

A What is Existence?

- 1 Holes
David Lewis and Stephanie Lewis
- 2 On What There Is
W. V. O. Quine
- 3 Beyond Being and Nonbeing
R. M. Chisholm

Introduction

Ontology is the part of metaphysics concerned with the question, “What is there?” when that question is taken in the broadest or most unrestricted sense possible. As Peter van Inwagen points out in the introduction to this book (“What is metaphysics?”), sometimes the question “Is there any such-and-such?” means merely, “Restricting our attention for the moment to just things that are so-and-sos, is there a such-and-such among them?” When we ask, for example, “Is there any beer?” we usually mean merely “Restricting our attention to just beverages in the fridge (or in the restaurant, or available for purchase in the county, etc.), is there any beer?” If the last beer has been taken from the fridge at a party, and someone asks, “Is there any beer?” it is a poor joke to say “Yes” and then explain that there is plenty in the grocery store (which is closed, by the way). The metaphysician interested in ontology wants to know what the world is like in its entirety, ignoring nothing. She wants a complete catalogue of “the furniture of the world,” but at a very high level of abstraction.

Ontology is one of the oldest parts of philosophy; it has a central place in Plato’s philosophy, for instance; and Platonistic ontological views are defended by philosophers even today. Quine, however, says that “Plato’s beard” (his catalogue of “what there is”) needs shaving – meaning that Plato’s ontology is too rich; it is full of entities that Quine finds it hard to accept as real. For instance, Plato says there are universals – features, properties, or attributes that can be

20 METAPHYSICS: THE BIG QUESTIONS

attributed to many individuals (whiteness, triangularity, courage, etc.). Quine, on the other hand, is a “nominalist,” admitting that there are words that can be used to describe many things but denying that there is any single thing present in all the objects truly described by one such word. For example, on Quine’s view, many things can truly be described as red, but there need be no extra thing – “redness” – that somehow unites them or is part of them all.

In van Inwagen’s “Introduction: What is metaphysics?,” Quine’s “On What There Is,” and the charming dialogue about “Holes” by David and Stephanie Lewis, we find contemporary philosophers wrestling with the ancient questions of ontology, but using some more recent tools – such as the notions of “existential quantification,” and the technique for eliminating “singular terms” known as “Russell’s Theory of Definite Descriptions”. Phrases of “existential quantification” are simply expressions like “There is a . . . ,” “There are some . . . ,” “There exists a . . . ,” “There exist some . . .” – phrases that can be completed in ever so many ways to affirm the being or existence of different kinds of thing. Statements express “existential commitment” to so-and-sos if they begin with these sorts of phrases and then go on to describe a thing or things that are so-and-so. Van Inwagen, Quine, and the Lewises all share the view that the way to do ontology is to consider all the things one believes to be true, and then to see what statements of existential commitment seem to follow, as a matter of logic, from these beliefs. They all also agree that appearances can be deceiving; that a statement apparently committing someone to the existence of so-and-sos can be regarded as innocent, a mere manner of speaking, if one can readily provide a “paraphrase” of the statement that does not even appear to imply that there are so-and-sos.

Van Inwagen, the Lewises, and Quine do not see an important difference between saying that *there is* a certain kind of thing, and saying that *there exists* a certain kind of thing; both signal existential commitment to things of that kind. But some philosophers – like Quine’s fictitious “Wyman,” and the Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong (described by Chisholm in Ch. 3) – think that the difference between “there is . . .” and “there exists . . .” is an important one; that what there is includes more than what exists, and “existence” and “being” come apart. Wyman (and Meinong) say that the things that have being but not existence are ones that merely “subsist” (Meinong using the German word “*bestehen*”).

Quine’s Wyman takes an extreme view about singular terms – that is, names (“Bill Clinton,” “Pegasus”) and descriptive phrases that can serve as the subject in a sentence with a singular verb (“Zimmerman’s favorite book,” “the present king of France”): If a singular term can be meaningfully used in a sentence, then there must be something answering to the term; it must at least subsist. So, Wyman claims not only that there are “ideal entities” such as universals and numbers, but also that there are mythical beasts, such as Pegasus.

Meinong’s position (as described by Chisholm) is a little more complicated. Like Wyman, he says that there are “ideal entities” like universals and numbers – they subsist, although they do not exist – and he reserves existence for concrete entities in space and time (in Ch. 4, Russell uses “exist” and “subsist” in the

same way). Unlike Wyman, however, Meinong denies that Pegasus, golden mountains, and other merely possible objects either exist *or subsist*. In other words, there are no such things; they have no “*Sein*,” no being, whatsoever. So far, then, Meinong agrees with Quine. We can, however, talk meaningfully about these merely possible “objects,” ascribing this or that feature. For instance, we can truly say, of Pegasus, that he has wings; and, of the present king of France, that he is French. Meinong used the word “*Sosein*” (“so-being” or “being thus-and-so”) to describe the characteristics truly ascribable to an object, whether or not there is such a thing. This led to the principle (first formulated in these terms by his student, Ernst Mally, but propounded by Meinong) of the “independence of the *Sosein* of an object from its *Sein*”: an object can be thus-and-so despite the fact that there is no such object. Pegasus can be winged, though there is no Pegasus.

(It should be pointed out that Chisholm does not explicitly *endorse* Meinong’s theory; he merely defends it from the charge of absurdity, and makes what he takes to be a strong case for it. Chisholm’s own views about the nature of existence, and the way to pursue ontology, were more like those represented here by van Inwagen, the Lewises, and Quine.)

Suggestions for further reading

- Alston, William P., “Ontological Commitments,” in Laurence and Macdonald (eds.), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998) pp. 46–54.
- Aune, Bruce, *Metaphysics: The Elements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985) chs. 1 and 2.
- Dorr, Cian, “There are No Abstract Objects,” in Hawthorne, Sider, and Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
- Eklund, Matti “The Picture of Reality as an Amorphous Lump,” in Hawthorne, Sider, and Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
- Haack, Susan, “Quantifiers,” in Laurence and Macdonald (eds.), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998) pp. 55–68.
- Hirsch, Eli, “Ontological Arguments: Interpretive Charity and Quantifier Variance,” in Hawthorne, Sider, and Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
- Lambert, Karel, *Meinong and the Principle of Independence: Its Place in Meinong’s Theory of Objects, Its Significance in Contemporary Philosophical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- Parsons, Terence, *Nonexistent Objects* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), Introduction, and chs. 1 and 2.
- Russell, Bertrand, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919), chs. 15 and 16.
- van Inwagen, Peter, “Meta-ontology,” *Erkenntnis* 48 (1998), pp. 233–50; reprinted in van Inwagen, *Ontology, Identity, and Modality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 13–31.

1 Holes

David Lewis and Stephanie Lewis

Argle: I believe in nothing but concrete material objects.

Bargle: There are many of your opinions I applaud; but one of your less pleasing characteristics is your fondness for the doctrines of nominalism and materialism. Every time you get started on any such topic, I know we are in for a long argument. Where shall we start this time: numbers, colors, lengths, sets, force-fields, sensations, or what?

Argle: Fictions all! I've thought hard about every one of them.

Bargle: A long evening's work. Before we start, let me find you a snack. Will you have some crackers and cheese?

Argle: Thank you. What splendid Gruyère!

Bargle: You know, there are remarkably many holes in this piece.

Argle: There are.

Bargle: Got you!

Bargle: You admit there are many holes in that piece of cheese. Therefore, there are some holes in it. Therefore, there are some holes. In other words, holes exist. But holes are not made of matter; to the contrary, they result from the absence of matter.

Argle: I did say that there are holes in the cheese; but that is not to imply that there are holes.

Bargle: However not? If you say that there are A's that ate B's, you are committed logically to the conclusion that there are A's.

Argle: When I say that there are holes in something, I mean nothing more nor less than that it is perforated. The synonymous shape-predicates '... is perforated' and 'there are holes in ...' – just like any other shape-predicate, say '... is a dodecahedron' – may truly be predicated of pieces of cheese, without any implication that perforation is due to the presence of occult, immaterial entities. I am sorry my innocent predicate confuses you by sounding like an idiom of existential quantification, so that you think that inferences involving it are valid when they are not. But I have my reasons. You, given a perforated piece of cheese and believing as you do that it is perforated because it contains immaterial entities called holes, employ an idiom of existential quantification to say falsely 'There are holes in it.' Agreeable fellow that I am, I wish to have a sentence that sounds like yours and that is true exactly when you falsely suppose your existential quantification over immaterial things to be true. That way we could talk about the cheese without philosophizing, if only you'd let me. You and I would understand our sentences differently, but the difference wouldn't interfere with our conversation until you start drawing conclusions which follow from your false sentence but not from my homonymous true sentence.¹

Bargle: Oh, very well. But behold: there are as many holes in my piece of cheese as in yours. Do you agree?

Argle: I'll take your word for it without even counting: there are as many holes in mine as in yours. But what I mean by that is that either both pieces are singly-perforated, or both are doubly-perforated, or both are triply-perforated, and so on.

Bargle: What a lot of different shape-predicates you know! How ever did you find time to learn them all? And what does 'and so on' mean?²

Argle: Let me just say that the two pieces are equally-perforated. Now I have used only one two-place predicate.

Bargle: Unless I singly-perforate each of these crackers, how will you say that there are as many holes in my cheese as crackers on my plate? Be so kind as not to invent another predicate on the spot. I am quite prepared to go on until you have told me about all the predicates you have up your sleeve. I have a good imagination, and plenty of time.

Argle: Oh, dear . . . (ponders).

Argle: I was wrong. There *are* holes.

Bargle: You recant?

Argle: No. Holes are material objects.

Bargle: I expected that sooner. You are thinking, doubtless, that every hole is filled with matter: silver amalgam, air, interstellar gas, luminiferous ether or whatever it may be.

Argle: No. Perhaps there are no truly empty holes; but I cannot deny that there might be.

Bargle: How can something utterly devoid of matter be made of matter?

Argle: You're looking for the matter in the wrong place. (I mean to say, that's what you would be doing if there were any such things as places, which there aren't.) The matter isn't inside the hole. It would be absurd to say it was: nobody wants to say that holes are inside themselves. The matter surrounds the hole. The lining of a hole, you agree, is a material object. For every hole there is a hole-lining; for every hole-lining there is a hole. I say the hole-lining *is* the hole.

Bargle: Didn't you say that the hole-lining surrounds the hole? Things don't surround themselves.

Argle: Holes do. In my language, 'surrounds' said of a hole (described as such) means 'is identical with.' 'Surrounds' said of other things means just what you think it means.

Bargle: Doesn't it bother you that your dictionary must have two entries under 'surrounds' where mine has only one?

Argle: A little, but not much. I'm used to putting up with such things.

Bargle: Such *whats?*

Argle: Such dictionary entries. They're made of dried ink, you recall.

Bargle: Oh. I suppose you'll also say that '. . . is in . . .' or '. . . is through . . .' said of a hole means '. . . is part of . . .'.

Argle: Exactly so, Bargle.

Bargle: Then do you still say that 'There are holes in the cheese' contains an unanalyzed shape-predicate synonymous with '. . . is perforated'?

Argle: No; it is an existential quantification, as you think it is. It means that there exist material objects such that they are holes and they are parts of the piece of cheese.

- Bargle:* But we wouldn't say, would we, that a hole is made out of cheese?
- Argle:* No; but the fact that we wouldn't say it doesn't mean it isn't true. We wouldn't have occasion to say, unless philosophizing, that these walls are perpendicular to the floor; but they are. Anyhow we *do* say that caves are holes in the ground and that some of them are made out of limestone.
- Bargle:* Take this paper-towel roller. Spin it on a lathe. The hole-lining spins. Surely you'd never say the hole spins?
- Argle:* Why not?
- Bargle:* Even though the hole might continue to be entirely filled with a dowel that didn't spin or move at all?
- Argle:* What difference does that make?
- Bargle:* None, really. But now I have you: take a toilet-paper roller, put it inside the paper-towel roller, and spin it the other way. The big hole spins clockwise. The little hole spins counter-clockwise. But the little hole is part of the big hole, so it spins clockwise along with the rest of the big hole. So if holes can spin, as you think, the little hole turns out to be spinning in both directions at once, which is absurd.
- Argle:* I see why you might think that the little hole is part of the big hole, but you can't expect me to agree. The little hole is inside the big hole, but that's all. Hence I have no reason to say that the little hole is spinning clockwise.
- Bargle:* Consider a thin-walled hole with a gallon of water inside. The volume of the hole is at least a gallon, whereas the volume of the hole-lining is much less. If the hole is the hole-lining, then whatever was true of one would have to be true of the other. They could not differ in volume.
- Argle:* For 'hole' read 'bottle;' for 'hole-lining' also read 'bottle.' You have the same paradox. Holes, like bottles, have volume – or, as I'd rather say, are voluminous or equi-voluminous with other things – in two different senses. There's the volume of the hole or bottle itself, and there's the volume of the largest chunk of fluid which could be put inside the hole or bottle without compression. For holes, as for bottles, contextual clues permit us to keep track of which we mean.
- Bargle:* What is the volume of the hole itself? How much of the cheese do you include as part of one of these holes? And how do you decide? Arbitrarily, that's how. Don't try saying you include as little of the cheese as possible, for however much you include, you could have included less.
- Argle:* What we call a single hole is really many hole-linings. Some include more of the cheese, some include less. Therefore I need not decide, arbitrarily or otherwise, how much cheese is part of the hole. Many different decisions are equally correct.
- Bargle:* How can a single hole be identical with many hole-linings that're not identical with one another?
- Argle:* Really there are many different holes, and each is identical with a different hole-lining. But all these different holes are the same hole.
- Bargle:* You contradict yourself. Don't you mean to say that they all *surround* the same hole – where by 'surround' I mean 'surround,' not 'be identical with'?
- Argle:* Not at all. I would contradict myself if I said that two different holes were identical. But I didn't; what I said was that they were the same hole. Two

holes are the same hole when they have a common part that is itself a hole.

Bargle: You agreed before that there were as many holes in my cheese as crackers on my plate. Are there still?

Argle: Yes; there are two of each left.

Bargle: Two crackers, to be sure, but how can you say there are two holes?

Argle: Thus: there is a hole, and there is another hole that is not the same hole, and every hole in the cheese is the same hole as one or the other.

Bargle: Be so kind as to say ‘co-perforated,’ not ‘same,’ and stop pretending to talk about identity when you are not. I understand you now: co-perforation is supposed to be an equivalence relation among hole-linings, and when you say there are two holes you are trying to say that there are two non-identical co-perforation-classes of hole-linings. Really you identify holes not with hole-linings but with *classes* of hole-linings.

Argle: I would if I could, but I can’t. No; holes are hole-linings; but when I speak of them as holes, I find it convenient to use ‘same’ meaning ‘co-perforated’ wherever a man of your persuasion would use ‘same’ meaning ‘identical.’ You know my reason for this trickery: my sentences about sameness of holes will be true just when you wrongly suppose your like-sounding sentences to be. The same goes for sentences about number of holes, since we both analyze these in terms of sameness.³

Bargle: You still haven’t told me how you say there are as many holes in my cheese as crackers on my plate, without also saying how many there are.

Argle: Here goes. There exist three things X, Y, and Z. X is part of the sum of the crackers, Y is part of the cheese, and Z is part of Y. Every maximal connected part of Y is a hole, and every hole in the cheese is the same hole as some maximal connected part of Y. X overlaps each of the crackers and Z overlaps each maximal connected part of Y. Everything which is either the intersection of X and a cracker or the intersection of Z and some maximal connected part of Y is the same size as any other such thing. X is the same size as Z.⁴ [See editors’ note, pp. ••–••, for exegesis of Argle’s proposal.]

Bargle: Your devices won’t work because co-perforation is not an equivalence relation. *Any* two overlapping parts of my cheese have a common part that is a hole-lining, though in most cases the hole-lining is entirely filled with cheese. To be co-perforated is therefore nothing more than to overlap, and overlapping is no equivalence relation. The result is that although, as you say, you can find two hole-linings in this cheese that are not co-perforated, you can find another one that is co-perforated with both of them.

Argle: If you were right that a hole made of cheese could be entirely filled with the same kind of cheese, you could find far more than two non-co-perforated holelinings; and there would be no such thing as cheese without holes in it. But you are wrong. A hole is a hole not just by virtue of its own shape but also by virtue of the way it contrasts with the matter inside it and around it. The same is true of other shape-predicates; I wouldn’t say that any part of the cheese is a dodecahedron, though I admit that there are parts – parts that do not contrast with their surroundings – that are *shaped like* dodecahedra.

Bargle: Consider the paper-towel roller. How many holes?

Argle: One. You know what I mean: many, but they’re all the same.

Bargle: I think you must say there are at least two. The left half and the right half are not the same hole. They have no common part, so no common part that is a hole.

Argle: They're not holes, they're two parts of a hole.

Bargle: Why aren't they holes themselves? They are singly-perforated and they are made of matter unlike the matter inside them. If I cut them apart you'd have to say they were holes?

Argle: Yes.

Bargle: You admit that a hole can be a proper part of a bigger – say, thicker-skinned – hole?

Argle: Yes.

Bargle: You admit that they are shaped like holes?

Argle: Yes, but they aren't holes. I can't say why they aren't. I know which things are holes, but I can't give you a definition. But why should I? You already know what hole-linings are. I say the two halves of the roller are only parts of a hole because I – like you – would say they are only parts of a hole-lining. What isn't a hole-lining isn't a hole.

Bargle: In that case, I admit that co-perforation may be an equivalence relation at least among singly-perforated hole-linings.

Argle: All holes are singly-perforated. A doubly-perforated thing has two holes in it that are not the same hole.

Bargle: Are you sure? Take the paper-towel roller and punch a little hole in its side. Now you have a hole in a hole-lining. You'd have to say you have a hole in a hole. You have a little hole which is part of a big hole; the big hole is not singly-perforated; and the little hole and the big hole are the same hole, since the little hole is a common part of each.

Argle: I think not. You speak of *the* big hole; but what we have are two big holes, not the same, laid end to end. There is also the little hole, not the same as either big hole, which overlaps them both. Of course we sometimes call something a hole, in a derivative sense, if it is a connected sum of holes. Any decent cave consists of many holes that are not the same hole, so I must have been speaking in this derivative sense when I said that caves are holes.

Bargle: What peculiar things you are driven to say when philosophy corrupts your mind! Tell me the truth: would you have dreamt for a moment of saying there were two big holes rather than one if you were not suffering under the influence of a philosophical theory?

Argle: No; I fear I would have remained ignorant.

Bargle: I see that I can never hope to refute you, since I no sooner reduce your position to absurdity than you embrace the absurdity.

Argle: Not absurdity; disagreement with common opinion.

Bargle: Very well. But I, for one, have more trust in common opinions than I do in any philosophical reasoning whatever. In so far as you disagree with them, you must pay a great price in the plausibility of your theories.

Argle: Agreed. We have been measuring that price. I have shown that it is not so great as you thought; I am prepared to pay it. My theories can earn credence by their clarity and economy; and if they disagree a little with common opinion, then common opinion may be corrected even by a philosopher.

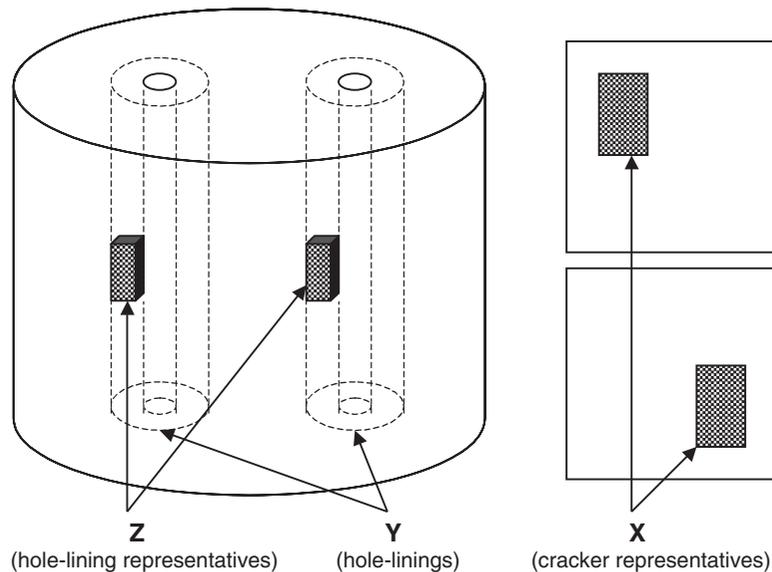
Bargle: The price is still too high.

Argle: We agree in principle; we're only haggling.

- Bargle:* We do. And the same is true of our other debates over ontic parsimony. Indeed, this argument has served us as an illustration – novel, simple, and self-contained – of the nature of our customary disputes.
- Argle:* And yet the illustration has interest in its own right. Your holes, had I been less successful, would have punctured my nominalistic materialism with the greatest of ease.
- Bargle:* Rehearsed and refreshed, let us return to – say – the question of classes.⁵

Notes

- 1 Cf. W. V. Quine, “On What There Is,” *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 13.
- 2 Cf. Donald Davidson, “Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages,” in Y. Bar-Hillel, *Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, Proceedings of the 1964 International Congress* (Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 383–94.
- 3 Cf. Quine’s maxim of identification of indiscernibles in “Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis,” *From a Logical Point of View*, p. 71; P.T. Geach, “Identity,” *Review of Metaphysics* 21 (1967): 3–12.
- 4 This translation adapts a device from Nelson Goodman and W. V. Quine, “Steps toward a Constructive Nominalism,” *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 12 (1947): 109–10.
- 5 There would be little truth to the guess that Argle is one of the authors and Bargle is the other. We thank Charles Chastain, who also is neither Argle nor Bargle, for many helpful comments.



THE CHEESE WITH TWO HOLES AND THE TWO CRACKERS

2 On What There Is

W. V. O. Quine

A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: “What is there?” It can be answered, moreover, in a word – “Everything” – and everyone will accept this answer as true. However, this is merely to say that there is what there is. There remains room for disagreement over cases; and so the issue has stayed alive down the centuries.

Suppose now that two philosophers, McX and I, differ over ontology. Suppose McX maintains there is something which I maintain there is not. McX can, quite consistently with his own point of view, describe our difference of opinion by saying that I refuse to recognize certain entities. I should protest of course that he is wrong in his formulation of our disagreement, for I maintain that there are no entities, of the kind which he alleges, *for* me to recognize; but my finding him wrong in his formulation of our disagreement is unimportant, for I am committed to considering him wrong in his ontology anyway.

When *I* try to formulate our difference of opinion, on the other hand, I seem to be in a predicament. I cannot admit that there are some things which McX countenances and I do not, for in admitting that there are such things I should be contradicting my own rejection of them.

It would appear, if this reasoning were sound, that in any ontological dispute the proponent of the negative side suffers the disadvantage of not being able to admit that his opponent disagrees with him.

This is the old Platonic riddle of non-being. Non-being must in some sense be, otherwise what is it that there is not? This tangled doctrine might be nicknamed *Plato's beard*: historically it has proved tough, frequently dulling the edge of Occam's razor.

It is some such line of thought that leads philosophers like McX to impute being where they might otherwise be quite content to recognize that there is nothing. Thus, take Pegasus. If Pegasus *were* not, McX argues, we should not be talking about anything when we use the word; therefore it would be nonsense to say even that Pegasus is not. Thinking to show thus that the denial of Pegasus cannot be coherently maintained, he concludes that Pegasus is.

McX cannot, indeed, quite persuade himself that any region of space-time, near or remote, contains a flying horse of flesh and blood. Pressed for further details on Pegasus, then, he says that Pegasus is an idea in men's minds. Here, however, a confusion begins to be apparent. We may for the sake of argument concede that there is an entity, and even a unique entity (though this is rather implausible), which is the mental Pegasus-idea; but this mental entity is not what people are talking about when they deny Pegasus.

McX never confuses the Parthenon with the Parthenon-idea. The Parthenon is physical; the Parthenon-idea is mental (according any way to McX's version of

ideas, and I have no better to offer). The Parthenon is visible; the Parthenon-idea is invisible. We cannot easily imagine two things more unlike, and less liable to confusion, than the Parthenon and the Parthenon-idea. But when we shift from the Parthenon to Pegasus, the confusion sets in – for no other reason than that McX would sooner be deceived by the crudest and most flagrant counterfeit than grant the non-being of Pegasus.

The notion that Pegasus must be, because it would otherwise be nonsense to say even that Pegasus is not, has been seen to lead McX into an elementary confusion. Subtler minds, taking the same precept as their starting point, come out with theories of Pegasus which are less patently misguided than McX's, and correspondingly more difficult to eradicate. One of these subtler minds is named, let us say, Wyman. Pegasus, Wyman maintains, has his being as an unactualized possible. When we say of Pegasus that there is no such thing, we are saying, more precisely, that Pegasus does not have the special attribute of actuality. Saying that Pegasus is not actual is on a par, logically, with saying that the Parthenon is not red; in either case we are saying something about an entity whose being is unquestioned.

Wyman, by the way, is one of those philosophers who have united in ruining the good old word 'exist'. Despite his espousal of unactualized possibles, he limits the word 'existence' to actuality – thus preserving an illusion of ontological agreement between himself and us who repudiate the rest of his bloated universe. We have all been prone to say, in our common-sense usage of 'exist', that Pegasus does not exist, meaning simply that there is no such entity at all. If Pegasus existed he would indeed be in space and time, but only because the word 'Pegasus' has spatio-temporal connotations, and not because 'exists' has spatio-temporal connotations. If spatio-temporal reference is lacking when we affirm the existence of the cube root of 27, this is simply because a cube root is not a spatio-temporal kind of thing, and not because we are being ambiguous in our use of 'exist'. However, Wyman, in an ill-conceived effort to appear agreeable, genially grants us the non-existence of Pegasus and then, contrary to what *we* meant by non-existence of Pegasus, insists that Pegasus *is*. Existence is one thing, he says, and subsistence is another. The only way I know of coping with this obfuscation of issues is to *give* Wyman the word 'exist'. I'll try not to use it again; I still have 'is'. So much for lexicography; let's get back to Wyman's ontology.

Wyman's overpopulated universe is in many ways, unlovely. It offends the aesthetic sense of us who have a taste for desert landscapes, but this is not the worst of it. Wyman's slum of possibles is a breeding ground for disorderly elements. Take, for instance, the possible fat man in that doorway; and, again, the possible bald man in that doorway. Are they the same possible man, or two possible men? How do we decide? How many possible men are there in that doorway? Are there more possible thin ones than fat ones? How many of them are alike? Or would their being alike make them one? Are no *two* possible things alike? Is this the same as saying that it is impossible for two things to be alike? Or, finally, is the concept of identity simply inapplicable to unactualized possibles? But what sense can be found in talking of entities which cannot meaningfully be said to be identical with themselves and distinct from one another? These

elements are well nigh incorrigible. By a Fregean therapy of individual concepts, some effort might be made at rehabilitation; but I feel we'd do better simply to clear Wyman's slum and be done with it.

Possibility, along with the other modalities of necessity and impossibility and contingency, raises problems upon which I do not mean to imply that we should turn our backs. But we can at least limit modalities to whole statements. We may impose the adverb 'possibly' upon a statement as a whole, and we may well worry about the semantical analysis of such usage; but little real advance in such analysis is to be hoped for in expanding our universe to include so-called *possible entities*. I suspect that the main motive for this expansion is simply the old notion that Pegasus, e.g., must be because it would otherwise be nonsense to say even that he is not.

Still, all the rank luxuriance of Wyman's universe of possibles would seem to come to naught when we make a slight change in the example and speak not of Pegasus but of the round square cupola on Berkeley College. If, unless Pegasus were, it would be nonsense to say that he is not, then by the same token, unless the round square cupola on Berkeley College were, it would be nonsense to say that it is not. But, unlike Pegasus, the round square cupola on Berkeley College cannot be admitted even as an unactualized *possible*. Can we drive Wyman now to admitting also a realm of unactualizable impossibles? If so, a good many embarrassing questions could be asked about them. We might hope even to trap Wyman in contradictions, by getting him to admit that certain of these entities are at once round and square. But the wily Wyman chooses the other horn of the dilemma and concedes that it is nonsense to say that the round square cupola on Berkeley College is not. He says that the phrase 'round square cupola' is meaningless.

Wyman was not the first to embrace this alternative. The doctrine of the meaningfulness of contradictions runs away back. The tradition survives, moreover, in writers such as Wittgenstein who seem to share none of Wyman's motivations. Still I wonder whether the first temptation to such a doctrine may not have been substantially the motivation which we have observed in Wyman. Certainly the doctrine has no intrinsic appeal; and it has led its devotees to such quixotic extremes as that of challenging the method of proof by *reductio ad absurdum* – a challenge in which I seem to detect a quite striking *reductio ad absurdum eius ipsius*.

Moreover, the doctrine of meaningfulness of contradictions has the severe methodological drawback that it makes it impossible, in principle, ever to devise an effective test of what is meaningful and what is not. It would be forever impossible for us to devise systematic ways of deciding whether a string of signs made sense – even to us individually, let alone other people – or not. For, it follows from a discovery in mathematical logic, due to Church, that there can be no generally applicable test of contradictoriness.

I have spoken disparagingly of Plato's beard, and hinted that it is tangled. I have dwelt at length on the inconveniences of putting up with it. It is time to think about taking steps.

Russell, in his theory of so-called singular descriptions, showed clearly how we might meaningfully use seeming names without supposing that the entities alleg-

edly named be. The names to which Russell's theory directly applies are complex descriptive names such as 'the author of *Waverly*', 'the present King of France', 'the round square cupola on Berkeley College'. Russell analyzes such phrases systematically as fragments of the whole sentences in which they occur. The sentence 'The author of *Waverly* was a poet', e.g., is explained as a whole as meaning 'Someone (better: something) wrote *Waverly* and was a poet, and nothing else wrote *Waverly*'. (The point of this added clause is to affirm the uniqueness which is implicit in the word 'the', in '*the* author of *Waverly*'.) The sentence 'The round square cupola on Berkeley College is pink' is explained as 'Something is round and square and is a cupola on Berkeley College and is pink, and nothing else is round and square and a cupola on Berkeley College'.

The virtue of this analysis is that the seeming name, a descriptive phrase, is paraphrased *in context* as a so-called incomplete symbol. No unified expression is offered as an analysis of the descriptive phrase, but the statement as a whole which was the context of that phrase still gets its full quota of meaning – whether true or false.

The unanalyzed statement 'The author of *Waverly* was a poet' contains a part, 'the author of *Waverly*', which is wrongly supposed by McX and Wyman to demand objective reference in order to be meaningful at all. But in Russell's translation, 'Something wrote *Waverly* and was a poet and nothing else wrote *Waverly*', the burden of objective reference which had been put upon the descriptive phrase is now taken over by words of the kind that logicians call bound variables, variables of quantification: namely, words like 'something', 'nothing', 'everything'. These words, far from purporting to be names specifically of the author of *Waverly*, do not purport to be names at all; they refer to entities generally, with a kind of studied ambiguity peculiar to themselves. These quantificational words or bound variables are of course a basic part of language, and their meaningfulness, at least in context, is not to be challenged. But their meaningfulness in no way presupposes there being either the author of *Waverly* or the round square cupola on Berkeley College or any other specifically preassigned objects.

Where descriptions are concerned, there is no longer any difficulty in affirming or denying being. 'There *is* the author of *Waverly*' is explained by Russell as meaning 'Someone (or, more strictly, something) wrote *Waverly* and nothing else wrote *Waverly*'. 'The author of *Waverly* is not' is explained, correspondingly, as the alternation 'Either each thing failed to write *Waverly* or two or more things wrote *Waverly*.' This alternation is false, but meaningful; and it contains no expression purporting to designate the author of *Waverly*. The statement 'The round square cupola on Berkeley College is not' is analyzed in similar fashion. So the old notion that statements of non-being defeat themselves goes by the board. When a statement of being or non-being is analyzed by Russell's theory of descriptions, it ceases to contain any expression which even purports to name the alleged entity whose being is in question, so that the meaningfulness of the statement no longer can be thought to presuppose that there be such an entity.

Now what of 'Pegasus'? This being a word rather than a descriptive phrase, Russell's argument does not immediately apply to it. However, it can easily be

made to apply. We have only to rephrase ‘Pegasus’ as a description, in any way that seems adequately to single out our idea: say ‘the winged horse that was captured by Bellerophon’. Substituting such a phrase for ‘Pegasus’, we can then proceed to analyze the statement ‘Pegasus is’, or ‘Pegasus is not’, precisely on the analogy of Russell’s analysis of ‘The author of *Waverly* is’ and ‘The author of *Waverly* is not’.

In order thus to subsume a one-word name or alleged name such as ‘Pegasus’ under Russell’s theory of description, we must of course be able first to translate the word into a description. But this is no real restriction. If the notion of Pegasus had been so obscure or so basic a one that no pat translation into a descriptive phrase had offered itself along familiar lines, we could still have availed ourselves of the following artificial and trivial-seeming device: we could have appealed to the *ex hypothesi* unanalyzable, irreducible attribute of *being Pegasus*, adopting, for its expression, the verb ‘is-Pegasus’, or ‘pegasizes’. The noun ‘Pegasus’ itself could then be treated as derivative, and identified after all with a description: ‘the thing that is-Pegasus’, ‘the thing that pegasizes’.

If the importing of such a predicate as ‘pegasizes’ seems to commit us to recognizing that there is a corresponding attribute, pegasizing, in Plato’s heaven or in the mind of men, well and good. Neither we nor Wyman nor McX have been contending, thus far, about the being or non-being of universals, but rather about that of Pegasus. If in terms of pegasizing we can interpret the noun ‘Pegasus’ as a description subject to Russell’s theory of descriptions, then we have disposed of the old notion that Pegasus cannot be said not to be without presupposing that in some sense Pegasus is.

Our argument is now quite general. McX and Wyman supposed that we could not meaningfully affirm a statement of the form ‘So-and-so is not’, with a simple or descriptive singular noun in place of ‘so-and-so’, unless so-and-so be. This supposition is now seen to be quite generally groundless, since the singular noun in question can always be expanded into a singular description, trivially or otherwise, and then analyzed out à la Russell.

We cannot conclude, however, that man is henceforth free of all ontological commitments. We commit ourselves outright to an ontology containing numbers when we say there are prime numbers between 1000 and 1010; we commit ourselves to an ontology containing centaurs when we say there are centaurs; and we commit ourselves to an ontology containing Pegasus when we say Pegasus is. But we do not commit ourselves to an ontology containing Pegasus or the author of *Waverly* or the round square cupola on Berkeley College when we say that Pegasus or the author of *Waverly* or the cupola in question is *not*. We need no longer labor under the delusion that the meaningfulness of a statement containing a singular term presupposes an entity named by the term. A singular term need not name to be significant.

An inkling of this might have dawned on Wyman and McX even without benefit of Russell if they had only noticed – as so few of us do – that there is a gulf between *meaning* and *naming* even in the case of a singular term which *is* genuinely a name of an object. Frege’s example will serve: the phrase ‘Evening Star’ names a certain large physical object of spherical form, which is hurtling

through space some scores of millions of miles from here. The phrase ‘Morning Star’ names the same thing, as was probably first established by some observant Babylonian. But the two phrases cannot be regarded as having the same meaning; otherwise that Babylonian could have dispensed with his observations and contented himself with reflecting on the meanings of his words. The meanings, then, being different from one another, must be other than the named object, which is one and the same in both cases.

Confusion of meaning with naming not only made McX think he could not meaningfully repudiate Pegasus; a continuing confusion of meaning with naming no doubt helped engender his absurd notion that Pegasus is an idea, a mental entity. The structure of his confusion is as follows. He confused the alleged *named object* Pegasus with the *meaning* of the word ‘Pegasus’, therefore concluding that Pegasus must be in order that the word have meaning. But what sorts of things are meanings? This is a moot point; however, one might quite plausibly explain meanings as ideas in the mind, supposing we can make clear sense in turn of the idea of ideas in the mind. Therefore Pegasus, initially confused with a meaning, ends up as an idea in the mind. It is the more remarkable that Wyman, subject to the same initial motivation as McX, should have avoided this particular blunder and wound up with unactualized possibles instead.

Now let us turn to the ontological problem of universals: the question whether there are such entities as attributes, relations, classes, numbers, functions, McX, characteristically enough, thinks there are. Speaking of attributes, he says: “There are red houses, red roses, red sunsets; this much is pre-philosophical common-sense in which we must all agree. These houses, roses, and sunsets, then, have something in common; and this which they have in common is all I mean by the attribute of redness.” For McX, thus, there being attributes is even more obvious and trivial than the obvious and trivial fact of there being red houses, roses, and sunsets. This, I think, is characteristic of metaphysics, or at least of that part of metaphysics called ontology: one who regards a statement on this subject as true at all must regard it as trivially true. One’s ontology is basic to the conceptual scheme by which he interprets all experiences, even the most commonplace ones. Judged within some particular conceptual scheme – and how else is judgment possible? – an ontological statement goes without saying, standing in need of no separate justification at all. Ontological statements follow immediately from all manner of casual statements of commonplace fact, just as – from the point of view, anyway, of McX’s conceptual scheme – ‘There is an attribute’ follows from ‘There are red houses, red roses, red sunsets.’

Judged in another conceptual scheme, an ontological statement which is axiomatic to McX’s mind may, with equal immediacy and triviality, be adjudged false. One may admit that there are red houses, roses, and sunsets, but deny, except as a popular and misleading manner of speaking, that they have anything in common. The words ‘houses’, ‘roses’, and ‘sunsets’ denote each of sundry individual entities which are houses and roses and sunsets, and the word ‘red’ or ‘red object’ denotes each of sundry individual entities which are red houses, red roses, red sunsets; but there is not, in addition, any entity whatever, individual or otherwise, which is named by the word ‘redness’, nor, for that matter, by the word

'househood', 'rosehood', 'sunsethood'. That the houses and roses and sunsets are all of them red may be taken as ultimate and irreducible, and it may be held that McX is no better off, in point of real explanatory power, for all the occult entities which he posits under such names as 'redness'.

One means by which McX might naturally have tried to impose his ontology of universals on us was already removed before we turned to the problem of universals. McX cannot argue that predicates such as 'red' or 'is-red', which we all concur in using, must be regarded as names each of a single universal entity in order that they be meaningful at all. For, we have seen that being a name of something is a much more special feature than being meaningful. He cannot even charge us – at least not by *that* argument – with having posited an attribute of pegasizing by our adoption of the predicate 'pegasizes'.

However, McX hits upon a different stratagem. "Let us grant," he says, "this distinction between meaning and naming of which you make so much. Let us even grant that 'is red', 'pegasizes', etc., are not names of attributes. Still, you admit they have meanings. But these *meanings*, whether they are *named* or not, are still universals, and I venture to say that some of them might even be the very things that I call attributes, or something to much the same purpose in the end."

For McX, this is an unusually penetrating speech; and the only way I know to counter it is by refusing to admit meanings. However, I feel no reluctance toward refusing to admit meanings, for I do not thereby deny that words and statements are meaningful. McX and I may agree to the letter in our classification of linguistic forms into the meaningful and the meaningless, even though McX construes meaningfulness as the *having* (in some sense of 'having?') of some abstract entity which he calls a meaning, whereas I do not. I remain free to maintain that the fact that a given linguistic utterance is meaningful (or *significant*, as I prefer to say so as not to invite hypostasis of meanings as entities) is an ultimate and irreducible matter of fact; or, I may undertake to analyze it in terms directly of what people do in the presence of the linguistic utterance in question and other utterances similar to it.

The useful ways in which people ordinarily talk or seem to talk about meanings boil down to two: the *having* of meanings, which is significance, and *sameness* of meaning, or synonymy. What is called *giving* the meaning of an utterance is simply the uttering of a synonym, couched, ordinarily, in clearer language than the original. If we are allergic to meanings as such, we can speak directly of utterances as significant or insignificant, and as synonymous or heteronymous one with another. The problem of explaining these adjectives 'significant' and 'synonymous' with some degree of clarity and rigor – preferably, as I see it, in terms of behavior – is as difficult as it is important. But the explanatory value of special and irreducible intermediary entities called meanings is surely illusory.

Up to now I have argued that we can use singular terms significantly in sentences without presupposing that there be the entities which those terms purport to name. I have argued further that we can use general terms, e.g., predicates, without conceding them to be names of abstract entities. I have argued further that we can view utterances as significant, and as synonymous or heteronymous

with one another, without countenancing a realm of entities called meanings. At this point McX begins to wonder whether there is any limit at all to our ontological immunity. Does *nothing* we may say commit us to the assumption of universals or other entities which we may find unwelcome?

I have already suggested a negative answer to this question, in speaking of bound variables, or variables of quantification, in connection with Russell's theory of descriptions. We can very easily involve ourselves in ontological commitments, by saying, e.g., that *there is something* (bound variable) which red houses and sunsets have in common; or that *there is something* which is a prime number between 1000 and 1010. But this is, essentially, the *only* way we can involve ourselves in ontological commitments: by our use of bound variables. The use of alleged names is no criterion, for we can repudiate their namehood at the drop of a hat unless the assumption of a corresponding entity can be spotted in the things we affirm in terms of bound variables. Names are in fact altogether immaterial to the ontological issue, for I have shown, in connection with 'Pegasus' and 'pegasize', that names can be converted to descriptions, and Russell has shown that descriptions can be eliminated. Whatever we say with help of names can be said in a language which shuns names altogether. To be is, purely and simply, to be the value of a variable. In terms of the categories of traditional grammar, this amounts roughly to saying that to be is to be in the range of reference of a pronoun. Pronouns are the basic media of reference; nouns might better have been named pro-pronouns. The variables of quantification, 'something', 'nothing', 'everything', range over our whole ontology, whatever it may be; and we are convicted of a particular ontological presupposition if, and only if, the alleged presuppositum has to be reckoned among the entities over which our variables range in order to render one of our affirmations true.

We may say, e.g., that some dogs are white, and not thereby commit ourselves to recognizing either doghood or whiteness as entities. 'Some dogs are white' says that some things that are dogs are white; and, in order that this statement be true, the things over which the bound variable 'something' ranges must include some white dogs, but need not include doghood or whiteness. On the other hand, when we say that some zoological species are cross-fertile, we are committing ourselves to recognizing as entities the several species themselves, abstract though they be. We remain so committed at least until we devise some way of so paraphrasing the statement as to show that the seeming reference to species on the part of our bound variable was an avoidable manner of speaking.

If I have been seeming to minimize the degree to which in our philosophical and unphilosophical discourse we involve ourselves in ontological commitments, let me then emphasize that classical mathematics, as the example of primes between 1000 and 1010 clearly illustrates, is up to its neck in commitments to an ontology of abstract entities. Thus it is that the great mediaeval controversy over universals has flared up anew in the modern philosophy of mathematics. The issue is clearer now than of old, because we now have a more explicit standard whereby to decide what ontology a given theory or form of discourse is committed to: a theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound

variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory be true.

Because this standard of ontological presupposition did not emerge clearly in the philosophical tradition, the modern philosophical mathematicians have not on the whole recognized that they were debating the same old problem of universals in a newly clarified form. But the fundamental cleavages among modern points of view on foundations of mathematics do come down pretty explicitly to disagreements as to the range of entities to which the bound variables should be permitted to refer.

The three main mediaeval points of view regarding universals are designated by historians as *realism*, *conceptualism*, and *nominalism*. Essentially these same three doctrines reappear in twentieth-century surveys of the philosophy of mathematics under the new names *logicism*, *intuitionism*, and *formalism*.

Realism, as the word is used in connection with the mediaeval controversy over universals, is the Platonic doctrine that universals or abstract entities have being independently of the mind; the mind may discover them but cannot create them. *Logicism*, represented by such latter-day Platonists as Frege, Russell, Whitehead, Church, and Carnap, condones the use of bound variables to refer to abstract entities known and unknown, specifiable and unspecifiable, indiscriminately.

Conceptualism holds that there are universals but they are mind-made. *Intuitionism*, espoused in modern times in one form or another by Poincaré, Brouwer, Weyl, and others, countenances the use of bound variables to refer to abstract entities only when those entities are capable of being cooked up individually from ingredients specified in advance. As Fraenkel has put it, logicism holds that classes are discovered while intuitionism holds that they are invented – a fair statement indeed of the old opposition between realism and conceptualism. This opposition is no mere quibble; it makes an essential difference in the amount of classical mathematics to which one is willing to subscribe. Logicians, or realists, are able on their assumptions to get Cantor's ascending orders of infinity; intuitionists are compelled to stop with the lowest order of infinity, and, as an indirect consequence, to abandon even some of the classical laws of real numbers. The modern controversy between logicism and intuitionism arose, in fact, from disagreements over infinity.

Formalism, associated with the name of Hilbert, echoes intuitionism in deploring the logicist's unbridled recourse to universals. But formalism also finds intuitionism unsatisfactory. This could happen for either of two opposite reasons. The formalist might, like the logicist, object to the crippling of classical mathematics; or he might, like the *nominalists* of old, object to admitting abstract entities at all, even in the restrained sense of mind-made entities. The upshot is the same: the formalist keeps classical mathematics as a play of insignificant notations. This play of notations can still be of utility – whatever utility it has already shown itself to have as a crutch for physicists and technologists. But utility need not imply significance, in any literal linguistic sense. Nor need the marked success of mathematicians in spinning out theorems, and in finding objective bases for agreement with one another's results, imply significance. For, an adequate basis

for agreement among mathematicians can be found simply in the rules which govern the manipulation of the notations – these syntactical rules being, unlike the notations themselves, quite significant and intelligible.*

I have argued that the sort of ontology we adopt can be consequential – notably in connection with mathematics, although this is only an example. Now how are we to adjudicate among rival ontologies? Certainly the answer is not provided by the semantical formula “To be is to be the value of a variable”; this formula serves rather, conversely, in testing the conformity of a given remark or doctrine to a prior ontological standard. We look to bound variables in connection with ontology not in order to know what there is, but in order to know what a given remark or doctrine, ours or someone else’s, *says* there is; and this much is quite properly a problem involving language. But what there is is another question.

In debating over what there is, there are still reasons for operating on a semantical plane. One reason is to escape from the predicament noted at the beginning of the paper: the predicament of my not being able to admit that there are things which McX countenances and I do not. So long as I adhere to my ontology, as opposed to McX’s, I cannot allow my bound variables to refer to entities which belong to McX’s ontology and not to mine. I can, however, consistently describe our disagreement by characterizing the statements which McX affirms. Provided merely that my ontology countenances linguistic forms, or at least concrete inscriptions and utterances, I can talk about McX’s sentences.

Another reason for withdrawing to a semantical plane is to find common ground on which to argue. Disagreement in ontology involves basic disagreement in conceptual schemes; yet McX and I, despite these basic disagreements, find that our conceptual schemes converge sufficiently in their intermediate and upper ramifications to enable us to communicate successfully on such topics as politics, weather, and, in particular, language. In so far as our basic controversy over ontology can be translated upward into a semantical controversy about words and what to do with them, the collapse of the controversy into question-begging may be delayed.

It is no wonder, then, that ontological controversy should tend into controversy over language. But we must not jump to the conclusion that what there is depends on words. Translatability of a question into semantical terms is no indication that the question is linguistic. To see Naples is to bear a name which, when prefixed to the words ‘sees Naples’, yields a true sentence; still there is nothing linguistic about seeing Naples.

Our acceptance of an ontology is, I think, similar in principle to our acceptance of a scientific theory, say a system of physics: we adopt, at least insofar as we are reasonable, the simplest conceptual scheme into which the disordered fragments of raw experience can be fitted and arranged. Our ontology is determined once we have fixed upon the over-all conceptual scheme which is to accommodate science in the broadest sense; and the considerations which determine a reasonable construction of any part of that conceptual scheme, e.g. the biological or the physical part, are not different in kind from the considerations which determine a reasonable construction of the whole. To whatever extent the adoption

of any system of scientific theory may be said to be a matter of language, the same – but no more – may be said of the adoption of an ontology.

But simplicity, as a guiding principle in constructing conceptual schemes, is not a clear and unambiguous idea; and it is quite capable of presenting a double or multiple standard. Imagine, e.g., that we have devised the most economical set of concepts adequate to the play-by-play reporting of immediate experience. The entities under this scheme – the values of bound variables – are, let us suppose, individual subjective events of sensation or reflection. We should still find, no doubt, that a physicalistic conceptual scheme, purporting to talk about external objects, offers great advantages in simplifying our over-all reports. By bringing together scattered sense events and treating them as perceptions of one object, we reduce the complexity of our stream of experience to a manageable conceptual simplicity. The rule of simplicity is indeed our guiding maxim in assigning sense data to objects: we associate an earlier and a later round sensum with the same so-called penny, or with two different so-called pennies, in obedience to the demands of maximum simplicity in our total world-picture.

Here we have two competing conceptual schemes, a phenomenistic one and a physicalistic one. Which should prevail? Each has its advantages; each has its special simplicity in its own way. Each, I suggest, deserves to be developed. Each may be said, indeed, to be the more fundamental, though in different senses: the one is epistemologically, the other physically, fundamental.

The physical conceptual scheme simplifies our account of experience because of the way myriad scattered sense events come to be associated with single so-called objects; still there is no likelihood that each sentence about physical objects can actually be translated, however deviously and complexly, into the phenomenistic language. Physical objects are postulated entities which round out and simplify our account of the flux of experience, just as the introduction of irrational numbers simplifies law of arithmetic. From the point of view of the conceptual scheme of the elementary arithmetic of rational numbers alone, the broader arithmetic of rational and irrational numbers would have the status of a convenient myth, simpler than the literal truth (namely the arithmetic of rationals) and yet containing that literal truth as a scattered part. Similarly, from a phenomenistic point of view, the conceptual scheme of physical objects is a convenient myth, simpler than the literal truth and yet containing that literal truth as a scattered part.

Now what of classes or attributes of physical objects, in turn? A platonistic ontology of this sort is, from the point of view of a strictly physicalistic conceptual scheme, as much of a myth as that physicalistic conceptual scheme itself was for phenomenism. This higher myth is a good and useful one, in turn, in so far as it simplifies our account of physics. Since mathematics is an integral part of this higher myth, the utility of this myth for physical science is evident enough. In speaking of it nevertheless as a myth, I echo that philosophy of mathematics to which I alluded earlier under the name of formalism. But my present suggestion is that an attitude of formalism may with equal justice be adopted toward the physical conceptual scheme, in turn, by the pure aesthete or phenomenalist.

The analogy between the myth of mathematics and the myth of physics is, in some additional and perhaps fortuitous ways, strikingly close. Consider, for example, the crisis which was precipitated in the foundations of mathematics, at the turn of the century, by the discovery of Russell's paradox and other antinomies of set theory. These contradictions had to be obviated by unintuitive, *ad hoc* devices; our mathematical myth-making became deliberate and evident to all. But what of physics? An antinomy arose between the undular and the corpuscular accounts of light; and if this was not as out-and-out a contradiction as Russell's paradox, I suspect that the reason is merely that physics is not as out-and-out as mathematics. Again, the second great modern crisis in the foundations of mathematics – precipitated in 1931 by Gödel's proof that there are bound to be undecidable statements in arithmetic – has its companion-piece in physics in Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle.

In earlier pages I undertook to show that some common arguments in favor of certain ontologies are fallacious. Further, I advanced an explicit standard whereby to decide what the ontological commitments of a theory are. But the question what ontology actually to adopt still stands open, and the obvious counsel is tolerance and an experimental spirit. Let us by all means see how much of the physicalistic conceptual scheme can be reduced to a phenomenistic one; still physics also naturally demands pursuing, irreducible *in toto* though it be. Let us see how, or to what degree, natural science may be rendered independent of platonistic mathematics; but let us also pursue mathematics and delve into its platonistic foundations.

From among the various conceptual schemes best suited to these various pursuits, one – the phenomenistic – claims epistemological priority. Viewed from within the phenomenistic conceptual scheme, the ontologies of physical objects and mathematical objects are myths. The quality of myth, however, is relative; relative, in this case, to the epistemological point of view. This point of view is one among various, corresponding to one among our various interests and purposes.

WILLARD V. QUINE

Harvard University

Note

* See Goodman and Quine. "Steps toward a constructive nominalism," *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, vol. 12 (1947), pp. 97–122.

3 Beyond Being and Nonbeing

Roderick M. Chisholm

“ . . . das Universum in der Gesamtheit des Wirklichen noch lange nicht erschöpf ist.”

Meinong

Meinong wrote: “There are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects.”¹ But he was well aware that this statement of his doctrine of *Außersein* was needlessly paradoxical. Other statements were: “The non-real” is not “a mere nothing” and “The object as such . . . stands ‘beyond being and non-being.’”² Perhaps the clearest statement was provided by Meinong’s follower, Ernst Mally: “*Sosein is independent of Sein.*”³ We could paraphrase Mally’s statement by saying: “An object may have a set of characteristics whether or not it exists and whether or not it has any other kind of being.”

It is commonly supposed that this doctrine of *Außersein* is absurd and that whatever grounds Meinong may have had for affirming it were demolished by Russell’s theory of descriptions. I believe, however, that this supposition is false. I shall attempt here to set forth the doctrine in its most extreme form and I shall then consider what may be said in its favour.

I.

The fundamental theses of Meinong’s theory of objects are (1) that there are objects which do not exist and (2) that objects which are such that there are *no* such objects are nonetheless constituted in some way or other and thus may be made the subject of true predication. The second of these two theses is the doctrine of *Außersein*. The first thesis, as Meinong says, is familiar to traditional metaphysics. But traditional metaphysics, he adds, has had “a prejudice in favor of the actual.”⁴ Though it has had a proper concern for “ideal objects,” those things that merely subsist (*bestehen*) and do not exist, it has neglected those things that have no being at all. Hence the need for a more encompassing theory of objects.

Among the characteristic tenets of the theory of objects are the following.

Of objects, some exist and others do not exist. Thus horses are included among objects that exist, and unicorns and golden mountains are included among objects that do not exist.

Of objects that do not exist, some may yet be said to be, or to subsist, and others may not be said to be at all.

Thus if existence is thought of as implying a spatio-temporal locus, then there are certain ideal objects that do not exist. Among these are properties or attributes

and the objects of mathematics, as well as states of affairs (what Meinong calls “*Objektive*”). Since there are horses, for example, there is also the being of horses, the being of the being of horses, the nonbeing of the nonbeing of horses, and the being of the nonbeing of the nonbeing of horses. And since there are no unicorns, there is also the nonbeing of unicorns, the being of the nonbeing of unicorns, the nonbeing of the being of unicorns, and the nonbeing of the nonbeing of unicorns.⁵

But, though every object may correctly be said to be something or other, it is not the case that every object may correctly be said to be.⁶ Unicorns, golden mountains, and round squares may not be said to be at all. Everything, however, *is* an object, whether or not it exists or has any other kind of being, and indeed whether or not it is even thinkable. (Whatever is unthinkable, after all, at least has the property of *being* unthinkable.) And every object, clearly, has the characteristics it does have whether or not it has any kind of being. This last is the proposition Mally expressed by saying that the *Sosein* of an object is independent of its *Sein*.

The theory of *Außersein* therefore, should be distinguished both from Platonism, as this term is currently interpreted, and from the reism, or concretism, of Brentano and Kotarbinski. Thus the Platonist might be said to reason as follows: “(P) Certain objects that do not exist have certain properties; but (Q) an object has properties if and only it is real; hence (R) there are real objects that do not exist.” The reist, on the other hand, reasons from not-R and Q to not-P; that is to say, he takes as his premises Plato’s second premise and the contradictory of Plato’s conclusion and then derives the contradictory of Plato’s first premise. But Meinong, like Plato and unlike the reist, accepts P as well as R; unlike both Plato and the reist, he rejects Q; and then *he* derives a conclusion that is unacceptable both to the Platonist and to the reist – namely, “(S) The totality of objects extends far beyond the confines of what is merely real.”⁷

Once this conclusion is accepted, a number of interesting distinctions may be made. These would seem to be peculiar to Meinong’s theory of objects.

Thus objects may be subdivided into those which are possible and those which are impossible. (We should note, incidentally, that to say of an object that it is only a possible object is *not* to say of it that it is only possibly an object. For possible objects, as well as impossible objects, *are* objects.) Possible objects, unlike impossible objects, have noncontradictory *Soseins*. Golden mountains, for example, although they have no kind of being, may be possible objects; for the *Sosein* of a golden mountain need not preclude its *Sein*. But some golden mountains are impossible objects – for example, those that are both golden and non-golden, and those that are both round and square. An impossible object is thus an object with a contradictory *Sosein* – a *Sosein* that precludes its object’s *Sein*.⁸

Soseins, too, are objects and therefore every *Sosein* has a *Sosein*. An object which is not itself a *Sosein* is an impossible object if it *has* a contradictory *Sosein*. May a *Sosein*, too, be an impossible object? Mally answers this question in a remarkable paragraph which may be paraphrased as follows.

“Like any other object a *Sosein* is an impossible object if *it* has a *Sosein* which precludes its *Sein*; that is to say, a *Sosein* is an impossible object if its own *Sosein*

is contradictory. A *Sosein* would have a contradictory *Sosein* if it had the property of being the *Sosein* of an object which does *not* have that *Sosein*. The circularity of a possible square is thus an impossible *Sosein*. For the circularity of a possible square has itself a contradictory *Sosein*: that of being the circularity of something that isn't circular. But an impossible *Sosein* is not the same as a contradictory *Sosein*. The circularity of a possible square must be distinguished from the circularity (and squareness) of a *round* square; the former is an impossible *Sosein*, but the latter is not. The circularity of a round square is a contradictory *Sosein* but *not* an impossible *Sosein*. What is impossible is that there be an object that is both round and square. But it is *not* impossible that a round square be both round and square. Indeed, it is *necessary* that a round square be both round and square."⁹

Objects may also be classified as being either complete or incomplete. Where an impossible object is an object having a *Sosein* that violates the law of contradiction, an *incomplete object* is one having a *Sosein* that violates the law of excluded middle. Of the round squares that were being contemplated just now, it may be neither true nor false to say of the one that was contemplated by you that it is larger than the one that was contemplated by me.¹⁰

Of all objects, the most poorly endowed would seem to be what Meinong calls *defective objects*. Indeed, they are so poorly endowed that Meinong seems to be uncertain as to whether they are objects at all. If I wish that your wish will come true, then the object of my wish is whatever it is that you happen to wish. And if, unknown to me, *your* wish is that my wish will come true, then the object of your wish is what it is that I happen to wish. But this object, in the circumstances imagined, would seem to have very little *Sosein* beyond that of being our mutual object. Meinong felt, incidentally, that this concept of a defective object might be used to throw light upon the logical paradoxes.¹¹

It is a mistake, then, to express the doctrine of *Außersein* by saying that, according to Meinong, such objects as golden mountains and round squares have a kind of being other than existence or subsistence. Meinong's point is that they have no kind of being at all. They are "homeless objects", not even to be found in Plato's heaven.¹²

Why assume, then, that an object may have a *Sosein* and yet no *Sein* – that an object may have a set of characteristics and yet no kind of being at all?

II.

The *prima facie* case for this doctrine of *Außersein* lies in the fact that there are many truths which *seem*, at least, to pertain to objects which are such that there are no such objects. It is reasonable to assume that this *prima facie* case would be weakened if we could show, with respect to these truths, that they need not be construed as pertaining to these homeless objects. It is also reasonable to assume, I think, that Meinong's case will be strengthened to the extent that we find ourselves *unable* to show, with respect to any one of these truths, that it need not be construed as pertaining to such objects.

There are at least five groups of such truths that have been singled out in recent literature. (The groups are not mutually exclusive and they may not be exhaustive.) For there would seem to be at least five different sorts of things that we may say of an object that does not exist or have any other kind of being: (1) we may say that the object does not exist; (2) we may say what the object is without implying either that it exists or that it does not exist; (3) we may note what expressions in our language are used to refer to that object; (4) we may say that the object is involved in myth or fiction and that, as so involved, it is richly endowed with attributes; or (5) we may say that someone's intentional attitude is directed upon that object.

Meinong's best case, I think, lies with the final group – with those truths that seem to pertain to the nonexistent objects of our intentional attitudes. But let us consider them all in as favourable a light as we can.

(1) Examples of the first group are “Things that are both round and square do not exist” and “Unicorns do not exist.” Can we paraphrase these in such a way that they may be seen to involve no reference to nonexistent objects? The first example presents fewer problems than the second, but it is doubtful that we can paraphrase it in a way that would satisfy Meinong.

The obvious paraphrase of “Things that are both round and square do not exist” would be “Everything that does exist is such that it is not both round and square.” But, Meinong would say, where the subject-term of the paraphrase may be taken to refer to any piece of reality one chooses, the subject-term of the original is intended to refer to “what does not exist and is therefore not a piece of reality at all.”¹³

The obvious paraphrase of “Unicorns do not exist” would be “Everything that does exist is such that it is not a unicorn.” But this, Meinong could say, leaves us with a reference to nonexistent objects. To say of a thing that is not a unicorn is to say of it that it is not identical with any unicorn; and to say of a thing that it is not identical with any unicorn is to relate it to objects that do not exist.

Hence we may wish to replace “a unicorn”, in “Everything that does exist is such that it is not a unicorn”, by certain predicates. But what predicates, and how do we decide? Let us suppose (to oversimplify somewhat) that we are satisfied with “single-horned” and “equine.” Then we paraphrase “Unicorns do not exist” as “Everything that does exist is such that it is not both single-horned and equine”. Meinong may now repeat the objection he had made to our attempted paraphrase of the first example above. And he may add still another.

How did we happen to choose the particular predicates “single-horned” and “equine”? We chose them, Meinong would say, because we know, *a priori*, that all and only unicorns are both single-horned and equine. And this *a priori* statement – “All and only unicorns are both equine and single-horned” – is one in which, once again, we have a subject-term that refers, or purports to refer, to non-existent objects. This statement, however, belongs to the second group and not to the first.

(2) Meinong writes: “If one judges that a perpetual motion machine does not exist, then it is clear that the object whose existence he is denying must have

certain properties and indeed certain characteristic properties. Otherwise the judgement that the object does not exist would have neither sense nor justification.”¹⁴ Applying a similar observation to our previous example, we may say, of the judgement that unicorns do not exist, that it presupposes that unicorns are both single-horned and equine. “Unicorns are both single-horned and equine” may also be expressed as “Every existing thing is such that if it were a unicorn then it would be both equine and single-horned.” But the presence of “a unicorn” in the latter sentence, as we have noted, enables Meinong to say that the sentence does tell us something about unicorns – namely, that if any existing thing were identical with any one of them, then that thing would be both equine and single-horned.¹⁵

These truths about nonexistent objects which are presupposed, whenever we say of anything that it does not exist, are *a priori*, according to Meinong. Much of what we know about objects, he says, is thus “*daseinsfrei*.”¹⁶

There are some *a priori* statements, according to Meinong, in which nonexistent objects are singled out by means of definite descriptions. “Not only is the much heralded gold mountain made of gold, but the round square is as surely round as it is square.”¹⁷ What are we to say of “The golden mountain is golden”? According to Russell’s theory of descriptions, some sentences of the form “The thing which is F is G” may be paraphrased into sentences of the following form: “There exists an x such that x is F and x is G, and for every (existing) y, if y is F then y is identical with x.” Hence if we paraphrase “The golden mountain is golden” in this way, we will have: “There exists an x such that x is both golden and a mountain, and x is golden, and, for every (existing) y, if y is both golden and a mountain then y is identical with x.” The resulting sentence would seem to refer only to objects that do exist. But is it an adequate paraphrase?

“The golden mountain is golden,” according to Meinong, is *true*. But Russell’s paraphrase implies “There exists an x such that x is both golden and a mountain” and is therefore *false*. How can a false statement be an adequate paraphrase of a true one?

Russell, of course, would say that Meinong is mistaken in insisting that “The golden mountain is golden” is true. But how are we to decide who is right, without begging the basic question that is involved?

(3) Semantical statements may seem to provide another type of reference to objects that do not exist or to objects such that there are no such objects. For example, “The word ‘*Einhorn*’ in German designates unicorns”; or “The word ‘*Einhorn*’ in German purports to designate unicorns”; or “The word ‘*Einhorn*’ is used in German ostensibly to designate unicorns”. And analogously for the word “unicorn” and its use in English. But Meinong would say – quite correctly, it seems to me – that semantical statements are really a subclass of intentional statements, statements about psychological attitudes and their objects, and hence that they belong to our fifth group below. To say that “*Einhorn*” is used to designate unicorns, according to Meinong, is to say that “*Einhorn*” is used to express those thoughts and other intentional attitudes that take unicorns as their object.¹⁸

(4) Statements about objects of fiction and mythology are sometimes taken as paradigm cases of statements about nonexistent objects. Examples are “Sam Weller was Mr. Pickwick’s servant” and “Sam Weller was a fictitious character who didn’t really exist.” But if I am not mistaken, these belong with our intentional statements, below. Thus the first example, as it would ordinarily be intended, pertains to one of the objects of a certain story (if we take “story” in the widest sense of the word). But to say of a thing that it is an object of a certain story is to say either that someone has told a story about that thing or that someone has thought of a story about that thing. And to say that someone has told a story, or that someone has thought of a story, is to make an intentional statement. When we say “Sam Weller was a fictitious character who didn’t really exist”, we are not only making an intentional statement, about an object of someone’s story, but we are also making a statement that belongs to our first group above – a statement saying that the object does not exist. Statements about the object of mythology are analogous, except that it may be necessary to add, again intentionally, that the story in question is one that someone believes.

(5) Meinong’s best case, then, would seem to lie with those true *intentional* statements that seem to pertain to objects that do not exist. I shall distinguish four types of such statements.

The first type is exemplified by

(a) John fears a ghost.

Here we seem to have a straightforward affirmation of a relation between John and a nonexistent object. It is of the essence of an intentional attitude, according to Meinong, that it may thus “have” an object “even though the object does not exist.”¹⁹ Can we paraphrase our statement (a) in such a way that the result can be seen to involve no such apparent reference to a nonexistent object? So far as I have been able to see, we cannot. (It is true, of course, that philosophers often invent new terms and then profess to be able to express what is intended by such statements as “John fears a ghost” in their own technical vocabularies. But when they try to convey to us what their technical terms are supposed to mean, then they, too, refer to nonexistent objects such as unicorns).

It is sometimes said that Meinong did not properly understand the use of words in intentional contexts – or, in the terms of our example, that he did not properly understand the use of the expression “a ghost” in such a sentence as “John fears a ghost.” He mistakenly supposed, it is suggested, that the word “ghost” has a *referential* use in “John fears a ghost.” But just what was the mistake that Meinong made? He did not make the mistake of supposing that the word “ghost” in “John fears a ghost” is used to refer to something that exists or to something that is real. Is it that the word has a certain nonreferential use in such sentences and that Meinong was not aware of this use? But what *is* that nonreferential use – other than that of being used to tell us that John fears a ghost? I know of four positive suggestions, but they all seem to leave Meinong untouched. Thus it has been said (i) that the word “ghost”, in “John fears a ghost”, is used, not to describe the object of John’s fears, but only to contribute to the description of John himself. This was essentially Brentano’s suggestion.²⁰ But just *how* does “ghost” here contribute to the description of John? It isn’t

being used to tell us that *John* is a ghost, or that John's *thought* is a ghost, for these things are false, but "John fears a ghost," we may suppose, is true. Surely the only way in which the word "ghost" here contributes to the description of John is by telling us *what* the object is that he fears. It has also been suggested (ii) that the word "ghost", in "John fears a ghost," functions only as part of the longer expression "fears a ghost" and that its use in such contexts has no connection at all with the use it has in such sentences as "There is a ghost." (Compare the use of "unicorn" in "The Emperor decorated his tunic ornately.") That this suggestion is false, however, may be seen by noting that "John fears a ghost" and "John's fears are directed only upon things that really exist" together imply "There is a ghost." It has also been suggested (iii) that the word "ghost," in "John fears a ghost," is used to refer to what in other uses would constitute the sense or connotation of "ghost."²¹ In this case, "John fears a ghost" would be construed as telling us that there is a certain relation holding between John and a certain set of attributes or properties. But what attributes or properties, and what relation? John himself may remind us at this point that what he fears is a certain *concretum* and not a set of attributes or properties. It has even been suggested (iv) that the word "ghost," in "John fears a ghost," is being used, in "the material mode," to refer to itself.²² But John, of course, may not fear the *word* "ghost." What, then, would "John fears a ghost" be used to tell us about John and the word "ghost"?

The second type of intentional statement is exemplified by

(b) The mountain I am thinking of is golden.

To supply a context for such a statement, we imagine a game in which the participants are told to contemplate a mountain, such as might be found in Atlantis, and are then asked to describe the mountain they have contemplated. Meinong's "The golden mountain is golden", of our second group above, may well leave us speechless, but surely "The mountain I am thinking of is golden" may express a proposition that is true.

Russell's theory of descriptions does not provide us with a way of paraphrasing the statement, for, once again, Russell's procedure would provide us with a statement that is *false* ("There exists an *x* such that *x* is a mountain I am thinking of and *x* is golden, and, for every *y*, if *y* is a mountain I am thinking of, then *y* is identical with *x*").²³

The participants in the game we have imagined may well compare mountains: "The mountain you are thinking of differs in interesting respects from the mountain I am thinking of." May we also say that the nonexistent object of one man's intentional attitude is *identical with* the nonexistent object of another man's intentional attitude? I think that we may often assume that this is the case. Such an identity statement provides us with our third example of a Meinongian intentional statement. Thus we may be agnostic and yet affirm.

(c) All Mohammedans worship the same God.

But this example, I think, is more problematic than the others. If the statement in question were true, we could say, of any two Mohammedans, that the God that is worshipped by the one is identical with the God that is worshipped by the other. But can we really say this if, as we are also inclined to say, "the God

that is worshipped by Mohammedans does not exist.” Shouldn’t we say, at most, that for any two Mohammedans, x and y, the God that x worships is *very much like* the God that y worships.²⁴ (And instead of saying “The God that is worshipped by Mohammedans does not exist,” we might express ourselves more accurately by saying “Every Mohammedan is such that the God that he worships does not exist.”) But for Meinong’s purpose, of course, it is enough to say that one nonexistent object is “very much like” another.

If we can never be sure that the nonexistent object upon with one man’s intentional attitude is directed is identical with the nonexistent object upon which another man’s intentional attitude is directed, we can be sure, on occasion, that the nonexistent object upon which one of a certain man’s intentional attitudes is directed is identical with a nonexistent object upon which another one of that same man’s intentional attitudes is directed. Thus we may say of an obsessed believer:

(d) The thing he fears the most is the same as the thing he loves the most. Any adequate theory of the emotions would seem to imply that a man may have at any particular time a great variety of attitudes and feelings all directed upon a single object – even though that object does not exist²⁵.

The latter example reminds us of what Meinong pointed out in a somewhat different connection – “we can also count what does not exist.”²⁶ For a man may be able to say truly “I fear exactly three people” where all three people are objects that do not exist.

Such intentional statements, then, are what provide the best possible case for Meinong’s doctrine of *Außersein*. I think it must be conceded to Meinong that there is no way of paraphrasing any of them which is such that we know both (i) that it is adequate to the sentence it is intended to paraphrase and (ii) that it contains no terms ostensibly referring to objects that do not exist. Doubtless many philosophers are prejudiced against Meinong’s doctrine because of the fact that Russell’s theory of descriptions, as well as the theory of quantification in the way in which it is interpreted in *Principia Mathematica*, is not adequate to the statements with which Meinong is concerned. But this fact, Meinong could say, does not mean that the statements in question are suspect. It means only that such logic, as it is generally interpreted, is not adequate to intentional phenomena.

Notes

I wish to express my indebtedness to the late Dr. Rudolf Kindinger. Certain portions of this paper are adapted from my “Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein”, in *Dichtung und Deutung: Gedächtnisschrift für Hans M. Wolff*, edited by Karl S. Guthke, Bern-Munich: Francke Verlag 1961.

- 1 A. Meinong, “Über Gegenstandstheorie,” *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth 1929, *Meinong Gesamtausgabe*, Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt 1971, Vol. II, p. 490. This work first appeared in 1904, in the

- collection *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, edited by Meinong. It is translated as “The theory of Objects,” in *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, Glencoe, III., The Free Press 1960, edited by Roderick M. Chisholm; the quotation above appears on page 83.
- 2 *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, pp. 486, 494; English translation in *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, pp. 79, 86.
 - 3 “Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie des Messens”, in *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, pp. 51–120; the quotation may be found on page 127.
 - 4 *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, p. 485; English translation, p. 78.
 - 5 See *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, pp. 486–8; English translation, pp. 79–80. The most complete statement of Meinong’s theory of states of affairs, or *Objektive*, may be found in Chapter III (“Das Objektiv”) of *Über Annahmen*, Second Edition, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth 1910.
 - 6 “Jeder Gegenstand ist *etwas*, aber nicht jedes Etwas *ist*.” Mally, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
 - 7 Compare the quotation at the head of this article; the quotation is from Meinong’s posthumous *Zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Werttheorie*, Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky 1923, edited by Ernst Mally, p. 158; Meinong Gesamtausgabe, Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt 1968, Vol. III, p. 638.
 - 8 Once we grasp the nature of an impossible object, according to Meinong, we become aware of “the necessity of its nonbeing.” Meinong does not use the expression “necessary object”, but he says, with respect to abstract objects, that once we grasp *their* nature, we become aware of “the necessity of their being”. See *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, Leipzig: R. Voithländer Verlag, 1970, p. 76.
 - 9 Paraphrased from Ernst Mally, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–9. I have translated “*Viereck*” as “square”, have added italics, and have written “possible square” in two places where Mally wrote only “*Viereck*”.
 - 10 On incomplete objects, see Meinong’s *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth 1915, pp. 179–180, also *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, pp. 118–123.
 - 11 Meinong discusses defective objects, in *Über emotionale Präsentation*, Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1917, pp. 10–26; *Meinong Gesamtausgabe*, Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt 1968, Vol. III, pp. 294–310.
 - 12 See *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, Section One (“Heimatlose Gegenstände”), p. 8 ff. In the *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 1919. Russell said that, according to Meinong, such objects as the golden mountain and the round square “must have some kind of logical being” (p. 169). But in “On Denoting” and in his earlier writings on Meinong, he does not make this mistake.
 - 13 *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, p. 38. Meinong’s remarks were directed toward the distinction between “Ghosts do not exist (*Gespenster existieren nicht*)” and “No real thing is ghostly (*Kein Wirkliches ist Gespenst*)”. Compare Richard L. Cartwright, “Negative Existentials,” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LVII (1960), pp. 629–639.
 - 14 *Über Annahmen*, p. 79.
 - 15 By confusing use and mention, one may try to render “Unicorns are both single-horned and equine” into a statement which mentions only words. (Such a statement as “The word ‘unicorns’ refers to things that are both single-horned and equine” belongs to our third group, below).

- 16 A considerable part of Meinong's *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften* is devoted to "Daseinsfreiheit" and "Apriorität."
- 17 English translation of "The theory of Objects," page 82; *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, p. 490. Russell said that if "The round square is round" is true, then "The existent round square is existent" is also true; and the latter statement, he pointed out, implies that there is a round square; see his review of *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie, Mind*, Vol. XIV (1905), pp. 530–538, esp. p. 533. Meinong replied that "existent" is not a predicate, not a "Soseinsbestimmung", and hence he should have said that "The existent round square is existent" is false. Unfortunately, however, he attempted to draw a distinction between "is existent" and "exists" and then said that although the existent round square is existent it does not exist. See *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, pp. 16–19. Reviewing the latter work, Russell replied: "I must confess that I see no difference between existing and being existent; and beyond this I have no more to say"; *Mind*, Vol. XVI (1907), pp. 436–439, esp. p. 439. Meinong also had difficulties with "The possible round square is possible"; see *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, pp. 277–289. What he should have said, I think, is that "possible" is not a predicate, not a "Soseinsbestimmung," and hence that "The possible round square is possible" is false.
- 18 See *Über Annahmen*, Second Edition, p. 26.
- 19 See *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, p. 383.
- 20 See Franz Brentano, *The True and the Evident*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1966, English edition edited by Roderick M. Chisholm, pp. 68–69.
- 21 This interpretation may be suggested by Frege's "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, Vol. C (1892), pp. 25–50; translated as "On Sense and Nomination," in *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1949, edited by Herbert Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars, pp. 85–102.
- 22 Carnap once suggested that "Charles thinks (asserts, believes, wonders about) A", where "A" is thought of as being the abbreviation of some sentence, may be translated as "Charles thinks 'A'"; *The Logical Syntax of Language*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company 1937, p. 248.
- 23 In "On Denoting" Russell said that "the chief objection" to Meinong's nonexistent objects "is that such objects, admittedly, are apt to infringe the law of contradiction"; see Bertrand Russell, *Logic and Knowledge*, London: George Allen and Unwin 1956, p. 45. Thus the round square that I am thinking of may be an object that is both round and nonround. Meinong's reply was that the law of contradiction (in the form, "For any attribute F, there is nothing that exemplifies F and also does not exemplify F") applies only to what is real or possible; one could hardly expect it to apply to impossible objects such as the round square. See *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*, p. 16. One may also argue that certain possible objects would seem to infringe upon other logical laws. Suppose Jones, who mistakenly believes that F.D.R. was assassinated, tells us that the man he is now thinking about is the assassin of F.D.R.; from Jones' true statement it follows that the man he is thinking about murdered F.D.R.; but for any x and y, if x murdered y, then y was murdered by x; hence F.D.R. *was* murdered – and by a nonexistent object! See James Mish'alani, "Thought and Object," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXI (1962), pp. 185–201. Meinong's reply could be: The statement "For any x and y, if x murdered y, then y was murdered by x" is true only if our variables range over objects that exist; and, more generally, from the fact that it is a

part of the *Sosein* of a nonexistent object x that x stands in a certain relation R to an existent object y , it does not follow that it is a part of the *Sosein* of y either that y is related by the converse of R to x or that x related by R to y .

- 24 P. T. Geach cites this example: “Hob thinks a witch has blighted Bob’s mare, and Nob wonders whether she (the same witch) killed Cob’s sow”; in “Intentional Identity”, *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXIV (1967), pp. 627–632. There is a certain ambiguity in the example, for it may be taken to imply either that the object of Hob’s thought, is identical with the object of Nob’s wondering or only that Nob *thinks* that it is. Taking it in its first sense, how could we ever find out that it is true? Hob may assure us that he thinks there is one and only one witch who blighted Bob’s mare and that he also thinks that that witch is F, G, H, and . . . (where ‘F’, ‘G’, and ‘H’ may be thought of as abbreviating certain predicates); and Nob may assure us that he, too, thinks there is one and only one witch who blighted Bob’s mare, that that witch is F, G, H, and . . . , and also, perhaps, that he, Nob, thinks that that witch is the same as the one that Hob believes to have blighted Bob’s mare. But our statement of these facts does not entail that the object of Hob’s thought is identical with the object of Nob’s wondering. And, given that there are no witches, it is difficult to think of anything we could learn from Hob and Nob that would entail it.
- 25 Thus Meinong’s theory of value is based upon this assumption; see *Zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Werttheorie*, Part II (“*Die Werterlebnisse*”).
- 26 “The Theory of Objects,” English translation, p. 79; *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, p. 487.