

BEN CAPLAN *

E. E. CONSTANCE JONES ON EXISTENCE IN FICTION AND IMAGINATION¹

SUMMARY: E. E. Constance Jones (1848–1922) was one of the first women to study philosophy at the University of Cambridge. On her view, “Dorothea” (from George Eliot’s novel *Middlemarch*) applies to a fictional character, which has existence in fiction, and “fairy” applies to fairies, which have existence in imagination. She proposes a novel account of negative existentials, on which “fairies are non-existent” is both meaningful and true, given that there are at least two kinds of existence: one that fairies have (so that we can talk about them) and another that they lack (so that we can truly say that they “are non-existent”). Contrary to Russell’s objection in *The Principles of Mathematics*, accounting for negative existentials does not require distinguishing existence and being, nor does it require rejecting the existential theory of judgment (according to which every sentence is about something that exists).

KEYWORDS: E. E. Constance Jones, existence, fiction, imagination.

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No one objects to admitting regions of, *e.g.*, Fiction and Imagination.
(Jones, 1893, p. 455)

1. Introduction

Emily Elizabeth Constance Jones (1848–1922) was one of the first women to study philosophy at the University of Cambridge.² In this paper, I present some of her work in metaphysics and philosophy of language, particularly pertaining to existence in fiction and imagination. On her view, fictional characters and imaginary creatures are things that have specific kinds of existence: for example, Dorothea (from George Eliot’s novel *Middlemarch*) has existence in fiction, and fairies have existence in imagination.³

The plan for the paper is as follows. In Section 2, I situate Jones’s views about existence in fiction and imagination both with respect to her views about other kinds of existence and with respect to other views about the reference of names from fiction and the existence of fictional characters. In Section 3, I discuss some of her views about what she calls the *application* of names and about the existence of the things that names apply to. On her view, names from fiction apply to fictional characters, which have some kind of existence. In Section 4, I discuss some of her views about what she calls *categorical* sentences, including sentences that contain terms that apply to mythological characters. On her view, a wide range of sentences carry a commitment to the existence of mythological characters. And, in Section 5, I discuss a passage in which she talks about the existence of fairies and offers a novel account of negative existentials. Her view, I argue, has the resources to respond to two of Bertrand Russell’s objections from different stages in his career: his argument in *The Principles of Mathematics* against “the existential theory of judgment” and his charge in *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (from 1903) that views that posit existence in fiction and imagination are “confused” beyond belief (Russell, 1903, p. 449; 1919, p. 169; Jones, 1892; 1893 accepts the existential theory of judgment).

Jones’s work is little discussed today (see n. 2 for some exceptions). But this neglect is not justified. Her work is careful and systematic. In addition, her views about existence in fiction and imagination fit with some of our ordinary thought and talk

² For biographical overviews of Jones’s life, see Janssen-Lauret, in press; Ostertag, 2020, Section 1; Ostertag, Favia, 2021, pp. 328–329; Waithe, Cicero, 1995, pp. 25–27; Warnock, 2004; see also Jones, 1922. For philosophical overviews of Jones’s work, see Ostertag, 2020; Waithe, Cicero, 1995.

³ I use the slightly cumbersome expression “has existence in fiction”—to be read as [has][existence in fiction] rather than [has existence][in fiction]—instead of “exists in fiction” to emphasize that, on Jones’s view, existence in fiction is a specific kind of existence. Likewise for “has existence in imagination”.

about fictional characters and imaginary creatures, and her views are substantially different from the views of several of her better-known male contemporaries.

In our ordinary thought and talk, we might say that Dorothea “exists in fiction” or that fairies “exist in imagination”.⁴ Sometimes, we might mean merely that it is true in the fiction that Dorothea exists, or we might mean merely that we imagine that fairies exist. But we might also sometimes mean that, as on Jones’s view, Dorothea is a thing that has a specific kind of existence—namely, existence in fiction—and fairies are things that also have a specific kind of existence: namely, existence in imagination. Jones would take such agreement with ordinary thought and talk to count in favor of her view.⁵

Jones’s views about existence in fiction and imagination were probably influenced by the views of John Neville Keynes and William James.⁶ And she probably took her views to be widely held. As Jones (1893, p. 455) says in *On the Nature of Logical Judgment* (and in the epigraph for this paper), “[n]o one objects to admitting regions of, e.g., Fiction and Imagination”. But, still, her views were not entirely commonplace. For example, as discussed below in Section 2.2, her views are distinct from the views of several of her contemporaries—including, not just Russell, but also Gottlob Frege and Alexius Meinong. On their views, it is not true that fictional characters have existence in fiction, nor is it true that imaginary creatures have existence in imagination.⁷

⁴ Parsons (1980, pp. 10–11) reports that he has “often heard expressed in conversation” a view on which “Pegasus *exists in mythology*” and “Sherlock Holmes *exists in fiction*” (emphasis in the original).

⁵ In *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions*, Jones (1890) says that Logic “must start from the standpoint of ordinary thought, ascertained by reflexion on ordinary language” (§1, p. 3). (Unless indicated otherwise, citations are to *Elements of Logic*). Thanks to an anonymous referee for discussion here.

⁶ On Keynes’s (1887, p. 155, n. 2) view, “the Homeric gods” and fairies “exist in the particular universes to which reference is obviously made” in sentences like “the wrath of the Homeric gods is very terrible” and “Fairies are able to assume different forms”. Keynes was one of Jones’s teachers (Jones, 1922, pp. 53–54). But Keynes does not talk about different kinds of existence.

On James’s (1889, p. 331) view, a “mythical object” exists “in the strict and ultimate sense of the word”. Jones quotes James approvingly (§2, p. 6, n. 1). But she takes existence “in the strict and ultimate sense” to be existence itself, which everything has, rather than a specific kind of existence (§11, p. 88, n. 2). On Jones’s views about different kinds of existence, see Section 2.1.

Jones might also have been influenced by the work of John Venn (see n. 24). But she seems to be more willing than he was to engage in “metaphysical enquiry” about existence (Venn, 1881, p. 127).

⁷ Thanks to an anonymous referee for discussion here.

2. Other Kinds of Existence and Other Views

2.1. Some Other Kinds of Existence

On Jones's (1890) view in *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions*, there are many "different kinds of existence" (§11, p. 101). At one end of the spectrum, each thing has a unique existence, which it does not share with anything else (§2, p. 10; cf. Caplan, 2022). At the other end of the spectrum, there is *existence itself* or *existence pure and simple*, which everything has (§11, pp. 88, 90).⁸

In between existence itself and the unique existence of each thing, there are various intermediate kinds of existence, which a thing might share with some but not all other things. One is "physical existence", which is had by people and buildings (§11, p. 89). Another is "fictitious" existence (§2, p. 9)—existence in fiction, or " E_f " for short—which is had by fictional characters such as Dorothea. (Dorothea is what Jones [1911, p. 14] might describe as a "fictitious character"). Jones also talks about *existence in imagination* (§11, p. 90), or " E_i " for short, which is had by fairies. And yet another intermediate kind of existence is existence in what she calls "a Region of Supposition", which is had by round-squares (Jones, 1893, p. 455; see also Jones, 1911, pp. 60–62).

On Jones's view, E_f and E_i are distinct from physical existence, since fictional characters have E_f but lack physical existence, and imaginary creatures have E_i but also lack physical existence. In the rest of this paper, I leave open the question of whether E_f and E_i are distinct from each other. And, if they are, I leave open the questions of whether fictional characters have E_i (in addition to E_f) and whether imaginary creatures have E_f (in addition to E_i). Jones describes E_i as "a certain kind of existence in fairy tales and in imagination" (§11, p. 90), and she says that the golden mountain, for example, "'exists' in imagination or a fairy tale" (Jones, 1910–1911, p. 178). Since fairy tales are a kind of fiction, these remarks suggest that the distinction between E_f and E_i might not be so stark. But she talks about "regions of, e.g., Fiction and Imagination" (Jones, 1893, p. 455). And existence in a region is a kind of existence (§11, p. 101). If she takes Fiction and Imagination to be distinct regions, then E_f and E_i would be distinct kinds of existence. Still, even if E_f and E_i are distinct, some fictional characters that have E_f might also have E_i ; and, conversely, some imaginary creatures that have E_i might also have E_f .

⁸ Emphasis in quotations from Jones occurs in the original. I have made some minor changes in quotations, eliminating spaces (after left quotation marks and before right quotation marks) and altering punctuation to conform to a text that Jones quotes.

2.2. Some Other Views

As we will see in Section 3, Jones accepts both of the following claims.

Reference: “Dorothea” refers to Dorothea.

Existence: Dorothea has some kind of existence.

But not everyone does.

Some reject Reference. For example, on Frege’s (1892/1948, p. 215) view and on Russell’s (1905, p. 491) view in *On Denoting*, “Dorothea” does not refer to anything.⁹ One problem with this view is that accounting for the truth of sentences like (1) is not straightforward (e.g., Caplan, 2021, pp. 387–390):

(1) Dorothea is a fictional character.

Others accept Reference but reject Existence. On Terence Parsons’s (1980, Chapters 3 and 7) view, for example, Dorothea is an object that does not have any kind of existence or being. (Parsons’s view is inspired by Meinong’s [1904/1960] view, on which some things that we can think and talk about are objects that do not have any kind of existence or being; see also Twardowski, 1894/1977). On Russell’s (1903, p. 449) view in *The Principles of Mathematics*, mythological characters (e.g., “Homeric gods”) are objects that have being but lack existence (see also Russell, 1903, p. 43; on Russell’s [1903, p. 449] view, existence and being are distinct, and neither is a kind of the other). A parallel view about fictional characters would be that Dorothea is an object that has being but lacks existence; on this parallel view, Existence is false, too.

Some accept both Reference and Existence but are committed to further claims about fictional characters. For example, Peter van Inwagen (1977) and Saul Kripke (2013) accept Reference and Existence. But, on their views, Dorothea is *abstract* rather than *concrete* (Kripke, 2013, pp. 73, 78; van Inwagen, 1977, p. 304). That is, they accept the following claim:

Abstract: Dorothea is abstract.

Those who accept a plurality of concrete possible worlds might also accept both Reference and Existence.¹⁰ But, on their view, Dorothea is *merely possible* rather than *actual* (Bricker, 2020, p. 34, n. 60). That is, they accept the following claim:

⁹ On Frege’s view, if “Dorothea” does not refer to anything, then Existence either lacks a truth-value or (if existence sentences are a special kind of linguistic context) is false (Caplan, 2021, p. 394, n. 24; Salmon, 1998, pp. 282–285). In either case, Frege does not accept Existence. And, on Russell’s 1905 view, Existence is false.

¹⁰ Lewis (1986) accepts a plurality of concrete possible worlds but does not discuss fictional characters. On Bricker’s (2020, p. 34, n. 60) view, the reference of a name from fiction

Merely Possible: Dorothea is merely possible.

By contrast, Jones is not committed to Abstract or Merely Possible (for Jones's discussion of the abstract-concrete distinction, see §5, pp. 37–39).

To avoid problems posed by names that do not refer to anything, one might want to accept Reference. And, as mentioned in Section 1, one might find a certain intuitive appeal to the view that Dorothea “exists in fiction”. So one might want to accept Existence. But one might not want to be committed to the view that Dorothea is abstract or merely possible. So one might want a view that accepts Reference and Existence without being committed to either Abstract or Merely Possible.

This is Jones's view. In what follows, I spell out some of the details of her view and present some of its virtues. Among other things, it allows her to offer a novel account of negative existentials and to respond to a pair of objections due to Russell (one from 1903, the other from 1919).

3. Application and Existence

On Jones's view, a name *applies to* or *refers to* one or more things (§2, p. 5; §27, p. 200). In what follows, I use “applies to” rather than “refers to”, since that is the terminology Jones uses more often herself. Using “applies to” instead of “refers to”, Reference becomes the following claim:

Application: “Dorothea” applies to Dorothea.

I take Reference and Application to be equivalent. In this section, I discuss Jones's acceptance of Application and Existence.

On Jones's view, everything has at least some kind of existence. She divides things into *attributes* and *subjects of attributes* (§2, p. 12). For example, George Eliot is a subject of attributes, and *being a novelist* is an attribute. On Jones's view, the world consists of attributes and subjects of attributes, each of which has “at least a minimum of ‘existence’” (§11, p. 88).

And, on Jones's view, every name applies to at least one thing, since every name applies to at least one attribute or subjects of attributes.¹¹ Speaking of the attributes

is indeterminate. So, on his view, Reference and Existence might not be true as stated. Still, he might accept Reference and Existence as super-true (i.e., true on all precisifications).

¹¹ There might be hard cases. Suppose that I introduce a new name (e.g., “Floop”) when using Universal Instantiation: “everything has some kind of existence”, I say, “so Floop must have some kind of existence”. Is “Floop” guaranteed to apply to something? Jones's view might be that it is. For example, she seems to endorse the claim that “all names are names of *Things*” (§6, p. 87). There might be a difficulty in singling out a particular thing for “Floop” to apply to. If I can have a particular thing in mind, then “Floop” can apply to that thing, which Jones would say I have “the intention of distinguishing” (§2, p. 15). In cases where no particular thing is singled out, she might say that

and subjects of attributes in the world, she says that “to some of these Subjects [of Attributes] or Attributes any term [or name] must apply” (§11, p. 89).¹²

We can now see that Jones accepts both Application and Existence. If every name applies to at least one thing and “Dorothea” is a name, then “Dorothea” applies to at least one thing. And, if so, then presumably it applies to Dorothea. In that case, Application is true. And, if everything has some kind of existence, then Dorothea has some kind of existence, too. In that case, Existence is true.

It might be helpful to work through some examples in which Jones says that a name applies to at least one thing, which has some kind of existence.¹³ She uses “name” broadly. Among the expressions that she uses “name” to apply to are proper names (e.g., “George Eliot”, “Athena”), possessive descriptions (e.g., “James Thomson’s second brother”, “George Eliot’s Dorothea”), and bare nouns (e.g., “bird”, “fairy”).¹⁴

On Jones’s view, “bird” applies to one or more birds, each of which has several kinds of existence. Each bird has a unique existence, which it does not share with anything else; existence itself, which it shares with everything else; and physical existence, which it shares with every other bird but not with any fairies. Similarly, “fairy” applies to one or more fairies. Each fairy has a unique existence, which it does not share with anything else; existence itself, which it shares with everything else; and existence in imagination, E_i , which it shares with every other fairy but perhaps not with every bird. Jones lists “bird” and “fairy” as names that explicitly signify a sufficient number of attributes “to enable us to define and apply the name” (§2, p. 14). And, later, in *A Primer of Logic*, Jones (1905, p. 12) lists “Ghosts” and “Fairies” along with “Men” and “Thoughts” as “concrete names” that “apply to subjects of attributes”. The subjects of attributes that “Ghosts” and “Fairies” apply to are presumably ghosts and fairies.

On Jones’s view, anything we can think about must have some kind of existence (§11, p. 89). Since we can think about fairies, they must have some kind of existence. But it is not just that we can think about fairies; we can also imagine them. Fairies are thus among what she would call *objects of imagination* (Jones, 1908, p. 533; 1911, p. 75). (I say more about Jones’s views about the existence of fairies in Section 5).

Jones has an extensive typology of names and terms (§2, pp. 16–18 [Tables 1–3]; §3, pp. 25–34 [Tables 4–16]). In this typology, she lists “Athena” and

I have failed to introduce a new expression or perhaps that the new expression I have introduced is not a name, since every name applies to at least one thing (§2, p. 5). But that would open the possibility that something that looks like a name does not actually apply to anything. Thanks to an anonymous referee for discussion here.

¹² A term, for Jones, is a name that occurs as the subject-name S or the predicate-name P in a sentence of the form S *copula* P (§2, p. 5). Any name can be used as a term.

¹³ As Jones says about categorical sentences (discussed below in Section 4), “it will perhaps not be superfluous to illustrate the application of my definition by a few simple examples” (§6, p. 46).

¹⁴ The examples are from §2, p. 14; §3, p. 31 (Table 11).

“Melpomene” in the same category as “George Eliot” and “Sir Walter Scott”, and she lists “George Eliot’s Dorothea” in the same category as “James Thomson’s second brother” (§3, p. 31 [Table 11]). Each of these names applies to at least one thing. “George Eliot”, “Sir Walter Scott”, and “James Thomson’s second brother” apply to people; “George Eliot’s Dorothea” applies to a fictional character; and “Athena” (“the goddess of wisdom”) and “Melpomene” (“the Muse of tragic poetry”) apply to mythological characters. Each of these things has its own unique existence as well as existence itself. In addition, George Eliot, Sir Walter Scott, and James Thomson’s second brother have (or had) physical existence; and Dorothea has existence in fiction, E_f .¹⁵

Jones does not describe a kind of existence that Athena and Melpomene share with each other but not with George Eliot and Sir Walter Scott. Perhaps Athena and Melpomene have E_f , E_i , or a similar kind of existence that one might call *existence in myth* or *existence in mythology*.¹⁶ (Jones might describe Athena and Melpomene as “personages in mythology”; §3, p. 32 [Table 13]; §6, p. 75 [Table 30]). On her view, that we can talk about some things tells us *that* they have some kind of existence, but it does not tell us *what* kind of existence they have, since we might be talking about “the ‘real’ world” or about “mere fancy or fiction” instead (Jones, 1911, p. 63). Rather, we can tell what kind of existence some things have from their attributes (p. 63).

4. Categorical Sentences and Mythological Characters

4.1. Categorical Sentences

In this subsection, I present part of Jones’s account of what she calls *categorical* sentences: that is, sentences of the form S *copula* P , where S is a subject-name and P is a predicate-name (§6, p. 46). In the next subsection, I discuss part of what her account has to say about categorical sentences that contain terms that apply to mythological characters.

Consider, for example,

¹⁵ It might be that, on Jones’s view, George Eliot and Sir Walter Scott (and perhaps James Thomson’s second brother) are now among the “visible and tangible objects which *once had* physical existence, but which, in the form in which they are thought about, have altogether ceased to be, except in thought” (§11, p. 89; on time and different kinds of existence, see n. 24).

¹⁶ In her typology, Jones routinely mentions names from Greek mythology—particularly names for the three Graces (i.e., Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphrosyne) and for some of the Muses (e.g., Mneme and Melete)—along with names for people and planets (e.g., §3, p. 33 [Tables 14–15]).

- (2) Jack is a fidgety child,
 (3) Monmouthshire is not a Welsh county.¹⁷

(2) and (3) are both of the form *S copula P*. In (2), “Jack” is the subject-name *S*, “is” is the copula, and “a fidgety child” is the predicate-name *P*. In (3), “Monmouthshire” is the subject-name *S*, “is not” is the copula, and “a Welsh county” is the predicate-name *P*. (2) is what Jones calls an *affirmative* categorical sentence (§6, p. 54); (3) is what she calls a *negative* categorical sentence (§27, p. 199).

On Jones’s view, an affirmative categorical sentence *S copula P* is true if and only if, in that sentence, *S* and *P* apply to exactly the same things (§6, pp. 46–48). For example, (2) is true if and only if, in (2), “Jack” and “a fidgety child” apply to the same person (and neither applies to anything else; for different interpretations, see Janssen-Lauret, in press; Ostertag, 2020, Section 2.4; in press).¹⁸

Two perhaps surprising features of Jones’s view are worth flagging here (Jones, 1893, pp. 441–442). First, what a predicate-name applies to varies across sentences. For example, in (2) “a fidgety child” applies to Jack and does not apply to any other fidgety child; but, in

- (4) Mary is a fidgety child,

“a fidgety child” applies to Mary and does not apply to Jack. Second, what a predicate-name applies to in a sentence depends on what the subject-name in that sentence applies to. For example, the reason “a fidgety child” in (2) applies to Jack but not to Mary is that “Jack” in (2) applies to Jack but not to Mary.

On Jones’s view, a negative categorical sentence *S copula P* is true if and only if, in that sentence, *S* and *P* do not apply to any of the same things (§6, pp. 46, 48). For example, (3) is true if and only if, in (3), “Monmouthshire” and “a Welsh county” do not apply to the same thing.

As mentioned in Section 3, Jones uses “name” broadly. Among the expressions that she uses “name” to apply to are, not only proper names (e.g., “Jack”, “Monmouthshire”), but also complex demonstratives (e.g., “this satellite of Jupiter”) and quantifier expressions (e.g., “some of the planets”, “some of the rivers in America”). As a result, categorical sentences include sentences in which the subject-name is a complex demonstrative or a quantifier expression. For example,

¹⁷ Examples (2) and (3) are from §6, p. 64 (Table 19).

¹⁸ I am ignoring two parts of Jones’s account of categorical sentences in the text. First, I have not said what categorical sentences *assert*. On Jones’s 1890 view, (2) asserts that “Jack” and “a fidgety child” in (2) have the same *denomination* (§6, p. 46)—where the denomination of “Jack” is, not Jack himself, but rather his unique existence (Caplan, 2022). Second, I have not said what explains why (2) is significant in a way in which “Jack is Jack” is not. On Jones’s view, the significance of (2) is explained in part by the difference in *determination* between “Jack” and “a fidgety child” in (2)—where the determination of “Jack” is one or more attributes that Jack has that are “*explicitly* signified” by the name (§2, p. 8).

- (5) This satellite of Jupiter is not so large as the moon,
- (6) Some of the rivers in America are larger than any in Europe,

and

- (7) Some of the planets are larger than the earth

are all categorical sentences.¹⁹

(5) is a negative categorical sentence. On Jones's view, "this satellite of Jupiter" in (5) applies to a particular satellite of Jupiter; and (5) is true if and only if "so large as the moon" in (5) does not apply to that satellite.

(6) and (7) are affirmative categorical sentences. On Jones's view, "some of the rivers in America" in (6) applies to some rivers (specifically, some rivers in America that are larger than any river in Europe); and (6) is true if and only if "larger than any in Europe" in (6) applies to those rivers and does not apply to anything else. Similarly, "some of the planets" in (7) applies to some planets (specifically, some planets that are larger than the earth); and (7) is true if and only if "larger than the earth" in (7) applies to those planets and does not apply to anything else.²⁰

4.2. Mythological Characters

In this subsection, I discuss part of what Jones's account has to say about categorical sentences that contain terms that apply to mythological characters.

Jones has an extensive typology of categorical sentences (§6, pp. 62–76 [Tables 17–31]). In this typology, she lists sentences that contain terms that apply to people, heavenly bodies, and rivers in the same categories as sentences that contain terms that apply to mythological characters. For example, for each of the following pairs, she lists both sentences in that pair in the same category (§6, pp. 64 [Table 19], 71 [Table 26], 75 [Table 30]):

- (2) a. Jack is a fidgety child.
- b. Aglaia was a Greek goddess.
- (5) a. This satellite of Jupiter is not so large as the moon.
- b. This Muse of Hesiod is Terpsichore.

¹⁹ Examples (5)–(7) come from §6, pp. 71 (Table 26), 75 (Table 30).

²⁰ It might be that, on Jones's view, the predicate-name in (6) must first be expanded, so that (6) is treated as "some of the rivers in America are [some rivers that are] larger than any in America" (on adding explicit quantifier expressions to predicate-names, see §6, p. 47). In that case, (6) would be true if and only if "[some rivers that are] larger than any in Europe" in (6) applies to the rivers in question and does not apply to anything else. (One might need to make corresponding adjustments to other sentences, including [5] and [7]). Thanks to an anonymous referee for discussion here.

- (6) a. Some of the rivers in America are larger than any in Europe.
- b. Some of the Muses of Hesiod are better known than the others.
- (7) a. Some of the planets are larger than the earth.
- b. Some of the Muses are not very important personages in mythology.

Since (2b) and (5b)–(7b) are categorical sentences, her account of categorical sentences applies to them.

(2b), (5b), and (6b) are affirmative categorical sentences. On Jones’s view, “Aglaiā” in (2b) applies to Aglaiā; and (2b) is true if and only if “a Greek goddess” in (2b) applies only to Aglaiā. “This Muse of Hesiod” in (5b) applies to Terpsichore; and (5b) is true if and only if “Terpsichore” in (5b) applies only to Terpsichore. And “some of the Muses of Hesiod” in (6b) applies to some Muses (specifically, some Muses of Hesiod that are better known than the others); and (6b) is true if and only if “better known than the others” in (6b) applies only to those Muses.

(7b) is a negative categorical sentence. On Jones’s view, “some of the Muses” in (7b) applies to some Muses (specifically, some Muses that are not very important personages in mythology); and (7b) is true if and only if “very important personages in mythology” in (7b) does not apply to any of those Muses.

Together, (2b) and (5b)–(7b) are true on Jones’s view only if mythological characters (specifically, Aglaiā, Terpsichore, some Muses that are better known than the others, and some Muses that are not very important personages in mythology) are among the things that names apply to. And everything that some name applies to has some kind of existence. So, if (2b) and (5b)–(7b) are true, then mythological characters have some kind of existence.

Some of the sentences Jones mentions are reminiscent of the kind of sentences van Inwagen (1977, p. 302) and Kripke (2013, p. 62) use to argue for the existence of fictional characters. For example, (6b) and (7b) are analogous to

- (8) Some fictional characters are better known than others,

and

- (9) Some fictional characters are not very important in literature.

For van Inwagen’s and Kripke’s argument, what is important about sentences like (8) and (9) is that they existentially quantify over fictional characters and describe them from a perspective external to the fiction. On Jones’s view, by contrast, it is not just quantificational sentences like (6b) and (7b) that carry a commitment to mythological characters; sentences like (2b) and (5b) do, too.²¹

²¹ On Jones’s view, sentences that describe mythological characters from a perspective internal to the myth (e.g., “each of the nine Muses was a daughter of Apollo”, “some of

5. Existence in Imagination

5.1. A “Certain Kind of Existence in Fairy Tales and in Imagination”

In *Elements of Logic*, Jones says,

(*) if I say—

Fairies are non-existent,

the existence that I deny is not existence of *every kind*, since fairies have a certain kind of existence in fairy tales and in imagination. This *existence in imagination* is, of course, distinct from the so-called *mental image* which accompanies not only our comprehension of the terms of propositions²² [names in sentences] which we understand, but also our apprehension of objects which we recognise. What is denied to them in the above proposition [sentence] is (perhaps) “ordinary phenomenal existence, and at the time present”. (§11, p. 90)

In this subsection, I discuss what Jones says in the starred passage about a kind of existence that fairies have; and, in the next subsection, I discuss what she says there about negative existentials and a kind of existence that fairies lack.

On Jones’s view, one kind of existence that fairies have is existence in imagination, E_i . In the middle of the starred passage, she says,

fairies have a certain kind of existence in fairy tales and in imagination. This *existence in imagination* is, of course, distinct from the so-called *mental image* which accompanies not only our comprehension of the terms of propositions [names in sentences] which we understand, but also our apprehension of objects which we recognise. (§11, p. 90)

Here, she distinguishes E_i from the mental image that we have when we think about things that have E_i .

In *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Russell (1919) criticizes a view on which some things have E_i or perhaps existence in fiction, E_f . He says,

To say that unicorns have an existence in heraldry, or in literature, or in imagination, is a most pitiful and paltry evasion. What exists in heraldry is not an animal, made of flesh and blood, moving and breathing of its own initiative. What exists is a picture, or a description in words. Similarly, to maintain that Hamlet, for example, exists in his own world, namely, in the world of Shakespeare’s imagination, just as truly as (say) Napoleon existed in the ordinary world, is to say something deliberately confusing, or else confused to a degree which is scarcely credible. (Russell, 1919, p. 169)

the Sirens were heard singing together”) also carry a commitment to mythological characters (§6, pp. 68 [Table 23], 75 [Table 30]).

²² Jones uses “proposition” to apply to sentences (§6, p. 44). And terms are names (see n. 12 above).

Although Russell might not have had Jones's view specifically in mind, his objection applies to her view. But her view has the resources to respond to his objection.

On Jones's view, to say that unicorns or fairies have E_i is not an evasion; rather, it is to attribute to them a specific kind of existence, one that they have and other things lack. And, in attributing E_i to some things, she is not confusing E_i with any representations ("pictures, or a description in words"). In the starred passage, for example, she is careful to distinguish E_i , which fairies have, from the mental image we have when we think about them. Nor is she confusing E_f or E_i , which Hamlet has, with Napoleon's existence "in the ordinary world". On her view, there is a kind of existence—namely, existence itself—that Hamlet and Napoleon share. But, in addition, there is a kind of existence that Hamlet has and Napoleon lacks (namely, E_f or E_i), just as there is a kind of existence that Napoleon has (or had) and Hamlet lacks (namely, physical existence).²³

5.2. Negative Existentials

On Jones's view, even if fairies have E_i we can truly say

(10) Fairies are non-existent.

In saying (10), we are not saying that fairies lack E_i or existence itself. Rather, we are saying that there is another kind of existence—for example, physical existence—that they lack. At the beginning and end of the starred passage, Jones says,

if I say—

Fairies are non-existent,

the existence that I deny is not existence of *every kind*, since fairies have a certain kind of existence in fairy tales and in imagination [...]. What is denied to them in the above proposition [sentence] is (perhaps) "ordinary phenomenal existence, and at the time present". (§11, p. 90)

I take it that "ordinary phenomenal existence, and at the time present" is something like physical existence.²⁴

²³ As a character in Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*, Napoleon might have E_f or E_i . I ignore this complication in the text. And perhaps Napoleon no longer has physical existence (see n. 15). Still, on Jones's view there is a kind of existence (namely, physical existence) that Napoleon once had but Hamlet never did.

²⁴ The phrase "ordinary phenomenal existence, and at the time present" comes from Venn's (1881, p. 127) *Symbolic Logic*. In that work, he mentions a contrast between "phenomenal or sensible existence", on the one hand, and "the region of the imaginary", on the other (Venn, 1881, p. 133, n. 1). Jones suggests that existence at a specific time is a kind (or "determination") of existence (§11, p. 92). So perhaps "ordinary phenomenal existence, and at the time present" is more specific than physical existence. I ignore this com-

In her discussion of fairies in the starred passage, Jones thus accepts the following three claims. First, fairies have some kind of existence; in particular, they have E_i . Second, although fairies have E_i , they lack another kind of existence; in particular, they lack physical existence. And, third, the truth of a negative existential like (10) requires that fairies have one kind of existence (so that we can talk about them) but lack another kind of existence (so that we can truly say that they “are non-existent”). As Jones (1893, p. 454) later puts it, “in order to predicate non-existence in one sphere it is necessary to postulate existence in another”.

In *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell (1903, pp. 449–450) criticizes “the existential theory of judgment—the theory, that is, that every proposition is concerned with something that exists”. He argues that it has trouble with negative existentials, or what he calls “non-existential propositions”: that is, sentences or propositions that deny the existence of some things (p. 450). Speaking of the existential theory of judgment, he says,

The theory seems, in fact, to have arisen from neglect of the distinction between existence and being. Yet this distinction is essential, if we are ever to deny the existence of anything. For what does not exist must be something, or it would be meaningless to deny its existence; and hence we need the concept of being, as that which belongs even to the non-existent. (Russell, 1903, p. 450)

Distinguishing existence and being is one way to account for the truth of negative existentials like (10). Perhaps fairies have being, so it is not meaningless to deny their existence; and perhaps fairies lack existence, so it is not false to deny their existence.

But, even if Russell is right that *some* distinction is essential, Jones’s discussion of (10) shows that the specific distinction that Russell draws—namely, between existence and being—is not. Instead, we can distinguish two kinds of existence: for example, E_i and physical existence. This distinction allows Jones to propose a different account of negative existentials, one that, as far as I know, is novel. On her view, fairies have E_i , so it is not meaningless to deny their existence; and they lack physical existence, so it is not false to deny their existence (at least if physical existence or something like it is the kind of existence that we are denying that they have). Jones’s view thus shows that, contrary to Russell’s objection, there is a way for the existential theory of judgment to account for the truth of negative existentials after all.

plication in the text (on existence at different times—particularly past, present, and future existence—as different kinds of existence, see Frischhut, Skiles, 2013; McDaniel, 2017, pp. 78–108; Turner, 2013, pp. 275–276).

6. Conclusion

On Jones's view, every name applies to something, which has some kind of existence. In particular, "Dorothea" (from *Middlemarch*) applies to a fictional character, which has existence in fiction, E_f ; and "fairy" applies to fairies, which have existence in imagination, E_i . Similarly, a wide range of names from mythology apply to mythological characters, which have some kind of existence other than physical existence: perhaps E_f , or E_i , or existence in myth. These names (broadly construed) include, not only proper names (e.g., "Athena", "Melpomene", "Aglaia"), but also complex demonstratives (e.g., "this Muse of Hesiod") and quantifier expressions (e.g., "some of the Muses of Hesiod"); and, where S is a name that applies to one or more mythological characters, sentences of the form *S copula P* carry a commitment to the existence of mythological characters.

Jones's view has the resources to reply to two of Russell's objections. First, contrary to Russell's (1919, p. 169) objection in *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, to say that Dorothea has E_f , or that fairies have E_i , is not a "pitiful and paltry evasion", nor is it "confused to a degree which is scarcely credible". And, second, contrary to Russell's (1903) objection in *The Principles of Mathematics*, saying that sentences like "Fairies are non-existent" are both meaningful and true does not require distinguishing existence and being, nor does it require rejecting the existential theory of judgment (according to which every sentence or proposition is about something that exists), provided that there are at least two kinds of existence: one that fairies have (so that we can talk about them) and another that they lack (so that we can truly say that they "are non-existent").

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