

**As-if existence** Frege's view on negative singular existentials: when we seem to be ascribing a first-order property of nonexistence to a particular putative object, say Zeus, really we are ascribing to the concept of Zeus the second-order property of having no instances. Since the concept exists regardless, there is no danger of our claim going meaningless for lack of a subject matter.

There is evidence that "exists" does indeed function as a first order predicate, true of absolutely everything. (1) Correct analysis of "this chair might not have existed" is presumably "possibly  $\neg$ exist(this chair)" rather than "possibly  $\neg$ instantiated(concept this-chair)." (2) Might be thought that the chair is identified as whatever satisfies the concept chair-we-are-looking-at. But then then "this chair might not have existed" is made true by the fact that we might not have been looking at any chairs! (3) If "this chair" was contributing a concept rather than the chair itself, "this chair might not have existed because I might not have made it" should be false (I didn't make the concept)

Evans's alternative view. Evans thinks that discussions of Zeus are conducted in what he calls a spirit of make-believe. One seeks to assert, or make as if to assert, not sentences S that are really true, but sentences that are make-believedly true. He uses \*S\* to abbreviate "it is make believedly true that S." A game of make-believe is defined by a series of rules issuing in verdicts of the form \*S\*.

Basic rules stipulate outright a bunch of make-believe truths. For instance, if the game is mud pies, basic rules might include

(x)(Glob of mud(x) & Fashioned into pie shape (x)  $\rightarrow$  \*Pie(x)\*)  
 (x)(Small black pebble(x)  $\rightarrow$  \*raisin(x)\*)  
 \*This metal object is a hot oven.\*

Second there is an incorporation principle which counts genuine truths as also make-believedly true whenever there is nothing in the game to rule them out.

Suppose that B is true, and there are no make-believe truths such that if they had been (really) true, B would have been false, then B is make-believedly true, that is, \*B\*.

Third there is a recursive principle which says that if you've got some make-believe truths, then their counterfactual consequences are make-believedly true.

Suppose there are make-believe truths such that had they been really true, B would have been true as well; and suppose the same cannot be said for  $\neg$ B. Then B is make-believedly true, that is, \*B\*.

"Zeus throws thunderbolts" sounds right because it is make-believedly true in the Greek gods game and it is that game we are playing when we talk in ordinary contexts about Zeus. It does not count as true that Zeus is a figment of the Greeks' imagination, for the rules of the game do not generate any such conclusion.

But hold on: in saying that Zeus throws thunderbolts, or Holmes smokes a pipe, I am not just playing at saying something that is make believedly true, I am also seriously saying

something that is genuinely true. What S *seriously* says – its serious content – can be identified with certain facts about the game-independent world, the ones that make it the case that S is true in the game. Metaphor as world-oriented make-believe.

Still not done: we were looking for an explanation of how it could be seriously true to say that Zeus does not really exist. “Really” is used to boot us out of the game and ask whether what we are making as if to say is not just make-believable true but true also outside the game:

“Really, S” is true iff utterances of S *in* the game express a proposition that is true *outside* the game, otherwise false.

Example, we’re at a play. Someone points at the stage and asks: Is he really the Prince of Denmark? The answer is no because what we pretend to assert when we say “he is the prince of Denmark” is only make-believable true, not true simpliciter. Compare: “Does he really stutter?” Yes, if what we pretend to assert, namely that that guy stutters, is true all pretense aside.

Both examples have the property that “utterances of S in the game express a proposition,” that is, there is a proposition that utterances of S in the game express. “Zeus really exists” is false not because it expresses a proposition, which is false outside the game, but because it fails to express a proposition at all. If “Zeus really exists” is false, then its negation “no he doesn’t really exist” is true.

Evans takes “exists” to stand for the same property (the universal property) within the game and without. Walton thinks “exists” doesn’t stand for anything outside the game: there is no such property. A word some people use is “intrinsic pretense.” Extrinsic pretense is when we make as if to assert that S because we know what S means outside the game and we want to pretend to assert *that*. Intrinsic pretense is when S means *nothing* outside the game; there is the proposition we pretend it expresses (so to speak) and that’s all. (Starr is a one-man train wreck, she has a lot of smarts, it scared the bejabbers out of me.) Existence-talk for Walton is intrinsic pretense. One pretends that Meinong was right; all terms *n* refer, but only some of the referents “exist.” “Exists” is governed by the rule:

*n* (really, outside the game) refers → \**n* exists\*

There’s a variant of Walton’s view where “exists” expresses the property had by everything, and we pretend in the game that that very property is had just by some things, the ones whose names really refer. (See p88ff.) But he dislikes this variant?

Normally if an expression has literal meaning that meaning is somehow exploited in the game – there’s some kind of semantic connection however weak or screwy. In the case of “exists” that would mean that it is somehow *natural* and *motivated* to pretend of the universal property that it is a discriminating property, attaching to things whose names really refer outside the game. Walton isn’t sure it is natural and motivated. One could say unmotivation is the rule with a dead metaphor (“keep your eyes peeled”). But the motivation even for dead metaphors is often recoverable. It shows up in bad mixes: “the mouth of the Charles has two arms, one reaching north and one south.” Walton: “I wonder if the metaphor was ever alive. Maybe it was dead on arrival.”