

Presentation of the Dossier 'Models and Fictions'

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In the last few decades there has been an increasing interest within various scientific domains, from economics to theoretical physics, about fiction or, in particular, what is or what is not fiction, and what turns out a piece of work, in literary or scientific work, into a piece of fiction. The philosophical research about the nature of fiction is not exactly new. Sometimes fictions were presented by metaphors, idealizations and abstractions. We could say the same about models. Modern science has given us very good examples of physical models, theoretical models and simulations. The relation between knowledge, representation and imagination is always present in every corner in the history of philosophy and science, and was subjected to extensive studies in aesthetics and philosophy of language, but not in Philosophy of Science. The contemporary focus of interest in those subjects is beyond a mere incidental relation between particular modes of representation, like those quoted above. A more profound research is necessary to take into account, a common and systematic ground, in which those concepts are used. But there is something we take for sure. It seems to be ludicrous to believe

that a scientific theory or another structure of scientific discourse would be a description of reality and not a kind of scenario to interpret phenomena. Models, within this regard, are mainly structures devoid of content, able to represent the world or some of its parts, in a schematic way. Mathematical or physical models are, nowadays, so distant from our direct sensory perception, they sound like pure artificial mind creations, instrumental to explain phenomena. It is then natural to question, *in limine*, its truth value and, furthermore, their real or unreal character. There is, then, a common research ground for models and fiction. In this special issue we present a selection of papers able to contribute to the discussion of some important problems in this contemporary debate: the nature of fiction, the unreality of non-existent objects, the relation between fiction and scientific model, and a dispensability view of fiction in scientific modeling.

When we talk about models and fictions we are revisiting Hans Vaihinger’s ideas in “*The Philosophy of ‘as If’*” (1911), the *locus classicus* regarding modern emphasis attributed to fictions. But this book was almost marginalized until its revival by Arthur Fine’s seminal paper on “Fictionalism” (1985) and Bas van Fraassen and Kendall Walton’s works, among others, on representation in science.

The history of scientific explanation during the last century is a rich collection of hopes and failures. The debate between realism and antirealism brought to light the opportunity to rethink the category of meaning and, again, the relation between theory and experience. One of the main points of disagreement with the received view of meaning was the way Russell and the analytical tradition understood the existence of imaginary entities, the right place to locate fictions and, may be, models. There is a long and well documented history of the difficulties of definite descriptions to account for the problem of imaginary entities. But it was only after the phenomenological tradition, in particular, after Alexius Meinong’s work and his student Ernst Mally, we were able to rethink the categories of possible and imaginary entities. This was the trigger that turned out possible a new approach to non-existent objects and, therefore, to fictions.

The debate about fictions and fictionalism is nowadays one of the most interesting subjects in Philosophy of Science, not just as a theoretical

problem, but also because the increasing use of modeling in physical and social sciences. Apart from particular applications, there is a need of a logical, epistemological and ontological theory for models and for fictions. Following this direction it is useful to consider the contribution of Amie Thomasson on the artifactual theory of fictions. We could say the same to the efforts of new forms of logic, like the dialogical logic developed by the Erlangen School. Quoting current debates about models and fictions there are major open problems to face such as the clarification of identity criteria, the existence of ontological commitments, if any, and, of course, a logical system able to express truth in fiction.

The publication of these five following papers is *Kairos*'s contribution to this lively and opportune debate. There is not a foundational reason for the order that the papers are presented. We tried, as far as possible, to follow a simple and logical canon to introduce the reader to five distinct problems: first, a new proposal of the utterance point of view on the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, throughout Alberto Voltolini's paper on "The Nature of Fiction/al Utterances"; Second, you are invited to follow a trip on the ontological disputed problem of the nature of the unreal, with Cristina Travanini's paper "Centaurs, Pegasus, Sherlock Holmes: Against the Prejudice in Favour of the Real"; third, a reinterpretation of Roman Frigg and Adam Toon's proposals on scientific models as games of make-believe, discussing the importance of the relation between authorized and non-authorized games, reinterpreting Walton's make-believe in terms of modal logic, with Matthieu Gallais's paper on "Scientific Models and Games of Make-Believe: A Modal-Logical Perspective"; fourth, on the un-necessity of fiction-view in scientific modeling, with Friedel Weinert's paper "Hypothetical, not Fictional Worlds"; finally, a paper by Noel Fitzpatrick, "The Question of Fiction-Nonexistent Objects, a Possible World Response from Paul Ricoeur", presenting Ricoeur's hermeneutical-phenomenological point of view on fiction to whom fiction is a question of narrative configuration, where the central issue is the idea of productive preference in opposition to reference.