# Is Lewis a Meinongian?*

Bernard Linsky
Philosophy Department
University of Alberta

and

Edward N. Zalta
Philosophy Department
Stanford University

The views of David Lewis and the Meinongians are both often met with an incredulous stare. This is not by accident. The stunned disbelief that usually accompanies the stare is a natural first reaction to a large ontology.[1] Indeed, Lewis has been explicitly linked with Meinong, a charge that he has taken great pains to deny.[2] However, the issue is not a simple one. 'Meinongianism' is a complex set of distinctions and doctrines about existence and predication, in addition to the famously large ontology. While there are clearly non-Meinongian features of Lewis' views, it is our thesis that many of the characteristic elements of Meinongian metaphysics appear in Lewis' theory. Moreover, though Lewis rejects incomplete and inconsistent Meinongian objects, his ontology may exceed that of a Meinongian who doesn't accept his possibilia. Thus, Lewis ex-

plains the truth of 'there might have been talking donkeys' by appealing to possibilia which are talking donkeys. But the Meinongian need not accept that there exist things which are talking donkeys. Indeed, we plan to show that a Meinongian even need not accept that there are *non*existent things which *are* talking donkeys!

## §1: What Are Meinongians?

Meinongians are philosophers who have been influenced by Alexius Meinong's development of a theory of objects in [13]. Meinong's investigation, in many ways, is in the Aristotelian tradition of distinguishing categories of existence and ways of having properties. Part of that tradition is embodied in the standard distinction among three senses of 'is': the 'is' of existence (as in 'there is an $F$'), the 'is' of predication (as in '$a$ is $F$'), and the 'is' of identity (as in '$a$ is $b$'). Meinongians go beyond this. They claim there are further distinctions to be made within the realms of existence and predication. Most notorious is their distinction between the category of being (or subsistence) and existence (and even, perhaps, between being and non-being). Variously distributed among these categories are the concrete particulars and abstract objects that Meinongians share with other philosophers, and the distinctively Meinongian objects including impossibilia (such as round squares), fictional objects, and other nonexistents (such as the golden mountain), some of which are incomplete. Less noticed are the various Meinongian distinctions in predication. Following hints from Meinong's student Ernst Mally, some philosophers in this tradition distinguish classes of properties (nuclear and extranuclear properties), while others distinguish modes of predication (exemplification and encoding).[3] These distinctions in predication provide solutions to the well known problems that Russell posed for Meinongian metaphysics, in particular, the problem of 'the existent golden mountain', and apparent contradictions that arise from accepting incomplete and impossible objects. In what follows we will need to sketch these distinctions and solutions.[4]

[1]Lewis says 'the incredulous stare' is a gesture that typically accompanies a frequently encountered argument which charges him with violating common sense.

[2]W. Lycan connected Lewis with Meinong in [10], and then again in a different way in [11]. Lewis explicitly attacks Meinongianism in [5], and even earlier dissociated himself from the view [6, pp. 97–101]. In [21, p. 189] (footnote 9), van Inwagen says 'Lycan mistakenly supposes that Lewis is a Meinongian.'

[3]See the cited works of Mally, Findlay, Parsons, Castañeda, Rapaport, and Zalta.

[4]In this paper, we shall not discuss in any detail the Meinongian theory proposed by Richard Sylvan (formerly Routley) in [16]. The reason is that his theory is not based on an extension of classical logic, unlike the other theories we discuss. His para-consistent logic manages the paradoxes of naive object theory by accepting contradictions, with the proviso that not every formula is provable from a contradiction. We shall discuss Meinongian theories that focus on the metaphysics of existence and predication rather than on ones that reject the basic laws of propositional logic.

The single greatest obstacle to the acceptance of Meinongian metaphysics has been the distinction between being and existence. There are two confusions concerning this distinction which must be addressed. Meinongians are often alleged to have two quantifiers 'there is' and 'there exists' and it is charged that this distinction is unintelligible. What is the difference between saying 'there is' and 'there exists'? A Meinongian need only say that 'there is an $x$ such that $\phi$' requires simply that there *be* an $x$ which is $\phi$, not that $x$ exists, since there are things that don't have the property of existence. In this paper we will follow those Meinongians who treat the existence predicate ($E!$) as restricting the quantifier 'there is' ($\exists$) to the domain of things having the property of existence. Rather than having to explain the logical force of two quantifiers, a Meinongian need simply defend the intelligibility of the existence predicate (if only by supposing that it signifies a primitive property).

The second confusion concerns Meinong's apparently novel conception of the relationship between the quantifier and one's ontology, namely, that the quantifier may range beyond the objects in the ontology. Some philosophers take seriously Meinong's intentionally 'paradoxical' formulation 'there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects' ([13, p. 83]).[5] But none of these philosophers has offered an intelligible account of 'there are objects that have no being whatsoever,' except by reinterpreting this claim as saying something else.[6] We restrict our discussion to contemporary Meinongians who avoid this doctrine of *Aussersein*. They use the quantifier 'there is' to range over all the objects in their ontology and use the existence predicate to pick out some portion of that domain.

These confusions avoided, objections to the distinction between being and existence reduce to a demand for an account of the property of existence. What could this property be, if it doesn't apply to everything in one's ontology? Typically Meinongians use the predicate 'exists' to refer to the present, material, spatiotemporal objects that satisfy Russell's 'robust sense of reality' (Russell [17, p. 170]). But why doesn't the

Meinongian apply this predicate to the entire ontology? At this point, however, the dispute may be one of terminology. For however they express themselves, Meinongians recognize divisions within their ontologies. They recognize some kind of a gap between objects like you, us and this computer terminal and such objects as Sherlock Holmes, the golden mountain, the round square, the Russell set, and so forth. In lieu of the predicate 'nonexistent', the Meinongian could use 'special', 'Meinongian', 'abstract', or some other predicate to mark off these latter objects. The question is not what predicates to use, but rather, whether one quantifies over some such distinctive objects in one's metaphysics. To do so is the touchstone of Meinongianism. Both the Meinongians and David Lewis assume that they need 'extra' objects for an adequate foundation for metaphysics. And the issue before us is, what is the relationship between Lewis' possibilia and Meinongian objects? Does Lewis' distinction between possible and actual objects give him a Meinongian ontology?

Before we turn to this issue, we need to say a few more things about the other doctrines that are often associated with Meinongian metaphysics. Meinongian objects are postulated as the objects of intentional acts, and as such, are typically incomplete.[7] Intentional objects frequently have incompatible properties. Some examples are the round square, the Russell set, and dream objects that violate the laws of space and time. Meinongians typically appeal to such objects as part of their project of explaining their experiences. We often discover that the objects of our thoughts and dreams have incompatible properties. Rather than deny that they ever were objects, or that we were ever thinking or dreaming of any such thing, the Meinongian prefers to find some response to the apparent contradictions they engender. Parsons, for example, suggests that the (non-logical) principle, everything round fails to be square, is true only if the quantifier 'everything' is restricted to the domain of possible objects. The resulting principle, every possible thing that is round fails to be square, is perfectly compatible with his theory on which Meinongian objects may be both round and square.

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[5]Lambert [4, p. 14] sees this as distinctive. See also Chisholm [2, p. 245].

[6]Chisholm, for example, interprets it as Mally's Principle of Independence (i.e., that an object can have properties even though it has no being), though he doesn't offer a clear reading of this principle either. See Chisholm [2, p. 245]. Lambert also understands it in terms of the Principle of Independence, and furthermore, construes Independence in the formal mode as the claim that sentences with non-denoting singular terms can still be true. See Lambert [4, p. 29].

[7]The object of Ponce de Leon's search was a fountain, located somewhere in Florida, and the waters of which conferred everlasting life. Beyond that it was indeterminate; de Leon had no idea what shape, size or location it would have. Fictional objects in general are indeterminate, having no more properties than those attributed to them in the story (which include those inferred from a sympathetic understanding of the storytelling). Sherlock Holmes neither has nor lacks the property of having a mole on the heel of his left foot.

This leads to the second major component of Meinongian theories, namely, the investigation into the nature of predication itself. This investigation was prompted to some extent as part of a reply to Russell's many-pronged attack on Meinong. Russell was concerned not just by the distinction between being and existence (for this distinction survived for some time even in his own view, with universals as 'subsistent'), but by the fact that Meinongian object theory implied falsehoods and seemed to be inconsistent with both logical and non-logical principles. We can separate three different Russellian objections in [18] and [19]:[8] (1) object theory contradicts contingent facts, since it postulates an existent golden mountain; (2) object theory is inconsistent with non-logical principles such as the one mentioned above, since it postulates a round square; and (3) object theory is logically inconsistent, since it postulates non-square squares. Other than accepting inconsistency, Meinongians have developed two distinct ways to respond to these objections. One response distinguishes classes of properties, the other modes of predication.

Parsons (in [14]) takes up Mally's distinction between nuclear and extranuclear properties. Existence is a typical extranuclear property, along with other ontological properties such as being mythical or fictional, modal properties such as being possible, intentional properties such as being thought about, and the very properties of Meinongian theory, such as being complete. However, the nature and identity of objects is determined by their nuclear properties, and it is axiomatic on Parsons' view that for every set of nuclear properties, there is an object which exemplifies exactly the properties in the set. Thus, Parsons allows that there are objects that exemplify nuclear goldenness and nuclear mountainhood, but argues that none have the extranuclear property of existence.[9] He rejects the idea that nuclear properties such as goldenness and mountainhood entail extranuclear existence.[10] Using this distinction between properties, then, Parsons' version of object theory doesn't contradict the contingent facts.

Nor is it committed to properties that lead to logical inconsistencies.

Though complex extranuclear properties are well-behaved from a logical point of view, complex nuclear properties are governed by a special comprehension principle that renders them logically inert.[11] For example, *nuclear non-squareness* is defined to be that property which all and only *existing* objects exemplify iff they fail to exemplify nuclear squareness. If an object does not exist, then its exemplifying nuclear squareness is not incompatible with its exemplifying nuclear non-squareness. So by simply denying the existence of non-square squares (while accepting that there are such things), Parsons has a response to Russell's third objection. Finally, we have already discussed how Parsons' replies to the second objection, namely, by restricting the quantifier in the principle 'everything that exemplifies being round fails to exemplify being square' to the domain of possible objects.

The other line of response to the Russellian objections is based on a distinction in modes of predication. Following a suggestion in Mally [12], Zalta distinguishes between *exemplifying* a property and *encoding* a property.[12] The idea behind this distinction is that some objects are composed of properties which they need not exemplify. Intentional objects are good examples of this. The ghost in John's nightmare last night is composed, in some sense, of the property of being ghost without exemplifying it. In some important sense, this dream object 'is' a ghost, otherwise why fear it? The sense of 'is' is captured by introducing encoding as a second *mode* of predication—though nothing exemplifies the property of being a ghost, this dream object encodes it. What's more, 'the ghost' from John's dream exemplifies properties as well as encodes them. It exemplifies the property of being a dream object, of being frightening, and of coming back night after night.

Once these two modes of predication are incorporated into a Meinongian object theory, there is an alternative response to Russell's objections. Zalta's version of this theory uses encoding to partition the class of

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[8]Here we follow Zalta [22, pp. 115–120], for this categorization of Russell's objections to Meinong.

[9]His semantic theory can give an interpretation of 'the existent golden mountain' as the object that exemplifies nuclear goldenness, nuclear mountainhood, and the nuclear, 'watered-down version' of existence. See [14, p. 44].

[10]Indeed, no nuclear property $P$ entails extranuclear existence, since Parsons' theory guarantees that there is an object $x$ exemplifying $P$ and no other property. This object $x$ is incomplete, and hence, nonexistent.

[11]The comprehension principle is this, where $F$ ranges over nuclear properties and '$E!$' denotes extranuclear existence: $\exists F \forall x(E!x \rightarrow (Fx \leftrightarrow \phi))$, where $\phi$ has no free $F$s. This says that given any condition $\phi$ on objects, there is a nuclear property $F$ such that, if $x$ exists, then $x$ exemplifies $F$ iff $x$ satisfies $\phi$.

[12]See Zalta [22] and [23]. Rapaport [15] and Castañeda [1] have introduced a second mode of predication in their work, but they use different names for it. Rapaport calls it 'constituency' and Castañeda calls it 'Meinongian (internal) predication' (Castañeda introduces other forms of predication as well). However, we shall follow Zalta's development of this 'two modes' approach to Meinongian theory.

objects—ordinary existing objects like you, me, and this computer terminal, only exemplify properties, whereas 'abstract' or 'Meinongian' objects encode as well as exemplify properties. Goldenness and mountainhood are treated as existence-entailing properties on Zalta's theory, that is, properties such that necessarily, anything *exemplifying* them exists. The theory doesn't assert that any objects do exemplify these properties. Instead, Zalta's theory asserts that, for every condition on properties, that there is an 'abstract' Meinongian object which *encodes* just the properties satisfying the condition. Every object whatsoever is complete with respect to exemplified properties, though objects may be incomplete with respect to encoded properties. It follows that there are objects that encode goldenness, mountainhood, and even existence, but they don't conflict with the contingent truth that nothing exemplifies existence, goldenness and mountainhood, for the fact that they encode these properties doesn't entail that they exemplify them.[13] Thus, Russell's first objection no longer applies.

Nor is this theory incompatible with non-logical principles such as 'whatever exemplifies roundness fails to exemplify squareness.' It asserts only that there is an object that encodes roundness and squareness, and such objects do not require that any restrictions be placed on the quantifiers of non-logical principles governing roundness and squareness. Everything whatsoever that exemplifies roundness fails to exemplify squareness. This answers Russell's second objection. Furthermore, no logical contradiction can be derived from accepting objects that encode properties such as being square and non-square. Of course, an object *exemplifies* non-squareness iff it fails to exemplify being square. This is just a consequence of the usual property-abstraction principle with regard to exemplification. Thus, no restrictions on property abstraction, such as the one described above in Parsons' theory, are needed to avoid logical inconsistency.[14]

## §2: Non-Meinongian Features of Lewis' View

While Lewis' metaphysical views are masterfully presented in *On the Plurality of Worlds*, their relationship to Meinongianism is still not well understood. On the first pass, it appears as if he has avoided characteristically Meinongian notions. (1) He has a single quantifier that is 'existentially loaded'; it ranges over exactly what exists. He insists that possible objects exist in the same sense that objects spatiotemporally related to us exist. (2) He rejects objects having incomplete or 'inconsistent' natures. Objects are all determinate down to the last detail. Instead of indeterminates, Lewis uses propositions (i.e., sets of worlds) as the objects of intentional acts. (3) Moreover, Lewis has a uniform notion of property. He makes no distinction between nuclear and extranuclear properties. Properties are sets of objects, and the objects may be located in different worlds. Thus, the property of being a donkey is the set of all the donkeys from all the worlds. (4) For Lewis, *all* properties are existence entailing, since all possible objects exist.[15] (5) Finally, having a property is simply being a member of such a set, and thus Lewis has a single mode of predication. He does relativize predication to worlds and times, but such modifications of the copula are given a reductive analysis. To have a property $F$ at world $w$ is just to be an element of $F$ and a part of $w$. For $x$ to have $F$ at a time $t$, the $t$-temporal part (stage) of $x$ is an element of $F$. It would seem, then, that we should take seriously Lewis' insistence that he is no Meinongian.

## §3: Meinongian Features of Lewis' View

The story is more complicated, however. There are, in fact, many Meinongian aspects to Lewis' program. To many people, Lewis' possibilia appear to be Meinongian objects, for they seem to offend against Russell's robust sense of reality. Of the three Russellian objections to Meinongian metaphysics, two still apply to Lewis' ontology. While Lewis' modal realism does not include inconsistent objects such as non-square squares, it does commit him to (1) apparent violations of non-logical principles and (2) possibilia such as talking donkeys (and golden mountains) that appear to contradict the contingent facts. In both cases, Lewis' defense is the Meinongian defense.

Consider first the non-logical principle, which is fundamental to physicalism, that reality consists of everything that bears some spatiotemporal relation to us. In quantificational terms, this amounts to: for all $x$, if $x$ is

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[13]Indeed, since they are abstract, these Meinongian objects exemplify the negations of the properties goldenness, mountainhood, and existence.

[14]Zalta's property abstraction principle is: $\exists F \forall x (Fx \leftrightarrow \phi)$, where $\phi$ has no free $F$s and no encoding subformulas. Thus, every property definable in standard second order logic is acknowledged (with the proviso that the introduction of encoding adds no new properties). See Zalta [23, Chapter 1].

[15]There aren't even any uninstantiated properties on Lewis' account, except possibly the empty set.

real then $x$ is spatiotemporally related to us. But Lewis' theory commits him to real things that are not spatiotemporally related to us. Indeed, for him, nothing in any world bears a spatiotemporal relation to anything in any other world. Lewis resolves this conflict by arguing that the non-logical principle in question is false unless the quantifier is properly restricted. It should read, for all $x$, if $x$ is actual, then $x$ is spatiotemporally related to us. Indeed Lewis tries to attribute this latter thesis to common sense (Lewis [6, p. 99]). Compare this response with Parsons' response to Russell's objections to round squares. Recall that Parsons argues that the principle, whatever is round fails to be square, is false, unless the quantifier is restricted to possible objects.

Lewis uses the same tactic in responding to the objection that there just *are* no talking donkeys. But he can think with the learned and speak with the vulgar as well as any Meinongian, for he can agree that there are no talking donkeys. He simply replies that the quantifier 'there are' must be restricted to the actual—there are no actual talking donkeys (Lewis [6, p. 133]). This characteristic Meinongian move of restricting the quantifier is integral to Lewis' entire program.[16]

A closer examination of Lewis' use of this maneuver reveals to what extent his exists/actual distinction covers the same ground as the Meinongian being/existence distinction. He insists that his possibilia simply exist, and to recover common sense he introduces the qualification that none are *actual*. The fact that no one will ever encounter a talking donkey is a consequence of the fact that none are spatiotemporally related to us, and so none of Lewis' existing talking donkeys are members of *this* world, and hence, not 'actual'. But given this way of speaking, it appears that Lewis' exists/actual distinction is just a restricted version of the Meinongian being/exists distinction. To see this, note first that the Meinongian domain of being contains incomplete objects, which are not found in Lewis' domain of existence. But if we focus our attention on the sub-domain of Meinongian objects that contains just the complete objects, then Lewis' 'actual' has the same extension as the Meinongian 'exists' with respect to this domain. Both predicates range over exactly the objects acknowledged by Russellian actualists, namely, the spatiotemporal, particular objects with which we are all familiar. Both Lewis and the Meinongians quantify over a wider class of objects that extends beyond such familiar objects, and the predicates 'actual' and 'exist' are used

by these philosophers, respectively, to restrict their quantifier to this same set of familiar objects.[17]

So even though Lewis' predicate 'actual' applies only to a portion of his existing objects, and the Meinongian predicate 'exists' applies only to a portion of their domain of being, the respective predicates pick out the same objects. Thus, relative to the complete objects, Lewis' distinction appears to be a restricted version of the Meinongian distinction. Lewis might respond to this by noting that even though the predicates pick out the same objects, his exists/actual distinction is *not* the same distinction as the Meinongian being/existence distinction because, for him, there is no difference in kind between the actual and the other existing objects, whereas for the Meinongian, there is a difference in kind between what exists and the rest of the domain of being. But is this true?

Lewis' possibilia are determinate and exemplify properties in the same way as actual objects. They are separated from actual objects (and in some cases from each other) only by a lack of spatiotemporal relations, and not by any categorial difference. Lewis could argue for this by analogy: just as there is no categorial difference between objects in this room and those outside the room, there is no categorial difference between objects in this world and those outside this world. The fact that they exist in alternative spacetimes does not affect the very nature of the possibilia, for they are just like you and me. Notice, however, that the situation is exactly the same with respect to the subdomain of determinate objects in Parsons' Meinongian theory. His domain of being contains completely determinate, nonexistent objects that exemplify their properties in exactly the same way that existing objects do. These determinate, nonexistent objects differ from the existing ones only by possessing the property of existence. But this difference is not a categorial one! For the property of existence is an *extranuclear* property of objects (according to Parsons' theory). As such, it is not part of the *nature* of objects.[18] So the Meinongian can deny that there is a difference in kind between the existing and nonexisting determinate objects on exactly the same grounds that Lewis uses

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[16]See the entries under 'quantification, restricted' in the *Index* to [6].

[17]Contrast this with the views of modal actualists such as Chisholm, Plantinga, and Adams, who suppose that concrete objects and abstract objects like states of affairs, properties, or sets, etc., all exist in the same sense, and that nothing else has any other sort of being. For them, all existing things are actual and all actual things exist. They will have none of this two part ontology.

[18]This corresponds to Meinong's dictum that an object can have properties whether or not it exists, that the object is by nature indifferent to being.

to deny the categorial difference between his possible and actual objects.

This point is so important that it is worth discussing in greater detail. Among Lewis' possibilia one finds fully determinate talking donkeys. Other than by the fact that they talk, these animals do not differ in kind from donkeys in this the actual world. Beyond the issue of talking, the beasts in question do not differ at all in nature. But Lewis cannot use this homogeneity to argue that his distinction between the actual and the merely possible is not an application of the being/existence distinction to a restricted domain. For Parsons, at least, the domain of nonexistents contains objects which do not differ in kind from certain objects in the domain of existents.[19] In particular, Parsons' theory asserts that there are complete, determinate, flesh and blood (albeit nonexistent), talking donkeys. These differ in nature from existing donkeys only by the fact that they talk. Their nonexistence doesn't constitute a difference in nature because *existence* and *nonexistence* are extranuclear properties.[20] Any *nuclear* property, such as being spatiotemporally located, being made of matter, having a certain size and shape, which might determine the category of a thing, can be shared by existing and nonexisting objects alike. It should be noted that Lewis' possibilia, which are duplicated in Parsons' ontology, do not play the same role in the latter's modal theory. For Parsons, an object $x$ is possible just in case it is possible that some existing object have exactly the nuclear properties $x$ actually has, that is, if at some possible world $w$, some object $y$ existing at $w$ exemplifies at $w$ exactly the properties $x$ exemplifies at the actual world.[21] Nevertheless, determinate, nonexistent talking donkeys in Parsons' theory have exactly the same nature as existing donkeys. Thus, neither existence (for

Parsons) nor actuality (for Lewis) is something that makes a difference to the nature of an object.[22]

In his defense, Lewis might argue that there is a disanalogy between his use of 'actual' and the Meinongian use of 'exists'. He might say that 'actual' for him is a context-sensitive indexical, and as such, no more marks off a property of things than does the indexical 'here'. Some things are here and some aren't, but that doesn't mean that any *property* distinguishes them, just as nothing distinguishes the things in this room from those that aren't. They do not differ in kind, category, or any other *way* from each other. As an indexical, the extension of 'actual' depends on the context in which it is used. It picks out all the objects that bear a certain relation to the speaker, namely, the speaker's worldmates, and since everyone is in a unique world, the actual things are precisely the things that are in the same world as the speaker.

In reply to this, let us follow Stalnaker in distinguishing the semantics of 'actual' from the metaphysics of actuality.[23] The semantics of 'actual' concerns the way the word acquires its significance, whereas the metaphysics of actuality concerns what this significance is. With respect to the latter, we may ask whether there is a property of being actual that is signified by uses of the predicate 'is actual', and if so, what the nature of that property is. Now it is clear that Lewis uses the predicate 'actual' to restrict metaphysical generalizations to a certain class of objects.[24] We may legitimately ask Lewis questions about the metaphysics of actuality, since if he is to restrict generalizations in this way, there must be some property by which he distinguishes the restricted class to which his generalizations apply. So there must be some property which is signified by uses

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[19]Indeed, there is a sense in which none of Parsons' objects differ in kind. They are all subsumed by a single comprehension principle.

[20]Parsons' takes these as *primitive* extranuclear properties. He would therefore defend the intelligibility of the predicate '$E!$' simply on the grounds that it denotes a primitive extranuclear property.

[21]See Parsons [14, p. 101]. The object $y$ that has at the other world the properties $x$ has here, however, will *be* in the domain of this world, though it may have different properties here. The object $y$ will be in the domain of this world, for according to Parsons, every possible object is in the domain of every world (the Barcan formulas, $\Diamond \exists x \phi \leftrightarrow \exists x \Diamond \phi$ and $\Box \forall x \phi \leftrightarrow \forall x \Box \phi$, are valid in his system). Thus if $x$ has all the properties of a determinate talking donkey and is possible because $y$ has all those properties and exists at another world, both $x$ and $y$ will be in the domain of the actual world. Whatever $y$'s properties in this world, there is, in the domain of being at the actual world, an object with all of the properties of a determinate talking donkey.

[22]This may be contrasted with Zalta's theory, where there is a clear difference in kind between the ordinary objects (which possibly exist) and the Meinongian objects (which couldn't possibly exist). The latter differ in kind from the ordinary objects by the fact that they alone encode properties.

[23]Stalnaker says ([20, p. 229]):

> . . . the *semantical* thesis that the indexical analysis of 'actual' is correct can be separated from the metaphysical thesis that the actuality of the actual world is nothing more than a relation between it and the things existing in it.

[24]See especially Lewis [6, pp. 3–6, 99–100]. On p. 3, for example, he says 'If I am right, other-worldly things exist *simpliciter*, though often it is very sensible to ignore them and quantify restrictedly over our worldmates'. Lewis typically uses sentences beginning 'Every actual thing. . . ' to assert such generalizations.

of 'actual', and if Lewis is right about the indexical analysis of 'actual', the property that is signified will depend on the context of use. Since Lewis uses 'actual' and 'this-worldly' synonymously, a particular use of 'actual' by speaker $x$ to assert some generalization serves to restrict the generalization to the class of objects which are the worldmates of $x$. So a use of 'actual' by $x$ in a metaphysical generalization must signify a relational property of the form *worldmate of* $x$. Notice that the relational property *worldmate of* $x$ is purely extrinsic. It is a property that neither is *grounded in* nor reflects the nature of its relata. For example, the property *being in the same room as* $x$ is one that an object $y$ has only extrinsically, whereas the property *being taller than* $x$ would be had by $y$ intrinsically, since that is (at least partly) a consequence of $y$'s size, which is a part of its own nature (it also depends in part on $x$'s size). So Lewis' indexical 'actual', when used by people in our world, designates an extrinsic, though relational, property. But this reestablishes the analogy with Parsons' use of 'exists', which though not relational, nevertheless designates an extrinsic, extranuclear property of objects. Thus, the fact that 'actual' is an indexical doesn't preclude its functioning to designate a property that is every bit as extrinsic as Parsons' extranuclear property of existence.

Lewis says that he uses 'actual' as an 'indexical, relative term' [6, p. 99]. We have argued above that the indexical character of 'actual' on Lewis' account does not suffice to distinguish the property it expresses from that expressed by the Meinongian 'exists' (on the domain of possible objects). The relativity of 'actual' will not do so either. Lewis contrasts his indexical account of 'actual', which makes actuality relative, with those alternative accounts in which actuality is an absolute property. For him, every world is 'actual at itself', in the same way that every time is a 'present moment' relative to itself. Actuality is relative because what is actual varies with respect to worlds. But the Meinongian notion of existence is similarly relative. In the modal Meinongian theories of Parsons and Zalta, the existence predicate '$E!$' is treated like any other predicate—it denotes a property that has an extension which varies from world to world. It picks out from the fixed domain of entities that have being those that exist in each possible world. The truth conditions for '$E!x$ at $w$' are simply that $x$ is in the extension of the property denoted by '$E!$' with respect to $w$. Though the extension of existence varies from world to world, these Meinongians do have an 'absolute' notion of existence, namely, existence in the actual world (a distinguished world $w_@$).

But the relativized notion of existence is the analogue to Lewis' notion of actuality! So there is a parallel: the Meinongian has a relative sense of 'existence', and an absolute sense of 'being' (this is a consequence of having a fixed domain of entities that have being), whereas Lewis has a relative sense of 'actuality' and an absolute sense of 'existence'. The *mechanisms* which produce the relativity are different in the two cases, but the effect is the same.[25] Though Lewis uses indexicality and a world-mate relation to give a relative sense to 'actual' while the Meinongian directly relativizes the predicate 'exists' to worlds, the result is that the property signified by 'actual' when Lewis uses it is a restricted version of the property signified by the Meinongian when he uses 'exists'.

Lewis thinks that his exists/actual distinction is not a version of the Meinongian being/existence distinction. In his most explicit discussion of these issues in [5], he concludes with a passage concerning Richard Sylvan's use of the distinction. This passage is relevant to our present concerns, for although Lewis' comments are directed towards Sylvan's brand of Meinongianism, they deal with views Sylvan (formerly Routley) shares with other Meinongians.

> At this point you might surmise that the distinction Routley has in mind is genuine, and what is more that we accept it no less than he does. It is just that he calls it the distinction between what 'exists' and what does not; whereas we call it the distinction between present actual, particular, spatiotemporal things and all the rest. (He may join us in giving it the latter name, though we will not join him in giving the former.) For does he not say that it is exactly the present, actual,... things that 'exist'?—he does. But plainly he takes that to be a highly controversial substantive thesis, not a trivial matter of definition. This hypothesis is altogether too irenic. Or rather, it is one-sidedly irenic: it squares Routley's position on loaded ['there exists'] and neutral ['there are'] quantification with orthodoxy, but at the cost of making nonsense of Routley's evident conviction that his position is deeply opposed to orthodoxy. To suppose that Routley mistakes mere terminological difference for profound philosophical disagreement is to

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[25]It is important not to confuse the relativity of actuality with the *relational* character of the property signified by 'actual' on any given use. The Meinongian view of existence is non-relational yet relative.

accuse him of stupidity far beyond belief.

In short: we dispense with existence—but heed what this means and what it does not. Of course, we do not dispense with the word 'exist' as one of our pronunciations of the quantifier. Neither do we dispense with the trivially universal predicate of existence, automatically satisfied by absolutely everything. But if 'existence' is understood so that it can be a substantive thesis that only some of the things there are exist—or, for that matter, so that it can be a substantive thesis that everything exists—we will have none of it. [pp. 30–31]

Lewis insists here that Meinongianism can be a substantive thesis only if the difference between the being/existence distinction, on the one hand, and the exists/actual distinction, on the other, is not merely terminological. For, he argues, how could the Meinongian have an alarming thesis if he merely is marking out the distinction between the 'present, actual, particular spatiotemporal things and all the rest'? For Lewis would have no 'profound philosophical disagreement' with them. But this all assumes that Lewis does have a profound disagreement with the Meinongian. We are arguing that he doesn't. The Meinongian can adopt Lewis' use of 'exists' and 'actual', meaning thereby 'has being' and 'exists', respectively. By doing so, it then does become a 'substantive thesis' (*contra* Lewis' final sentence) that only some of the things there are exist. There is a profound philosophical disagreement, but it is not between Lewis and the Meinongian, but rather between both of them and philosophers with smaller, uniform ontologies.

In summary, Lewis' metaphysics has the following Meinongian characteristics: (1) He has a large ontology that goes beyond Russell's robust sense of reality. (2) He uses restricted quantification in response to the Russellian objections that apply to his theory as well as to Meinong's. (3) He utilizes a version of the being/existence distinction—his notion of actuality, like the Meinongian notion of existence, picks out the subclass of objects that satisfies Russell's robust sense of reality. (4) Finally, in keeping with some Meinongians, Lewis rejects actuality-entailing (i.e., existence-entailing) properties. The property of being a donkey is not an actuality-entailing property for Lewis, just as it is not an existence-entailing property for a Meinongian such as Parsons. Indeed, just as Parsons has *no* existence-entailing properties, Lewis has *no* actuality-entailing properties (at least, no ordinary, non-relational properties, such as being a donkey,

being a person, being hot, being round, etc., are actuality-entailing). This may be another reason why both Parsons and Lewis get the incredulous stare—it just isn't clear what it is to exemplify being a donkey if this doesn't entail the existence (Parsons) or actuality (Lewis) of a donkey.[26] It is here that Lewis' ontology exceeds even that of some other Meinongians. In the final section, we explore this suggestion in greater detail.

## §4: Meinong and Necessity

Lewis' possibilism commits him to a version of the being/existence distinction, and indeed it would seem that any form of possibilism would so commit one. The possibilist is committed to a large class of possibilia which extends beyond a narrower class of actual objects. To be genuinely committed to the possible objects, to say that there are such things, requires an all-inclusive quantifier, ranging over the entire domain of 'being'. In this final section we argue that Lewis' possibilism is of a distinctive kind and has features at which even some Meinongians balk.

We begin our discussion by noting that Lewis rejects irreducibly modal properties. For example, there is no property of being possibly a talking donkey, or of being a donkey at a world (taken as a primitive). 'Possibly there is a talking donkey' is true because there is a talking donkey at some possible world $w$. But to be a talking donkey at $w$ is simply to be a talking donkey and to be a part of $w$. Thus all traces of modality are eliminated and as a consequence Lewis is left with the startling result that possibly there is a talking donkey because there is a talking donkey. In Lewis' modal logic it follows from $\Diamond \exists x(Tx \ \& \ Dx)$ that $\exists x(Tx \ \& \ Dx)$ (Lewis [6] and [7]). We call this view 'diamond dropping possibilism'.

It would seem that diamond dropping is a Meinongian move. Consider that Meinongians 'drop' other intensional operators. Both Parsons and Zalta move from 'According to the story, Holmes is a detective' to 'Holmes is a detective' (though, in the latter sentence, the sense of 'is' for Zalta is 'encodes'). As intentional objects, Meinongian objects have (in some sense) the properties the intentional state attributes to them. The ghost John fears is in some sense a ghost, otherwise why fear it? A dream about Santa Claus is a dream about an object which is (in some sense) a jolly old elf. It is central to Meinongian strategy to raise the objects

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[26]Compare this with the similar conclusion that van Inwagen draws in [21, p. 196] about the source of the incredulous stares.

of intentional states to the full-fledged ontological status of being, and diamond dropping would seem to be the natural extension of this.

But contemporary Meinongians have refrained from applying this tactic to modal contexts. Both Parsons and Zalta use standard possible world semantics to interpret such contexts. They both equate necessity with truth in all possible worlds, and this is ultimately based upon an appeal to relativized predication—an object $x$ has property $F$ with respect to possible world $w$. That same $x$ can lack $F$ with respect to some other world $w'$. The reason that Parsons and Zalta don't extend the Meinongian strategy is that diamond dropping leads to Lewis' counterpart theory. For suppose a Meinongian wanted to account for modal statements by dropping diamonds and adding the needed objects. The natural question that arises is what to do about the contingent properties of objects. Using an example from Lewis, consider that Humphrey contingently had five fingers and might have had six. How could one drop the diamond—to a Meinongian object with five fingers or to a Meinongian object with six? Lewis' solution is with both, namely, two world bound individuals, one with five fingers and one with six. This is Lewis' primary motivation for counterpart theory and it also explains why contemporary Meinongians such as Parsons and Zalta don't drop diamonds. They consider counterpart theory unnatural when compared with relativized predication.

Lewis adopts counterpart theory because he can't make metaphysical sense of the relativized predication of standard modal semantics. How can an object $x$ which is $F$ at $w$ be a part of $w'$ but not $F$ at $w'$? Is it $F$ or not, he asks? He doesn't see how the modifiers 'at $w$' and 'at $w'$' can resolve this dilemma.[27] This is where contemporary Meinongians depart from Lewis. For relativized predication is in the spirit of Meinongianism; it falls out naturally as part of the project of distinguishing senses of 'is' and distinguishing modes of being $F$. Not only can a Meinongian accept predication relativized to a world as a primitive, as Parsons does, but it can be analyzed, as in Zalta's system.

Zalta's encoding Meinongianism has a further feature in comparison to which both Lewis and Parsons have unnecessarily large ontologies, namely, there are no flesh and blood talking donkeys, not even nonexistent

(nonactual) ones. Zalta's Meinongianism allows that there are abstract objects that *encode* donkeyhood, being made of flesh and blood, and talking; it also allows that there are nonexistent objects which are possibly such that they are talking donkeys made of flesh and blood.[28] But there are no existing or nonexistent objects that exemplify these properties. Both Lewis' and Parsons' theory stand in contrast to this. A consequence of diamond dropping is that Lewis' possibilia simply exemplify their properties (recall that to be $F$ at $w$ is just to be $F$ and to be a part of $w$). His possible talking donkeys are 'flesh and blood' donkeys. Parsons' theory has a similar unsettling feature, for he has nonexistent flesh and blood talking donkeys. Though nonexistent, these objects nevertheless exemplify donkeyhood, being made of flesh and blood, and talking. On this point, then, the encoding Meinongian stands on the side of untutored common sense. Pretheoretically, we are not inclined to believe that there are nonactual (Lewis) or nonexistent (Parsons) flesh and blood donkeys. Thus, the encoding Meinongian can preserve our intuitions concerning existence- and actuality-entailing properties, namely that being a donkey, being made of flesh and blood, etc., are such properties. We suggest the real reason both Lewis and Parsons have to contend with the incredulous stare is the fact that they give up these intuitions.

So is Lewis a Meinongian? Well, yes and no. Our main project has been to show the extent to which his ontology is Meinongian. We also hope to have shown exactly which other distinctively Meinongian features are present in his theory and which he rejects. It is a point of agreement with some Meinongian theories which, we think, meets with the greatest resistance and which causes the incredulous stares. It is not simply the large ontology nor even the possibilia *per se* which gets a shocked response. It is those talking donkeys—donkeys which (Lewis says) must exist, since only flesh and blood donkeys could exemplify the property of talking. From the point of view of encoding Meinongianism, Lewis has a needlessly

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[27]See Lewis' discussion of the problem of 'accidental intrinsics' [6, pp. 200–01]. In response to Lewis' claim that he can't understand relativized predication, Linsky [8] proposes to treat 'truth at a world' as a primitive operator and sketches a semantic interpretation for it.

[28]Zalta's domain of ordinary objects includes objects that exemplify existence, like you and us, and, in addition, objects that do not exemplify existence but which might have. (These latter are unlike his abstract objects, which are not the kind of thing that could have exemplified existence.) Thus, Zalta agrees that there are nonexistent, possible talking donkeys, but notes that (at this world) they are not talking donkeys (although they are *possibly* talking donkeys, and talking donkeys *at other worlds*). Since they don't exist (at our world), they fail altogether to exemplify being donkeys, and instead exemplify the property of *not being a donkey* and the other properties typically exemplified by objects with no spatiotemporal location.

big ontology. This is something even a Meinongian takes seriously. We won't stare at him though.

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