY.
OBJECT-THEORY LIBERALIZED, PLURALIZED AND
SIMPLIFIED BUT COMPREHENSIVIZED

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Outside a small but expanding circle, Meinong remains an underrated philosopher, a philosopher who has not yet been given his proper due for his contributions, above all in general object-theory. One reason is that the broad philosophical position that Meinong eventually reached, after painstakingly careful work, stood in destructive contrast both to the former European mainstream and to the now dominant Anglo-American stream. What Meinong arrived at had the potential to subvert prevailing philosophy. It represented a revolutionary direction, not only in metaphysics (through object-theory) but also in other philosophical reaches such as value theory. But the revolutionary impact has so far been suppressed, with only a few features absorbed. Meinong was then an intellectual revolutionary in 20th century philosophy – admittedly an unconscious revolutionary – in a way that other Austrian philosophers of prominence, such as Brentano, Wittgenstein and Popper were not. Meinong's revolution has yet to happen. Meinong's own enterprise and practice hardly prepared the way.

Although he made major and revolutionary moves – advancing object-theory in particular far beyond anything it had previously achieved – Meinong did not present anything approaching a full, coherent and well-rounded position, an alternative capable of displacing orthodoxy. Rather much of his theory is obscure and fragmentary, decidedly incomplete with many issues unresolved, and too much borrowed from a defective past. Nor perhaps would he have claimed otherwise. In part he was gradually overcoming orthodox impositions and hang-ups in his own thinking, in part he was groping his way towards new theories he only glimpsed.

From a revolutionary perspective, these are not the only problems. Most serious, Meinong directed object-theory in a wrong direction, into a virtual dead-end from which escape was hard to locate. The theory got into this trouble by focussing upon a narrow and special class of objects, pretty pure phenomenological objects, which have no other source than their descriptive presentation, bare (homeless) items such as “a blue patch”, “the golden mountain” and “the round square”. The trouble affects not only investigations of Meinong’s school, but persists in subsequent formal theories, which do eliminate the damaging pre-logical aspects of earlier theories. There has been this unfortunate tendency to try to build the whole of object-theory by extrapolation from these otherwise sourceless isolated objects. It has been accompanied by an even more unfortunate tendency of critics of object-theory (a far larger mob than its few exponents) to suppose that they can restrict object-theory to these curiosities, but also that they can transpose features of phenomenological objects to differently sourced objects, thereby obtaining contradictions allegedly refuting object-theory.

Looking back, it is as if Meinong and his small but growing band of followers saw only a fragment of a rich regional landscape, namely a part of the old city where homeless objects loitered, which may have looked self-contained but was not. The newer extensive suburbs of theoretical science and most of the surrounding intentionally saturated countryside escaped proper attention. Yet it is the objects of structures of purer science and the items of intentional systems that offer far and away the most promising paths into wider object-theory. Granted the old city retains its quaint aspects and its tourist attractions, still it is only a small and atypical part of the life of the region.

For several reasons, there is a need to venture beyond the attractions and temptations of the old city to which Meinong guided us. The present wider venture begins with reinvestigation and transformation of earlier explorations of item theory, those developed and assembled in the *Jungle Book*¹, which also had its unsatisfactory

1. Referred as JB. That text provides detailed background to the present exercise. Please refer to it on many of the key terms used here without full explanation here: for example, *characterizing* (or *nuclear*) *predicate*, *source*, and so on.

features. In particular some of the themes delineating object-theory (themes M1-M9) stand, reexploration reveals, in need of revision. But wider exploration over the last years has shown more; it has disclosed features of a much more comprehensive theory of items. So reexploration has come to include a more ambitious aim: to outline a comprehensive item-theory covering the entire region, a theory that enjoys a range of virtues insufficiently exhibited in previous theories such as flexibility and comparative simplicity.

For *some* sort of object-theory not much is required (though it is already too much for the present philosophical mainstream), not much more than a domain of ineliminable objects which, although they do not exist, do have distinctive properties. As much is said in theses M2 and M3:

- M2. Very many objects do not exist; and in many cases they do not exist in any way at all, or have any form of being whatsoever.
- M3. Non-existent objects are constituted in one way or another, and have more or less determinate natures, and thus they have properties. In fact they have properties of a range of sorts, sometimes quite ordinary properties.

A comprehensive item-theory can be expected to offer much more in the way of themes, but just how much, and of what sort, is one of the issues to be taken up immediately.

PART 1. SCENE SETTING FOR COMPREHENSIVE ITEM-THEORY

Lastly by way of introduction, a prevalent misconception as to the present state of item-theory should be removed.² Let there be no mistake. Item-theory is, on the whole, as these things go, in satisfactory shape; it is in much better shape than the entrenched, ailing, referential opposition. Unlike the main opposition, item-theory is

2. Such a misconception may also have been encouraged by some remainder-ing of significant object-theory texts. But the book market shows nothing directly as to the health of a theory; it shows only the direction of fickle philosophical fashions in richer countries.

not bogged down in failed or failing reductions. It is not confronted by a sizeable list of scientifically and socially essential items it cannot decently account for or admit. Item-theory is already up and away, fit and running strong. But it could, nonetheless, be put in even better shape by relaxing former unduly restrictive approaches to the free characterisation of items.

Freedom of assumption has been advertised as a major feature of item-theory;³ but that ambiguous freedom was underpinned and rendered feasible by a heavily qualified freedom of characterisation. Now, by a simple separation strategy, soon to be revealed, much greater freedom of specification is also being offered. Almost anything now goes; you can have anything you want, somewhere. That freedom is a further major liberalization.

Subjects and objects and other items

The subject is everything. For

- M1. Everything (viz. item) whatever, however problematic or paradoxical, is an item.

This initial item-theory thesis, while apparently near tautological, proves, as it unfolds (thereby ensnaring much discourse), highly controversial. For items include *every* thing that can be talked about, signified, designated, whatever can be a subject of discourse. Whence, seemingly,

- M1a. Whatever can be selected as a subject of discourse is an item.

Thus items include many things that cannot be talked about, perhaps at all, certainly not satisfactorily, according to the sistologically censorious (unfortunately virtually all who have not maintained undisclosing silence). So included are some at least of the following often *neglected* items, *all given in broad experience*: nonexistent items, negatives, vague or variable objects, contradictory objects, diagonalization products, paradoxical items, holistic and complex

3. For instance JB pp. 529-30, here authentically following Meinong.

objects, ineffable things, nondescript items, and so on. Included therewith are many items, of wide variety, that get neglected or are admissibly forgotten or excluded under prevailing approaches.

While the subject is everything, the topic is not ontology. Many items, most of those cited, do not exist, or have other ontic status: some are not even possible. The illiberal opinion that we can only talk, or talk sensibly, about items when certain, usually demanding, conditions are satisfied, that persistent opinion is astray and, in any case, is unenforceable. Widespread philosophical censorship should be recognized for what it is: censorship. Such often onerous, variously imagined constraints as that an item must exist, have being, be material, be consistent, be objective, be exact, are one and all unnecessary, and invariably unwarranted. There are no such restrictions upon items. No restrictive characterisation is required to delineate items. Indeed since items are all-inclusive, there will be no exclusive delineations. Every thing enters, under this *initial approach*, which takes neglected items seriously.

Consider next a complementary approach. Item-theory is partly typified by a free and direct, *face-value approach*. It takes subjects, and associated items, as they come, initially at face value, in much the way that common-sense does. It does not look for hidden analyses, unplumbed depths, deviousness, without reason. It tries to shun, or strip away, doctrines assumed in advance, a priori, about how items are or must be, what restrictive requirements they must meet. Above all, discourse is accepted, and processed, as simple and straightforward. Subjects are taken as what they present themselves as, or are presented as, subjects of certain sorts, signifying something. Certainly not all the claims subsequently made concerning them, or on their behalf, need be accepted, as they stand, or accepted at all. But that is to proceed beyond grammatical presentation and initial introduction to, what is often entangled, characterization. (There is already here much disentangling to do, at which Meinong was expert, including signs and signifieds, subjects and items.) It is one thing to be told of a unicorn, another to start imagining what it is like, quite another to proceed on to its status, to enquire whether it exists and so forth.

Both the neglected items approach and the face value approach lend support to – what they do not enforce but leave as optional –

a further item-theory thesis of the following controversial form:

M0? Every well-formed subject signifies an item,

where now by 'subject' is meant subject term or expression, a linguistic item. Naturally the converse connection fails, fairly abysmally. There are innumerable many items that are not signified by any terms⁴ – though any select one can no doubt be named.

The thesis is more far-reaching than M1a which strictly only concedes itemhood to select, already certified subjects of discourse (with subjects here signifieds of linguistic subjects). Although the stronger thesis appears tempting, especially to the philosophically uninformed, it is widely regarded as naive, and is an early topic for ridicule and dismissal in introductory philosophy courses and texts. Accordingly it is hardly an astute move to require it in item-theory, unless the tactic is to discredit it. Nor is it required to obtain a well developed object-theory, where only terms signifying items may conveniently conform, not all subjects. Nonetheless, despite its bad philosophical press, thesis M0? – not insisted upon even in comprehensive item-theory – can be defended, and standard criticisms disarmed.

As it happens, the thesis itself is so formulated that it does allow for exceptions, by way of the qualifying term 'well-formed'. Varying that term yields variant theses, for instance for *genuine* subjects, and more exceptions, and so on. Then no doubt under Humpty Dumptyism the theory could even be twisted into orthodoxy, with "genuine" all and only logically proper subjects. But the intention was merely to exclude ungrammatical strings and the like (should that even need doing). Ideally there are *no* other exceptions. For the semantical advantages and considerable simplicity the thesis brings get eroded through exceptions. Still let us consider some candidates often favoured as exceptions:

– nonsense subjects such as 'beer-swilling quadruplicity', 'a square-shaped idea', 'an abracadabra', which many nowadays would class as ill-formed. But alternatively, very simply, nonsense subjects signify absurd items.

4. As Cantorian arguments concerning respective sizes of classes will show.

– other substantival expressions which do not, for one reason or another, function as full or independent subjects. For a well-worn example consider the relic term ‘sake’, which used to function as an independent substantive, but is now obsolete in that role, and remains in use essentially only in a possessive role (e.g. ‘for – ’s sake’; see the *Oxford English Dictionary* for its interesting etymology). It is a tired counter-example to M0? that ‘sake’ is a genuine subject but that there are no sakes (of any sort), no item for ‘sake’ to signify. A dilemma appears to meet such alleged counter-examples: either the expression remains functional only in limited dependent roles, in which case it is hardly a genuine subject, or else it is genuine as in its former usage, in which case there are signifieds. For there are certainly considerations, interests, causes, and so on, of requisite sorts: sakes in the original sense. In brief, ‘sake’ signifies a consideration.

– nonsingular subjects, including plural subjects, such as ‘men’ (e.g. ‘men hang around here’) and quantified subjects, such as ‘each number’ (e.g. ‘each number is even or odd’) and ‘nobody’. No doubt a version of M0? restricted to singular subjects is correct, but is such a restriction required – because the unqualified original yields ridiculous results? Notice that ‘yields ... results’. Ridiculousness only ensues given further assumptions, with the adoption of certain inference patterns, notably those inappropriate for such quantified subjects. A prime example is particularization, $f(a) \rightarrow (Px) f(x)$ which does not hold for subjects such as *no one*. For no one is at home does not imply someone is at home, but rather excludes it. The *Alice* books are a rich source of entertaining examples of inappropriate inference. When the messenger responds ‘I passed nobody on the road’, the king (assuming nobody was going in the same direction) illegitimately infers that the messenger walks faster than nobody, and thereupon, switching logical tack, that the messenger is extraordinarily slow. As against that the messenger could also have asserted, quite consistently, ‘Nobody walks faster than I do’, which would have similarly induced a different incompatible round of “ridiculous results”. Taking ‘nobody’ and ‘everyone’ as admissible subjects, as in ‘Nobody walks around here, everyone drives’ is one thing, a straightforward face-value thing. However the logical behaviour of such subjects is another, and trickier matter. As

is now appreciated, $f(\text{no item})$ functions logically (scoping issues, concerning complexity of f , aside) like: it is not the case that for some singular item x , $f(x)$, i.e. $\sim(Px) f(x)$. Of course the feature that in many settings the quantified subject functions thus does not mean that such an analysis exhausts its meaning. It does not.

Not all classes of apparent exceptions to or difficulties for $M0?$ are so easily met. A more serious challenge appears to derive from adaptations of paradoxes of denoting, that is from

– paradoxical subjects. It is even contended that a ‘result’ of this sort drawn from Hilbert and Bernays, ‘refutes certain versions of Meinongianism’, namely any which maintain that ‘all terms denote’.⁵ Therewith apparently refuted is enriched item-theory, by virtue simply of thesis $M0?$ – upon substituting what obtains for denotation, which may be status or otherwise loaded, by analogous connections for signification, which is not so loaded. However paradoxes and connected results turn upon a familiar conflation: of signification with characterisation, roughly of *that* with *what*, that an item is signified with what is signified. Put differently, in reaching these results, denotation is loaded by a requirement of *faithfulness* or the like, that a denoting term, if it denotes, denotes what it says it denotes, the item is as characterized in the denoting expression. In short $M0?$ has been strengthened to

$M0+?$ Every well-formed subject signifies, and signifies faithfully, an item.

The strengthening clause is what is implausible and should be rejected. For it is now sufficiently appreciated that such unqualified characterisation spells serious trouble for object theories. Even subjects like “the adjacent round square which exists”, if taken as faithfully denoting, yield inconsistent existents, and it is worse with trivializing denoting terms (e.g. a term that says of itself that it denotes a trivializer, or implies p for arbitrary p). It is no news at all that not every subject faithfully signifies. So it is with some paradoxical subjects, such as the following term t :

5. See Priest 95, p.1, p.11.

... in informal (natural language) terms, H & B's "paradox" is about a term of the form: the successor of the denotation of this term. Call this *t*. If it denotes, it denotes the successor of *t*, i.e. of its own denotation. It is natural, then, to suppose that it has no denotation.⁶

This effectively confuses denotation with successful denotation. Where this fails then, in item-theoretic terms, is in the main conditional: if *t* signifies, *t* signifies what it says it does, namely the successor of *t*. Not so. While *t* signifies, it does not signify what it presents itself as signifying. Faithfulness fails. Naturally for the associated achievement notion, *faithful* signification, matters are different. But those concern characterization as well as signification. Accordingly, as it only claims universal signification, M0? is in no way upset by paradoxical subjects. It advances nothing as to faithfulness or reliability, which it could hardly guarantee, as logically they are far from universal.⁷

Much of the criticism of theories of objects of Meinong and others has assumed that these theories all assume a principle of faithful signification like M0?, that every subject signifies faithfully. Such was a presupposition of Ryle's famous dismissal of Meinong (and others) as committed to 'Fido'-fido theories of meaning. However the main targets (Meinong and Carnap) were not so committed; nor certainly is item-theory. No satisfactory theory can be, on pain of triviality.

In sum, nothing is imposed so far beyond a certain minimum for subject introduction (for example, linguistic conditions for talk, which can be displaced in nonlinguistic settings, for instance by those for intensional focus). That minimum is very minimal, as an example is intended to show. Here is a new subject, Bugboo.

6. Priest p. 7. A more formal version of this argument assumes that the successor function is entirely faithful, whence by a fixed point theorem, there is a natural number that is its own successor.

7. Nor is the idea of nonfaithful signification new, ad hoc, or plucked from nowhere. It is not only included in many formal object theories (JB for one), but is part of classical logic in the Germanic, Frege-Hilbert tradition, where subjects that did not meet strict existence, uniqueness or other conditions were (wrongly) assigned such denotations as zero, the null class, and so on. That tradition went badly astray in how extraordinarily extensive and unreliable it supposed that the nonfaithful signification was, but not in its implicit recognition of the distinction involved.

Suppose Bugboo is not an item. Then Bugboo is an item, albeit an entirely nondescript one. For whatever is not an item is thereby an item. There is thus no contrast (within the subject nexus), nothing that is not an item, including such logically strange “quantified” items as *whatever* and as *nothing* itself.

It is plain, for instance from M0? that there is simply no limit to items. Everything, whether existent or not, possible or not, objective or not, even absurd or not, is an item. Like genuine subjects, there is no limit either to their variety. They can be as large, small, complex, unstructured, dynamic, variable, vague, paradoxical, perverse, as you like, and even more so. They are not restricted to objects, in some restricted senses or other of ‘object’ (such as those considered in the following terminological detour) or otherwise.

Terminological detours: certain key terms in item-theory further elucidated: I. Objects and items

There are some unfortunate associations, or unnecessary restrictions, or both, introduced through use of the word ‘object’. Some of these associations are, as it happens, unproblematic. There are no longer any serious worries – except their restrictiveness – about some of the obsolete senses of ‘object’, for instance, those concerning items, things or statements, thrown or put in the way, obstacles or hindrances (though that no doubt is how too many philosophers still tend to view nonexistent objects). But others *are* more problematic, including various recent terminological restrictions.

Firstly, the word ‘object’ has obtained a bad press in some quarters because of its linkage with objects of consumption. Thus, Baudrillard produced a fashionable book on the “theory of objects”, which has nothing to do with object-theory, but is about consumption and objects of consumption. Then in other philosophical places, especially Marxist and feminist literature, the term ‘object’ has been taken to represent something that is cold, neutral, remote, without value, as in the phrase ‘a mere object’.⁸ Such a usage contrasts

8. Thus, for instance, Barfoot: ‘I see that remembering has separated me from it; that looking back at myself as an object of my memory has made everything else I saw then an object as well, so that I have lost the unity’ (p. 13). Similar

strikingly with an older sense, where an “object” is ‘something which on being seen excites a particular emotion, as admiration, horror, disdain, amusement: a sight, spectacle, gazing-stock: formerly sometimes, an object ... of pity or relief, an afflicted person, sufferer: in colloq. use, a person or thing of pitiable or ridiculous aspect ...’ (*Oxford English Dictionary: object*, 3b). To add further to confusion, *object* has recently acquired a special computing science sense, in such combinations as ‘object code’, ‘object oriented’ and so on, where it means roughly *machine* (and in any case is tied to getting down to machine language).

Yet again, ‘object’ has been taken to refer to something material or a substance, and object-theory linked with substance-theoretical or material accounts of the world, as opposed for instance to process theories and dynamic or immaterialist accounts. In Whitehead, for instance, an object is taken to be an item enjoying some permanence, like a substance, by contrast with items like events and processes, which may be fleeting and unrepeatable. Consider what is reported: ‘Whitehead distinguishes sharply between “events” and “objects”’. An event is unique; by its nature it can never recur. Events, we might say, are the stuff, the particularity of Nature. “Objects”, on the other hand, are what we *recognise* in Nature; its permanent features. Neither object nor event can exist in isolation; every event is of a certain character, i.e. an object has “ingressed” into it, and every object characterises some event’.⁹ The ontological presuppositions built into the latter statement remove it far from any theory of items; pure objects of mathematics need not ingress in any events, etc.

Unsurprisingly, too, there are philosophers who have tried to constrict object-theory to a particular narrow, and more easily discredited, style of theory, for example, to a reductive Locke-Parsons kind of theory, with objects reduced to (or always correlated with) certain bundles of properties. As regards such restrictive practices, Fine for one, is a regular offender. Such trade practices are of course hardly peculiar to object-theory; they are convenient

neutralisation penetrates some environmental literature; thus e.g. Johnson: ‘Were such an object [a tractor] to appear as an improbable freak of nature on an uninhabited planet, it would merely be an object which was neither harmed nor benefited by its subsequent erosion’ (p. 57).

9. Passmore, pp. 341-2.

in “refuting” otherwise much more impervious positions, and also handy for those who wish to distant their own “novel” theory, perhaps a special case of, or mere twist upon, some historical position, from that position.

Last, and most important, the notion of *object* is linked ineluctably with objectivity. There *is* something queer about a “subjective object” that there isn’t about a “subjective item”. The objectivity of “object” is exploited by Nagel¹⁰ in a slick slide of sense: ‘The private object or sense datum view is an instance of the false objectification of what is essentially subjective.’ But discernment of private items, such as pains and after-images, is not any sort of objectification; subjectivity is not thereby threatened. When items take over from objects, the often presumed and exploited opposition to subjects also vanishes away. Even if ‘... Cartesian analysis ... takes it as its first premiss the alienation of subject and object’¹¹, item-theory can include both sides of the forced duality as items. Certainly in much modern European philosophy, objects do (or are made to) contrast sharply with subjects; they are entities, out there, to be perceived and acted upon by subject. “Roughly speaking, empiricism presumes that the world falls apart into two classes of entities – ‘subjects’ whose principal task it is to perceive and ‘objects’ whose character it is to be perceived. So perception, according to the empiricists is the link between two ontologically isolated forms of substance. But then, according to Heidegger, it is impossible to show how any link could possibly connect substances so disparate, how, for example, a ‘spiritual substance’ could ever perceive on ‘external world’”.¹² Whether or not Heidegger’s point carries any weight (it certainly does not if intensional relations, which provide appropriate connections, are duly admitted), nothing stops objective and subjective *items* from being interrelated. But much stands in the way of objects *being* subjects, and so, if all relations reduce to identities (as is still occasionally thought), in way of objects so relating to subjects. The deep etymological connections of *object* with objectivity, objectification, what is out there, persisting, thrown in the way, will not

10. See p. 207.

11. Levins and Lewontin, p. 264.

12. Passmore pp. 488-9.

easily disappear: an “object” theory that properly aims to encompass subjects and subjective items is resisting a significant flow, and risks insinuating defective if unintended assumptions. By contrast, item-theory can go with the flow.

Items may be objects of consumption, but mostly they are not. They may be valuable, but very often they are not. They are not all alienated or divided sharply from subjects or persons, but include them; these creatures and characters, like minds and private thoughts, are yet more items. Furthermore, process itself and processes, occasions, events and the like, are all items, though not material ones (even if perhaps transformations of material items, and perhaps not).¹³ The term ‘object’ is not as comprehensive as ‘item’; an “object” undoubtedly has some restrictions upon it in more ordinary use; for instance, it is something “out there”, sufficiently objective, it is separable, more or less, it has a certain stability, it is sufficiently public, and so on. ‘Thing’ is perhaps even more limited. The term ‘item’, though it has a tendency to slide towards the linguistic or the enumerable, avoids these problems. All things and objects are items; but the converses may not hold. Mental items which are (de facto) private and subjective may not be objects, but they are certainly items.

All words have their problems, and limitations; all are liable to corruption and degradation, especially if they gain enough popularity. The term ‘object’ has already taken a heavy battering. So far ‘item’ is in significantly better shape than ‘object’; it has 2 senses as a substantive, as against 7 complex senses for ‘object’ and 7 or more diverse senses for ‘subject’ (see *Oxford English Dictionary* entries); it does not (yet) have a bundle of undesirable associations. These are among the many reasons for shifting, bit by bit, away from the term ‘object’ to ‘item’. There are advantages, however, in holding onto the word ‘object’ for occasional uses. Use of the term after all helps to remove unwanted restrictions the term ‘item’ may suggest, e.g. again to enumerated or linguistic objects.

At least the term ‘object’ used to offer that sort of help. Another reason for now eschewing the term ‘object’ is the role it has acquired,

13. A corollary is that process theory is, like any theory of things, a branch of item theory. Conversely, all items can be represented in a generous process theory.

as recently in computing science, as designating some machine-related entity or other. Ontological assumptions are at work again, but they can be dropped, in computing as elsewhere. Then too, ‘object’ has in its favour, occasionally, the way it can function as a verb (or in other parts of speech), e.g. one can *object* to ...; one can’t *item* to ...! Use of the term ‘object’ also gives item-theory historical roots, roots in European philosophy – roots that are occasionally helpful, but often require some pruning or even (as when the theory is misleadingly reconstrued as within the tradition of European ontology or Austrian platonism) total extirpation.

These problems with key words generate much fuel, low efficiency fuel, for philosophy. For philosophy, though far from purely linguistic (and certainly not, one meta-step removed, merely conceptual), is heavily linguistic. (Look at how much turns upon the word ‘exists’, and what *it* means. Differently look at how much of Meinong’s work or of recent Anglo-Celtic philosophy turn upon linguistic shuffles, linguistic distinctions and niceities.) It is bad or good news for philosophy – depending on how you look at it – that words, one distinctive sort of item, as bearers of meanings, another sort, are fickle, with none of the immutability of substances; words are vulnerable to quite rapid erosion in sense.

To return from this first terminological detour, observe that *restrictive terminology often encourages restrictive theory*. Previous theories of items, or still more restrictively those of objects, have generally not respected the full range of data; they have typically imposed undue limitations. A first step in liberalization consists in complete liberalization of items, in removing any remaining restrictions on itemhood. Given the implicit restrictions on what counts an *object*, as just explained, this step implies partial abandonment of the term ‘object’, and further distancing of the theory from object-theory. Objects are but a quite proper subclass – roughly, sufficiently objective, sufficiently public, sufficiently stable items – which have typically been subject to overdemanding restrictions as to the character and type.

In explicit thesis formulation, then:

M1b. While many items are objects, it is also the case that many items are not objects.

Item discourse renders liberalizations *easier*. That first step is not however the most important liberalizing step that should be taken. That step concerns characterisation, or better *specification*, of items.

A further terminological detour: 2. Assumption and characterisation and their surrounds

The term ‘assumption’ carries some embarrassing senses apart from those relevant to item-theory (e.g. religious senses, office or duty undertakings, pretentiousness, arrogance, usurpation, simulation). Even where the term is relevant, it exhibits some ambiguity.¹⁴ It can allude, for instance, either to the *introduction* of an item, or its *specification*, or what is supposed about it, its *supposition* (a load). The term ‘characterisation’, which ordinarily overlaps ‘assumption’ (and was sometimes confused with it in earlier excursions in Meinong’s Jungle), may signify also what is postulated of the item, its special *axiomatisation*, which normally represents what is taken for granted of it (as distinct, for instance, from supposed, for the time being, about it, and also from what might be truly said of it).

The fuller setting of “natural deduction” systems supplies almost all these elements, and thus affords a natural *model*. Such a system includes all of: introduction of items, linguistically through constants or descriptions; their specification, through definitions; their characterisation, through axioms or like schemata; and suppositions concerning them, investigated in suppositional proofs. Each of these elements meets certain conditions, perhaps of an essentially unrestrictive sort, which will be indicated as they are considered, now, in a little more detail.

Introduction and presentation: This concerns the introduction or presentation of the item, (Other notions in this orbit include offering and exhibiting, and ranging wider, submitting, suggesting, putting up, proposing and delivering.) Only some rather minimal conditions must be met; little need be assumed. Something has to be the sort of thing that can be *presented*. For example, it must have a subject expression which meets grammatical requirements for being a lin-

14. In Meinong’s work the matter is made worse, by heavy, varying, and unnecessary restrictions upon what can be an assumption.

guistic subject, for proper presentation in a syntactical system. It must be presentable as suitably separate (e.g. as a separate element in an argument sequence). For perceptual presentation it must be suitable isolatable from its surrounds. And so on. In short, it must meet broad conditions for being a subject (of discourse). But any thing, any item, can do this. It is a matter, should failure threaten, of fixing up the presentation.

Specification and characterization do not introduce an item as such but say what an item is *like*, what features it *itself* has.

Specification: This supplies the features which purport to specify the item in question, the putative specification. As in a manufacturers' specification of a piece of machinery, it may be given by a list of properties. As the specification normally determines *which* item is in question, has been presented, an alternative term is *determination* (an old Kantian term also used by Meinong, which has conveniently fallen into disuse in this sense). Yet other terms are *demarcation* and *definition*. The term 'specification' has the advantage, now that industry has modified both usage of the term and expectations, of not requiring completeness or exactness. A specification can, like that of a character in a novel, be appropriately loose and open-ended (a "cluster characterisation", for example, as opposed to a definition by tight necessary and sufficient conditions).

Nonetheless, though sometimes vague and incomplete, specifications must meet some (again minimal) conditions; otherwise they fail to be specifications. Whatever these conditions are, they are very considerably less demanding than the conditions standardly put up for well-definition. Certainly, existence is not required; nor is consistency. Nor is accuracy nor reliability. Reliable specifications are some among specifications.

Characterisation: In a narrower sense, this gives those of the features of an item from a full specification that it (genuinely) has. It is the correct part of a (putative) specification. In short, characterization adds requirements of *adequacy* to specifications. Let us call narrower characterisation, which concerns automatic characterisation postulates read off description of items, *automization*. The leading idea of newer item-theory is the freeing-up of characterisation, so that it is not restricted to and need not require automization. In a wider sense, a characterisation expands to include

postulates and other requirements imposed on an item. For the postulational part the terms *postulation* and *axiomatisation* will be used, despite their unwanted associations (e.g. with self-evidence in the latter case); there would be some merit in assigning a term such as *delineation* a technical sense to cover the role.

Supposition and postulation: Postulation gives what is taken for granted, in one way or another; it may be simply what is put up, or it may be what is claimed on the basis of reasoning. Supposition supplies what is supposed or hypothesized, in particular about an item. Unlike postulation, supposition is not taken for granted (for the context in question). Unlike postulation, a supposition may be dropped, discharged or modified (so differently can postulation, but that changes the theory). Likewise new suppositions are freely introduced, perhaps within the scope of standing suppositions. Suppositions is always putative: postulation is not.

As the boundary between postulation and supposition is contextually dependent, the boundary is not sharp. That is one reason why the notions tend to be easily confused, and why the term *assumption*, said sometimes ‘to fix what can be said or assumed about an item’, vacillates between the notions. But in a formal setting, such as that of “natural deduction”, the differences are clear enough.

These more than merely terminological distinctions – conceptual divisions – lead immediately into substantive issues, especially to conditions to be met for each sort of division, and for matching freedom of operation.

For each type of element there are matching *freedom* features and principles. In some cases, introduction and supposition, there is complete freedom, within categorial confines. Anything (any item) can be introduced. Anything (any proposition) can be supposed. It is simply a matter of getting or making sure what is involved is in the right form, the relevant category. By contrast, for one at least of specification and characterisation that is not good enough. There is a trade-off, which constituted a problem for old item-theory, between freedom of specification and of narrow characterisation, more exactly between freedom of specification (any cluster of features whatsoever can specify an item) and unrestricted narrow characterisation (all the properties used to determine an item can be truly predicated of it, or more succinctly, an item has all the properties

used to specify it). In the theory of logicistic systems, freedom of specification was generally abandoned. But in the old item-theory freedom of specification was maintained at the cost of freedom of characterisation; only certain predicates could automatically enter in characterisation. This has appeared to make for problems, one of them simply this: What is meant by saying that a property is part of the specification of an item if the item doesn't have the property in question? With our experience of manufactured goods, that problem is not so severe. Goods frequently fail to conform to their specifications: either the goods are defective or the specifications are unsatisfactory given the goods involved.

Freedom naturally vanishes if items to be specified or characterised are already given, as manufactured goods are. Specification and postulation then have to accommodate to given items. While specification and postulation frequently do have to accommodate to given items or preanalytic data, often they do not, and then they are free. The cost of free postulation is truth (consistency, etc.), as the cost in free specification is existence (possibility, reliability, etc.). While there is complete freedom of postulation, provided only that the basic (statemental) forms are met, there may be heavy penalties in usually prized external properties such as truthlikeness. There is no assurance that the results of postulation measure up to externally imposed standards; only worlds far removed from actual ones may be impressionistically or partially depicted.

Already indicated therewith are the two main stages of a comprehensive item-theory. Namely, first, completely free specification of items; and subsequently assessment of items as to adequacy for various purposes.

PART II. FIRST DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF COMPREHENSIVE ITEM-THEORY

Reencountering assumption and characterization

There is a serious limitation to object-theory as so far developed recently.¹⁵ That limitation lies in the restriction of assumption,

15. The whole theory of items remains very much in the developmental stages.

through certain characterisation postulates, of a carefully qualified form to the effect that objects have all their characterising features. These were (sometimes at least) taken to hold *everywhere*, when they hold only within the confines of certain formerly central settings.

Important arguments of object-theory led to the following claim:¹⁶ *Some* characterisation principles, procedures or postulates are needed to supply nonexistent objects with their distinctive (nonintensional) features, their distinguishing and separating features. *Some* postulates or other; but no *particular* set for all types of items. It does not follow that the very specific postulates sometimes introduced into formalised object-theory are required or obligatory. These postulates usually take some such form as,

$$A(\tau x A)$$

$$CP,$$

with τ some descriptor, and with some heavy restrictions upon the schema A admitted, in order to avoid triviality of theory. Or as

$$F(n)$$

$$(CPA),$$

where F is in the constitution of, or is a nuclear property of, distinguished term n . Nothing however forces postulates of these particular forms. Postulates can be *freely* chosen. But that natural proposal can introduce awkward problems.

For such postulates as those of CP form, even decently specified, can lead to trouble in the context of other (perhaps naturally-imposed) conditions and other postulates, and can appear to rule out other less demanding or differently characterised objects. In a generous theory, such as item-theory is intended to be, there is no reason to seek to do those exclusive things.

One typical example of the problems of exclusiveness takes these lines: Consider a prime, m , between the twin primes 11 and 13 (i.e. $m = \xi x (11 < x < 13) \ \& \ \text{prime } x$). By a suitably liberal characterisation

Nor have the prototype logical theories, largely bypassed in the rush of mainstream busyness, had the critical assessment and testing they deserve.

16. Such arguments represent a main staging point on route to the item-theory of JB, upon which the present exercise is heavily parasitic.

postulate m is both prime and between 11 and 13 (i.e. prime m and $11 < m < 13$). But by standard arithmetic (and similarly by Peano arithmetic, which has no facilities for introduction of these extra items), *there are* no primes properly between 11 and 13. The outcome is a bit awkward. If we do not want push further into dialethic reaches, which is certainly not where standard arithmetic is supposed to lead, qualifications have to be inserted. For instance, we could say that while there are no standard primes between 11 and 13, there are some assumption-generated primes, which “standard” arithmetic does not yield or recognise. However, there is no impressive reason why a more pluralistic noneist framework should not recognise *all* these sorts of arithmetic (and others): standard arithmetic as neutralised, Peano arithmetic as neutralised, assumption-enriched and qualified arithmetic, dialethic arithmetic, and so on. Let’s have them all, let’s hear it for them all!

That major liberalisation is in effect achieved through an elementary quantifier shift. The particular-universal form, with *some* characterisation postulate applicable to *all* objects, is superseded by a universal-particular form, with for *every* sort of object, except the entirely nondescript, *some* characterisation. That characterisation will often be achieved through a postulate or assumption framework; but it can of course be attained in other familiar ways (such as a genetic account, character delineation, typical presentation, etc.) drawn from many possible sources.

As the difference resembles that between uniform convergence and ordinary (perhaps non-uniform) convergence of a sequence, let us likewise distinguish *uniform* (or rigid) and *flexible* (or not necessarily uniform) characterization. What is contrasted is

- FC. For every item there is a characterization (of some sort), with
- UC. There is a characterization (scheme) for every item.

In the past this distinction has been insufficiently clear; it has seemed that historical object-theories, such as Meinong’s, are uniform.¹⁷

17. The theory of JB was explicitly criticised along these lines, which had the effect of forcefully drawing the distinction to my attention. While that theory was certainly not intended to be uniform, the matter was not made sufficiently clear.

While item-theory itself was intended to be flexible, the relevant thesis M6 was, as formulated, at least somewhat ambiguous. It read:

M6. An object has those characterising properties used to characterize it.

For example, the round square, being the object characterised as round and square, is both round and square. While the first part could be (wrongly) construed as near tautological, the examples could well suggest that isolated structural characterization operates everywhere. But that is not so; it operates automatically only for certain residual objects, the objects (sometimes distinguished as M-objects) of narrow object-theories, such as the popular part Meinong's theory and imitations and formalizations of it. (Correspondingly, a correct qualification of M6 is to M-objects, or as will be said, to *bare* objects.) Other items, other specifications.

Put differently, a major deficiency in the development of item-theory has been this. Hitherto object-theories have tended to follow the narrow lead provided by a part of Meinong's object-theory and to focus upon otherwise sourceless objects, items without much setting, whose sole "sources" are their descriptions, such as the round square, a blue thing, the present king of France, and so on – *instead* of looking also at more interesting anti-entities such as transfinite ordinals, quarks, and so forth. In such *residual* cases as bare items, where there is no other source to consult, properties of the item are directly reached internally, from the structural description. The round square, for example, by virtue of its description, is round and square. (By contrast, the existent round square is round and square and presented as existent, but does not exist. For items alone cannot determine their own status.) But the approach through such bare, otherwise sourceless items has *distorted* and limited theory, seriously underemphasizing its richness and importance, and obstructing its grander development. It is much more revealing to begin with items with rich sources such as those of intricate mathematics, challenging theoretical science, and high fiction, and to treat

In a particular thesis M6 of JB (first formulated in JB on p. 3) was, as indicated in the main text, wide open to fair criticism.

the originally emphasized bare objects as default cases: structural descriptions are sources in evacuated contexts when other normal sources fail.

In the light of the distinction of types of characterisation indicated, item-theory can be initially separated into two interconnected, sometimes overlapping but far from exhaustive, areas: old downtown and suburban. Pictorially the ancient city coincides approximately with older object-theory, as postulationally constrained by characterisation postulates of type CP. In suburban regions such specific characterisation postulates may not apply or operate (as no such CP operates upon *m* in standard arithmetic). In the suburbs items are characterised or axiomatised through different postulates, appropriate to the suburb. Such characterisation is of course far from new; but it has often been put in illegitimate existential form, such as Platonically-inspired “existence axioms”. In structures of items given by postulation, neither are items being brought into existence (or assigned being), nor are the items concerned constructed (except in special cases where recipes or the like for generation may be offered). Neither a creationist nor a constructive story is being told, or would be satisfactory. Rather what occurs is, as in astronomy, selection of items, from a vast background of items, selection of certain items for investigation.

What is intended includes a vast expansion of postulate theory, as that topic is explained in stock logical texts.¹⁸ While stock postulate theory is based on some form of classical logic, such as second order theory, in fact *any* logical basis may serve. As well, far less formal arrangements may operate.

The division into various regions relates then to access through free assumption, and concerns the structures and types of specification involved, postulation or other. While these may be, as in ancient structures, object-characterisation postulates (of a regimented form), the postulates can be of any sort. As such assumption is free and unlimited, *any* batch of postulates or the like is admissible. Liberalization begins by suburbanisation!

In suburban regions, of which there are really no end of varieties,

18. Notably Church, p. 317ff. A comparison of Church on postulate theory with Meinong on assumption theory would prove rewarding.

specific delineating principles or axioms are imposed on the items involved. These axioms may *amount* to special cases of the characterisation postulate, as happens with the main axioms of set theory and of attribute theory. But they need not. In special areas – such as those of arithmetic, analysis, this or that space or topology – properties and relations of items (numbers, spaces, categories, etc.) are assigned by sets of postulates, type-of-object-specific assumptions. These postulational assumptions *displace* characterisation postulates. The items are those that satisfy the characterisation through the given postulates, those which have the features so assigned. (So each is a *that which*, as some philosophers like to express it: but *that whichery* does not in general guarantee existence, or even ensure consistency.) To be sure, as is worth emphasizing, an overarching and unifying characterisation postulate does then operate; namely, to the effect that the items so postulationally-characterised conform to the postulates, i.e. that which satisfies the postulates satisfies the postulates, a sort of *meta-* or better *epi-CP* (ECP). In other words, in the liberated theory only a more overarching version of the CP will hold good at best, namely a regionalised epi-principle taking the following shape: the items of the region (or the theory depicting it) have the features their assumptive principles ascribe.

Examples of suburban zones are provided by an extraordinarily wide range of theories: not only by most mathematical theories (subsequently duly neutralized), by philosophical theories and as those of monads, of substances (perhaps already in postulate form, as in Spinoza), or of gods, by theories of ideal objects, including those of physics, biology and economics, and by theories of religious and philosophical items such as Soul, Self, Will, Virtue, Tao, Nirvana, Absolute, etc., but also through theories of what are presently regarded as unusual objects – such as variable objects, generic items, dynamic objects, processes, vague objects, characterless objects, etc. Item-theory as a comprehensive theory of items can be seen as an umbrella theory of the items of the theories under its umbrella, with central theory at the centre and suburban theories radiating out. Other pictures serve in turn to cancel limitations of the umbrella image; for instance that of item-theory as like a mapping department which surveys and generally maps out a whole

landscape.

As in more site-constrained terrestrial suburbs, there are both *isolated* individual structures and enterprises, and group projects and developments, including *integrated* estates. In such group developments, distinctive constraints may apply across whole estate, constraints not upset by different conditions upon other estates with different postcodes. So it is with postulates; these may be uniform across an extensive system, but not apply elsewhere; they are so to say endemic to that systematization.

Expanded specification

The liberalized theory so far sketched is still too narrow. For many structures discerned may violate theory-requirements, may be non-symbolic, etc. While in fictionalization, symbolic representative prevails, in much artistic work presentation operates differently, e.g. pictorially. Put differently, the approach so far taken may be justly criticised as over-intellectual, at least so far as it has focussed on access to items through theories by predominantly intellectual means, such as explicit or implicit postulation and the like. Intellectualization is but part of intensionalisation. Access to nonexistent items is also accomplished by various other very familiar means: in particular, experiential means, such as dreams, memory, perception, and imagination, as well as intellectual means, such as assumption and inference. Creature *access* beyond the creature, to outsides, to other worlds, to objects (from subjects), is achieved by intensional relations. The empiricist prototype, perception, is just *one* of these relations. A more general picture involves, at first schematisation, a subject standing in a direct intensional relation to objects or items (observe that reverse connections are important also, e.g. for emotional phenomena). Items so intensionally discerned are intentionally specified. The specification of a perceived object is in terms of the features the object is perceived to have. In the world of that perception, it can have all the features so specified. It may well be that the item involved cannot actually have all the features thus ascribed. Actual worlds properly resist intentional prescription. The important point for present purposes is that nonintellectually discerned items are intensionally characterised; and such charac-

terisation reaches beyond postulation as usually understood. It is even more implicit and less linguistic. This brings us then to the extensive, often *unintellectualised*, rural and wider regions of item-theory. Partly because of these regions, nondowntown item-theory does not dissipate into an expansive and windy postulate-theory. For instance, an existentially-neutralised nonclassically-based postulate-theory constitutes only part of item-theory.

The huge suburban and rural reaches of item-theory consist then of *characterisation-relaxed* structures and landforms, where narrow characterisation postulates, uniform automatization, get displaced. There is *no* limit upon the variety or types of items admitted, or which can be considered. But nor are there limits to the “assumptions” admitted; that too is entirely free. Any old axiomatic or intentionally-supplied constraints are allowed; among untoward results will be that some special structures of items are trivial.¹⁹ Such triviality does not matter; it is to be expected, and the diagnosed structures will be set aside as no longer so interesting. Nor does that triviality spread or infect the rest of the broad theory. Triviality of one outlying structure does not burst out and sink the rest; triviality is well-contained. Nothing requires that such theories are consistent or regular; trivial worlds simply are very far from actual.

Nothing stops mixing of central and suburban structures, as opponents of item-theory have in concerted attempts to bring the whole grand city complex down. The suburbs are not neatly segregated. The result of such mixing will of course be structures *different* from the starting special structures; for instance, arithmetics much richer than Peano’s; and outcomes will often enough be in trouble. But that’s alright. Some items are troublemakers, paradoxical, difficult or wayward. Correspondingly, some theories of types of items are troublesome; some theories are too rich; some are trivial. The more important present point is that suburban zones do not *also* have to conform to narrow characterization assumptions – unless it is so specified, in which case this is a further local feature (and perhaps a trivialising one). Usually mixed theories will furnish yet further,

19. Such is the fate of several grander philosophical structures, so it is argued in Priest and others, where it is also contended that many such structures are inconsistent.

perhaps exotic, suburbs.

In old downtown areas a restricted characterisation postulate is satisfied – some postulate – for the restrictions may be subject to variations. In *default* of a special postulate or assumption framework, contextually signalled, some general characterisation principle will operate, i.e. a principle of the form $A(\tau xA)$, subject to *some* satisfactory constraints. Since central theory tends, especially where natural language and common-sense are concerned, to operate by default, the constraints are usually not specified or even well indicated. But we now know from investigations of object-theory some of the sorts of constraints that are satisfactory when adequacy is sought (e.g. again to nuclear predicates). Most of that investigation has been directed at central theorizing. Special subjects, especially branches of ideal sciences such as logic and mathematics, concentrate on suburban areas (special zones specialists depart to their suburban offices during their working hours). Natural languages (conceived as theories) form part of central theory. They do not underwrite unrestricted characterisation postulates, but presuppose “natural” constraints. So natural languages are *not* potentially trivial on this score (what da Costa alleges).²⁰

The diversification of regions (and correspondingly of theories) under the broader item umbrella is to be expected. The broad theory of all items is not going to be exhausted in a single theory with one fixed set of postulates. Wherever characterising postulates are adopted, other forms and styles of postulation are available and can in principle be tried. (For these sorts of reasons, the claim to generality of the old item-theory was misleading. It suggested a kind of comprehensiveness which is not available.)

One remaining issue of moment concerns *integration of regions*. Two different images other than the city region may also help, to begin. A first is that of a modern large mosaic telescope. Such a telescope has a mosaic of small mirrors each of which is figured to form part of the surface of a single large mirror. By this means a much improved overall picture of distant objects can be achieved. Item-theory, with its mosaic of regions (and semantically of worlds) has an analogous aim. A second related image is that of a cubist

20. See further the appendix.

painting, a Braque painting for example, which combines in one frame many smaller scenes. Again the aim is improved overall representation. But the images are only images. The fitting together in pluralistic item-theory is achieved, not by spatial location (though such a depiction has a qualified usefulness as regards the system of worlds and their access relations involved in an accurate semantical story), but through *contextual location*, location contextually supplied. As in pluralism, contextualisation plays a crucial role; a theory has a contextually supplied address, its postcode or source-code. It could even be said that a principle of contextual characterization applies: that is, which specification principles operate is contextually given or ascertainable.

Naturally a suburban theory such as a nonstandard arithmetic, or a country story, such as *Pickwick Papers*, can be discussed in a linguistically absolute fashion, where a background context is taken for granted. For integration into the larger theory, however, the background context of a regional theory is often taken up in one way or another (e.g. *non*Archimedean arithmetic, Dicken's Sam Weller or Pickwickian Sam Weller), or by way of covering functor (e.g. in Peano arithmetic, as related in the Bible). It is suitable contextual addressing, taken into significations, that affords location in the larger theoretical framework.²¹

Properly addressed theories are readily integrated into the item-theory geography or mosaics. Semantics for each properly addressed theory is supplied through a system of worlds. By virtue of the separation achieved by contextual addressing, these systems can be combined to form a super-system of worlds, a further system of worlds which affords an accurate representation of the mosaic integration of theories. But semantical matters do not end there (with neutralisation of what is now a fairly standard intensional view).

At this stage some techno-logical development could be infused. What the comprehensive theory includes are *zones of structures of items*, with *codes* or addresses of zones and structures of distinguished areas within those zones supplied. So much resembles what might be depicted on a detailed map of a region. Associated with structures are *sources* which provide *specifications* of the items of

21. For a full account of taking up context see SL.

the structures. No doubt too the items distinguished so far, and those to come, can be assembled together in a relational structure, a complex array, giving a sort of formal representation of the theory. A suitable structure would include domains or functions supplying at least all the items just given italicized mention.

PART III. PROCESSING, FOR ADEQUACY, TO MEET ACTUALITY AND FACTUALITY CONSTRAINTS

Pluralization: from theoretical to radical

The direction of liberation amounts to that of pluralization, of which there are two stages, first of theories, structures and associated worlds, and secondly, a more radical liberalization still to come, of truth and correctness and correspondingly of actuality and factuality. Firstly, in place of a single theory arises a plurality of theories, in place of a uniform city centre a mosaic of regions; therewith the already rich variety of objects and items is further enhanced.

Many introductions and presentations, presumptions and postulations, while propositional in character, do not make status claims, to factuality, truth, objectivity or the like. They only make, or are only entitled to make, *what costs little*, other worldly or other situation claims, as to what *holds* there, in the country, etc. (The cost lies in what it costs to demarcate a situation or world fragment.) So it is with many of range of introductory preambles such as 'Let', 'Let it be granted that', 'Given', 'Once upon a time', 'In a faraway world', 'Imagine', 'Define such and such as'. Outside pure science, not much in the way of status is expected upon following through such preambles; primarily in mathematics, which often illegitimately elevates its ideal items (surrogates for actual objects) to existence, more is regularly contemplated.²²

Nonetheless, it is often important, and sometimes essential, to be able to report on what holds of items not merely in other worlds,

22. The option of treating whole of mathematics as delivering falsehoods, not usually taken by philosophers, could help support literary people rather than scientists.

but in actual worlds too (and in logically regular worlds). For instance, Pegasus is a winged horse but does not exist, $7+5$ does equal 12, not 2, Sherlock Holmes was a detective who lived in London, Moas are not the same as, but bigger than, Phoenixes, and so on. For these and interlaced assignments, items and sometimes whole structures of objects are transferred, after processing, when duly prepared, to more central evaluation areas.

Often processing is never undertaken. For instance, theories remain mere speculation, and never get further assessed. What happens in processing can be variously told, for example, in terms of tales of address upgrading or regional transfer to city locations on a theory level, or in terms of transworld travel or commerce at a semantical level. Such a theory as first order arithmetic may require little or no preparation to transfer to a respectable city address (not so perhaps a richer arithmetic which could formally represent its own semantics). By contrast, features of the life of Joan of Arc's unhappy husband (drawn from Griffin's novelette) require preparation before Joan's-husband gets housed downtown, at least where awkward clashes with Joan's lifelong spinsterhood are to be avoided. A typical preparation would be "reduction" of these relations that Joan's-husband entered in the novelette, so that conditions for application of a central CP were satisfied.²³

Even a religious analogy may help. In certain religions, people live out their lives, then they answer to a Maker on how well they have done. Similarly items do their itemizing out in suburbs or countryside, but eventually they may answer to factuality tribunals, as regards how adequately they have done.

Put differently, out in its region, an item has all those features, properties and relations, it is ascribed by its relevant source. If its source reliably says it is thus and so, then it is thus and so. Like what is told in a story, believed in a religion, or explained within science, this may comprise a bizarre or unlikely collection of features, a logically intractable collection even on received perceptions. Down, however, where truth is evaluated, as in an actual world, affairs are different, and more demanding, as (real-world) constraints operate. For example, what Lytton has told on the

23. For explanation of reduced relations, see JB, pp. 268-9.

destruction of Pompeii in *The Last Days of Pompeii* is one depiction, and long received; what archaeological investigations are now disclosing about the city, and the character of the resident population, is a different matter, which as far as truth goes, as opposed to literary merit, enjoys some priority. While there is mostly not a strong temptation to assign truth, factuality, authenticity, and so on, to the meanderings of story-tellers or even philosophers, what needs tempering is widespread proclivity to assign undue credence to the pronouncement and speculations of priests and scientists and various other experts and crackpots.

Preparation of an item (or system of items) for factual inclusion – which strictly involves two separable parts, inclusion of the item in an actual world domain, and assignment of non-compound features – is not unique. It should no longer be a material objection that there is a touch of indeterminacy and some arbitrariness in how an item is prepared where it needs to be. There are alternatives, as there are alternative actual worlds; there are better and worse and indifferent options. Classical logical approaches, themselves not unique, are decidedly worse.²⁴ Consider, for another example, a leading character N in Lytton's work. If she existed then she has a rich array of features, namely those portrayed by Lytton given his picture is accurate. But if, by chance, she did not exist, her primary features plummet to zero classically. And if her past existence should remain uncertain, then she hovers uncertainly, for all that ordinarily discourse may operate similarly whatever the situation, between richness and nothing.

One way that preparation may proceed in the transfer from country to evaluation market, consists in deletion or reduction of non-characterizing (or non-primary) features and compensating adjustment of deleted or reduced features to presentational features. For instance, an item Doddy, a dodo, that is portrayed as existing in Mauritius in Prof. Somersault's work, a bird which Somersault takes to be as real as quarks, is reassigned presentational existence when entered in the domain of an accommodating actual world. *Regularization* or *normalization* of features, data and so on, is in fact commonplace in scientific practice; awkward or wayward data get

24. As is explained in enough detail in JB.

deleted, functions are smoothed or normalized, and so on.²⁵

For a more detailed example, consider preparation of *constructive set theory*, as axiomatised by way of modification of Zermelo's theory.²⁶ Even when Zermelo's theory is made more plausible through some sort of constructive explication, there remain two types of impediments to its elevation to factuality or truth status – certainty given common-sense or item-theory.

Consider *first*, the fashionable existential claims made concerning its sets, none of which are to be encountered in an everyday empirical world. (For example, ordinary collections, clubs or whatever, are not invariant, but can change their elements over time without sacrificing their identity.) Its sets are ideal objects, which do not exist, so why endorse the grand existential claims which the theory advances, especially concerning a range of transfinite objects nowhere to be grounded satisfactorily in existential experience or confirmed in a physical world. There seem to be no actual objects like transfinite constructive sets. To compound evident enough difficulties, all the sets of pure constructive set theory are taken to be constructed, by admissible set theoretic operations (such as union and complementation, powering, etc), out of the null set $\{\}$, out of *nothing*, so almost to say.

In a way, the great sistological beauty of constructive set theory is that, in its quintessentially pure form, it builds a huge structure out of the null set – and so out of what is often seen, from a existential viewpoint, as highly problematic. Out of nothing but a single set of nothing – or no members – a huge structure results (of course it could result from any object). The null set does not exist, according to ordinary unwarped perceptions (hence its effective removal from the calculus of individuals). So how could the rest exist either?

A *second* major impediment connects with the first through the null set. Owing to its classical logical basis, paradoxes of implication and inference are transmitted to the set theory. Some of these concern the null set. For example, by virtue of the paradox that a

25. There is now a small literature discussing this scientific preparation, especially in the context of scientific fraud. See e.g. Broad and Wade, or Franklin.

26. For requisite details of the standard model for Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory, see almost any post-1970 textbook covering set theory, e.g. Fraenkel, Bar-Hillel and Levy or Schoenfield.

false statement implies anything, it follows fairly directly that the null set is included in every set. Every set shares a “common inclusion”, namely the null set. Similarly, likewise counterintuitively, there is a single null set.

Preparation is, like main impediments, two-fold: neutralization of existential claims, and qualifications of claims made to those for cc (classical constructive) sets, or *ccets* if preferred. Instead of “there exists a single set which is included in every set, namely the null set” it is said in the prepared statement that some cc set is (cc)included in every cc set, namely the null cc set.

A second example involves more. Historically important now is treatment and evaluative preparation of structures of bare objects, such as Meinong and other phenomenologists considered. What initial unprepared structures of the sort are like will depend upon what objects, what *sort* of problematic objects, they include. Before Meinong, considered structures were normally restricted to fairly well-behaved possible objects; these usually required little preparation other than ontic neutralization. (Even so there were exceptions in the vicinity of the Ontological argument: the most beautiful existent island, and so on.) With Meinong the range of objects investigated vastly expanded: both inconsistent and radically incomplete objects (such as something blue) were incorporated. Still the structures remained coherent, with apparent inconsistencies such as the roundness and squareness of the round square (derived from an assumed CP) nicely controlled.²⁷ Heavy opposition to object-theory soon led to the introduction of more difficult structures – also supposed to be actual world structures – first comprising objects whose features contradicted what was already taken as unquestionably given, such as that there are no existent round squares, and secondly comprising objects which lead to breakdown, explosion or even triviality of structures.

Liberalized item-theory simply admits all these structures, at appropriate addresses, conceding the now evident, that some are radically flawed structures. Because of remote (nonactual) ad-

27. In one way or another either through predicate negation theory or paraconsistent logic. Strictly there are *different* structures resulting, depending upon how an inexplicit informal base is logically elaborated.

addresses, objects cannot generate non-conservative extensions of what is actual, such as new existent things, or new relations between them. An existent God in a structure at a Vatican address, will exist at that address, but does not thereby exist; similarly for fictional objects, the Red Queen will exist at whatever the address of the *Alice Books* is, but address-relative existence does not entail existence. Similarly for (other) items and relations.

Preparation of bare objects structures for actual-world-inclusion is not unique; there is a plurality of related ways of proceeding, different ways brought out by different classifications and different formal object-theories. For example, one way is given by Parson's theory of nonexistent objects, main ingredients of which comprise, as regards predicates in structure descriptions, watering-down of nonnuclear one-place predicates (nuclear predicates stand) and bracketing of two or more place predicates (effectively reducing relations).²⁸ Other viable formal object-theories employ related, and sometimes interdefinable, procedures. As all those can be admitted in comprehensive item-theory, *it* includes logical space for the structures and regularization and normalization procedures of other object-theories. Nothing viable need be excluded.

For yet other examples, consider ideal mathematical objects characterised by postulation, for example Peano numbers, Hilbertian geometric lines and points, vector spaces, or whatever. Then these objects are characterised by the specified postulation procedure. It is inadmissible to throw on top of them further items with a structural descriptive characterizations drawn from elsewhere. No doubt some further structures including these items as well, can be developed, but it is *different*. Preparation of such a postulate characterised zone may consist in nothing more than neutralizing existential assumptions, if the objects are suitably isolated. If however they are related to independently characterised objects, some reduction of relations may also be needed. This includes suspension of logical

28. For details, see Parsons. Note that the feasibility of alternatives does mean that such basic distinctions as those into nuclear (characterizing) predicates and other predicates are more flexible than previously supposed; such distinctions and classifications succumb to a certain relativity. In any case, their complete rigidity always appeared an artifice.

relations, such as active-passive transformation. It may also include replacement of nonspecifying status-determining features by presentational or diluted analogues. Such preparation should, incidentally, deliver qualified faithfulness. Observe however that preparation is not always feasible, because a structure may be too degenerate.

Freedom of characterisation is not qualified, or defeated, by resistance of actual worlds. It need not impinge on actual worlds. And that resistance remains. But it is resistance supplied through central evaluation conditions, by such features as *actuality*, *factuality* and *existence*. These features demarcate categories that are hard to enter. By no means anything goes in these areas. It is here that *ontology* – otherwise a major distraction in philosophy, and a serious impediment to legitimate problem-solving – imposes its proper barriers.

There will, naturally then, be external constraints on how a favourably-located theory goes, especially if it is drawn from and answers to a field of experience or controlled investigation. The guarantee of freedom afforded does not, without further ado, extend far beyond the theory concerned. A religious theory cannot impose its assumptions or speculations, for free, upon an actual world. Theory-independence or realisation has to be earned or won. It is most easily achieved, as by special theories of mathematics, by remaining respectfully beyond the existent, by fruitful commerce with nonexistents.

Matching liberalised item-theory to a worlds semantical story (also continuing all the while in this mixing of pictures and stories) helps to clarify some obscurities. The central zone is central in its comparative age as part of object-theory. As central parts of unplanned cities usually become established first, usually by virtue of some geographic or other advantages, so a central part of item-theory became established early on by virtue of its apparent explicative advantages. As various disadvantages became evident it has been reshaped and to some extent refined and rebuilt. More to the semantic point, parts of the central zone are central as regards commerce with truth. The central zone is part of an actual world, a rich actual world which includes in its item domain a full variety of nonexistent items.

By contrast, a suburban region may, or may not, overlap such an actual world, or make a contribution to truth as thereby determined. Arbitrary postulation is unlikely to achieve truth, though it will determine features of the world or worlds it corresponds to, and what holds there. That is, noncentral zones usually correspond to nonactual worlds. That is one reason why not much notice need be taken of most scientific speculation as far as truth is concerned. Speculation is like postulation; without much due preparation it contributes nothing to truth-likeness. However, well-characterised items of an apparently successful and fruitful suburban or outlying area may be upgraded to actual world status.²⁹ Arithmetic, which works well for favoured discrete objects is one example; quantum theory which delivers apparently correct results for previously unaccounted-for data is another. Correspondingly a failing theory may be degraded, or demoted, to more suburban other-world status; the pictures it assigned its objects do not hold truly any more (and never did, according to historical adjustment). It emerges then that central zones do not have a monopoly on contribution to rich actual worlds: noncentral areas may also make important contributions.

Finally, liberalisation inflates inexistentially the logical space and setting of item-theory, allowing room for expansion of the theory and significant scope for rehabilitation of logically degraded landscapes. One significant direction for development of item-theory lies in investigation of extramathematical items of various sorts, items violating the requirements of standard extensional mathematical theories for example. Among such very different sorts of items are the following: vague items (which run into trouble with countability requirements), variable items, set-like items (which do not conform to ZF postulates), empty items (such as holes and vacuums), subjective items, items of faculty psychology such as Reason, Will, etc, items of dying or dead scientific theories, metaphysical items such as those of oriental philosophies, and so on for many other sorts of neglected items.

29. A key idea of pragmatism appears here, hopefully in improved form. For there is a neoplatonic tendency to represent “upgrading” in degrees-of-reality terms – a tendency, based on ontological assumptions, that should be resisted.

Formal appendix: some recent criticisms of Meinong's theory

While Meinong's object-theory is not really the first theory of objects, as leading themes had been appreciated earlier, it is presumably the first *explicit* theory, it does advance far beyond anything previously presented, and it does offer, for the first time, due treatment of objects beyond the possible. (Requisite qualifications to this claim can be set down against the splendid indeterminacy of notion of a *theory*). But Meinong's object-theory, though dignified by the honorific title of 'theory' unlike earlier more rudimentary theories of objects, is quite insufficiently explicit on several critical issues. One of these issues concerns the range of impossible and paradoxical objects Meinong's theory "countenances", and whether it is duly paraconsistent or dialethic.³⁰ In this, as on many other issues, Meinong's theory is certainly different from item-theory.

Another crucial issue, this time for the viability of the theory, is this: Does Meinong's theory of objects include, sustain, or lead to an unrestricted Characterisation Postulate (CP)? On the one side there is no firm basis for supposing that it does. At most Meinong gives *examples* of the CP at work, typically drawing from a quite narrow range of predicates, as in 'the blue object', 'the round square' and the like. But all the examples support are more obvious forms of a restricted CP, a principle where the predicates involved are restricted to nuclear or characterising ones. It is doubtful in the light of the textual evidence that Meinong's "theory" contains an unrestricted CP; such a restricted principle holds only for "Meinong's theory".

It is no longer any great feat to establish contradictions, and worse triviality, in theories of objects with insufficiently restricted characterisation *postulates*. One very easy way to derive a contradiction in "Meinong's theory" is as follows: let c be $\exists x (g(x) \ \& \ \neg g(x))$, with $\neg$ representing a wide negation. Then by immediate applications of an unrestricted CP, $g(c) \ \& \ \neg g(c)$. For suitable "negation" $\neg$ this issues, in turn, in triviality, e.g. where $\neg A \rightarrow A \rightarrow F$ and $F \rightarrow B$.

Another paradox which may be derived in "Meinong's theory" is the following (devised by R. Orayen): Let $p(x)$ be a predicate and

30. The issue is discussed in JB, chapter 5.

c a name. Consider the pair of separately consistent descriptions: $\lambda x (p(x) \ \& \ x = c)$ and $\lambda x (\neg p(x) \ \& \ x = c)$. Then by identity principles and a (very dubious) CP:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) $\lambda x (p(x) \ \& \ x = c) = c$ | 4) $\lambda x (\neg p(x) \ \& \ x = c) = c$ |
| 2) $p(\lambda x (p(x) \ \& \ x = c))$ | 5) $\neg x (\lambda x (\neg p(x) \ \& \ x = c))$ |
| 3) $p(c)$ | 6) $\neg p(c)$ |

Therefore, $p(c) \wedge \neg p(c)$. The point of Orayen's paradox is said to be that a contradiction is derived without the use of "contradictory" descriptions. But rather (as in the well-known policeman-prisoner paradox) there are separately consistent descriptions which jointly yield inconsistency. Different item-theories will offer different resolutions of this, as of other semantical paradoxes. Classically-based theories, for instance, cannot adopt an *obvious* paraconsistent approach, as Meinong may have done if pressed.

Yet another paradox is the following: $\lambda p (p \text{ is false})$, where ' p ' is a propositional variable. Upon setting $k = \lambda p (p \text{ is false})$, the contradiction $k \wedge \neg k$; follows. This paradox also has an obvious Curry form, e.g. $\lambda p (p \text{ implies everything})$. Should we introduce numerical variable binding term operators, say $\in \leq_2$, $\in \leq_3$ etc., the paradoxes can be multiplied. More generally, it *seems* that all common types of paradoxes can be derived in "Meinong's theory". In the light of such paradoxes, da Costa tentatively suggests that Meinong's theory itself is "potentially" trivial (or inconsistent), though not actually trivial. Indeed, in da Costa's opinion, this is precisely what happens with the English language, and all natural languages; they are "potentially" trivial. But a restricted CP of some sort is not, and not 'potentially', an unqualified CP – any more than a restricted comprehension axiom, or right to slaughter whales for "scientific purposes", is "potentially" an unrestricted axiom or open slaughter. Moreover, these paradoxes are arguments that only not entirely sympathetic supporters would try to foist on Meinong; and their alleged extension to natural language exhibits a somewhat hostile, exact philosophy, approach to it.*

* This paper expands, revises, and supersedes, 'Item-theory further liberalized', which fortunately never achieved much public exposure. It was prepared

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for an invited address at the World Congress of Philosophy, Brighton, 1988 (for which I failed to obtain travel funding) and for a conference near Bolzano (where available funding was, late on, frozen by a directive of the central Italian government). But this unfortunate paper did have the benefit of a detailed commentary by Nick Griffin, especially as regards distinction between types of "assumptions".

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