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CONSERVATIVE MEINONGIANISM: AN ACTUALIST+ ONTOLOGY

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In the main, this paper is a defence of the classic Meinongian thesis that ‘there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects,’ in relation to talking donkeys and other fictitious or illusory objects.¹ But the thesis is reconstrued in a distinctive way; it is interpreted as claim that in an important sense, there are non-existent objects *in this world*.

Some have wondered whether a thesis like Meinong’s is even consistent (Lycan 1979, 1994; van Inwagen 1977, 1983, 2003; Lewis 1990). But all are agreed that contradiction is avoided if the two quantifiers in the thesis are given different readings. And indeed, the view to be developed is not that ‘there are’ talking donkeys in our world in the same sense that there are non-talking donkeys in our world. Though admittedly, the sense in which there are talking donkeys in our world is obscure, and making this clear is of central importance. (Unlike some Meinongians, we shall refuse to take the Meinongian quantifier as primitive.)

As a rule, any Meinongian view is ‘conservative’ in that it preserves the appearance that we refer freely to non-existents, and speak truths about them. Yet the view developed is conservative in a second sense. In contrast to other Meinongians, I do not simply describe non-existents as mind-independent. (Hence, in defending Meinong’s thesis, I make no pretense to historical accuracy.) Instead, the view just allows the sense in which there actually are mind-dependent objects—illusory and fictitious objects (including impossibilia) being prime examples. Given the mind-dependence thesis, the expansion in one’s ontology is thus a relatively conservative one by Meinongian standards.

¹ Relatedly, ‘Everything’ is not always the answer to ‘What is there?’, pace Quine (1948).

A further important element is that the present Meinongianism features a more conservative ‘ideology.’² For the usual Meinongian talk of ‘nuclear’ or ‘encoded’ properties (as occurs in Mally 1912; Parsons 1980; Zalta 1988) will be paraphrased away. In brief, such talk is unnecessary once we realize that *property-instances* of fictional/illusory objects are, themselves, fictional or illusory.³

The three conservative features suggest that a thesis like Meinong’s has been underestimated by philosophers, and the aim is to show why it should be taken seriously. Still, the discussion is silent on several crucial matters. For instance, there is no attempt to develop the formal semantics in any detail—the focus is just on clarifying the ontology. And even so, the problem of ‘incomplete’ fictional objects must be passed over (e.g., the ‘indeterminacy’ in whether Santa has a mole on his left knee). Also, we must skip problems of individuation, made famous by Quine’s (1948) possible bald/fat man in the doorway. These topics are omitted not because they are unimportant, but because an author can accomplish only so much in one paper.⁴

However, we will address a string of objections along way. Even so, the arguments below are not controversy-free. If a philosopher is determined to resist such Meinongianism, they will succeed—and the literature on empty representation is so vast, one can hardly do justice to it all. Be that as it may, my hope is to make clear why the view offered here is a new kind of Meinongianism, and why its innovations make it an especially attractive kind.

² This is usually called a ‘parsimonious’ ideology in the literature, though ‘conservative’ strikes me as more apt. The aim is not merely to have as few terms as possible—after all, a whole theory could be coded as a single digit. The aim is rather to have the most ‘user friendly’ ideology. This is served partly by jettisoning unnecessary jargon, but it is also served by the lexicon being, at most, a conservative extension of a lexicon you already know.

³ A fourth conservative feature, though it is detachable from the view, is a kind of *quietism*. As explained in Parent (2015a), this is a refusal to see interpretations as answering the *most fundamental* questions of ontology. This is my attitude when assigning a term a Meinongian object, though none of my arguments require such an attitude.

⁴ For an explication and defence of ‘incomplete’ Meinongian objects, see Parsons (1980). For a Meinongian response to Quine’s possible bald/fat man, see Priest (2005/2016).

1. NEGATIVE EXISTENTIALS: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE

We may start with a novel version of the problem of negative existentials, one that proves more vexing to anti-Meinongians than is usual. Consider here a true negative existential such as:

(P) Pegasus does not exist.

Traditionally, the semantical problem is put as follows:⁵ A subject-predicate sentence is true only if the subject-term is meaningful—and it is meaningful only if it refers to something. But the subject-term (P) does not refer to anything. Thus ‘Pegasus’ is not meaningful in (P), and so, (P) is not even truth-apt, much less true. But (P) *is* true: If we search the world high and low, we won’t find Pegasus anywhere.

This formulation of the problem seems unnecessarily contentious, however, since it supposes that a subject-term is meaningful only if it refers to something. Yet ‘Pegasus’ would be precisely the sort of term which falsifies this. For this and other reasons, I wish to pose the problem anew as the following inconsistent triad. Where ‘ Φ ’ is a metavariable, and ‘ α ’ is a metavariable for proper names specifically:

- (1) If a sentence of the form $\lceil \Phi(\alpha) \rceil$ is true in the actual world, then the open formula $\lceil \Phi(x/\alpha) \rceil$ is satisfied by an actual object named by α .
- (2) (P) is a sentence of the form $\lceil \sim\Psi(\text{Pegasus}) \rceil$ and is true in the actual world.⁶
- (3) The formula $\lceil \sim\Psi(x/\text{Pegasus}) \rceil$ is not satisfied by an actual object named by ‘Pegasus’.

⁵ This is how the problem is phrased in, e.g., Russell (1905).

⁶ Traditionally, ‘exist’ has been viewed as a quantifier, so that (P) has the logical form ‘ $\sim(\exists y) y = \text{Pegasus}$.’ Yet the view that ‘exist’ is a predicate has been reinvigorated by, e.g., McGinn (2002), Azzouni (2004), and Moltmann (2013). Accordingly, I mean to leave open here whether $\lceil \sim\Psi(x) \rceil$ is the negation of a quantified or unquantified formula.

Here, there is no dubious reference-condition on the meaningfulness of a subject-term. Instead, it is held that a sentence of the form $\ulcorner \Phi(x/\alpha) \urcorner$ (i.e., a sentence with a proper name) is *true* in the domain of actual objects only if an actual object satisfies the predicate. This derives from a standard semantic assumption that if $\ulcorner \Phi(x/\alpha) \urcorner$ is true within a model, the predicate is satisfied by an object in that model. But if the actual world stands as the relevant model, true negative existentials appear to violate this.⁷

The new formulation is also important since it proves less tractable to Lewis' (1986) 'other worlds' approach—also employed by Modal Meinongians such as Priest (2005/2016) and Berto (2008, 2011). (The term 'Modal Meinongian' is from Berto.) On this approach, (P) is true because 'Pegasus' names a creature that inhabits only in some nonactual world. But assuming (1), this does not yet vindicate (P) as a truth in the domain of actual objects, a truth that holds *here*. So one may well grant that the 'other worlds' approach explains its truth in some extended sense. But we also want to say that (P) is true in our world considered *in itself*, and this does not yet follow on the other worlds approach.

In reply, one might invoke distinction between (P) being true 'at' our world, versus being true 'in' our world. Such a distinction is not unprecedented (see, e.g. Plantinga 1974; Stalnaker 1976). However, in recruiting the distinction, the 'other worlds' approach would admit that (P) is true only 'at' our world, but not 'in' it. Yet that is precisely the problem: We want to say (P) is true *in* our world, and not merely true in some extended sense.⁸

⁷ Granted, there are those who will reject (1). Yet this is to surrender classical logic; the truth of (1) is needed for the formal validity of existential instantiation. This is not a decisive point in its favor, but it gives (1) a certain *prima facie* appeal. In fact, I myself reject classical logic in §5, where the being of round squares is allowed. But rejecting (1) means surrendering classical logic even with respect to *Pegasus*—and that is something I would hope to avoid.

⁸ Relatedly, Berto (2013) talks of Holmes being 'in the domain of our world' without being *within* our world; this explains why 'Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes' is actually true. Yet I do not how to take this. Objects 'in a domain', after all, are in the domain of a quantifier. So if Holmes is in the domain for the actual world, then he must *in some sense* 'exist' in the actual world. But Berto does not seem prepared to admit that. (To his credit, he admits some obscurity here, yet suggests the problem is not unique to him; see p. 177.)

In contrast, the new Meinongian will propose a sense in which Pegasus *is* in our world, even though in another sense he is obviously not. But why not just reject (2) instead?⁹ A descriptivist, for instance, will say that the logical form of (P) does not feature a proper name concatenated with a predicate; rather, it features a definite description—so that (P) is properly read as ‘The winged horse captured by Bellerophon does not exist.’¹⁰ Once (P) is seen this way, the truth of the sentence does not require the subject-term to denote some part of the actual world. Instead, the sentence is true by the fact that nothing in the actual world satisfies the description ‘the winged horse captured by Bellerophon’.

As first observed by Marcus (1961), however, Russellian descriptions do not seem equivalent to names.¹¹ But while this is now widely accepted for non-empty terms, some philosophers retain a descriptivist view for *empty* names/kind terms (e.g., Boghossian 1997). The thought is that an empty term cannot directly refer (since there is nothing to directly refer to). So it appears its meaning must be fixed by a description.

In an important paper, however, Brock (2004) shows that Marcus’ point applies just as well—nay, even better—in the case of empty names. Suppose the descriptivist says that ‘Pegasus’ is equivalent to ‘the winged horse captured by Bellerophon.’ Then, (C) should be equivalent to (C*):

(C) Pegasus might have not been captured by Bellerophon.

(C*) Pegasus might not have been Pegasus.

⁹ There are many other views of negative existentials, and I am unable to address them all. Descriptivism is singled out, since besides its continuing interest, it is historically the leading anti-Meinongian view (cf. Russell 1906). But see section 6 for some comparisons with other competing views.

¹⁰ I’m glossing that ‘Bellerophon’ is an empty name too. A descriptivist ultimately breaks it down into a set of descriptors also.

¹¹ The point is better known via Kripke (1972/1980), and one should recognize that there have been detractors such as Searle (1983) (mentioned further below), and more recently, Jackson (2010).

But whereas (C) is true, (C*) is not. Also, it is no help to rigidify the descriptor, e.g., in the way that Searle (1983) proposes for non-empty names. In particular, we cannot analyze ‘Pegasus’ as ‘the actual winged horse captured by Bellerophon;’ for otherwise, (P) expresses:

(P*) The actual winged horse captured by Bellerophon is not actual.

And while (P) is true, (P*) is contradictory. Perhaps there are ways a descriptivist could reply to this—but it at least makes it not unreasonable to consider other options.

2. MERELY INTENTIONAL OBJECTS

To this end, let us consider the following:

(I) Pegasus is imaginary.

I submit that (I) is actually true. But if so, then even a descriptivist needs an actual object to explain this. The descriptivist would analyse this as something like ‘there is an x such that x is an imaginary winged-horse...’ Yet for that quantificational claim to be actually true, there must *be an actual object* satisfying the descriptor. Similarly, (I) vexes ‘fictionalist’ views, where it is interpreted as ‘According to the fiction, Pegasus is imaginary’ (see Lewis 1978; Rosen 1990; Nolan 2002; Brock 2002; Sainsbury 2010). After all, Pegasus is not imaginary according to Greek myth—he is rather a flesh-and-blood creature.¹²

In light of such considerations, the new Meinongian proposes that there is an *actual object* o satisfying $\ulcorner \text{Imaginary}(x) \urcorner$. But if so, what kind of object could o be? Well, if o satisfies $\ulcorner \text{Imaginary}(x) \urcorner$, then o is imaginary. Or more broadly, o is a *merely intentional* object, or ‘MIO’ for short. Such an object is ‘merely’ intentional in the sense that the object does not also

¹² Sainsbury replies to this sort of concern by offering an alternate analysis: ‘According to the fiction, Pegasus exists’ (2010, p. 150). But this will not do in general, since some objects in fiction are not imaginary, e.g. Napoleon in *War and Peace* (Kripke 1973/2013). Truth be told, however, Sainsbury’s considered view ends up looking rather different, for it is joined with the negative free logic of Sainsbury (2005). But unfortunately, I cannot explore this here without going too far afield.

exist in the mind-independent world.¹³ But since *O* is actual, that means *O* is an actual yet merely intentional object satisfying the predicate.¹⁴

Naturally, this will be met with resistance. An immediate objection is that if an actual object *O* = Pegasus, then Pegasus is actual! However, this is not as fatal as it seems. For Pegasus is not identified as a mind-independent object in our world. Quite the contrary—the truth of (I) means that he is just pretend. So the view is that Pegasus is indeed an actual object albeit a mind-*dependent* object.

Regardless, talk of ‘actual imaginary objects’ may seem to abuse the term ‘actual’. As mentioned, some declare this to be unintelligible, even to the point of being ‘literally gibberish’ (Lycan 1979, p. 290). But when it is said that Pegasus is not actual, ‘actual’ indeed denotes (something like) mind-independent objects in our world; let us use ‘**actual**’ to express this sense of the term. Whereas, when Pegasus is said to be an ‘actual imaginary object,’ ‘actual’ denotes both mind-independent and merely intentional, mind-*dependent* objects in our world. Let us use ‘actual+’ to mark this use of the term.

And it is key against Lycan et al. that both uses of ‘actual’ is already present in natural language. Consider:

- (A1) There actually are mirages.
- (A2) There actually are hallucinated objects.
- (A3) There actually are imaginary objects.

I submit that each of (A1)-(A3) has a true and a false reading in English. On the true reading, for example, (A3) just says that thanks to our imaginative faculty, some things are imaginary. But on the false reading, it states that these imagined objects are not merely imagined. A similar

¹³ The term ‘merely intentional object’ is from Brentano, though I am told it originates in the Medieval scholastics.

¹⁴ McGinn (2000, 2004, ch. 10) and Crane (2013) defend similar views, though they differ in crucial respects. See section 5 for elaboration.

distinction holds of (A1) and (A2) as well. And generally, it seems that MIOs are ‘actual’ in one sense of the term, but not in another sense. Yet this indicates that English already contains a use of ‘actual’ that extends to non**actual**s. Such talk is hardly ‘gibberish.’

Still, in the regimented language, an anti-Meinongian will hope to paraphrase away the Meinongian ‘actual’ in the true readings of (A1)-(A3). Yet these examples are not meant to prove that the regimentation of English requires Meinongian objects. Rather they are meant to show just that ordinary English features Meinongian uses of ‘actual’. And though the point is modest, it is still important—for it shows that the distinction between ‘**actual**’ and ‘actual+’ is not mere philosopher’s jargon. It is a distinction that is already grasped by English speakers.

With negative existentials, we can therefore intelligibly say without contradiction that Pegasus is actual+ and not **actual**. He is ‘actually nonactual’ meaning that Pegasus is actually+ a MIO. Accordingly, the inconsistent triad is resolved by refining (1)-(3) as follows:

(1*) If a sentence of the form $\lceil \Phi(\alpha) \rceil$ is true in the actual+ world, the open formula

$\lceil \Phi(x/\alpha) \rceil$ is then satisfied by some actual+ object named by α .

(2*) (P) is a sentence of the form $\lceil \sim\Psi(\text{Pegasus}) \rceil$ and is true in the actual+ world.

(3*) The formula $\lceil \sim\Psi(x/\text{Pegasus}) \rceil$ is not satisfied by some **actual** object named by ‘Pegasus’.

All this is quite consistent. Yet to be clear:

(4) $\lceil \sim\Psi(x/\text{Pegasus}) \rceil$ is satisfied by an actual+ object named by ‘Pegasus’.

Thus, (P) is true in the actual+ world, owing to an actual+ object satisfying the predicate—albeit a non**actual** one. For the name ‘Pegasus’ directly (i.e., non-descriptively) refers to a MIO.

Admittedly, it is mysterious how a name comes to refer to a MIO (though, like a non-empty name, perhaps it can be introduced via a non-equivalent descriptor). Regardless, for the new

Meinongian it is clear enough that ‘Pegasus’ names an imaginary object, even if it is not obvious how it does this.

Note well; nothing here vindicates ‘Pegasus does not exist’ as an **actual** truth. Yet this is how it should be. If we consider a model of only **actual** objects, the name ‘Pegasus’ fails to denote. So in that sort of model, (P) is like the sentence ‘Blurgaflurg does not exist’—both sentences would use a subject-term that does not even denote a MIO. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to ask why ‘Pegasus does not exist’ is true in that model—just as it would be a mistake to ask this of ‘Blurgaflurg does not exist’. For neither sentence is true in the model; instead, they are not truth-evaluable, thanks to their uninterpreted proper names.

Now in our world (P) is true, and that means that our world (somewhat paradoxically) does not merely consist in the **actual** world. But by this, I mean only that our world contains actual+ objects and not just the **actual** ones. One distinguishing feature of our world is that we have a mythical creature called ‘Pegasus.’ A world in which Pegasus was never conjured up would be a world that is different from ours.

Some may protest that the foregoing smacks of Quine’s (1948) nemesis McX, who thinks the object of ‘Pegasus’ is the *idea* of Pegasus. But that is not the claim. Rather, it is that the MIO is the object of ‘Pegasus’ *as well as* the object of the idea. Yet since Pegasus is an artifact of the imagination, there is a sense in which Pegasus is only ‘of the mind.’ But he is not an idea—it is not as if he *represents* an object in the manner of an idea. In the vernacular, speakers may say that Pegasus is ‘just an idea.’ Still, this is misleading. It encourages not only the McXian idea that Pegasus represents, but also that Pegasus represents *Pegasus* in particular, making him a kind of self-referring idea (which would be truly bizarre).

But if Pegasus is not an idea, what is he? From one angle, the answer is plain: Pegasus *isn't anything*, at least not in the **actual** world. Yet from another angle, Pegasus is the actual+ intentional object of some thoughts and expressions. Though again, he is merely intentional. I confess I lack a fully informative set of necessary and sufficient conditions for being such an object. But the true readings of (A1)-(A3) indicate some paradigmatic examples. And as noted there, if such things are esoteric philosophy-speak; they are understood by ordinary English speakers. (For further explanation, see also the next section.)

Now although 'actual' and 'actual+' are satisfied just by objects in our world, we can also introduce world-relative uses, akin to quantification in Lewis (1986). Thus, we can say Pegasus is **actual-at-a-Pegasus-world**, even though he is **nonactual**, i.e., **nonactual-at-our-world**. The world-relative uses are helpful, since *inter alia* they help make sense of negative existentials that are true at **nonactual** worlds. Consider a world just like the world of *Macbeth*, except Macbeth dubs the hallucinated dagger 'Spooky.' In such a world, he is then able to say correctly:

(S) Spooky does not exist, though the murder weapon does.

This would rightly state that only the murder weapon is **actual-at-Macbeth's-world**. Though in a sense, Spooky is part of his world; it makes his world different from one without any such dagger. We can capture this by saying that Spooky is actual+-but-**nonactual-in-Macbeth's-world**. And in his world (as in ours), the distinction here would turn on whether the thing is a MIO. (Notably, Macbeth's hallucinated dagger is actual+-in-our-world as well, since the dagger is something we imagine. But of course it is not something we ourselves hallucinate.¹⁵)

¹⁵ This observation also resolves a problem case given by Thomas Hofweber (in conversation): Suppose that a certain drug causes hallucinations of a mythical creature called 'Thomasus.' If you are uninitiated in the drug, you can still understand what this means, even though you lack first-hand experience. But on the present view, such experience seems required if 'Thomasus' is to avoid the fate of 'Blurgafllurg.' Yet we must distinguish *imagining* Thomasus from *hallucinating* him. The two experiences may be different, since only the latter may involve a visual image of the creature. Still, the object imagined can be the same as the object hallucinated—for the creature is not the image experienced, but rather the object of these images.

That Spooky is part of Macbeth's world is a further datum which vexes Lewis and other-worlds Meinongians. 'Spooky' would be a name for an imaginary object that is not found in Macbeth's spacetime. So on such views, there would be no sense in which a hallucinated dagger is part of his world. Yet there is a real sense in which it is. A world without the hallucinated dagger would not be the world described by Shakespeare's tale.

The point also counters a reply from the 'other worlds' gambit, re: the reformulated problem of negative existentials. The reply would be to co-opt my proposed disambiguation at (1*)–(3*), yet reinterpret 'actual' as the Lewisian indexical 'actual', and 'actual+' as Lewis' unrestricted quantifier, respectively. This could be used to get the truth-value of (P) right, without appeal to 'actual' non-existent objects. However, the proposal could not be extended to (S); specifically, it would not retain a sense in which Spooky is part of Macbeth's world. After all, Spooky is not in Macbeth's spacetime; i.e, he is not actual-in-his-world (indexical use). So Spooky would not be a part of Macbeth's world at all—even if one adds that Spooky is 'actual' in some less restricted domain. But again, the intuition is that Spooky is a part of *that* world. If one remains unconvinced, we might add that Macbeth's mind and/or brain is plausibly what *causes* the hallucinated object. So if Lewis (1986, p. 78) is right that there is no trans-world causation, then Spooky and Macbeth must be in the same world.

3. THE NATURE OF MIOS

It is worth emphasizing what has not been said about Pegasus and other MIOs. Specifically, in saying 'Pegasus is actual+', there is no suggestion of a Platonic heaven where Pegasus lives as an abstract object. The idea is that Pegasus is a mind-*dependent* object, a MIO, and more

specifically, a product of the imagination. Once we are clear on that, it seems much easier to acknowledge a sense in which Pegasus is actual.

Meinongians usually say that non-existents are mind-*independent*, but for reasons that are not obviously sound. Parsons (1980) says that mind-dependence implies that Pegasus comes into existence at a particular time, even though he does not exist. Still, Parsons grants that an author can bestow *fictional existence* on Pegasus (p. 188), and this plausibly fits with my claim that Pegasus is actually+ a MIO. Yet Findlay (1963) also argues that nonexistents cannot be mind-dependent since ‘these objects exist as little when we are imagining them as at any other time’ (p. 56). But I concur that Pegasus is not **actual**, whether or not he is imagined. So in that sense, Pegasus’ ontological status does not depend minds. Yet in another way, his status indeed so depends—in particular, Pegasus’ actuality+ depends on whether there is a mind to imagine him.

What exactly does it mean to be mind-dependent? It potentially means several different things.¹⁶ But in the present discussion, Pegasus is mind-dependent in the sense that in a world W where neither Pegasus nor minds are **actual-in- W** , Pegasus has no being in any sense at all. The point is intuitive enough: A world without minds is a world without imaginations, hence, without imaginary objects. Yet note on the current usage, minds themselves are not ‘mind-dependent.’ Nor are artifacts like tables, chairs, and the like. For the more precise notion is that of a MIO—and minds, tables, etc., are not merely intentional objects. E.g., if we never thought of our own

¹⁶ In a paper I greatly admire, Rosen (1994) identifies persistent obscurities in terms like ‘objective’, ‘mind-independent’, and the like. And I do not regard my remarks here as settling Rosen’s conundrums. He might allow that I have made proper sense of ‘mind dependent’, but at the cost of surrendering ‘naturalism,’ the view that some mentality is ‘not quite identical with anything we encounter in the natural world’ (p. 277). Even so, I would argue that we indeed encounter hallucinated and illusory objects as part of the natural world+—though not as part of the natural **world**. But this of course is contentious.

minds, they would still exist.¹⁷ In contrast, if we never had thoughts of Pegasus, he would not have any sort of being.

Pegasus is mind-dependent in the further sense that minds are needed to bring about his actuality+. Yet he is also mind-dependent in that minds are needed to sustain his actuality+. Though minds are not sufficient: If Pegasus became a forgotten legend (and all records of the legend were destroyed), then plausibly he would no longer be in any sense. But if so, does Pegasus' persistence require him to be contemplated at all times? A better view is that *tacit beliefs* about Pegasus are sufficient for his persistence. The nature of tacit belief is obscure, to be sure (see, e.g., Lycan 1998, ch. 3). But assuming there are such things, Pegasus' persistence can plausibly depend on them. There is no ambition to make this utterly convincing; rather, it is just to show that if Pegasus persists as a MIO, it does not follow that someone must be meditating on him constantly.

A different problem with mind-dependence was raised by Ed Zalta (in conversation). Two persons can think of numerically the same fictional object. Hence, this object is apparently not within any one mind, contra the natural assumption. Pegasus instead starts to look like an abstract object in a third realm, which can be 'grasped' by several minds at once.

Yet we can instead accommodate this via the phenomenon of reference borrowing (cf. Putnam 1975, pp. 227-9). Let 'Homer' be the first person to imagine Pegasus, and suppose for simplicity's sake that Homer used the term 'Pegasus' to tell stories about him. An audience member might then create a 'mental picture' of a winged horse. Though again, a mental picture

¹⁷ For the record, the real story about minds and mind-independence is more complicated. But I do not want to pursue the matter here.

By the way, it may be unclear whether something would count as a "chair" if minds did not exist, for this may require the object to be *intended* for certain functions. But this is irrelevant for present purposes; the object would still exist in a world without minds, regardless of whether it would still be classifiable as a "chair."

is not the same thing as Pegasus. But in creating this picture, the audience member can contemplate numerically the same object, if she intends her picture to represent ‘the winged horse that Homer speaks of.’ So even if Pegasus lives only in Homer’s mind, others could still think of him, thanks to reference borrowing. Again, the aim is not to make the point utterly convincing, but merely to show that the ‘publicity’ of Pegasus does not prove that he is a mind-independent abstractum.¹⁸

4. ENCODING PARAPHRASED AWAY

Nevertheless, there remain apparent problems in saying that Pegasus is a mind-dependent MIO. For we also want to say that:

(W) Pegasus is a horse with wings.

But, one may protest, Pegasus cannot be both a MIO *and* a horse. After all, MIOs are mind-dependent and horses are not.¹⁹

For such reasons, Meinongians often introduce a notion of ‘nuclear’ or ‘encoded’ properties.²⁰ Thus, we hear that Pegasus is an abstract object, and hence, that he is not a horse. Instead, he merely ‘encodes’ *being a horse*. Such encoding is supposed to explain why (W) is true, even though (W) is no longer about a horse, strictly speaking. Unfortunately, however, little more is said to explicate the ‘encoding’ terminology. So the Meinongian apparently incurs an extra primitive in her vocabulary.

¹⁸ The questions of individuation, vis-à-vis Quine’s possible bald/fat man, become especially important in connection with the ‘reference borrowing’ proposal. But again, unfortunately, this is one issue I must table in the present discussion. Yet see again Priest (2005/2016) for headway on the matter.

¹⁹ One may ask if Pegasus is even a horse, i.e., of the biological kind *equus caballus*. But let that pass.

²⁰ Parson’s (1980) nuclear properties are not the same as Zalta’s (1988) encoded properties. Yet Parsons’ ‘watered down’ versions of nuclear properties (see p. 44) basically play the role of encoded properties, and any remaining differences will be irrelevant to the present discussion.

Besides this, encoding also weakens what was otherwise a straightforward explanation of the data. The claim is now that Pegasus is not a horse, even though it is ‘true’ to say he is. An ‘encoded property’ here threatens to be a mere ‘dormative virtue,’ posited as ‘whatever explains the explanandum.’ So again, the introduction of ‘encoding’ depreciates what was otherwise a tight explanation of the data.

Fortunately, there is a better way. Since the new Meinongian allows **nonactual** individuals, she can also allow **nonactual** *property-instances*. After all, a property-instance is itself an individual—it is a non-repeatable affair. On the present view, then, Pegasus is a ‘horse’ in the sense that he has a **nonactual** property-instance of *horseness*. Or, if this talk of ‘having’ an instance is confusing, one can say that he *is* a **nonactual** property-instance of *horseness* (It may then also be better to speak of merely intentional property-instances or ‘MIPs.’)²¹

Either way, (W) consequently acquires two readings, one where it is true and one where it is false. It is true if it is interpreted as:

(W1) Pegasus is a **nonactual** horse with wings.

Or what I regard as equivalent to (W1):

(W2) Pegasus is an actual+ **nonactual** horse with wings.

But (W) is false if it expresses:

(W3) Pegasus is an **actual** horse with wings.

So (W) is certainly false in one sense—though the fact remains that Pegasus is a **nonactual** imaginary horse. And qua imaginary horse, in that sense he is both a MIO and a horse. More

²¹ The present view is meant to be neutral on trope theory; thus, I favour the use of ‘property-instance’ rather than ‘trope’. After all, a realist about universals need not deny that there are particular instantiations of properties, in addition to the properties themselves. Or at least, a realist is able to re-interpret my term ‘property-instance’ as denoting the token-event of the object’s ‘participating’ in a universal, and thus co-opt conservative Meinongianism.

precisely, he is actually+ a MIO who is a non**actual** horse. And this does not imply that he is **actually** a MIO; indeed, **actual** MIOs are impossible.

Priest (2005/2016) and Berto (2011) are Meinongians who claim to dispense with encoding as well. But in adopting the ‘other worlds’ gambit, they seem to lose something. Again, Pegasus’ *qua* horse is found in nonactual worlds. But as was the case with (P), this seems to account only for the truth of (W) in some extended sense. It does not yet explain how it is actually true, i.e., a true sentence *here*. (One can again try to go descriptivist, but the Brock-style problem would be to explain the truth of ‘Pegasus might have never been captured’ or the like.)

Let me add that ‘encoding’ Meinongians like Parsons and Zalta could co-opt the present property-instance strategy, if desired. They could just relinquish the primitive status of ‘encoding’ and instead analyse as: Pegasus encodes *horseness* iff Pegasus has/is a non**actual** property-instance of *horseness*. But at least, this would represent an advance in understanding, for the notion of imaginary or merely intentional objects is grasped by ordinary English speakers, whereas encoding as a technical notion is not. Nonetheless, I might remind us that it is ideologically more conservative just to drop technical nomenclature whenever we can.²²

Question: When (W) is interpreted as actually+ true, are both **actual** and non**actual** objects in the extension of ‘is a horse’? That may seem odd—we often assume that extensions contain only **actual** objects. However, the matter may depend on context: If the domain is restricted in context to **actual** objects only, then obviously, only **actual** horses can be in the extension. But then, thanks to the name ‘Pegasus’, (W) lacks a proper interpretation (or so I claim). Relaxing the restrictions can thus prove advantageous, where Pegasus is indeed in the

²² Artifactualists such as van Inwagen (1977, 1983) and Salmon (1998) also have jargon that is similar to encoding. E.g., van Inwagen talks of fictions as ‘having’ vs. ‘holding’ properties. The actual+/**actual** distinction might prove desirable to them as well.

extension of ‘is a horse.’ (If this still feels odd, it may just reflect that fiction is not our paradigm of discourse in general.)

Still, if you think Pegasus should never be in the extension of ‘is a horse,’ then you can define ‘is a horse’ accordingly, even in a Pegasus-domain. But there, (W) will come out false. Again, I think there is a reading of (W) where it is false; *vide* (W3). Still, one cannot insist both that (W) is true and that Pegasus is not in the extension of ‘is a horse.’

So if we hold that Pegasus is a horse *and* a figment of the imagination, as I think we should, it follows that some imaginary objects are horses. This may sound odd in one sense, but we must remember that these horses are not **actual** horses but actual+ horses that are MIOs.

We have so far considered with ‘fiction internal’ truths like (W), in addition to truths that attribute fictionality like (I) and (P). But importantly, the **actual**/actual+ distinction helps with truths that ‘mix’ fictitious and non-fictitious objects, e.g.,

(Z) Zeus was worshipped by Ancient Greeks

(H) Sherlock Holmes is admired by some detectives at Scotland Yard.

On the present approach, we can make sense of such truths as follows:

(Z1) Zeus is an actual+ but non**actual** deity worshiped by Ancient Greeks.

(H1) Sherlock Holmes is an actual+ but non**actual** detective admired by some detectives at Scotland Yard.

These express that in the domain of the actual+, some MIOs are in the worshipping- or admiring-relation to some **actual** people. (The Greeks did not realize that Zeus was non**actual**, but that is an epistemic matter, not a semantic one.)

It is also worth remarking that, since the **actual**/actual+ distinction holds for objects within a world, the same moves are available for mind-dependent objects that are also mind-dependent within other worlds. Consider for instance:

(D) Spooky is a dagger.

In light of the **actual**/actual+ distinction, (D) turns out to be semantically underdetermined in several ways. First, it expresses a truth if it means the following (where ‘*M*’ is the pertinent Macbeth-world):

(D1) Spooky is an actual+ dagger

(D2) Spooky is an actual+-in-*M* dagger.

Yet it is false if it expresses either of:

(D3) Spooky is an **actual** dagger.

(D4) Spooky is an **actual**-in-*M* dagger.

Though it is right to say:

(D5) Spooky is actually+ a **nonactual** dagger.

(D6) Spooky is actually+-in-*M* a **nonactual**-in-*M* dagger.

Related claims can be identified here as well, which I leave as an exercise to the reader.

5. IMPOSSIBILIA

Following Meinong, the present view maintains in addition that there are impossible objects—or more perspicuously, that impossibilia are actual+. This is not merely because ‘Impossible objects are imaginary’ looks undeniable. It also that Brock’s arguments can be applied equally to modal claims about impossibilia. This problematizes the alternative, descriptivist treatment of such

sentences. Suppose, for instance, that ‘Bertie’ names Russell’s barber who shaves exactly those who do not shave themselves. The Brock-style observation would be:

(B) Bertie need not have been the barber who shaves exactly the non-self-shavers.

Such a thing appears true: Even though Bertie is a barber with an impossible task, he might have been (say) a dentist instead. Assuming as much does not introduce a further impossibility into Bertie’s world.

However, a descriptivist treatment of ‘Bertie’ cannot follow suit. For it construes (B) as equivalent to:

(B*) Bertie need not have been Bertie.

And (B*) indeed puts a further impossibility into Bertie’s world. As with the descriptivist treatment of ‘Pegasus’, moreover, it will not help to rigidify the descriptor in the manner of Searle. For here too, there is no object for the name to be rigid on.

Famously, Russell (1906) rejected Meinongianism about impossibilia, since the view entails the contradiction that the round square is both round and not round. But as Yagisawa (1988) has argued, this contradiction is entirely in order. To acknowledge an *impossible* object is precisely to acknowledge an object with inconsistent features. (Indeed, something would be wrong if a putative impossibilium was not sufficient for inconsistency.) So it is no objection to point out that an impossible object is impossible.²³

Nonetheless, if our Meinongian adds that round squares are somehow ‘actual,’ then in what sense are they impossible? This seems to be an inconsistency *in the Meinongian’s ontology*

²³ Relatedly, Lewis’ (1986, p. 7, n. 3) claim that one can never assert a truth by asserting a contradiction. But the reply again is: This is exactly why these objects are impossible—they are objects of which inconsistent claims are true. Nonetheless, I sympathize with Lewis (2004) that *reasoning* about impossible objects is vexed. Clearly, some sort of paraconsistent, dialethic logic is needed, but the details may remain obscure. A round square is round—and it is square. But is it therefore both non-round and non-square? Is a round square then also not a round square? I hypothesize that different round squares can be imagined in different ways, meaning that it will depend on the particular stipulations at hand. But I admit uncertainty in this area.

and not just in the objects' shape. Yet conservative Meinongian holds instead that round squares are actual+ even though they cannot be **actual**. The actuality+ of round squares seems entirely tenable, moreover, since it is just the claim that we have thoughts where round squares are the intentional objects, albeit merely intentional objects.

Importantly, the actuality+ of impossible objects leads to a new way for Meinong to escape Russell's famous example 'there is an existing golden mountain'. Meinongianism seems committed to this, for it is associated with the following 'comprehension principle':

(CP) For any formula $\lceil \Phi(x) \rceil$ with exactly 'x' free, there is an object satisfying the formula.

And if we consider as 'Golden(x) & Mountain(x) & Existing(x)', (CP) absurdly implies that there is an existing golden mountain.

In the first instance, a Meinongian can reply that the existing golden mountain is not **actual**, though it is actual+ (for it is actually+ a non**actual** mountain). Yet there is an obvious revenge example:

(R) There is an **actual** golden mountain.

But notice that (CP) already commits the Meinongian to an impossibilium which satisfies (R), namely, the impossibilium which satisfies the predicate in:

(R0) There is an **actual** golden mountain that is also non**actual**.

This particular object is impossible in virtue of instantiating both mind-independence in our world and its contrary. This is of course impossible, and so, the object could not be **actual**. Yet in a suitable dialetheist logic, (R) is derivable from (R0) (cf. Priest 1987/2007, Beall 2009). And from this angle, the object in (R) is mind-independent only *per impossibile*, much like the round

square has its shape only *per impossibile*. So (R) can be seen as a commitment to an object that is only impossibly **actual**.

However, what about the following ‘super-revenge’ example?

(R1) There is a non-impossible **actual** golden mountain.

In fact, if the object is impossible for an independent reason, then to characterize it as ‘non-impossible’ only compounds its impossibility even further. Once an object is defined as impossible, adding more defining characteristics will hardly make it possible. In such a case, the object is non-impossible only *per impossibile*.

The situation is rather similar to the Anselmian statement ‘God exists,’ where by definition, ‘God’ denotes x only if x is **actual**. As explained in Parent (2015b), if a term is defined by ‘**actual**’, it does not follow that *there is* anything **actual** satisfying the definition. That is so, even if the object is nonetheless actual+ (or as Anselm says, ‘exists in the mind’). If the definition makes the object non**actual**, then to add **actuality** as a defining condition suffices to define something impossible. (The point stands, even though a MIO can of course be **actual-in- W** , for some non**actual** world W). Thus, a commitment to Anselm’s God or the **actual** golden mountain can be accepted on the present view, by treating them as non**actual** objects that are only impossibly **actual**.

A similar line can be given to resolve a problem raised by Priest (2005/2016). Priest considers a formula such as ‘ $F(x) \ \& \ \text{Venus} \neq \text{Venus}$ ’. Without restrictions, (CP) entails that something satisfies the formula, from which the truth of ‘ $\text{Venus} \neq \text{Venus}$ ’ follows. Yet for the conservative Meinongian, the ‘truth’ of these formulae would concern actual+ states-of-affairs, not **actual** states-of-affairs. After all, in the domain of the **actual**, the present Meinongian is *not* committed to a satisfier for ‘ $F(x) \ \& \ \text{Venus} \neq \text{Venus}$ ’. But she will grant that ‘ $\text{Venus} \neq \text{Venus}$ ’ is

true when it represents a merely intentional state-of-affairs. In that case, however, she will of course add that the state-of-affairs is an impossible one, i.e., one that could not be **actual** (although depending on the details, it may end up being **actual** *per impossibile*).

6. COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Matters can be clarified further by contrasting the present account with some other prominent views of nonexistents. (The contrast with **actualist** views like fictionalism and descriptivism should be obvious.) The views in question I shall collect under five headings, although of course these classifications are rough and surely not definitive of the options. But they will suffice to bring out the main ways in which conservative Meinongianism differs.

N.B., I put question-marks next to some authors when I classify them below. This corresponds to one principal motivation of this paper: It is not clear where several authors stand when it comes to the ontological details. I suspect some wished to leave such details open, so that their work has the broadest appeal. (Zalta basically says as much; see Bueno & Zalta 2017, pp. 764-765.) Still, it means that the ontological details are often glossed in the literature. This is why the present work focuses on clarifying the ontology rather than developing the formal machinery (which other authors have expertly accomplished already).

Five Views of Nonexistent Objects

- I. *Traditional Meinongianism*: There are objects that do not exist, though they can be quantified over. They are ‘subsistent’, ‘beyond being and non-being’ (Meinong 1906; Chisholm 1973), do not exist in any sense at all (Routley 1979),²⁴ or perhaps have being in some unexplicated sense (Parsons 1980; ?Zalta 1983, 1988; ?Jacquette 1996).

²⁴ Routley, however, departs from traditional Meinongianism in holding that abstracta do not exist in any sense at all. Such is his ‘noneism.’ Priest (2005/2017) borrows this aspect of his view as well.

- II. *Modal Meinongianism*: There are objects that are not actual, though they are occupants of concrete possible and impossible worlds (Priest 2005/2016; Berto 2011, 2013).
- III. *Abstractionism*: ‘Nonexistent objects’ are eternal abstracta in our world; our quantifier can include or exclude such objects, depending on context (?van Inwagen 1977, 1983; ?Zalta, op. cit.; ?Jacquette op. cit.).²⁵
- IV. *Artifactualism*: ‘Nonexistent objects’ are actual artifacts whose being depends on actual texts (Thomasson 1999; ?Moltmann 2015) or on our imaginations (Salmon 1998; McGinn 2000, 2004, ch. 10; Crane 2013; ?van Inwagen op. cit.). Our quantifier can include or exclude such objects, depending on context.
- V. *Kripke’s Pluralism*: With fiction-external truths like (I) or (Z), some version of artifactualism is true. With a fiction-internal sentences like (W), we do not refer to anything using ‘Pegasus’; we only pretend to refer. (The sentence is thus untrue.) With negative existentials like (P), yet a different view is offered (Kripke 1973/2013, 2011; ?Moltmann 2015).²⁶

In fact, Kripke’s pluralism can be quickly distinguished from the present view. The differences with artifactualism (see below) will apply *mutatis mutandis* to Kripke on fiction-external sentences. On fiction-internal sentences like (W), Kripke’s view is that ‘Pegasus’ does not refer outside of pretense; whereas, conservative Meinongianism holds that it actually+ refers and, hence, that (W) is actually+ true. (Re: negative existentials, there is no easy summary of Kripke’s

²⁵ Under abstractionism, one might also include ersatzism from modal metaphysics (Adams 1974; Plantinga 1976; Lycan 1979). But unlike some abstractionisms, ersatzism has no truck with impossibilia; more importantly, ersatzism remains neutral on ficta as such.

²⁶ Kripke, of course, is better known for his (1972/1980) view that ficta *necessarily* do not exist. I discuss this view a bit further in connection with McGinn below. Nevertheless, Kripke is unequivocal in recent work that names for fictional objects, when they refer at all, refer to abstracta. Salmon (2011, p. 50) expresses doubt on whether Kripke’s views are all consistent; regardless, Kripke’s current view indeed goes beyond his earlier rigidity view.

position here, but it is readily apparent that it differs from the present view; see his 2011, pp. 68-72, and lectures 3 and 6 of his 1973/2013.)

As for traditional and modal Meinongianism, conservative Meinongianism is similar in several respects. Besides (CP) (or some restricted version thereof), such Meinongianisms accept Meinong's thesis (MT), as well as the following Impossibleist thesis (IT):

(MT) There are objects that do not exist (e.g., Pegasus, the golden mountain, etc.)

(IT) There are impossible objects (e.g., the round square)

And (CP) and (MT) plausibly suffice for the so-called Independence of *Sosein* from *Sein*:

(ISS) The satisfaction (a restricted class of) formulae by an object is independent of whether the object exists.

Further, assuming any thought can be expressed by some formula, one might infer from (CP) Meinong's principle of the object-directness of thought:

(OD) Every thought is a thought about an object.

So there is potentially a great amount of agreement among Meinongians.

Nevertheless, traditional Meinongianism provoked the complaint of obscuritism from Lycan et al. However, the present view explicates 'actual+' as denoting both mind-independent objects and merely intentional objects; more, the 'encoding' jargon has been eliminated.

Whereas, unlike Modal Meinongianism, conservative Meinongianism explains how true negative existentials are true in our world, rather than true in a modal pluriverse more broadly.

As a contrast with abstractionism, I would prefer to say not that Pegasus is abstract but rather that he is both non**actually** concrete and **actually** neither. Nonetheless, as a MIO *per se*, isn't Pegasus abstract? He is—if 'abstract' means 'not in our spacetime.' But all views on nonexistents agree to that much. (From this angle, 'abstractionism' does not seem like a

distinctive view.) More to the point is whether a nonexistent object is abstract in the manner of a universal, set, or number.²⁷ And it seems to me that different answers here are appropriate for different kinds of nonexistents. E.g., Pegasus is a **nonactual** concretum, whereas the largest prime is a **nonactual** abstractum. In this, ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract’ have application-conditions to non-existent objects in just the same way that adjectives like ‘horse’ and ‘winged’ do. (Ideally, more would be said on abstract objects, yet I am not able to do so on this occasion.)

A further contrast is that van Inwagen’s abstractionism is a view of fictional objects only, not of nonexistents generally. Yet this difference with abstractionism is also a difference with most varieties of *artifactualism*. Thomasson and McGinn are offering us an artifactualist view of ficta only; they do not endorse artifactualism about possibilia as such (or about impossibilia for that matter).²⁸ I also reject Thomasson’s view that the being of a fictum depends on the existence of linguistic representations (1999, pp. 22-23). The view mistakenly suggests that it is impossible to create a fictional character just in one’s own mind. Perhaps Thomasson would reply that such an object is not a *dramatis personae* (a character *in* a work of fiction), and thus, outside the scope of her concerns. Fair enough, although the status of such an ‘object’ ought to be a concern at some stage.

Crane’s (2013) artifactualism is a bit different. Like the present view, Crane holds that there are a wide variety of nonexistent, merely intentional objects. However, Crane stresses early on that he is not making an ontological claim when he says that there are MIOs (see p. 4). This may be puzzling, but in brief, Crane wishes to explain the truth of ‘there are non-existent objects’

²⁷ Cf. Lewis’ (1986, pp. 81ff.) on different ways of characterizing abstractness, especially where he distinguishes The Negative Way from The Way of Example and the Way of Conflation.

²⁸ I am unsure but Salmon (1998) seems to be an artifactualist about possibilia, in addition to ficta. But if so, he would then face McGinn’s objection (discussed further below) that possibilities ought to be mind-independent. And it is unclear how Salmon might answer that objection. (But n.b., Salmon does not count ficta *as possibilia*; thus, he does not need to face McGinn’s Kripkean worry that no possible object could count as Pegasus.)

by the truth of ‘we represent non-existent objects’. So Crane regards the former as a less *fundamental* truth than the latter. It is in that respect not an ontological thesis. Now in fact, the present view also implies that ‘there are non-existent objects’ is not an **ontological** truth, for it is not a truth about objects in the domain of the **actual**. Yet unlike Crane, the present view implies that it is nonetheless an ontological+ truth. Moreover, ‘we represent non-existent objects’ is accorded the same status regarding fundamentality. For both sentences equally concern a relation that holds between us and non**actual** objects; they both concern the domain of the actual+ and not just of the **actual**. Accordingly, there is no implication that one of these truths is more fundamental.^{29, 30}

The present account may bear the strongest resemblance to McGinn’s (2000) artifactualism. For even though McGinn is concerned only with *ficta*, he advocates for the mind-dependence of Pegasus. But McGinn adds that Pegasus is not a possible object, for two reasons. First, he references Kripke’s (1972/1980) argument that, since no particular biological essence characterizes Pegasus, no possible object could count as *Pegasus*, even though many possible objects would be superficially indiscernible from him. Second, McGinn wishes to preserve the mind-*independence* of metaphysical possibilities, so that, e.g., ‘there are unconceived possible objects’ comes out true.

Importantly, however, the second argument compels McGinn to relinquish mind-dependence for nonactual possible objects:

²⁹ Crane further differs from the present view in denying that Pegasus instantiates *being a horse*. This is because MIOs allegedly do not have natural or “sparse” properties (in Lewis’ 1983; 1986 sense), and *being a horse* qualifies as such. In contrast, we saw that the new Meinong thinks that there actually+ are non**actual** sparse-property-instances. And besides upholding the face-value truth of (W), this allows one to affirm that Pegasus and mind-independent horses have something important in common.

³⁰ Priest (2006/2014, ch. 14) develops yet ultimately rejects a similar artifactualist view. I lack the space here to consider Priest’s rendering of artifactualism; for now, suffice it to say that the present view differs in that it is not flat-footedly an “anti-realist” view about non-existents. It is instead a realist+ view, albeit simultaneously an anti-realist view.

merely possible entities, such as the younger sister I might have had, really do exist, and did exist before I ever formed the concept of them—though they do not *actually* exist. Such entities exist in the realm of the merely possible; their ontological deficiency consists just in the fact that their existence is not actual (p. 39).

So here, McGinn succumbs to the Lewisian view that nonactual possibilities really exist.³¹

But the conservative Meinongian regards talking donkeys and other mere possibilia as mind-dependent objects as well. The reasons for avoiding Lewis' view should by now be familiar; yet how can we accommodate McGinn's intuition that metaphysical possibility ought to be a mind-independent matter?

Apparently, what bothers McGinn that talking donkeys would seem possible even if minds had never existed. However: Since this point is phrased as a counterfactual, notice that the claim would standardly be construed as (cf. Lewis 1973):

(M) In some nearby world, both minds do not exist and talking donkeys are possible.

Or, in the language of possible worlds:

(M1) There is a nearby world W and a world V such that: W accesses V and minds are not in W and talking donkeys are in V .

It turns out, moreover, that conservative Meinongianism can accept (M1), provided that the 'actual+' and '**actual**' operators are interspersed appropriately:

(M2) Actually+, there is a **nonactual** nearby world W and a **nonactual** world V such that...

³¹ Accordingly, McGinn (n. 42) admits that his aim was not so much to argue that all nonactual objects are mind-dependent. It was rather to describe a rapprochement between the Lewisian view that all possibilia exist, and the view that there are non-existent objects. McGinn's point is that there is room here for the view that the difference between existing and non-existing turns on whether an object is mind-dependent.

In other words, a talking-donkey-world would exist even if minds did not, in virtue of the fact that we imagine the modal pluriverse to be that way. Specifically, we imagine it to contain a nearby mindless world which accesses a talking-donkey world. It is thereby actually+ true that talking donkeys would be possible even if minds did not exist.

8. CLOSING REMARKS

I am certain many further questions could be raised. The ambition of this paper was not to settle the issues, but merely to introduce a new way of thinking about them. In particular, the aim was to motivate the actual+/**actual** distinction, and to exploit it in making new inroads into the problems. The result is at least a novel kind of Meinongianism, one that can claim advantages over its competitors. To recap, it is a Meinongian view in that it accepts (MT), (IO), (CP), (ISS), and (OD). But it also boasts the following innovations:

- (a) Meinongian being is not left as primitive or left as some mysterious state ‘beyond’ being and non-being. Instead, MIOs are identified the objects of a tacit or occurrent thought which otherwise do not exist in the mind-independent world.
- (b) Talk of ‘encoding’ or ‘watered down nuclear properties’ is eliminated in favor of talk about **nonactual** property-instances (or at least, the former is explicated in terms of the latter in order to avoid technical terms as primitives).
- (c) True negative existentials are made true *in* our world; similarly, negative existentials true in other worlds are made true *in* those worlds;
- (d) A Russellian golden mountain is embraced as **actual** *per impossibile*, thus allowing (CP) to stand without restrictions;

- (e) It is maintained that only some non-existents are abstract (in the sense of that numbers are abstract); other non-existents are concrete;
- (f) It is clarified how mere possibilia can be conceived as mind-independent, while allowing them to stand as mere objects of conception.

I suspect that Meinongians themselves will be most interested in (d), yet the non-**actualist** view of possibilia is hoped to garner attention as well. One of my primary motivations, however, has been to clarify the basic ontology of a Meinongian view—and so (a) and (b) occupy a prominent place. But since judicious use of the actual+/**actual** distinction led to each of these innovations, this stands as the most basic contribution of the paper.

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