

SOME THINGS DO NOT EXIST

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The main objects of this paper are to suggest a definition of 'exists', to propose solutions to difficulties raised within restricted predicate logic with identity by failures of existential presuppositions of purportedly referring expressions such as individual constants and definite descriptions, to develop within a semantical system R^* , with the syntax of a restricted applied predicate calculus, the logic of 'exists', and to unify within $=R^*$, i.e. R^* with identity, several hitherto distinct logical theories, to construct theories of definite descriptions, and to criticize certain widely accepted criteria for the ontological commitment of a theory. The logical developments in this paper are limited almost entirely to those that can be carried out in a first-order predicate logic with identity but without modal or intensional functors.

On the meaning of the predicate 'exists'. 'Exists' is grammatically a predicate, and the predicate seems to demarcate a property which Russell has, Socrates had, and Pegasus lacks. If, at a given time or atemporally, a domain D' of items, represented by names or referring expressions referring or purportedly referring to these items, is selected, then the property of existence, like other properties, can be represented over D' by a subdomain of D' , by the class of its instances. For example given the domain [Churchill, Russell, the present king of France, Pegasus] 'exists' is represented by the subdomain [Churchill, Russell]. 'Exists', like any other property-word, has various designation-domains, the main special feature of which is that whereas the actual designations or extensions of other predicates, like '(is) red' or 'walks', are proper subclasses of the class G of all actual (or existent) items the extension of 'exists' coincides with G . The sense of 'exists' can also be explained [see below] in ways resembling explanations of the sense or meaning of other property-demarcating predicates, though admittedly the explanation is more like that for predicates also cast under suspicion, such as 'is true' and 'is good', than that for paradigmatic property-demarcating predicates such as predicates which demarcate simple descriptive properties. But, without drastic legislation on the meaning of 'property', these differences would at