

Guide to Chapter Ten of Gareth Evans' *The Varieties of Reference*

Rick Grush
Department of Philosophy 0119
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA 92093

10.0 What Happens in Chapter Ten

In this chapter Evans explains how empty Russellian singular terms are apparently able to be used in meaningful conversation. In Section 10.1 Evans sketches the problem and desiderata for a solution. The desiderata are that the account should be one in which the empty singular term is used, not just mentioned in a metalinguistic analysis; the account should use "exists" as a first order predicate; and it should explain the role of "really" in expressing empty singular terms. The account hinges on an analysis of pretense. In Section 10.2 Evans describes games of make-believe, and what is involved acting under the scope of a pretense. Evans example is a children's mud pie game, in which they pretend that globs of mud are pies. This includes an analysis of intentional states and language use under the scope of a pretense – for example intentional states such as make-believable desiring more pies, or make-believable referring to a pie by actually referring to a glob of mud. In Section 10.3 Evans applies this apparatus to the use of empty singular terms in discussing fiction. The basic idea is that such uses are cases of people making statements about the fiction (painting or novel or whatever) by make-believable making statements within the scope of a pretense to the effect that the fiction is actual. Section 10.4 Evans uses the tools to give an account of negative existential statements, for example Santa Claus does not exist, in which a singular term is apparently used to register the fact that it is empty. The account starts by pointing out that one can sometimes make an actual statement by make-believable making a statement within the scope of a pretense. For example, one child can state that another child stole a glob of mud by making the make-believe statement that the child stole a pie. A negative existential statement is analyzed as a statement to the effect that in making a make-believe statement to the effect that a exists, one is not thereby making an actual statement.

10.1 The problem, and constraints on a solution

This section is entirely preliminary, setting up some desiderata and bringing out some resources that will be used in the following sections. The problem is that terms that Evans (and others) want to treat as Russellian seem to be able to be used for genuine communicative purposes while empty. Prima facie this should not be possible, since if they are Russellian, then nothing is said by someone who uses such a term. The two primary sorts of cases are discussion about fictional objects (Superman is weakened by

Kryptonite) and negative existential statements (Superman doesn't (really) exist). Evans sets up some desiderata for the account he will spell out in Sections 10.2-10.4. First is that the account should not be metalinguistic, that is, in the account the empty RST should be used and not merely mentioned. Second, the account should be consistent with the use of existence as a first order predicate. And finally, there is a suggestion that the English word "really" has a sense in which it can mark a different sense of the existence predicate from the basic one: "x exists" vs "x really exists," and this difference will be important for his account of negative existential statements in Section 10.4.

Evans starts by pointing out that a major source of resistance to Russellian singular terms will be the claim that they can apparently be used meaningfully when empty. Indeed, they might be used to say true things. It needs to be pointed out that Evans' target here in Chapter 10 are situations where the interlocutors know that the term is empty — anyone who doesn't know that the terms is empty will have their understanding of the term covered by the considerations in Chapter 9. The two major cases are negative existential statements (NES), and discourse about fiction (DAF) or other representations. Though the phenomenon also includes discussion about shared illusions that are known to be illusions by both parties.

Evans points out that the fact that RSTs can be used to discuss fiction is not an immediate threat to their Russellian status since there is a clear distinction between normal discourse and discourse about fiction. And existential generalization is a litmus test: Fa entails $\exists xFx$ in normal discourse, but not fictional discourse. So there is a theory-independent motivation for the claim that such discourse is special in some respect. And consequently the defender of RP is not immediately threatened by fictional discourse, since RP could be said to apply only for non-fictional discourse. Nevertheless, the proponent of their Russellian status needs to give an account of what is going on in these cases. They can't just say that fiction is special and go home.

The first desideratum is introduced at the top of p. 344: in the cases of DAFs and NESs, the term is *used* and not merely mentioned:

If a speaker says something like 'That woman does not (really) exist', in the context of a shared perceptual illusion, a remembered film, or a story, he surely cannot simply be represented as saying something like 'This use of the demonstrative "That woman" does not refer'; no one who merely grasped that could be said to have understood what the speaker said. (VR p.344)

For Evans, this will mean that the audience must do the same sort of thing that they do when the term is not empty: "the hearer must possess some information or misinformation, and somehow bring it to bear upon his interpretation of the remark." (P. 344)

At the top of p. 345 Evans says that "some other" (there will be two) desiderata are connected to the use of the word "exists." Evans will be arguing in much of this section that '... exists' is a predicate. And given that, the second desideratum will be that NESs use this predicate. And the third desideratum is going to be that the account of NESs should use 'exists' in a way that is connected to how the word 'really' is used.

So first to the discussion of ‘... exists’ as a predicate. From the bottom of p. 345 to the bottom of p. 347 Evans points out that sentences discussing existence using modals, intentional idioms, tense, and existential quantifiers all seem to admit of straight-forward analyses when ‘... exists’ is treated as a first-order predicate. Below are some of Evans examples (I have added normal predicates in parentheses for comparison)

This might not have existed (/broken/been green).
 John doesn't know that this beach exists (/is eroding/is private).
 Once upon a time this did not exist (did not stink/was not valuable).
 Some tame tigers exist (/are albino/are old).

In all these cases, treating ‘... exists’ as a predicate makes the analysis straight-forward. On p. 348 Evans points out that while there is good reason to treat ‘... exists’ as a predicate, it is a special predicate in some ways — a *logical* predicate, similar to identity.

From the bottom of p. 348 to the bottom of p. 351 Evans discusses a proposal by Kripke concerning NESs. Kripke agrees that an account of NESs should be one in which the empty RST is used, and not merely mentioned. And Kripke recognizes that ‘*a* exists’ says nothing if *a* is empty, and so ‘*a* does not exist’ would also say nothing. Kripke's idea is to construct another kind of negation operator (and there are two versions):

... we can understand a different negation operator, which, when applied to a sentence ‘*Fa*’, yields a sentence which is true if and only if there is no true proposition which says of *a* that it is *F*. And the negative existential statement uses this different negation operator. (VR p. 349)

... someone who says ‘*a* exists’, where ‘*a*’ is empty, does not purport to put forward a proposition of the form ‘*E(a)*’, but puts forward the intelligible, and false, proposition ‘There is a true proposition which says of *a* that it exists’; and the negative existential statement is the negation of this. (VR p. 349)

Evans raises an objection in the paragraph bridging p. 349-350, and then discusses two potential replies to that objection on Kripke's behalf. The objection is that if one is unable to construct a meaningful expression, using *a*, of the form “*a* does not exist”, it is completely unclear why one should be able to use *a* to construct a meaningful expression of the form “There is a true proposition which says of *a* that it exists.”

The first reply to this on Kripke's behalf is that the proposal is that all it requires is that:

... there should be, in English, a negation sign yielding a true sentence when applied to a sentence which does not express a proposition ... (p. 350)

Evans' rebuttal is that this reply gives up on the desideratum, which Kripke endorsed, that *a* be used and not merely mentioned. It effectively becomes a metalinguistic analysis stating that the sentence expresses no proposition.

The second reply on Kripke's behalf is much more interesting. It hinges on a notion of *intelligibility*. The idea is this. Suppose that *a* is associated with some descriptive content ϕ . In such a case, even if *a* is *F* is meaningless because *a* is empty:

... it would be intelligible because it would be clear under what circumstances it would express a proposition. (VR p. 350)

Notice (as Evans points out in footnote 12) that this reply is assuming *a* is a descriptive name. Now on Evans' analysis descriptive names are not meaningless if empty, and so are not Russellian. But Kripke takes descriptive names to be Russellian, and so this reply would be an attempt to say that for Kripke, even if they are RSTs, they can still be 'intelligible' if they are empty.

Evans first rebuttal to this is essentially that there is no reason not to take the "circumstances under which it would express a proposition" as part of the truth conditions of that proposition. (Evans' reply here raises an interesting issue. I will discuss this at the end of my notes on this section so as to not disrupt the flow of the exposition.) This is essentially what Evans does with descriptive names: the conditions under which the sentence would express a proposition are those circumstances in which there is a unique ϕ , and so the sentence has the truth conditions the ϕ is *F*.

The second rebuttal is that this tactic works only for NESs employing descriptive names. Evans has no problem with NESs using descriptive names, but clearly NESs can and usually do involve Russellian singular terms of other types.

Evans brings out the third desideratum in the following way. First, Evans introduces the idea of a basic existential statement, which is just a normal statement someone might use to say that something exists: *a exists*. Granted that's an unusual locution in normal circumstances, normally it would be expressed with other words. But clearly it is a statement that can be made in normal circumstances.

Now imagine a speaker who believes he is hallucinating a little green man, but in fact is not hallucinating. Evans has already argued (Chapter 9) that in such a case the speaker, in making statements about the LGM, will actually be demonstratively identifying the LGM even though they think the LGM is illusory. Now in such a case it would follow that there should be no problem giving an analysis of that speaker's NES. Sure, the speaker is using an Russellian singular term, but since it has a referent, it can be meaningfully used.

But the question is, when the speaker in this situation says "That little green man doesn't exist" can she be understood as simply negating the basic existential statement "That little green man exists"? Evans claims that the answer is no, but the argument here is thin. It will be discussed and filled out more in Section 10.4. But the basic idea is that there are two different ways positive existential statements that can be made. They can both be expressed by the words "*a exists*", and so on Evans' analysis that sentence is ambiguous. But only one of those senses allows for the addition of the word "really", as in "*a really exists*". So far we don't have an analysis of what those two different senses of the positive existential statement mean, but we do have a test to let us know which is being used — if the word "really" can be felicitously added, then it is not the basic existential statement. In Section 10.4 this will be filled out.

OK, now to turn to the issue that came up in the context of Evans' objections to Kripke's proposal. For Kripke descriptive names are Russellian. And so the idea is that the defender of Kripke is here trying to give an account of why an empty descriptive name can be "intelligible" even if empty. The idea was that though S (*Julius is an Englishman*) is meaningless if empty (recall, for Kripke descriptive names are Russellian), we know what condition would have to be satisfied in order for the name to have a meaning (the inventor of the zip would have to exist). So though the name is *meaningless*, we know the condition under which it would be meaningful, and so that makes the sentence *intelligible*. Evans' reply to this is:

Suppose it is said that a sentence S , of the kind in question, expresses a proposition only if A obtains, and that if both A and B obtain, then S expresses a true proposition. Why are we not permitted to say instead that S expresses the proposition that A and B obtain? (This is surely what would be grasped by someone who heard and understood an utterance of S .) (VR p. 350)

This is essentially what Evans did with descriptive names, and why he thinks that though they are referring expressions, they are not Russellian. The condition that, according to the Kripkean proposal makes the sentence intelligible is one that, according to Evans, just tells us the truth conditions under which S is true. And so S isn't merely *intelligible*, but perfectly meaningful.

But why couldn't this same line of reasoning be employed to call into question the Russellian status of any singular term? To be specific, compare this to the ETs are not IBTs principle that I described in my notes to Chapter 8. Recall that there the context was Evans' claim that a sentence using a demonstrative would not express a thought if it were empty.

One might object to Evans here that we know precisely the circumstances under which that thought-attempt would be successful, or in which the sentence would express a thought — namely, if there were an object there. In answering this objection on Evans' behalf I articulated what I called *the existential thoughts are not information-based thoughts principle*. Consider a demonstrative such as *that φ is F* . According to Evans, the difference between *the φ* and *that φ* is not a difference in the descriptive content φ , but is reflecting the requirement that the thought be information-based in the demonstrative case. The suggestion then is that since we know precisely the conditions under which *that φ is F* would have expressed a proposition, namely, if there was a φ that was the source of information used to interpret the remark (or something along those lines) why can't this just be worked into the descriptive content? That is: iSuppose that *that φ is F* expresses a thought when

(IL) + the phi is F

Here, the parenthetical material is just registering the existence of the object and information link between it and the thinker. If this is the case, then why can't we describe the parenthetical part of this as φ_0 , and then analyze the content of the thought as something along the lines of:

The phi is φ_0 and F

Or

Something is φ_0 and is also the φ that is F.

Either way, we have perfectly determinate truth conditions. And it seems to be exactly the move that Evans himself is making in response to the Kripke defender:

Suppose it is said that a sentence S, of the kind in question, expresses a proposition only if A obtains, and that if both A and B obtain, then S expresses a true proposition. Why are we not permitted to say instead that S expresses the proposition that A and B obtain?

Evans does point out in footnote 13 that Dummett employs an argument of this sort to undermine the Russellian status of any singular term. Presumably on grounds similar to those I have articulated here. So if Evans' can answer this, then he will have an answer to Dummett's case against Russellian singular terms.

I think there is an answer here. We need to distinguish *presupposition* from *precondition*. Roughly, a *presupposition* is a condition that must obtain for a *thought T to be true*. And in the passage Evans cites from Dummett, the topic under discussion is presupposition. By contrast, a *precondition* is something that must obtain for S *to be able to grasp T*. Here is the difference. Suppose someone's doctrine is:

The sentence S expresses a proposition only if *b is G*; and if that condition does obtain, the proposition S expresses is *a is F*.

In such a case, Evans' point is that it seems reasonable to say that the sentence just means something like the conjunction "*b is G and a is F*" since that is what anyone who understands the sentence would take it to mean. Now compare this to

X can grasp the thought *T* only if *b is G*, and if that condition does obtain, the thought *T* expresses the proposition *a is F*.

And let's suppose that in this case "*b is G*" is "the thinker is awake", and "*a is F*" is "the apple is red". Clearly in this case it wouldn't do to say that the proposition expressed by *T* when I entertain it is *the apple is red and I am awake*.

That *X* is awake is not a presupposition of the truth of any thought *T*, but it may very well be a precondition on *X*'s ability to grasp or entertain *T*. And this condition's failing to obtain doesn't render *T* false. In this case, being awake is a precondition for the thought's being graspable (by the thinker), not a presupposition of the truth of the thought.

The *ETs are not IBTs* principle then is the claim that the proposition expressed by the relevant existential thought "the little green man exists" is expressing a *precondition* for there to be a graspable thought employing a demonstrative Idea of *that little green man*; it is not a *presupposition* that can be worked into the truth conditions for the proposition expressed by the thought.

In the case of the thinker being awake it is very obvious that what is under discussion is a precondition and not a presupposition since the content of the two is so different as to make it entirely

obvious (*I am awake* vs *the apple is red*). So while indeed I can't grasp the thought *the apple is red* unless I am awake, nobody will be tempted to analyze the content of that thought when I grasp it as *I am awake and the apple is red*. But in the case of the demonstrative thought and the existential statement that describes its precondition, they are similar enough that the existential statement suggests itself as expressing the truth condition for the information-based thought.

10.2 Games of make-believe

In this section Evans discusses the structure of games of make-believe. Such games involve a pretense that can establish basic stipulations of the game. Evans uses a children's mud-pie game in which they stipulate that globs of mud are pies. Such games can incorporate new make-believe truths that are not part of the initial stipulation, such as the pies can be known to be burnt if they are left in the pretend over too long. Moreover, within the scope of the pretense, children can make-believely refer to pies by actually referring to globs of mud. Such games often incorporate props (such as globs of mud), but can also be 'existentially creative', as when children pretend that there is someone chasing them. Evans gives an analysis of a range of practices in games of make-believe, including intentional states and linguistic acts within the scope of a pretense. He will then, using this structure, given accounts of discourse about fiction in Section 10.3, and negative existential statements in 10.4.

Evans previews the point of the chapter:

The fundamental idea is to regard utterances containing empty singular terms used connivingly as moves in a linguistic game of make-believe. We make believe that there is an object of such-and-such a kind, from which we have received, or are receiving, information and we act within the scope of that pretence. (VR p. 353)

It will turn out that there are two kinds of situation, and Evans' phrasing here is ambiguous between them (purposefully so, probably). In some situations we have no information, and we are pretending that there is an object and that we are receiving or have received information from it. In the other sort of situation, we do have information that is of the same sort we would have if there were an object, and while we know there is no object, we pretend that the information is in fact from an object. Evans will use the expression "informational props" in this latter sort of case. The analysis will apply to both, but just slightly differently.

As an example of a game of make-believe, Evans introduces the mud pie game (example from Walton, who Evans cites in the text). Children pretend that globs of mud are pies, and they will exchange, 'bake' and engage in other behaviors with respect to these make-believe pies. Evans also follows Walton in using the notation **P** to mean *it is make-believely the case that P*. Though as the Evans' discussion proceeds the notation will be extended to arguments other than propositions: e.g. **pie** is a make-believe pie. We are using a metalanguage to discuss the game, and **()** is an operator in this metalanguage.

There are three principles, which I will summarize here:

Establishing principles. These set up the initial pretense(s) of the game. Evans' examples are:

1. (x) (Glob of mud(x) & Fashioned into pie-shape(x) \rightarrow *Pie(x)*);
2. (x) (Small black pebble (x) \rightarrow *Raisin(x)*);
3. *This metal object is a hot oven*.

These mean: any glob of mud that is pie shaped is make-believely a pie; small black pebbles are make-believely raisins; and it is make-believely the case that this metal object is a hot oven.

The incorporation principle. This permits the inclusion of truths into the game unless they are ruled out by the initial establishing principles.

4. If B is true, and there is no set $A_1 \dots A_n$ of make-believe truths such that the counterfactual 'If $A_1 \dots A_n$ were true, B would not be true' is true, then B is make-believely true.

This allows for actual truths to be incorporated into the game. For example, if it actually starts raining, then this principle permits *it is raining* (it is make-believely raining) to be incorporated into the game.

The recursion principle. This is sort of a closure principle. Anything that follows from the make-believe truths incorporated into the game (and not ruled out by any other truths in the game) is incorporated into the game.

5. If $A_1 \dots A_n$ is a set of make-believe truths, and the counter-factual 'If $A_1 \dots A_n$ were true, then B would be true' is true, and there is no set of make-believe truths $A'_1 \dots A'_n$ such that the counterfactual 'If $A'_1 \dots A'_n$ were true, then B would not be true' is true, then B is make-believely true.

So if P entails Q, and *P*, then *Q* (so long as no other truths incorporated into the game rule out Q).

Evans points out that these principles allow for the discovery of new make-believe truths. For example *These pies are burnt* if the globs of mud are left in the metal box for a long time.

Next Evans argues that we must be able to incorporate propositional attitudes:

6. (x)(If x believes that *P* then *x believes that P*)
7. (x)(If x intends that *P* then *x intends that P*)

Then, on the bottom of p. 357, we get the means of incorporating linguistic actions into the game:

A subject can utter a sentence *intending to get his audience to realize that his utterance is true if and only if P*. This will be because he really intends that *his audience realize that his utterance is true if and only if P*. And this state of affairs which he aims to produce is the audience really

realizing (believing) that *his utterance is true if and only if P*, i.e. realizing that *his utterance is true* if and only if *P*.

We can spell the sequence of moves out in this way:

8. X utters S *intending A to believe that S is true iff P*
9. X utters S intending *A believe that S is true iff P*
10. X utters S intending A believe *S is true iff P*
11. X utters S intending A believe *S is true* iff *P*.

The point of this sequence is to explain what linguistic action *X* is performing by uttering *S*. Notice that the *uttering of S* is real. *X* isn't pretending to utter a statement, but is really uttering it. But this utterance is not a real "saying" (a real move in language). If it were a real move, the audience would need to understand *S* via believing that *S* is true iff *P* — that is, the audience would have to have a belief about the world. But no such belief about the world need be formed. Rather, what the audience is to do is to have a belief *about the game*: *S is true* iff *P*. While playing the game, *X*'s utterances are to get the audience to have true beliefs about the game; that are not sayings, but *sayings*, understood by forming a belief about the game.

Evans contrasts this with Walton's proposal, which is that

12. If X says that *P* then *X says that P*

On Walton's view, *X*'s pretend saying is a real statement (a real *saying*) about the game. This has the liability that if the saying employs an empty Russellian singular term, then it is not clear how the speaker will be able to use it, in a real saying, so make a statement about the game, as (12) requires.

From the middle of p. 358, Evans discusses *existentially conservative* and *existentially creative* games. An existentially conservative game is one in which if make-believedly there is something that is *G*, then there is something that is make-believedly *G*. The mud pie game is an example. In the middle of p. 360 Evans points out that in existentially conservative games, actual objects underwrite pretend intentional states via the incorporation principle. One can *refer to a pie* by referring to a glob of mud, and *the audience is thinking of the same pie as the speaker* can be true in virtue of the fact that the audience is thinking of the same glob of mud as the speaker.

What about existentially creative games, where there is no object for the incorporation principle to appeal to in order to account for understanding? There are two kinds of case. In one sort of case, not only is there no object, there is also nothing corresponding to what would have been information from an object had there been one. So for example in the case of children pretending that another person is chasing them, there is none of the sounds nor sights that would be produced if they were actually being chased. In the other sort of case, though there is no object, there is information of a sort that there would have been had there been an object. The most straight-forward cases of this would be story-tellers who provide information that is of a similar sort to what they would be providing if they were giving testimony about actual events. Speaking of pretenses that have informational props such as this, Evans says:

[p]laying, at least cognitively, within the scope of this kind of pretence is generally very much easier and more natural than playing within the scope of the shadow-boxing kind of pretence, because one can let the automatic and habitual responses of one's cognitive system take over and produce the make-believe thoughts, emotions, and reactions which playing the game normally requires. One can throw oneself into the pretence by suppressing the impact of disbelief. (VR p.359)

Other cases of this sort would include FPS video games, virtual reality, and hallucinations.

In the case where there is neither an object nor an information link, Evans points out that that any *reference* would have to be by description to an *object* set up by the initial stipulations of the pretence, for example to “the person who is chasing us.”

But in the case where there *is* information, the people operating within the scope of the pretence can *refer* by means other than by description. Evans discusses an example of two people who take themselves to be under a mutual illusion to the effect that there is a little green man ahead of them. Because they take themselves to be under an illusion, they will be playing a game of make-believe one of whose basic stipulations is that things are as they seem, that the information they have is actually from a little green man. There are two cases to discuss. He will first discuss the case where they are right about the illusion, and then the case in which that are mistaken — where there *is* a little green man there that they take (erroneously) to be illusory.

If there is no little green man, but S and A both have information that is as if it is from a little green man, then they have the option of letting the psychological mechanisms — the creation of demonstrative Ideas with their controlling conceptions fed by information from these ILs — operate in much the same way they would operate had the object actually been there. And thus they can *refer* to *that little green man*. This is entirely parallel to the story-telling case Evans discussed above.

So to summarize:

1. In the existentially conservative games, such as the mud-pie game, the mud-pies can secure shared *reference*. S can *refer* (demonstratively) to a pie* by referring (demonstratively) to a glob of mud, via the incorporation principle.
2. In an existentially creative game with no informational props (such as the children who are pretending they are being chased by a third party), any *reference* capable of underwriting communication would have to be via a description employed by both S and A. Since there is no information from “that man”, the expression is merely being *used as a demonstrative*, but is really understood as a description: the man who is chasing/attacking us. And any additional sentences uttered about this man are essentially new stipulations in the game that add to the description. When S says “Be quiet! He’s going back to the river.” The sentence is essentially adding a stipulation to the game via adding descriptive material. The pretence now involves a *man* who *is attacking them* and *who is moving back towards the river*.
3. But in a case in which while there is no object there are informational props, there can be *demonstrative reference* to the *object*. The subject allows the psychological mechanisms

that would underlie demonstrative reference to operate on the information. If the informational props are shared (a single story-teller, a shared illusion), then S and A can *communicate* about the *object*. Moreover, because this mechanism is operating on the information links as usual, if there actually is an object, then the people involved in the pretense will be actually demonstratively identifying the object, even if they take themselves to merely be *demonstratively identifying the object*. But if the object does not exist, then only someone who engages in the pretense will be able to *have demonstrative thoughts* about the object, and so only by engaging in such a pretense could one understand *statements* made about the *object*.

10.3 Discourse “about the novel” (etc)

*In this section Evans outlines his proposal concerning discourse about fiction. The basic idea is that people speaking of fictional characters and events are engaged in a pretense to the effect that the information they have is actual information from real objects and events. Within the scope of this pretense, they can make statements about the game (in this case, about the fiction itself, the book, painting, film, etc.) by *making statements* within the scope of the pretense. He points out that on this account the RSTs are actually used, not mentioned. Or more accurately they are *used*, meaning used within the scope of the pretense.*

The initial point is that, if one is engaged in a pretense, one can make a statement about the game by *making a statement* within the game, provided one somehow manifest the intention that this is what one is trying to do. Evans' example is a mud pie game where the fathers of the children get into a disagreement: “Listen! Your boy started out with three pies, right out of the oven. Then he gave one to Mary, and ate one — he should only have one left.” Here the father is *making a statement* about *pies* in order to make a statement about the game, a statement such as the other child is cheating, or something like that. Evans' claim is that people are engaging in exactly this sort of pretense when they are discussing things depicted in fiction.

He points out on the bottom half of p. 364 that one reason this analysis hasn't been considered seriously is “partly because of an illusion that this serious discourse can be adequately represented as involving an intensional operator such as ‘It is fictionally the case that ...’.” Here Evans cites Lewis' ‘Truth in Fiction’. Evans argues that this won't work, for the familiar reasons. If a sentence is unintelligible on its own, then any embedding of it should be unintelligible as well.

Evans is claiming that discourse about fictional entities is to be understood in a manner similar to the fathers' discussion in the mud pie game. In the case of discussion about fictional characters, the discussants are continuing the pretense started by the creator of the fiction (they might also be starting their own pretense, as in the case of the little green man). The speaker makes a statement about the fiction by *making a statement* within the scope of the pretense. And the speaker must somehow manifest the intention that her goal is to make a statement *about* the game. And the audience must *understand* the utterance (Evans introduced the expression ‘quasi-understanding’ for

understanding, that is, understanding within the scope of a pretense). And moreover, the audience is to realize that S's statement about the game is true iff S's *statement* is *true*.

Evans points out that on this account, the expressions are *used* and not merely mentioned, since *understanding S* requires A to do very much the same thing that is done in understanding an utterance. Specifically, to bring information to bear on her interpretation of the remark.

The point of the paragraph bridging pages 365-366 is that this account must recognize distinct *uses* of singular terms. What this means is that our language has two conventional uses for singular terms, and these uses require different things of the audience in order to be understood. The standard use requires A to have a singular thought T about the referent and to realize that what the speaker is saying is true iff P. And for information-invoking singular terms, this requires the speaker to invoke information appropriately. In the conniving use something very different is required of A. A must engage in a pretense, must quasi-understand the statement using the IIST, and must know that the speaker is intending to make a statement about the game by *making a statement* within the scope of the pretense. These are different things, though they do share many components.

To bring this out Evans compares two people who read a novel, but one of them takes it to be a non-fictional historical account of real events, and the other realizes it is fictional. Both might utter the sentence "That thief was a fool," but the first will be using the expression "that thief" connivingly (because they believe themselves to have read a fictional work) while the second will be using it normally (because they believe, correctly, that they have read a non-fictional historical account). Evans claims that "the person who utters the sentence with the intention of giving expression to a historical fact *cannot* be judged to have spoken truly." While the other speaker, in uttering the same sentence, can be judged to have spoken truly.

Now one might have the intuition that the first speaker *did* say something true, but just accidentally so. Evans' doctrine will be that that intuition exists because *in a sense* the speaker did say something true. That sense is that the speaker uttered a sentence that could have been used to make a true statement. Consider the following situation: a friend is using my computer, and I see her spill her cup of coffee to the side of the keyboard, and I exclaim "I'll need to get a new mouse!" Suppose though that my computer mouse was safely off to the side, but my pet mouse happened to be next to my computer and was mortally injured by the scalding hot coffee. Did I say something true? It is certainly the case, because of the ambiguity in the expression "mouse" that the sentence I uttered could have been used to utter a true statement. And so one can easily have the intuition that I accidentally said something true. But it should be clear that in a less sloppy way of describing the situation, I didn't say something true (in fact, what I actually said was false, I don't need a new computer mouse), but I did utter a sentence that, by coincidence, I *could* have truly uttered, had I used the other distinct but phonologically indistinguishable English word. Evans' doctrine is essentially that it is only in this loose sense in which the person who said "That thief was a fool" could be considered to have said something true.

On the last full paragraph of p. 366 Evans makes a really interesting point that he sort of undersells. It is that his account explains why it is that people can have various attitudes towards fictional characters. When one engages in a pretense, exactly because one is employing some of the same psychological mechanisms that would be employed if the pretense were actual, we get a natural

explanation of the truth of sentences like “Lisa admires Commander Adama.” It’s not at all clear how a metalinguistic analysis or an operator analysis would try to account for such things (it is *not* fictionally the case that Lisa admires Adama).

Evans closes by discussing an alternative approach that treats fictional characters as abstract objects. Evans does accept that we can invoke abstract objects to discuss fiction, as in ‘There are only three characters in the whole of English literature who kill their mothers.’ But he rejects the idea that this is a workable analysis of normal discourse about fictional characters. His reasons are straightforward: this account does not involve interlocutors invoking information; it does not account for the pretense that is apparently in play; and it also requires attributing to anyone who discusses fiction an understanding of a pretty sophisticated kind of abstract object. Evans summarizes the last point:

I agree that it is central to any account of ‘discourse about fiction’ that it explain what it is for two people to be thinking of the same fictional object (i.e. for them to be *thinking of the same object*). But this does not involve the application of a new criterion of identity for a new kind of entity (the abstract objects); it involves the application, within a pretence, of perfectly familiar criteria of identity for perfectly familiar kinds of objects. (VR p. 367-8)

And he points out that similar remarks hold for Moore’s analysis concerning identity conditions for two people to be thinking of the same imaginary objects, which appealed to the causal source of their “conceptions” of the object :

The requirement of a causal relation between ‘conceptions’ (*Ideas*) simply flows out of the requirement that parties to this sort of communication must be *thinking of the same thing*: that is, that they must be so related that, had the pretence been real, they would actually have been thinking of the same thing. It is not part of a new criterion of identity for a special sort of thing (imaginary objects). (VR, p. 368)

10.4 Singular negative existential statements

*Here Evans will give an account of negative existential statements, such as “That little green man doesn’t exist.” The basic idea is to first understand that in some cases a person, in uttering a sentence to *make a statement* can in virtue of *making that statement* say something that is not only *true*, but also true (absolutely). For example, one can say “The little green man has a beard” while engaging in a pretense because the speaker believes herself to be subject to an illusion, but if in fact there is a little green man there — the information is not illusory — the statement will be not only *true*, but true. Evans then claims that the meaning of “Really”[^]*P* is roughly something like “In uttering *S* to *say that P*, the *statement* will be not only *true*, but also true.” And a negative existential statement is the denial of this. Negative existential statements are then the denial of “Really *X* exists” which has a perfectly determinate meaning even if *X* doesn’t exist: “In *saying X exists* one will have said something not only *true* but true.*

(My discussion of this section will not follow the order of Evans' discussion, but will introduce things in a slightly different order.) The topic now is negative existential statements: statements of the form "a doesn't exist," which obviously pose a challenge for anyone who thinks that Russellian singular terms can meaningfully show up in such expressions. Evans will argue that pretense is key, but not in precisely the way described in previous sections. If one is merely speaking within the scope of a pretense concerning the *existence* of a *little green man*, then the utterance "the little green man does not exist" is *false*, for within the scope of that pretense, *the little green man exists*.

The first piece of the solution is what Evans has called the "game to reality shift." This is a situation where, in quasi-understanding the utterance, one would not only be *demonstratively identifying the little green man*, but also actually demonstratively identifying a little green man because there is actually one there. This is different from a situation in which A takes S to be making a normal statement about an actually existing little green man. In both cases there is in fact a little green man, and in both cases S is uttering the sentence "That little green man has a beard." The difference is that in the normal case one just identifies the LGM as one normally would, and one would grasp the thought in the usual way. In the situation in which A believes the LGM to be illusory, A is not just doing things as normal. Rather, A is engaging in a pretense, and taking themselves to quasi-understand the utterance. And by way of *understanding* the utterance, they *demonstratively identify the little green man*. But in so doing, it turns out they actually *demonstratively identify the little green man*. This is the *game-to-reality shift*. In both situations the audience ends up demonstratively identifying the little green man, but the route they take is different.

Given that there can be such shifts, speakers know that this can happen, and so can mark and exploit this. Evans claims that the word "Really" as in "Really, that little green man has a beard" is a marker of this. The import of "Really^S" is that it is indicating that in *understanding* S, and *demonstratively identifying the little green man*, one will in fact be identified (not merely *identified*) the little green man. It says, of a move within the scope of a pretense, that that move was not merely within the scope of the pretense. It is a condition on this that A is in fact interpreting S within the scope of the pretense, and understands that in so doing, they are also genuinely identifying the referent. If there is no pretense going on, then "Really^S" is infelicitous. If we are driving in my car and I pull into (what is obviously) a parking lot and stop the car and say "the car is really in a parking lot" you would be puzzled, because in this case your understanding of "the car is in a parking lot" is straightforward and does not involve any pretense. And so it is entirely unclear what game-to-reality shift my use of "really" could be appealing to.

Note, though Evans doesn't discuss this, that this account has the virtue of being consistent with this same use of "really" in other contexts: if two children are playing at sword fighting, a parent who sees that they are playing with *swords* that have genuinely sharp edges might warn the children that they could *really* get injured, meaning that in *injuring* someone within the pretense of the game, one could be also actually injuring them. By contrast, if the potential source of injury had nothing to do with the pretense — for example, if the children were playing near a cliff — it would be odd for the mother to say "Be careful, you might really get injured." Rather, the way to express it would be to just

say “Be careful, you might get injured.”¹ So there does seem to be a sense of “really” that is used for making a game-to-reality-shift sort of statement.

Now it is important to see that the word “really” isn't always required. Typically the audience will know that the speaker is intending such a shift. The speaker might make this intention explicitly manifest by using the word “really”, but this is not always necessary.

Given this, one could say “The little green man really exists” (aka “Really, the little green man exists”). The analysis here is that this sentence is saying something like: Engage in the pretense and *understand* the sentence, so that you *grasp* the *proposition* that **that LGM exists**, and in so doing you will have actually grasped a genuine proposition. Or as Evans puts it:

‘Really’ is a word which, when prefixed to a sentence, produces a sentence such that an utterance of it is true (absolutely) if and only if the sentence preceded by ‘really’ is itself such that there is a proposition expressed by it when it is uttered as a move in the relevant game of make-believe, and this proposition is true (absolutely) — not merely *true*. (VR p. 370)

So “Really^S” is not an instruction for someone to interpret S literally. It is an instruction for them to interpret it within the scope of the pretense, and it is saying that in doing this, one will be grasping a proposition, not merely a *grasping a proposition*. This is key, because on this analysis, empty singular terms cannot be literally used, but they can be *used* within the scope of a pretense. And it is crucial that they be able to be *used* when empty.

Finally, applying this to negative existential statements:

‘Really (That little green man exists)’ is therefore true if and only if the information is not hallucinatory, and in receiving it, the subjects are seeing a little green man; for, under those circumstances, quasi-understanding the embedded sentence would involve entertaining the proposition normally expressed by ‘E(That little green man)’, which is true. So, finally, ‘Not (Really (That little green man exists))’ — or ‘That little green man does not (really) exist’ — is the denial of such a claim. (VR p.371)

Or to put it another way, *Really(a exists)* says that in *understanding* that sentence one is not merely *understanding* it (*a exists*), but is *understanding* it. *Not(Really(a exists))* says that one is merely *understanding* “a exists,” not *understanding* it. This obviously does not require that the embedded sentence be literally interpretable.

Evans points out that this account meets the three desiderata. It uses, and does not merely mention, the singular term. True, it uses it within the scope of a pretense, and this differs in some respects from using it not within the scope of a pretense. But it is clearly not merely mentioning the term.

¹ Of course, in the no-pretense situation the mother could use a different sense of ‘really’ — an intensifier — to mean something like “injured to a significant degree” as in “You might get *really* injured”, but this is clearly a different sense of ‘really’.

Second, it employs exists() as a predicate, since this is what is being assessed by the *use of the term*. And third:

...someone who asserts 'Not (Really (This exists))' does not simply deny the basic existential statement, even when he is mistaken and there is in fact something to which he is referring. This is because in those circumstances, the two claims 'This exists' and 'This really exists' are not equivalent. (VR p. 371)

The last clause is capturing the same fact I noted above, that "You could really get injured" does not mean the same thing as "You could get injured". The first requires, and the second does not, that the genuine injury be indicated by means of a potential pretense injury.