

AN ARTEFACTUALIST ACCOUNT OF THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE ONTOLOGY AND IDENTITY OF FICTIONAL ENTITIES

[Kurgusal Varlıkların Ontolojisi ve Kimliğinde Dilin İşlevine İlişkin Yapıtsalcı Bir Yaklaşım]

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ABSTRACT

One of the pressing questions that the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities have had to address is the question about how to determine the identity of fictional entities given their alleged abstract nature. Underlying this question is the problem of accounting for how it is possible for abstract entities to have properties which are essential to determining their identity. Various attempts to address the question of the identity of fictional entities within the artefactualist framework have not adequately addressed this underlying question. This paper aims to advance an artefactualist account of the ontology and identity of fictional entities while paying particular attention to explaining how abstract fictional entities can genuinely have

properties. First, the paper builds on Manuele Dozzi's amorphous account of the ontology of fictional entities to explain the identity of fictional entities. The paper further argues that language plays an ontological role, rather than a semantic role, in the creation of fictional entities. Acknowledging this unique ontological role of language in the ontology of fictional entities helps develop a more plausible explanation of how fictional entities possess genuine properties and how these properties account for their identity.

Keywords: Artefactualism, fictional identity, ontology, language, amorphism.

ÖZET

Yapıtsalci (artefaktçı) perspektifin, kurgusal varlıkların ontolojisi bağlamında ele almak zorunda kaldığı temel sorulardan biri, kurgusal varlıkların iddia edilen soyut doğaları dikkate alındığında kimliklerinin nasıl belirlenebileceğidir. Bu sorunun arkasında, soyut varlıkların kimliklerini belirlemede belirleyici özelliklere sahip olabilmesinin nasıl mümkün olabileceğini açıklama problemi yatmaktadır. Yapıtsalci çerçevede kurgusal varlıkların kimliği üzerine yapılan çeşitli girişimler, bu temel problemi yeterince ele alamamıştır. Bu makale, soyut kurgusal varlıkların gerçekten özelliklere sahip olabilme durumunu açıklamaya özel önem vererek, kurgusal varlıkların ontolojisi ve kimliği üzerine yapıtsalci bir yaklaşımı ileri sürmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makale öncelikle, kurgusal varlıkların ontolojisine ilişkin Manuele Dozzi'nin amorf yaklaşımını temel alarak, kurgusal varlıkların kimliğini açıklamaktadır. Ayrıca makale, dilin kurgusal varlıkların yaratımında anlamsal değil, ontolojik bir işlevi olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Kurgusal varlıkların ontolojisinde dilin bu özgün ontolojik rolünü kabul etmek, bu varlıkların gerçek özelliklere sahip olmasının ve bu özelliklerin kimliklerini belirlemesinin daha ikna edici bir şekilde açıklanmasına imkân sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yapıtsalcılık, kurgusal kimlik, ontoloji, dil, amorfizm.

Introduction

Ontological issues relating to literary works can be viewed from two different but related perspectives. Ontological questions usually arise about the status and nature of literary works themselves. For scholars like J. Levinson (2007), these literary works are abstract entities having an independent life of their own. For some others, literary works have no ontological status over and above the various copies through which authors communicate the works to their audience (N. Goodman 1976). Closely related to this is a different set of ontological questions relating to the existence of fictional entities when they are introduced in literary works. Philosophers have been variously interested in addressing many questions about these entities. Such questions relate to issues concerning whether fictional entities exist, the alleged nature of these entities, their identity conditions, etc.

The questions regarding the ontology of literary works and the ontology of fictional entities are two different metaphysical questions even though fictional entities owe their alleged 'existence' to literary works. This is because fictional entities, like some non-fictional entities, are usually introduced as characters in literary works. However, what essentially distinguishes fictional entities is that they are not intended to represent actual entities whenever they are introduced in these works. In other words, when characters are introduced in literary works, some of these characters are intended to represent actual entities while some are not so intended. Sometimes, it can be difficult to distinguish between what is fictional and non-fictional in literary works so much so that some scholars have argued that there are no literary works that are absolutely fictional (G. Currie 2008).

Questions about the ontology of literary works and fictional characters suggest some further questions bothering on the significance of fictional entities. For instance, it is debatable whether fictional entities have any significance beyond the literary works in which they are introduced. Besides, there are other questions relating to the cognitive significance of these fictional entities. Can they serve as truth conditions for determining the truth of propositions in which they occur? On the one hand, if this question is to be answered in the affirmative, then there has to be an account of how it is possible for fictional entities to serve this purpose. If, on the other hand, the question is answered in the negative, then an account of the cognitive significance of propositions containing apparent reference to fictional entities needs to be provided to show

how fictional entities are not relevant to the cognitive meaningfulness of these propositions. Again, other questions arise regarding how we should understand negative existential claims involving fictional entities or the reality/possibility of fictional entities eliciting emotional reactions in the audience. Questions such as the foregoing have formed the motivation for many scholarly works relating to fictional entities, with the primary focus being to give an ontological account of the existence and nature of fictional entities in a way that many of the other related questions are answered.

One of the primary questions relating to the nature of fictional entities bothers on how to determine their identity. Particularly, for fictional realists who affirm the existence of fictional entities, one of the ubiquitous challenge they have had to contend with is how to explain the identity of these alleged fictional entities given their non-concrete nature. This is the primary focus of this paper. The difficulty in explaining the identity of fictional entities is closely related to questions concerning their nature and whether and how these entities can be said to have properties. Thus, this paper will discuss issues relating to the nature of fictional entities, the properties that they allegedly possess, and the role of language in determining the properties and identity of fictional entities. The paper adopts an artefactualist framework for explaining the ontology of fictional entities. In order to justify this artefactualist framework, the paper argues that language plays an ontological role in the metaphysics of fictional entities, and acknowledging this ontological role of language helps to plausibly account for some of the important data on the ontology of fictional entities.

The question of the existence of fictional entities

Ordinarily, fictional entities belong to the category of things that are regarded as nonexistent. This is why scholars who align with common sense ontology would adopt an antirealist position denying the existence of fictional entities. The motivation for this antirealist view can be explained by the common sense presupposition which, according to Edward Lowe, affirms the existence of ordinary objects based on a direct awareness of these object or based on the awareness of their causal efficacy on other ordinary objects (2005). Thus, the common sense denial of the existence of fictional entities, and (to borrow R. C. Osborne's terminology) other *strange* entities, is owing to the fact that they are neither empirically perceptible nor do they

have empirically perceptible causal effect on other empirically perceptible entities (2016, 197-221).

Given the foregoing common sense view on the ontology of fictional entities, one can then understand the motivation for the various questions that arise in discourses concerning fictional entities. Thus, philosophical questions about fictional entities are motivated by attempts to understand the meaning of fictional propositions and how these propositions relate to reality. However, one cannot understand the meaning of these propositions without a clear understanding of what the propositions represent, or the kind of things that form the subject of these propositions. As John Searle notes, there is a systematic relation between the meaning of the expressions we utter and the speech acts we perform using those expressions. However, with regards to fictional discourse, Searle notes that while fictional propositions appear similar to non-fictional propositions, they do not perform the same kind of speech act. This is because, while non-fictional propositions make assertions, fictional propositions are incapable making assertions because they do not comply with those rules that are specific to and constitutive of assertions (Searle 1975).

It is thus important to address the problem about how to determine the meaning of sentences in fictional discourse. This has been the focus of the traditional debate between fictional realists and fictional antirealists. Realists have focused on trying to argue that fictional entities must exist in order to justify the meaningfulness of the propositions in fictional discourse. In contrast, antirealists try to account for the meaningfulness of such propositions in a way that the existence of fictional entities is not required. For instance, R. M. Sainsbury argues that to determine the genuine logical structure of fictional propositions, these propositions should be paraphrased by introducing what he calls fictional operators. These fictional operators relativize the propositions and helps to distinguish fictional propositions from non-fictional propositions. With such a paraphrase, the need for the existence of a robust entity to explain fictional propositions will disappear. Hence, we can explain the meaningfulness of fictional propositions without allusion to the existence of fictional entities (Sainsbury 2010).

In spite of its alignment with common sense, and in spite of the proposed ontologically non-committal explanation of fictional propositions, there are certain kinds of propositions involving reference to fictional entities that the anti-realist account is unable to explain. Such

propositions include metafictional propositions like ‘Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character.’ Metafictional statements, though dependent on the fictional story, are not supposed to represent the way things are *according to the relevant story*. For instance, ‘‘Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character’’ is a metafictional statement. The proposition it expresses depends on the fact that Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes in a particular fictional story. However, the proposition is not supposed to represent or imply any claim made within the context of the relevant story. Rather, it expresses something about the character itself which is external to the fictional context in which the character is introduced. Such propositions belong to the category of External discourse because they make claims about fictional entities that are actually true beyond the context of the relevant fictional story (A. L. Thomasson 2009; E. Orlando 2008). Paraphrasing such meta-fictional propositions using fictional operators will make such propositions lose their import.

Realist attempts to address the problem of the ontology of fictional entities have come with a number of options. There are three prominent realist attempts that are worth mentioning. First is Meinongianism. Generally speaking, Meinongianism holds the view that fictional entities do not exist. However, fictional expressions refer because there is a domain of non-existing objects to which fictional terms refer. This implies that we can utter true propositions about non-existent objects because the terms contained in such propositions quantify over a domain of non-existent objects. As such, these terms refer, even though there are no actual objects that they refer to (F. Berto 2013; G. Priest 2005; T. Parsons 1980). Sometimes, this position is interpreted to mean that fictional entities have some kind of *being* or subsistence, especially if one is to follow Meinong’s presentation of the theory.

An alternative realist account of fictional entities is possibilism; a theory usually attributed to David Lewis (1986), even though a precursor to the idea can be found in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Possibilism adopts the tools of possible world semantics in addressing the puzzle of the ontology of fictional entities. According to this view, each fictional story represents a possible world. Since Lewis maintains that possible worlds are descriptions of ways the world could have been and that these descriptions represent various worlds independent of our actual world, it follows that these fictional worlds exist independent of our actual world. In fact, each fictional world and its alleged constituents are real and actual in their world. This implies that our actual

world has the same ontological status as the other possible worlds. Thus, Hamlet is an actual and concrete object in the world of the Hamlet stories because fictional objects exist actually and concretely in a world in which the fictional story containing them is told as fact (Lewis 1986, 96).

Artefactualism presents a more contemporary realist account of the ontology of fictional entities. Artefactualists argue that fictional entities are created by authors of the relevant literary works in which these entities are introduced. So, unlike the other versions of fictional realism, artefactualism contends that the coming into being of fictional entities depends on the activity of human beings. Precisely, the creative activities of authors of literary works (Z. Zvolensky 2015; S. Kripke 2013; 2011; Thomasson 2003; 1999). Since the creative activities of authors create fictional entities, these entities have independent existence, and this explains why it is possible to refer to them. It also explains why they can be real subjects of expressions in various kinds of discourse, both fictional and non-fictional. However, since the semantic content of expressions involving fictional reference are not concrete, the objects must be abstract. Thus, fictional entities are real abstract artefacts (P. Inwagen 1977).

Artefactualism appears more plausible than the other versions of fictional realism because it seems to justify some of our key intuitions about fictional entities. First, it accounts for the creative role of authors of literary works in the coming into being of fictional entities. As such, it aligns with the fact that it is through the activities of authors that we get to *know* fictional entities, and that these entities are not introduced to identify things that predated their introduction in the relevant literary works. Second, artefactualism also recognizes that the intention of authors play a significant role in the understanding of the ontology of fictional entities. This is because, as Thomasson argues, it is the intentional act of an author to introduce a particular fictional entity that leads to the creation of that entity (Thomasson 1999, 88-89).

The identity of fictional entities

Despite the appeal of the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities, it is not without its own challenges. For instance, Sainsbury raises a singularity objection against artefactualism to the point that fictional entities are incapable of fitting into the role that artefactualists are trying to assign to them. This is because of the fact that the identity of fictional

entities are indeterminate. As such, they are incapable of standing as singular objects that are capable of exemplifying the properties that artefactualists allege that these entities possess. Since we cannot identify any entity that is determinately Sherlock Holmes, how do we account for the claim that such an entity possesses any properties? What is suggested by this objection is that any realist account of the ontology of fictional entities must be able to account for the identity of fictional entities. In the absence of a plausible account of the identity of fictional entities, a realist account of fiction is not adequate.

In metaphysical discourse, questions about the identity of material objects pose a lot of challenge. The complexity of this challenge is reflected in the multiplicity of theories that are proposed to address this challenge. Proposals to address this problem range from mereological essentialism which proposes that all the parts of any material object are essential to determining the identity of such object (R. Chisholm 1976), to mereological inessentialism which proposes that only some parts of a material object are relevant to determining its identity (D. Moore 2015). Aside these two views, there are yet other proposals such as pedurantism, exdurantism, bundle theories, etc., all trying to address the same problem of the identity and persistence of material objects. If the identity of concrete material objects can generate so much controversy, it is not surprising that the problem of the identity of fictional entities will generate a much deeper controversy, especially for the fictional realist who maintains that these fictional entities have a mode of existence that is distinct from ordinary objects. Without addressing this serious problem, it is difficult to adequately defend an artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities, or any other realist account for that matter. This is why a number of artefactualist have invested some effort in addressing this question.

According to Sainsbury, questions about the identity of fictional entities do genuinely arise, and can be very thorny to resolve. For instance, Sainsbury notes that we may genuinely ask “whether Pierre Menard’s Don Quixote is the same as or different from Cervantes” (2010, 74). If two literary critiques write two different commentaries on Hamlet, we may ask meaningfully whether both commentaries are about the same fictional character. Such a question will be meaningless if there are no conditions available to either distinguish between the subjects of the commentaries, or show that the subject of both commentaries are one and the same. Notice, for instance, that an important aspect of the meinongian theory is the claim that every possible

object of thought subsists independent of our thinking about them. This suggests that authors of fictional works simply *discover* an object from among the available subsisting non-existent objects (Parsons 1980, 188). Shakespeare merely picked one out of many subsisting entities when he formulated created the Hamlet character.

The meinongian is faced with the challenge of showing that the fictional entity introduced by any particular author is identical with some particular subsistent entity whose subsistence predates the author's work – that Shakespeare's Hamlet is identical with a pre-subsisting entity which Shakespeare actually picks to talk about. Even if it is granted that there are such subsisting entities, it seems unlikely that authors of fiction will agree that their works are about any such entities. A similar challenge faces fictional possibilism. This is the import of one of Saul Kripke's objection to fictional possibilism (to be addressed later). Assuming that there are possible worlds where possible objects are, how can we determine of any particular one of them that it is the object that Shakespeare is talking about if there are is no independent means of determining the identity of such subsistent entities? The characters introduced by authors of fiction appear to be products of the imaginations of the authors themselves, and an adequate realist account of the ontology of fictional entities should be able to account for the place of authors in creating and identifying fictional entities. We go on to examine two key attempts by artefactualists to address the problem of the identity of fictional entities.

Intentionality, Amorphism, and fictional identity

The intentional object theory of the identity of fictional entities is foregrounded by Roman Ingarden (1931) who argues that fictional entities, and the fictional works in which they appear, are intentional objects, owing their existence and essence to consciousness. This phenomenological approach to the identity and nature of fictional entities is developed further by Amie Thomasson following her Intentional Object theory of intentionality. According to this theory, every mental state about an object is an intentional act, and every intentional act has both a content and an object. The object of an intentional act may be an object that predates the event of the intentional act or an object that was not in existence before the relevant intentional act. Where an intentional act is about a pre-existing object, that pre-existing object is the object of the intentional act. However, where there is no pre-existing object which an intentional act is about, the intentional act itself creates the object of the act. This is the category

into which fictional entities belong. These entities did not exist before they became the object of the intentional acts which introduce them. As such, it is these very intentional acts in which they are introduced by which they are created. Once created by these intentional acts, they continue to exist and their identities are tied to that very same intentional acts through which they are created Thomasson 1999, 88-89).

One key strength of Thomasson's intentional object theory of the nature and identity of fictional entities lies in its recognition and explanation of the creative role of authors of fictional works in determining the nature and identity of fictional entities. This is one datum that antirealist as well as other realist accounts have had a difficulty in explaining. These other accounts have entailed that the existence of fictional entities is independent of authors, making it difficult to explain the intuition that authors have a significant role to play in the account of the ontology of fictional entities. This is important because it is through these authors that we are acquainted with the fictional entities in the first place. Thus, an adequate account of the ontology of fictional entities should be able to explain this important role of authors when it comes to the identity of fictional entities.

Besides, the intentional object theory is also instructive in its account of the role of intentionality in the ontology of fictional entities. Even if it can be argued that the existence and constitution of fictional entities transcend the intentional state of authors and audience of fictional works, it is hard to doubt that the intention of authors, and even the audience, plays significant roles in identifying and distinguishing these fictional entities within intertextual and cross-textual or extra-textual contexts involving fictional reference. For instance, if we suppose that two distinct authors create two distinct fictional works different from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but involving a fictional character Hamlet. It is hard, or impossible, to deny that the intention of the two authors is relevant to determining whether the two new Hamlet characters are the same as Shakespeare's Hamlet or whether they are different.

While the intentional object theory strengthens the artefactualist theory by accounting for the dual intuition that fictional entities are closely linked to the creative acts of authors and that they are also closely linked to intentional state of authors, it has its challenges. One major challenge is related to the subjective character of intentionality. Given this subjective character of intentional states and their contents, it is difficult to defend the thesis that intentional objects

are the referents of fictional expressions. This is because it is difficult to explain how fictional entities can have inter-subjective expression if they are subjective in character. In other words, if Hamlet is confined to the subjective intentional state of Shakespeare, how can a different author refer to Hamlet given that no individual has access to the intentional state of another person? Thus, even if it is granted that intentionality plays a significant role in the ontology of fictional entities, it is important to explain how this fictional entities can have a nature and identity that is independent of the intentional states that create them. According to Manuele Dozzi (2023), while it is essential for the identity of fictional entity to be the creation of its author, the existence of the author should be detachable from the author in such a way that the fictional entity can survive the death of the author who created it.

To address the foregoing challenge, Dozzi, borrowing from Simon Evnine's lead, proposes Ficta Amorphism to explain the identity of fictional entities in a way that he believes is consistent with the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities. One of the core tenets of amorphism is the view that the act and intention of creation of an artefact is essential to its identity. This means that an artefact is essentially identical to the product of a particular act of creation and the intention of the creator (S. J. Evnine 2016). As such, fictional amorphism retains the artefactualist acknowledgment of the artefactual nature of fictional entities since they are created by authors of fictional works. Another core tenet of amorphism is that an act that creates an artefact is one in which the creator works on matter to create that particular artefact. This has serious implications for artefactualism because this tenet requires that there are certain elements that stand in the position of matter from which fictional entities are created. Given the artefactualist view that fictional entities are abstract entities, it becomes expedient to account for the material from which fictional entities are created by authors. Dozzi's proposal is that we identify a component that plays the functional role of matter in the creation of fictional entities (2023, 513).

While acknowledging that fictional entities are lacking in material component, Dozzi insists that an analogical amorphic explanation can be extended to the ontology of fictional (abstract) entities. For him, the set of properties ascribed to fictional entities by authors in the relevant stories constitute these fictional entities. It is these set of properties that play the functional role of matter in the constitution of fictional entities. This proposal on the constitution of fictional

entities is similar to Adetayo Alade's Constitutive Fictional Realism (CFR) according to which fictional entities are created by the very act through which authors of fiction stipulate their properties in the relevant literary works (2018). The implication of this is that the properties stipulated of a particular fictional entities by an author is what makes up the composition of that entity. This highlights further the importance of the creative role and intention of authors in the nature of fictional entities. Thus, Dozzi (2023, 514) notes that "the creative act that results in the creation of a fictional object, is the intentional selection of some properties operated by an author for the purpose of generating a *fictum*." While this authorial intention is important for the creation of fictional entities, it is not sufficient to account for their identity. However, acknowledging the importance of the properties stipulated of fictional entities creates a path for addressing the challenge of subjectivity facing Thomasson's intentional object theory. Acknowledging these properties is not only consistent with the data on how fictional entities are introduced by authors to their audience, it also shows how these entities move from the subjective state of the authors to the intersubjective state where their existence and identities can be jointly accessed by distinct individuals.

Artefactualism and fictional identity

Two basic elements of the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities have been discussed earlier. First, artefactualism contends that fictional entities are artefacts since they are products of the creative acts of authors. Second, every fictional entity is linked to the creative intention of a particular author. Our discussion of fictional amorphism presents a third element; namely that fictional entities have properties and these properties are those stipulated by the authors who create these entities. Two important questions arise from this. First, how is it possible for fictional entities to have properties since they are alleged to be abstract entities lacking in material or concrete component? Second, how are these properties related to the identity of fictional entities? While there have been clearly articulated attempts to address the second question, attempts to address the first question have remained largely unsatisfactory and unclear.

Particularly within the artefactualist framework, the identity of fictional entities have been grounded in a combination of authorial intentional act and linguistic context. In other words, the identity of fictional entities is a function of their being created by authors when their

attributes are stipulated by these authors and their identity is dependent on these attributes that have been stipulated about them. These stipulated attributes are the properties of these fictional entities. However, while the author's stipulation assigns a number of properties to a fictional entity, not all such properties are relevant to determining the identity of the fictional entity. Artefactualists tend to distinguish between essential and non-essential properties of fictional entities. The essential properties are the ones that are relevant to determining the identity of fictional entities. Accordingly, a fictional entity may lose some of its non-essential properties without losing its identity, but cannot lose an essential property while retaining its identity. This is akin to the understanding of the identity of concrete entities. For instance, the identity of a car is linked to its creation at some point in time by its manufacturer. The creation of a car gives it some properties and while some of these properties are essential to the car's retention of its identity, some are not. For instance, a car will not lose its identity simply because its side mirror is replaced. Similarly, while being intelligent is essential to the identity of Sherlock Holmes, living on Baker Street is not essential.

Even though the essential properties of a fictional entity are relevant to determining its identity, even these essential properties must be connected to a specific intentional act that created the fictional entity. What this suggests is that the primary criterion for determining the identity of a fictional entity is that it is linked to a particular intentional act of creation. This, as Dozzi notes, is because two distinct fictional entities may have similar essential properties but yet non-identical if they are products of distinct intentional acts of creation (2023, 514-515). Thus, one can argue that, while the essential properties of a fictional entity reveals the entity's identity to the audience, these properties are grounded in the relevant intentional act that created the fictional entity. In fact, one may argue that the property of being a product of a particular intentional act is the most essential property of a fictional entity.

Language and the ontology of fictional entities

The ascription of the identity of fictional entities to the possession of certain essential properties appears logical. If it can be determined that the possession of certain properties by an entity is essential to the entity, it seems logical to define the identity of such an entity in terms of those essential properties. This is because the loss of such properties will likely lead to the end of the entity. This applies to concrete and abstract entities alike. For instance, we may assume that

there are certain properties essential to the nature of a table, say its shape. The moment the table loses that shape, it is no longer a table. Similarly, one can argue that if there are certain properties essential to nature of a particular fictional entity, the absence of such a property implies the absence of the relevant fictional entity. While this addresses the problem about the identity of fictional entities, the problem about how abstract fictional entities can have properties remains unanswered.

One general point of agreement on the ontology of fictional entities appears to be that when authors introduce these fictional entities, the ascriptions and stipulations they make are not intended to be about any preexisting entity in the world. It is the very act of making these ascriptions or stipulating the properties that bring the fictional entities into existence. It is thus important to address the question of how it is possible that authors are able to *create* entities simply by stipulating properties of them. This calls into question the role of the linguistic expressions used by these authors in the making of fictional entities.

Generally speaking, it is presumed that the role of language or linguistic expressions, especially propositions, is to communicate beliefs. This is why propositions are considered the primary bearers of truth values (N. J. J. Smith 2016, 83-85). From this perspective, linguistic expressions are expected to conform to certain logical norms in performing their roles. Thus, we assess the truth of linguistic expressions on the basis of their coherence, consistency, or how well they are able to represent facts in reality. Linguists or philosophers hardly ever consider the possibility that language can belong to a metaphysical category, or that language can have metaphysical properties. However, understanding and acknowledging this possibility is important to explaining what authors of fiction do when they *create* fictional entities. If their ascription of properties is not intended to describe a preexisting entity and is not intended to latch onto any object in reality, then authors are inadvertently not using their linguistic expressions in the traditional role. They are using those very expressions to bring entities into reality. The most logical explanation for this is to understand that when authors use language in this way, the language is rather an ontological tool which belongs to a metaphysical category, not a semantic tool. To maintain that linguistic expressions can belong to a metaphysical category is to imply that linguistic expressions can form part of the essential tools out of which substantive entities

can be composed. This is what makes it possible for fictional entities, and other similar abstract entities, to be created simply by the stipulation of authors.

The view that linguistic devices can be used to play ontological roles is presupposed by John Searle (1995, 75) who argues that institutional facts such as money, political offices, points scored in games, etc., depend heavily on linguistic devices for their creation. Thus, Searle affirms the view that linguistic devices can play certain roles that are different from the roles that are traditionally attributed to them. The usual presupposition that linguistic devices are merely semantic tools is a major obstacle in formulating a plausible account of the ontology of abstract entities. Once this obstacle is resolved, and it is acknowledged that language can also play ontological or metaphysical roles, it becomes clearer how authors are able to create fictional entities simply by stipulating properties of them. Thus, the propositions that authors use to introduce fictional entities are ontological tools that bring the entities into existence. This ontological role of language complements the artefactual account of the ontology of fictional entities by explaining how authors actually *create* fictional entities, and how these entities are able to possess properties, transcend the subjective state of their authors, have an identity, and also persist over time and across various textual contexts.

Conclusion

The arguments in this paper have been presented to complement the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities. While adopting the key tenets of the artefactualist account, the paper addresses some important lapses in the existing artefactualist explanation of the ontology of fictional entities. Following the discussions, we are now in better position to reaffirm some of the key elements of the ontology of fictional entities become more obvious:

1. Fictional entities are artefacts because they are products of the creative acts of authors;
2. Each fictional entity is essentially linked to a particular creative intention of a particular author;
3. Fictional entities possess both essential and non-essential properties, and these properties are those stipulated by the authors who created them;
4. The expressions used to stipulate the properties of a fictional entities are ontological tools that create these entities;

5. The identity of fictional entities is determined by the essential properties that they possess.

These five elements sum up the artefactualist account of the ontology of fictional entities that this paper defends. Adopting these key elements presents a plausible background for addressing some of the other problems that arise from the nature of fictional entities.

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