THE MAIN VIEWS ON FICTIONALITY IN THE LOGICO-SEMANTIC TRADITION

ZOLTÁN KANYÓ

Szeged University, Hungary

Fictionality is without doubt the central question of literary semantics. Just as most semantical problems in natural language are inseparable from the determining influence of use, fictionality could and should be examined from a pragmatical point of view as well, and even certain syntactical pecularities and special use of the vocabulary may be pointed out in a more or less limited circle of fictional texts. However, the decisive point in fictionality seems to be connected with the eminent semantical problem of truth. The problem is: how can truth and other semantical notions presupposing it, such as validity, consequence, etc., be accounted for in a class of so-called fictional texts which are known not to reflect actual reality. Literary theory has offered a number of rather controversial theories concerning this question, but there are valuable contributions in philosophy, linguistics, psychology, logic etc. as well. In this way an all-embracing theory of fictionality can only be worked out if the different attempts are taken into account and an adequate metalanguage is formulated in which the relevant problems can be satisfactorily dealt with. In this respect we can only formulate a preliminary investigation aimed at grasping some theoretically important variant characteristics of fictionality in the essays of modern logico-semantic research.

A systematic overview of this field of research from such
a point of view proves to be very essential and illuminating: the
prerequisites of a theory of fictionality are necessarily implied
by the logical systems applied in modern semantics, and well-
founded conception of fictionality can only be based on the
relevant semantic research. On the other hand we have a negative
experience as well: the contradictions between different
conceptions do not disappear with the transition from an informal
and inexact methodology to a formal and exact one. Modern semantics
being as such divided between contraversial tendencies provides
arguments for different standpoints on the question of fictionality.
It is this plurality of views challenging any theoretical endeavour
to account for this phenomenon that we are going to deal with. Our
interest is not historical, but theoretical, and we are primarily
attracted not by mere factuality but by the logical possibilities
which have come to light in the historical process. We attempt to
reduce to an underlying coincidence the controversies that have
played such a decisive role in the development of this branch of
science as mere appearances. If this will not work because of
logical incompatibility of the views in question we try to delimit
the different variants in an unambigous way.

In order to sum up our vast material in an economical way it
seems best to rely upon some general theoretical theses concerning
semantics and fictionality. In accordance with Castañedas' theory
of fictionality we are of the opinion that each community which
knows fictionality and applies it in some language games has to

distinguish two fundamental domains in its naive or scientific
semantics, namely actuality and fictionality. The question of
which domain a certain utterance belongs to can be decided on
the basis of the conventions underlying the communication-game
in which the utterance is embedded, that is by menas of the
practical knowledge of language use. The semantic distinction
mentioned is connected with a possible twofold orientation of
reference: in the case of actuality there is a relation between
meaning and the actual world, whereas in the case of fictionality
the relation lies between meaning and an imaginary world.
Nonwithstanding this difference in reference both domains can be
semantically characterized in respect of truth, consequence,
validity etc.; that means that the pragmatical opposition between
actuality and fictionality must not be interpreted as a semantic
opposition between truth and falsehood. On the other hand truth
in actuality will not necessarily correspond to truth in
fictionality just because of different definition of the
reference relation in each domain.

If we now consider one of the main disagreements in modern
semantics concerning fictionality we see that it is closely
connected with a different appraisal of the reference relation
in fictional context regarding truth. In order to formulate plainly
the contraversial standpoints we have clear up some terminological
questions. According to our working hypothesis we differentiate
two domains consisting of several different sets of objects, the
first sets out from objects of the actual world and defines their

properties, relations, etc. while the second is based on
fictional objects and their respective characteristics
supposed to be found in imaginary worlds. We call an expression
fictional if it applies to a fictional object and consequently
has no reference in actuality. A sentence can be considered as
fictional if the subject-constituent proves to be a fictional
expression. We should like to underline that this connection
is taken here in the sense of a test and not as the source of
fictionality - the latter rather complex problem should be
dispensed with in our present exposition. The limitation of the
fictional expression to the subject role aims obviously at avoiding
possible ambiguities which may appear e. g. in the object case
after an intensional verb. By means of this test we certainly
cannot delimit fiction and non-fiction in an unambigous way,
but we are able to point out a class of sentences which are
without doubt fictional. In respect to this class some general
semantic statements can be formulated. We shall call the first
two apparently controversial ones Russellian and Meinongian
Formulae as they have been propounded in the most convincing
way in the work of the well known British and Austrian
philosopher, respectively. The Russellian Formula can be stated
in the following way:

(RF) Fictional sentences are necessarily false

This thesis, as we know from the classical study "On Denoting",
is based on the insight that fictional objects have no reference

in actuality, and truth was concieved of here as a relation
between meaning and actuality.

The Meinongian Formula can be correctly formulated as
dependent on the reference relation:

> (MF) Fictional sentences apply to a certain class of
> objects

As a corollary of the Meinongian Formula we have the following
postulation:

> (MP) Fictional sentences are true or false

If we consider the assignement of truth in both cases, the two
formulae seem to contradict each other. However the characteristic
formulation of truth in both cases is a consequence of the
conception of the reference relation which in a deeper analysis
reveals itself as incomplete in each case in a peculiar way.
In the light of our theoretical remarks both formulae have to be
supplemented by the assignement of the reference relation to
either of the two domains of possible application: actuality and
fictionality. In this respect the correct formulation of the
Russellian Formula seems to be:

> (RF') Fictional sentences are necessarily false with
> respect to actuality

whereas the Meinongian Formula appears as

> (MF') Fictional sentences have fictional objects
> as *reference in fictionality*

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These completed formulae do not contradict each other, and
insofar as one does not worry about nominalistic provisos
concerning the ontological status of fictional objects and
imaginary worlds, both of them can be considered as not only
compatible, but as true statements in a semantic theory of
fictionality. If we are right in the theory of fictionality
the necessity does not arise of opting exclusively either for
the Russellian or for the Meinongian Formula: the problem is
rather to account for their inner connection and correlation.

The logico-semantic tradition offers not only the primary
Formulae mentioned but some competing variants as well. Besides
the Russellian Formula we have the Frege - Strawson Position
formulating the first approach

(FSP) Fictional sentences have no significance

In this view a sentence must be first syntactically and
semantically complete, that is significative, in order for it
possibly to have truth-value assignment. A fictional sentence is
qualified as incomplete because of the lacking referential relation
in the actuality, and therefore the negative semantic status is
registered not as falsehood as in the Russellian Formula, but
as one without significance. One is certainly aware that the
Frege - Strawson Position represents an alternative standpoint
to the Russellian Formula, although both of them may be true,
but not connected with each other as the thesis of a unified
theory. Which one should be preferred depends on pragmatical

criteria. On the other hand the Frege - Strawson - Position
is just as incompletely formulated as the Russellian Formula
and needs the same complement:

> (FSP') Fictional sentences have no significance with
> respect to actuality

Opposed to the ontologically founded Meinongian Formula we have
the variant of model-theoretic intensional logic where a set of
possible logical worlds is introduced as a primitive term and
fictional expression, imaginary world, etc. can be defined
with respect to it:

> (MIL) The truth of fictional sentences is decidable
> in a model the interpretation part of which is
> necessarily based on a possible world not identical
> with the actual one

This formulation already takes into account the reliance on
fictionality with respect to the referential relation. The
model-theoretic formulation represents yet another variant:
if we had more space, we could even differentiate several
variants according to the different conceptions of reference
within intensional logic. There should be formulated at least
one variant based on the theory of rigid designators and
another on the basis of transworld-identity. However what we
need is not only an exhaustive classification but at the same
time an effective systematization and in this respect we have
done our work by halves. Let us return to the first mentioned

Russellian and Meinongian Formulae: their relation to each
other can illuminate in a comparatively simple form the
connection of the two determining trends in the semantics of
fictionality. We have spoken about a compatibility between
Russellian and Meinongian Formulae, however, this compatibility
applies only to the conception of reference and in connection
with it to the definition of the truth-relation, that is, to the
semantically-relevant relations of fictionality, and it cannot
in the least be extended to the congruence of Russellian and
Meinongian semantics or philosophy. As far as regards the two
semantic systems the following main differences can be enumerated:

(1) Russellian and Meinongian semantics are based on different
    sign conceptions

(2) Russellian semantics presupposes the well-known extensional
    logic; Meinongian semantics is connected with a sort of free
    logic a main characteristic of which consists in the
    distinction of predicate negation and sentence-negation.
    By this means Meinong is not compelled to accept the Law
    of excluded Middle with an absolute validity as it is
    conceived of in extensional logic.

(3) concerning its ontological foundation Russellian semantics
    can be characterized as nominalistic, whereas Meinongian
    semantics appears to be a representative of the realistic
    tradition.

    These semiotic, logic and ontological divergences have
surely to be taken into account if we want to formulate an all-
embracing theory of fictionality. As a matter of fact there are

several possibilities to proceed according to special preferences
in ontological and even in logical and terminological questions.
Not having space for a typological review of possible opinions
we must content ourselves with the scheme of a unique variant
determined by our own predilections. Ontologically we opt for
a non-dogmatic nominalism which permits us to consider
fictional reference, fictional objects, imaginary worlds etc.,
as linguistic and/or other conventional appearances which do not
necessarily require a special ontological foundation, but can
be reduced from the ontological setting of actual objects and
their properties, relations, etc. by means of different mental
operations. As to logic the extensional system appears to be
rather limited; Meinongian and other modern intensional
philosophical logic systems have subtle methods of dealing
with questions which remain without the scope of extensional
logic and stand in the foreground of semantic and philosophical
research. Therefore the solution is sought for in a direction
where the totality of the linguistic-semantic appearances are
seriously and exhaustively accounted for without any ontological
commitment over and above a special conventional agreement
between the members of the community for the use of a language-
game.

We have tried to enumerate some impulses that the study
of the logico-semantic tradition may give to a modern theory
of fictionality. We must admit there are other possible
conclusions that one can deduce from this complex theoretical
research. Nevertheless one connection seems to be of general

importance and that is that the number of possible divergent views on fictionality is essentially limited to a rather restricted circle of variants made possible by theoretically and/or methodologically different accounts of reference relation in fictionality. The number of these variants is not irrevocably determined, it may increase with scientific developments. A further aim should be to get an adequate description of these variants in order to gain deeper insights into the complex phenomenon of fictionality.