In the preface to *Logical Properties*, McGinn writes: “The general theme of the book is a kind of realist anti-naturalism about logical properties. My tendency is to take logical notions at face value, rather than trying to reduce them to something else” (p. vi). The five notions discussed in the book, each with its own chapter, are identity, existence, predication, necessity, and truth. McGinn’s anti-reductionism seems to me right for identity, existence, and predication. The case of truth, I think, is more complicated than McGinn allows because there are different notions of truth depending on what the truthmakers are taken to be, and how they are individuated; I won’t be discussing truth here. The case of necessity is where I have my sharpest disagreement with McGinn. I do not believe that necessity *de re*, which for McGinn is the central case, should be classified as logical at all: it is far too parochial and context-dependent for that. Necessity *de dicto*, on my view, may properly be classified as logical, but *contra* McGinn it is reducible to more fundamental logical notions.

I devote the second half of this article to McGinn’s argument that reductive analyses of necessity, and modal notions generally, are either inadequate or circular. In the first half, I raise some questions for McGinn’s positive account of existence, which countenances non-existent, intentional objects.

In the chapter on existence, McGinn disputes the once orthodox Russellian view that, as it used to be put, “existence is not a predicate.” McGinn characterizes the Russellian view thus:

> ... when you say that Bill Clinton exists, you do not attribute to a certain object the property of existence, since there is no such property; what you do is say that some property is instantiated ... Instead of attributing a property to an object you attribute a property to a property – the second-order property of having an instance. (p. 17)

For the Russellian, ordinary proper names such as ‘Bill Clinton’ are associated with uniquely identifying properties; to say that Bill Clinton exists is to say that the associated property has instances. It is the second-order property of having instances – formally expressed by the “existential quantifier” – that is the logically basic notion. Statements asserting existence, if meaningful at all, are to be analyzed in terms of this second-order property.

McGinn marshals an impressive array of arguments, both ontological and semantic, against the Russellian view. Most telling, perhaps, is that the second-order property of “having instances” must, if the Russellian analysis is to be materially correct, be taken to mean “having instances that exist”; existence as a first-order property has not been done away with. The point is clearest if one accepts, with McGinn, that there are non-existent objects such as Holmes that instantiate ordinary properties such as being a man. Then, unless “having instances” means “having instances that exist,” the analysis will wrongly entail that Holmes exists. But in any case, surely, the second-order property of having instances depends upon what entities there are to be instances, not vice versa. Existentially quantified facts are not basic facts; they supervene on what objects and properties exist, and on what instantiates what.

So far, so good. But now ask: if existence is a property, what sort of property is it? One could reject the Russellian view and yet hold, simply, that existence is a blanket property, like self-identity, universally applying to all objects. McGinn takes a philosophically harder line, but one more in accord with the appearances, with how we think and talk. We say, truly, that Clinton exists, whereas Holmes does not; that Venus exists, whereas Vulcan does not. Respecting appearances, McGinn treats these as ordinary subject-predicate assertions, or their denials. Clinton and Venus are objects with the property of existence; Holmes and Vulcan are objects that lack the property of existence – “intentional objects”, representation- and mind-dependent, but no less objects for that. What makes McGinn’s rejection of the Russellian view interesting and difficult is not that he holds that existence is a property, but rather that he holds that existence is a property that some things have and other things lack.

McGinn’s view divides into related semantic and ontological components. On the semantic side, McGinn boldly asserts that