



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Mind Association

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Fiction and Metaphysics by Amie L. Thomasson

Review by: Stacie Friend

Source: *Mind*, Vol. 109, No. 436 (Oct., 2000), pp. 997-1000

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Mind Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2660067>

Accessed: 18-12-2018 15:49 UTC

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“fixed past” requirement that if the agent had (voluntarily and intentionally) chosen otherwise, the past would have remained the same. Sobel may counter that the “fixed past” requirement is more intuitively plausible than (2) (and, as a libertarian myself, I am inclined to agree with him about that). But many compatibilists (and fence-sitters) in my experience disagree and find (2) quite plausible, more so than FP; so I think further argument is required to show that (2) is false. And (as I have elsewhere argued) in order to show (2) false, one has to go beyond the argumentative resources of the Consequence Argument itself, including Sobel’s challenging new version of it. (One might also reject claim (1), of course, but that is a debate for another time.)

There are many other deserving topics in this book that I have not had the space to consider, including its discussions of fatalism, rational choice, divine omniscience and human freedom, and the lengthy discussion (in chapter four) of John Martin Fischer’s views on responsibility and control. On these topics, as on the topics I have considered, Sobel invariably forces one to think about familiar subjects and arguments in new and fruitful ways—reason enough to highly recommend this book to interested readers.

The University of Texas at Austin
 Robert Kane
 Department of Philosophy
 Waggener Hall 316
 Austin TX 78712-1180
 USA

ROBERT KANE

Fiction and Metaphysics, by Amie L. Thomasson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. xii + 175. H/b £35.00, \$49.95.

Many philosophers reject fictional objects as too bizarre to fit into our metaphysics. Amie Thomasson’s “artifactual theory of fiction” depicts such objects as no more difficult to categorize than artworks, laws, stories, and theories. The first half of the book answers the question: if we postulated fictional objects, what would they be like? Thomasson describes fictional characters as created artifacts, and uses this conception to explain identification of and reference to them. The second half of the book then argues for postulation. Thomasson claims that non-postulating views do not explain features of intentionality and discourse as smoothly; and that certain ontological principles, consistently applied, support postulation. Thomasson’s aim, then, is twofold: to define a better system of ontological categorization, and within this to develop a plausible theory of fictional characters. Thomasson’s overview and analysis of the issues—in metaphysics and philosophy of language and mind—are a welcome contribution to the literature on fictional characters.

Thomasson certainly offers a far more plausible view of fictional characters than other postulating views. By contrast with theorists such as Meinong, Tho-

masson holds that the only fictional characters are those created by authors. She defines characters in terms of their ontological dependencies. They are immediately dependent, first on the creative acts of the author to bring them into existence, and second on literary works for their maintenance. They are necessarily identified in terms of this origin, rather than in terms of the properties attributed in stories. Thus Thomasson construes fictional characters as abstract (lacking spatiotemporal location), contingent artifacts. As with other abstract entities, one cannot be causally connected to a fictional character; but Thomasson holds that “the textual foundation of the character serves as the means whereby a quasi-indexical reference to the character can be made by means of which that very fictional object can be baptized by author or readers” (p. 47). Identification across works requires that the author of the later work intend to import the character from an earlier work into his own, and textual interpretation supports the identification. Overall, Thomasson insists that the identity and reference conditions for her fictional characters parallel those for literary works and other such contingent abstractions as theories and symphonies, which are also entities that supervene on concrete objects and intentional states. She is right to emphasize the difficulty of categorizing these other kinds of objects, and this lends credence to her claim that fictional characters—as defined by her theory—are not alone, ontologically speaking.

In the second half of the book, Thomasson claims that postulation provides a smoother, more unified and less ad hoc explanation of our ability to identify and distinguish fictional characters in thought and language. She is clearly correct in criticizing non-postulating theories that rely on unintuitive paraphrases of statements seemingly about characters. There remain two kinds of claims that must be reinterpreted on her view. A statement such as “Candide does not exist” is literally false unless understood to mean “Candide is not a real human being”. And “Candide is optimistic” becomes “According to the story, Candide is optimistic”, since abstract artifacts cannot literally be optimistic. For Thomasson, only statements from an external critical perspective, such as “Candide is a fictional character” and “Candide was created by Voltaire”, are straightforwardly true (or false).

However, relying on a sharp distinction between the internal or “fictional” context, and the external or “real” context, is not convincing. Thomasson never discusses the more problematic kinds of utterances, those that mix aspects of the real and the fictional; for example “I pity Anna Karenina because she loses her children”. It cannot be literally true that I pity an abstract object; and although Anna loses her children only according to the story, “I pity Anna” cannot be prefixed since I am not part of Tolstoy’s novel. As a result Thomasson’s rejection of Kendall Walton’s pretence theory (*Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990) is too quick. Although many criticize Walton for his handling of external contexts, his theory has the advantage of accounting for emotional responses and other mixed statements within the single framework of make-believe. Tho-

masson should show that postulating characters allows for an equally unified theory.

More important to Thomasson's argument for postulation is the chapter on intentionality. Thomasson notes that a satisfactory theory of intentionality must make sense of the following:

its so-called existence independence (the purported fact that intentional acts need not be directed at any existent object), its conception dependence (the fact that one and the same object may be picked out by two different intentional acts conceiving of it in two very different ways), and its context sensitivity (the fact that two internally indistinguishable intentional acts may pick out different objects in different contexts). (p. 77)

Thomasson argues that the same phenomena arise in thoughts about fictional characters, and non-postulating theories that rely solely on internal mental content (such as Husserl's), or the context in which the thinker is situated (for example, in front of the text), cannot account for them. She claims that such intentional acts must also have an "intentional object"; such objects exist, but not independently of mental acts. Although Thomasson's criticism of Husserl's theory is rather too brief, her counterexamples to content and context theories are quite ingenious.

Still, it is not obvious how postulation explains the relevant features of intentionality. On Thomasson's theory, to be able to refer to the abstract object *Candide* in thought, one must be causally connected in the right way to the *textual foundation* of the character. Whether the right causal connection is there is a question that cannot appeal to identity of character, which in turn depends on the text. So even if we posit the object, the explanation of intentionality depends on facts about the literary work—just the facts upon which fictional characters are said to supervene. This seems to leave Thomasson with the same problem she assigns to context/content theories: defining "the right way" thoughts are caused by a literary work. Thomasson (in correspondence) responds that she need not provide a reductive account of when two thoughts are about the same character, since no such account is available even for concrete objects. However, given that the existence of fictional characters is in doubt, the burden of showing how postulation aids explanation is on Thomasson. Fictional characters appear to do little explanatory work as far as intentionality is concerned.

The final chapters propose a complementary strategy to defend postulation, this time in terms of ontological categorization. Thomasson lays out a system of categories founded on whether and how a thing depends on spatiotemporal entities and mental states for its existence. Then she claims that because literary works and their characters share relevant features, they land in the same ontological category. Therefore, once we accept literary works, eliminating fictional characters is inconsistent and not "genuinely parsimonious" (pp. 138–9). Although she presents the system prior to asking which categories are occupied, Thomasson ultimately admits anything dependent in

any way on spatiotemporal entities and mental states, leaving agnosticism with respect to purely ideal entities.

This ontological conclusion, consistent with the rest of Thomasson's arguments, implies a more expanded ontology than is acknowledged explicitly. Thomasson claims that once we admit literary works, the fictional characters in them come along at no ontological cost. But similar considerations arise with, say, phlogiston and Zeus, since Thomasson categorizes theories and myths with literary works. Should we then accept the posits of failed scientific theories and the creatures of discredited myths alongside fictional characters? Should we consider them to be abstract artifacts as well? If we accept Thomasson's arguments, it should be false parsimony to accept theories and reject their posits. However, just because there is no element phlogiston and no planet Vulcan, does not mean that there *are* two contingent artifacts. Failure to pick out a concrete object is not success in creating an abstract one. (For a more developed version of this argument against postulating theories, see Frederick Kroon, "Characterizing Non-Existents", *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 51 (1996), pp. 163–93.)

The results are even more expansive if we apply Thomasson's arguments from intentionality in other contexts. Suppose I hallucinate seeing a green apple while situated in front of a (real) green apple, and my thoughts about one cannot be distinguished from thoughts about the other by content and/or context. Should we therefore accept the hallucinated apple into our ontology? Thomasson's claims imply that we should; yet the fact that the apple is hallucinated seems to entail that it *not* exist. If we posit an abstract object whenever we seem to be talking or thinking "about the same thing", we end up with many more objects than one might be willing to accept. I have argued that fictional characters do little to explain intentionality and discourse. If I am right about that, there seems little reason to postulate them; if I am wrong, or if one is persuaded by Thomasson's arguments from ontology, then we must postulate many more entities as well.

Department of Philosophy
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305-2155
USA
sfriend@csl.stanford.edu

STACIE FRIEND