

# THE WORLD IN PARADOX: FIELDS OF SENSE ONTOLOGY AND THE OUTLINES OF "PARADOXISM"

Gabriel Azevedo Cruz<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Markus Gabriel's Fields Of Sense Ontology (FOS) is a theory molded to uphold pluralism in its most radical form. If the project succeeds, it seems that a lot of benefits would follow for ontology in general. One example is a solution to the problem of "negative existentials". Another one is the reality attributed to fictional objects through FOS's pluralistic base. Be that as it may, the project is, in fact, threatened by a series of criticisms. Among those, some appear to follow the same line: Gabriel seems to commit himself to the entity that is, by his own diagnosis, the heart of a strong reductionist system, that is, "the world". As we can derive from arguments laid out by Meillassoux, Priest and Moss, Gabriel seems, in one way or another, to be a reductionist "despite itself". In our reading, this problem can be solved if we reorientate the place of the "non-contradiction principle" in Gabriel's system. Our endeavor will lead us, finally, to a deviant form of FOS that places the paradox at the center of the system. We call the position that follows from this move "Paradoxism" which relies on the "paradox of paradox" as its foundation (and lack of it).

**Key-words:** Markus Gabriel; Fields of sense ontology; Metaphysical Reductionism; Paradox.

**Resumo:** A Ontologia dos Campos de Sentido (FOS) de Markus Gabriel é uma teoria moldada para defender o pluralismo em sua forma mais radical. Sendo bem-sucedido, o projeto parece trazer muitos benefícios para a ontologia em geral. Um exemplo é uma solução ao problema dos "existenciais negativos". Outra é a realidade atribuída aos objetos ficcionais através de sua base pluralista. Seja como for, o projeto, de fato, é ameaçado por uma série de críticas. Entre essas, algumas seguem a mesma linha: Gabriel parece comprometer-se com a entidade que é o coração de um sistema reducionista forte, ou seja, "o mundo". Como se pode derivar das argumentações propostas por Meillassoux, Priest e Moss, Gabriel parece, de uma forma ou outra, ser um reducionista "apesar de si mesmo". Em nossa leitura, este problema pode ser resolvido se reorientarmos o lugar do "princípio de não contradição" no sistema de Gabriel. O nosso esforço nos conduzirá, finalmente, a uma forma desviante de FOS que coloca o paradoxo no centro do sistema. Chamamos a posição que decorre dessa reorientação de "Paradoxismo", que se baseia no "paradoxo do paradoxo" como seu fundamento (e falta dele).

**Palavras-Chave:** Markus Gabriel; Ontologia dos campos de sentido; Reduccionismo metafísico; Paradoxo.

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<sup>1</sup> Mestrando em Filosofia no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia da na UFRRJ.

## Introduction

Our objective here is to rethink the problem of metaphysical reductionism through the revising lenses of Markus Gabriel's Fields of Sense ontology (FOS). That said, we concur with Gabriel, Meillassoux and Harman when it comes to the idea that it is a problem when metaphysicians try to build theories by choosing one type of object as the privileged one - a kind of divine or necessary entity (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 22-23; MEILLASSOUX, 2022, p. 52, HARMAN, 2023a, p. 87; 2023b, p. 129). Furthermore, we agree with Gabriel that the best way to rehabilitate the ontological purport of philosophy without a "fall back" into an arbitrary metaphysical system is through the defense of a strong type of anti-reductionism. Gabriel's anti-reductionism is developed through what he calls "neutral Realism" which is part of his ontological system (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 22; 2016, p. 11-29; 2020a, p. 290-291). This version of anti-reductionism amongst the so-called New Realists and Speculative Realists is probably the most consistent one. Be that as it may, his system still presents some flaws, as any great system does. In this light, the core of the contribution we're trying to offer here is a revision of the basis of Gabriel's ontology, through which we can postulate, if possible, an original twist on what concerns its relationship with "paradoxes".

To do so, first we'll draw on several critiques made by Gregory Moss, Graham Priest and Quentin Meillassoux to the effect that Gabriel seems to enable, both in his negative and positive ontologies, the kind of reductionism he criticizes. If this is so, then we should give up on the FOS enterprise or try to alter some of its tenets for the sake of making it more cohesive. Our intuition is that FOS's relation with inconsistency and paradox is somewhat arbitrary and derivative of a common-place stance in philosophy about some metaphysical non-contradiction principle. We'll consider this problem especially in relation to "paradox". Here a revision of the notion of "paradox" is needed. The final part of the paper draws on our version of FOS through the guidelines of a theory of paradox we can call "Paradoxism".

### 1. The "metaphysical reductionism" problem

Since the massive adherence of "Realism" in continental philosophy through what we can call "the Realist Turn" (GRANT, 2015, p. vi; GABRIEL, 2015, p. 21), the question "what counts as real?" stands out as significantly relevant. This question is also at the heart of the famous disagreement between the so-called "Speculative Realists". This was the first great "movement" that ignited that overarching journey towards "Realism". In this preliminary

stage we can see the voices of Quentin Meillassoux (2006), Ray Brassier (2007), Graham Harman (2002; 2010) and Iain Hamilton Grant (2006) colliding in a battle over what should be considered as the hallmark of the “real”. The “stark opposition”, as Harman puts it, between Himself and Brassier boils down to what each of them defends as being the core of reality, so to speak (HARMAN, 2018b, p. 2, 98-99). Meanwhile, the same problem arises in relation to Meillassoux and Grant (Ibidem, p. 99-101). They all fought, in one way or another, over which type of object, entity or “thing” they felt obliged to concede the privilege of being considered “the real one” or the basis of reality (Ibidem, p. 8-12). If this description holds, then the answer to what counts as real can be seen as the tensional core that unifies “Speculative Realism” in its contingent fashion, a topic for another occasion.<sup>2</sup>

Following this trend, New Realism presents a new take on reductionism, especially in Gabriel’s ontology. This second “movement” emerged in 2011 and was founded by Maurizio Ferraris and Markus Gabriel (GABRIEL, 2016a, p. 9; HARMAN, 2014, p. xi; 2023b, p. 119; FERRARIS, 2015, p. 2-4). Most recently, Markus Gabriel, as Harman puts it, built a bridge between “Speculative Realism” and “New Realism” (HARMAN, 2015, p. vii). The German philosopher takes anti-reductionism to a whole new level: he makes even the former most charitable ontologist (i.e., Alexius Meinong)<sup>3</sup> look like a begrudging arbitrary judge in light of his all-inclusiveness towards objects (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 179-181; 2016b, p. 48-49).

Gabriel’s answer to the question “what counts as real?” is arguably the only of the six<sup>4</sup> that does not fall victim of arbitrariness. Brassier and Meillassoux, for instance, choose, each one, a kind of object describable by an area of investigation (the natural sciences or mathematics) to be the protagonist of their systems (HARMAN, 2018b, p. 9-12) although the true protagonist of Meillassoux system is clearly contingency (BRASSIER et al, 2007, p. 440). Grant, on the other hand, seems to privilege some kind of “dynamis” or “productivity” that is pre-individual and thus, show signs of a protagonism over individual items (HARMAN, 2018b, p. 8-9; BRASSIER et al, 2007, p. 352-353). Finally, Harman clearly chooses a type of objects

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<sup>2</sup> This is important because of the discussion circumscribing the reality of the “movement”: did it exist? Does it still exist? There was and is a certain polemic about it. See: HARMAN, 2018, p. 1-6. This is also part of our current MA research.

<sup>3</sup> That follows Gabriel’s reading. Is a debatable placement. Maybe Harman should figure as the most charitable ontologist.

<sup>4</sup> The “six” here are the four founders of speculative Realism (Meillassoux, Brassier, Grant and Harman) and the two founders of new Realism (Ferraris and Gabriel). It is a matter of dispute if they can be meaningfully related in a overall movement. Castro, for instance, reads them all as a part of what he calls “Post-Continental Realism”. See CASTRO, 20202. This is one of the focuses of our current MA research.

as the protagonists of his Realism: those he calls “real ones”, that is, those who run away *withdrawing*, which he deliberately distinguishes from the sensual ones (HARMAN, 2023b, p. 55-91). Finally, although Ferraris appears to be open to a plurality of types of objects, he seems to give a priority to what is “concept-independent”. This becomes clear when he asserts that “reality may oppose refusals to our conceptual schemes” (FERRARIS, 2015, p. 39) and that “the real is the negative of knowledge” (*Ibidem*, p. 40).

Against this background, Gabriel talks about a “Neutral Realism”, that is, a kind of Realism that does not state any priority to any type of object or “thing”:

There is no overall point where we have to stop or even where we typically stop. (...) In this sense, the ontology defended in this book is a form of anarchical Realism, Realism without an overall principle that organizes everything (...). This might be fair to say to the extent that it defines a limited space of orientation by claiming that no move is permissible that leads to or is grounded in a world-picture. (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 22).<sup>5</sup>

This is Gabriel’s “semi-flat”<sup>6</sup> ontology (*Ibidem*, 2015, p. 152-253, RALÓN, 2022, p. 10). Taking away the notion of a fundamental layer to which everything should be reduced (a move that usually divides reality into “real reality” and “illusionary appearances”), Gabriel seems to find a way to accommodate a “transfinite” variety of objects, be them material, numerical, fictional, fictive or other (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 1-13). The aftermath of the absence of that “deep reality” and a strong difference between appearance and reality is what can lead us to a true “democracy of objects” (HARMAN, 2018a, p. 228; DE SANCTIS; SANTARCANGELO, 2015, p. 91).

Having considered all those promising outcomes, we cannot ignore the fact that Gabriel’s position is not flawless. On the contrary, there are two sets of objections that are constantly raised against his system and seem to be rather valid. The objections point to the idea that both in rejecting the totalization that is tantamount to reductionism and in postulating his positive ontology, Gabriel falls prey to the enemy he criticizes, i.e. he ends up committing to

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<sup>5</sup> See also: GABRIEL, 2020a, p. 290; 2016c, p. 11-31.

<sup>6</sup> “Flat ontology” stands for an ontology without hierarchies, where all entities are on the same level. “Semi” stands for the notion that there is a difference between objects and fields of sense, which means that, in Gabriel’s system, it is not the case that everything is on the same level in all times and senses. Nonetheless, this difference, in the end, is functional and not substantial. Cf. Gabriel, 2015, cp.9.

some sort of unified totality or another. The unrestricted totality Gabriel calls “the world”: the only thing that, he insists, does not exist full-stop (GABRIEL, 2016a, p. 19, 73-78; 2016b, p. 34, 51-55; 2015, p. 187-189; 2022a, p. 39-68; 2022b, p. 83-95). Even though Gabriel replies (*repeatedly*) to those objections, his arguments on this point seem to fall short of its objective and resonate as unconvincing (GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 132).

If that is so, then this attractive theory needs either to be abandoned or to be reformed. In the present paper we are opting for the second alternative. Of course, as a living philosopher, Gabriel himself can reform his position and maybe even bring to light a set of arguments that make the current objections disappear altogether. We have no doubt of his capacities to do so. However, we are convinced that the route he is heading is definitely not the same as the one we will point out. This means that our aim is to take a profitable turn in the current chaotic state of FOS and propose an original theory derivative of this chaos. This new theory, nonetheless, would be independent of any future revamps and advances that can emerge from Gabriel himself. In this instance, we could join Harman in the way he treats Heidegger and his fourfold:

The biggest compliment we can offer to philosophers is to comprehend their core ideas and its respective systems and try to go beyond them. When this is successful, this enterprise always will make the predecessors look somewhat primitive - although “primitive” here means “classic” and not “rude”. We often find out that they stopped where we cannot afford to stop. Our own contributions need to be more flexible, with deeper nuance and coverage than the originality of our predecessor. (HARMAN, 2023a, p. 144)<sup>7</sup>

Let's wrap this section up. This is what will follow: first we'll argue that Gabriel's good argument against “the world” cannot be carried out within the No-World-View in its current state but, also, that a fall back into some arbitrary metaphysics is of no value. If both the postulation of the world and its thorough denial appear as incoherent and unacceptable, then we could try to go dialectic. In this scenario FOS would be fused with a theory of paradox which allows for the “paradox” to be (and not to be at the same time) the metaphysical entity that unites everything, our world-rule governing over all. To get there, let's first revise Gabriel's FOS.

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<sup>7</sup> Our translation.

## 2. The problem of the “unified totality” in Markus Gabriel’s philosophy

In the present section we’ll (1) reconstruct Gabriel’s diagnosis and solutions that gravitate what we call “the problem of the world”; (2) Exhibit in some detail why Gabriel’s solution seems to be contradictory to his critique; (3) Expose that the root of the problem seems to be that still Gabriel adheres the notion of “unification” where it is tied to a metaphysical principle of non-contradiction; and finally, (4) open the gates for a revision of the place of “the paradox” in the ontology of fields of sense.

### 2.1 Reconstructing the diagnosis and solutions: FOS at the center.

Both in *Porque o mundo não existe*<sup>8</sup> and *Fields of Sense*, Gabriel poses a diagnosis of the current state of art in contemporary philosophy. Outside his new alternative (his version of the new Realism tied to the “no-world-view”), he maps two positions: the metaphysical or “old realist” one and the constructivist or “anti-realist” one (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 10-12; 2016a, p. 9-10). As he puts it, both are arbitrary in how they approach reality:

Both are equally extreme and unmotivated mistakes. ‘Reality’ is neither generally of our own making (the world of the spectators, as I called it elsewhere<sup>9</sup>), nor is it generally unobserved or even in principle observed conceptually ‘spooky’ in-itself (the world without spectators). (Ibidem, 2015, p. 40).

Gabriel’s alternative aims at a middle ground: we cannot exclude subjectivity from reality (Ibidem, p.10) nor postulate an in-principle barrier to access the reality of things that are “subject-independent” (Ibidem, 2015, p. 330-332; 2016a, p. 114-119, 188-192; 2018, p. 66-77; 2020a, p. 69-71; 245-250; 2024a, p. 41). To carry on with this insight, Gabriel then excludes ‘the world’ from the equation. The “unified totality” (i.e. “the world”) is the core “entity” postulated in both problematic cases aforementioned. It does not matter if, in the end, the

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<sup>8</sup> Two important books for this paper will be referred to by its Brazilian name. One is precisely *Why the world does not exist (porque o mundo não existe)*. The other is *O sentido da existência* which, as far as we know, does not have an English edition. We chose to refer to the Brazilian titles because exactly those versions were consulted and, thus, the pages we indicate are tied to them.

<sup>9</sup> The reference here is to *Porque o mundo não existe* - 2016a, p.13-14.

posited totality of what there is ought to be considered as “material”, “mental” or a disjunct (or even conjunct) set of the two. It doesn’t even matter if the totality is the sum of infinites or transfinite “things” if they, finally, are encompassed by the same rule or set of rules. We are, in any event, still dealing with totalities.

Against this background, Gabriel asserts the inexistence of the world. He fully embraces the task to prove that the world does not exist full-stop. This proof (or set of proofs) seems to be derived from the best account of existence he can offer. In this context, he affirms in *O sentido da existência*: “I will defend that the world does not exist because it cannot satisfy the minimal conditions of existence: the appearance in a field of sense, or, if you will, in a context.”<sup>10</sup> (Ibidem, 2016b, p. 34). By that he means what is expressed in the beginning of *Porque o mundo não existe*: “The world cannot exist because it does not occur in the world”<sup>11</sup> (Ibidem, 2016a, p. 19). The idea behind it is simple enough: for Gabriel existence is appearance in a field of sense, his technical term for a context that makes it possible for something to be “manifested” (Ibidem, p. 54) or “appear” (Ibidem, 2016b, p. 30; 2015, p. 158; 2022a, p. 42), that is, exist.

This definition comes into play to solve the problem of the “ontological motive” which asserts that existence must be a property although not a proper one (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 43). Gabriel concurs that “existence” cannot be a proper property insofar as the function of such kinds of properties is to distinguish objects in a given “domain”, and existence never fulfills this role since every object that exists in a domain, in fact, exists (Ibidem, p. 49). An idea he derives from Kant and Frege is that existence can be a property of a domain instead of a property of the objects within it, i.e. the property to contain certain entities (Ibidem, p. 72). Existence would thus be a relation, so to speak. We can argue that this seems to solve the problem of the “property role” since now “existence” can be useful to distinguish one domain from another.

The problem that remains in this point of the dialectics is: if existence is the appearance in a given domain, then how can the domain itself exist? Following the rule, it must then appear in another domain (ibidem, 2016a, p. 79; 2015, p. 253-254). All this indicates that it is impossible for the “world”, the omni-comprehensive domain, to exist. If it appears in a

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<sup>10</sup> Our translation.

<sup>11</sup> Our translation.

domain, it is not the world anymore (by definition) but, on the other hand, if it is, at last, the world, then it cannot exist given the best account for existence offered by FOS.<sup>12</sup>

Now, why is this definition treated by Gabriel as the best one? It is so exactly because it gets rid of the two main problems that alternative approaches could not: (1) the questions raised by the “role” of properties and its relation with the notion of “existence” and, (2) the manifold problems that arise by the postulation of a “world”, be it the problems relative to reductionism or the problems concerning the existence of that world itself.

This anti-world stance sums up to the position Gabriel calls “meta-metaphysical nihilism”. For Gabriel, metaphysics in its main and worse significance means an investigation of the “world as world”, that is, the idea that there is something that unifies reality supported by the investigation of this “fundamental layer” and its rules. Since this “layer”, “the world” does not exist, then there is no place for metaphysics. Instead, Gabriel calls himself an ontologist. Ontology is the discipline that investigates what existence is (Ibidem, 2015, p. 1-10; 2016a, p. 54).<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 Critiques: is FOS a bad solution?

It is fair to say that any philosophical endeavor that has any level of recognition will be the target of a myriad of critics. In some sense, it is even flattering. Of course, it is better than being ignored. And since philosophy is widely a field of disagreement, this response is somehow the best outcome someone can ask for. As we’ve already noted, Harman states that the biggest compliment we can give to the philosophers we admire is to try to go beyond them, looking at the flaws or limitations of their systems and seeking to improve them (HARMAN, 2023a, p. 144).

Nonetheless, not all critiques are made in such spirit, nor are all well founded. For example, there is a set of critiques against Gabriel’s system that we can call the “Ferraris-

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<sup>12</sup> The question of whether the world could appear in itself is treated both in chapter seven of *Fields of sense* (2015) and in *Everything and Nothing* (2022). Gabriel’s response is a clear “no”. It is not clear how the world could appear in itself without some sort of self-duplication. One way to argue for it is that at least the properties “to contain” and “to be contained by” would differentiate “the world” contained from “the world” container. Thus the “one world” would turn into two, triggering the problem of the everlasting postponement of the world.

<sup>13</sup> We must acknowledge that Gabriel makes some differentiation between types of metaphysics in a way that his position can also be called “metaphysical”. Thus, we highlight the fact that “metaphysics” in the present text will always refer to the one that takes the world as its object: the worst kind of metaphysics for Gabriel (Gabriel, 2024a, p.90-91).



Berruga critique”, a type of opposition that seems to misinterpret (badly) Gabriel’s position. This kind of critique affirms that some notions of the FOS’s system such as “differentiation” or “sense” seem to call for an overarching human construction insofar those notions are considered to essentially tied to the human subject (BERRUGA, 2022, p. 80-84; FERRARIS, 2015, p. 54-55). Now, one thing is to argue that Gabriel’s system could decay into an idealist-constructivist model despite itself contending that his theory has inconsistencies from within (a move we will try to articulate on what follows). Another thing, and a completely different one, is to ignore the technical use a philosopher gives to a term in order to project into that term an arbitrary background according to habit or predisposition.

In this respect we can point out that notions such as “sense” or “differentiation” do not call for an overarching human-dependency in a way that it marks some kind of constructivist-idealism in Gabriel’s model. *Au contraire*, he explicitly and specifically asserts time and again that this is not the case, given good reasons for it (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 338; 2024a, p. 19-22). In his theory, “sense” can mean a way some object manifests itself, a mode of presentation, which is usually completely independent of any subject (Ibidem, 2015, p. 158, 166; 2016a, p. 68-72; 2016b, p. 101-105; GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 116). This use comes from Frege who also seems to consider “sense” to be something that goes beyond the realm of human subjectivity (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 12, 92-93; 2016a, p. 166-167).

The “differentiation” trend, in its turn, asserts that the differentiation of objects is dependent on human interest (BERRUGA, 2022, p. 80). What differentiates an object in the FOS, nonetheless, are its properties which contrast, in a given domain, with other objects and their properties (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 49, 65). Some objects are mapped onto domains in which they exist even in the absence of subjects. The “furnishing function” that maps objects onto a field is another meaning of “sense” in Gabriel’s system. In this case, “sense” is the rule that governs the field and the objects that appear within it (Ibidem, 2015, p. 166-167; 2022a, p. 42; 2024a, p. 67; GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 103). Yet, those two senses of “sense” are intrinsically connected.<sup>14</sup>

Back to our topic: critiques based on misinterpretation can be seen as mistakes and, therefore, do not provide enough tension to compel an improvement nor an overthrow of the position criticized. We will try to not focus on objections of this type. Instead, let’s turn to areas

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<sup>14</sup> In such a way that this distinction can be seen as merely pedagogical.

of Gabriel's philosophy that seem to raise real and serious problems for its own maintenance. There are a series of critiques that coherently seem to point out inconsistencies in the FOS system. Here we will develop four of them. The first one was made by Quentin Meillassoux as it is outlined in *O sentido da existência* (2016b). Then, two others that feature in *Everything and Nothing* (2022), one made by Graham Priest and another by Gregory Moss. Those first three are deeply related.<sup>15</sup> One last critique was made by Lucas Machado in a paper called “(Un)bestimmtheit e (Da)sein, ou: é real a indeterminação? Algumas observações sobre o Novo Realismo de Markus Gabriel” (2019). This last one was the kickoff to the development of a critique of our own.

As Gabriel puts it in the chapter about sense in *O sentido da existência*, Meillassoux raised worries about his way to solve the reductionism problem. The criticism in specific can be reconstructed based on the idea that senses, in Gabriel's system, seem to be “everywhere”:

In a debate between Meillassoux and me, in March of 2011, in Paris, Meillassoux raised the question of universality. Despite my explicit link with the multivocity of being and of my equation between being and appearing in a relative field, constantly, he said, I quantify over all objects when I affirm that, for instance, “what exists must appear in a field of sense”. Is the assertion that existence is appearance in a relative field “universal”? And what would it mean “universality”? (...) (GABRIEL, 2016b, p. 105).<sup>16</sup>

Gabriel's answer to this objection can be summarized in the following paragraph:

The appearance-in-a-world, and thus existence, is governed by constitutive rules that open different fields. Because of that, the universality of sense does not exist, because existence is already specific. As Badiou says (...) “the discontinuity between worlds is the law of appearance, and thus, of existence”. (...) Ontologically, the “same” is, at the same time, transfinitely multiple things in relation to transfinitely multiple fields of sense (...) (*Ibidem*, p. 108).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The scope of this section was more broadly treated in “A Consistência do Nihilismo Meta-Metafísico de Markus Gabriel (ou a Falta Dela)”. There, the same three criticisms are outlined, although with a different scope of development and intervention. (CRUZ, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> Our translation.

<sup>17</sup> Our translation.

Here lies an important problem. Even if “senses” were (each one of them) always specific so that there would be no overall “sense of senses”, then how could we meaningfully speak about them all under the same heading, that is, “pointing” at them all under the singular-term “sense”? If we can talk of them all in this way, it seems that they all share something in common. But why wouldn’t this entail a field that contains them all by the fact that the rule of mapping objects inside this hypothetical field would be precisely to have *this feature* that they all have in common? Because *this feature* would be “too thin” of a property? But why could thin properties not make an appearance in a field ruled by a sense that would include in itself all the objects who have exactly this thin property? If we can refer to all objects that have *this property*<sup>18</sup> in one stroke, how is it that there is no field that unifies them in order for them to be the target system reached when we talk about “senses”? None of this is clear. If this critique holds, then there would be an overall “sense of senses”. But if FOS’s mantra reveals that it is not healthy to choose some object or set of objects as the privileged basic reality that rules all, then how does this idea of senses fare any better?

The problem goes even further. Pressing on the same point, Graham Priest puts forward a more elaborated critique to the effect aimed by Meillassoux. That is, the problem is not just the notion of senses but a tension between the two poles of Gabriel’s system. The No-World-View is the negative pole according to which we cannot talk about “absolutely everything” in one breath, i.e. unrestricted quantification is not allowed<sup>19</sup> (GABRIEL, 2015, p.7-8; 2022a, p.51-52). Nonetheless, in his positive pole, Gabriel seems to frequently make claims about “absolutely everything”. For example, that everything that exists, exists in a field of sense or that for everything that exists, it does so in the field of sense  $x$  or not. On the very least, this proposes a problem of expressibility as Priest puts it:

The claim you made a few moments ago was something like this: “when I say ‘for all  $x$ ’, I can replace the variable with the name of any object for which it makes sense to do so, given the field of sense”. So, you seem to be saying of all things that some of them are of this kind, and some are not. So, the wide-scoped universal quantifier has reappeared. Hence, it seems to be that, to say whatever you want to, you need to quantify over absolutely everything. I understand that you don’t think so, but I think we should now leave it to anyone who hears

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<sup>18</sup> Still following the idea of “thin properties” here.

<sup>19</sup> Nor any “cousin” of it.

this discussion to make up their own mind on the matter. (GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 132).

If the supposed “world” is implemented in a theory by a commitment with something that unifies everything and such an idea should be banned from our epistemic economy, then how can Gabriel talk about everything in one stroke? Priest’s argument deepens what is shown through the account Gabriel gives us from Meillassoux’s opposition.

Finally, Moss points out, just like Priest, but in a wider reflection, that the notion of the world seems to pose a massive obstacle to Gabriel’s ontology. Gabriel adheres to a “formal theory of objects” according to which anything that can be referred to literally exists, in one sense or another (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 146; 2016b, p. 48-49). This is also part of what Gabriel calls “Neo-Meinongianism” that Moss describes as the idea according to which conceivability entails actuality (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 267; 2022a, p. 57-58; MOSS, 2022, p. 171). In the landscape of “Neo-Meinongianism” Gabriel describes FOS as adhering to some kind of “Formal Meinongianism” that can be defined simply as the view according to which “we cannot claim that something does not exist without thereby committing to its existence.” (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 180). That said, how does the “world” fit in all of this? Let’s expand our limited context for a moment.

Gabriel talks about “non-existence” in an utterly positive way. In fact, according to him, his answer to the quarrel about “non-existence” is one of the strengths of his position, and we agree on this point (GABRIEL, 2020b, p. 217-231). For Gabriel, existence is not a mere straightforward question of “yes or no” but, first and foremost, a query about location (Ibidem, 2016a, p. 87-90). His theory of non-existence is a personalized version of Plato’s solution of the “non-being” featured in the *sophist*. If for Plato “non-being” means “being-different”, for Gabriel “non-existence” means “existence-in-another-field” (Ibidem, 2015, p. 172-179; 2016b, p. 50). Thus, any assertion of “non-existence” is local in such a manner that everything can exist - except the world. But why would the world be an exception? For Priest this exception stood out as “question begging” (PRIEST, 2022, p. 29). Moss affirms that Gabriel has good reasons for the exception exactly because of the incompatibility that emerges between his definition of existence and the notion of “the world” (MOSS, 2022, p. 172-176). The problem is that Gabriel still talks about the world. Now how can any of his claims about the world make any sense if the world would be a pure “senseless” notion (and therefore, not even a notion)?

The problem goes deeper. In his debate with Priest, Gabriel argues that his situation differs from the ending scene of the Wittgensteinian *Tractatus* which seems to be an act of undermining that destroys the whole project. Gabriel affirms that his theory can go a long way without any reference to the world (GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 133-136). We beg to differ. In *O sentido da existência*, we saw that the non-existence of the world is a condition of possibility to sense - that is, for anything to exist (GABRIEL, 2016b, p. 55-60). The same dependence appears in *Porque o mundo não existe* (Ibidem, 2016a, p. 192) and in *Fields of Sense* (Ibidem, 2015, p. 159, 167).<sup>20</sup> Even though Gabriel tries to flee from the fact that he tied this knot, the tie can be seen throughout his works.

Thus, Moss argues that Gabriel has two options, go in silence or go dialectic:

Because Gabriel cannot assert anything true about the world, the truth that “the world does not exist” must simply be *ineffable*. (...) Whatever truth there may be in the non-existence of the world, it is an ineffable truth that transcends all language, even the proposition “the non-existence of the world is ineffable”. (...) without a mystical concept of truth (and facts), Gabriel must abandon the no-world-view. In a word, Gabriel’s ontology must invoke an inverted mysticism, whereby the nothingness of the world (rather than its existence) transcends conceptual determination and is accessible through non-conceptual means. (...) On the point of meaninglessness, the dialogue with Priest has opened Gabriel to carefully reconsider his position on the meaninglessness of totality. If Gabriel abandons the thesis on meaninglessness, then he would be forced to accept a form of Absolut Dialetheism. As we know, Gabriel cannot hold the “no-world view” to be true, since it is a meaningless position. On Gabriel’s terms, who can hold the “no-world view” to be true? Only the Absolute Dialetheist can hold the no-world view to be true. Since conceivability implies actuality, if we conceive the “world” then it must exist. Thus, if we meaningfully conceive and assert the term “world” in “the no-world view is true”, then the world exists. But the “no-world view” asserts that the world does not exist. Thus, if the no-world view is true, then the world exists and does not exist. For this reason, if the no-world view is true, then the world must exist, but only as a true contradiction. Thus, the truth of the no-world view engenders the truth of Absolut Dialetheism. (...) What is the world? We Absolute Dialetheists proudly assert that “the world is nothing”, and we invite Gabriel to join us in the chorus. By asserting the truth of Gabriel’s view - by asserting the truth of the no-world view,

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<sup>20</sup> For the sake of clarity: the dates we use in our references are not the dates of the first publications of the books since for *O sentido da existência* and *Porque o mundo não existe* we use the Brazilian version and for *Fields of sense* the English one. The release order follows the order we deployed in the text: *Ill senso dell esistenza* (2012); *Warum es die welt nicht gibt* (2013); *Fields of Sense* (2015). *Fields* presents us the most developed and systematic version of Gabriel’s ontology between the three.

we acknowledge the truth of the world and raise Dialetheism to the throne of the Absolute. (MOSS, 2022, p. 188-189).

The position we'll try to defend is dangerously close to Moss's Absolute Dialetheism although we claim that our tents and starting points are emphatically different. Nonetheless a whole paper would be needed in order to make such differences explicit, and we will not dwell on this exciting topic by now. Be that as it may, the three critiques that were said to be "deeply connected" at the beginning of the section can now be seen in a clear light. All of them seem to target the inconsistency that emerges on the interplay between the positive and negative sides of Gabriel's ontology. The problems of "universality", "expressibility" and "conceivability" seem to amount to the same core: Gabriel seems to commit himself with the world although affirming that his objective is to destroy such a "pseudo-construct". We would like to call the arguments and critiques that amount to the result that Gabriel, despite itself, ends up endorsing a version or other of the world the "Meillassoux-Priest-Moss ("M.P.M." for short) arguments".

At this point, a final critique can be deployed. This critique found in the commentary of Lucas Machado on Gabriel's New Realism seems to lead us to the conclusion that even if there were a way to make the interplay between the positive and negative poles of Gabriel's ontology consistent, the system wouldn't fare any better. That is so because there is a fault line in the landscape of Gabriel's taxonomy that seems to put it all to waste. To be clear: it seems that Gabriel cannot guarantee the existence of his basic ontological unit, that is, the Fields of Sense. Before giving an account of Machado's critique, let's clarify that we do not agree with his *rationale*. Instead, what we would like to do is radicalize his initial thought, which seems to have great power in store to offer.

For Machado, Gabriel's theory has a big gap. There is in it a clarification of what does it mean for an object to exist. But what about fields? In this context, Machado argues that there is no space for the existence of fields in FOS and, therefore, nothing could actually exist (MACHADO, 2019, p. 89-94). We are not sure about how well this critique goes since it is precisely to avoid the problem of the existence of domains that Gabriel postulates the functional distinction between Fields and Objects. Fields, then, exist in the same manner as objects, that is, by being encompassed by another field of sense (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 167, 256-258). Be that as it may, even if Machado's critique does not hold, we still think that there is an insight of

interest in his argument that, conversely, is not about the existence of fields, but about the existence of any entity of Gabriel's system.

By the end of the chapter eight of *Fields of Sense*, Gabriel talks explicitly about what we are heading at: "at this point of the argumentation, people regularly ask me how fields can be individuated if there are no overall rules of individuation?" (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 243). His response is to treat "fields" and all his ontological terms (like objects) as mere abstractions (*Ibidem*, p. 244-245). Now we are back to the problem we posed with Meillassoux critique: how can those "things" (be they objects, fields of sense or whatever other item of Gabriel's ontology) be singled out if they do not share anything that can unite them all under the same heading?

All of this presents us with a flavor of constructivist-idealism. In the end, fields and objects would be only abstractions. If those abstractions were findings, then we would be back at the doors of an overarching field (and the world would "emerge" again). On the other hand, if the abstraction is not a finding but a construction, then "existence" seems to become a concept fully dependent on thinkers and their conceptual constructions. "To exist is to appear in an item created by humans, that is, fields of sense". But then again, how thinkers would exist in Gabriel's system? They would not. At least not without a pre-given field. Thus, if this critique holds, we arrive at metaphysical nihilism (and not at "meta-metaphysical nihilism" as Gabriel wanted).

Since Machado's objection was built from Eduardo Luft's argument that appeared on *Fields of Sense* (*Ibidem*, p. 189) and our own development of the critique is based on Machado's take to the effect that Gabriel's entities seem to be not allowed to exist given his "best account of existence", we would like to call all objections that target this precise point<sup>21</sup> the "Brazilian anti-FOS" objections.

Now this is not to say that Gabriel's moves are unmotivated. Far from that. It is clear enough why he cannot allow the idea of a domain of "pure senses" or of "pure objects" in his philosophy. In the end, this rehabilitation of the world would commit him to all the problems that derive from that very notion. What Gabriel seems to be failing to see is that all parts of his system already seem to be committed with "the world". In addition, his defenses seem to put him in a tightrope that cannot give his theory enough breathing room to develop. The "M.P.M."

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<sup>21</sup> i.e., that questions the possibility of existence of anything in Gabriel's system.

objections and now the “Brazilian anti-FOS” objections all point to the idea that the world is, in one way or another, inevitable. But how can we make the notion of the world progress beyond the arbitrariness that was characteristic of naive metaphysics? That's a good line of inquiry to develop.

### 2.3 FOS's metaphysical principle

Gabriel cannot allow for the existence of the world because it generates problems concerning his best account of existence. One contradicts the other. He thus needs to reaffirm his findings concerning ontology in detriment to the notion of a “world”. Gabriel asserts that the adhesion of an “world” triggers a set of paradoxes that reveals its lack of sense and serves as a clarification to why it is an utterly unacceptable concept (GABRIEL, 2019, p. 228-229). Now let's take the notion of paradox as a demonstration of the fact that two entities or “things” cannot coexist: one denies thoroughly the other, and this is an untenable scenario. Thus, there is an anti-paradoxical commitment in the opening move of FOS. This commitment regulates the basic tenets of the position. Precisely this, then, seems to be the commitment that generates the world in FOS.

Now the question is: what regulates such an idea? The principle of non-contradiction (PRIEST, 2004, p. 23-38). It seems, thus, that FOS' metaphysical rule is simply the olden “non-contradiction law” (or some cousin of it). This principle can be seen as metaphysical because it defines the joints of Gabriel's world, that is, it generates the demand for the absence of any “world” as the definitive character of its “reality”. Gabriel could argue that his motivations for the “No-World-View” do not stop in such a demand, but, instead, that he is committed with a more robust thing called “pre-theoretical experience” (GABRIEL, 2022a, p. 56; 2019, p. 231). This does not sound like a good argument for we can counter it with (1) there are “pre-theoretical experience” of the “totality” (as we can derive from Moss);<sup>22</sup> (2) there is no reason to dismiss *a priori* theoretical experiences in order to privilege some pre-theoretical ones (MOSS, 2022, p. 179-180); and finally (3) Gabriel himself seems to sometimes enable the idea of “the totality” is a notion based on some kind of “pre-theoretical experience” (GABRIEL, 2019, p. 231).

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<sup>22</sup> MOSS, 2022, p. 179-180.



Again, this is not to say that Gabriel's worries are unjustified. In fact, contradictions and paradoxes have been ruled out from many metaphysical systems for generating what Gabriel calls a "ontological chaos" or "overload" (GABRIEL, 2024b, p. 20). Let's consider this idea for one moment. Suppose that we give space in our theory for contradictory or paradoxical objects<sup>23</sup>. Suppose in addition that this text that you now read is a paradoxical object. It is paradoxical in the most upfront way: it is and is not what it is. Then what? Well now it seems that we cannot decide if you are reading it or not. Thus, it is not clear how you could start or stop reading it. How can someone start reading something that they are already reading or stop reading something that is not being read at all? A similar problem would arise if someone commanded you to walk and not walk at the same time. Not walk and then not walk. Not walk with pauses. Both. At the same time. If you could do that, it seems like reality would collapse. The same is what seems to emerge from the text example. Those seem like "impossible objects *tout court*", as Gabriel puts it (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 233).<sup>24</sup>

The situations we described are a type of loop. Let's call those kinds of loop a "bad-loop". Now let a bad-loop be a situation of vicious circularity that undermines its own existence or possibility. Paradoxes are thus the kind of entity that, when emerges, shows that nothing in its scope can be as it was "previously posited" because of sheer inconsistency. In fact, it seems that it suspends the whole existence: nothing can exist full-stop. Contradiction and paradoxicality in this reading seem to be something like a very contagious disease with the consequence of an overall pause of reality: nothing can really be or cease to be because nothing is determined as anything specific. If a paradox manifests itself in our metaphysics then it seems that they would put the whole reality on hold, making it impossible to actualize itself by the means of a vicious set of bad-loops. Metaphysical nihilism has thus been enthroned. This is the "ontological overload" Gabriel is worried about (*Ibidem*, p. 57).<sup>25</sup>

This is not to say that Gabriel does not reject some *kind* of principle of non-contradiction or that he does not accept some contradictions amongst its fields. For instance, at the end of *Everything and Nothing*, he seems to agree with Priest that "the nothing" could exist

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<sup>23</sup> For the moment we'll treat "contradictory" and "paradoxical" as synonyms.

<sup>24</sup> Gabriel has a way around those objects See. GABRIEL, 2015, p.233.

<sup>25</sup> How paraconsistent logic deals with this kind of problem is a whole different issue. First it is imperative to decide what place logics and mathematics occupy in an ontology. As Gabriel argues, and we agree, to give any priority to a certain logical system or option seems to be, *prima facie*, as utterly arbitrary since the system needs (1) an interpretation and (2) to reduce objects in order to fit the logical/mathematical description. More about this on chapter four of *Fields of Sense* (2015) and on the introduction of *Transcendental Ontology* (2011).

and be a contradictory object, but right after he asserts that then dialetheism would (maybe) be confined to this “nothingness” (GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 147-148). But even if he allows for some contradictions or paradoxes to exist, they exist only as subordinates of a higher-order non-contradictory system. The non-contradiction (or, non-paradoxicality) has the last word. That said, this permissiveness concerning local inconsistency can be seen as arbitrary and, thus, may put the whole system at risk: if there is an overarching principle of non-contradiction, then how can contradiction appear without putting the whole system in jeopardy? Even with isolationism since it is not clear how the contradiction-friendly field functions and still serves as a wall for the “disease” to not spread out (GABRIEL, 2024B, p. 61-81). Be that as it may, this “arbitrary move” does not, in any capacity, undermine the idea that the non-contradiction/paradoxicality metaphysical rule governs Gabriel’s theory.

Gabriel’s system is truly fascinating and has generated a whole lot of debate. Given that the philosopher is still alive, a lot of development can occur in the next few years. Nonetheless, it is not at all clear that this system delivers what it promises. In fact, it seems that, *malgré lui*, there is in FOS a metaphysical overarching principle. Machado, Moss, Meillassoux and Ferraris have, in one way or another, noticed that. They all argued, each one in their own manner, that Gabriel is in fact committed to some kind of metaphysical principle that organizes his system in order for it to be harmonious. Each of them picks out some name or concept to tackle over this point. Moss talks about the notion of “meaninglessness” as opposed to “senses” that are the “rock bottom” of Gabriel’s philosophy (MOSS, 2022, p. 188) - even if this “bottom” is not postulated, *prima facie*, as some overarching with a kind of “universality” like Meillassoux had suspected (GABRIEL, 2016b, p. 105). Machado, on the other hand, talks about “determinacy” in a way that we could think of Gabriel as a philosopher that commits itself to a metaphysical rule of determination (MACHADO, 2019, p. 87-94). Finally, a good catch from Ferraris appears in his foreword to Gabriel’s *O sentido da existência* where he asserts that the problem with Gabriel’s ontology is his equation between being and intelligibility (FERRARIS, 2016, p. 19). His metaphysical commitment with “harmony”, “consistency” and “homogeneity” seems to be the most profound problem of FOS. In fact, it seems to be his true world.

### 3. The World in Paradox.

This is the current state of the problem: it seems that we can neither grant that there is a world nor articulate any positive ontology without generating some kind of world. What to

do then? One way out could be to reevaluate the place of “the paradox” in the FOS’ landscape. If we could trade Gabriel’s tacit commitment with a metaphysical principle of non-contradiction for some openness towards the paradox of the world from the beginning, then, maybe, we could have it both ways.

To do that we need first to understand more deeply what “paradox” is. Let’s refine the definition. A Paradox can be defined as that which arises by the circumstance of some object or fact being undermined by the reason that it is and is not itself at once. The object is in conflict with itself. Nonetheless, the idea of a “paradox” is rarely treated outside the realm of the discourses and argumentation. Usually, it is taken to be a construct that helps us give up on ill-conceived ideas. For example, if an argument of mine leads to a paradox, then it seems to be better to abandon it since it is at the same time false and true and its relations with other statements probably would lead to some kind of “ontological overload” in Gabriel’s sense (GABRIEL, 2024b, p. 20).

With a bit of discursive anti-Realism, according to which the realm of discourses is not part of reality and thus, can follow paths of incoherence that reality itself could not, it is possible to try to limit the scope of paradoxes just to language. Indeed, words such as “paradox” and “contradiction” seem to indicate that they belong to the discursive realm since they are composed of words that disclose this discursive focus (ABBAGNANO, 2007, p. 742; BRUNI; CANTINI, 2024). In this interpretation, the only “paradoxical objects” (if any) would be discursive ones.

In this light, we seem to discreetly presuppose that reality in itself, that is, outside our language games, is governed by some metaphysical harmony that is powerful to correct our misguided intellect whenever it produces some “incoherence”. All scenarios of radical opposition and mutual utter incompatibility, for this view, are not outside language. A wider position would be that, more than “linguistic”, contradictions and paradoxes are a feature of human or subjective minds, and exist only there. Usually, both the metaphysician and the constructivist hold a close enough “subjectivist” approach to paradox and contradiction: the first one tries to grasp the principle that dissolves our inter-subjective disagreements through a (supposedly “pure”) objective foundation. The other, Gabriel argues, seems to go on an anti-realist route because experience shows “perspectival” features through senses that are not the same for all humans or species (GABRIEL, 2016a, p. 40-48, 110-127). If this is so, then, if there was a world-reality ruled by harmony and shown to us, the constructivist could give up

on his anti-Realism.<sup>26</sup> This means that, for both (as long as they fall under this description), contradictions and paradoxes are still a characteristic of human minded-ness alone (GABRIEL, 2016a, p. 10-14; 2015, p. 33-41).

Gabriel's case is interesting in this respect. He seems almost to go in the way we are now heading but falls back into some metaphysics of "harmony" which unifies his whole project as a stance against paradoxes in its most powerful form (i.e.; the negation of the absolute paradox-entailer, or, if you may, the ultimate paradoxical-entity: the world). This seems to indicate that an overall metaphysical principle of non-contradiction is usually sustained in all of Western philosophy.

In fact, our research concerning the nature of paradox made us aware of a somewhat strange fact. This concept is more generally dissected in analytic circles and, as a rule, taken as a concept concerning some hypothesis of conflict between sentences<sup>27</sup>, arguments or conclusions that need just to be explained away (OLIN, 2003, p. 1-21; LYCAN, 2010, p. 615-621). For the most part, it is not clear if those accounts are committed to the belief that paradoxes exist or are "non-existing-illusions". And if they are illusions, is it not the case that they truly are (i.e. that they truly exist as) illusions?

Those discussions about paradoxes that are limited to the scope of the linguistic and mentalistic realm seem to be an instance of the overall anti-Realism that appears to be the turning point for what later became the analytic philosophy derived from the linguistic turn (GABRIEL, 2016b, p. 21). Problems they leave open are such as: (1) why linguistic or mentalistic entities would be "inexistent"? (2) Why should paradoxes exist only linguistically or mentally? (3) Why does the principle of noncontradiction seem to be presupposed as a metaphysical rule since metaphysics triggers a whole lot of paradoxes and problems?

But what would it mean for an object to be paradoxical outside linguistic and mental stances? In this scenario the paradox would emerge as a signal that the object (or fact) in its own structure cannot be determined as it was "posited": it cannot be p or not-p, but only both and neither, so it is impossible, self-implosive, self-collapsing. A fully paradoxical object seems to be canceled from possibility insofar as it cannot be itself and also cannot not be it. We can think of it as a kind of ontological black hole. We already saw the problems derived from the

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<sup>26</sup> The range of this taxonomy, that is, who really falls under it is a topic for another occasion.

<sup>27</sup> Or some cousin of it.

acceptance of objects like this in the form of Gabriel's "ontological chaos" or "overload" (GABRIEL, 2024b, p. 20). In a world of paradox, the loops are unbound. All reality becomes stationary, on hold, in a big lump of tension. Maybe we could say it explodes. The result is pure metaphysical nihilism.

There are the current options to escape this equation: (1) maintain the principle of noncontradiction; (2) embrace contradiction; (3) try to deal with contradiction in controlled stances. The problem with (1) is that it falls prey to the problem of the world. We could state that the usual problem with consistency theories (i.e. theories that start and depend on consistency), is that if some inconsistency or other is afterwards revealed, then the whole system collapses. The problem with (2) is that it is self-contradictory. If everything is paradoxical, nothing could be intelligible. To speak of this option is to state a series of non-paradoxical utterances that follow the principle rejected by it (that is, the noncontradiction principle). (3) Is Gabriel's and Priest's option, and it seems that it does not fare any better. The problem with (3) is that it tries to deal with paradox in a way that it is restricted by some arbitrary principle or another. Thus, it is, again, consistency-vicious metaphysics.

What we need then, is a new way to deal with paradoxes (and "the paradox"). What we need is an account of metaphysical paradox that does not collapse reality: a consistent take on inconsistency.

### *3.1 Paradoxology and Paradoxism: the consistency of inconsistency*

From this point onwards we will go speculative. Our objective from this section on is to outline a view we can call "Paradoxism" as a way to deal with the consistency problems that arrive in the debates concerning ontology. Hence, we will develop our view based on some contemporary attempts to approach the paradox bearing in mind the problem of the world as a starting point.

That said, we can call "Paradoxology" the philosophical investigation towards "the paradox". For now, we can see it as an "ontology of paradox". Some philosophers are somewhat acquainted with this branch of investigation. Nonetheless, we argue that it is an area of inquiry that needs to be taken into a more diligent account. If we have the license to propose one more analogy, "the paradox" seems to be like a radioactive mineral that some empirical scientists deal with - we cannot simply add them to our framework of investigation without some

precautions. Let's repeat our intuition: what we need, if paradoxes and contradictions make out inconsistency, is a consistent theory of inconsistency.

If we think of logical paradoxes related to epistemology and logic, then we arrive at the domain of paraconsistent logic. As said, there are philosophers dealing with it in that domain. Thus, there is something to be derived from it to the ontology of "the paradox". The foundation of the kind of logic that accepts contradiction is credited to the Brazilian philosopher Newton da Costa who developed a robust way to support systems with contradictions in it while still not trivial. This is a gigantic improvement on logics because, if we followed the classical principle of explosion that goes back to the medieval times, then from two contradictory premises anything follows - *contradictione quodlibet*: an explosion takes place (DA COSTA, 2004, p. 91-97; PRIEST, 2006, p. 5). A non-trivial logical system that accepts contradictions can prevent that kind of explosion.

The problem with this type of Paradoxology is that it covers the notion of paradox from an arbitrary stance as Gabriel puts it. For one thing, Gabriel seems to be cautious with the fact that logical systems need an interpretation which can lead to fully arbitrary positions (GABRIEL, 2015, p. 116-124; GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 120-127). In addition, if we are dealing here with epistemological and logical paradoxes, and, nonetheless, we are allowed to assume that paradoxes go beyond the epistemic and logical realm, then epistemology and logics may not be the disciplines that can give us the most complete ontology of paradoxes.<sup>28</sup>

There are alternatives. An interesting one is Hilan Bensusan's indexicalism. Bensusan argues that he can draw interesting conclusions through an acceptance of the notion of "paradox" within his framework which take the "indexicals" to be the most basic "bricks" of reality (HILAN, 2021, p. 14-66). We believe that Hilan is right in his desire to rehabilitate contradictions and paradoxes in metaphysics. Nonetheless, his strategy seems to be simply to postulate some kinds of objects as the basis of the world, which gives his system a metaphysical reductivist look. The problem here is once again arbitrariness: it seems that any object could fit this position. *Enter in the problem of the world*. For this reason, we cannot count this framework as tenable to receive the paradox in its most radical vein - because, firstly, the indexicals need

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<sup>28</sup> Moss, in its wake, seems also to be committed first with the realm of epistemology in his idea that the world is a contradictory object (MOSS, 2022, p. 189). A deep dive into his philosophy is much needed in the future of our enterprise.

to count rationally, that is, harmonically (non-paradoxically), as the basis of the world. In Hilan's system, consistency seems to have the final word.

Here we can start to draw our intuitions a little better. If (*ex hypothesi*) Bensusan's theory fails to accommodate the paradox because it rests in a deeper layer of pure harmony, then it is fair to propose that the only way a system would go with paradox is postulating it as *the* deeper layer. What if "the paradox" was our "Arché"? Here we have at least two worries: (1) how does this fare any better? Does it not simply amount to the position of the incoherent standard paradox-philosopher? And (2) the idea of an *Arché* would rehabilitate the world. This means that such an enterprise could go dramatically wrong. Let's take the risk.

Until now we have argued that a paradox, when in place, overload, pause and explode both information and reality. So "the paradox" in an overarching position would make existence and reality stop (or just "not start"). But in turn, the overarching paradox would have to be reflexive - because it rules everything, thus, it also rules and affects itself. And now what? What happens if "the paradox" enters in paradox? It would overload itself. The paradox would make "the paradox" stop, not start or, as it were, "explode" - from this "explosion" would emerge the explosion of sense that Gabriel postulates (GABRIEL, 2016a, p. 192). From this argument we could try to defend that only from absolute inconsistency can emerge consistency. Another way of arguing is looking at the alternative options. For if we start with consistency and then stumble with any inconsistency (which always happens) then the whole system needs to be thrown away or to open some arbitrary exception. But if we start thoughtlessly by putting the paradox at the top without delineating a way for consistency to emerge, then we have just a "sloppy-hyper-chaotic-overloaded-nihilistic-paradox" without any grip to hold on. Now, if we start with a reflexive version of the metaphysical paradox, then it would be its own driving force through which consistency emerges.

This would also answer Harman's clever invective against monism: if there is one single "thing" why does it become a plurality? That is, why would some kind of pure flux, for example, become the plurality of individual objects we see today? (HARMAN, 2023a, p. 40-43). The paradox as *Arché*, on the contrary, demands its "one's" to become a plurality through the force of its own essence/nature. The movement and the plurality are inscribed in its properties as well as the stopping force for stationary objects, since it stops to be paradoxical to give way to consistency (and the cycle goes on and on).

The position that defends the "paradox of the paradox" as a consistent theory of inconsistency we call "Paradoxism". Now, since the paradox has given way to consistency, we

can talk about fields of sense or anything that serves a consistent hyper-plural function in ontology. That is so because if everything is involved in the paradox of paradox, then everything becomes consistent at once. The problem is that in that way everything would still be paradoxical, since both *p* and not-*p* are becoming consistent. So, for the sake of true consistency to emerge, those paradoxical-generating-entities need to become isolated from one another through some form of “isolationism” as Gabriel invokes it, even if this isolation is not a full closure, which means that paradoxes still arises effectively: the inconsistency is still present which means that we need not to throw the whole system away when we stumble on an inconsistency (GABRIEL; PRIEST, 2022, p. 101). This means, ultimately, that inconsistencies manifest themselves because they are at the heart of existence.

### *3.2 Paradox and the problem of the World*

Arturo Romero Contreras arrives at a similar conclusion that we are now putting forward: that the world exists and does not exist (CONTRERAS, 2020). Nonetheless, our reasons are quite different. His idea goes along the lines of the diagnosis Moss and Priest make concerning Gabriel rehabilitating the world whenever he talks about it. But this does not help since we need to maintain our theory consistent and avoid the arbitrariness of metaphysics. Now, if we assert that the world exists and does not exist through the lenses of Paradoxism, what we are saying, in the end, is that ontologically it is and is not the foundation of everything and, consequently, it does not fall entirely under the laws of metaphysics because it is not harmonic (consistent). On the other hand, it is the principle, so, conversely, it does follow metaphysics: because it negates itself (and all its functions and dysfunctions). Metaphysics only works, as it seems, through the presupposition of non-contradiction at its heart. So maybe we could solve the problems generated by the world with Paradoxism.

In this light, critiques of the kind of “M.P.M.” arguments could be undermined: yes, there is an overarching principle that is postulated when Gabriel talks about “the world” or “senses” or that “everything that exists does so in a field of sense” but, also, there is no such principle since its dialectics makes it move from principle to non-principle - actually, no, it does not move, it is and it is not at once, which is exactly what makes consistency possible. It is not that the world is a contradictory object or that it is and is not in an epistemologically demanding way. The reality of this state of affairs is that the world is in paradox because paradox *is* the world.



## CONCLUSION

In the present paper our objective was to outline what we have called “Paradoxism”, a position that defends the paradox of paradox as the *Arché* of reality in which we arrive by an investigation we have called “Paradoxology”, the investigation that seeks a consistent view of inconsistency. To this end we started with Markus Gabriel’s ontology. This choice was made on the basis that his project seems to be the one that better escapes the problem of arbitrariness in ontology, although we did defend that he is still committed to an arbitrary (in a unsustainable fashion) point of view, that is, an anti-paradoxical-point-of-view. Accordingly, we brought to light some problems of his position in order to make explicit that all the major objections raised against the FOS system call for a revision of its relations with “contradiction” and “the paradox”. From there we sketched three possibilities on what concerns paradox adhesion, that is (1) its full rejection; (2) its full adhesion; (3) its partial adhesion. The problems with those views are that either (a) they need metaphysical consistency first, which makes the system stop when an inconsistency is found or leads the philosopher to make some arbitrary choice, or (b) they make the world explode. We concluded that the only escape in what concerns paradox is to put it at the heart of reality and existence: as the basis of all inconsistency and consistency at once, since, in its reflexive relation, the paradox of paradox gives space for everything to be, including the world.

We need to emphasize that all the work done here is just an outline. This means that the arguments are preliminary and may need general alterations in future versions of the position. Also, we think it is paramount to remember that Gabriel’s position will find its way of development separately from Paradoxism and we look forward to that. We strive to see the next FOS’ evolutions.

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