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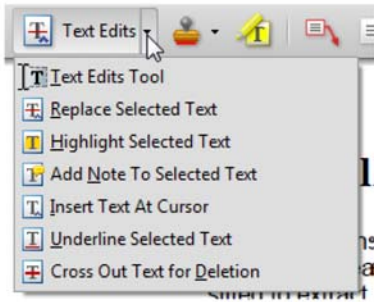
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There are *Intentionalia* of Which it is True that Such Objects Do Not Exist

Alberto Voltolini

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Abstract

According to Crane's schematicity thesis (ST) about intentional objects, *intentionalia* have no particular metaphysical nature *qua* thought-of entities; moreover, the real metaphysical nature of *intentionalia* is various, insofar as it is settled independently of the fact that *intentionalia* are targets of one's thought. As I will point out, ST has the ontological consequence that the *intentionalia* that really belong to the general inventory of what there is, the overall domain, are those that fall under a good metaphysical kind, i.e., a kind such that its members figure (for independent reasons) in such an inventory. Negatively put, if there are no things of a certain metaphysical kind, thoughts about things of that kind are not really committed to such things. *Pace* Crane, however, this does not mean that the *intentionalia* that are really there are only those that exist. For existence, *qua* first-order property, is no metaphysical kind. Thus, there may really be *intentionalia* that do not exist, provided that they belong to good metaphysical kinds.

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Keywords: intentionality; non-existent objects; intentional objects; ontology; Tim Crane

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AQ8 The structure of this paper is as follows. In § 1, I will present Crane's conception of intentional objects as schematic objects. In § 2, I will outline two main consequences of Crane's schematism, one ontological and the other metaphysical: first, that there really are only some *intentionalia*, i.e., those that fall under good metaphysical kinds, and second, that thoughts about the *intentionalia* that are really not there involve no relation at all to such objects. In § 3, I will say that Crane's criterion to ontologically 'divide' genuine thought-of entities from merely pseudo-thought-of entities – or better, to divide thoughts that are really related to *intentionalia* from thoughts that are not such – in terms of the existence vs. nonexistence of the relevant *intentionalia* is different from the criterion I provide, which appeals to whether an *intentionale* falls or not under a good category. For there are *intentionalia* that fall under a

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5 good category and yet do not exist. Finally in § 4, I will try to answer some objections to my ontological criterion.

1. Intentional Objects as Schematic Entities

10 In recent works (2001a, 2001b; see also 2012), Tim Crane has maintained that intentional objects, the objects intentional states, or *thoughts*,¹ are about, are *schematic* objects; as Crane says, ‘intentional objects [...] are [...] objects in a schematic sense’ (2001a, p. 17). This is a *metaphysical* thesis, i.e., a thesis on the *nature* of an entity, or as it may also be formulated, a thesis on what kind of entities some entities are, provided that there are any;² specifically, a thesis on the nature of *intentionalia*. According to this thesis – let me call it the *schematicity thesis* (ST) – insofar as they are
15 thought-of, *intentionalia* have no particular nature. In other words, *qua* target of a thought, what that thought is about, an *intentionale* has no nature.

20 *Intentionalia* are therefore not *merely intentional objects*, if this means that *intentionalia* are so-called *objects-of-thought*, i.e., entities of a *particular* nature, which can further be grasped by a given metaphysical theory. Classical examples of how one can conceive *intentionalia* as *mere intentionalia* are the following. First of all, *intentionalia* may be taken as *immanent* entities *à la* Brentano (1924) – i.e., entities that both modally and temporally depend for their own being on the being of the thoughts that conceive them: necessarily, if there is an *intentionale*, then there is the thought that conceives it; that *intentionale* perdures for as long as that thought does. Alternatively, *intentionalia* may be taken as *abstract* entities, i.e., entities that necessarily fail to have either a spatiotemporal
25 location or genuine causal powers, for they necessarily have either a non-spatiotemporal dimension or non-genuine causal powers – in Meinong’s (1971) terms, they *subsist*.³ These *abstracta* may be further taken to be either thought-independent entities, *free idealities* – Zalta (1988) – or thought-dependent entities, at least in the already explained modal sense, *bound idealities* (Thomasson, 1999; McGinn, 2004; Moltmann, 2012).⁴

35 Yet Crane’s thesis does not rule out that *intentionalia* do have natures; simply, it states that they do not have such natures as *intentionalia*. This means that one can think of objects of whatever metaphysical kind – the *category*, to use with Crane a different and venerable word for such a kind – she likes. Simply, the fact that an object is an object of that kind
40 is not determined by the fact that one thinks of it. So, ST has not only a negative but also a positive side, stating that *intentionalia* have various natures that are settled utterly independently of the fact that such *intentionalia* are thought of. As Crane himself points out, one can think of *concrete individuals* – Jimmy Carter – as well as of *events* – the

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Iraq–Iran war; moreover, one can also think of things belonging to an institutional world, such as *nations* – Iraq, Iran – and so on. All these objects are different in nature, they fall under different categories, but they are not different insofar as they are all thought-of.⁵

2. Consequences of Schematism⁶

I think Crane’s conception of *intentionalia* as schematic objects has a number of theoretical advantages. From the metaphysical point of view, it seems to me the right way to approach the issue of what are *intentionalia*. As Sainsbury (2010) also points out, to postulate a new metaphysical class of *exotica* in order to account for the ‘directionality’ of our thoughts sounds rather *ad hoc*. Yet I also think that ST, taken as the idea that the nature of an *intentionale* is not settled by its being thought-of, has some consequences one of which, as I shall try to show, may not be welcomed by Crane.

To begin with, ST has an *epistemological* consequence: the nature of an *intentionale* is not transparent to the subject who thinks of it, in the sense that one can be wrong as to the nature of an *intentionale* one is thinking of. Consider mythological entities, such as the old Greek gods or Santa Claus. In thinking of them, believers in them erroneously take them to be entities belonging (at least also) to the natural world, whereas in point of fact they are fictional entities of a particular kind; namely, *ficta* that do not depend on a *particular* creator (you can trace back Sherlock Holmes to Conan Doyle and Anna Karenina to Leo Tolstoy, yet the creative processes of Apollo and Santa Claus are, as Thomasson (1999) would put it, *diffuse*).⁷

Although Crane does not say anything about this consequence, I think he would have no qualms in endorsing it. Yet more interestingly for my present purposes, ST also has, along with some other ontological theses on categories, an *ontological* consequence. Suppose we take ST in its positive import – namely, that *intentionalia* have various natures, i.e., fall under different categories, each of which is settled independently of their being thought of. Suppose moreover that, from an ontological point of view, it turns out that, in the general inventory of what there is, the *overall domain*,⁸ there are no things of the category an *intentionale* falls under. Hence, in that domain there utterly are no *intentionalia* of that category. *Vice versa*, suppose that things of that category figure in that domain; then, in that domain there also are *intentionalia* of that category.⁹ For instance, suppose that – to stick to one of Crane’s own examples – one thinks of Jimmy Carter, who is (at least) a concrete entity. Since concrete entities figure in the overall domain, then in that domain there really is an individual identical with Jimmy Carter. Yet now suppose that one thinks of Jimmy’s imaginary companion, what

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Jimmy pretended to play with when he was a kid; let me call it Jommy. Metaphysically speaking, *entia imaginaria* are posits of mere imagination, typical mind-dependent entities if there are any. Since we don't have *entia imaginaria* in our overall domain – what figures in such a domain is just a child's pretend play with them – then there is really no such thing as Jommy.¹⁰

Thus, not all objects of thought are admitted in the overall domain, only those that fall under so to speak to *good* metaphysical kinds, to categories whose members are in that domain. A further *metaphysical* consequence of this overall predicament is that defenders of ST have to tell a credible story as to what the structure of thoughts really is. Phenomenologically speaking, it sounds as if, insofar as it has an intentional object, any thought has a given *relational* structure, i.e., it involves a relation with one such *intentionale*. Yet since at least in the case in which a thought has an intentional object that is not admitted in the overall domain there really is no such thing, and moreover, there obviously cannot be relations without *relata*, that phenomenological appearance cannot match the real structure of that thought.

Adverbialists *à la* Kriegel (2008) would say that, despite its relational appearance, for that thought to be about an *intentionale* when there really is no such thing amounts for that thought to merely having a certain monadic property; such a property can be further described in adverbialist terms. So in apparently thinking of Jommy, Carter's imaginary companion, one is merely thinking jommywise.¹¹ Now, Crane shares Kriegel's idea that, for the aforementioned reasons, *being about an intentional object* is not a relational property.¹² Yet he is not that radical. According to him, when it turns out that there really is no *intentionale* a given thought is about, then that thought can still be sorted out as that particular thought in terms of that *intentionale*. As he puts it, the fact that two thoughts are about different *intentionalia* that are such that there really are no such things 'does not mean that the thoughts are the same' (2001a, p. 25); although both such *intentionalia* are nothing, the first thought is about the first *intentionale*, the second thought is about the second *intentionale*.¹³ To be sure, Crane goes on saying, the real structure of any such thought is not a relational structure involving that *intentionale* as the right-hand-side member of the relation, for the really is no such thing. Nevertheless, one can still legitimately hold that the real structure of that thought is relational. For, although there really is no such *intentionale*, that thought is anyway related to an *intentional content*. So, when a thinker thinks about Jommy, provided that there is really no such thing as Jommy, that thinker is merely related via her thought to a certain Jommyian intentional content. Moreover, in order not to have two different types of thoughts – a thought whose structure contains a relation of its bearer to no thing, a

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thought whose structure contains a relation of such a bearer to a genuine thing – for Crane the same holds also in the case in which an *intentionale* really figures in the overall domain. Although in such a case the thought is effectively related to such an entity – the thought *refers* to it, as he has put it recently¹⁴ – the structure of that thought remains the same as before, i.e., a bearer-thought-content structure.¹⁵ In point of fact, Crane’s story is reminiscent both of the early Husserl’s (1984) and of Searle’s (1983) approach to intentionality, according to which the only *intentionalia* that there are are those that exist. *Whenever* one entertains a thought, she is related via that thought to a certain intentional content. This is the real relation that *always* holds as far as a thought is concerned and characterizes its structure. If there really is no *intentionale* for that thought, that’s the end of the story. Yet if there really is such an *intentionale*, then one is also indirectly related in her thought to that *intentionale*, via the fact that the intentional content of that thought somehow singles out that very *intentionale*.

Now, Crane is right in holding that, at least whenever it turns out that there really is no *intentionale* a thought is related to, the thought’s real structure is different from what it appears to be – it involves an intentional content rather than an intentional object.¹⁶ Yet he is not right in drawing the line of division between thoughts that are really related to *intentionalia* and thoughts that are only seemingly such in terms of the *existence* of the relevant intentional object. For, as we will see in the next section, endorsing the aforementioned ontological consequence that follows from ST in its positive import, along with the fact that there are good categories, amounts to a way of drawing the above line that is not identical with Crane’s own way.

3. Are *Intentionalia* that Do Not Exist Mere *Façons de Parler*?

As we have just seen, Crane surely endorses the last metaphysical consequence, namely that at least whenever a thought is about an *intentionale* that is not in the overall domain, that thought’s structure involves no relation with that *intentionale*. Yet he does not seem to also endorse the previous ontological consequence, namely the one stemming out of ST in its positive import. I said that the only *intentionalia* that are really there are those that fall under good categories; since things falling under any such category are in the overall domain, a fortiori there are the things so categorized that are also thought of. Yet although Crane accepts that there is a divide between thoughts that are about *intentionalia* that are really there and thoughts that are about *intentionalia* that are such that there really are no such things, he draws that divide where the early Husserl and Searle actually put it. That is, when the *intentionale* is

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an *existent* thing, then there really is such a thing, so that the relevant thought is really related to it (via the proper intentional content). Yet when the *intentionale* is a *nonexistent* thing, then there really is no such thing; existent *intentionalia* are the only *intentionalia* that there are.

5 Hence, in that case the relevant thought is really related only to a given intentional content. For instance, suppose Leverrier thinks of Neptune, the planet posited in order to explain the perturbation of Uranus' orbits. Since Neptune really exists, then there really is such a thing, so that Leverrier is really related to it in his thinking of it (via the proper Neptunian intentional content). Yet now suppose Leverrier thinks of Vulcan, the alleged planet posited in order to explain the perturbation of Mercury's orbits. Since Vulcan does not really exist – that perturbation can be alternatively accounted for, e.g. via Einstein's theory of relativity – then there really is no such a thing. Now, Leverrier's thought can still be sorted out as a thought of Vulcan. Yet since there really is no such a thing as Vulcan, that thought is utterly not related to it, it is merely related to a Vulcanian intentional content. So for Crane, it is not good categories, but it is existence that makes the 'divide' between ontologically acceptable and ontologically unacceptable *intentionalia*. Let me reframe this point in more proper terms, in order not to give the misleading impression that there is a line separating things in two groups, the *intentionalia* that are genuine things and those that are just fake things – the line simply divides thoughts that are related to *intentionalia* from thoughts that are not such. For Crane, it is the existence of an intentional object, rather than its falling under a good category, that lets that *intentionale* to be admitted in the overall ontological domain.

Now, if this is the way for Crane to draw such an ontological 'divide' between genuine thought-of things, i.e., *intentionalia* that exist – say, Neptune – and pseudo- thought-of things, i.e., *intentionalia* that fail to exist – say, Vulcan – existence has to be conceived as a first-order property, a property of individuals.¹⁷

In the history of philosophy, two main candidates have been proposed for existence as such a first-order property: either *having a spatiotemporal location*, an idea recently reprised by Williamson (1990, 2002), or *being straightforwardly involved with a worldly causal order*, in the sense of both producing and undergoing effects (in short, *having genuine casual powers*), a suggestion coming from Plato down to Meinong (1971) and Castañeda (1989). The first candidate entails the second – things spatiotemporally located are endowed with genuine causal powers – yet it is not clear whether the entailment holds also in the opposite direction, since it is not that clear whether having genuine causal powers involves being spatiotemporally located.¹⁸

Granted, regardless of how existence as a first-order property is understood, it may seem strange to say that Crane's ontological 'divide'

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between *intentionalia* that are genuine entities and *intentionalia* that are not such presupposes that he appeals to existence so conceived, for he never positively endorses such a conception. Rather (at least in 2001a, 2001b), he explicitly endorses Quine's (1948) stance on ontology, according to which to be is to be the value of a (bound) variable.¹⁹ Apart from Quine's nominalism, this is the typical Frege–Russell conception of existence as a second-order property, according to which a thing of a certain kind exists if, in the general inventory of what there is, there are things of that kind, or in other terms, that kind has instantiations.

Yet this is not the end of the matter. First of all, Crane explicitly recognizes that the Meinongian thesis according to which 'some intentional objects do not exist', to which he himself seems somehow to be committed, is at least perfectly understandable.²⁰ More recently, he has even said that the thesis is true; or better, true *at most in some sense*, for he also adds that, properly speaking, there are no nonexistent *intentionalia*. As he explicitly says, 'it is not the case that there is anything corresponding to the quoted words [i.e., 'Pegasus', 'unicorns']. The words have no reference: there are no unicorns, and no Pegasus' (2001a, p. 25).²¹ Now, whatever Crane believes on the Meinongian reading of the Meinongian thesis,²² in order for the above sentence expressing that thesis to be both understandable and merely in a sense true, in it 'exist' must mean a first-order, not a second-order, property, as Meinongians hold. Otherwise, that saying would be contradictory (it would *per impossibile* mean 'there are some intentional objects that are such that there are no such objects'). Or, if it meant something utterly different, such as 'there are thoughts that involve no relation to things', as Crane suggests,²³ then for him it would not be something merely understandable and at most true in a sense; it would have to be *true*, period.

As I have just hinted at, Crane ultimately denies the Meinongian thesis; 'I reject it', he says (2001a, p. 25). Properly speaking, in fact, for him it is not really true; if you like, if it is true it is such only at a preliminary level – at a way of looking things that at most mirrors a phenomenological approach to reality; but it is not really true, at the very ground level of how things really are.²⁴ Now, the fact that Crane ultimately rejects the Meinongian thesis might be taken as further evidence to show that he does not endorse the idea that existence is a first-order property. Yet for him to hold that the Meinongian thesis is not really true is to hold the negation of that thesis, namely the claim that there are no nonexistent *intentionalia*, i.e., that it is not the case that there are *intentionalia* that do not exist – e.g., it is not the case that there is a nonexistent *intentionale* to which the word 'Vulcan' refers.²⁵ But if this claim is the *denial* of the Meinongian thesis, i.e., its negation, then it obviously preserves the intelligibility of the latter thesis by taking it as (really) false. As a result, in it the predicate 'exists' must again mean a first-

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5 order property of existence. For simply the anti-Meinongian claim
amounts to saying that, *pace* Meinongians, the property in question is
universal – it applies to all things in the overall domain – i.e., it is not
such that, as Meinongians believe, it applies to some but not to all things
10 in that domain. (More or less, the predicament here is the same as when
one says ‘there are no unopened cans in the fridge’, meaning – against a
possible opponent of hers – that it is not the case that in the fridge there
are cans that are not open).²⁶ Put in another way, in order for the
sentence ‘it is not the case that there are *intentionalia* that do not exist’
15 to work as a *denial* of the Meinongian thesis ‘there are *intentionalia* that
do not exist’, it cannot be a sheer tautology. But it would be such if in it
‘exist’ meant a second-order property; the sentence would trivially say
that there are no *intentionalia* that are such that there are no such
objects.

At any rate, since Crane manifestly thinks that appealing to a first-
20 order property of existence is inessential in ontological matters, let me
put into brackets whether he is really committed to such a property. The
point remains that the two afore-mentioned criteria for having merely
some *intentionalia* within the overall domain – Crane’s criterion: existence
vs. nonexistence of an *intentionale*; my criterion: an *intentionale*’s
25 falling under a good category versus an *intentionale*’s failing to fall under
it – are not identical. Moreover, the only plausible way to explain this
criterial difference is to say that an *intentionale* may well fall under a
good category, hence it may well belong to the overall ontological
domain, and yet fail to exist, in the only possible sense in which this way
30 of saying is intelligible; namely, the Meinongian reading that commits
one to existence as a first-order property. So, what ultimately makes the
ontological ‘divide’ is not having versus not having our first-order prop-
erty of existence, but rather, once again, falling under rather than not
falling under a good category. Let me expand on this.

To begin with, let us go back to Crane. For him, the fact that we
35 cannot accept *intentionalia* as such in the overall domain is just another
way to see that, as ST states, *being an intentional object* is no category at
all. For, according to him, in order for a kind to be a category, all its
members must exist. This is not the case as far as the kind *being an
intentional object* is concerned, for its putative members are both existent
40 and nonexistent. Thus, as soon as we discover a category under which a
certain *intentionale* falls, we *eo ipso* have it ontologically at our disposal;
as Crane puts it, if an intentional object falls under a certain category,
then it exists. Yet conversely, if an intentional object does not exist, then
it falls under no category, ‘for all members of a given category exist’
45 (2001a, p. 17), hence it is ontologically rejected.

According to this way of putting things, all categories are trivially
good categories: all categories make it the case that their members figure

THERE ARE *INTENTIONALIA* OF WHICH IT IS TRUE THAT SUCH OBJECTS DO NOT EXIST in the overall ontological domain. Yet this does not seem to be the case. For, as I said before by appealing to *entia imaginaria*, there are categories whose (putative) members are not admitted in such a domain. In this respect, *entia imaginaria* are just a case in point; disembodied souls, entelechies, hypostases and other philosophers' dreams may be others.

Now, Crane might accept this point by simply saying that bad categories (like *entia imaginaria*) are those whose members do not exist, where 'exist' supposedly means the second-order property. If this were the case, then the two ontological criteria for having only some *intentionalia* in the overall domain – existence vs. nonexistence of an *intentionale*; an *intentionale*'s falling under a good category vs. failing to fall under it – would be the same one. But, *pace* Crane, they are not the same criterion: indeed, there are *intentionalia* that fall under a good category and yet do not exist. Moreover, there is just one way to understand what I have just said: namely, that in the overall domain there are *intentionalia* – which thereby fall under good categories – that however fail to possess a certain first-order property of existence. If in saying 'there are *intentionalia* – which thereby fall under good categories – that do not exist' the verb 'exists' did not mean that property, but the second-order one, what I say would again be merely contradictory – as if I said that certain *intentionalia* both fall and do not fall under good categories.²⁷

Let me now argue for the point just stated above – briefly, that there are *intentionalia* that do not exist in a first-order sense – by generalizing it, namely by showing that as a first-order property, existence is not necessary for something, whether it is thought-of or not, to be admitted in the overall domain (or conversely, nonexistence is not a sufficient criterion in order for something to be banned from that domain). There indeed are things that belong to the overall domain yet they do not exist. Consider again Neptune and Vulcan. From the *metaphysical* point of view, they are both *concrete* entities, i.e., as Cocchiarella (1982) puts it, entities that *may* have either spatiotemporal location or genuine causal powers. Given the above characterizations of existence as first-order property, Neptune actually has such location or powers insofar as it actually exists, Vulcan actually fails to have such location or powers insofar as it does not actually exist. So, they have the same nature, although the first actually exists and the second does not. Hence, either their shared category, *being concrete*, makes both of them to figure in the overall domain, or neither entity is admitted in such a domain. Since we clearly admit *concreta* in the above sense, we then have at our disposal both Neptune and Vulcan, although only the former exists in a first-order sense. As a result, *qua* first-order property, existence fails to ontologically distinguish between them.²⁸

To be sure, one may have qualms in conceiving of Vulcan as a *concretum* that is a mere *possibile*, i.e., as an entity that might have existed

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although it actually fails to exist. Is Vulcan not simply a false theoretical posit, hence something which rather falls on the side of *abstracta* rather than on that of *concreta*?²⁹ Well, if one has problems with the example, just change it. Consider Willy-Volly, the mere possible suit made of one of Tim Williamson's jackets and of a pairs of trousers of mine.³⁰ This is precisely a mere *possibile* in the above sense, which moreover is as much a *concretum* as one of Tim Williamson's actual suits.

To say that existence is not a necessary condition for figuring in the overall domain does not obviously entail that nonexistence is a sufficient condition in order for something to figure in that domain. Some of the nonexistents figure in the domain, some other do not. Once again, it's belonging to the good category that 'wears the trousers' in this respect. Consider again Willy-Volly, and in addition both the Platonic ideal Bed and Twardy, the impossible wooden cannon made out of steel (this example comes from Twardowski [1982/1894]). All of them do not exist in our first-order sense. Yet from the metaphysical point of view, they are different entities. As I said, the first is a *concretum* that is a mere *possibile*, an entity that actually fails to exist although it might have existed. The second is the prototype of an abstract entity, i.e., an entity that necessarily fails to have either genuine causal powers or spatiotemporal location. The third is an *impossibile*, i.e. an entity that not only does not actually exist, but also it might not have existed. So, these three entities do not belong to the same metaphysical kind. Now, as we have already seen, *concreta*, both actual and possible, are legitimate entities; mere failure to actually exist does not provide good reasons to reject them (cf. Williamson, 1998; Voltolini, 2007). This is also the case of at least some *abstracta*, typically bound idealities, such as fictional entities, which are a species of bound idealities (cf. Thomasson [1999] and Voltolini [2006b] for attempts at providing reasons for accepting them). Yet *impossibilia* are non-legitimate entities, since we have serious grounds to get rid of them: as Russell (1905a, 1905b) insisted, they violate Excluded Middle in its *propositional* form.³¹ Now, as we just saw, all these metaphysically different entities – *concreta* that are mere *possibilia*, *abstracta*, *impossibilia* – do not exist, in our first-order sense. Yet, even nonexistence does not distinguish among them which is a genuine entity – something that does belong to the overall domain – and which is just a pseudo-entity – something that does not figure in that domain. What counts is that *being impossible*, unlike both *being concrete* and *being abstract*, is a bad category: there is nothing impossible that figures in that domain.

If all this is correct, then the 'divide' between genuine entities (figuring in the overall domain) and pseudo-entities (not figuring in it) does not coincide with the divide between existent and nonexistent entities (a real divide between genuine entities, at this point), hence a

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fortiori between existent and nonexistent *intentionalia*. In order for something to be a genuine entity, that something must fall under a category whose members belong to the overall domain. This is utterly independent of whether that very something exists or not in a first-order sense. For existence in that sense is no metaphysical kind. Thus, if we think of Santa Claus, insofar as we have *ficta* in the overall domain, then there really is such a thing as Santa, although it does not exist. Yet since we do not have *impossibilia*, then independently of the fact that Twardy, the impossible wooden cannon made out of steel we were talking about before, does not exist, there is no such a thing as Twardy.

Of course, it may be questionable which category is good and which is bad. A good category is a category whose members figure in the ontological domain; yet it may be controversial whether one category is really a good one. For one thing, contrary to what I claimed before, many people believe that there are no such things as *ficta*; some people even believe that there are *impossibilia*.³² But this is part of the ordinary philosophical debate in ontology; ontological arguments or other kinds of evidence have to be provided in order to show that a category is good (or bad). Now, my thesis that only an *intentionale* that falls under a good category figures in the overall domain is obviously conditional on the premise that the relevant category is a good one. Should it turn out (by means of the above arguments or other kinds of evidence) that such a category is not good, that *intentionale* would not figure in that domain. As a further result, we would be forced to reject a story saying that the structure of the thought about it is made *inter alia* by a relation to that *intentionale*.

4. Objections and Replies

On behalf of Crane, one may first of all point out that, in order for something to figure in the overall domain, what is required is simply, *à la* Quine, that the kind that very something allegedly falls under is instantiated. That kind must not be a *metaphysical* kind, something for whose instantiation an *a priori* demonstration is required; an *empirical* kind, something that calls for a posteriori search, may well suit ontological needs. For example, in order to positively answer the question of whether there are platypuses, a typical empirical kind, one simply needs to look and see; if that a posteriori search is satisfied then the overall domain will include things that are platypuses, and that's all. So, even if to exist in our first-order sense were no metaphysical kind, this would not mean that it does not work as a (discriminative) ontological criterion.

To begin with, I hold that although *being existent*, in our first-order sense, is not a metaphysical kind, it is a *sui generis* empirical kind. All

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empirical kinds are existence-entailing properties, for instance *being a platypus* entails to exist in our first-order sense. Hence, looking for existent things is quite a trivial matter – it is enough to find instantiations of any empirical kind whatsoever. Patently, moreover, in order to admit things falling under an empirical kind, we have already to accept things of the metaphysical kind an empirical kind specifies. For instance, in order to admit platypuses, we have already to have *concreta* in the overall domain. If we were solipsists, we would admit just disembodied souls – possibly, ourselves only; hence, we would not have *concreta* in the overall domain, *a fortiori* we would not have platypuses. So, even if existence were an empirical kind, it would not ultimately be in terms of its possession that something would figure in the overall domain. Finally, if an *aposteriori* search gives us instantiations of an empirical kind *F*, it does not obviously allow us to reject putative things that are not *F* – e.g. non-platypuses cannot be ruled out that way (I, for one, am a non-platypus). *A fortiori*, no *a posteriori* search can allow us to reject *nonexistent* things. Indeed, as we saw before, it is not in virtue of its nonexisting that something can be legitimately banned from the overall domain.

Here one must be very careful. True enough, an *a posteriori* search can well help us to reject fountains of youth as well as golden mountains.³³ But if such a search has that ontologically negative outcome, this depends on the fact that those properties are existence-entailing ones; thus, there is neither a fountain of youth nor a golden mountain, for there is neither an entity that is both existent and a fountain of youth, nor an entity that is both existent and a golden mountain either. Thus, it is not because they do not exist that such putative entities are rejected. Rather, they are rejected because only things that exist can possess the properties of *being a fountain of youth* or of *being a golden mountain*, so there is no entity which both does not exist and is either a fountain of youth or a golden mountain.³⁴

Another objection to my point against existence as a metaphysical kind comes from the remark that it is notoriously hard to find a divide between metaphysical and non-metaphysical kinds. Tables of categories are hardly convincing.³⁵ For example, I have previously treated *being concrete* as a metaphysical kind, by defining it as *being possibly such that it has either a spatiotemporal location or genuine causal powers*. Now, as we have seen before *being such that it has either a spatiotemporal location or genuine causal powers* is actually tantamount to *being existent*. If *being existent* is, as I have claimed, no metaphysical kind, why should *being possibly existent* be one such kind? In general, if *being F* is no metaphysical kind, *being possibly F* is no such kind either. For instance, *being a fisherman* is not a metaphysical kind, but neither is *being a possible fisherman*.

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True enough, some more work should be done in order to characterize a metaphysical kind so as to distinguish it from other such kinds. For instance, intuitively speaking *being abstract* and *being impossible* are two such kinds. But if one limits oneself to qualifying them in terms of having necessarily either no spatiotemporal location or no genuine causal powers, i.e., of having *impossibly* either spatiotemporal location or genuine causal powers, then one fails to distinguish between such kinds. This is why one must add, as I did before, that unlike *impossibilia*, *abstracta* have necessarily either no spatiotemporal location or no genuine causal powers insofar as they necessarily have a non-spatiotemporal dimension or non-genuine causal powers, i.e., insofar as they necessarily subsist.³⁶ Furthermore and more interestingly for my present purposes, some more work should be done in order to properly qualify a kind as a metaphysical one. For the time being, however, it is enough for me to sketch a necessary condition in order for a kind to be a metaphysical kind: in order for a kind to be a metaphysical kind, one must perform an independent *a priori* investigation in order to settle whether that kind has instantiations, that is, an investigation that is neither an a posteriori search nor an *a priori* search that depends on some previous investigation of the same type.³⁷ So, not only no empirical scrutiny can help us in settling the question e.g. of whether there are fictional entities or numbers, but also one cannot argue e.g. for possible fishermen unless one has already argued for possible existents in our first-order sense (cf. Voltolini, 2007).

So far, so good. Yet one might trace back to Crane an argument to the effect that *being nonexistent* is an ontologically bad metaphysical kind (and conversely, *being existent* is a good such kind). Some of the things he says as regards nonexistent *intentionalia* may indeed be taken precisely as going along this direction. First of all, he appeals to the well-known Geach (1982²) problem of intentional identity: is there a nonexistent individual that both Hob and Nob take to be a witch such that Hob thinks she has blighted Bob's mare and Nob wonders whether she has killed Cob's sow? This question, Crane claims, seems to have no definite answer. For there seem to be no fact of the matter as to whether such different thinkers think of the same nonexistent *intentionale*. Now such an indeterminacy, he also claims, only affects nonexistent *intentionalia*. For whenever existent *intentionalia* are concerned, is fairly easy to establish whether two thinkers are thinking of the same thing yet under different aspects.³⁸ Now, one might take these claims as gesturing towards an argument showing that, since *being nonexistent* leads to ontological indeterminacy, it is an ontologically bad metaphysical kind. In a nutshell, all nonexistents are vague things, and there cannot be such thing as vague entities.

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The structure of the argument I tentatively trace back to Crane is clear: (1) *qua* nonexistent entities, nonexistent *intentionalia* are ontologically indeterminate; (2) if an entity is ontologically indeterminate, then there is no such thing; thus, (3) there are no nonexistent *intentionalia*.³⁹

Although premise (2) is contestable,⁴⁰ I do not want to raise any question against it. It follows from Quine's *dictum* 'no entity without identity'. If it is indeterminate whether *x* and *y* are the same entity, then there is no fact of the matter as to whether the overall domain contains either one or different entities; put alternatively, the identity of an entity is a necessary condition in order for it to belong to that domain. Quine's *dictum* is the reason why it is one thing to settle e.g. whether *O* and *O'* are the same *factum*, quite another to settle whether there is such a thing.⁴¹

Yet I reject premise (1), and I think Crane should reject it as well. If *intentionalia* are schematic objects in the ST sense that they have no metaphysical nature *qua* thought-of objects, or, positively put, the metaphysical nature of an *intentionale* is settled independently of its being thought-of, then the identity criteria of an *intentionale* are given in terms of the identity criteria for entities of the category that *intentionale* falls under. Now, such criteria are given independently of whether not only there is such a thing as that *intentionale*, but also, and more importantly for my present purposes, that very *intentionale* exists (in our first-order sense) or not. But then it is not the case that there is no fact of the matter as to whether two thinkers think of the same nonexistent *intentionale* or not. This depends on whether, given the category that *intentionale* falls under, the identity criteria for entities of that category settle whether it is the same entity the two thinkers are thinking or not. For example, suppose first that by thinking of *O* thinker *T* is actually thinking of a *factum* and by thinking of *O'* thinker *T'* is actually thinking of a *factum*, and second, that sharing the same core properties makes *O* and *O'* the same *factum*.⁴² Now, a fictional entity does not exist in our first-order sense. Yet if *O* and *O'* are *ficta* sharing the same core properties, then given the above criterion of identity for *ficta* there is a positive answer as to the question of whether *T* and *T'* think of the same nonexistent *intentionale*: they think the same *factum*. So, Socrates is thinking of Zeus, which is a fictional entity whose core property is *being the chief god*, while Cicero is thinking of Jupiter, whose core property is exactly the same. Since those *ficta* share the same core property, they are the same entity. Since moreover *ficta* do not exist in our first-order sense, then Socrates and Cicero are thinking of the same nonexistent *intentionale*.⁴³

Thus, it is not the case that nonexistents are *per se* ontologically indeterminate entities. A fortiori, if *intentionalia* are schematic objects, such an indeterminacy does not also hold of nonexistent *intentionalia*.

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5. Conclusion

Let me sum up. Crane's metaphysical conception of intentional objects as schematic objects is definitely interesting and convincing. From this conception, it indirectly follows that, as Crane rightly argues, not all thoughts that are about *intentionalia* involve a relation with such objects; for not all *intentionalia* are really admitted in the overall domain. Yet the 'divide' between ontologically acceptable and ontologically unacceptable *intentionalia* (or better, the divide between thoughts that involve a relation to such objects and thoughts that only involve a relation to an intentional content) is not to be drawn where Crane puts it, namely, as a 'divide' between existent and nonexistent *intentionalia*. For, *pace* Crane, not only this way of letting only some *intentionalia* to be admitted in the overall domain involves a conception of existence as a first-order property, but it does not work insofar as existence is no metaphysical kind. In fact, the right way to draw that 'divide' is to appeal to a distinction between the metaphysical kinds *intentionalia* fall under. If an *intentionale* falls under a *good* metaphysical kind, i.e., a kind whose members are ontologically accepted, then there really is such an *intentionale* in the overall domain; if it falls under a *bad* metaphysical kind, i.e., a kind which is such that it has no instantiations, then there really is no such *intentionale* in the overall domain.

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Notes

- 1 Following Crane himself (2001a, p. 39), I will here draw no difference between intentional *states* and intentional *events*, i.e., between mental particulars without a temporal part and mental particulars with a temporal part. *A fortiori*, I will draw no difference between intentional states or events and intentional *acts*, the latter traditionally counting as intentional events under an intentional description. Let me call *thoughts* all such mental particulars.
- 2 For this understanding of a metaphysical thesis; see for example Thomasson (1999).

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- 3 This conception is not Meinong's. If Meinong is taken as a defender of a meta-
 5 physical approach to *intentionalia* as mere *intentionalia*, then for him *intentionalia*
 are entities that neither exist nor subsist. Yet since Meinong thought that
 objects are given before they are thought of, then one may take him as a sort
 of precursor of Crane's ST (even though, unlike Crane, he would admit all
 10 *intentionalia* in the overall domain). In this perspective, for Meinong an *intentionale*
 may be a concrete actual entity, a concrete possible entity, a concrete
 impossible entity, or an abstract entity, depending on which of any such entities
 is really thought of in the thought involving such an *intentionale*.
- 4 The distinction between free and bound idealities comes from Husserl (1948,
 p. 267), but it can also be found in Ingarden (1931). Following Ingarden
 (1931), Thomasson (1999, p. 89) literally calls mere *intentionalia* 'purely intentional
 15 objects' and distinguishes them from ordinarily existing *intentionalia*. In
 the same vein, by mere *intentionalia* McGinn (2004) and Moltmann (2012)
 mean nonexistent intentional objects, which for them are rather mind-dependent
 entities.
- 5 Cf. Crane (2001a, pp. 15–17).
- 6 This paragraph elaborates things originally said in Voltolini (2009).
- 7 Cf. Thomasson (1999, pp. 7, 140, fn. 3).
- 8 By equating the overall domain with the general inventory of what there is, I
 do not mean that domain as an universe of discourse, as Crane (2011a) would
 be prompted to take it. For unlike an universe of discourse, the members of
 25 the overall domain are genuine entities.
- 9 In order for this consequence to follow, when people say 'things of category
 C exist' (for instance, '*ficta* exist'), such a saying does not have to be taken as
 meaning 'there is at least one C'. As Fine would put it, such a saying displays
 a *universal*, not an *existential* commitment, i.e. a commitment to *all* Cs. Thus,
 30 it means 'All things of category C exist', where 'exist' expresses a first-order
 property of existence (cf. Fine, 2009, p. 167). In the light of what I will say
 later, I add that this is not a *substantial*, but a *formal* first-order property of
 existence: i.e., a property that is both universal and such that possessing it
 makes no difference for the thing that has it (for more details on this distinction
 35 between different existential first-order properties, cf. Voltolini [2012]).
- 10 As to *entia imaginaria* so conceived and the reasons for rejecting them, cf.
 Kroon (2011). In order to understand what follows, it is crucial that *entia*
imaginaria are not fictional entities.
- 11 Kriegel (2007, 2008) says that the same also holds for an *intentionale* that is
 40 such that there really is such a thing, such as Jimmy Carter: in apparently
 thinking of Jimmy, one rather thinks Jimmily. But this complication is irrelevant
 for my present purposes.
- 12 This idea is sketched in Crane (2001a, pp. 25–6) and is forcefully reprised in
 his later (2011b, 2012).
- 45 13 Crane also says that the thought is *individuated* in terms of its intentional
 object, even if turns out that there really is no such thing (cf. 2001a, p. 29).
 This terminology is unfortunate, for if an entity is individuated in terms of
 something else that something else has to figure in the overall ontological
 domain. Soon later in the book, Crane accepts this *ontologically committed*
 50 sense of individuation. For he says that a thought is individuated in terms of
 its intentional content, where the intentional content is something the thought
 is really related to (so, it figures in the overall domain; cf. Crane [2001a], p.
 32). So, it would have been better if Crane had resorted to an *epistemological*
 sense of individuation by saying that a thought is *identified* in terms of its

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- intentional object, in the sense that it is by appealing to such an object that we tell that thought from any other thought. As a matter of fact, he explains individuation precisely in these terms, i.e., as ‘distinguishing [an intentional state] from all others’ (2001a, p. 31). Yet as I said, this is merely a terminological point. 5
- 14 Cf. Crane (2011b), pp. 24–5. 10
- 15 Cf. Crane (2001a), pp. 28–33.
- 16 For the purposes of this paper, I here remain neutral as to whether, whenever there really is the object a thought is about, not only the thought is related to that object, but *the real structure* of that thought is made by a relation to that very object. For reasons to believe that, see Sacchi and Voltolini (2012). 15
- 17 This property is a *substantial* property, for – regardless of whether it is universal, i.e., it is possessed by all members of the overall domain – it adds something to its possessor. For more details on this point, see Voltolini (2012).
- 18 On this, cf. Berto (2012).
- 19 Cf. Crane (2001a), p. 17. In Crane (2011a, 2012), however, he tries to put this stance aside. 20
- 20 Cf. Crane (2001a), p. 24.
- 21 Cf. Crane (2011a).
- 22 Crane (2011a) explicitly states that in order to take one such sentence as intelligible or even (in a sense) true, one does not have to commit to the idea that ‘exists’ works in it as a first-order property. Indeed, he says (2012) that a sentence like ‘the round square exists’ can be both intelligible and even (in a sense) true, even if it means ‘there (uniquely) is a round square’. This is correct, yet if the latter sentence is conjoined to the former sentence – as follows: ‘there are some *intentionalia* that do not exist: e.g., the round square (does not exist)’ – in order both for the whole conjoined sentence to be both intelligible and even (in a sense) true and for the anaphorical link in it concerning ‘exists’ to hold, that predicate must work as a first-order predicate throughout the whole sentence. 25
- 23 As he himself points out (Crane 2001a, p. 25). I thank two referees for having attracted my attention to this point. 30
- 24 Cf. also Crane (2011a, 2012).
- 25 Cf. Crane (2001a), pp. 17, 25.
- 26 Cf. on this also Voltolini (2012).
- 27 To be sure, Crane might reply that if we say that some *intentionalia* that are accepted in the overall domain and thereby exist (in the second-order sense of the predicate) do not however exist in *another* sense, *this* sense does involve a first-order property which however is not ontologically relevant; this property would just be a property *F* whatsoever that such *intentionalia* fail to have (c. 2001a, p. 25, for this possible reply). Yet I would retort that (1) in this predicament it would nevertheless remain a distinction between *intentionalia* that do not exist in the second-order sense and *intentionalia* that exist in the very same sense; and (2) this distinction is utterly parasitic on the distinction between *intentionalia* that fall under good categories and *intentionalia* that fail to fall under such categories. It is because an *intentionale* falls under a category whose members are accepted in the overall domain that such an *intentionale* exists, in the second-order sense. 40
- 28 Vulcan, of course, is just a case in point. Consider directly the case of an *intentionale* such as the dagger I hallucinate. Since my object of hallucination is a concrete object in the aforementioned sense and moreover we admit *concreta*, there really is such an *intentionale*, although it does not exist. 45

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- 29 For this option, see for example Salmon (2002).
- 30 See Williamson (1998, p. 267) for a similar example.
- 31 Such *impossibilia* would be things that *per impossibile* were such that it is the case that *p* and it is the case that *not-p*, not things that possess both property *P* and its complement *non-P*, i.e., entities that violate Excluded Middle in their *objectual* form. Such entities may well figure in the overall domain, as most Meinongians claim. On this point, see Simons (1990, pp. 182, 185).
- 32 For arguments against *facta*, see for example Everett (2005); for supporters of *impossibilia*, see for example Priest (2005).
- 33 Even Meinongians who commit themselves to Meinongian objects such as the fountain of youth or the golden mountain must play here some tricks. They have to say either that the properties involved by such objects are *special* properties – the so-called *nuclear* properties, properties belonging to the respective core of those entities (Meinong, 1972; Parsons, 1980) – or that those objects well possess the ordinary properties of *being a fountain of youth* or of *being a golden mountain*, yet they possess such properties in a special mode – the so-called *determining*, or *encoding*, or *internal* mode (Mally, 1912; Castañeda, 1989; Rapaport, 1978; Zalta, 1983).
- 34 For believers in the aforementioned appeal to different modes of property possession (cf. previous footnote), this entailment only holds in the *satisfying*, or *exemplifying*, or *external*, mode, which faces the aforementioned *internal* mode. Hence, there may well be an entity that internally is a fountain of youth (a golden mountain) that externally fails to exist.
- 35 For an interesting attempt at constructing one such table by appealing to different dependence relations between items so categorized, cf. Thomasson (1999).
- 36 In this very complicated conceptual situation, one has not to be led astray by what amount to points of terminology. Earlier (in section 3), I have metaphysically distinguished *concreta* from *abstracta* by appealing to a certain *modal* distinction: roughly, *concreta* are the entities that *may* exist, so that some of them actually exist while some others exist merely possibly; instead, *abstracta* are the entities that *necessarily* fail to exist. Yet one may instead make a similar tripartition by speaking of contingent *concreta* as flanked by, respectively, contingent non-*concreta* and necessary *abstracta* (cf. Linski and Zalta, 1996). Now, any terminological choice is good, provided it captures the real distinctions between metaphysical kinds.
- 37 I take this way of qualifying metaphysical kinds as a mere necessary condition for being a metaphysical kind. For if this way were also meant as a sufficient condition, it would rule out the standard counterexamples for sufficiency, i.e., other *a priori* yet not metaphysical kinds such as *specific* mathematic kinds, only if one believed that these latter kinds are such that in order to settle *a priori* whether they have instantiations one has to previously settle whether there are *mathemata* in general.
- 38 Cf. Crane (2001a, pp. 30–1).
- 39 This argument reminds similar arguments provided by actualists against mere *possibilia*; see for example Adams (1974). As Crane does not say that *all* non-existents are indeterminate objects, the argument cannot be properly ascribed to him.
- 40 For problems with (2), see for example Routley (1982) and Williamson (2000).
- 41 On this, cf. Thomasson (1999).
- 42 For this idea, see for example Parsons (1980).

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- 43 A similar argument may be given for thought-of mere *possibilia*, since there is a criterion of identity for such entities as well; see Zalta (1988, p. 32) and Priest (2005, p. 115). 5

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