

## MEINONG'S MUCH MALIGNED MODAL MOMENT

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### *Summary*

Russell's objections to object-theory have been refuted by the proofs of the consistency of Meinong's system given by various writers. These proofs exploit technical distinctions that Meinong apparently uses very little if at all. Instead, Meinong introduces a theoretical postulate called the modal moment. I describe this postulate and its place in Meinong's system, and I argue that it has been much under-rated by Meinong's logician expositors.

### *The Existent Round Square*

Meinong's doctrine of the modal moment was prompted by an objection from Bertrand Russell, who argued that if we accept Meinong's assumption that every denoting phrase denotes some object, then some of Meinong's impossible objects encroach into the actual world. We can reason, "If the round square is round and square, the existent round square is existent and round and square. Thus something round and square exists, although everything round and square is impossible" ("Review of *Untersuchungen*" 533).

Russell has apparently drawn a false consequence from Meinong's theory. Meinong's response to this serious objection is to claim that 'existent' (*ist existierend*) and 'exists' (*existiert*) mean different things (*Über Möglichkeit* 281). The existent round square still does not exist. Russell could not see much sense in this distinction ("Review of *Über die Stellung*" 439). It is also possible to put a strengthened version of the objection forward even after, or if, the distinction is recognised. Just as the round square is round and square, the round square that exists is round, square, and exists. Thus, something round and square exists.

Russell's criticism is potentially devastating to Meinong, because it cuts to the heart of central tenets of Meinong's theory. Three

of the basic principles of Meinong's theory are: The unrestricted freedom of assumption principle, the intentionality thesis, and the principle of independence. The principle of unrestricted freedom of assumption dictates that anything may be assumed (i.e. supposed). The intentionality thesis dictates that an object corresponds to every thought or idea. And the principle of independence dictates that an object may have properties even though it may not exist. Together the principles seem to entail that we may think of any object, including an existent round square, and that there is an object corresponding to this thought, and that this object has properties (i.e. really is round, really is square, and really is existent). And, unfortunately for Meinong, this seems to entail that there is something that exists and is round and square. This is, of course, false.

What did Meinong mean when he distinguished 'being existent' and 'exists'? Meinong was, understandably, very concerned that his theory not have the consequence that one can simply imagine things into existence. And at the same time, he wanted his theory to capture the fact that when we imagine things to be a certain way, the object of our imagination has the properties we imagine it to have. The distinction was introduced to reconcile these two *desiderata*, since when we imagine that something exists, say an existing round square, it doesn't get imagined into existence. 'Being existent' and 'exists' are two strengths of existence, the former a watered-down (*depotenziert*) version of the latter. What is missing from the former could be informally called 'oomph,' or as Meinong put it, the modal moment. The modal moment is what separates the property that the existent round square that we imagine has from the property it would have if it actually existed. It is an artificial distinction and although Meinong tried to claim some evidence of the distinction in normal linguistic practice (*Über Möglichkeit* 279), even he admitted that it was weak (281).<sup>1</sup> Introducing this distinction allows Meinong to retain what Routley called the Characterisation postulate: an object has whatever properties it is assumed to have. But introducing the distinction also forced Meinong to restrain what we are

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1. In fact, sometimes he ignored his own distinction. On page 281 of *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, „das existierende A existiert“ (the existing A exists) is not an analytic judgement, because the predicate 'exists' is not contained in the subject 'existing'. But the very same judgement is called analytic on page 718 of the same book, and hence true, but is said to concern not genuine existence, but merely existence that has the modal moment missing from it.

free to assume. You can't assume that an object exists, although you can assume that it is existent.

Dale Jacquette discusses Meinong's response to Russell's objection concluding that Meinong should not have distinguished between 'existent' and 'existing' (85). According to Jacquette, the principle of unrestricted freedom of assumption, does not need to be restricted, provided that the principle of independence and the characterisation postulate are interpreted so that they only apply to nuclear properties of objects. We are free to assume whatever we like, but any object we assume will only have the nuclear properties we assume it to have. Once this restriction is in place, we cannot think of an existent round square, although we can still think of a round square. Jacquette's response treats 'existent' and 'exists' as two words for the same extra-nuclear property of existence. According to Jacquette, Meinong's (and Twardowski's) distinction between the content and object of a mental act provides all the material we need to explain why we thought we could assume an existent round square (89). The so-called content of a mental act is that (intrinsic) part of it that assures that (a) it differs from another act of the same type (i.e. distinguishes one hope from other hopes, and desires from other desires etc.); and, (b), brings it about that the mental act is intentionally directed at its object. But two distinct mental states can be about the same object, and can be directed at it in virtue of different contents. Twardowski's example is that the content 'the city on the site of the ancient Roman city of Juvavum' and the content 'the birthplace of Mozart' each pick out the same object, namely Salzburg. We could also use the contents 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' to defend the same conclusion. Jacquette suggests that the content/object distinction could be used in the case of the round square/the existent round square. The ideas differ in content, but designate the same object, viz. the round square. It would follow that the existent round square is round and square, but not existent. Obviously, this solution can be used to defend Meinong from the strengthened version of Russell's objection: the round square that exists is round and square but doesn't exist.<sup>2</sup>

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2. It could be objected that the content/object distinction could be exploited to get rid of the whole realm of non-entities. We would need only one non-existent entity and, for example, both 'Pegasus' and 'Cerberus' could refer to it. This won't do, however, because intuitively 'Pegasus = Cerberus' is false, but it would be true on the above proposal.

### *The Nuclear/Extra-Nuclear Property Distinction*

Jacquette's explanation utilises a distinction that has become established in contemporary discussion of Meinong's philosophy. According to some commentators,<sup>3</sup> Meinong distinguished so-called nuclear properties that characterise the nature of an object, from so-called extra-nuclear properties of objects that do not. I am not sure that Meinong distinguishes between *kinds of properties*. My uncertainty is mainly due to the fact that Meinong's discussion is largely carried out in terms of circumstances (*Objektive*) rather than objects and their properties. A circumstance is an object's having properties.<sup>4</sup> Objects and properties should both be thought of as examples of Meinong's *objecta*, in my view. The nuclear/extra-nuclear distinction plays a vital role in modern logical re-constructions of Meinong's theory, but Meinong himself does not explicitly use it.<sup>5</sup> It is exceedingly difficult to say how he would have expressed himself in contemporary terminology. A distinction is introduced into Meinong's work in *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* as follows "Therefore, I propose to call all the constitutive and consequent determinations 'constitutory' (nuclear) and to call the remainder 'non-constitutory' (extra-nuclear)" (176—my translation)<sup>6</sup>. Meinong is introducing his own terminology so this translation contains a little invention, but it is possible to say a few more words in explanation. So-called consequent determinations follow from so-called constitutive ones. For example, it is a constitutive determination of a red ball that it is red, and it is a consequent one that it is coloured. These then, are examples of constitutory determinations. Constitutory determinations are retained as an object is further determined. They are passed on from genus to species, so to speak.

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3. For example Jacquette (*Meinongian Logic*), Lambert (*Meinong*), Parsons (*Nonexistent Objects*), and Routley (*Exploring Meinong's Jungle*).

4. Throughout this paper, I speak of Meinong's *Seinsobjektive* as existential circumstances, and his *Soseinsobjektive* as predicative circumstances.

5. The cited source of the distinction (cited, e.g. by Lambert (*Meinong* 22), and Routley (*Exploring Meinong's Jungle* 265)), is Meinong's *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*. However, apart from introducing the distinction, not without ambiguity, on page 176 he only uses it on pages 177–8 and 190, and only to say that extra-nuclear properties obey the law of the excluded middle. This is not to say, of course, that Meinong would not have approved of the distinction being put to other uses.

6. Originally as follows: "Ich schlage darum für die Gesamtheit der konstitutiven und konsekutiven Bestimmungen die Benennung „konstitutorische“, für die übrigen die Benennung „außerkonstitutorische Bestimmungen“ vor."

For example, a triangle has three sides. When this triangle is further determined, say, it is determined to be an isosceles triangle, the initial determination of three-sided-ness is retained (*Über Möglichkeit* 176). A non-constitutory determination does not behave this way (by definition). Imagine something that has only the property of being red; (a red thing). It has only one property so it is simple. This determination ‘a red thing is simple’ is non-constitutory, since when the red thing is further determined, say it becomes an ivory red ball, it is no longer simple. Also, that a red thing is simple cannot be a constitutory determination, since then the red thing would be both red and simple, and thus complex rather than simple. Also, Meinong tells us that whether something is determined with respect to a particular quality is also a non-constitutory determination. So for example in the judgement ‘Lying is immoral’ we have a case of constitutory determination, whereas in ‘Yellow doesn’t admit of a determination with respect to morality’ (i.e. ‘Yellow is amoral’) we have a non-constitutory determination. Vagueness is surely another example of a non-constitutory determination, since something is vague when it is insufficiently determined with respect to some quality, and becomes less and less vague (more and more determinate) the further it is determined.

So far as I can tell, nothing in the talk of ‘determinations’ requires that there be two distinct kinds of *properties* (constitutory vs. non-constitutory). Couldn’t there be different predicative relations, one constitutory the other non-constitutory, into which properties and objects may enter? This needn’t be decided here.<sup>7</sup> It *can* be decided

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7. Meinong does talk about properties at one point: “*E. Mally hat auf die wichtige Tatsache hingewiesen, daß die Gegenstände Eigenschaften aufweisen, die ihnen weder im gewöhnlichem Sinne konstitutiv noch im Hinblick auf diese konstitutiven Bestimmungen konsekutiv sind*” (*Über Möglichkeit* 175). This statement certainly encourages the interpretation that the constitutory/non-constitutory distinction applies to the properties themselves rather than the mode of predication, because he specifically talks about *Eigenschaften*. It is, however, the only place I have found where Meinong is explicit, and it seems strange that he would so frequently use ‘*Bestimmung*’ when he could use ‘*Eigenschaft*’ or ‘*Attribut*’ if that was what he really intended. On the other hand, Meinong also uses ‘*konstitutive*’ on an occasion where the property-interpretation as opposed to the mode of predication-interpretation seems quite strained: “*Hinsichtlich jeder [...] Soseinsbestimmung liegt es [...] in meiner Macht, durch angemessenes Meinen einen Gegenstand herauszugreifen, dem die betreffende Bestimmung tatsächlich zukommt; und dieses konstitutive Zukommen zu konstatieren, ist die Aufgabe des (Kantschen) analytischen Urteils*” (*Über Möglichkeit* 282). Here, although ‘*Bestimmung*’ seems to mean ‘property,’ ‘*konstitutiv*’ applies to the ‘*Zukommen*’, i.e. to the having of the properties. Castaneda (“Language and the Structure of the World”), Rapaport

here that the distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties does not coincide with the distinction between essential and accidental properties. Real objects, such as my desk, are completely determined according to Meinong (*Über Möglichkeit* 179), in the sense that it is determined with respect to every property whether or not my desk has it (by the principle of the excluded middle, which Meinong accepts regarding real objects). In the main, these will be constitutory determinations, or, if we like, my desk's nuclear properties (the exceptions will be e.g. that my desk is complex, that it is amoral, etc., which are non-constitutory determinations). But not all of these nuclear properties of my desk will be essential to it. Currently, I work at a brown desk, but it is not essentially brown. There is a great danger of confusing Meinong's constitutory/non-constitutory distinction with the distinction between essential and merely accidental properties. I have to disagree with Lambert, for example, who says that the nature of an object is constituted by all its nuclear properties (18). The very most one could say is that an object's necessary properties are constitutory, i.e. that an object's nature is constituted *only* by its nuclear properties.

As far as I can tell, there is very little connection in *Über Möglichkeit* between the constitutory/non-constitutory distinction and the modal moment. I have not found them occurring in the same sentence. Yet other commentators believe that there is an intimate connection. According to, for example, Parsons (44), or Jacquette (82), Meinong also thought that to each extra-nuclear property (with the exception of the modal moment itself) there corresponds a "watered-down" nuclear version of that property. As was said above, Jacquette would eliminate the modal moment from Meinong's object-theory in favour of the nuclear/extra-nuclear distinction. Parsons thinks that the modal moment helps explain the nuclear/extra-nuclear distinction. Watered-down versions of extra-nuclear properties are distinguished from the strong versions because they lack the modal moment. I am quite sure Parsons and Jacquette are mistaken. While Meinong did discern full-strength and watered-down varieties of (an object's) existence, there is no reason to suppose that one of these is nuclear and the other is extra-nuclear.

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("Meinongian Theories and a Russellian Paradox"), and Zalta (*Intensional Logic*) have all explored the 'two modes of predication' interpretation of Meinong's distinction.

### *Mish'alani's Objection to Object-Theory*

James K Mish'alani presents an argument that resembles Russell's objection to object-theory. Mish'alani wishes to reject the view that when you think about something there is always something that you are thinking about (185). Nevertheless, I will remove this particular emphasis from Mish'alani's objection and reconstruct it along Russellian lines as follows:<sup>8</sup>

If the assassin of Abraham Lincoln assassinated Abraham Lincoln, the assassin of Franklin D. Roosevelt assassinated Franklin D. Roosevelt. Thus something assassinated Franklin D. Roosevelt, although Franklin D. Roosevelt was not assassinated but in fact died of natural causes.

Both Parsons and Routley would object to the transition from "something assassinated Franklin D. Roosevelt," to "Franklin D. Roosevelt was assassinated." This is also the objection that Mish'alani anticipates. Mish'alani argues that the transition is supported by what he calls the principle of the converse, and what Parsons and Routley call passive conversion. The principle of passive conversion states that for any genuine relation, *R*, and any objects *x* and *y*, a statement in the active voice such that *x R-ed y* is true if and only if a statement in the passive voice such that *y is/was R-ed by x* is true. For example 'John kissed Mary' is true if and only if 'Mary was kissed by John' is true. *Prima facie*, this principle also holds in intentional contexts such as 'John thought about Mary' is true if and only if 'Mary was thought about by John.' Note that the principle of passive conversion is not the same as the property of symmetry possessed by some relations. The principle of passive conversion holds even in the case of non-symmetrical relations such as '... thought about ...'

The principle of passive conversion is not a logical principle, since it principally relates to grammatical structure, which is not commonly within the purview of logic (the grammatical features of particular natural languages being their own idiosyncratic affair). It is very fortunate for opponents of Meinong that the principle of passive conversion is not a logical principle, since, given the several extant proofs of soundness and completeness for Meinongian theories, no objection based purely

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8. Mish'alani is, I believe, the source of the assassin of F.D.R. example. The reconstruction follows the form of Russell's existent round square objection at the start of this article.

on logical grounds can refute Meinong. Since passive conversion is not a logical principle it is optional whether one chooses to incorporate the principle into one's logical system, but, on the face of it, there is good reason to believe it is true. The passive voice and the active voice are generally thought to be alike in meaning in the sense of conveying the same literal information. Any differences between them are thought to be merely stylistic (This was Frege's line in *Begriffsschrift* (§3), for example). If they are regarded as alike in meaning, there should be no difference in truth value.

Routley rejects passive conversion (267).<sup>9</sup> Parsons rejects it too (59). Passive conversion is not universally valid, but holds for certain only for relations between existent entities. When the *relata* are mixed, or are both non-existent, then passive conversion may fail. If I understand him correctly, Parsons would go a couple of steps further than Routley and do away with the relation between F.D.R. and his assassin,<sup>10</sup> instead talking about the relational properties of F.D.R and his assassin. Relational properties are formed in Parsons' system by means of a 'plugging up' function that takes n-place predicates and turns them into n-1-place predicates by plugging the k<sup>th</sup> place of the predicate with a singular term (where  $1 \leq k \leq n$ ). Thus, for example, plugging up the second place of '... assassinated ...' with 'F.D.R.' turns the relation '... assassinated ...' into the relational property '... assassinated F.D.R.' If we speak in terms of relational properties instead of relations, we can say that there is an assassin of F.D.R. because some item in the domain has the property of assassinating F.D.R., in spite of the fact that F.D.R. does not have any of the relational properties attained by plugging up the first place of '... assassinated ...' by a singular term.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Routley rejects passive conversion, but not as a response to Mish'alani's argument, but rather in response to one of his own concerning the husband of Joan of Arc. According to Routley, the real difficulty with Mish'alani's argument is that it relies on an unrestricted characterisation postulate (1980, p.472), which according to Routley Meinong cannot accept. The unrestricted characterisation postulate Routley rejects says "The  $\phi$   $\phi$ s", whatever  $\phi$  may be. According to Routley, it is necessary to restrict the properties that may be substitution instances of  $\phi$ . Only characterising, i.e. constitutory properties may be used. As an objection against Mish'alani, this is hardly fair since being an assassin of F.D.R. is a constitutory property. It does not seem to me that Routley proves that Mish'alani relies on an unrestricted characterisation postulate, and I do not think Mish'alani does.

10. This is what I suspect Parsons would do based on other things he has said. For Parsons' views of relational properties see *Nonexistent Objects*, and "Meinongian Semantics Generalised."

11. Although Parsons' approach is acceptable as a formal solution, it is completely

Meinong didn't consider Mish'alani's objection. I don't think Meinong would have accepted the Parsons/Routley dodge of dropping passive conversion. Meinong does not need to. There is another option available to Meinong that sits well with Meinong's other commitments. In my opinion, Meinong would have said that we can not really think about the assassin of F.D.R.<sup>12</sup> What we are dealing with in the case of the assassin of F.D.R. is a non-actual, non-existent object that threatens to force its way into the actual course of events just by our thinking about it. It is, in this regard, just like Russell's existent round square. I suggest that Meinong's exit strategy in the case of Russell's existent round square is also available in the case of the assassin of F.D.R.; namely the modal moment.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Role of the Modal Moment*

It is necessary to review Meinong's reasoning about the modal moment.

With respect to every particular or so to speak conventional predicative determination, it lies within my power, due to the principle of freedom of assumption, via an appropriate intention, to single out an object that really has the determination concerned; and stating this constitutive relationship is the exercise of the (Kantian) analytic judgement. With a grain of salt,

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without intuitive backing. I think it actually undermines the identification, even for merely exploratory purposes, of a property with its extension. The extension of '... assassinates ...' will be a set of ordered pairs, e.g. {<J.W. Booth, Abraham Lincoln>, <L.H. Oswald, J.F. Kennedy>, <J.Ruby, L.H. Oswald>, ...} and it will have no ordered pair of which the second member is F.D.Roosevelt. On the other hand the extension of '... assassinated F.D.R.' will be a set of ordered pairs such that F.D.Roosevelt is the second member of every pair. There is no formal inconsistency. Outrageously, in my view, '... assassinates F.D.R.' may be non-empty even though '... assassinates ...' contains no member pair whose second part is F.D.R.

12. I am not going to distinguish between (1) We don't *really* think about the assassin of F.D.R. / the existent round square, etc. and (2) We think about an object that isn't *really* the assassin of F.D.R. / the existent round square, etc. I think this is acceptable given the fairly loose meaning of 'really'. (2) seems to me to be a plausible elucidation of what is meant by (1), and proving (1) undermines Mish'alani's argument.

13. Since I do not wish to deny the principle of passive conversion, it is not possible to follow Jacqueline (above) and rely on the content/object distinction to solve the F.D.R. problem as we solved the existent round square problem. This is because assassinating F.D.R. is a characterising property. Restricting the principle of independence to characterising properties as Jacqueline suggests won't prevent us from imagining the assassin of F.D.R.

I can also handle Being (Existence or Subsistence) on the tails of predicative determinations; but this “grain”— perhaps a disproportionately meagre unit for the significance of the difference— makes itself felt in that it is in no way within my power to also really meet a factually existing or subsisting object with the observed property. Much more exactly, my power inevitably falls short of perfection here by the modal moment. So, what I in truth grasp, viewed from the exceptional case to be returned to immediately, is not the factually existing object but rather at best an object in an existential circumstance of maximum grade. My freedom of assumption finds a limit in anything beyond that, since anything beyond that unconditionally cannot be more acceptably apprehended. More indeed than I can acceptably apprehend also cannot be contained in the predicates of an analytic judgement. So the object “round square of maximum grade of being” trivially has the maximum grade of being, but whoever says “the round square is or exists” contends more than that, more than he can pack into the subject of the analytic judgement by assumption, and therefore more too than he is entitled to transfer to the predicate with the help of the judgement. (*Über Möglichkeit* 282—my translation)<sup>14</sup>

Meinong states here that in the normal case of intending, an assumption singles out the intended object on the basis of its characteristics, and these characteristics can into be analytically predicated of the object. The same principle applies with a grain of salt when the one of the

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14. *Hinsichtlich jeder eigentlichen oder sozusagen gewöhnlichen Soseinsbestimmung liegt es nach dem Prinzip von der Annahmefreiheit in meiner Macht, durch angemessenes Meinen einen Gegenstand herauszugreifen, dem die betreffende Bestimmung tatsächlich zukommt; und dieses konstitutive Zukommen zu konstatieren, ist die Aufgabe des (Kantschen) analytischen Urteils. Auch das Sein (Existenz oder Bestand) kann ich cum grano salis auf dem Fuße einer Soseinsbestimmung behandeln; aber dieses „granum“—vielleicht ein unverhältnismäßig geringer Gewichtsansatz, für die Bedeutung des Unterschiedes— macht sich eben darin geltend, daß es hier keineswegs in meiner Macht steht, einen tatsächlich seienden Gegenstand von der ins Auge gefaßten Beschaffenheit auch wirklich zu treffen. Meiner Machtvollkommenheit bleibt hier vielmehr genau um das Modalmoment unvermeidlich zurück. Was ich da also in Wahrheit erfasse, ist, von einem Ausnahmefall abgesehen, auf den sofort zurückzukommen ist, nicht der tatsächlich existierende Gegenstand, sondern bestenfalls der Gegenstand in einem Seinsobjectiv maximaler Höhe. Was darüber hinaus liegt, daran findet meine Annahmefreiheit insofern eine Schranke, als das eben überhaupt nicht mehr annehmend erfaßt werden kann. Mehr aber, als ich annehmend erfassen kann, mehr kann dann das analytische Urteil auch nicht in seinem Prädikate enthalten. So kommt dem Gegenstande „rundes Viereck maximaler Seinshöhe“ dieser Seinshöhe unbedenklich zu; wer aber sagt: „das runde Viereck ist oder existiert“, der behauptet mehr als das, mehr als er durch Annahme in das Subjekt des analytischen Urteils hineinlegen kann und darum auch mehr, als er mit Hilfe dieses Urteils in das Prädikat aufzunehmen berechtigt ist.*

characteristics is existence, except that it is not possible to imagine an object that doesn't really have the property of existence possessing it. Naturally, the object, the existing round square, does not really have the property of existence. Missing from its existence is the modal moment. It has the maximum grade of being, which I'll explain later, but not genuine existence.

This passage is nicely illustrative of the mechanics of intending as Meinong sees it. When one endeavours to think of the existing round square, one is intending "by way of being," something Meinong calls *seinsmeinen* (*On Assumptions* 193ff.). All intending consists in assuming some circumstance, and this kind of intending consists in assuming an existential circumstance. However, there must be something missing from what we imagine the existing round square to have, because, given the iterative nature of an analytic judgement, if genuine existence were involved in our fastening upon assumption, it would be analytically true that the round square exists.

I think Meinong misplaced the grain of salt. Meinong's iterative conception of analytic judgements only works when the "fastening upon characteristics" genuinely apply to the subject, i.e. when the subject is genuinely in the predicative circumstance.<sup>15</sup> The grain of salt should not be taken, as Meinong suggests above, with intending by way of being, but with all cases of intending by means of a false circumstance. Consider how this reasoning can be applied to the case of the non-existent assassin of F.D.R.

When we think about the assassin of F.D.R., we cannot say the assassin of F.D.R. assassinated F.D.R., because it is false that F.D.R. was assassinated. Although the judgement looks like one of Meinong's analytic judgements, it cannot be one because it is false. Accordingly, on this picture, the predicate term must contain more than is contained in the subject term. So the subject cannot be the assassin of F.D.R., i.e. the object with that *Sosein*, or the object in *that* circumstance. What can it be then, given that we can certainly imagine something meeting that description? It seems it must be an object with a *Sosein* like that but from which the modal moment is lacking, or to put it an equivalent way, an object identified by a non-factual predicative circumstance. The act of assuming that would intend the object the assassin of F.D.R.

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15. According to Meinong, we initially apprehend an object by means of "fastening upon" characteristics (*On Assumptions* 171).

apprehends a *non-(genuinely)-factual* predicative circumstance, viz. the circumstance ‘It assassinated F.D.R.’ So the object is being apprehended by means of a *Sosein* that it doesn’t in fact have. Thus, when this same *Sosein* is ascribed to the object in the ‘analytic’ judgement the judgement is false.

This is how I envision it to work. As was said above, intending an object is assuming a circumstance containing it. The object is literally in that circumstance, and is identified or selected from the logical domain by means of that circumstance and in terms of those properties (*On Assumptions* 198). This is all well and good provided that the circumstance is a genuine fact. If the circumstance is not a genuine fact, this opens up the interesting possibility that an object could occur in, and hence be identified by, or singled out by, or “fastened upon” by, a circumstance that is not a fact. In such a case, I believe we should say that the object is not *genuinely*, or *really*, or *in fact*, in that circumstance. This is what I meant above when I said that the object of the subject term ‘the assassin of F.D.R.’ is identified by a *Sosein* that it does not in fact have. Meinong’s iterative, analytic judgements turn out to be false in such cases because the judgement asserts that the intended object really has the identifying characteristics.

The advantage of returning to the doctrine of the modal moment to solve the F.D.R. case, is that it can be put to use in another situation that contains no relations, but which also threatens to have the non-actual force its way into reality.<sup>16</sup> By the principle of freedom of assumption, I can think about the golden mountain such that I have two heads. So, by the principle of intentionality, an item in the domain is a golden mountain such that I have two heads. By the principle of independence and the characterisation postulate it is a golden mountain and it is such that I have two heads. So it is a golden mountain and I have two heads. So I have two heads.

This argument doesn’t concern a relation so Parsons’ strategy will not work. Routley might object to it because he restricts the characterisation postulate so that only certain properties may be said to characterise objects, and perhaps he would argue that my having two heads is not a property that can characterise any object except me. In any case, both Parsons and Routley will need an additional strategy to deal with this

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16. The example is a modified version of an example from Parsons’ “Meinongian Semantics Generalised.”

case. The doctrine of the modal moment can be roped in to service in this case as well: We cannot *really* be thinking about the golden mountain such that I have two heads, because only if I really had two heads could we be thinking about that, since only then would we be able to form the analytic judgement ‘the golden mountain such that I have two heads is a golden mountain such that I have two heads’. Instead, in terms of Meinong’s theory of intending, what is going on is that we assume a *non-factual* predicative circumstance. This circumstance is an object of higher order and, in addition to the golden mountain, it contains another predicative circumstance, viz. the circumstance ‘that I have two heads,’ which is also non-factual.

The strategy I advise for avoiding Mish’alani’s objection appears to undermine the principle of unlimited freedom of assumption. Indeed it does, but only in the way already indicated by Meinong. It is not in one’s power to determine what the facts are. It is not within one’s power to determine which circumstances have the modal moment. One can only intend an object by assuming a circumstance that contains it, and in doing this, one must take the circumstances as they come. If the circumstance one assumes in order to apprehend the existent round square lacks the modal moment, then the object reached by that assumption will not be a genuinely existing round square (*Über Möglichkeit* 282). I am extending this same reasoning to predicative circumstances, so that when we attempt to think about the murderer of F.D.R., we don’t apprehend the genuine murderer, but an object in a predicative circumstance that has been depleted of the modal moment.

On the face of it, extending Meinong’s reasoning to the case of predicative circumstances confronts another difficulty; this time with the principle of independence. Analytic judgements such as ‘the golden mountain is golden’ are treated as incontrovertible by Meinong, and as data to base his theory on. If what I say is correct, not all such iterative judgements are analytic, and in particular ‘the assassin of F.D.R. assassinated F.D.R.’ is not. The explanation I offer for this is that the circumstance ‘it assassinated F.D.R.’ is a falsehood. Doesn’t my explanation endanger Meinong’s project by opening up the possibility that all circumstances containing non-existents are falsehoods? For example, can’t one argue that the circumstance ‘it is a golden mountain’ is also a falsehood? Quite simply, my response is that nothing follows automatically either way. We have independent evidence (in the form of

the natural death of F.D.R.) that the circumstance ‘it assassinated F.D.R.’ is a falsehood. Perhaps the circumstance ‘it is a golden mountain’ is also a falsehood, in which case ‘the golden mountain is golden’ would not be a true judgement. Wherever we have a strong inclination that a statement about a non-existent is true, then we can be sure, on this account anyway, that there is a factual circumstance at base of it that makes it true. The circumstance ‘Sherlock Holmes’ being more famous than any real detective’ is an exemplary case. In other words, what is significant for the solution proposed here is whether the circumstance is a fact or not, rather than whether the circumstance involves non-existent objects or not. There is therefore no conflict with the principle of independence.

The modal moment is introduced (*Über Möglichkeit* 266) in the context of a puzzling phenomenological distinction between ‘penetrative’ and ‘contemplative’ apprehension. Apparently, Meinong felt that cognition differs from assumptions not only as to the nature of the acts themselves, but also in how they apprehend their objects (*Über Möglichkeit* 255). There is a difference in the “quality of the apprehending performance” (*in der Beschaffenheit dieser Erfassungsleistung*) (*Über Möglichkeit* 255). Cognition apprehends penetratively, and assumptions apprehend circumstances contemplatively. Penetrative apprehension as opposed to merely contemplative apprehension apprehends the facticity of a circumstance. Meinong considers the following case:

If I realise e.g. that 3 is less than 4, I surely hit upon a fact. If I ask myself, however, what I really think about, the data would appear to instruct only that I think about 3, 4, and less than, but not in any way on facticity. How should I apprehend something that I don’t even think about? (*Über Möglichkeit* 257—my translation)<sup>17</sup>

Compare realising that 3 is less than 4 with merely supposing it. It seems clear that there is a sense in which both mental acts apprehend the same thing, (*viz.* the fact that 3 is less than 4) but it is equally clear that the realisation apprehends more, namely *that it is a fact* that 3 is less than 4. The realisation (and cognition generally) apprehends the facticity of

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17. *Sehe ich z. B. ein, daß 3 kleiner als 4 sei, so treffe ich sicher eine Tatsache; frage ich mich jedoch, woran ich dabei wirklich denke, so scheint die Empirie nur zu lehren, daß ich an 3, 4, und Kleiner, nicht aber, daß ich außerdem in irgend einer Weise an Tatsächlichkeit denke. Wie sollte ich etwas erfassen, an das ich gar nicht denke?*

a circumstance while assuming that very same circumstance doesn't.<sup>18</sup> The difference is not to be explained in terms of the subjective feeling of confidence accompanying the realisation, which could accompany the (mistaken) 'realisation' that 4 is less than 3, nor is it simply a case of thinking about the higher-order circumstance 'the circumstance 'that 3 < 4' is a fact.' Firstly, that would belie the phenomenological data, since it seems from the inside, so to speak, that both the realisation and the assumption are directed toward the same circumstance, and secondly, one could also contemplate the higher-order, non-factual circumstance 'the circumstance 'that 4 is less than 3' is a fact.' Incorporating more content into the apprehending mental act does not guarantee that it apprehends a fact.

Having introduced this distinction between penetrative and contemplative apprehension, Meinong blurs it by beginning to speak about the contemplative 'sphere'. Strictly speaking, as both modes of apprehension relate to the same subject matter, the same objects and circumstances, they will have the same 'spheres'. Nevertheless, some part of a cognition manages to transcend the contemplative sphere by connecting with, or picking up on, the facticity of facts, and this aspect of cognition cannot also belong to the content of a judgement—or else an assumption could also have it. For any judgement there is an assumption with the same content. Meinong coins the term 'the foundational act' (*der Fundamentalakt*) for this feature (*Über Möglichkeit* 264). Wherever possible, Meinong likes to maintain a structural parallel between subjective, phenomenological classifications of experience and object-theoretic ones. Given the foundational act there must be something it relates to, and there is: The foundational act of cognition apprehends the modal moment (*Über Möglichkeit* 266). It is highly significant that it is the foundational act of cognition that apprehends the modal moment, rather than permitting the modal moment to be represented by means of content as is everything else in Meinong's system. The modal moment is grasped in cognition but not represented to the judging subject. Because the modal moment is not represented, it is not possible to imagine that a circumstance has the modal moment. That it is not possible to imagine the modal moment forestalls a possible objection that is sometimes levelled at Meinong's

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18. On the difference between assumption and cognition also see Meinong (*On Assumptions* 160–7).

solution to the existent round square problem. It is questioned why, if the difference between ‘existing’ and ‘being existent’ is simply the modal moment, can’t we imagine a round square that is existent and has the modal moment? (Findlay 106) According to the objection, if we are free to assume anything we like, why can’t we assume the circumstance has the modal moment? Because the modal moment is not represented to the subject, but simply apprehended in any successful cognition, this type of objection to Meinong’s theory is answered.<sup>19</sup>

The modal moment “transcends [the contemplative] sphere and expands the level of being to complete modality (*über diese Sphäre hinausführt und die Seinshöhe gleichsam zur vollständigen Modalität ergänzt*)” (*Über Möglichkeit* 266). Here ‘complete modality’ means either genuine facticity or, because the modal moment plays a role with respect to modal judgements too, genuine possibility. By ‘expands the level of being’ is meant taking the circumstance from a state of watered-down facticity to genuine facticity (or from a state of watered-down possibility to genuine possibility). Meinong doesn’t give examples of this apart from the watered-down ‘existence’ of the existent round square, which he says concerns not factual existence but an existence whose facticity has been depleted of the modal moment (*Über Möglichkeit* 718). I contend that the watered-down murderousness of Mish’alani’s assassin is another instance. It has the same ‘level of being’ as a genuine assassin of F.D.R., but still doesn’t quite cut it.

### *Seinshöhe and the Modal Moment*

Meinong separates out two aspects of any circumstance, namely what he calls the *Seinshöhe*, or level/grade of being, and the modal moment (*Über Möglichkeit* 266). Level of being in this sense applies to being-so just as much as to existence and subsistence (*Über Möglichkeit* 266). The level of being is the ‘quantity’ of a circumstance in just the same way that the opposition of positive and negative expresses the quality of a circumstance (*Über Möglichkeit* 265). It is the determination of

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19. This still leaves some difficult puzzles. If the modal moment is not represented, how do we understand (the phrase) ‘the modal moment’? It refers to the modal moment, but I have no idea how. In Meinong’s philosophy of language, the meaning of words and phrases is parasitic on the meaning of ideas and assumptions. There is no way he can use this model for the phrase ‘the modal moment’.

a circumstance as to its being (*Über Möglichkeit* 112), and forms a sliding scale of probabilities on which the limiting cases are facticity and falsehood (*Über Möglichkeit* 110).<sup>20</sup> In this respect, it would surely most usefully serve English-bound philosophers' understanding of Meinong's views if we translated Meinong's '*Seinshöhe*,' simply as 'probability.' This won't do however, except as an approximation, since the concept is invoked as part of an explanation of what probability is. The level of being of a circumstance is the underlying basis of its probability. The modal moment does not comparably admit of degrees (*Über Möglichkeit* 266).<sup>21</sup> The modal moment operates on the levels of being like a switch, determining whether a given circumstance genuinely has its determinate probability.<sup>22</sup> Earlier, Meinong was quoted as saying that when we attempt to think of the existent round square at most we think of an object in an existential circumstance of the highest grade of being. The grade of being at the high end of the scale is factual existence, so why aren't we thinking of the factual existence of the round square? To continue the simile of a switch, this is a circumstance where the highest grade of being is in the off position, so the round square does not really have factual being.

I haven't found Meinong discuss the *Seinshöhe* of a predicative circumstance. But I suspect that with respect to predicative circumstances as well, the *Seinshöhe* is best thought of as the underlying objective basis of a probability. This approach to probability differs radically from that adopted in the metaphysics of possible worlds. There the same circumstance is distributed, so to speak, over different possible worlds and 100% present wherever it is present. In Meinong's contrasting picture, the circumstance itself is given a level between 1% and 100%. For example, is it probable that Jonah Lomu will be in the All Black team to play Australia?<sup>23</sup> If it is, I speculate that Meinong

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20. Actually, though I call them 'probabilities,' Meinong calls them 'possibilities' in his discussion. Meinong's possibility is '*steigerungsfähig*', i.e. admits of degrees. Chisholm, in his foreword to the 1972 edition notes, on page xi, that we would use the term 'probability' for what Meinong means.

21. In this respect, the use, initiated by Findlay, of 'watered-down' as a translation of '*depotenziert*' is not entirely appropriate. Watering something down, or diluting it, is almost a paradigm of something that admits of degrees.

22. This is not Meinong's simile.

23. In New Zealand, the national rugby side is chosen from players in the regional competitions. The best players in these competitions are divided into two groups usefully called 'the Probables' and 'the Possibles'.

would hold that the level of being of the circumstance ‘Lomu’s being in the team’ is >50% but <100% maximal. In the language of possible worlds, we could explain this fact about Jonah by saying that the circumstance ‘Lomu’s being on the team’ is completely realised in the majority of worlds containing him that are relevantly similar to this one. The difference between the two approaches is that the possible worlds analysis distributes the likelihood over distinct possible worlds rather than giving the circumstance a value between 0% and 100% in this world.

### *Facticity and the Modal Moment*

Why doesn’t Meinong simply identify the basic property of being a fact with the modal moment? If this were possible, Meinong’s technical apparatus would be considerably simpler. And is the modal moment really necessary? In the solution to the ‘assassin of F.D.R. problem’ presented earlier, everything turned on whether the intentional object was embedded in a factual circumstance or not, rather than whether the circumstance had the modal moment. Unfortunately, Meinong cannot identify facticity and the modal moment, which makes the modal moment necessary. The reason no identification is possible is because it is possible to imagine that a circumstance is a fact. ‘Being a fact’ is a property that can be represented to the subject, and if it is possible to imagine something having it, it is possible to imagine something having it that shouldn’t.

To imagine that a circumstance is factual is not the same as imagining the circumstance itself.<sup>24</sup> Consider two people, Alexius and Bertrand, discussing an incident for which the only explanation would seem to be a horrific act of betrayal by a mutual friend. Alexius says, ‘I can’t imagine that it’s true,’ and Bertrand says, ‘I can imagine that it’s true.’ In this case, ‘it’ is the explanation, the circumstance that amounts to an act of betrayal. Both Alexius and Bertrand are intending this circumstance, i.e. imagining the betrayal but, in addition, Bertrand and not Alexius assumes that the circumstance is factual.

If this conversation is possible and the discussants can correctly

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24. There is no room for a deflationary position with respect to the facticity of circumstances. It would be frankly inconsistent with the data.

report their thinking, then we require something, such as the modal moment, in addition to facticity as a property of circumstances. For though Bertrand can imagine that he and Alexius have been betrayed by their friend, this does not mean that they have. Just because Bertrand imagines a circumstance is factual doesn't mean it is. Equally clearly, what Bertrand imagines is different from what Alexius imagines, and the difference consists in this: Bertrand but not Alexius imagines the betrayal is a fact, i.e. imagines that the betrayal has the property of being a fact. Bertrand assumes, therefore, the super-ordinate circumstance 'the circumstance 'we were betrayed' is a fact.' Their friend did not betray them so the betrayal, the embedded, sub-ordinate, circumstance, is not a fact, and hence neither is the super-ordinate circumstance Bertrand assumes.<sup>25</sup> At this point, we have two conflicting data only something like the modal moment can reconcile:

- (a) What Bertrand assumes *is* (=) that the betrayal is a fact.
- (b) The betrayal is not a fact.

From (b) we can infer (c)

- (c) The mediate object of Bertrand's assumption is not a fact.

But (d) follows from (a)

- (d) The mediate object of Bertrand's assumption is a fact.

The exposition at this point involves a distinction introduced by Meinong in *On Assumptions* (44). Usually, a circumstance is the *immediate* intentional object of an assumption or judgement. And usually, an *objectum* is the *mediate* intentional object of an assumption or judgement. I think of the *objectum* as "the featured object." We succeed in thinking about the *objectum* by assuming a circumstance containing it. In the present example, there is no *objectum*, but instead the mediate intentional object is the sub-ordinate circumstance 'we were betrayed.'

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25. It leads to an infinite regress to view things round the other way, i.e. that it is because what they imagine is not a fact that it is not a fact that their friend betrayed them. Super-ordinate circumstances do not determine whether sub-ordinate objects are facts (*On Assumptions* 55).

But how can (d) be true? (d) follows from (a) because the mediate object of any assumption is singled out/identified/fastened-upon by means of an immediate higher order circumstance (*On Assumptions* 177). In this case, the sub-ordinate, mediate circumstance, the betrayal, is being identified, in part, in terms of being a fact! What sort of fact can the betrayal be? The modal moment strategy is to reconcile (c) and (d) by adding ‘really’ to (c) and ‘watered-down’ to (d):

- (e) The mediate object is not really a fact; it is a watered-down fact.

Bertrand imagines a fact, the betrayal, that is not a fact, because they were not betrayed. Meinong’s explanation is that the fact Bertrand imagines, the betrayal, lacks the modal moment and hence is not really a fact. What is a fact that is not a fact? It is a circumstance with maximum *Seinshöhe* but without the modal moment; in other words, a circumstance with the property of facticity but without the modal moment.

How does (d) follow from (a)? The key to understanding Meinong’s doctrine of the modal moment is to see why he thought the transition was justified. To imagine that the betrayal is a fact is to imagine a factual betrayal, which is to imagine a fact. Just like to imagine that the ball is green is to imagine a green ball, which is to imagine a green thing. This is so notwithstanding the great difference between being a certain way and being imagined to be a certain way.

The transition from (a) to (d), is phenomenologically supported. Bertrand would report his belief as an instance of imagining, or conceiving, a fact, and the disagreement between the discussants seems best characterised as a dispute over the facts. The principle that would justify the transition from (a) to (d) I wish to call the *de dicto* assumption principle (DDAP), to distinguish it from an alternative, *de re* assumption principle (DRAP). These principles can be represented thus:

- (DDAP) Imagining that x is F **is** *ipso facto* imagining an F
- (DRAP) Imagining that x is F **is not** *ipso facto* imagining an F
- (DRAP) Given x; imagining that it is F **is not** *ipso facto* imagining an F

DDAP seems to cause problems not just when the property involved is facticity, as we saw in the case of Russell's existent round square. For by DDAP, imagining the round square exists is *ipso facto* imagining an existent. Such examples suggest that DDAP is false. Should we prefer DRAP, which is just the negation of DDAP (the second formulation of DRAP is just an elucidation of the first). The following scenario suggests that we should. Consider Tom. Tom is not a thief. John imagines that Tom stole his bicycle. So by DDAP, John imagines a thief. But Tom is no thief. So John does not imagine Tom, and yet clearly he does. So, DDAP is false. John does not imagine a thief, and DRAP is correct.

This would be the end of the story except for one small thing: the DRAP is inadequate to characterise the experience of imagining. Imagination must be characterised, and distinct imaginative acts identified, *according to the intentional objects of the experiences*. Differences in intentional act must be traced to differences in intentional object, and this requires DDAP. To illustrate: two new homebuyers walk around the empty rooms of their freshly purchased first home. They both imagine how the new sitting room is going to look. Unfortunately they disagree. Their disagreement depends on the same room being imagined to be different ways (this much is still consistent with the DRAP). Yet it is equally clear that *what they imagine* is different, otherwise there would be no disagreement (DDAP).

Or is it equally clear? Can't there be an adverbial approach to this question? Can't they imagine the same sitting room *differently*? The adverbial approach is an attempt to make a transitive relationship intransitive by packing the material contained in the specification of the transitive object into an adverbial characterisation of the now intransitive verb. I don't believe that an adverbial approach can be successful in this area. The approach must work regardless of whether the putative intentional object of the imaginative episode would be said to exist or not. That is, there can be only one 'logical form' of imagination. So to consider an ordinary episode of imagination that, were it not for the possibility of an adverbial solution, would be thought to involve an ordinary transitive intentional object. We can immediately see a problematic feature of the adverbial solution that is quite decisive. First, the same circumstance can be imagined differently. That is to say different imaginative episodes can have the same intentional object. Consider, if you will, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, who both imagine that Tweedledum is wearing a yellow sweater and Tweedledee

is wearing a red one. Tweedledum imagines that he is wearing yellow and that Tweedledee is wearing red, whereas Tweedledee imagines that he is wearing red while Tweedledum is wearing yellow. In other words, Tweedledum imagines I-am-wearing-a-yellow-sweater-and-he-is-wearing-a-red-sweater-ly, and Tweedledee imagines I-am-wearing-a-red-sweater-and-he-is-wearing-a-yellow-sweater-ly. The same circumstance is imagined, but the way it is imagined by each of them is different. Second, equally, indexicals provide the means to imagine different things without imagining differently. When Tweedledum imagines that he is wearing a red sweater, he thereby imagines the circumstance in which Tweedledum is wearing a red sweater. When Tweedledee imagines that he is wearing a red sweater, he imagines thereby the circumstance in which Tweedledee is wearing a red sweater. The imagined circumstances are distinct, but the way they are imagined is the same; in both cases the subject imagines I-am-wearing-a-red-sweater-ly. In view of these difficulties, an adverbial theory of imagination is unlikely to work.

The problem currently in focus is how do we characterise the object of an intentional mental state. DRAP provides no information. In the case of the disagreement about the sitting room, the same object is imagined and so cannot account for the differences in imagination. DDAP apparently provides an adequate characterisation of the intentional object but immediately creates difficulties. When we use DDAP as our intentional content characterising principle, we have to deal with thieves that are not thieves, assassins that are not assassins, and facts that are not facts. The modal moment undoes these difficulties. All the qualitative aspects of a circumstance, whether it is positive or negative, and what circumstance it is, together with the quantitative aspects, such as whether it is a fact or a mere possibility are settled independently of the question, 'is it genuine/true/real?' We have unlimited freedom to conceive any circumstance we like but we are held back, with respect to that circumstance, at this question, which is answered independently of our aspirations, powers, and mental exertions by the modal moment.

Is Meinong's doctrine of the modal moment a satisfying solution? We need to answer two questions, what does the doctrine itself have to recommend it?, and will adopting it require relinquishing the proofs of Routley and Parsons? Taking the second question first, adopting Meinong's modal moment strategy to deal with troublesome intended objects does not require jettisoning Parsons' or Routley's proofs. This

is because in real terms the strategy changes only the truth-evaluations of certain contingent statements. For example, on the approach I am suggesting, we should count 'Mish'alani thought about the assassin of F.D.R.' false because the object Mish'alani thought about did not assassinate F.D.R. This strategy is concordant with a proof of the consistency of Meinong's views even if such proofs would treat 'Mish'alani thought about the assassin of F.D.R.' as true. This is because since the statement is not logically true, there will be an interpretation, in each of their logical systems, on which the negation of it is true. In other words, the statement itself will be false, just as the present suggestion demands.

What is the merit in the modal moment strategy itself? Very little, according to some, since it is described only in terms of what it is supposed to accomplish (Bourgeois 665). I feel this is unduly harsh. It is true that nothing has been said about the nature of the modal moment. But we have (a) specified its role, including (b) explaining its peculiar characteristics, such as why it cannot be imagined to belong to a circumstance. Judging from what we know of its role, the idea of a modal moment is not entirely unfamiliar. Meinong's doctrine of the modal moment, in the parlance of theorising about possibility, is very much like a simple property theory of actuality. The modal moment is the index of actuality. Viewed in terms of possible worlds semantics, the modal moment distinguishes the actual world from every other world by distinguishing actual facts from merely possible facts. As such, it is a theoretical postulate of considerable plausibility. Meinong's efforts to solve this ancient problem should not be condemned because he used unfamiliar terminology.

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