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*Nonexistence\**

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## I

Among the most perennial of philosophical problems are those arising from sentences involving nonreferring names. Chief among these problems is that of true singular negative existentials. Consider, for example,

(0) Sherlock Holmes does not exist,

interpreted not as an assertion within the fiction (as might be made mendaciously by Professor Moriarty in one of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories), but as an assertion about reality outside the fiction. So interpreted, the sentence is evidently true. But how can any sentence with a nonreferring term in subject position be true? It seems as if (0) designates someone (by its subject term) in order to say (by its predicate) that he does not exist. But it entails that there is no such thing to be designated. G. E. Moore put the problem as follows:

[I]t seems as if purely imaginary things, even though they be absolutely contradictory like a round square, must still have some kind of *being*—must still be in a sense—simply because we can think and talk about them. ... And now in saying that there is no such thing as a round square, I seem to imply that there *is* such a thing. It seems as if there must be such a thing, merely in order that it may have the property of not-being. It seems, therefore, that to say of anything whatever that we can mention that it absolutely is *not*, were to contradict ourselves: as if everything we can mention must be, must have some kind of being (*Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953, at p. 289).

In “On Denoting,” Russell trumpeted his Theory of Descriptions not only for its explanation (which I believe Russell saw as the theory’s principal virtue) of how we gain cognitive access to the world beyond our immediate acquaintance,

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but also for its ability to handle a variety of puzzles that arise on his theory that the semantic content of a singular term is solely its referent (denotation, designatum).<sup>1</sup> The puzzles are primarily: Frege's Puzzle about ' $\alpha = \beta$ '; the more general problem of substitution failure in certain contexts, especially those ascribing propositional attitude; the question of content and truth value for sentences involving nonreferring terms; and as a special case, true negative existentials. In previous writings I have discussed the first two problems from the perspective of *Millianism*, which I endorse, according to which the semantic contents of certain simple singular terms, including at least ordinary proper names and demonstratives, are simply their referents, so that a sentence containing a nonvacuous proper name expresses a *singular proposition*, in which the name's bearer occurs directly as a constituent.<sup>2</sup> It has been objected that the second two problems are sufficient by themselves to refute Millianism even if the first two problems are not. Here I shall discuss the problems of nonreferring names from a Millian perspective, and also from the less committal perspective of the *theory of direct reference*, according to which the semantic content of a name or demonstrative is not given by any definite description. I have also discussed the concept of existence in previous work.<sup>3</sup> I shall draw on these previous discussions.

Russell has us consider the English sentence

- (1) The present king of France is bald,

which, given that France is no longer a monarchy, Russell deems "plainly false" (p. 165). As he points out, if (1) is indeed false, then it would seem that its negation,

- (2) The present king of France is not bald,

ought to be true. But (2) is as wrong as (1), and for the very same reason. By contrast, the singular existential

- (3) The present king of France exists

is indeed false, and its negation,

- (4) The present king of France does not exist

is true. In Russell's Theory of Descriptions, (1) is analyzed as:

- (1')  $(\exists x)[(y)(Present-king-of-France(y) \equiv x = y) \wedge Bald(x)]$ ,

in English as "Something is both uniquely a present king of France and bald" (where to say that something is *uniquely* such-and-such is to say that it, and nothing else, is such-and-such). As with (1), Russell says that (1') is "certainly false" (p. 170). In the English sentence (2), the existential quantifier of (1') to-

gether with its accompanying material joust with negation for dominant position. Sentence (2) may mean either of two things:

$$(2') (\exists x)[(y)(\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y) \equiv x = y) \wedge \sim \textit{Bald}(x)]$$

$$(2'') \sim(\exists x)[(y)(\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y) \equiv x = y) \wedge \textit{Bald}(x)].$$

The former is the wide-scope (or *primary occurrence*) reading of (2), on which it expresses that some unique present king of France is not bald. This is false for the same reason as (1'). The latter is the narrow-scope (*secondary occurrence*) reading of (2), on which it expresses that no unique present king of France is bald. This genuinely contradicts (1') and is therefore true. In *Principia Mathematica*, instead of analyzing (3) by replacing '*Bald(x)*' in (1') with ' $(\exists y)(x = y)$ ', Russell and Whitehead analyze it more simply as

$$(3') (\exists x)(y)(\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y) \equiv x = y),$$

i.e. "Something is uniquely a present king of France." This is equivalent to its analysis in the style of (1'), since ' $(\exists y)(x = y)$ ' is a theorem of *Principia Mathematica*. Although Russell did not distinguish two readings for (4), he might as well have. The narrow-scope reading is equivalent to the reading given,

$$(4') \sim(\exists x)(y)(\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y) \equiv x = y),$$

while the wide-scope reading is straightforwardly inconsistent, and hence, presumably, cannot be what would normally be intended by (4). Russell extended his solution to sentences involving nonreferring proper names through his thesis that ordinary names abbreviate definite descriptions. The name 'Sherlock Holmes', for example, might abbreviate something like: *the brilliant but eccentric late 19th century British detective who, inter alia, performed such-and-such exploits*. Abbreviating this description instead as 'the Holmesesque detective', (0) is then subject to an analysis parallel to that for (4'), as:

$$(0') \sim(\exists x)(y)(\textit{Holmesesque-detective}(y) \equiv x = y).$$

Neither (0') nor (4') designates anyone in order to say of him that he does not exist.

Frege had defended a very different theory in "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*" (1892) concerning sentences like (1) and (2).<sup>4</sup> On that theory—later championed in a somewhat different form by Strawson<sup>5</sup>—although the truth of (1) requires that there be a unique present king of France, (1) is not rendered false by the nonexistence of such a monarch. Instead, (1) *presupposes* that there is a unique present king France, in the sense that (1) and (2) each separately entail (3'). Since this entailed proposition is false, neither (1) nor (2) is true. Though meaningful, (1) is neither true nor false.<sup>6</sup> Frege regarded this as a consequence of the Principle of Compositionality for Reference, according to which the referent of a com-

pound expression—and as a special case, the truth value of a sentence—is determined entirely by the referents of the component expressions and their mode of composition. On Frege’s view, if a component lacks a referent, so does the whole.

In “Mr. Strawson on Referring,” published some 54 years after “On Denoting,” Russell responds to the objection that (1) is neither true nor false.<sup>7</sup> Where he had earlier claimed that (1) is “plainly” false, he now says that the issue of whether (1) is false “is a mere question of verbal convenience” (p. 243). Though this seems to indicate a change of heart, I believe it may not actually do so. He goes on to say, “I find it more convenient to define the word ‘false’ so that every significant sentence is either true or false. This is a purely verbal question; and although I have no wish to claim the support of common usage, I do not think that he [Strawson] can claim it either.” Frege can indeed accommodate Russell’s verdict that (1) is “plainly false,” simply by understanding ‘false’ as coextensive with ‘untrue’. One way for Frege to do this is to invoke a distinction between two types of negation, so-called *choice* and *exclusion* negation.<sup>8</sup> The difference between the two is given by their three-valued truth tables (where ‘U’ stands for “undefined,” i.e., without truth value):

$P$	$\sim_C P$	$\sim_E P$
T	F	F
F	T	T
U	U	T

Frege’s Principle of Compositionality for Reference requires that exclusion negation be seen as an *ungerade* (oblique) operator. Where ‘ $\sim_C$ ’ is concerned with the customary referent of its operand sentence (i.e., its truth value), ‘ $\sim_E$ ’ is concerned instead with the indirect referent of its operand, which is its customary sense. Exclusion negation is definable using choice negation. Let  $p$  be the proposition expressed by sentence  $\varphi$ . Then ‘ $\sim_E \varphi$ ’ means that  $p$  is not<sub>C</sub> true—or in Fregean terminology, that the thought  $p$  does not<sub>C</sub> determine the True. Hence, ‘The present king of France is not<sub>E</sub> bald’ may be regarded as shorthand for ‘It is not<sub>C</sub> true that the present king of France is bald’. One might say this if one wishes to assert, cautiously, that either there presently is no unique king of France, or else there is such and he is not bald—i.e. that (2’).

One may understand the term ‘false’ so that to call a sentence ‘false’ is to say that its negation is true, where the relevant notion of the negation of a sentence is syntactic (rather than defined in terms of truth tables). The two notions of negation, choice and exclusion, thereby yield two notions of falsehood. Let us say that a sentence is *F-false*<sub>1</sub> (false in the Fregean primary sense) if its choice negation is true, and that it is *F-false*<sub>2</sub> (false in the Fregean secondary sense) if its exclusion negation is true. The latter term is coextensive with ‘untrue’. By Frege’s lights, (1) is neither true nor *F-false*<sub>1</sub>, and therefore, plainly *F-false*<sub>2</sub>.

So far so good. But Russell’s response to Strawson suggests that not only could Frege and Strawson have chosen an alternative sense for ‘false’, and deem (1) “false” in that sense, but Russell himself could have chosen a sense for ‘false’

on which (1') is neither true nor "false." Only in that case can it rightfully be said that the question of whether (1) is false is entirely terminological.<sup>9</sup> Is there a legitimate sense of 'false' on which (1) is neither true nor false given its analysis on the Theory of Descriptions?

Whatever 'false' means, it is something contrary to truth. Russell, as well as Frege, could understand falsehood as truth of the (syntactic) negation. Except that on Russell's theory, the negation of (1) is ambiguous. Let us restrict our focus for the time being to sentences none of whose definite descriptions occur within the scope of a nonextensional operator (including sentences with no definite descriptions). Let us call the reading of the negation of such a sentence on which each description is given narrowest possible scope the *outermost negation* of the original sentence, and let us call the reading of the negation on which each description is given widest possible scope the *innermost negation*. (Cf. note 8.) Let us say of a sentence of the sort under consideration that it is *R-false<sub>1</sub>* if its outermost negation is true, and that it is *R-false<sub>2</sub>* if its innermost negation is true. (A multitude of further Russellian notions of falsehood are definable in similar ways.) On the Theory of Descriptions, a sentence none of whose definite descriptions occur in a nonextensional context and all of whose definite descriptions are proper (i.e., such that there is exactly one thing answering to it) is *R-false<sub>1</sub>* if and only if it is *R-false<sub>2</sub>*. Not so for sentences containing improper descriptions. In particular, (1) is *R-false<sub>1</sub>* by Russell's lights—and indeed, plainly so in the present absence of a king of France. But (1) is neither true nor *R-false<sub>2</sub>*.

Russell's reply to Strawson has a good deal of merit. It is by no means obvious, however, that the issue of whether (1) is false is entirely verbal. Whereas both Russell and Frege may deem (1) "false" in one sense and not "false" in another, it appears that the particular senses Russell employs are not the same as Frege's. The distinction between innermost and outermost negation is not the same as the distinction between choice and exclusion negation. The Fregean treats (2) as involving a lexical ambiguity; Russell sees (2) instead as involving a scope ambiguity. The terms '*R-false<sub>1</sub>*' and '*R-false<sub>2</sub>*' presuppose the Theory of Descriptions, while '*F-false<sub>1</sub>*' and '*F-false<sub>2</sub>*' presuppose the opposing view (assumed by John Stuart Mill as well as Frege) that definite descriptions are singular terms. Insofar as the term 'false', in its standard sense, is identical in extension, and at least close in meaning, to one of these theoretically loaded terms (or to some appropriate variation), it cannot be close in meaning to any of the remaining three. To decide whether (1) is false in the standard sense, it would seem that one must first make a determination between Russell's theory and the Frege/Strawson view—or (perhaps most likely) in favor of some alternative account.

The nature of the divergence between Russell and Frege emerges more fully at a deeper level of analysis on which the four notions of falsehood are theoretically neutralized, to the extent that this is possible. The notions of *R-falsehood<sub>1</sub>* and *R-falsehood<sub>2</sub>* can be made more or less neutral by taking the former to be truth of the *de dicto* reading of the negation, the latter to be truth of the *de re* reading—where (2) read *de dicto* expresses that it is not true that the present king of France is bald, and read *de re* that the present king of France is such that not bald is *he*.

One need not embrace the Theory of Descriptions to recognize the *de-re/de-dicto* distinction (problematic though this general distinction is on Fregean theory).  $R$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> thus corresponds, closely enough, to  $F$ -falsehood<sub>2</sub>—essentially the notion of untruth. All parties agree that (1) is plainly “false” in this sense. The relationship between  $R$ -falsehood<sub>2</sub> and  $F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> is not nearly this close. The Fregean agrees that (1) is not  $R$ -false<sub>2</sub>, since it is plainly not true that the present king of France is nonbald. But this is different from the Fregean denial that (1) is  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>.  $F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> is falsehood in the sense of the ‘F’ invoked in three-valued truth tables. This notion, though Fregean, is not anti-Russellian. There could be untrue sentences in which all singular terms refer but which lack  $F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> for reasons unrelated to singular-term reference—for example, because of a partially defined predicate, or a category mistake, or a failed presupposition that is not existential in nature. It is perfectly consistent to acknowledge that such sentences are neither true nor  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub> (i.e., that they are U) while embracing the Theory of Descriptions. A decision would have to be made concerning whether the negation symbol ‘~’ is a sign for choice or exclusion negation, but whichever decision was made (it is customary to use it for choice negation), a second negation sign could be introduced for the other notion. Even if the Russellian were to embrace the Principle of Bivalence—according to which every well-formed declarative sentence is either true or false (Russell says that he finds it convenient to use the term ‘false’ in such a way as to honor this principle)—this need not represent a rejection of  $F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub>. It may constitute a thesis that every well-formed sentence is either true or  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>—even category-mistake sentences and the rest, or that such “sentences” are not well-formed, etc.

$F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> should be understood not merely as truth of the choice negation, but as truth of the choice negation *construed as the authentic contradictory of the original sentence*—in effect, as truth of the outermost choice negation. Readings or analyses of the choice negation that do not contradict the original sentence, or do not contradict an analysis of it, are irrelevant. If a category-mistake sentence is neither true nor  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>, then the outermost choice negation of it, and of any analyses of it, are likewise neither true nor  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>. The question is whether the untrue (1) is  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>. On Russell’s theory, (1) is  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub> if and only if (2’’) is true. The untruth of (2’) is not pertinent. To rebut the objection that (1) is neither true nor  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub> it is not sufficient for Russell to agree that (1) is neither true nor  $R$ -false<sub>2</sub>. He must argue further that (1) is indeed  $F$ -false<sub>1</sub>, and that in denying this Frege and Strawson have probably confused  $F$ -falsehood<sub>1</sub> with  $R$ -falsehood<sub>2</sub>.<sup>10</sup>

## II

Whereas Frege’s Principle of Compositionality for Reference requires that sentences like (1) and (2) lack truth value, his theory of sense and reference explains how such sentences nevertheless semantically express propositions. On the other hand, the same Principle of Compositionality creates a problem for Frege in connection with sentences like (3) and (4). It is natural to take these to be analyzable as:

- (3'')  $(\exists x)[(\lambda y)Present\text{-king-of-France}(y) = x]$   
 (4'')  $\sim(\exists x)[(\lambda y)Present\text{-king-of-France}(y) = x]$ ,

respectively. The intended truth conditions for (3'') and (4'') are given by (3') and (4'). But since the definite description lacks a referent, (3'') and (4'') must instead for Frege be neither true nor false—assuming the standard interpretation for existential quantification, identity, and negation (as Frege gave them in connection with his own notation) on which each is fully extensional.

By way of a solution to this difficulty, Frege suggested that (3) and (4) are properly interpreted not by (3'') and (4''), but as covertly quotational. He wrote:

We must here keep well apart two wholly different cases that are easily confused, because we speak of existence in both cases. In one case the question is whether a proper name designates, names, something; in the other whether a concept takes objects under itself. If we use the words 'there is a ----' we have the latter case. Now a proper name that designates nothing has no logical justification, since in logic we are concerned with truth in the strictest sense of the word; it may on the other hand still be used in fiction and fable. ("A Critical Elucidation of some Points in E. Schroeder's *Algebra der Logik*," published 1895, translated by Peter Geach in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970, at p. 104.)

Elsewhere Frege made similar remarks about singular existentials and their negations: "People certainly say that Odysseus is not an historical person, and mean by this contradictory expression that the name 'Odysseus' designates nothing, has no referent (*Bedeutung*)" (from the section on "Sense and Reference" of Frege's 1906 diary notes, "Introduction to Logic," in H. Hermes, F. Kambartel, and F. Kaulbach, eds, *Posthumous Writings*, translated by P. Long and R. White,<sup>11</sup> University of Chicago Press, 1979, at p. 191). Earlier in his "Dialogue with Pünjer on Existence" (pre-1884, also in Hermes, et. al.), Frege observed: "If 'Sachse exists' is supposed to mean 'The word "Sachse" is not an empty sound, but designates something', then it is true that the condition 'Sachse exists' must be satisfied [in order for 'There are men' to be inferred from 'Sachse is a man']. But this is not a new premise, but the presupposition of all our words—a presupposition that goes without saying" (p. 60).<sup>12</sup>

The suggestion would appear to be that (3) and (4), at least on one reading (on which the latter is true), are correctly formalized as:

- (5)  $(\exists x)[\text{'the present king of France' refers}_{\text{English}} \text{ to } x]$   
 (6)  $\sim(\exists x)[\text{'the present king of France' refers}_{\text{English}} \text{ to } x]$ .

Notice that this semantic-ascent theory of singular existence is not disproved by the success of substitution of coreferential terms in existential contexts—as for example, in 'The author of *Naming and Necessity* exists. The author of *Naming and Necessity* is the McCosh Professor of Philosophy at Princeton Univer-



sity; therefore the Princeton McCosh Professor of Philosophy exists'.<sup>13</sup> Although positions within quotation marks are not typically open to substitution of coreferential terms, by the very nature of the particular context '\_\_\_\_' refers<sub>English</sub> to  $x$ <sup>7</sup> the position within its quotation marks respects such substitution. Assuming, as Frege did, that each instance of the metalinguistic schema

$$(F) (x)([ \text{'the' + NP refers}_{\text{English}} \text{ to } x ] \equiv (y)[ \phi_y \equiv x = y ]),$$

is true where  $\phi$  is a formalization in the notation of first-order logic for the English NP, (5) is true if and only if (3') is, and (6) is true if and only if (4') is. Frege can thus attain the same truth conditions for (3) and (4) as does Russell.

Frege's semantic-ascent approach succeeds in capturing information that is indeed conveyed in the uttering of (3) or (4). But, to invoke a distinction I have emphasized in previous work, this concerns what is *pragmatically imparted* in (3) and (4), and not necessarily what is *semantically encoded* or *contained*.<sup>14</sup> Frege does not attain the same semantic content as Russell or even the same modal intension, i.e., the same corresponding function from possible worlds to truth values. Indeed, that the semantic-ascent interpretation of (3) and (4) by (5) and (6), respectively, is incorrect is easily established by a variety of considerations. The semantic-ascent theory of existence is analogous to Frege's account of identity in *Begriffsschrift* (1879). Curiously, Frege evidently failed to see that his objection in "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*" to the semantic-ascent theory of identity applies with equal force against the semantic-ascent theory of existence. Another objection to semantic-ascent analyses has been raised by Frege's most effective apologist and defender, Alonzo Church.<sup>15</sup> Translating (4) into French, one obtains:

*Le roi présent de France n'existe pas.*

Translating its proposed analysis into French, one obtains:

'The present king of France' *ne fait référence à rien en anglais.*

These two translations, while both true, clearly mean different things in French. So too, therefore, do what they translate.

A theory of singular existence statements that is equally Fregean in spirit but superior to the semantic-ascent account takes the verb 'exist' as used in singular existentials to be an *ungerade* device, so that both (3) and (4) concern not the phrase 'the present king of France' but its English sense.<sup>16</sup> This is analogous to the semantic-ascent theory of existence, except that one climbs further up to the level of intension. On the intensional-ascent theory of existence, (3) and (4) are analyzed thus:

$$\begin{aligned} (7) & (\exists x)\Delta^{(s)(\tau y)}\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y)^s, x) \\ (8) & \sim(\exists x)\Delta^{(s)(\tau y)}\textit{Present-king-of-France}(y)^s, x), \end{aligned}$$

where ‘ $\Delta$ ’ is a dyadic predicate for the relation between a Fregean sense and that which it determines (that of which the sense is a concept) and the superscript ‘ $s$ ’ is a device for sense-quotation (in the home language, in this case a standard notation for first-order logic with ‘ $\Delta$ ’).<sup>17</sup> Like the semantic-ascent theory, this intensional-ascent account of existence is not disproved by the success of substitution of coreferential terms in existential contexts. On a Fregean philosophy of semantics, sense-quotation marks create an *ungerade* context—one might even say that they create the paradigm *ungerade* context as Frege understood the concept—so that any expression occurring within them refers in that position to its own customary sense, yet the position flanked by them in the particular context ‘ $\Delta$ ( <sup>$s$</sup> \_\_\_\_,  $x$ )’ remains open to substitution because of the special interplay between sense-quotation and ‘ $\Delta$ ’. The intensional-ascent theory is not so easily refuted as the semantic-ascent approach by the Church translation argument.<sup>18</sup> In place of schema ( $F$ ), we invoke the following:

$$(C) (x)[\Delta(\textsuperscript{s}(1y)\phi_y^s, x) \equiv (y)(\phi_y \equiv x = y)],$$

thereby attaining the familiar Russellian truth and falsehood conditions for (3) and (4). Unlike ( $F$ ), every instance of ( $C$ ) expresses a necessary truth. The intensional-ascent theory of existence thus also obtains the correct modal intensions for (3) and (4).

### III

A singular term is *nonreferring* (with respect to a context  $c$ , a time  $t$ , and a possible world  $w$ ), in one sense, if and only if there does not exist anything to which the term refers (with respect to  $c$ ,  $t$ , and  $w$ ). On Millianism, a nonreferring proper name is thus devoid of semantic content. A Millian, like myself, and even a less committal direct-reference theorist like Kripke, may not avail him/herself of the Theory of Descriptions to solve the problems of sentences with nonreferring names.<sup>19</sup> If  $\alpha$  is a proper name, referring or not, it is not a definite description, nor by the direct-reference theory’s lights does it “abbreviate” any definite description. Direct-reference theory thus excludes application of the Theory of Descriptions in connection with the analogues of (1)–(4):

- (1 $\alpha$ )  $\alpha$  is bald
- (2 $\alpha$ )  $\alpha$  is not bald
- (3 $\alpha$ )  $\alpha$  exists
- (4 $\alpha$ )  $\alpha$  does not exist.

For similar reasons, the direct-reference theorist is also barred from using Frege’s sense-reference distinction to solve the difficulties. How, then, can the theorist ascribe content to (1 $\alpha$ )–(4 $\alpha$ )? In particular, how can (4 $\alpha$ ) express anything at all, let alone something true? The semantic-ascent theory of existence is refuted on the direct-reference theory no less than on Fregean theory by the Church

translation argument as well as by modal considerations (among other things). The *ungerade* theory hardly fares much better on direct-reference theory in connection with (3 $\alpha$ ) and (4 $\alpha$ ). On the Millian theory, it fares no better at all. Using the superscripted ‘s’ now as a semantic-content quotation mark, the intensional-ascendant theory yields

(7 $\alpha$ )  $(\exists x)\Delta({}^s\alpha^s, x)$

(8 $\alpha$ )  $\sim(\exists x)\Delta({}^s\alpha^s, x)$

as purported analyses for (3 $\alpha$ ) and (4 $\alpha$ ), respectively. But according to Millianism, if  $\alpha$  is a proper name, then ‘ ${}^s\alpha^s$ ’ refers to  $\alpha$ ’s bearer. Where  $\alpha$  is a nonreferring name, ‘ ${}^s\alpha^s$ ’ is equally nonreferring.

Canvassing some alleged cases of true sentences of the form of (4 $\alpha$ ) with  $\alpha$  a nonreferring name reveals that the so-called problem of nonreferring names, on closer examination, frequently vanishes.

First, let the  $\alpha$  in (3 $\alpha$ ) and (4 $\alpha$ ) be a name for a possible individual that does not actually exist, i.e. for a merely possible individual. Though there is no bald man (we may suppose) in Quine’s doorway at this moment, there might have been.<sup>20</sup> I hereby dub the merely possible bald man in Quine’s doorway (if there is exactly one there) ‘Curly-0’. Even though Curly-0 might have existed, this much should be clear: Curly-0 does not exist. But how can that be?

Contemporary philosophy has revealed that my little naming ceremony was an exercise in futility. For even if we countenance merely possible individuals, at least for the purpose of naming one of them, I have not yet singled any one of them out to be named. There are many different merely possible individuals who might have been bald men standing in Quine’s doorway, but none of them are actually bald or standing in Quine’s doorway. The problem is to distinguish one of them. Difficult though the task may be, David Kaplan has found a way to do it.<sup>21</sup> Gamete *S* is a particular male sperm cell of my father’s, and gamete *E* is a particular ovum of my mother’s, such that neither is ever actually united with any other gamete. Following Kaplan’s instructions, I have given the name ‘Noman-0’ to the particular possible individual who would have resulted from the union of *S* and *E*, had they united in the normal manner to develop into a human zygote.<sup>22</sup> Noman (as I call him for short) is my merely possible brother. He is a definite possible individual who might have been a bald man standing in Quine’s doorway. Noman does not exist. But how can that be?

The apparent difficulty here is an illusion. Consider the following analogous situation. Let the  $\alpha$  in (4 $\alpha$ ) be the name ‘Socrates’. Then (3 $\alpha$ ) is true with respect to the year 400 BC, and (4 $\alpha$ ) false. With respect to the present day, these truth values are reversed. Socrates is long gone. Consequently, singular propositions about him, which once existed, also no longer exist. Let us call the no-longer-existing proposition that Socrates does not now exist, ‘Soc’. Soc is a definite proposition. Its present lack of existence does not prevent it from presently being true. Nor does its nonexistence prevent it from being semantically expressible in

English. Notice that in 400 BC, the sentence ‘Socrates does not exist’ evidently did not express anything in English, and hence was not true or false, since the language itself had not yet come into being. Some might argue that the sentence did not yet even exist. Moreover, even if the language had come into being in 400 BC, the English sentence ‘Socrates does not exist’ might not have had the exactly same semantics then that it has today. Expressing a proposition (or being true or false, etc.) *with respect to* a given time  $t$  is not the same thing as expressing that proposition *at*  $t$ . Today the sentence ‘Socrates does not exist’ expresses Soc with respect to the present time. It does not follow that there exists a proposition that this sentence expresses with respect to the present time. There presently exists no such proposition, but there was such a proposition. ‘Socrates does not exist’ does indeed single out a definite past thing in order to say of it, correctly, that it does not now exist. It does not follow that there presently exists someone designated in the sentence (and said therein not to exist). There presently exists no one to whom the term ‘Socrates’, as a name for the philosopher who drank the hemlock, refers in English, but there did exist someone to whom the name now refers. The sentence ‘Socrates does not exist’ *now* expresses Soc, and Soc is now true. And that is why the sentence is now true in English (even though Soc does not now exist). This account of the truth of ‘Socrates does not exist’ applies *mutatis mutandis* to objects from the future as well as the past. Kaplan has named the first child to be born in the 22nd century ‘Newman-1’.<sup>23</sup> There presently exists no proposition expressed by ‘Newman-1 does not exist’. But there will exist a particular proposition that is already so expressed, and it is true.

The principal facts about Socrates and Newman-1 are true as well of Noman. I call a nonreferring singular term *weakly nonreferring* if there might have existed something to which the term actually refers, and I call a nonreferring term *very weakly nonreferring* (at a time  $t$ ) if (at  $t$ ) there has existed, or is going to exist, something to which the term refers. ‘Noman’ is weakly nonreferring but not very weakly. There exists no one to whom ‘Noman’ refers but there might have been a definite someone  $x$  such that ‘Noman’ *actually* refers to  $x$ . By the same token, there exists no proposition expressed by ‘Noman does not exist’, but there might have been a proposition that *actually is* expressed, and it is actually true.

Consider now *la pièce de résistance*. A *strongly nonreferring* term is one such that there could not have existed something to which the term actually refers. Curiously, an extension of the same solution may be made even for some strongly nonreferring terms. To see this, let  $E_{NS}$  be the ovum from which I actually sprang. I have introduced the name ‘Nothan-0’ for the merely possible individual who would have sprang from the union of  $S$  and  $E_{NS}$  had they been united in the normal manner. Like ‘Noman-0’, ‘Nothan-0’ is weakly nonreferring but not very weakly. It seems that Nothan (as I call him) and I are *impossible*; we could not both exist since we each require the same ovum. Either it is true or it is false that Nothan might have been taller than I actually am. This is a truth-valued singular proposition about a definite pair of possible individuals. But unlike the proposition that Nothan is 6 feet tall, this proposition could not possibly exist; there is no

possible world in which its two constituent possible people exist together. The term ‘the proposition that Nothan-0 might have been taller than Nathan Salmon actually is’ is thus strongly nonreferring. Still, there is in *some* sense a definite impossible thing to which the term actually refers: the very singular proposition in question, which is true if Nothan might have been taller than I actually am and is otherwise false. An analogous situation obtains in connection with the proposition, which I believe, that Plato was taller than I now am. There is no time at which this singular proposition exists. In particular, it does not now exist, yet I now believe it.<sup>24</sup> The negative existential ‘The singular proposition that Nothan might have been taller than Nathan Salmon actually is, does not exist’ is true, and its subject term is strongly nonreferring. In fact, the proposition expressed by this negative existential could not possibly exist. Yet there is in some sense a definite proposition that is in question, and it is true. Something analogous to this is true also in connection with the pair set, {Nothan-0, Nathan Salmon}; there is in some sense a definite set that is actually referred to by this piece of set-theoretic notation (assuming it is properly interpreted), yet that set could not possibly exist. Even if Nothan had existed, {Nothan, me} still could not do so. Neither could the singular proposition about the pair set that it does not exist. Yet that proposition is true, precisely in virtue of the fact that the pair set to which it makes reference does not exist. Analogously again, the pair set {Plato, me} does not exist, never did, and never will. Neither does the proposition that this pair set does not now exist. But it is a definite set with a definite membership, and the proposition is true.

It should be noted that the mentioned impossible objects are not like “the round square,” which Alexius Meinong claimed had lower-class ontological status, a sort of being shy of existence due to its incompatible properties of shape.<sup>25</sup> What makes the pair set {Nothan-0, Nathan Salmon} and the proposition that Nothan might have been taller than I actually am impossible is not that they have inconsistent or otherwise incompatible properties. As a matter of pure logic, it is provable that nothing has inconsistent properties. An impossible object, like the mentioned pair set or singular proposition, is a complex entity composed of impossible things. Any composite entity, even one whose components are impossible, has a perfectly consistent set of attributes. An impossible object is not a Meinongian inconsistent Object. Though it cannot exist, an impossible object’s properties are perfectly coherent.

Some might wish to object to the foregoing that, of the nonreferring names mentioned, only ‘Socrates’ refers to a definite individual, since the reference of the rest is not fixed by the entire history of the universe up to the present moment. There is not yet any objective fact, says the objector, concerning which future individual the name ‘Newman-1’ names.<sup>26</sup> This objection involves the issue of future contingencies. While a full response cannot be given here, I will provide a brief response that I think adequate to the task at hand. First, the particular example of Newman-1 could be replaced with the introduction of a name for the future result of an in-progress physically and causally determined process. Sec-

ond, the objection confuses truth with a concept of unpreventability, which entails truth but is not entailed by it. The fact that ‘Socrates’ has the particular reference it does is now unpreventable. By contrast, perhaps it is still within our power (at least if free will is assumed) to influence who will be the first child born in the 22nd century. Suppose it is not yet causally (or in some other manner) determined which future person will be born first in the 22nd century. It does not follow that there is no fact of the matter, or that it is as yet neither true nor false that that future person will be born first in the 22nd century. Many facts about the future are as yet causally open, still preventable. Suppose I am about to decide whether to listen to Beethoven or Beatles, but have not yet done so. I will either choose Beethoven or I will not. One of these two disjuncts obtains—one of them is a fact—though which one is not yet settled. There is no incompatibility between its not yet being settled which choice I will make and my eventually choosing Beethoven. On the contrary, it’s not yet being settled entails that either I will choose Beethoven and it is not yet settled that I will, or else I will decide against Beethoven and that is not yet settled. Either way, there now is a fact concerning my future choice—as yet still preventable but a fact nonetheless. However I choose, although that future choice is still preventable the fact remains (however preventably) that I will make that decision instead of the other.

What follows from our assumption is that there is no unpreventable fact concerning whom ‘Newman-1’ now names, not that there is no fact at all. It is not yet *causally* (or in the other manner) fixed which future individual the name names, but the name’s reference is *semantically* fixed. There is—or rather there will be—a fact concerning whom the name names, even if it is still preventable. That fact also does not yet exist, but it is already a fact, and eventually (not yet) it will even be unpreventable. Kaplan fixed the reference of ‘Newman-1’ *semantically* not by means of the description ‘the future person who is unpreventably going to be born first in the 22nd century’, but by ‘the future person who *will* be born first in the 22nd century’. The name’s reference is even *causally* fixed to the extent that, given the way in which Kaplan introduced the name, it is already settled that the name now refers to whichever future individual will turn out to be the first child born in the 22nd century if there will be such an individual (and that the name is nonreferring otherwise). This much about the name is unpreventable (although, of course, the name’s semantics can be changed from what it currently is). Though it is not yet causally fixed who will be born first in the 22nd century, there already is (or rather, there will exist something that is now) a fact, as yet preventable, concerning who it will be. These two facts—one unpreventable, the other still preventable—entail a third fact, itself as yet preventable, concerning whom the name now names.<sup>27</sup> The possible causal indeterminacy, and our present ignorance, concerning who the first child born in the 22nd century will turn out to be does not impugn the fact that whoever it turns out to be, that one is already the referent of ‘Newman-1’. Nor does that future individual’s present nonexistence impugn this fact, any more than Socrates’s present nonexistence impugns the fact that ‘Socrates’ refers to him. Socrates’s pastness and unpreventability does not bestow on his name any more semantic factu-



ality, or rigidity, than ‘Newman-1’ enjoys—nor, for that matter, than ‘Noman-0’ enjoys. There is no more justification for saying that ‘Socrates’ is semantically superior to ‘Newman-1’ because Newman-1 is preventable and Socrates is not, than there is for saying that ‘Newman-1’ is semantically superior to ‘Socrates’ because Socrates is dead and Newman-1 is not.

Followers of Quine dismiss merely possible objects like Noman on the ground of a lack of clear “identity conditions.” It is worth noticing that it is causally determined which possible individual would have sprang from gametes *S* and *E*, had they united in the normal manner to form a zygote. If causal determination were important to semantic definiteness, the name ‘Noman-0’, and even the term ‘{Nothan-0, Nathan Salmon}’, should be semantically definite to a greater degree than ‘Newman-1’. Despite its actual nonexistence, there is no problem about the identity conditions of the proposition that Noman does not exist. Nor is there a problem about the identity conditions of Soc. Or at least there is no more problem than there is in the case of the ordered pair consisting of Socrates first, and the temporally indexed property (or concept) of present nonexistence second. A proposition is identical with Soc if and only if it consists of these very same two constituents. Indeed, Soc might even be identified with the ordered pair. If the Principle of Extensionality suffices for giving the “identity conditions” of sets, then an exactly analogous principle is sufficient for propositions, presently existent and not. Quine and his followers also object to such intensional entities as properties and concepts, and on similar grounds. But the particular property of nonexistence creates no special problems. One may take it to be fully definable by means of the purely logical notions of abstraction, universal quantification, negation, and identity thus:  $(\lambda x)(y)[x \neq y]$ .<sup>28</sup> There is no legitimate reason for allowing a sentence of the form  $(4\alpha)$  to be true by virtue of expressing Soc, but to disallow such a sentence from being true by virtue of expressing the analogous proposition about Noman.

Some may balk at my proposal on the grounds that it conflicts with the metaphysical principle that any object must exist in every conceivable circumstance in which that object has any properties. This principle that existence is a pre-condition for having properties—that existence precedes suchness—underlies the Kantian doctrine that existence is not itself a property (or “predicate”). It, like the Kantian doctrine it supports, is a confused and misguided prejudice. Undoubtedly, existence is a prerequisite for a very wide range of ordinary properties—being blue in color, having such-and-such mass, writing *Waverley*. But the sweeping doctrine that existence universally precedes suchness has very clear counterexamples in which an object from one circumstance has properties in another circumstance in virtue of the properties it has in the original circumstance. Socrates does not exist in my present circumstance, yet he has numerous properties here—for example, being mentioned and discussed by me. Walter Scott, who no longer exists, currently has the property of having written *Waverley*. He did exist when he had the property of writing *Waverley*, of course, but as every author knows, the property of writing something is very different from the property of having written it. Among

their differences is the fact that the former requires existence. On the doctrine that existence precedes suchness, Scott lacks the property of having written *Waverley* not because he did not write *Waverley* (since he did), but merely because he does not exist. Once it is conceded that Scott wrote *Waverley*, or that Socrates is admired by Jones, etc., what is gained by denying nevertheless that they have these very properties? To satisfy the prejudice, one may simply insist that objects like Socrates that no longer exist can no longer have properties. To do so is to concede that Socrates does not exist. One thereby falsifies the very position insisted upon, by bestowing on Soc the particular property of being conceded (or asserted, agreed upon, presupposed, etc.). As long as it is deemed now true that Socrates does not exist, that is sufficient for the present truth in English of ‘Socrates does not exist’, granted that ‘Socrates does not exist’ expresses in English (with respect  $t$ ) that Socrates does not exist (at  $t$ ). It matters little whether it is conceded that Soc has the property Truth—or for that matter whether it is conceded that ‘Socrates does not exist’ has the corresponding property of being a true sentence of English. And it matters not at all that Soc no longer exists.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV

Though the realm of “logical space” may fail to provide clearly problematic examples of true negative existentials, the realms of fiction and myth may fare better. Let the  $\alpha$  in  $(3\alpha)$  and  $(4\alpha)$  be a name from fiction, for example ‘Sherlock Holmes’. It is a traditional view in philosophy, and indeed it is plain common sense, that  $(3\alpha)$  is then false and  $(4\alpha) = (0)$  true, when taken as statements about reality. For ‘Sherlock Holmes’, as a name for the celebrated detective, is a *very strongly* or *thoroughly nonreferring* name, one that does not in reality have any referent at all—past, present, future, forever merely possible, or even forever impossible. Bertrand Russell lent an eloquent voice to this common-sense view:

[M]any logicians have been driven to the conclusion that there are unreal objects. ...In such theories, it seems to me, there is a failure of that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies. Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than zoology can; for logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features. To say that unicorns have an existence in heraldry, or in literature, or in imagination, is a most pitiful and paltry evasion. What exists in heraldry is not an animal, made of flesh and blood, moving and breathing of its own initiative. What exists is a picture, or a description in words. Similarly, to maintain that Hamlet, for example, exists in his own world, namely in the world of Shakespeare’s imagination, just as truly as (say) Napoleon existed in the ordinary world, is to say something deliberately confusing, or else confused to a degree which is scarcely credible. There is only one world, the “real” world: Shakespeare’s imagination is part of it, and the thoughts that he had in writing *Hamlet* are real. So are the thoughts that we have in reading the play. But it is of the very essence of fiction that only the thoughts, feelings, etc., in Shakespeare and his readers are real, and that there is not, in addition to them, an objective



Hamlet. When you have taken account of all the feelings roused by Napoleon in writers and readers of history, you have not touched the actual man; but in the case of Hamlet you have come to the end of him. If no one thought about Hamlet, there would be nothing left of him; if no one had thought about Napoleon, he would have soon seen to it that some one did. The sense of reality is vital in logic, and whoever juggles with it by pretending that Hamlet has another kind of reality is doing a disservice to thought. A robust sense of reality is very necessary in framing a correct analysis of propositions about unicorns, golden mountains, round squares, and other such pseudo-objects.<sup>30</sup>

Contemporary philosophy has uncovered that, unlike ‘Noman’, a name from fiction does not even name a merely possible object. Thus Kripke writes:

The mere discovery that there was indeed a detective with exploits like those of Sherlock Holmes would not show that Conan Doyle was writing *about* this man; it is theoretically possible, though in practice fantastically unlikely, that Doyle was writing pure fiction with only a coincidental resemblance to the actual man. ... Similarly, I hold the metaphysical view that, granted that there is no Sherlock Holmes, one cannot say of any possible person, that he *would have been* Sherlock Holmes, had he existed. Several distinct possible people, and even actual ones such as Darwin or Jack the Ripper, might have performed the exploits of Holmes, but there is none of whom we can say that he would have *been* Holmes had he performed these exploits. For if so, which one?

I thus could no longer write, as I once did, that ‘Holmes does not exist, but in other states of affairs, he would have existed’ (*Naming and Necessity*, Harvard University Press, 1972, 1980, pp. 157–158).

It is not merely true that Sherlock Holmes does not exist, it is a necessary truth. On Kripke’s view, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is a rigid *nondesignator*, designating nothing—not even a merely possible thing—with respect to every possible world. In a similar vein, Kaplan says:

The myth [of Pegasus] is possible in the sense that there is a possible world in which it is truthfully *told*. Furthermore, there are such worlds in which the language, with the exception of the proper names in question, is semantically and syntactically identical with our own. Let us call such possible worlds of the myth, ‘*M* worlds’. In each *M* world, the name ‘Pegasus’ will have originated in a dubbing of a winged horse. The Friend of Fiction, who would not have anyone believe the myth ..., but yet talks of Pegasus, pretends to be in an *M* world and speaks its language.

But beware the confusion of our language with theirs! If *w* is an *M* world, then *their* name ‘Pegasus’ will denote something with respect to *w*, and *our* description ‘the *x* such that *x* is called ‘Pegasus’ will denote the same thing with respect to *w*, but *our* name ‘Pegasus’ will still denote nothing with respect to *w*. ...

To summarize. It has been thought that proper names like ‘Pegasus’ and ‘Hamlet’ were like ‘Aristotle’ and ‘Newman-1’, except that the individuals denoted by the former were more remote. But regarded as names of *our* language—introduced by successful or unsuccessful dubbings, or just made up—the latter denote and the former do not.<sup>31</sup>

The passage closes with a “Homework Problem”: If the foregoing account of names deriving from fiction is correct, how could a sentence like (0) be true? Our task is to examine this very problem from a Millian perspective.

We begin with a plausible theory of fiction and its objects. Saul Kripke and Peter van Inwagen have argued, independently, and persuasively, that wholly fictional characters should be regarded as real things.<sup>32</sup> Theirs is not a Meinongian view—one of Russell’s targets in the passage quoted above—on which any manner of proper name or definite description, including such terms as ‘the golden mountain’ and ‘the round square’, refers to some Object, though the Object may not exist in any robust sense and may instead have only a lower class ontological status (and, as in the case of the round square, may even have inconsistent properties).<sup>33</sup> To be sure, wholly fictional characters like Sherlock Holmes, though real, are not real people. Neither physical objects nor mental objects, instead they are, in this sense, abstract entities. They are not eternal entities, like numbers; they are man-made artifacts created by fiction writers. But they exist just as robustly as the fictions themselves, the novels, stories, etc. in which they occur. Indeed, fictional characters have the same ontological status as the fictions, which are also abstract entities created by their authors. And certain things are true of these fictional characters—for example, that the protagonist of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories was inspired in part by an uncannily perceptive person of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s acquaintance.

On this theory, a negative existential like (0), taken as making an assertion about the fictional character and taken literally, denies real existence of a real fictional character, and is therefore false. Yes, Virginia, there is a Sherlock Holmes. In fact, Holmes may well be the most famous of all fictional characters in existence. The same sentence, understood as making an assertion about the fictional character, may be open to a more charitable and plausible interpretation, albeit a nonliteral one. Perhaps one may reinterpret the predicate ‘exists’, for example, to mean *real*, in something like the sense: *not merely a character in the story, but an entity of just the sort depicted*. Then (0) may be understood, quite plausibly, as making an assertion that the character of Sherlock Holmes is a wholly fictional man, not a real one. That is to say, there is a fiction in which Holmes is a man of flesh and blood, but in reality Holmes is merely a fictional character. On this Pickwickian reading, the sentence is indeed true. But it is then not an authentic negative existential, and thus generates no special problem for Millianism, let alone for direct-reference theory.<sup>34</sup>

Our homework problem is not yet solved. How can this talk about the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes as a real entity be reconciled with the passage from Kripke quoted above, in which he appears to agree with Kaplan and Russell that ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is nonreferring?

On Kripke’s account, use of the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ to refer to the fictional character is in a certain sense parasitic on a prior, more fundamental use not as a name for the fictional character. Kripke and van Inwagen emphasize that the author of a fiction does not assert anything in writing the fiction. Instead, Kripke, like Kaplan, says that Conan Doyle merely *pretended* to be referring to someone

in using the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ and to be asserting things, expressing propositions, about him. A fiction purports to be an accurate historical recounting of real events involving real people. Of course, the author typically does not attempt to deceive the audience that the pretense is anything but a pretense; instead the fiction merely goes through the motions (hoaxes like Orson Welles’s radio broadcast of H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* and the legend of Santa Claus being the exceptions that prove the rule). Frege expressed the basic idea as follows:

Assertions in fiction are not to be taken seriously: they are only mock assertions. Even the thoughts are not to be taken seriously as in the sciences: they are only mock thoughts. If Schiller’s *Don Carlos* were to be regarded as a piece of history, then to a large extent the drama would be false. But a work of fiction is not meant to be taken seriously in this way at all: it’s all play.<sup>35</sup>

According to Kripke, as the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ was originally introduced and used by Conan Doyle, it has no referent whatsoever. It is a name in the make-believe world of storytelling, part of an elaborate pretense. By Kripke’s lights, our language licenses a certain kind of metaphysical move. It postulates an abstract artifact, the fictional character, as a product of this pretense. But the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ does not thereby refer to the character thereby postulated, nor for that matter to anything else, and the sentences involving the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ that were written in creating the fiction express no propositions, about the fictional character or anything else. They are all part of the pretense, like the actors’ lines in the performance of a play. It is only at a later stage when discussing the fictional character from a standpoint outside of the fiction, speaking about the pretense and not within it, that the language makes a second move, this one semantical rather than metaphysical, giving the name a new, non-pretend use as a name for the fictional character. The language allows a grammatical transformation, says Kripke, of a fictional name for a person into a name of a fictional person. Similarly van Inwagen writes, “we have embodied in our rules for talking about fiction a convention that says that a creature of fiction *may* be referred to by what is (loosely speaking) ‘the name it has in the story’” (*op. cit.*, p. 307*n*). On this account, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is ambiguous. In its original use as a name for a human being—its use by Conan Doyle in writing the fiction, and presumably by the reader reading the fiction—it merely pretends to name someone and actually names nothing at all. But in its nonpretend use as a name for the fictional character thereby created by Conan Doyle, it genuinely refers to that particular artifactual entity. In effect, there are two names. Though spelled the same, they would be better spelled differently, as ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ for the man and ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ for the fictional character. Neither names a real man. The latter names an abstract artifact, the former nothing at all. It is the original, thoroughly nonreferring use of ‘Sherlock Holmes’—its use in the same way as ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’—that Kaplan, Kripke, and Russell emphasize in the passages quoted.

Kripke’s theory involves a complex account of sentences from fiction and myth, like ‘Sherlock Holmes plays the violin’ and ‘Pegasus has wings’ (cf. (1α)).

I shall call these sentences *object-fictional*, to be contrasted with *meta-fictional* sentences like ‘According to the stories, Sherlock Holmes plays the violin’. On Kripke’s view, object-fictional sentences are multiply ambiguous, as a result of the two uses of the names and of differing perspectives from within and without the fiction or myth. Using the name in ‘Sherlock Holmes plays the violin’ in the manner of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ as the pretend name of a pretend man, and using the sentence to make a statement not within the pretense and instead about the real world outside the fiction, the sentence expresses nothing and is therefore not literally true. (See note 19.) But object-fictional sentences may also be used from within the fiction, as part of the general pretense of an accurate, factual recounting of real events, not to be mistaken as a “time out” reality check. Interpreted thus, the sentence ‘Holmes plays the violin’ is a correct depiction, part of the storytelling language-game. So used, the sentence may be counted “true” in an extended sense—truth *in the fiction*, as we might call it—conforming to a convention of counting an object-fictional sentence “true” or “false” according as the sentence is true or false in, or according to, the fiction. This is the sense in which the sentence should be marked “true” on a true-false test in English Lit 101.<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, the name may be used in the manner of ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ as a name for the fictional character. With the name so used, and the sentence used as a statement not about the fiction but about reality, it is false; no abstract entity can play a musical instrument. On the other hand, according to Kripke, we also have an extended use of predicates, on which ‘plays the violin’ correctly applies to an abstract entity when it is a character from a fiction according to which the corresponding fictional person plays the violin. Giving the name its use as a name of the fictional character, and understanding the predicate ‘plays the violin’ in this extended sense, the sentence is true. According to the stories, Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin. In virtue of that fact we may say that Holmes<sub>2</sub> “plays the violin.” The truth conditions of the sentence on this reading are exactly the same as the conventional truth-in-the-fiction conditions of the sentence interpreted as ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin’. But they differ in meaning. The former invokes a new interpretation for both subject and predicate.<sup>37</sup>

Viewing the negative existential (0) on this same model, it has various interpretations on which it is false. Interpreted in the sense of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not exist’, it is like ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not play the violin’ in pretending to express a proposition that is false in the fiction. The sentence should be marked “false” on a true-false quiz about the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Interpreted in the sense of ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub> does not exist’, the predicate ‘exist’ may be given its literal sense, or alternatively it may be given its extended sense on which it applies to a fictional character if and only according to the relevant fiction the corresponding person exists. Either way the sentence is false. The fictional character exists, and moreover the corresponding person exists according to the stories. But now read (0) again in the sense of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not exist’, and this time take it not as a statement within the fiction but as a statement about the real world. Then it is significantly unlike ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not play the violin’, which expresses nothing

about the real world outside the fiction. For ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not exist’, according to Kripke, is in reality quite true. On this interpretation, the sentence is regarded by Kripke, as by traditional philosophy, as an authentic true negative existential with a thoroughly nonreferring subject term.

This was our primary concern. We have attempted to deal with the problem of negative existentials by concentrating on ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub> does not exist’. But it is Holmes<sub>1</sub>, not Holmes<sub>2</sub>, who literally does not exist. The homework problem requires more work. Kripke says that it is “perhaps the worst problem in the area.”

By way of a possible solution, Kripke proposes that (0) should not be viewed on the model of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin’, understood as a statement about the real world—and which thereby expresses nothing—but instead as a special kind of speech act. Consider first the object-fictional sentence ‘Sherlock Holmes does not play the violin’, in the sense of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not play the violin’ construed as a statement about reality (cf. (2 $\alpha$ )). One may utter this sentence even if one is uncertain whether Holmes<sub>1</sub> is a real person, in order to make the cautious claim that either there is no such person as Holmes<sub>1</sub> or there is but he does not play the violin. In that case, the assertion is tantamount to saying that either there is no proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin, or there is such a proposition but it is not true. In short, the sentence is interpreted as meaning *there is no true proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin*. A similar cautious interpretation is available whenever negation is employed.

Kripke extends this same interpretation to singular negative existentials. He proposes that whenever one utters any sentence of the form (4 $\alpha$ ) from the standpoint of the real world, what one really means is better expressed by ‘There is no true proposition that  $\alpha$  exists’. What is meant may be true on either of two very different grounds: (i) the mentioned proposition is not true; (ii) there is no such proposition. If  $\alpha$  is ‘the present king of France’, so that (4 $\alpha$ ) is (4), then what one is really saying—that there is no true proposition that the present king of France exists—is true for the former reason; it is false that the present king of France exists. If (4 $\alpha$ ) is (0) with ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in its ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ use, then what one is really saying—that there is no true proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> exists—is true for the latter reason. Kripke’s is not a theory that takes (4 $\alpha$ ) to express that (3 $\alpha$ ) is not true<sub>English</sub>. Semantic-ascent theories are notoriously vulnerable to refutation (as by the Church translation argument). Instead Kripke takes (4 $\alpha$ ) to express that there is no true proposition of a certain sort, if only because there is no proposition. This is closer to the intensional-ascent theory of existence—with a wink and a nod in the direction of Millianism.

Kripke extends this account to mistaken theories. He explicitly mentions the case of the fictitious intra-Mercurial planet Vulcan, hypothesized and named by Jacques Babinet in 1846 and later thought by Urbain Le Verrier to explain an irregularity in the orbit of Mercury. The irregularity was eventually explained by the general theory of relativity.<sup>38</sup> Though the Vulcan hypothesis turned out to be

a mistake, it nevertheless bore existent fruit—not in the form of a massive physical object, but a man-made abstract entity of the same ontological status as Holmes<sub>2</sub>. Vulcan even has explanatory value. It accounts not for Mercury's perihelion, but for the truth in English of 'A hypothetical planet was postulated to explain Mercury's irregular orbit'. In introducing the name 'Vulcan', Babinet meant to introduce a name for a planet, not an abstract artifact. His intentions were thwarted on both counts. Kripke holds that the dubbing ultimately resulted in two distinct uses of the name—in effect two names, 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>2</sub>'—the first as a name for an intra-Mercurial planet, and consequently thoroughly nonreferring, the second as a name of Babinet's creation. (Presumably these two uses are supposed to be different from two other pairs of uses, corresponding to the fire god of Roman mythology and Mr. Spock's native planet in *Star Trek*.) When it is said that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> does not influence Mercury's orbit, and that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> does not exist, what is meant is that there are no true propositions that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> influences Mercury or that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> exists.

The motivation for Kripke's intensional ascent is obscure. In any event, the account fails to solve the problem. The 'that' clauses 'that Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin' and 'that Holmes<sub>1</sub> exists' are no less problematic than 'Holmes<sub>1</sub>' itself. Kripke concedes, in effect, that if  $\alpha$  is a thoroughly nonreferring name, then propositional terms like 'the proposition that  $\alpha$  is bald' are also thoroughly nonreferring. The account thus analyzes a negative existential by means of another negative existential, generating an infinite regress with the same problem arising at each stage: If  $\alpha$  is a thoroughly nonreferring name, how can 'There is no proposition that  $\alpha$  is bald' express anything at all, let alone something true (let alone a necessary truth)? To give an analogy, a proposal to analyze  $(4\alpha)$  as 'Either  $\{\alpha\}$  is empty or it does not exist' yields no solution to the problem of how  $(4\alpha)$  can express anything true. Even if the analysis has the right truth conditions (the first disjunct may be true if  $\alpha$  is an improper definite description, the second is true if  $\alpha$  is a nonreferring simple term), it also invokes a disjunct that is of the form of  $(4\alpha)$  itself, and it leaves unsolved the mystery of how either disjunct can express anything if  $\alpha$  is a thoroughly nonreferring name.<sup>39</sup>

There is more. On the account proposed by Kaplan, Kripke, and van Inwagen, object-fictional sentences, like 'Sherlock Holmes plays the violin', have no genuine semantic content in their original use. This renders the meaningfulness of true meta-fictional sentences like 'According to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Holmes plays the violin' problematic and mysterious. (See note 37.) On Kripke's account, it is true that according to the stories Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin, and that on Le Verrier's theory Vulcan<sub>1</sub> influences Mercury's orbit. But how can this be if there is no proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin and no proposition that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> influences Mercury? What is it that is the case according to the stories or the theory? How can Le Verrier have believed something that is nothing at all? If object-fictional sentences like 'Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin' express nothing and only pretend to express things, how can they be true with respect (or "according")



to the fiction, and how can meta-fictional sentences involving object-fictional subordinate clauses express anything at all, let alone something true?

More puzzling still are such cross-realm statements as ‘Sherlock Holmes was cleverer than Bertrand Russell’, and even worse, ‘Sherlock Holmes was cleverer than Hercule Poirot’. The account as it stands seems to invoke some sort of intensional use of ‘Sherlock Holmes’, whereby the name is not only ambiguous between ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’, but also accompanying the former use is something like an *ungerade* use, arising in constructions like ‘According to the stories, Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin’, on which the name refers to a particular concept—presumably something like: *the brilliant detective who performed such and such exploits*. Kripke acknowledges this, calling it a “special sort of quasi-intensional use.” The account thus ultimately involves an intensional apparatus. Indeed, it appears to involve industrial strength intensional machinery of a sort that is spurned by direct-reference theory, and by the very account itself. Further, the intensionality seems to get matters wrong. First, it seems to give us after all a proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin, a proposition that Vulcan<sub>1</sub> influences Mercury, etc.—those things that are the case (or not) according to stories or believed by the theorist. Worse, depending on how the *ungerade* use of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ is explained, it could turn out that if there were someone with many of the attributes described in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, including various exploits much like those recounted, then there would be *true* propositions that Holmes<sub>1</sub> existed, that he played the violin, etc. It could even turn out that if by an extraordinary coincidence there was *in fact* some detective who was very Holmesesque, then even though Holmes<sub>2</sub> was purely fictional and not based in any way on this real person, there *are* nevertheless true propositions that Holmes<sub>1</sub> existed, played the violin, etc. The theory threatens to entail that the question of Holmes’s authenticity (in the intended sense) would be settled affirmatively by the discovery of someone who was significantly Holmesesque, even if this person was otherwise unconnected to Conan Doyle. If the theory has consequences like these, then it directly contradicts the compelling passage of Kripke’s quoted above, if not also itself. Kripke expresses misgivings about the theory, acknowledging that the required “quasi-intensional” use of a name from fiction needs explanation.<sup>40</sup>

## V

One may well demur from these tenets of Kripke’s otherwise compelling account. One need not claim, as Kripke does, that a name like ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is ambiguous. In particular, there is no obvious necessity to posit a use of the name by Conan Doyle and his readers that is nonreferring (in any sense) and somehow prior to its use as a name for the fictional character and upon which the latter use is parasitic. There is first a general methodological consideration. Once fictional characters have been countenanced as real entities, why hold onto an alleged use of their names that fails to refer to them? It is like buying a luxurious Italian sports car only to keep it garaged. I do not advocate driving recklessly, but I do advise

that having paid for the car one should permit oneself to drive it, at least on special occasions.

There is a more decisive consideration. The alleged use of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ on which it is thoroughly nonreferring was supposed to be a pretend use, not a real one. In writing the *Holmes* stories, Conan Doyle did not genuinely use the name at all, at least not as a name for a man. He merely pretended to. Of course, Conan Doyle wrote the name down as part of sentences in the course of writing the *Holmes* stories. In that sense he used the name. This is like the use that stage or film actors make of sentences when reciting their lines during the performance of a play or the filming of a movie. It is not a use whereby the one speaking commits him/herself to the propositions expressed. Even when writing ‘London’ or ‘Scotland Yard’ in a *Holmes* story, Conan Doyle was not in any robust sense using these names to refer. As J. O. Urmson notes, when Jane Austen, in writing a novel, writes a sentence beginning with a fictional character’s name,

[i]t is not that there is a reference to a fictional object, nor is there the use of a referring expression which fails to secure reference (as when one says “That man over there is tall” when there is no man over there). Jane Austen writes a sentence which has the form of an assertion beginning with a reference, but is in fact neither asserting nor referring; therefore she is not referring to any character, fictional or otherwise, nor does she fail to secure reference, except in the jejune sense in which if I sneeze or open a door I fail to secure reference. Nothing would have counted on this occasion as securing reference, and to suppose it could is to be under the impression that Miss Austen was writing history. ... I do not say that one cannot refer to a fictional character, but that Miss Austen did not on the occasion under discussion.

What I am saying is that making up fiction is not a case of stating, or asserting, or propounding a proposition and includes no acts such as referring (“Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 13, 2 (April 1976), pp. 153–157 at p. 155).

The pretend use of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ by Conan Doyle does not have to be regarded as generating a use of the name on which it is nonreferring. *Pace* Kaplan, Kripke, Russell, and traditional philosophy, it *should* not be so regarded. A name semantically refers to this or that individual only relative to a particular kind of use, a particular purpose for which the name was introduced. One might go so far as to say that a pretend use by itself does not even give rise to a real name at all, any more than it gives birth to a real detective. This may be somewhat overstated, but its spirit and flavor is not.<sup>41</sup> Even if one regards a name as something that exists independently of its introduction into language (as is my inclination), it is a confusion to think of a name as referring, or not referring, other than as doing so *on* a particular use. On this view, a common name like ‘Adam Smith’ refers to different individuals on different uses. The problem with saying that ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is nonreferring on Conan Doyle’s use is that in merely pretending that the name had a particular use, no real use was yet attached to the name on which it may be said to refer or not to refer.



The matter should be viewed instead as follows: Conan Doyle one fine day set about to tell a story. In the process he created a fictional character as the protagonist, and other fictional characters as well, each playing a certain role in the story. These characters, like the story itself, are man-made abstract artifacts, born of Conan Doyle's fertile imagination. The name 'Sherlock Holmes' was originally coined by Conan Doyle in writing the story (and subsequently understood by readers reading the *Holmes* stories) as the fictional name for the protagonist. That thing—in fact merely an abstract artifact—is *according to the story*, a man by the name of 'Sherlock Holmes'. In telling the story, Conan Doyle pretends to use the name to refer to its fictional referent (and to use 'Scotland Yard' to refer to Scotland Yard)—or rather, he pretends to be Dr. Watson using 'Sherlock Holmes', much like an actor portraying Dr. Watson on stage. But he does not really so use the name; 'Sherlock Holmes' so far does not really have any such use, or even any related use (ignoring unrelated uses it coincidentally might have had). At a later stage, use of the name is imported from the fiction into reality, to name *the very same thing* that it is the name of according to the story. That thing—now the real as well as the fictional bearer of the name—is according to the story a human being who is a brilliant detective, and in reality an artifactual abstract entity created by Conan Doyle.

The use of 'Sherlock Holmes' represented by 'Holmes<sub>2</sub>', as the name for what is in reality an abstract artifact, is the same use it has according to the *Holmes* stories, except that according to the stories, that use is one on which it refers to a man. The alleged thoroughly nonreferring use of 'Sherlock Holmes' by Conan Doyle, as a pretend name for a man, is a myth. Contrary to Kaplan, Kripke, et. al., there is no literal use of 'Sherlock Holmes' that corresponds to 'Holmes<sub>1</sub>'—or at least I know of no convincing reason to suppose that there is one. One might say (in the spirit of the van Inwagen-Kripke theory) that there is a mythical use represented by 'Holmes<sub>1</sub>', an allegedly thoroughly nonreferring use that pretends to name a brilliant detective who performed such-and-such exploits. This kind of use is fictitious in the same way that Sherlock Holmes himself is, no more a genuine use than a fictional detective is a genuine detective. Instead there is at first only the pretense of a use, including the pretense that the name refers to a brilliant detective, a human being, on that use. Later the name is given a genuine use, on which it names the very same entity that it named according to the pretense, though the pretense that this entity is a human being has been dropped.

Literary scholars discussing the *Holmes* stories with all seriousness may utter the name 'Sherlock Holmes' as if to import its pretend use as the name of a man into genuine discourse—as when a Holmes "biographer" says, "Based on the evidence, Holmes was not completely asexual." Even then, the scholars are merely pretending to use the name as a name for a man. There is no flesh-and-blood man for the name to name, and the scholars know that.<sup>42</sup> If they are genuinely using the name, they are using it as a name for the fictional character. The only genuine, nonpretend use that we ever give the name—of which I feel confident—is as a name for the character. And that use, as a name for that very thing, is the very use

it has in the story—though according to the story, that very thing is a human being and not an abstract entity. Conan Doyle may have used the name for a period even before the character was fully developed. Even so, this would not clearly be a genuine use of the name on which it was altogether nonreferring. For it is at least arguable that if that was a genuine use by Conan Doyle, then it was very weakly nonreferring, in the sense used earlier. There would soon exist a fictional character to which *that* use of the name already referred.<sup>43</sup> In the same way, expectant parents may begin to use a name already decided upon even before the actual birth, perhaps even before conception, and readers of Kaplan may already use the name ‘Newman-1’ to refer. Once the anticipated referent arrives on the scene, to use the name exactly as before is to use it with reference to that thing. At that point, to use the name in a way that it fails to refer would be to give it a new use.

It seems at least as reasonable as Kripke’s account to claim instead that once the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ has been imported into genuine discourse, Conan Doyle’s sentences involving the name express singular propositions about his character. One might even identify the fiction with a sequence of propositions, about both fictional and nonfictional things (e.g., Scotland Yard). To say this is not to say that Conan Doyle asserted those propositions. He did not—at least not in any sense of ‘assert’ that involves a commitment to one’s assertions. He merely pretended to be Dr. Watson asserting those propositions. In so doing, Conan Doyle pretended (and his readers pretend) that the propositions are true propositions about a real man, not untrue propositions about an abstract artifact. That is exactly what it is to pretend to assert those propositions. To assert a proposition, in this sense, is in part to commit oneself to its truth; so to pretend to assert a proposition is to pretend to commit oneself to its truth. And the propositions in question entail that Holmes was not an abstract entity but a flesh-and-blood detective. Taken literally, they are untrue.<sup>44</sup>

This is not quite an offer one can’t refuse. Some have reacted to this proposal with a vague feeling—or a definite feeling—that I have conscripted fictional characters to perform a service for which they were not postulated and are not suited. Do I mean to say that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* consists entirely of a sequence of mostly false propositions about mostly abstract entities? Is mine a view on which the essence of fiction is to pretend that abstract entities are living, breathing people? These misgivings stem from a misunderstanding of the nature of fiction and its population. The characters that populate fiction are created precisely to perform the service of being depicted as people by the fictions in which they occur. Do not fixate on the fact that fictional characters are abstract entities. Think instead of the various *roles* that a director might cast in a stage or screen production of a particular piece of fiction. Now think of the corresponding characters as the components of the fiction that *play* or *occupy* those roles in the fiction. It is no accident that one says of an actor in a dramatic production that he/she is playing a “part.” The characters of a fiction—the occupants of roles in the fiction—are in some real sense *parts* of the fiction itself. Sometimes, for example in historical fiction, what fictionally plays a particular role is a real

person or thing. In other cases, what plays a particular role is the brainchild of the storyteller. In such cases, the role player is a *wholly* fictional character, or what I (following Kripke) have been calling simply a “fictional character.” Whether a real person or wholly fictional, the character is that which according to the fiction takes part in certain events, performs certain actions, undergoes certain changes, says certain things, thinks certain thoughts. An actor performing in the role of Sherlock Holmes portrays Holmes<sub>2</sub>; it is incorrect, indeed it is literally nonsense, to say that he portrays Holmes<sub>1</sub>, if ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ is thoroughly nonreferring.

It is of the very essence of a fictional character to be depicted in the fiction as the person who takes part in such-and-such events, performs such-and-such actions, thinks such-and-such thoughts. Being so depicted is the character’s *raison d’être*. As Clark Gable was born to play Rhett Butler in Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*, that character was born to be the romantic leading man of that fiction. Mario Puzo’s character of Don Corleone is as well suited to be the charismatic patriarch of *The Godfather* as Marlon Brando was to portray the character on film. Except even more so. The character was also portrayed completely convincingly by Robert De Niro. But only that character, and no other, is appropriate to the patriarch role in Puzo’s crime saga. Likewise, the butler in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* would have been completely inappropriate, in more ways than one, as the protagonist of Ian Fleming’s *James Bond* novels. It is of the essence of Flemings’s character precisely to be the character depicted in the dashing and debonair 007 role in the *James Bond* stories—and not merely in the sense that being depicted thus is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for being the character of Bond in any metaphysically possible world. Rather, this is the condition that defines the character; being the thing so depicted in those stories characterizes exactly *what* the character of James Bond *is*.

In a sense, my view is the exact opposite of the traditional view expressed in Russell’s pronouncement that “it is of the very essence of fiction that only the thoughts, feelings, etc., in Shakespeare and his readers are real, and that there is not, in addition to them, an objective Hamlet.” To Russell’s pronouncement there is Hamlet’s own retort: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” It is of the very essence of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* that there is indeed an object that is Hamlet. I am not urging that we countenance a person who is Hamlet<sub>1</sub> and who contemplated suicide according to the classic play but who does not exist. There is no sense in which there is any such person. The objective Hamlet is Hamlet<sub>2</sub>—what plays the title role in the Bard’s drama—and hence not a human being at all but a part of fiction, merely depicted there as anguished and suicidal. It is with the most robust sense of reality prescribed by the Metaphysician that I should urge recognition of this fictionally troubled soul.<sup>45</sup>

It is an offer one shouldn’t refuse lightly. Unlike Kripke’s theory, a treatment of the sentences of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories on which they literally make reference (although their author may not) to the fictional character, and literally express things about that character (mostly false), yields a straightforward account—what I believe is the correct account—of the meaningfulness and apparent truth of

object-fictional sentences like ‘Sherlock Holmes plays the violin’, and thereby also of the meaning and truth of meta-fictional sentences like ‘According to the *Holmes* stories, Holmes plays the violin’. Following Kripke’s lead in the possible-world semantics for modality, we say that ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is a rigid designator, referring to the fictional character both *with respect to the real world* and *with respect to the fiction*. The object-fictional sentence is not true with respect to the real world, since abstract entities make terrible musicians. But it is true with respect to the fiction—or true “in the world of the fiction”—by virtue of being entailed by the propositions, themselves about fictional characters, that comprise the fiction, taken together with supplementary propositions concerning such things as the ordinary physical-causal structure of the world, usual societal customs, etc., that are assumed as the background against which the fiction unfolds.<sup>46</sup> When we speak within the fiction, we pretend that truth with respect to the fiction is truth *simpliciter*, hence that Holmes (= Holmes<sub>2</sub>) was a human being, a brilliant detective who plays the violin, and so on. Or what is virtually functionally equivalent, we use object-fictional sentences as shorthand for a meta-fictional variants. The meta-fictional ‘According to fiction *f*,  $\phi$ ’ is true with respect to the real world if and only if  $\phi$  is true with respect to the mentioned fiction. In effect, the meta-fictional sentence receives a Fregean treatment on which the object-fictional subordinate clause has *ungerade* reference, referring to a (typically false) proposition about a fictional character. In all our genuine discourse about Holmes, we use the name in the ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ way. One may feign using ‘Sherlock Holmes’ as the name of a man, but this is only a pretend use. To say that according to the stories Holmes<sub>1</sub> plays the violin is to say nothing; what is true according to the stories is that Holmes<sub>2</sub> plays the violin.<sup>47</sup>

Consider again sentence (0), or better yet, ‘Sherlock Holmes does not really exist; he is only a fictional character’. Taken literally, this sentence expresses the near contradiction that Holmes<sub>2</sub> is a fictional character that does not exist. It was suggested above that the existence predicate may instead be given a Pickwickian interpretation on which it means something like: *is the very sort of entity depicted*. This suggestion, however, is questionable. In many cases, Russell’s analysis (0’) seems closer to the facts. In uttering (0), the speaker may intend not merely to characterize Holmes<sub>2</sub>, but to deny the *existence* of the eccentric detective. It may have been this sort of consideration that led Kripke to posit an ambiguity, and in particular a use of the name in the alleged manner of ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’, a pretend-referring-but-really-nonreferring use on which the ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ use is parasitic (and which generates an intensional *ungerade* use). Kripke’s posit, I believe, is also off target. There is a reasonable alternative. We sometimes use ordinary names, especially names of famous people, in various descriptive ways, as when it is said that so-and-so is a Napoleon, or a Nixon, another Hitler, no Jack Kennedy, or even (to segue into the fictional realm) a Romeo, an Uncle Tom, quixotic, Pickwickian, etc. I submit that, especially in singular existential statements, we sometimes use the name of a fictional character in a similar way. We may use ‘Sherlock Holmes’, for example, to mean something like: *Holmes more or less as he is actually depicted in the stories*, or *Holmes replete with these*

*attributes [the principally salient ones ascribed to Holmes in the stories], or best, the person who is both Holmes and Holmesesque.* In uttering (0), one would then mean that the Holmes of fiction, Holmes as depicted, does not exist in reality, that there is in reality no such person—no *such* person, no person who is both Holmes<sub>2</sub> and sufficiently like *that* (as depicted in fiction).

Since this interpretation requires a reinterpretation of the name, it might be more correct to say that the speaker expresses this proposition than to say that (0) itself does. This is not a use of ‘Holmes’ as a thoroughly nonreferring name, but as a kind of description that invokes the name of the fictional character. In short, the name is used *a là* Russell as a disguised improper definite description. It is very probably a nonliteral, Pickwickian use of the name. It is certainly a nonstandard use, one that is parasitic on the name’s more fundamental use as a name for the fictional character, not the other way around. It need not trouble the direct-reference theorist. The disguised-description use is directly based upon, and makes its first appearance in language only after, the standard use in the manner of ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ as (in Russell’s words) a “genuine name in the strict logical sense.” If an artificial expression is wanted as a synonym for this descriptive use, something clearly distinguished from both ‘Holmes<sub>2</sub>’ (which I claim represents the standard, literal use of the name) and ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ (which represents a mythical use, no genuine use at all) is called for. Let us say that someone is a *Holmesesque-Holmes<sub>2</sub>* if he is Holmes<sub>2</sub> and sufficiently like he is depicted to be, in the sense that he has relevantly many of the noteworthy attributes that Holmes<sub>2</sub> has according to the stories. Perhaps the most significant of these is the attribute of being a person (or at least person-like) and not an abstract artifact. Following Russell, to say that *the Holmesesque-Holmes<sub>2</sub>* does not exist is to say that nothing is uniquely both Holmes<sub>2</sub> and Holmesesque—equivalently (not synonymously), that Holmes<sub>2</sub> is not Holmesesque. It is an empirical question whether Holmes<sub>2</sub>—the character of which Conan Doyle wrote—was in reality like *that*, such-and-such a person, to any degree. The question of Holmes’s existence *in this sense* is answered not by seeking whether someone or other was Holmesesque, but by investigating the literary activities of Conan Doyle.<sup>48</sup>

These various considerations, and related ones, weigh heavily in favor of account of names from fiction as unambiguous names for artifactual entities.<sup>49</sup> In its fundamental use that arises in connection with the fiction—and I am inclined to think, its only literal use—‘Sherlock Holmes’ univocally names a man-made artifact, the handiwork of Conan Doyle. Contra Russell, et. al., names from fiction do not have a prior, more fundamental use. They do not yield true negative existentials with thoroughly nonreferring names.

## VI

The account suggested here is extendable to sentences that are uttered in debunking myths, like ‘Pegasus does not exist’. By ‘myth’ I shall mean any mistaken theory that has been held true. A mythical object is a hypothetical entity erroneously postulated by a theory. Like a fictional object, a mythical object is an ab-

stract (non-physical, non-mental) entity created by the theory's inventor. The principal difference between myth and fiction is that a myth is believed whereas with fiction there is typically only a pretense.<sup>50</sup> An accidental storyteller, Le Verrier attempted in all sincerity to use 'Vulcan' to refer to a real planet. The attempt failed, but not for lack of a referent. Here as before, there is ample reason to doubt that 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' represents a genuine use of the original name. Le Verrier held a theory according to which there is such a use, and he intended and believed himself to be so using the name. Had the theory been correct, there would have been such a use for the name. But the theory is false; it was all a mistake. Kripke says that in attempting to use the name, 19th century astronomers failed to refer to anything. But this verdict seems to ignore their unintended relationship to the mythical planet. One might just as well judge that the ancients who introduced 'Hesperus' as a name for the first star visible in the dusk sky, unaware that the "star" was in fact a planet, failed to name that planet. Nor had they inadvertently introduced two names, one for the planet and one thoroughly nonreferring. Plausibly, as the ancients unwittingly referred to a planet believing it to be a star, so Le Verrier may have unknowingly referred to Babinet's mythical planet, saying and believing so many false things about it (for example, that it affects Mercury's orbit). There may have been a period during which 'Vulcan' was misapplied to the mythical planet before such application became enshrined as the official, correct use. It does not follow that there is a prior, genuine use of the name on which it is thoroughly nonreferring. I know of no compelling reason to deny that Babinet introduced a single name 'Vulcan' ultimately with a univocal use as a name for his mythical planet.<sup>51</sup> One might say that 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' represents a mythical use of the name. As with 'Holmes<sub>1</sub>', this kind of use is no more a genuine use than a mythical planet is a genuine planet.

It is unclear whether there are significant limitations here, and if so, what they might be. Even Meinong's golden mountain and round square should probably be seen as real mythical objects. Meinong's golden mountain is an abstract entity that is neither golden nor a mountain but as real as Babinet's Vulcan. Real but neither round nor square, Meinong's round square is both round and square according to Meinong's erroneous theory. Should we not also admit and recognize such things as fabrications, figments of one's imagination, and flights of fancy as real abstract entities? Where does it all end?

In the kingdom of France.

If one adopts a very inclusive attitude toward such applicants for Existence as fictional characters, mythical planets, fabricated boyfriends, and flights of fancy, then one is hardly in a position to urge a restrictive admissions policy when it comes to nonreferring names. We know that France has no emperor at present. But we do not know this *a priori*. We could even be mistaken. It is not *a priori* impossible that a fanatic, with the help of an underground army and the unanimous approval of the United Nations, has just seized control of the French government and declared himself the new emperor. I hereby introduce the name 'Nappy' to refer to the new emperor of France, whoever that might be, if there is one, and to refer to nothing otherwise. Take note: I do not introduce 'Nappy' as a



name for a particular fictional character that I just created. I am not storytelling and I am not pretending to use ‘Nappy’ as a name of a person. Nor do I subscribe to any theory to the effect that France now has an emperor. Rather I introduce ‘Nappy’ as a name for the actual present emperor of France, provided—contrary to my every expectation—that there presently is an emperor of France. Barring a fairly radical skepticism, we know that there is no such person as Nappy. Nappy is not a fictional character, not a mythical character, not a fabrication, not a flight of fancy. There is a very good reason why Nappy is none of these things. Not to put too fine a point on it, Nappy does not exist.

Or consider again the name ‘Curly-0’, which I introduced above for the merely possible bald man presently standing in Quine’s doorway. There is no such merely possible man. But the name itself, so introduced, is real. I introduced it. And it does not refer. It would have been a mistake to suppose that there might have been someone to whom the name actually refers. But I made no such mistake in introducing the name; I knew I had not succeeded in singling out any particular possible individual. This much, then, is not a mistake: Curly-0 does not exist.

Why do the introductions of ‘Nappy’ and ‘Curly-0’ result in thoroughly non-referring names when Babinet’s introduction of ‘Vulcan’ results in a name for an existing abstract artifact? Because in inventing his theory, Babinet inadvertently invented a mythical planet, and though Babinet intended to target an independently existing planet, his referential arrow eventually struck the mythical object—not in exactly the same manner as the ancients’ arrow that struck Venus despite its not being a star, but close. To the allegation that I have invented a fictional emperor of France, I plead Not Guilty. One should not suppose that to every improper definite description one might conjure up there corresponds a fiction, or mini-fiction, in which the description is proper. Even pulp fiction is not that easy to write.<sup>52</sup>

My contention has not been that there are no true sentences of the form  $(4\alpha)$  with  $\alpha$  a thoroughly nonreferring name. My point, rather, is that they are rare—and bizarre. The examples are not like an utterance of ‘Sherlock Holmes does not really exist’ to assert that Holmes<sub>2</sub> in reality is not sufficiently like the way he is depicted. The examples are also dissimilar from ‘Socrates does not exist’, ‘Newman-1 does not exist’, ‘Noman does not exist’, and even ‘{Noman-0, Nothan-0} does not exist’. In these other negative existentials, there is some sense in which the subject term refers to a definite nonexistent thing: a past, future, merely possible, or impossible object. The negative existentials say of these definite things, correctly, that they do not exist. By contrast, ‘Nappy does not exist’ and ‘Curly-0 does not exist’ have a completely different flavor and are true on altogether different grounds: In no sense is there a definite nonexistent thing referred to. Do these two sentences, then, deny existence of different things? If so, what things? How do they differ? ‘Curly-0’ is a different name from ‘Nappy’, but Curly-0 is not a different *thing* from Nappy. They are not *things* at all; they are nothing. Or perhaps I should say, there is no such thing as Curly-0, and likewise Nappy. As much as to say that Curly-0 and Nappy do not exist. That there are no such things is true, but what exactly is it?

One might be tempted to suppose that ‘Nappy does not exist’ expresses the proposition that there is no unique present emperor of France. This is essentially the approach of Russell. It directly conflicts with the theory of direct reference (entailing, for example, that ‘Nappy’ is not a rigid nondesignator), and has been discredited by the arguments supporting that theory. So with the Fregean semantic-ascent and intensional-ascent approaches to singular existentials. I shun the heavy-handed intensionality of these approaches, as well as the unexplained intensional machinery of Kripke’s proposal to interpret ‘Nappy does not exist’ as a paraphrase of ‘There is no true proposition that Nappy exists’. There is here a new homework problem.

Consider the slightly simpler issue of the meanings of sentences of the form of  $(1\alpha)$  with  $\alpha$  a thoroughly nonreferring name. Does ‘Nappy is bald’ express anything? Does ‘Curly-0 is bald?’ I believe the answer is clearly that they do. They are not mere strings of nonsense syllables. They have translations—very literal translations—into most natural languages (by resorting to use of the very names ‘Nappy’ and ‘Curly-0’). Such translations preserve *something*. What? Not the proposition expressed, for these sentences express no proposition, or at least none that is a candidate for being true or false. I would propose that they be seen instead as expressing something severely disabled, the partially formed product of a failed attempt to construct a true-or-false proposition, something whose cognitive and semantic function is that of a truth-valued proposition but which is unable to fulfil its function for lack of an essential component. Think of the nondefective sentence ‘Marlon Brando is bald’ as expressing its semantic content in the manner of: ‘This object is bald: Marlon Brando’. Then ‘Nappy is bald’ expresses the semantic content of ‘This object is bald:       ’. ‘Curly-0 is bald’ expresses the very same thing. Let us call it a *structurally challenged proposition*. It may be thought of for the present purpose as an ordered pair, or rather a would-be ordered pair, whose second element is the concept or property of baldness and whose first element is nothing whatsoever.<sup>53</sup>

Granted sufficient leeway, expressions like ‘the proposition that Nappy is bald’ and ‘that Curly-0 is bald’ may be taken to refer to the structurally challenged proposition expressed in common by their complement clauses. This is one crucial respect in which the present view differs from that of Kripke, who contends that ‘Nappy is bald’ and ‘Curly-0 is bald’ express nothing, and that their corresponding ‘that’ clauses are consequently thoroughly nonreferring. (See note 19.) On the view I am proposing, although Nappy does not exist, the structurally challenged proposition that Nappy is bald exists, and is identical to the structurally challenged proposition that Curly-0 is bald. Not all sentences of the form  $(1\alpha)$  with  $\alpha$  a nonreferring name or improper definite description express this structurally challenged proposition. ‘Socrates is bald’ expresses that Socrates is bald, a proposition that does not exist but once did. ‘Newman-1 is bald’ expresses a different proposition, one that will exist but does not yet. ‘Noman-0 is bald’ expresses a proposition that might have existed but never will, and ‘{Nothan-0, Nathan Salmon} is bald’ (properly interpreted) a proposition that could never exist. ‘Sherlock Holmes is bald’ and (1) express existing propositions that are



untrue. None of these propositions are structurally challenged in the manner of  $\langle \_\_\_, \text{baldness} \rangle$ . But all sentences of the form  $(1\alpha)$  with  $\alpha$  a thoroughly nonreferring name express this same structurally challenged proposition, *this one is bald*:  $\langle \_\_\_, \text{baldness} \rangle$ . None of these various propositions, structurally challenged and not, are true. I shall assume here that atomic structurally challenged propositions cannot be either true or false.<sup>54</sup>

Though both express the same structurally challenged proposition, ‘Nappy is bald’ and ‘Curly-0 is bald’ present their common semantic content to the mind of the reader in different ways. One presents it in the manner of ‘This object is bald: the present emperor of France’, the other in the manner of ‘This object is bald: the possible bald man presently in Quine’s doorway’. The reader takes the structurally challenged proposition differently, depending in this case on the actual words used to express it.<sup>55</sup> I have argued in previous work that the way in which a reader takes a given proposition has no bearing on semantics; what matters as far as semantics goes is the literal meaning of the sentence and what propositions are thereby semantically expressed. Though the way in which a proposition is taken is not semantics, it bears on cognitive psychology and plays an extremely important role in pragmatics, on which I have spoken elsewhere at some length. Structurally challenged propositions do not differ from their unchallenged cousins in this respect.<sup>56</sup>

## VII

Structurally challenged propositions provide content for the most intransigent instances of  $(4\alpha)$ . Even if  $(4\alpha)$  does not express a nonexistent singular proposition (past, future, merely possible, or impossible), there is always the structurally challenged proposition. But if  $\alpha$  is thoroughly nonreferring, all of  $(1\alpha)$ – $(4\alpha)$  express structurally challenged propositions. It would seem that  $(4\alpha)$  must then be neither true nor false, hence not true. But if  $\alpha$  is nonreferring,  $(4\alpha)$  is true. In philosophy, this is what is known as a *Headache*.<sup>57</sup>

I prescribe relief in the form of a new theory of singular existence, or rather of nonexistence. Although the intensional-ascend theory of existence improves upon Frege’s semantic-ascend theory by capturing (or at least by approaching) the right modal intensions for singular existentials, there remains an intuitive difference between ‘The present queen of England exists’, which evidently mentions Queen Elizabeth II, and ‘ $(\exists x)\Delta^s(\exists y)(\text{Present-queen-of-England}(y)^s, x)$ ’, which does not. There is an alternative to both approaches that, although still within the spirit of Fregean theory, has not to my knowledge been explicitly proposed before. We saw in Section I that the distinction between choice and exclusion negation reveals an ambiguity in (2) for which there is no corresponding ambiguity in (1). According to Frege, one who utters (2) using ‘not’ in the sense of choice negation erroneously presupposes that there presently is a unique king of France. But one may use ‘not’ in the sense of exclusion negation to commit oneself only to the significantly weaker claim that no unique present king of France is bald. This

same ambiguity occurs wherever ‘not’ does. One may thus take (3) to be analyzed by (3’), as was the original idea, while taking (4) to be ambiguous between the following:

- (9)  $\sim_C(\exists x)[(\exists y)Present\text{-king-of-France}(y) = x]$   
 (10)  $\sim_E(\exists x)[(\exists y)Present\text{-king-of-France}(y) = x]$ .

These correspond exactly to the two readings of the negation sign in (4’). In the general case, on this theory, (3 $\alpha$ ) receives its usual analysis (alternatively, the existence predicate may be regarded as primitive), while the ‘not’ in (4 $\alpha$ ) yields two readings. On one reading, (4 $\alpha$ ) means the same as ‘ $\alpha$  does not<sub>C</sub> exist’, on the other the same as ‘The proposition that  $\alpha$  exists is not<sub>C</sub> true’, or ‘It is untrue that  $\alpha$  exists’. Let us call this analysis of singular existentials and their negations *the choice/exclusion theory of nonexistence*.<sup>58</sup>

The choice/exclusion theory still has the consequence by Frege’s lights that (3) is neither true nor *F*-false<sub>1</sub>, and hence not false. But at least it is thus judged untrue (*F*-false<sub>2</sub>). The choice/exclusion theory also has the consequence that (4) has a true reading while (3) does not. This might be deemed satisfactory.

It might even be deemed insightful. There is something odd about (4). If one wishes to correct the view that France presently has a king, it is more natural to do so by saying ‘There presently is no king of France’ (accompanied with an explanation that France is no longer a monarchy) or ‘There is no such thing as the present king of France’. The former suggests (4’), the latter something like (8). By contrast, (4) itself seems to involve a faulty presupposition. We can use (4) to say something acceptable, but when we do, we seem to mean that it is untrue that the present king of France exists—precisely what (10) expresses. (This is what we mean, that is, unless someone whom we wish to enlighten about international politics has inadvertently created a mythical king of France, so that the description in (4) is used with invisible scare quotes to mean *the mythical object that Smith believes is presently king of France, thus depicted*.) Some of (4)’s oddness is present also in (3), and even in true singular existentials. If (1) presupposes (3’), as Frege and Strawson claim, then how could (3) fail to do so? (Compare Frege’s comments about the name ‘Sachse’.) If Britain were to dissolve its monarchy during the present queen’s lifetime, ‘The present queen of England exists’, uttered after the dissolution, would become untrue. But would it become straightforwardly false?

I propose combining the choice/exclusion theory of nonexistence with structurally challenged propositions. The resulting theory applies across the board to sentences with improper definite descriptions, nonreferring proper names, or other nonreferring terms. The negative existential ‘Socrates does not exist’ receives two readings: Soc, and *it is untrue that Socrates exists*. Neither proposition currently exists, but both are true. Similarly for ‘Newman-1 does not exist’ and ‘Noman-0 does not exist’. The sentences ‘Nappy does not exist’ and ‘Curly-0 does not exist’ are also deemed ambiguous. On one reading, they each express the

same structurally challenged proposition, one that is neither true nor false. On the other reading, they each express the same true proposition, that the structurally challenged proposition  $\langle \_\_\_, \text{existence} \rangle$  is untrue. Both readings, because of the involvement of structurally challenged propositions, are to some extent bizarre. The presence of distinct bizarre readings contributes towards the overall oddness of these negative existentials.

This theory relieves the Headache without capitulating to golden mountains. It also respects distinctions of content among intuitively nonsynonymous true negative existentials, like ‘Socrates does not exist’ and ‘Noman does not exist’. And while it equates true negative existentials with thoroughly nonreferring names as expressing the same thing (or the same things), it respects their nonsemantic differences regarding how they present their common content. The theory diverges from Kripke’s theory that a sentence like  $(2\alpha)$  is sometimes true on the same ground as ‘There is no proposition that  $\alpha$  is bald’ and  $(4\alpha)$  on the same ground as ‘There is no proposition that  $\alpha$  exists’—whatever that ground is. There is no true proposition that Nappy is bald, or that Nappy exists, but these propositions exist. Instead  $(2\alpha)$  sometimes means the same as ‘It is untrue that  $\alpha$  is bald’ and  $(4\alpha)$  as ‘It is untrue that  $\alpha$  exists’, where the ‘that’ clauses always refer. Unlike Kripke’s account, mine makes no intensional concessions that run against the grain of direct-reference theory.<sup>59</sup>

More important, the theory is intuitively correct as applied to a very wide range of sentences with nonreferring terms. The theory also coheres with Millianism to form a unified theory of content for singular terms, referring and not, and for sentences, existential and not. If there remain problematically true negative existentials for which the present theory does not provide a plausible account, I do not know which ones they are. Most importantly, if there are such, it may be that the Unified Metaphysico-Semantic Theory that some of us have sought exists only in fable and myth.

## Notes

\*The present essay is a result of the Santa Barbarians Discussion Group’s ruminations on fictional objects, during Fall 1996, organized by C. Anthony Anderson. I am grateful to the participants, especially Anderson, for our extremely useful confusions. I also thank Alan Berger, Kevin Falvey, Steven Humphrey, David Kaplan, and Scott Soames for discussion or comments. Portions of the paper were presented at the universities of California, Irvine; California, Los Angeles; Southern California; and Yale. I am grateful to those audiences for their comments. The essay is dedicated to Noman, without whom it would not have been possible.

1. *Mind*, 14 (1905), pp. 479–493. Page references are to the reprinting in Robert M. Harnish, ed., *Basic Topics in the Philosophy of Language* (Prentice-Hall, 1994), pp. 161–173.

2. Principally in the following: *Frege’s Puzzle* (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview, 1986, 1991); “Reflexivity,” *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 27, 3 (June 1986), pp. 401–429; “How to Become a Millian Heir,” *Noûs*, 23, 2 (April 1989), pp. 211–220; “Illogical Belief,” in J. Tomberlin, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives*, 3: *Philosophy of Mind and Action Theory* (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview, 1989), pp. 243–285; “A Millian Heir Rejects the Wages of Sinn,” in C. A. Anderson and J. Owens, eds, *Propositional Attitudes: The Role of Content in Logic, Language, and Mind* (Stanford, Ca.: Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, 1990), pp. 215–247; “How Not to

Become a Millian Heir," *Philosophical Studies*, 62, 2 (May 1991), pp. 165–177; "Reflections on Reflexivity," *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 15, 1 (February 1992), pp. 53–63; "Relative and Absolute Apriority," *Philosophical Studies*, 69 (1993), pp. 83–100; and "Being of Two Minds: Belief with Doubt," *Noûs*, 29, 1 (January 1995), pp. 1–20.

To correct a common misconception: Millianism does not entail that a proper name has no features or aspects that might be deemed, in a certain sense, intensional or connotive. Unquestionably, some names evoke descriptive concepts in the mind of a user. Some may even have particular concepts conventionally attached. Though the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' have the same semantic content (the planet Venus), the former connotes *evening*, the latter *morning*. Barbarelli was called 'Giorgionne' because of his size, though the two names for the Venetian artist are semantically equivalent. There is no reason why there cannot be an operator that operates on this kind of connotation. Kripke mentions the particular construction 'Superman was disguised as Clark Kent'. The second argument position in '\_\_\_ is disguised as \_\_\_' (or 'dressed as', 'appears as', etc.) is semantically sensitive to the physical appearance associated with the name occurring in that position. It does not follow that this connotive aspect of a name belongs to semantics, let alone that it affects the propositions semantically expressed by sentences containing the name.

3. "Existence," in J. Tomberlin, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives, 1: Metaphysics* (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview, 1987), pp. 49–108.

4. Page references are to the reprinting in Harnish, pp. 142–160.

5. In "On Referring," *Mind*, 59 (1950), pp. 320–344.

6. Frege also speaks of a sentence like (1) as presupposing that the expression 'the present king of France' refers to something (pp. 151–152).

7. In Russell's *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), pp. 238–245.

8. These are called 'internal' and 'external' negation, respectively, in D. A. Bochvar, "On a Three-Valued Calculus and its Application in the Analysis of the Paradoxes of the Extended Functional Calculus," *Matematicheskii Sbornik*, 46 (1938), pp. 287–308.

9. Echoing Russell, Michael Dummett argues, in "Presupposition," *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 25 (1960), pp. 336–339, that Strawson has not shown that (1) is not false in an antecedently understood sense of the term, but has instead introduced a natural sense of 'false' different from that employed by Russell and on which the term, so understood, does not apply to (1). See also his *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973, 1981), chapter 12, especially pp. 419–429.

10. An analogous situation obtains in connection with verbs like 'know', 'realize', 'notice', etc. Is the untrue sentence 'Jones knows that the Earth is flat' false, or is it neither true nor false? The analogue of the Russellian view would be that this sentence is analyzable into a conjunction 'The Earth is flat &  $\varphi$ ', for some sentence  $\varphi$  concerning Jones's epistemic situation (e.g., 'Jones is epistemically justified, in a manner not defeated by Gettier-type phenomena, in believing that the Earth is flat'). This is the standard view in contemporary epistemology. The negation 'Jones does not know that the Earth is flat' may then be subject to an innermost/outermost scope ambiguity. The analogue of the Fregean view would be that the original sentence instead presupposes that the Earth is flat. This alternative to the Russellian view has been discussed by linguists. See Ed Keenan, "Two Kinds of Presupposition in Natural Language" in Charles Fillmore and D. Terence Langendoen, eds, *Studies in Linguistic Semantics* (1971), Paul and Carol Kiparski, "Fact," and Charles Fillmore, "Types of Lexical Information," both in D. D. Steinberg and L. A. Jakobovits, eds, *Semantics* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), and Deirdre Wilson, *Presuppositions and Non-Truth-Conditional Semantics* (Academic Press, 1975). On this view, the negation of the original sentence may be subject to a choice/exclusion lexical ambiguity. Either view may thus regard the negation as true in one sense and untrue in another, making the original sentence false in one sense, unfalse in another. The two views nevertheless differ over the question of whether the original sentence instantiates *F*-falseness<sub>1</sub>. (The similarity between the issues concerning reference and factives can be made more than merely analogous, by taking ' $\alpha$  knows that  $\varphi$ ' as shorthand for ' $\alpha$  knows the fact that  $\varphi$ ', with 'the fact that  $\varphi$ ' a definite description that is proper if and only if  $\varphi$  is true.)

11. Except that I here render '*Bedeutung*' as 'referent'.

12. Frege also suggests here that there may be an alternative reading for ‘Sachse exists’, on which it is tantamount to ‘Sachse = Sachse’, which Frege says is self-evident. He might well have said the same about ‘ $(\exists x)[\text{Sachse} = x]$ ’.

13. The term ‘semantic ascent’ is due to W. V. O. Quine. See his *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), §56.

14. *Frege’s Puzzle*, pp. 58–60 and elsewhere (especially 78–79, 84–85, 100, 114–115, 127–128). The distinction is developed further in other works cited in note 2 above.

15. See Church’s “On Carnap’s Analysis of Statements of Assertion and Belief,” *Analysis*, 10, 5 (1950), pp. 97–99. For a defense of the Church-Langford translation argument, see my “The Very Possibility of Language: A Sermon on the Consequences of Missing Church,” to appear in C. A. Anderson’s and M. Zelency’s, eds, *Logic, Meaning and Computation: Essays in Honor of Alonzo Church* (Boston: Kluwer, 1998).

16. Church cites the particular sentence (4) as an example of a true sentence containing an *ungraded* occurrence of a singular term (“name”), in *Introduction to Mathematical Logic I* (Princeton University Press, 1956), at p. 27n. See note 58 below.

17. Cf. my “Reference and Information Content: Names and Descriptions,” in D. Gabbay and F. Guenther, eds, *Handbook of Philosophical Logic IV: Topics in the Philosophy of Language* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1989), chapter IV.5, pp. 409–461, at 440–441 on Fregean sense-quotation. The idea comes from David Kaplan’s “Quantifying In,” in D. Davidson and J. Hintikka, eds, *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. O. Quine* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969), pp. 178–214; reprinted in L. Linsky, ed., *Reference and Modality* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 112–144, at 120–121. In English, the word ‘that’ attached to a subordinate clause (as in ‘Jones believes that  $\phi$ ’ or ‘It is necessary that  $\phi$ ’) typically functions in the manner of sense-quotation marks.

18. On this application of the translation argument, see my “A Problem in the Frege-Church Theory of Sense and Denotation,” *Noûs*, 27, 2 (June 1993), pp. 158–166, and “The Very Possibility of Language: A Sermon on the Consequence of Missing Church.”

19. Kripke does not officially endorse or reject Millianism. Informal discussions lead me to believe he is deeply skeptical. (Cf. his repeated insistence in “A Puzzle about Belief” that Pierre does not have inconsistent beliefs—in A. Margalit, ed., *Meaning and Use*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979, pp. 239–283; reprinted in N. Salmon and S. Soames, eds, *Propositions and Attitudes*, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 102–148.) Nevertheless, Kripke believes that a sentence using a proper name in an ordinary context (not within quotation marks, etc.) expresses a proposition only if the name refers. Similarly, Keith Donnellan, in “Speaking of Nothing,” *The Philosophical Review*, 83 (January 1974), pp. 3–32 (reprinted in S. Schwartz, ed., *Naming Necessity and Natural Kinds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 216–244), says, “when a name is used and there is a failure of reference, then no proposition has been expressed—certainly no true proposition. If a child says, ‘Santa Claus will come tonight,’ he cannot have spoken the truth, although, for various reasons, I think it better to say that he has not even expressed a proposition. [*footnote*: Given that this is a statement about reality and that proper names have no descriptive content, then how are we to represent the proposition expressed?]” (pp. 20–21)

20. Cf. “On What There Is,” in Quine’s *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953, 1961).

21. “Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice,” in K. J. Hintikka, J. Moravcsik, and P. Suppes, eds, *Approaches to Natural Language*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1973, pp. 490–518, at 516–517n19. Kripke has also described such a procedure.

22. In “Existence,” cited *supra* in note 3, at pp. 49–50. I draw heavily from the discussion there, especially at pp. 90–98, in the remainder of this section.

23. In “Quantifying In,” p. 135 of Linsky.

24. The same fate might befall Soc, if (as some believe) the present time did not itself exist when Socrates did. In order to facilitate the exposition I have pretended instead that times (like the present) exist eternally.

The sense in which there is a proposition that Nothan might have been taller than I actually am is troublesome. The fact that it seems to require quantification over objects that could not exist should give one pause. Still, it is difficult to deny that in *some* sense, there are such objects to be quantified

over; the proposition that Nothan might have been taller than I actually am is one such. To deny this would be to undertake the burden of explaining how it is either true that Nothan might have been taller than I actually am or true that Nothan could not have been. Either way, the result seems to be a true singular proposition that exists in no possible world. A substitutional interpretation of ‘there are’ may be called for when impossible objects rear their ugly heads.

25. “The Theory of Objects,” in R. Chisholm, ed., *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 76–117.

26. Ilhan Inan brought this possible objection to my attention.

27. The situation can be illustrated by means of a deductively valid argument:

(P1) The referent<sub>English</sub> of ‘Newman-1’ = the first child to be born in the 22nd century.

(P2) The first child to be born in the 22nd century = Newman-1.

Therefore,

(C) The referent<sub>English</sub> of ‘Newman-1’ = Newman-1.

Assume ‘Newman-1’ is used as a name of the future person who will be born first in the 22nd century. (This assumption, of course, begs the question against the objector, but let that pass; I wish to clarify the objector’s position from the perspective of one who is not persuaded by the objection.) Then the conclusion (C) specifies whom ‘Newman-1’ names; it states that the name names *that* particular future individual. Think of the argument as consisting not of these sentences, but of the propositions they express. The question at issue is whether (C) (the proposition) is already true. The truth or falsity of (P2), we are assuming, is not yet causally (or in some other manner) fixed. Equivalently, the result of prefixing the sentence (P2) with a temporal/modal operator ‘It is unpreventable that’ is false with respect to the present, and likewise the result of prefixing its negation. (Unpreventability is closed under logical consequence.) The objector reasons that since (P2) (the proposition) is still preventable, both it and (C) are as yet neither true nor false. (The objector will want to say this about (P1) as well.) This wrongly assumes that (for propositions of the class in question) truth is the same thing as unpreventability, thus making ‘It is unpreventable that  $\phi$ ’ truth-functional, equivalent in a three-valued logic to the double exclusion-negation of  $\phi$ , ‘ $\sim_{\text{E}}\sim_{\text{E}}\phi$ ’. The truth of (P1) is already unpreventable. Contrary to the objector, (P2) is also true, even though that fact is still preventable. Therefore (C), though preventable, is true.

This same deductive argument illuminates other philosophically interesting issues. I have used it to argue that though (P1) is true by semantics alone, and is also known by semantics alone, surprisingly (C)—which is established by this very argument—is neither. See “How to Measure the Standard Metre,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (New Series), 88, (1987/88), pp. 193–217, at 200–201n10; and “Analyticity and Apriority,” in J. Tomberlin, ed., *Philosophical Perspectives 7, Language and Logic* (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview, 1993), pp. 125–133, at 133n15.

28. Cf. note 24. The universal quantifier here cannot be substitutional. One of my central tasks in “Existence” was to investigate the viability of an analysis of existence in terms of standard objectual quantification.

29. Cf. “Existence,” pp. 90–97. Alvin Plantinga calls the doctrine that everything exists in any possible world in which it has properties *serious actualism*, in “De Essentia,” in E. Sosa, ed., *Essays on the Philosophy of Roderick M. Chisholm* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1979), pp. 101–121, at 108–109. By analogy, *serious presentism* would be the corresponding temporal doctrine that everything exists at any time at which it has properties. The doctrine that existence precedes suchness encompasses both serious actualism and serious presentism. Kripke says that the doctrine that existence is not itself a property but a prerequisite for having any properties, though rather obscure, seems to him in some sense true. The doctrine seems to me erroneous on both counts. What can a pre-condition for a given property be if not another property?

Joseph Almog, in “The Subject-Predicate Class I,” *Noûs*, 25, (1991), pp. 591–619, objects to my view that ‘Socrates does not exist’ is true in English in virtue of expressing a true singular proposition, on the ground that no sentence can be made true by Soc’s being the case since Soc no longer exists. Instead, he asserts (influenced by Donnellan—see note 19) that the sentence is true because ‘Socrates’



refers to Socrates, who does not exist (pp. 604–607; cf. Donnellan, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8). Far from solving the problem, skepticism about propositions only makes matters worse: A sentence that mentions Socrates but expresses nothing whatever about him cannot have truth value, let alone truth. In order for a sentence to be true, what it expresses must be the case; this is what truth for sentences consists in. (Curiously, Almog seems to concede this, just one page after objecting to my view.) Further, as Frege and Church argued, ‘Jones believes that Socrates does not exist’, if true, requires something for Jones to believe. A genuine solution requires genuine semantic content. Worse still, Almog’s purported solution is inconsistent. If Soc cannot be true only because it does not exist, then for exactly the same reason Socrates cannot be referred to—the name ‘Socrates’ is nonreferring, however weakly—and we are left with nothing that accounts for the truth in English of ‘Socrates does not exist’. But Socrates is referred to, warts and all, and Soc is the case (and in addition is expressed, believed, known, etc.).

30. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1919), at pp. 169–170. Cf. Russell’s *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, D. Pears, ed. (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1918, 1972, 1985), at pp. 87–88.

31. From appendix XI, “Names from Fiction,” of “Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice,” *loc. cit.*, at pp. 505–508. Kaplan credits John Bennett in connection with this passage. The same general argument occurs in Donnellan, *op. cit.*, at pp. 24–25, and in Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford University Press, 1974), section VIII.4, “Names: Their Function in Fiction,” at pp. 159–163.

32. Kripke, *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures for 1973* (Oxford University Press, unpublished); van Inwagen, “Creatures of Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14, 4 (October 1977), pp. 299–308, and “Fiction and Metaphysics,” *Philosophy and Literature*, 7, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 67–77. One possible difference between them is that van Inwagen accepts an ontology of fictional characters whereas Kripke is instead merely unveiling an ontology that he argues is assumed in the way we speak about fiction while remaining neutral on the question of whether this manner of speaking accurately reflects reality. My interpretation of Kripke is based partly on notes I took at his seminars on the topic of reference and fiction at Princeton University during March–April 1981 and on recordings of his seminars at the University of California, Riverside in January 1983. See also Kit Fine, “The Problem of Non-Existence: I. Internalism,” *Topoi*, 1 (1982), pp. 97–140; Thomas G. Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Harvard University Press, 1986); Amie Thomasson, “Fiction, Modality and Dependent Abstracta,” *Philosophical Studies*, 84 (1996), pp. 295–320; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1980). Various articles on the philosophy and logic of fiction are collected together in *Poetics*, 8, 1/2 (April 1979)—see especially Robert Howell, “Fictional Objects: How They Are and How They Aren’t,” pp. 129–177—and in Peter McCormick, ed., *Reasons of Art* (University of Ottawa Press, 1985).

33. Cf. Terence Parsons, “A Meinongian Analysis of Fictional Objects,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 1 (1975), pp. 73–86, and *Nonexistent Objects* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

34. Cf. Van Inwagen, *op. cit.* at p. 308n11. Kripke argues against any interpretation of (O) on which the name is used as a name of the fictional character but ‘exist’ receives a Pickwickian interpretation on which the sentence is true. I am somewhat less skeptical. See below, especially note 48. (Van Inwagen’s suggestion is neutral between this sort of account and the one proposed below.)

35. “Logic,” in Frege’s *Posthumous Writings*, *loc. cit.*, at p. 130. See also Kendall L. Walton, “On Fearing Fictions,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 75 (1978), pp. 5–27; and *Mimesis As Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

36. Kripke recognizes that this is generally equivalent, in some sense, to treating an object-fictional sentence  $\phi$  as implicitly shorthand for the meta-fictional ‘According to the fiction,  $\phi$ ’, and evaluating it as true or false accordingly. But he says that he prefers to regard it as applying ‘true’ and ‘false’ in conventionally extended senses directly to object-fictional sentences themselves in their original senses. Cf. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 15 (1978), pp. 37–46; reprinted with postscripts in Lewis’s *Philosophical Papers: Volume I* (Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 261–280.

37. Kripke cautions that when one is merely pretending to refer to a human being in using a name from fiction, that pretense does not in and of itself involve naming a fictional character. On the

contrary, such a pretense was involved in the very creation of the as yet unnamed fictional character. He also remarks that an object-fictional sentence like ‘Sherlock Holmes plays the violin’ would be counted true in the conventionally extended “according to the fiction” sense even if the name had only its ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ use and the language had not postulated fictional characters as objects. Van Inwagen (*op. cit.*, pp. 305–306) invokes a notion of a fiction “ascribing” a property to a character, but admits that his terminology is misleading. He does not explain his notion of *ascription* in terms of what sentences within the fiction express, since such sentences on his view (as on Kripke’s) do not mention fictional characters and express nothing at all. Nor does he explain this kind of ascription in any other terms. Instead the notion is an undefined primitive of the theory.

38. Babinet hypothesized Vulcan for reasons different than Le Verrier’s. See Warren Zachary Watson, *An Historical Analysis of the Theoretical Solutions to the Problem of the Perihelion of Mercury* (doctoral dissertation, Ann Arbor, Mich: University Microfilms, 1969), pp. viii, 92–94; and N. T. Roseveare, *Mercury’s Perihelion: From Le Verrier to Einstein* (Oxford University Press, 1982), at pp. 24–27. (Thanks to Alan Berger and Sidney Morgenbesser for bibliographical assistance. I also researched the Vulcan hypothesis on the Internet. When I moved to save material to a new file to be named ‘Vulcan’, the program responded as usual, only this time signaling a momentous occasion: **Vulcan doesn’t exist. Create? Y or N.**)

39. As Kripke intends the construction ‘There is no such thing as  $\alpha$ ’, it seems close in meaning to ( $8\alpha$ ). In our problem case,  $\alpha$  is ‘the proposition that Holmes<sub>1</sub> exists’. Since the ‘that’ prefix is itself a device for sense-quotation (see note 17), ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ would thus occur in a doubly *ungerade* context. It may be, therefore, that Kripke’s intensional-ascent theory presupposes (or otherwise requires) a thesis that proper names have a Fregean *ungerade Sinn*, or *indirect sense*, which typically determines the name’s referent, the latter functioning as both customary content and customary referent, but which in the case of a thoroughly nonreferring name determines nothing. This would provide a reason for intensional ascent; one hits pay dirt by climbing above customary content. Kripke’s theory would then involve Fregean intensional machinery that direct reference scrupulously avoids and Millianism altogether prohibits.

40. Cf. Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, J. McDowell, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1982), at pp. 349–352. See also note 2 above. The kind of intensionality required on Kripke’s account is not merely pragmatic in nature. Taking account of note 39, the account may be steeped in intensionality. The danger of entailing such consequences as those noted is very real. The theory of fiction in Lewis, *op. cit.* is similar to Kripke’s in requiring something like an *ungerade* use for thoroughly nonreferring names from fiction. Lewis embraces the conclusion that “the sense of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ as we use it is such that, for any world  $w$  where the Holmes stories are told as known fact rather than fiction, the name denotes at  $w$  whichever inhabitant of  $w$  it is who there plays the role of Holmes” (p. 267 of his *Philosophical Papers, I*). A similar conclusion is also reached in Robert Stalnaker, “Assertion,” P. Cole, ed., *Syntax and Semantics, 9: Semantics* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 315–332, at 329–331. These conclusions directly contradict Kripke’s account of proper names as rigid designators. In the first of the Locke Lectures, Kripke argues that uniquely being Holmesesque is not sufficient to be Holmes. Further, Kripke also argues there that the phenomenon of fiction cannot yield considerations against this or that particular philosophico-semantic theory of names, since it is part of the fiction’s pretense, for the theorist, that the theory’s “criteria for naming, whatever they are, are satisfied.” Why should this not extend to the thesis, from direct-reference theory, that names lack Kripke’s hypothesized “quasi-intensional use”?

Donnellan, *op. cit.*, regards negative existentials as unlike other object-fictional sentences, though his solution differs significantly from Kripke’s and is designed to avoid intensionality. Donnellan provides a criterion whereby if  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are distinct names from fiction, then (in effect) the corresponding true negative existentials, taken in the sense of ‘ $\alpha_1$  does not exist’ and ‘ $\beta_1$  does not exist’ as literally true statements about reality, express the same proposition if and only if  $\alpha_2$  and  $\beta_2$  name the same fictional character. (I have taken enormous liberties in formulating Donnellan’s criterion in terms of Kripke’s apparatus, but I believe I do not do any serious injustice.) This proposal fails to provide the proposition expressed. In fact, Donnellan concedes that “we cannot ... preserve a clear notion of what proposition is expressed for existence statements involving proper names” (p. 29; see



note 19 above). This fails to solve the original problem, which is even more pressing for Donnellan. How can such sentences be said to “express the same proposition” when by his lights neither sentence clearly expresses any proposition at all? Cf. note 29.

41. C. J. F. Williams, in *What is Existence?* (Oxford University Press, 1981), argues that ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is not a proper name (pp. 251–255). This is what Kaplan ought to have said, but he did not. See his “Words,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 64 (1990), pp. 93–119, especially section II, “What are Names?” at pp. 110–119.

42. What about a foggy headed literary theorist who maintains, as a sophomoric anti-realist or Meinongian philosophical view (or quasi-philosophical view), that Sherlock Holmes is in some sense no less flesh-and-blood than Conan Doyle? The more bizarre is someone’s philosophical perspective, the more difficult it is to interpret his/her discourse correctly. Such a case might be assimilated to that of myths. See below.

43. On the view I am proposing there is a sense in which a fictional character is prior to the fiction in which the character occurs. By contrast, Kripke believes that a fictional character does not come into existence until the final draft of the fiction is published. This severe restriction almost certainly does not accord with the way fiction writers see themselves or their characters. Even if it is correct, it does not follow that while writing a fiction, the author is using the name in such a way that it is thoroughly nonreferring. It is arguable that the name already refers to the fledgling abstract artifact that does not yet exist. There is not already, nor will there ever be, any genuine use of the name as the name of a human being; that kind of use is make-believe.

44. See note 37. If my view is correct, then van Inwagen’s use of the word ‘ascribe’ in saying that a fiction ascribes a particular property to a particular fictional character may be understood (apparently contrary to van Inwagen’s intent) quite literally, in its standard English meaning.

45. In reading a piece of fiction, do we pretend that an abstract entity is a prince of Denmark (or a brilliant detective, etc.)? The question is legitimate. But it plays on the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re*. Taken *de dicto*, of course not; taken *de re*, exactly. That abstract entities are human beings is not something we pretend, but there are abstract entities that we pretend are human beings. Seen in the proper light, this is no stranger than pretending that Marlon Brando is Don Corleone. (It is not nearly so strange as Brando portraying a character in *The Freshman* who, in the story, is the real person on whom the character Marlon Brando portrayed in *The Godfather* was modelled).

46. Cf. John Heintz, “Reference and Inference in Fiction,” *Poetics*, 8, 1/2 (April 1979), pp. 85–99. Where the fiction is inconsistent, the relevant notion of entailment may have to be non-standard. Also, the notion may have to be restricted to a *trivial* sort of entailment—on pain of counting arcane and even as yet unproved mathematical theorems true with respect to fiction. Cf. Lewis, *op. cit.*, at pp. 274–278 of his *Philosophical Papers*, I.

47. Philosophers have sometimes neglected to distinguish among different possible readings of an object-fictional sentence—or equivalently, between literal and extended (fictional) senses of ‘true’. See, for example, Richard L. Cartwright, in “Negative Existentials,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 57 (1960), pp. 629–639; and Jaakko Hintikka, “*Cogito Ergo Sum*: Inference or Performance,” *The Philosophical Review*, 71 (January 1962), pp. 3–32.

When we use an object-fictional sentence  $\phi$  as shorthand for something meta-fictional, what is the longhand form? Perhaps ‘There is a fiction according to which  $\phi$ ’, perhaps ‘According to the fiction in which he/she/it/they is a character,  $\phi$ ’, perhaps ‘According to *that* fiction,  $\phi$ ’, perhaps something else. Recognizing that we speak of fictional characters in these ways may to some extent obviate the need to posit a nonliteral, extended sense for all predicates. On the other hand, something like Kripke’s theory of extended senses may lie behind the use of gendered pronouns (‘he’) to refer to fictional people even in discourse about reality.

Perhaps the most difficult sentences to account for are those that assert cross-realm relations. Following Russell’s analysis of thinking someone’s yacht larger than it is, ‘Sherlock Holmes was cleverer than Bertrand Russell’ may be taken to mean that the cleverness that Holmes<sub>2</sub> had according to the stories is greater than the cleverness that Russell had. Cf. my *Reference and Essence* (Princeton University Press and Blackwell, 1981), at pp. 116–135, and especially 147n.

48. The notion of something being *sufficiently* like Holmes<sub>2</sub> is depicted may be to some extent interest-relative. Consequently, in some cases the truth value of an assertion made using (3a), with  $\alpha$  a name from fiction, may vary with the operative interests. Some scholars tell us, while not believing in vampires, that Bram Stoker's character of Count Dracula really existed. (This aspect of the theory I am suggesting raises a complex hornets' nest of difficult issues. Far from disproving the theory, however, some of these issues may tend to provide confirmation of sorts.)

Kripke argues that the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes does not really exist; he is only a fictional character', properly interpreted, involves an equivocation whereby the name has its original nonreferring use and 'he' is a "pronoun of laziness" referring to the fictional character—so that the sentence means that the man Holmes<sub>1</sub> does not exist and the fictional character Holmes<sub>2</sub> is just that. Kripke also says that one should be able to assert what is meant in the first clause of the original sentence without mentioning Holmes<sub>2</sub> at all. This is precisely what I believe cannot be done. The original may even be paraphrased into 'Sherlock Holmes does not really exist and is only a fictional character'. On my alternative hypothesis, the speaker may mean something like: *The Holmesesque-Holmes<sub>2</sub> does not really exist; Holmes<sub>2</sub> is only a fictional character*. This is equivalent to: Holmes<sub>2</sub> is not Holmesesque but a fictional character. Besides avoiding the putative 'Holmes<sub>1</sub>' use, my hypothesis preserves an anaphoric-like relation between pronoun and antecedent. (Other possibilities arise if Kripke's theory of extended senses for predicates is applied to 'Holmesesque'.)

49. In later work, and even in the same work cited *supra* in note 32, Kripke argued persuasively against positing ambiguities when an alternative, univocal hypothesis that explains the phenomena equally well is available. Cf. his "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference," in P. French, T. Uehling, and H. Wettstein, eds, *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. 6–27, especially 19.

50. Donnellan says that myth is not analogous to fiction (*op. cit.*, at pp. 6–8). Almog agrees, and dismisses the idea of a mythical Vulcan (*op. cit.*, pp. 611, 618n13). I am convinced these philosophers are mistaken, and that this myth about myths has also led other philosophers astray. When storytellers tell stories and theorists hypothesize, fictional and mythical creatures abound. (An interesting possibility: Perhaps the myth invented by Babinet no longer exists, now that no one believes it. Can a myth, once it is disproved, continue to exist as merely an unbelievably theory? If not, then perhaps 'Vulcan' is nonreferring after all, though only very weakly.)

Kripke extends his account in the natural way also to terms for objects in the world of appearance (e.g., a distant spec or dot), and to species names and other biological-kind terms from fiction and myth, like 'unicorn' and 'dragon'. The theory should be extended also to general terms like 'witch', 'wizard', etc. There is a mythical species designated by 'dragon', an abstract artifact, not a real species. Presumably, if *K* is the mythical species (or higher level taxonomic kind) of dragons, then there is a corresponding concept or property of being a beast of kind *K*, thus providing semantic content for the predicate 'is a dragon'. Kripke believes there is a prior use of the term, in the sense of 'dragon<sub>1</sub>', which has no semantic content. But as before, on this point I find no persuasive reason to follow his lead.

Are there dragons? There are myths and fictions according to which there are dragons, for example the legend of Puff. Is Puff, then, a dragon? No, he is a fictional character—an abstract artifact and not a beast. Fictional dragons like Puff are not real dragons—though they may be said to be "dragons," if by saying that we mean that they are dragons in the story. (Cf. Kripke's hypothesized extended sense of 'plays the violin'.) Is it metaphysically possible for there to have been dragons in the literal (unextended) sense of the word? No; the mythical species *K* is not a real species, any more than Puff is a real beast, and the mythical species could not have been a species any more than Puff could have been a beast. It is essential to *K* that it not be a species. *A fortiori* there could not have been such beasts. The reasoning here is very different from that of Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*, at pp. 156–157, which emphasizes the alleged 'dragon<sub>1</sub>' use (disputed here), on which 'There are dragons' allegedly expresses nothing (hence nothing that is possibly true).

The account of mythical objects as real abstract artifacts also yields a solution to P. T. Geach's famous problem about Hob's and Nob's hypothesized witch, from "Intentional Identity," *Journal of Philosophy*, 74, 20 (1967).

51. I am assuming throughout that in introducing ‘Vulcan’, Babinet presupposed the existence of an intra-Mercurial planet to be so named. In some cases of reference fixing, the description employed may have what I call a *Bad mock referential*, or *Ugly*, use—i.e., reference is fixed by an implicit description not coreferential with the description explicitly used. See my “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” forthcoming in Paolo Leonardi’s festschrift for Keith Donnellan. Cf. Kripke on ‘Hesperus’, in *Naming and Necessity*, at p. 80n34.

52. But see note 43. I introduced ‘Holmes<sub>1</sub>’ as a name having the thoroughly nonreferring use that the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ originally has according to Kripke’s theory. That alleged use is mythical. My introduction of the name thus misfired; no genuine use was attached to the name on which it may be said either to refer or not to refer. I might have fixed the reference of a new name, say ‘Holmes<sub>3</sub>’ (not a disguised description), by the description ‘the Holmesesque-Holmes<sub>2</sub>’. Analogously, I might have introduced a name ‘Vulcan<sub>3</sub>’ as a name for the planet, if there is one, whose gravitational force (rather than general relativity) correctly explains the irregularities in Mercury’s orbit, and nonreferring otherwise. I would exploit a certain myth to obtain the reference-fixing description, but would have introduced the name in such a way that it does not refer instead to Babinet’s mythical planet. Had I done this, authentic true negative existentials with thoroughly nonreferring names would have been generated.

53. The set-theoretic representation can be made formally precise in an intuitive way (for example by invoking partial functions). Cf. my discussion of *open propositions* in *Frege’s Puzzle*, at pp. 155–156n. (The alternative terminology of ‘structurally impaired proposition’ is implicitly structuralist, hence contrary to the inclusive spirit of the present essay, which celebrates cognitive structural diversity. I also resist the temptation to use the abbreviation ‘SC-proposition’, for fear it might be mistaken as shorthand for ‘Southern California proposition’ and the idea then summarily dismissed.)

It is reported in Almog, *op. cit.*, p. 618n15, that Kaplan, in an unpublished 1973 lecture commenting on Kripke, proposed that ‘Vulcan does not exist’ expresses a true “gappy proposition.” Kaplan briefly mentions a similar idea in “Demonstratives,” in J. Almog, J. Perry, and H. Wettstein, eds, *Themes from Kaplan* (Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 481–563, at 496n23. Contrary to the view imputed to Kaplan, ‘Vulcan does not<sub>c</sub> exist’, taken literally, expresses on my view a false structurally unchallenged singular proposition about the mythical planet (and may frequently be understood instead as expressing the true proposition that there is no Vulcanesque Vulcan<sub>2</sub>).

Plantinga, in “On Existentialism,” *Philosophical Studies*, 44 (1983), pp. 1–20, at p. 9, argues as part of a defense of serious actualism (note 29 above) that the singular proposition about William F. Buckley that he is wise might be regarded as existing but “ill-formed or even maimed” in a possible world in which Buckley does not exist. This is decidedly different from my view. The only defect suffered by Soc is that it does not exist; it is neither “ill-formed” nor “maimed.” It is even true. In a possible world in which Buckley does not exist the proposition that he is wise is neither existent nor true, but it does not face the structural challenges of singular propositions about Nappy and Curly-0.

54. Frege’s Principle of Compositionality for Reference, as he understood it, required that the usual truth-functional connectives observe their Kleene weak three-valued truth tables, on which any truth-functional compound with a non-truth-valued component is itself without truth value regardless of the truth values of the other components. Whereas Frege’s argument for this may seem inconclusive at best, an analogous argument is more persuasive as regards truth-functional compounds with structurally challenged components. At the very least, atomic structurally challenged propositions do seem, intuitively, to lack the resources necessary to achieve truth value. If it is incorrect to say that Nappy is bald, it is equally incorrect to say that Nappy is not<sub>c</sub> bald, and for the very same reason. Mimicking Russell, if we enumerated the things that are bald, and then the things that are not bald, we should not find Nappy in either list. Even Russell, who loved truth value (and abhorred a synthesis), would probably have withheld falsity as well as truth from (\_\_\_, baldness)—unless he was prepared to label such things as Picadilly Circus and his own singleton false.

55. The same point might be made by using Kaplan’s *dthat* operator, on its originally intended interpretation. Cf. Kaplan’s “Afterthoughts” to his “Demonstratives,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 565–614, at 578–582. I am arguing that, on that original interpretation, the two sentences ‘*Dthat*[the present emperor of France] is bald’ and ‘*Dthat*[the possible bald man presently in Quine’s doorway] is bald’ express the same thing, though each presents the structurally challenged proposition in its own special way.

56. Thus one who believes that Curly-0 is bald thereby also believes (despite any denials) that Nappy is bald. Cf. *Frege's Puzzle*, at p. 7, and especially pp. 127–128. The present essay delivers on the promissory note issued there.

57. David Braun, in “Empty Names,” *Noûs*, 27 (December 1993), pp. 449–469, at 460–465, develops Kaplan’s idea of gappy propositions in connection with sentences like ‘Vulcan is bald’ and ‘Vulcan does not exist’. See note 53 above. To repeat: Vulcan does exist, and such sentences as these express ordinary, structurally unchallenged propositions. Aside from this, Braun illegitimately makes the problem too easy for himself, arguing by analogy (in effect) that since all structurally unchallenged propositions have truth value so too do all structurally challenged ones, then asserting without further argument that atomic monadic singular propositions are false whenever there is nothing in the subject position that has the property in the predicate position—so that without any further ado, all atomic structurally challenged propositions are straightforwardly false. Against this, see note 54 above.

58. As mentioned in note 16, Church cites (4) as an example of a true sentence in which a singular term has an *ungerade* occurrence. He also cites ‘Lady Hamilton was like Aphrodite in beauty’ and ‘The fountain of youth is not located in Florida’. It is possible that Church held that the constructions ‘\_\_\_ is located in Florida’ and ‘Lady Hamilton is like \_\_\_ in beauty’ are (at least sometimes) *ungerade* devices. On such a view the un-negated sentences, ‘The fountain of youth is located in Florida’ and (3) would be *F*-false<sub>1</sub> sentences in which the subject terms have *ungerade* occurrences, the first expressing that the concept ‘the fountain of youth’ determines something with a certain location. But it seems at least as likely, assuming that ‘the fountain of youth’ is nonreferring, that this sentence is neither true nor *F*-false<sub>1</sub>, and the *ungerade* device in ‘The fountain of youth is not located in Florida’, and that in (4), is instead something common to both sentences.

In light of the fountain of youth’s role in fable and myth (not to mention its impact on Ponce de Leon), Church’s example might be better replaced with a sentence like ‘The present king of France is not among the bald men of the world’, which may be more readily accepted as true than (2). It is unclear whether Church would have held that this sentence, assuming it is true, means that the concept ‘the present king of France’ does not determine something that is among the bald men of the world (analogously to the intensional-ascent theory of existence), or instead that the proposition ‘the present king of France is among the bald men of the world’ is not true (analogously to the exclusion theory of nonexistence). Church’s abstention from citing (2) itself as another example of the same phenomenon may suggest the former interpretation—on which such expressions as ‘located in Florida’ and ‘among the bald men of the world’ are distinguished from ‘bald’ as *ungerade* devices. (C. Anthony Anderson conjectures that the relational aspect of ‘\_\_\_ is located in \_\_\_’ and ‘\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_ in beauty’ may have played a role in Church’s view that they are *ungerade* devices. This would involve assimilating them to ‘\_\_\_ seeks \_\_\_’, which on Church’s view expresses a relation between an object and a concept, thus distinguishing them from ‘\_\_\_ is bald’. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8n20. Anderson notes that ‘\_\_\_ is among \_\_\_’ is likewise relational.) On the other hand, the mere juxtaposition of two examples involving negation may suggest the latter interpretation. (It is possible that relational phrases like ‘located in Florida’ and ‘among the bald men of the world’ have a greater tendency than ‘bald’ to induce the exclusion reading of their negation.)

59. The choice/exclusion ambiguity may extend also to the negation in ‘Nappy is nonexistent’, and even to the negations in ‘Nappy is innocuous, since he is nonexistent’. The theory may even be sufficiently flexible to accommodate those who remain unconvinced concerning the nonexistent propositions mentioned above, like Soc. A skeptic concerning a particular nonexistent proposition may replace the offending proposition with the corresponding structurally challenged proposition, which does exist. It is not always possible to do so, however, while preserving truth value. The nonexistent proposition that Nothan, had he been born instead of me, would have been taller than I actually am is either true or false, but the corresponding structurally challenged proposition is evidently neither. Even if the latter is deemed to have truth value, then so must be the structurally challenged propositions corresponding to the nonexistent propositions that Nothan would have been shorter than I actually am and that Nothan would have been exactly the same height as I actually am. At least one of these existing structurally challenged surrogates fails to preserve the truth value of the nonexistent proposition it was put in to replace.