

Not to Be

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1 Introduction

It is wise, I suppose, to begin by saying something about the meaning of the words involved in the title of this essay, and especially, ‘to be’. (‘Not’ is not entirely innocent either; but that is largely a different story.) For a start, though some philosophers are inclined to draw a distinction between being and existence (as we will note in due course), there seems to me to be little to be served by such a distinction. I will therefore take ‘is’ and ‘exists’ (and so ‘there is’ and ‘there exists’) to mean the same.

What, then, is it to exist? I am inclined to think that to exist is to engage in causal processes, or at least, to have the ability to do so. But this is not an analysis of the meaning of ‘exist’: the claim that there are objects that take no part in causal interactions is not self-contradictory. I suspect that it is impossible to provide any analysis of ‘exist’. Some concepts are so fundamental that it appears impossible to say anything much about their meaning, except give simple paraphrases. (The notion *set* is like this—collection, bunch, group.) And concepts don’t come much more fundamental than existence.

One further preliminary word: following Priest (2005), I will write the particular quantifier, ‘some’, as \mathfrak{S} , and not \exists . An important part of what will be at issue in this essay is precisely whether the quantifier must be read as ‘there exists’. Notation should beg no questions. I stress, however, that the particular quantifier is to be taken as having its usual semantics. Given a domain of quantification, D , $\mathfrak{S}xA(x)$ is true just if something in the domain

satisfies $A(x)$. Whether the things in D must be taken to exist is a further question.

2 The Extremes

To matters of substance. Whatever ‘exists’ and the quantifiers mean, there would seem to be three possibilities:

1. Everything exists.
2. Nothing exists.
3. Some things exist and some things don’t.

View 1 appears to be one of the earliest in philosophy. It is usually attributed to Parmenides (early 5th century BCE). In his poem *The Way of Truth* he tells us that one cannot countenance the non-existent: whatever can be investigated, spoken of, thought of, exists. (Barnes 1982, ch. 9.) It also turns out that what exists is one thing, with some curious properties; but that is not an important part of the story here.

One naturally balks at Parmenides’ view. Hasn’t he heard of chimeras, false gods, fictional objects of stories? It would seem obvious that we can imagine, fear, desire, etc., things that don’t exist. In reply, one imagines Parmenides saying, with a stamp of his foot, perhaps, ‘But, goddamit, if they are thought of, then they must be *there* to be thought of.’ But where, exactly? Non-existent objects exactly aren’t in space or time, or they would enter into causal processes, and so would exist. At root, his claim would be that for a relation to hold between two objects, they must both exist. Well, that’s certainly true for some relations, such as *kicking*, or *sitting on*, but why suppose that all relations are like this? To do so, would appear simply to be an unwarranted generalisation. *Prima facie*, objects can certainly have properties without existing—at least intentional ones, like *being thought of* or *being feared*, and status ones, such as *being possible* or *being impossible*, or, indeed, *being non-existent*.

Position 2 appears to have been taken by Gorgias, about 100 years later. In his lost text *What is Not*, Gorgias claimed that nothing exists. (Barnes 1982: 182-3.) Gorgias provides more arguments than Parmenides. These are notable for their panache, but not for their persuasiveness (though this is not the place to go into them). It seems all too evident that some things

exist—Australia, the Sun, pinot noir grapes. Well, Gorgias was a sophist. (Or maybe just a satirist of Parmenides. See Barnes 1982: 173.) Few since him have endorsed the view that *nothing* exists.

3 The Via Media

So if the extremes of 1 and 2 seem implausible, we are left with 3. Some things, such as Australia and the Sun, exist. Some things, such as Father Christmas and Gandalf, do not. This was the dominant view in both Ancient and Medieval logic. Aristotle, for example, says (*An. Post.* 92^b29-30. Translation from Barnes 1984.):

... one can signify even things that are not.

And in *On Ideas*, 82.6, we have:¹

Indeed, we also think of things that in no way are ... such as hippocentaur and Chimaera.

The great medieval logicians were even more explicit on the matter. (Read 2001 and Priest 2005, 3.7.) According to standard theories of *supposition*, ‘some *Ss* are *Ps*’ is true just if something that is actually *S* is *P*. However, the also standard doctrine of *ampliation* tells us that ‘some *Ss* will be *Ps*’ is true just if something that is or will be *S*, is or will be *P*. (Symmetrically for past tense sentences.) So the domain of supposition is amplified to a wider collection of objects: present and future ones. And the medievals had a very robust sense of reality. Future and past objects do not exist (though they will or did exist). It might be thought that we may identify existence *simpliciter* with existence at some time or other, as the medievals did not. But they go further. They held, applying the notion of ampliation again, that ‘some *Ss* can be *Ps*’ is true just if something that is or could be *S*, is or could be *P*. The domain of supposition includes *possibilia*, things that do not exist (though they could do). Here, for example, is Buridan on the matter (Buridan 2001: 299):

A term put before the word ‘can’ ... is amplified to stand for possible things even if they do not and did not exist. Therefore the

¹The authenticity of this text is sometimes disputed. For a defence, see Fine 1993, from which the quote comes (p. 15).

proposition ‘A golden mountain can be as large as Mont Ventoux’ is true.

The medievals standardly allowed that some verbs, notably intentional ones, amplified the supposition of a term to an even broader class of objects. Thus, Marsilius of Inghen writes (Maierù 1972: 182):

Ampliation is the supposition of a term ... for its significates which are or were, for those which are or will be, for those which are or can be, or for those which are or can be imagined.

And at least for some logicians, what can be imagined includes *impossibilia* too. A standard medieval example of an object of the imagination is a chimera. On at least one understanding, this is an impossible object—having incompatible essences. Here is Paul of Venice (Paul of Venice 1978: 13):

Although the significatum of the term ‘chimera’ does not and could not exist in reality, still the term ‘chimera’ supposits for something in the proposition ‘A chimera is thought of’, since it supposits for a chimera.

We see, then, that Medieval logicians took the middle way. The way persisted into the 19th Century. It was held by members of Brentano’s phenomenological school, most notoriously, Alexius Meinong. (Meinong 1904.) Many, if not all, of our mental states are intentional. That is, they are directed towards objects. Meinong divided such objects into two kinds: those that are and those that are not. The objects that are not can be further divided into two kinds: the (merely) possible, such as Father Christmas, a golden mountain; and the impossible, such as a round square. The objects that are can also be divided into two: those that exist, properly speaking—these are objects in space and time, such as Melbourne and Meinong; and those that subsist (*besteht*)—these are abstract objects, such as numbers and propositions. A version of the view, too frequently confused with Meinong’s, was held by Russell in the *Principles of Mathematics* (Russell 1903). Spatio-temporal objects exist; all the others (abstract, merely possible, impossible) subsist.

4 Parmenides Makes a Comeback

In the 20th century, Parmenides’ view made a comeback; indeed, it became the orthodox view. Of course, exponents of the modern Parmenideanism, do

not subscribe to the sad view that Father Christmas really exists. Some way had to be found of understanding true claims which are, *prima facie* about non-existent objects, which avoids this conclusion.

Thus, consider the (true) claim ‘Priest is thinking about Father Christmas’. This cannot be understood as a relationship between Priest (an existent object) and Father Christmas (a non-existent one). If it is a relationship between two objects, the second must also exist. What, exactly, we take this to be, we might well debate. One natural candidate is a mental representation (whatever that is). Another is an individual concept, or a sense. (This was Frege’s view in ‘Sense and Reference’. Geach and Black 1970: 56-78.) All such positions face problems with quantification. Thus, Priest is thinking about Russell, and Russell is a great philosopher. It follows that I am thinking about a great philosopher:

(1) $\exists x(\text{Priest is thinking about } x \text{ and } x \text{ is a great philosopher})$.

But that cannot be right. In the first conjunct, whatever ‘ x ’ refers to, it is not a philosopher, great or otherwise. And in the second conjunct, ‘ x ’ refers to a philosopher, not a mental representation, or whatever. Or again, Priest is thinking about Father Christmas, and Father Christmas does not exist. Hence it would seem that I am thinking of something that does not exist.

(2) $\exists x(\text{Priest is thinking about } x \text{ and } x \text{ does not exist})$

But the ‘ x ’ of the first conjunct refers to something that does exist. So this sentence is just plain false.

Another possibility is to refuse to take a sentence such as ‘Priest is thinking about Russell’ at face value. Sentences reporting intentional states are not to be understood as stating a relationship between two objects. This was essentially Russell’s view after he formulated his theory of descriptions (Russell 1905b). Using ι as a definite-description operator (so that one reads ‘ $\iota x A(x)$ ’ as ‘the x which satisfies $A(x)$ ’), sentences of the form $A(\iota x B(x))$ are to be understood as saying that there is a unique x satisfying $B(x)$, and it satisfies $A(x)$ too. And if we suppose that proper names are covert definite descriptions, we may apply this analysis to sentences containing these also. But this approach is beset with problems too. Leave aside the fact that names seem to behave quite differently from descriptions (e.g., they do not display scope ambiguities). Just consider the (true) claim ‘Priest is thinking about the greatest prime number’. This becomes: there exists a unique x

which is a prime number greater than all other primes, and Priest is thinking of it. This is false, since there is no greatest prime number. (For every prime, some prime number is a greater.)

An even more radical move (suggested in connection with perception in Ducasse 1942) is to interpret a phrase such as ‘thinking of Father Christmas’ as a simple monadic predicate, with no internal structure. Since there are an infinite number of things one can think of, this means that there will be an infinite number of semantically independent monadic predicates in the language. As such, it would be unlearnable. Since we do learn our natural language, this proposal therefore gets its semantics wrong. Perhaps more importantly, the approach also runs into problems with quantification. Neither (1) nor (2) makes any sense on this account. And suppose that you and I are both thinking about Russell. Then we are thinking about the same thing: $\exists x(\text{you are thinking about } x \text{ and I am thinking about } x)$. This makes no sense either.

5 Existence is not a Predicate

Of course, there is much more to say about all the above matters. But what they suffice to establish is that Parmenides’ comeback did not occur because people found clearly adequate ways to handle the natural objections to his position. Rather, what has driven the revival are problems taken to hold for the moderate view. The drivers are essentially three.

The first, and most important, is constituted around two claims:

ENP Existence is not a monadic predicate of objects

EPQ Existence is expressed by the particular quantifier.

Given EPQ, ‘some’ just means ‘there exists’, and ‘everything exists’ is a logical truism.

ENP is usually attributed first to Kant, in his discussion of the Ontological Argument for the existence of God in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A592=B620, ff). In fact, Kant states that existence is a perfectly legitimate syntactic predicate. It is not a *determining* predicate. That is, for any concept, F , to say that something is an F is the same as saying that it is an existent F .

It is by no means clear that Kant’s claim is correct. Certainly, to say that something is an F and to say that it is an existent F are the same thing for

some *F*s. If something is a \$1 coin, it can be held, put in one's pocket, etc. These are causal interactions, and so the coin exists. To say that something is a \$1 coin is to say that it is an existent \$1 coin. (The converse is obvious.) But to say that something is an object of fiction (in the sense that the object occurs in a work of fiction), is by no means the same as saying that it is an existent object of fiction. Gandalf is an object of fiction, but not an existent one. Napoleon is an object of fiction (because of *War and Peace*), but also exists. But in any case, Kant's view is quite consistent with existence being a significant predicate. Kant himself points this out. He says (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A600=B628. Translation from Kemp Smith 1933):

When, therefore, I think of a being as the supreme reality, without any defect, the question still remains whether it exists or not.

Indeed, the judgment as to whether or not it exists is a synthetic one (A598=B626).²

More recently, many have taken ENP to be established by a claimed dissimilarity between pairs such as:³

Tame tigers growl.

Tame tigers exist.

The first sentence is ambiguous. It could mean that some tame tigers growl, that all do, or that generically they do. For our purposes, it is apt to consider the first of these. Then the logical form of this sentence is:

$\exists x(Tx \wedge Gx)$

The second sentence is not ambiguous. It means that there exist tame tigers; that is, some existent things are tame tigers. If we write the monadic existence predicate as *E*, this has exactly the same form:

$\exists x(Tx \wedge Ex)$.

There is no dissimilarity of form—or even of truth value.

²Kant also rejects EPQ. In the table of categories (A80=B106), the categories of plurality ('some') and reality ('existence') are distinct.

³The actual example comes from Moore 1936, who shows a characteristic ambivalence on the matter.

6 The Particular Quantifier

EPQ was first proposed by Frege. He explains (Geach and Black 1970: 48-9):

I have called existence a property of a concept. How I mean this to be taken is best made clear by an example. In the sentence ‘there is at least one square root of 4,’ we have an assertion not about (say) the definite number 2, nor about -2 , but about a concept *square root of 4*; viz. that it is not empty.

It is not clear that the reading of the quantifier is more than a *façon de parler*, however. In a similar way, when a mathematician says that one group *can* be embedded in another, this has nothing to do with possibility or permission. It is just a way of saying that something (a function) satisfies a certain condition. So it would seem with ‘there is’. At any rate, Frege gives no *arguments* for reading the particular quantifier in this way. (See, further, Priest 2008.)

The matter is different with Russell. Russell endorses both ENP and EPQ, and defends both in his *Lectures on Logical Atomism*. His central argument goes as follows (Pears 1972: 90):

If you say ‘Men exist, and Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates exists’, this is the same sort of fallacy as it would be if you said ‘Men are numerous, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is numerous’, because existence is a predicate of a propositional function, or derivatively of a class. When you say of a propositional function that it is numerous, you will mean that there are several values of x that will satisfy it... If x , y , and z all satisfy a propositional function, you may say that that proposition is numerous, but x , y , and z severally are not. Exactly the same applies to existence, that is to say that the actual things there are in the world do not exist, or, at least, that is putting it too strongly, because that is utter nonsense. To say that they do not exist is strictly nonsense, but to say that they exist is also strictly nonsense.

Russell asks us to compare two inferences:

Men exist	Men are numerous
<u>Socrates is a man</u>	<u>Socrates is a man</u>
Socrates exists	Socrates is numerous

and claims that the same sort of fallacy is involved in both. We are supposed to conclude that the conclusion of the first is ungrammatical, as is that of the second. But the analogy is lame. To say that men are numerous is indeed to say that many things are men. In the right context, this is true, as is the other premise. The conclusion, however, is *clearly* nonsense. The inference is therefore fallacious. The first argument, too, is fallacious. But that is simply because it is of the form:

$$\frac{\exists x(Mx \wedge Ex)}{\frac{Ms}{Es}}$$

Note that the corresponding inference with a universal major premise:

$$\frac{\text{All men exist}}{\frac{\text{Socrates is a man}}{\text{Socrates exists}}}$$

seems perfectly valid. (All the people in this story actually exist; Napoleon is in this story, so Napoleon is an actually existing person.) And the conclusion of both arguments, that Socrates exists, is perfectly grammatical. Compare: ‘Napoleon exists, but Father Christmas does not’. Russell’s argument does nothing to show matters to be otherwise.

Perhaps the most influential defence of EPQ was given some 30 years later by Quine in his essay ‘On What there Is’. Here, the view that the particular quantifier expresses existence—or, as Quine is wont to put it: to be is to be the value of a bound variable—is endorsed with panache. The full passage is worth quoting. Having argued that the use of predicates does not commit us to the existence of universals, Quine asks if there is nothing one can say which commits one to the existence of something. There is (Quine 1948: 12-13 of the reprint):

I have already suggested a negative answer to this question, in speaking of bound variables, or variables of quantification, in connection with Russell’s theory of descriptions. We can very easily involve ourselves in ontological commitments by saying, for example, that *there is something* (bound variable) which red houses and sunsets have in common; or that *there is something* which is a prime number and larger than a million. But this is, essentially, the *only* way that we can involve ourselves in ontological commitment: by our use of bound variables. The use of alleged names

is no criterion, ... for I have shown, in connection with ‘Pegasus’ and ‘pagasize’, ... names can be converted into descriptions, and Russell has shown that descriptions can be eliminated... To be assumed as an entity is, purely and simply, to be reckoned as the value of a variable.

The logic of the text is interesting. Quine argues that the use of names and predicates is *not* existentially committing; but there is absolutely no argument given as to why quantification *is* existentially committing. Quine simply *assumes* that the domain of quantification comprises existent objects—or what comes to the same thing, that the particular quantifier is to be read as ‘there is’. No argument is given for this: it is stated simply as a matter of dogma. (So if neither names, nor predicates, nor quantifiers are ontologically committing, what is? To say that something exists, of course!)

7 Identity

The second driver for Parmenides’ comeback concerns identity. In a famous passage of ‘On What there Is’. Quine charges that non-existent objects have no well-defined identity conditions; but any entity must have such conditions, so the notion of a non-existent object is incoherent. But why should we suppose that non-existent objects have no well-defined identity conditions? Unfortunately, Quine mounts no arguments for this either. We simply find a string of rhetorical questions—many of which, incidentally, have very obvious answers.⁴ Of course, the identity conditions of existent objects are a problem too. And pretty much any account of the identity conditions of existent objects that one can give can be applied with just as much plausibility to non-existent objects. For example, one can say that two objects are the same just if the one has a property iff the other does (the Leibniz condition of the identity of indiscernibles). Or, if distinct objects may, as a matter of chance, have the same properties in the actual world, then two objects are the same if, in every world, the one has a property iff the other does.

The only thing one cannot do for non-existent objects, as one might attempt for existent objects, is provide identity conditions in terms of spatio-temporal locations: they have none. Thus, one cannot say that they are

⁴Thus, for example: how many merely possible men are in the doorway? Answer: none. Non-existent objects are not in space and time, or—*a fortiori*—doorways. For a discussion of the whole passage, see Routley 1982 and Priest 2005, ch. 5.

identical iff they have the same spatial locations at all time. Of course, such identity conditions will not work for abstract objects either. So exactly the same point can be made about existent abstract objects.

In fact, attempting to provide spatio-temporal identity conditions is problematic even for objects that are in space and time. The medievals pondered how many angels could be on the head of a pin. This was because angels have no spatial extension, and so can exist at the same place. One standard answer to the question of how angels are to be individuated—offered by Paul of Venice (Conti 2007)—was in terms of individual essences (*haecceities*). Thus, to be Gabriel is to have the individual essence of Gabriel. Such an account of identity has also found favour in debates about trans-world identity in modal logic, and can be applied just as well to non-existent objects. Or, a very different problem: a statue and a piece of clay may occupy the same spatial locations for all time; yet arguably they are not identical: one could exist without the other. A standard answer in this case, is to say that they are distinct since they may have different properties at worlds other than the actual. In this case, we are back to something like the trans-world version of the identity of indiscernibles.

Which account of identity should be endorsed, we may, here, safely leave as a matter of debate. It suffices to note that problems about identity apply just as much to existent objects as non-existent ones. They therefore provide no leverage specifically against objects in the latter category.

8 Characterisation

The third driver for Parmenides' comeback surfaces in Russell's critique of Meinong's view, once he had jettisoned his own version of it in the light of the theory of descriptions (Russell 1905a). Russell's objections are essentially two. First, Meinong's view violates the Law of Non-Contradiction, since the round square is both round and square. Secondly, the view validates the Ontological Argument for the existence of God—and anything else one can describe—since the existent so and so is both so and so and existent.

There are a number of things to note about the objection. First, the objection targets the Characterisation Principle: the thing that satisfies $A(x)$, satisfies $A(x)$:

CP $A(\iota x A(x))$

This is a very natural-feeling principle. An object has the properties in its characterisation; that is how we pick it out. Next, the CP is quite independent of the view that some objects do not exist. That some objects do not exist in no way commits one to the CP. Third, the unrestricted CP is acceptable to no one. It allows us to prove absolutely everything. Let B be any claim. Let t be $\iota x(x = x \wedge B)$. Then the CP delivers $t = t \wedge B$, from which B follows. Finally, everyone accepts *some* restricted version of the CP. Thus, on standard accounts of definite descriptions, including Russell's, we have $\mathfrak{S}!xA(x) \rightarrow A(\iota x(A(x)))$ (where the exclamation mark expresses uniqueness).

So what has Russell's objection to do with non-existence? The answer is that without some version of the CP, we would have, generally speaking, no way of establishing what properties non-existent objects have. If $\iota xA(x)$ exists, we can causally interact with it, and hence determine its properties. (At least, given the understanding of existence stated in the introduction. If there can be abstract existent objects, these are just as much a problem as non-existent objects.) If it does not, we cannot; we need something like the CP.

Meinong himself only ever gestured at a reply to Russell. Later friends of non-existent objects have gone various ways on the matter. One approach (endorsed, for example, by Parsons 1980 and Routley 1980) is to distinguish between two kinds of vocabulary—characterising (or nuclear) and non-characterising (or non-nuclear). Only the first of these can be deployed in acceptable instances of the CP. Crucially, existence is not characterising, and maybe neither is negation. A major problem with this approach is to distinguish between the two kinds of vocabulary in a principled fashion. A more subtle, but perhaps more telling, worry is that we appear to be able to think of an objects satisfying *any* description whatsoever, not just ones deploying characterising vocabulary. The object must, in *some* sense, have those properties, since it is *that* object we are thinking of.

Another approach is pursued by Zalta.⁵ Zalta distinguishes between two modes of predication, *instantiation* and *encoding*, the 'is' of predication being ambiguous between them. Instantiation is the familiar notion, used when we say truly, for example, 'Russell is a philosopher'. Encoding, by contrast, delivers a way in which a non-existent object, in particular, may present itself. Thus, given any property, some object may present itself as possessing, and so

⁵Zalta 1988. Zalta often describes the non-existent objects as abstract, suggesting some form of platonism, though this is not essential to his approach.

encode, just that property. Encoding may be taken to satisfy the CP (though things are not quite that simple in Zalta’s actual account); instantiation does not. If we use $\lambda xA(x)$ for the property corresponding to the conditions $A(x)$, \circ for instantiation, and \bullet for encoding, we may have the CP in the form $\iota xA(x) \bullet \lambda xA(x)$, but not $\iota xA(x) \circ \lambda xA(x)$. “ λ -conversion” holds for instantiation. That is, where y does not occur in $A(x)$:

$$y \circ \lambda xA(x) \leftrightarrow A(y)$$

But we are not guaranteed it for encoding. Hence, we cannot move from instances of the CP to their damaging consequences.

There is a certain feeling of artifice attached to the distinction between the two modes of predication, but once over this, the approach does avoid the problems noted so far.—Well, not quite. A version of Russell’s paradox strikes. Let P be the property of encoding a property that is not exemplified, $\lambda x \mathfrak{S}Y(x \bullet Y \wedge \neg x \circ Y)$. Let t be the object that encodes this property. It is not difficult to demonstrate that t behaves inconsistently. (This was first observed by Clark 1978.) Zalta’s reaction to the problem is to deny that every λ -term, in particular $\lambda x \mathfrak{S}Y(x \bullet Y \wedge \neg x \circ Y)$, denotes a property. λ -conversion cannot, therefore, be applied to it. This certainly avoids the contradiction, but does so at the cost of going back on the idea that for *any* guise, an object may present itself under that guise. We would certainly seem to be able to think of an object presenting under the guise P . (You just did.)

A third approach to the problem is to endorse but a single mode of predication, and a completely unrestricted CP, but say that the instances of the CP are not guaranteed to hold in this world (though they may); they are guaranteed to hold in some world or other. (This is the approach followed in Priest 2005.) Thus, for example, an object was characterised by Arthur Conan Doyle as a detective with acute powers of observation and deduction, as living in Baker St, etc. The object does not satisfy this characterisation at the actual world: there has never been such a detective living in Baker St. But it does satisfy the characterisation at those worlds in which the stories which Doyle tells us are true. Of course, some characterisations are impossible, and even inconsistent; thus, we must suppose that not only are some worlds non-actual, but that some worlds are impossible.

This approach to the CP avoids all the problems we have met so far. Of course, it faces its own distinctive objections. For example, it obviously inherits any problems posed by the machinery of (impossible) worlds. Arguably, we have to deal with these for quite different reasons anyway. But all

this is a can of worms too big to open here. (Criticisms of this approach to the CP can be found in Kroon 2007 and Nolan 2007, with a reply in Priest 2007.)

9 Conclusion

As we have seen, the extreme views of Parmenides, that everything exists, and Gorgias, that nothing exists, are both *prima facie* implausible. The common-sense *via media*, that some things exist and that some things do not, was the predominant view in logic until the 20th century. Things then changed. But this was not because a clearly acceptable way of rendering Parmenides' view more plausible was found. Neither was it because the *via media* was shown to be untenable. Perhaps, then, in the 21st century, common sense will reassert itself, and the 20th century will come to be seen as something of an historical aberration.

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Further Reading

On the Presocratics: Barnes 1982. On medieval logic: Read 2001 and Priest 2005, 3.7. For the classical texts defending the contemporary view: Geach and Black 1970: 56-78, Pears 1972, lecture 5. Quine and his critics: Quine 1948, Routley 1982. Modern defences of non-existent objects: Parsons 1980, Zalta 1988, Priest 2005.