

# Beyond Objectiveness: Non-dualism and Fiction

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**> Context** • Traditional research on the fiction/non-fiction distinction is the fruit of an essentialist methodology in which the procedures of ontologizing and textualizing are assumed as obligatory. Ontologizing and textualizing form the basic discursive technique, in which analyses are focused on the object as the semantic centre. Theory of literary fiction – deeply rooted in Alexius Meinong's theory of non-existent objects – is object-orientated and, as a result, is always ontologically involved/engaged. **> Problem** • The re-description of the fundamental literary problems as a kind of epistemological experiment for which non-dualizing philosophy is a foundation. Considerations are aimed at providing answers/solutions to the three following issues: 1. Is it possible to connect non-dualism with a literary discourse about literary fiction? 2. What difference does the non-dualizing perspective make in comparison to a philologically-orientated discourse? 3. What difference does the non-dualizing perspective make in comparison to the constructivist approach to the problem of fiction? **> Approach** • Mitterer's non-dualism is considered from both the context of ontologically-orientated discourse about fiction and literary research and the context of constructivist discourse about fiction. **> Results** • Mitterer's non-dualizing conception may be considered a foundation of a radical non-essentialist way of thinking about literary fiction. As a result, the philologically-orientated research on literary text, focused on the explanation of its semantics, would rather move towards a culturally-, pragmatically-, and/or sociologically- orientated type of discourse. The notion of (literary) fiction should be reformulated as follows: fiction is not the reason for interpretation; fiction is the result of interpretation because the description comes *from* the object of speech (*from-object-cognition*). **> Implications** • This is only an introduction to the project of a potential non-ontologizing discourse about literary fiction. Therefore it should be developed and discussed as the option for the dualizing type of the discourse as it still stirs up a lot of controversies. **> Key words** • Non-ontologizing, non-dualizing, description, non-existent object, fiction/non-fiction, from-object-cognition.

## Introduction

In March 2010, Artur Domosławski published *Ryszard Kapuściński: Non-Fiction* (Domosławski 2010), the biography of the Polish journalist and writer of world-wide reputation. Immediately, it stirred up a discussion about the real value of Kapuściński's books. According to Domosławski's analyses, Kapuściński used fictional stories in his reports. The discussion was so strong and antagonistic that it was echoed abroad. This also seemed to be due to the world-wide fame of Kapuściński, whose reports provided – his readers assumed – a *real* picture of the ruling regimes in Ethiopia, Iran, or the Russian republics.<sup>1</sup> The criticism of

Domosławski's book was formulated from many perspectives. However, it was *the distinction between fiction and non-fiction* that was considered to be the most problematic. Here, I am not going to judge Domosławski (or Kapuściński). I would rather consider the fiction/non-fiction distinction as the foundation of the special discussion that is – in my opinion – the fruit of an essentialist methodology of literary research for which the procedures of *ontologizing* and *textualizing* are assumed as obligatory.<sup>2</sup>

Here we should rethink the ontological foundations rather than try to solve the particular problems of the above-mentioned biography case. Talking about fiction and non-fiction, I ask about the discourse on fiction and its (*scientific*) status. This leads me to another question about literary research

itself. I would try to re-describe these fundamental problems as a kind of epistemological experiment for which the non-dualizing philosophy of Mitterer is a basis. I underline the word *experiment*, as the problem of the possibility of connections between non-dualism and literary research will be explored for the very first time.

## Preliminary remarks

Dualist thinking, which is founded on the distinction between a world and a language (a word and an object, a sentence and an empirical fact, a subject and an object, etc.) can be found in many disciplines and is characteristic of many philosophical schools. However, based on my experience as a literary researcher, I maintain that in literary research this basic dualism has been doubled by an additional assumption: that the general assumption of the distinction between fiction and reality results from the

1 | The problem that may be identified here is the way in which a historical fact is perceived. History is not an exact science as it is impossible to verify facts and achieve its pure form. As it is impossible to consider this problem in the present paper, see, for example, White (1973).

2 | "Textualizing" refers to the philological procedure in which the text, especially literary text, is assumed to be the objective, semantic center of analyses.

distinction between an ordinary language (correlated with reality) and a special language (correlated with fiction). The dichotomy of fiction versus reality is followed by the dichotomy of a special language versus an ordinary language.<sup>3</sup> It has been problematized and described in different notions to define the phenomenon of fiction itself. Here, I would consider the possibility of describing literary fiction in a non-dualizing (and non-ontologizing) way to be the introduction to a project of non-dualizing literary research.

### Literariness and fictionality

The two distinctions, fiction versus reality and a special language versus an ordinary language, should be furnished with some comments. The second distinction is not very precise as it implies a question connected with a notion of a *special* language. What does it mean in a context of a literary work traditionally perceived as a domain of figurative acts of speech? There are notions by which the phenomenon of a literary language (*special* language) is specified in order to underline the difference between these two types of speech acts. The notion of *the aesthetic valorisation of a language*<sup>4</sup> refers to the set of means by which the author reaches the effect of the transformation of a language material. These, as I would like to call them, *language tricks* may be described using different terms such as polysemy, metaphor, ambiguity, or, more specifically, *fusing of form and meaning*.<sup>5</sup> In traditional literary research, the recognition of a special value of the text served as a basis for the acceptance its *literariness*<sup>6</sup> or *poeticity*. Here comes

the significant question – what comes first, the essential language features of the text, *the text itself*, which stimulates a reader response, or rather this reader response, which gives the *poeticity* or *literariness* of a given text. The non-dualizing philosophy of Mitterer provides some guidelines by which the traditional view on a way in which one can define these two notions may be changed.

Before I try to analyse the way in which Mitterer's philosophy changes the traditional view of a literary text, let me consider the connections between the notion of fiction and the notion of literariness/poeticity. John R. Searle's conception provides some plausible solutions to be discussed. Considering the distinction between fiction and literature, Searle comes to the conclusion that these are not synonyms, as the class of objects perceived as fictional is wider than the class of objects (texts) qualified as literary. Namely, some works of fiction are literary works, while some are not. There are also literary works that are not fictional at all. Thus, "the concept of literature is a different concept from that of fiction" (Searle 1975: 320). By using Wittgenstein's term, Searle assumes that literature is a family-resemblance notion. It is "the name of a set of attitudes we take toward a stretch of discourse" (ibid) as literariness is not an internal property that is obligatorily given in the text. The notion of literariness is more problematic when we take into consideration that it is impossible to mark out sharp, definitive boundaries between literary and non-literary texts (ibid).

Paying attention to the second possible distinction between fictional speech and figurative speech, Searle claims that although in both of them "semantic rules are altered or suspended in some way" (Searle 1975: 320), the fictional domain is different and independent from ordinary speech acts. Thus Searle assumes that there is a difference between figurative and literary utter-

ances but focuses on the difference between fictional and serious utterances (ibid: 321). He puts the emphasis on the notion of fiction, trying to explore it with the set of notions taken from John L. Austin's speech acts theory (in the version modified by Searlians, especially Searle himself: Searle 1969). Following Searle's point of view, I am certain that the literature is a family-resemblance notion that is changeable, and pragmatically and institutionally conditioned. However, I do not think Searle's concept may be compared with Mitterer's philosophy as his view on fiction remains strictly essentialist, orientated towards a text, no matter what kind of text is considered. Although Searle's distinctions – representative of the pragmatically-orientated type of discourse about a literary work – are not questionable from the modern view on literary research, they seem to be deeply rooted in "*the text itself*"-orientated discourse. Searle tries to provide a kind of definition of fiction by paying attention to the phenomenon related to a text domain. This will be explored later in this paper.

Although two distinctions (fiction/non-fiction, ordinary language/extra-ordinary language) are typical for ontologically-orientated literary research, this type of pragmatically-orientated discourse about fiction is deeply rooted in ontology as well. Searle's theses are representative as the researcher still locates the meaning in the text domain. Searle – based on his axioms of reference – considers the distinction between *fictional* and *real* literary characters, as well as between genuine illocutionary acts and pretended illocutionary acts. But he does not provide any criteria for the distinction between them. Thus, *text-orientated* literary research, rooted in philological tradition, always ontologically involved, has been concentrated on the following problems: the truth of the text, the distinction between the semantic and ontological order of the text and the word presented in a literary work, and the phenomenon of semantics and aesthetics of a literary text. It has formed a range of methods used by literary schools searching for correct solutions to those problems. As John Searle claims: "...there is as yet no general theory of the mechanisms by which such serious illocutionary intentions are conveyed by pretended illocutions"

3| This idea is rooted predominately in the works of Russian formalism's representatives. It has influenced research on literary works up to the present (Erlich 1969).

4| The "aesthetic valorisation of a language" is one of the obligatory terms used in the philologically-orientated type of discourse about literary work. See, for example, Glowinski, Okopień-Sławińska & Sławiński (1962: 90–95).

5| The last expression was formulated by S. R. Levin in his well-known book (Levin 1964).

6| The term *literariness* was formulated by the researchers of the Russian formal school in order to distinguish the set of features typical for a literary work as *the art of word*, which is irreduc-

ible to ordinary language – here *ordinary* means *aimed at cognitive, expressive and persuasive function*. However, since then, the term *literariness* has been used in a more universal context as a set of conditions under which – within the framework of social-literary consciousness – a text is perceived as literary (Erlich 1969).

(Searle 1975: 332). Taking into consideration Mitterer's thesis that assumes that it is impossible to present an object without a rudimentary description, the reason for such a situation may be seen in a different light. The aim of the following thesis is to give possible explanations as an experiment in which non-dualism is the cognitive basis.

### Fictive, fictitious, fictional

Assumptions that a literary work is a special domain of extra-ordinary language (as described above) support the theory of fictionality as an essential feature of a literary text. Consequently I will use the terms *fictionality/fictional* as they refers to literary works, although they are not obligatory literary terms. Analyzing the phenomenon of fiction, the following terms should be taken in consideration: *fictional*, *fictive*, and *fictitious*. I will try to distinguish them by analyzing their usage domains. Obviously, these three notions carry the same meaning of *being not real* and *being the product of imagination*. However, the first word is used mostly to refer to literary works. Thus, *fictional* means mostly *literary* as literariness is traditionally perceived as the domain of imagination (as opposed to the experienced word). One may use the words *fictitious* and *fictive* in the same context in which *fictional* appears, although their referential scopes are not identical. The term *fictitious* is used in the situation where something is made up to deceive someone. While in the first case the word could be associated with the term *unreal*, the following word should rather be replaced by the notion of *false*. The word *fictive* is the most problematic as it is rare in ordinary acts of speech, as well as in the discourse of fiction. It can be understood as related to fiction but it refers rather to the domain of untrue feelings and emotions. Here comes the question of a relation between fiction and lies. For Ludwig Wittgenstein, lying is a language game that has to be learned like every language game (Wittgenstein 1953: §249). However, this point of view has been questioned. Searle assumes that "lying consists in violating one of the regulative rules on the performance of speech acts, and any regulative rule at all contains within it the notion of a violation" (Searle 1975: 326). He focuses on the fact that it is not that we have

to learn to follow the rule and then learn a separate practice of breaking it: fiction "is much more sophisticated than lying" (ibid). The difference between fiction and lying consists in the existence of conventions enabling the author to utter sentences he knows to be untrue without an intention to mislead anyone. According to Searle, it is necessary to understand the set of conventions of fiction in order to distinguish these two notions. Fiction is similar or even the same as lying for those who have no knowledge of this set. Thus, if somebody does not know the conventions according to which it is possible to construct fictional stories, he/she is not able to perform a *make-believe game* (Walton 1990). Such lack of knowledge would result in making lies and fiction equivalent. This kind of knowledge is assimilated by us while functioning in a specific culture and specific institutions (especially in school).<sup>7</sup>

## The phenomenon of fiction

### From a logical to a panfictional view of fiction

The *phenomenon of fiction* is one of those phrases that seem to be most typical in literary research. As Searle's considerations show, it is not very easy to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction, literary text and figurative discourse, fiction and lie. However, if we take into account the isolated notion of fiction, not necessarily in reference to what we perceive as a literary work, the situation may become even more complicated. The definitions of this notion range from commentaries assuming it is something limited to a special type of utterances (not only in a literary work) to assumptions that fiction is a basic feature of the reality we construct.

The definition of fiction is based on the recognition of a special status of a literary sentence. This status may be defined

7| See also the interesting conception formulated by Schmidt (1986: 130–147). Here one may also find an explanation of the notion of *fictionality*, which is interpreted from a pragmatic perspective.

in various ways, according to the logical qualifications. Thus, it is treated as a false sentence (Pelc 1960: 97–128, 399–402) or *quasi-judgment* (Ingarden 1960: 229–244). Analogously, it may be claimed that the sentences have a heterogenic status: they could be false or true depending on the subject given in the sentences and the possibility of empiric verifiability of its semantic contents (Markiewicz 1976: 118–147). These selected views are representative of the *ontologizing* and *textualizing* type of thinking about fiction.

Although this type of logical and linguistic approach is on the periphery of a modern discourse about fiction, it (paradoxically!) still forms the main shape of literary research/discourse about literary fiction.

In contrast to this textual and logical view, the panfictional perspective is a result of the assumption that fiction is a basis of all cognitive activities of subjects. As it is impossible to achieve the pure nature of a naked fact, all types of invented cognitive categories should be perceived as the constructs that cover worlds to which access is impossible (Goodman 1978).<sup>8</sup> Thus, fiction is a limitless notion because it appears everywhere. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is presented as oppressive, being one of the oppositions typical of the discourse in Western metaphysics (Derrida 1977a, b).<sup>9</sup>

This view of fiction seems to be problematic, especially from the perspective of literary research. Panfictionality leads to the assumption that literary fiction and theory must rather be excluded or abandoned: it does not offer any operational procedure and cannot be incorporated into the discourse about fiction. If the literary text and the discourse about fiction are fictional, as well as their possible theory (Bowie 1987), there is no starting point for a conversation.

8| In Lebkowska (2001: 80–90), Goodman's conceptions are presented as the most representative of the panfictional orientation in the discourse about fiction.

9| Here I refer to the discussion between Searle and Derrida. See Derrida (1977a), Searle (1977), and Derrida (1977b).

In fact, such a conversation is fictitious as well. There are no criteria for distinguishing, there are no distinctions, and even the differences identified in a meaning of the above-mentioned words (fictive, fictitious, and fictional) become irrelevant. Does Mitterer's non-dualism then offer an operational procedure that could refer to the discourse on literary text? Panfictionality is often associated with constructivist conceptions: as radical constructivism constitutes the basic context for Mitterer's considerations,<sup>10</sup> non-dualism could be immediately incorporated into the set of panfictional conceptions.<sup>11</sup> Is this assignation appropriate?

### On a reasonable panfictionality

The constructivist approach to a problem of fiction is represented by Siegfried J. Schmidt.<sup>12</sup> He assumes that the reality independent from cognitive processes performed by subjects is inaccessible and finds a foundation for his conceptions predominately in Humberto Maturana's and Ernst von Glasersfeld's works. Although Schmidt's theory is often associated with the panfictional movement (cf. Lebkowska 2001: 90–99), I consider his proposal to be different. First, Schmidt assumes an empirical basis for his deliberations and refers to empirical theories of cognition, so his theory cannot be suspected of solipsism (Schmidt 1980: 545). Following some radical constructivists, especially Glasersfeld and Maturana (regarding the notion of autopoiesis and the way in which living systems function), Schmidt comes to the conclusion that the adequate conception of fiction should be based on empirical studies on the processes of perception (ibid: 525–526). Living systems construct the models of reality, which are invented inside each system as every system is closed and auto-referential. As a result, there can be no difference between

the reality in a discourse about "reality" and fictional discourse as there is always only the construct of reality, not *reality itself*. This does not ground the thinking about fiction and reality as two non-distinguishable notions. On the contrary, Schmidt does not reject the distinction between fiction and non-fiction but moves the discourse about them to a different position. The very starting point is the assumption that the pragmatic perspective is the best way to formulate the problem of fiction, reality, and literature. The determinants of fiction depend on the models of reality invented in a concrete historical moment by the members of a concrete society (the socially determined model of reality). Hence, in defining the notion of fiction, a model of reality accepted in a society and the cognitive activity of the subject are to be taken into account. Here we come to the significant conclusion – fictionality is not a feature of the text and/or the special mode of being of the objects given in a fictional discourse (Schmidt could agree with Searle!); it is something taken from the situation of communication. The status of fictionality is rather granted in concrete circumstances than discovered from the discourse. The attitudes and intentions of both the author/the sender of the discourse and the reader/receiver should be taken into consideration while analyzing the potential status of fictionality. The intention of the author must be recognized by the receiver, who assumes that the speech acts are suspended in a special sense, thus they are fictionalized. Here is another convergence between Searle's theory and Schmidt's conception: both of them allocate the status of fictionality to the level of the discourse (the series of speech acts), excluding the possibility of the description of the sentences by the category of fiction.

By analogy, Schmidt assumes that the idea of literature is changeable from a social and a historical perspective. Schmidt emphasizes that this is also a changeable convention. However, literature fulfills a special function in Schmidt's conception. A literary work is one in which the constructivist character of cognition is expressed in the most visible way. The uniqueness of a literary work lies in the fact that this is the place where the constructions of the models of the world are thematized (Schmidt 1984:

265). This is the experience given within the literary domain. As Schmidt assumes, this fundamental feature of a literary work, and, more generally, the whole social system of literature, may serve as a basis for the understanding of the processes of construction in society.

## The flight from dualizing...<sup>13</sup>

### The flight from ontologizing?

Firstly, let me focus on a strictly ontological perspective from which fiction (and every object associated with a literary work, and a literary work itself) is perceived. Although Alexius Meinong's theory of non-existent objects has been forgotten for a long time, it has influenced the research on fiction up to now. At present, there are not so many philosophers interested in formalizations of Meinong's ontology. However, we can consider his notion of non-existent object as representative of *the ontology-orientated discourse* about literary fiction (Parsons 1975; Paśniczek 1984, 1988, 1994). This influential theory, which seems to be the continuation of the phenomenological tradition from Brentano to Husserl, constitutes the foundation of the theory of fictional objects (fictional discourse). Thus, the theory of literary fiction is *object-orientated and as a result it is always ontologically involved*.<sup>14</sup>

Meinong's theory of possible objects of consciousness has been forgotten, as a consequence of radical criticism formulated by Bertrand Russell (1905, 1935). However, these theories may be connected and even convergences between them may be found. Theorists of fiction used to claim that it was Russell who excluded fictional objects, such

10| The connections between non-dualism and radical constructivism are more complicated. See the discussion in Riegler & Weber (2008).

11| An exhaustive explanation of panfictional theories of fiction is given in Lebkowska (2001: 61–102).

12| Here I reconstruct S. Schmidt's theses on his selected works. See Schmidt (1980: 525–546, 1984: 253–274, 1986: 130–147).

13| I use the same metaphor, which I consider most appropriate while analysing Mitterer's philosophy, as used by Mitterer in his book *Flucht aus der Beliebigkeit*, which could be translated into English as *The Flight from Contingency*.

14| I claim that the theory of *possible intentional* objects leads to paradoxes and unsolvable problems. Unfortunately, it is impossible to describe all of them here. For analyses concentrating on Meinong's ontology and its possible consequences in logic, ontology, and literary research, see Cyzman (2009).

as a *unicorn*, from philosophy, especially from logic, pointing out there is no place for such a mode of being in either zoology or philosophy (Russell 1905: 479–493). Nevertheless, Russell did not exclude every possible object of thought from a rational discourse. He proposed a distinction between *being* and *existence*, connecting the first notion with every possible object of thought. Hence, the Meinongian objects, *the golden mountain* or *the round square*, have *being*, but not *existence*. Reading Meinong's concepts more closely, it appears that the similarity between Russellian and Meinongian points of view is rather illusory. For Meinong, these special types of objects are *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein* (translated as: *beyond being and non-being*, Findlay 1963). Meinong's deliberations lead to the non-classical and non-bivalent conception of logic, in which the elementary principles (the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle) do not apply. This way, he liberated ontology from rules that could not be valid in fiction. That is why researchers interested in fiction consider Meinong's concept as the foundation of their theories, leading them to formalize this original *free logic*. However, it should be emphasized that Meinong's philosophy does not liberate the discourse about fiction from ontological involvement. It may be rather interpreted as the attempt to make this discourse still rational from the perspective of ontology. In Meinong's theory, there is also an object that should be taken into consideration as the semantic, cognizable centre of the act of consciousness.

Both Meinong and Mitterer use in their concepts a significant phrase or metaphor that should be pointed out. While Meinong formulated the phrase *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein* to defend the rationality of ontological discourse about fiction, allocating a kind of objectiveness to all type of imaginable properties, Mitterer later used the same expression, *Jenseits*, connecting it with *philosophy* to emphasize the fact that *dualizing* and, analogically, *ontologizing* are the procedures that lead to arbitrariness. Meinong, while excluding classical ontological principles from the discourse about fiction, did not remove the notion of an object, which is still perceived from an essentialist perspective; Mitterer broke off this type of discourse, try-

ing to avoid the necessity of essentialist formulations about the object. Meinong used an ontological discourse against ontology, while Mitterer's proposal may be considered as a non-ontologizing discourse.

### The flight from ontologizing

In the ontologizing discourse about literary fiction, the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is considered a basis of discourse that, consequently, is focused on the explanation of what fiction is and according to what conditions one can distinguish fiction from non-fiction. The fictional object is considered to be the centre of philosophical investigations, in which it is perceived as a specific mode of being functioning in opposition to a real type of being. The non-existent object is impossible and incomplete, while existent individuals are understood as possible and complete ones. As Roman Ingarden claims, in every intentional object there are *spots of indeterminacy* (in the original German version he uses the expression *Unbestimmtheitsstellen*; Ingarden 1960: 316–326). Thus a fictional character has as many features as the author included in his text, but while reading a literary work (the reading process is hidden in the notion of *concretization*), a receiver, the person who responds to the text, completes and sometimes changes these *spots of indeterminacy* (always in accordance with *the objective senses* of a literary work, while the cultural context is weakly represented). Pointing to the way in which the relation between these two modes of being is problematized, one can assume that it refers to a kind of *axiom of existence*. Surprisingly, it is nothing but a Russellian view on the notion of existence, understood as an ordinary spatiotemporal being (Rorty 1994: 118–119). The presence (of the objects that may be seen or experienced) then seems to be one of the central assumptions that ground the ontology-orientated discourse. The fictional objects, both Meinongian (*round square*) and literary (*Hamlet*), are usually divided into two subsets: the first refers to their internal properties (*Hamlet is a Danish prince*), and the second is connected to their external properties (*Hamlet is a literary character created by William Shakespeare*).

The possibility of fiction is based on the assumption that a literary work (or fictional

discourse) creates a special type of objects. However, this assumption is followed by the thesis that the work of fiction consists of utterances of a specific kind. The list of specific notions used to distinguish fictional sentences from *normal*, *non-pretended*, *true* sentences in ordinary language will never be exhausted as it is always connected with the particular methodology of literary research. In Polish literary research, *the most scientific* literary methodology is based on structuralism, or, more precisely, a combination of structuralism and phenomenology (Lewiński 2004). Thus, the text is perceived as an objective, cognizable object that is ready for reader's response. And the reader's response may be verified and valued as right or wrong. The text is also understood as a semantic object to which readers should refer to solve interpretative problems. The epistemological assumption of direct cognition is, therefore, still at work.

### Reaching for non-ontologizing

The assumptions given above result from an epistemology that could be described as *object-orientated epistemology* in order to point out the main direction of thinking *about* the objects (the preposition “*about*” seems to be the key word for the traditional epistemology of that type). The cognition is directed towards the object as the semantic centre, which may be discovered in the series of intentional acts performed by a reader. The result of his/her cognition is expressed in the meta-discourse based on the first level, which is always the fictional text. Researchers assume that their analyses result from objective knowledge, which can be proved or verified from a neutralist perspective. This way, they established only arbitrary notions or arbitrary qualifications of what the fiction is and what it is not. According to them, Kapusciński's *Cesarz* (*The Emperor*)<sup>15</sup> is fictional or non-fictional and it is *the text* that may verify its fictionality or non-fictionality *itself*. Here, comes Mitterer's description of *the text*, which is understood as “dumb and silent; but fortunately the interpreters represent the text, speak on behalf and for him...” (Mitterer 2013: §6) From a non-dualizing perspective it is not the text

15| I refer to the original Polish edition of Kapusciński's text (Kapusciński 2009).



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that is fictional or non-fictional. *The fiction is not the reason for the interpretation; it is rather the result of the interpretation.* It is one of the most significant consequences of Mitterer's concept, in which there is nothing like talking "about" the object. "Talking about" focuses on the object and is the result of an epistemology concentrated on the object (*object-orientated epistemology*). In non-dualizing thinking, the description continues the object of speech understood as a description so far. Thus, it is rather talking from the object. In non-dualizing thinking the description of the object (*from the object*) means to continue the speech so far by a speech from now on. Talking from the object – a phrase that sounds ungrammatical – may be considered as an expression that designates the new non-fundamental epistemology, which I called *from-object-cognition*, as opposed to *towards-object-epistemology*.<sup>16</sup>

Fiction is not an essential feature of the text that is discovered by the reader and then described in a series of speech acts. There is nothing like an essential or constitutive nature of the object, as the object is always given with a description. In a dualizing way of thinking, there is a deeply grounded assumption of textual objectivity, which is followed by claiming that the sense (meaning) is given in the text. If so, the fiction is recognizable by the analysis of the utterances or

the ontological status of the world presented in a work of fiction. Descriptions are directed towards the object and they are perceived as the result of objective recognition of the senses building the global meaning of fictional discourses. In a non-dualizing way of thinking, descriptions come from the text: describing is a process of stepping forward, not backwards. The establishing of fiction is not the result of the recognition of senses (modified senses) in the text because it arises within the interpretation. *There is nothing like an ontologically understood identity of the object as the object is the result of just-stabilized relations between descriptions.* It is the permanent process of changing, in which an object as a description so far is always being replaced by another object that is a description from now on. The ontological identity presupposes the stable nature of the object that is *such and such*. The non-dualizing way of thinking represented by Mitterer suggests, rather, the *so far* stabilised point of description. It is occasional and changeable as *so far* assumed by the set of description and relations functioning between them.

Fiction, then, is an occasional and never privileged description from now on that may always be changed and replaced by another description. It is always the readers' formulation, if by reader we do not mean an isolated person but a participant in a group of people that may be called – following Stanley Fish – the *interpretive community* (Fish 1980: 164–184) or – following Ludwik Fleck – the *thought collective* (Fleck 1960: 130–160). The existence of absolutely individual observation/interpretation is a kind of epistemological utopia as we always look with the eyes of the group in which we were

socialised. Thus, it is not only our particular view that makes something fiction or non-fiction as this based on many cultural and social circumstances. The acceptability of interpretations is also based on extra-textual conditions determined by the group of readers, the cognitional and even ethic rules of each society, politics, philosophical tendencies, or the power of an authority represented by interpreters. Thus, all these circumstances should be taken into consideration when analysing the way in which a description so far is established and changed.

## The Flight from meta-language

### Dangerous flight from (the illusion of) literary science?

Ewa Bińczyk claims that Mitterer's project is a conception of a radical non-essentialist way of thinking about language (Bińczyk 2007: 112). I assume – analogously – that his *non-dualizing theory may be considered a foundation of a radical non-essentialist way of thinking about literature*.

The *towards-text-orientated* literary school can argue that Mitterer's direction of thinking ends with relativism or even anarchism, which makes all descriptions, even the most aberrant ones, possible and acceptable. Can a description then ever be falsified in a non-dualizing philosophy? This radical anti-essentialist concept does not assume a *free-floating set of descriptions*. The procedure of verification and falsification of descriptions is still at work (see for example: Fish 1980: 338–46). However – according to

16| There are many theses that develop and describe *from-object-cognition* in Mitterer's conception. See, for example, thesis number 88 in *Das Jenseits der Philosophie. Wider das dualistische Erkenntnisprinzip*. As there is no English translation, I am using the Polish edition (Mitterer 1996).

non-dualizing thinking – it is not performed from the perspective of the text.

*Towards-object-orientated* researchers may ask what practical difference it makes as a kind of negotiation is also characteristic of every type of discussion. The difference lies in the way in which the text is perceived. It is not an *adjudicating instance*, from a non-dualizing perspective. While formulating an interpretation, a reader does not get closer to the immanent sense of it: he/she moves forwards formulating and changing descriptions. The text – as Mitterer claims – is not beyond all possible descriptions, which is the basic assumption of nearly all literary schools (Mitterer 2013: §§15, 16, 19). According to his conception, as mentioned above, every time I formulate a description, I move a step forward, changing and continuing the previous descriptions, the descriptions *so far*. In contrast, a dualizing way of thinking about a literary work assumes that every new description, yet unfamiliar to me, is treated as a kind of particular act of speech that goes deeper into the text in order to recognize its internal senses more precisely.

The way the interpreter pinpoints, modifies, and develops the text *from* a literary work is accepted in a community as long as the interpretation (the set of descriptions) is proved and accepted by its participants. The acceptability of the interpretation is also occasional and may vary according to different pragmatic conditions. Therefore, the essentialist stable notion of an object is excluded.

There is also another consequence of non-dualizing thinking about the literary discourse, which I consider the most important: namely, the exclusion of the meta-level from a discourse, which may lead to a general rebuilding of our thinking about literary research.

### Reaching for the one-level notion of language

The meta-level is not a consequence of understanding the object as a description *so far* that is continued as a description *from now on*. The distinction between acts of speech referring to language-independent objects and acts of speech concerning other descriptions is characteristic of a *two-level theory of language* that is strictly dualizing. Mitterer's deliberations presuppose, rather, a *one-level notion of language*, which may

be considered as problematic or controversial, or even not acceptable at all. Alicja Pietras claims that the distinction between these two levels of language is very useful as it helps to solve many problems, especially logical ones, such as *the liar's paradox* (Pietras 2011: 26). She refers to Russell's and Alfred Tarski's ideas, which were invented as a possible solution to some logical problems, including *the liar's paradox* (Russell 1908: 222–262; Tarski 1944: 341–376). Let me discuss in short the lack of the meta-level and its possible consequences for literary research.

From the non-dualizing perspective, the discourse about fiction and *the discourse about the discourse about fiction* are nothing but the continuation of the description *so far* as there is no longer any *about*; there is only “*from the object*” description. Hence, we may come to the conclusion that the continuation of the object considered literary and/or fictional is analogous to literary discourse itself. The result is, therefore, predictable: it is impossible to make a reasonable distinction between *literary* and *towards-literary* text. If philosophy is a kind of writing – as Richard Rorty claims – the interpretation of a literary text may be considered as a kind of writing as well (Rorty 1994: 90–109). Mitterer's proposal, in that case, is radically anti-methodological as it does not assume any special tools, notions, methods, or languages necessary in a methodology of literary research and is treated as special means aimed at discovering the truth of the text.

Here comes a difficulty with the perspective from which I may observe this *descriptive movement* from the previous to the further object. If I am the observer of the way in which people formulate descriptions or interpretations by analysing all possible circumstances that influence their decisions and negotiations, what position should I take towards the discourse? One can assume this is strictly the meta-level of the discourse as I take the discourse about fictional discourse as the basis of my deliberations. Still, it would be a dualizing perspective as the distinction between *what is observed* and *what is an observation* is established as a foundation of the series of my acts of speech. It is difficult to assume that this *discourse about discourse about fictional discourse* is nothing more than a continu-

ation of the discourse. I can observe how people formulate their descriptions *from an object*, claiming it is fictional for *such and such* reason. By then assuming their description as a description *so far*, I am able to continue it as a description *from now on*. Does this mean that in assuming a non-dualizing perspective, we reach for a conception of literary research that loses its scientific value? If a text is judged as non-scientific enough, its author may be excluded from the *circle of real researchers*. The situation has now been changed thanks to some of the contemporary philosophical deliberations of Derrida, Rorty, and Fish. However, literary research still seems to be a step behind them. The fear of losing the scientific value is so strong that treating the interpretation as a kind of writing is unimaginable and irrational and is immediately associated with the end of discourse about literary works. Nevertheless, a non-dualizing perspective does not exclude such a writing: it liberates *the discourse from a literary work* from obligations that – as shown above – could not be fulfilled.

In the essentialist type of literary research, an interpreter's work aims at discovering, understanding, and expressing the immanent, objective sense given in a literary text. The methodology of literary research concentrates on distinguishing between more and less adequate interpretations, more and less appropriate means of rendering the one, real, true sense of a literary work. The paradox of this type of investigation lies in the fact that in trying to get closer to the text itself, researchers go further, creating rather the exponents of a particular methodology that influence their view of a literary work. Mitterer's conception breaks with the illusion of objective literary research, showing its arbitrariness.<sup>17</sup>

17| However, the problems of science – its reference to the reality as well as its objective value and cognitive function – are more complicated and cannot be exhausted in the present paper. It should be rediscussed in the context of sociology of knowledge, from L. Fleck up to the contemporary conception of, for example, Bruno Latour's theories (e.g., Latour 2004). Here, I will not adopt any of the specific theses connected with literary research, but will rather focus on possible consequences of non-dualism as an epistemological

## The flight to a new model of literary research

The non-dualizing and non-ontologizing perspective from which the discourse about fictional discourse is perceived may lead to a significant conclusion that allows answers to the initial questions. The philologically-orientated research on literary texts, which is concentrated on the explanation of their semantics, would, rather, be moved towards a culturally- and/or socio-logically-orientated type of the discourse. The way people establish descriptions, their possible influences, and the possibility of their acceptance in each society are issues that this type of research may be focused on. Hence, the theses presented in *On Interpretation* (Mitterer 2013) should be developed in a pragmatic direction.

The non-dualizing, non-textualizing, and non-ontologizing perspectives change the type of questions asked while observing the way in which interpreters formulate the discourse about fictional discourse. The question of whether the researcher is closer to the immanent sense of a text is removed and replaced with questions such as: *Why do people continue this object/description so far with the description "such and such"? Why do they establish that the description consisted of the notion of fiction in that particular moment? What practical consequences follow this step? Where are the limits of interpretation?* The interpretations formulated by subjects, not only researchers, may be treated as the exponents of the models of the world constructed by people in concrete circumstances. They offer constructivist models that may be compared with other models. The textual perspective, as problematized in the philologically-orientated discourse about fiction, is removed.

### Reaching the pragmatics once again...

We come to the conclusion that one of the possible consequences of a non-dualizing perspective is a pragmatically-orientated literary research. However, this is not a completely new view on the discourse about fiction and literature. There are many

background of this type of reflection on literature and its interpretations.

convergences between this model and Schmidt's constructivist perspective, as well as Rorty's<sup>18</sup> or Fish's concept. Moreover, if we consider that at present we can observe that contemporary discourse of this type has been moved towards research on all of the sociological, cultural, and medial context, we can ask: *Non-dualism and literary research – what the difference does it make?* The answer is not original and was given above. However, there are two fundamental differences, which I consider to be most important:

- 1 | The first lies in a radical anti-essentialist perspective, from which the interpretation/literary fiction/literary research is perceived. *The text itself* is consequently unneeded and the new epistemological perspective, *from-object-cognition*, is successfully introduced by Mitterer. This way, the new direction of thinking and interpreting is set.
- 2 | The second one, which is even more fundamental, points out the potential *operationality* of Mitterer's theses in a relation to literary research.

Mitterer offers a non-dualizing mode of speaking that results in placing the consideration on the level of discourse within *the descriptonal movement*. It reduces the abstractive problems to the notions that are stabilized as a result of conversation (of the non-dualizing type) and negotiations performed by subjects as participants in this process. As analysed above, it helps avoid stale-mate situations, which are unavoidable as long as the dualizing mode of speaking is at work. Mitterer's concept presupposes the practical dimension of interpretation and literary fiction, as well as the discourse about the discourse about fiction.

According to Mitterer (2013: §25), it is exactly the choice of a *certain technique of argumentation and the conceptual vocabulary* that is followed by the choice of a *non-dualistic preference-model* of interpretation (discourse about fiction, literary research). Abstract thinking is successfully replaced with pragmatics. As Mitterer claims: "When non-dualists favor one interpretation over

18 | The significant fact is that Rorty also uses the notion of anti-dualistic interpretation (Rorty 1991: 141–167). It may be very interesting to compare his conception with Mitterer's perspective.

another, it is a matter of *preference* and not a matter of *reference*" Mitterer 2013: §24). And this preference is expressed and justified within a framework of the discourse.

Thus, answering the third initial question, the general difference with the panfictional (even *rational* panfictional) approach to the problem of (literary) fiction lies in a potential operationality of Mitterer's theses. They do not only move these problems towards the level of discourse: Mitterer's considerations also provide a possibility of how to form such a discourse, how to stabilize the notions, and how to interpret works and not to fall into stale-mate situations when it comes to competing views on a literary works.

## Are we ready for the flight?

Would a non-dualizing background of literary discourse also change the discussions about Domosławski's biography completely? I hope so as I suspect it would become less antagonistic and more rational. Pointing to the way in which the relation between descriptions *so far* and descriptions *from now on* is established, I may reach for a new vision of such a discussion. If, from a non-dualizing perspective, some questions are excluded – for example, the question of the constitutive sense of a literary work or its representational value – all the unsolvable problems I sketched above are no longer valid. Answering the question of whether a text is fictional or not, I do not establish the main instance – *adjudicating authority*, the authority of the text. However, at the same time I do not resign from rationalism and logic in my discourse. I am giving the reasons for changing the description *so far*, assuming – according to Rorty's notion – that my vocabulary is not final and could be always changed. Performing negotiations from non-dualizing, non-ontologizing, and non-textualizing perspectives, I am able to avoid stale-mate situations, which I consider the most precious consequence of such thinking. To perform the series of descriptions *from* the object, I may concentrate on more pragmatic problems as there is no need to define the essence of an object itself.

However, this new perspective, which I consider to be one of the most important

in the contemporary discourses in general, stirs up some controversies that should be pointed out. Following some of Danuta Szajnert's theses, we may formulate the objections (Szajnert 2011: 133–135). If we remove the philological, traditional notion of the text as the intentional, semantic, objective center prior to the interpretation, we may come to the conclusion that the institution of literature is not necessary at all as it only interferes with the reader's idiosyncratic vision. The result is that it will be the reader who creates a literary work thanks to the selected tools, techniques of argumentation, and rhetoric, and his own ideas.<sup>19</sup> The interpretative discourse that is the result of the reader's activity is communicational, and – paradoxically! – has textual status, the status that is suspended while analyzing the fictional/literary discourse. According to the set of institutional practices, interpretation is the cognitive activity in respect of the text. Does it necessarily mean *the text itself*? Perhaps this category is illogical if we take into account that the meaning is always pragmatically changeable and contextualized.

## Conclusion

I consider Mitterer's conception is operational in contrast to many strictly constructivist theses. As I pointed out above, it offers a new mode of speaking, not a new definition or new type of means by which we should achieve the recognition of fiction, a literary work, or an interpretation. However, it should be still discussed in comparison with the different conceptions, including constructivist theses.

Here, I present only a project of a possible non-dualizing literary research/literary discourse. There are many problems that should be still reformulated. There are still theses that should be specified, such as – for example – the whole complex of pragmatic, social, cultural, and institutional conventions that determine the way in which we establish and stabilize a literary work or fic-

tion among others within the descriptional movement towards the pursuit of change. I may only speculate that here there is an answer to the objections formulated against a constructivist perspective.

Non-dualism is not *a desert island* on the philosophical globe. There are some dependencies and convergences between Mitterer's conception and Rorty's philosophy, Fleck's epistemological investigations, Fish's theory of interpretation, and Latour's analyses. On the other hand, by excluding dualisms and offering a completely new non-ontologizing perspective, Mitterer is an original author. He offers (let me underline this significant notion – it is an option) the possibility of a way of discussing many topics that is both non-dualizing and non-ontologizing. Mitterer's conception seems to be extremely rational by excluding the *beyond* from the discourse and putting the emphasis on the way in which the description *so far* is changed into a further description *from now on*.

In spite of some doubts, I am certain that considering Mitterer's philosophy as a possible foundation of *literary research* may be refreshing. However, the main question is still: Are we ready for non-dualizing, with all of these consequences? Are we ready for a general rebuilding of our thinking? Are we ready to replace *the pursuit of truth* with *the pursuit of change*? (Mitterer 1996: §97)

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19| See, also, some more interesting commentaries on the constructivist perspective in literary research (mostly Fish's conception) in Szajnert (2011: 133–135).

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