Silvia Jonas: "From Existence to Expression"
(Huji MA and advanced BA seminar in metaphysics, Fall Semester 2015)

Timothy Williamson (2002). 'Necessary Existents'. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 51, pp 233-251

Questionnaire

1. What is the goal of Williamson's argument, i.e. what does he want to prove?

2. What are the main steps of Williamson's argument?

3. What, according to Williamson, are propositions? Does anything in his argument depend on a specific way of understanding propositions, e.g. as structured entities vs. as sets of possible worlds?

4. How does Williamson motivate the principle (1+), i.e. the principle that, necessarily, the proposition that P is true if and only if P?

5. What is Williamson's response to the objection that (1+) must be revised to accommodate cases of semantic paradox?

6. Does Kit Fine's distinction between 'true in a world' vs. 'true of a world' pose a threat to Williamson's argument?

7. Why, according to Williamson, is modal realism not a good way to counter his circularity objection against the 'truth-in' vs. 'truth-of' a world distinction? Do you find Williamson's view on modal realism convincing?

8. Williamson infers the existence of an object from the existence of a proposition referring to that object. What would be an obvious objection to this proposal, and how does Williamson counter that objection?

9. At the beginning of section 3 (p. 244), Williamson addresses the way he conceives of existence: "Existing was taken as a necessary precondition of having any properties or relations whatsoever." What do you think about this statement? Does it change the way you understand his existence proof?

10. Williamson argues for at least two ways of existing. What are they and what do yout think about this distinction?

11. What is the difference between a *predicative* and an *attributive* reading of 'being possible', and which one of the two readings is the relevant one for Williamson?

12. Williamson addresses the objection that his account entails a massive inflation of ontological commitments. How does he counter that objection, and what do you think about his response?

13. How does Williamson's account simplify the proof theory of quantified modal logic?

14. How does Williamson's account simplify the semantics of quantified modal logic?

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Questionnaire

1. What is Schaffer's main question?

2. What is the difference between monism and pluralism? Which of the two does Schaffer want to defend?

3. What are his two main arguments?

4. Schaffer defends a particular reading of monism – which?

5. How does Schaffer motivate the notion of metaphysical priority? How does he characterize metaphysical hierarchy?

6. What does Schaffer mean by 'tiling constraint'?

7. How does Schaffer define 'monism'?

8. How does he define 'pluralism'?

9. What is the 'argument from common sense' and why, according to Schaffer, does it favour monism? Where do you see room for criticism in this argument?

10. What is the 'argument from quantum-entanglement', why, according to Schaffer, does it favour monism?

11. What is the 'asymmetry of supervenience'?

12. How does Schaffer tackle the problem of qualitative heterogeneity?

13. What is gunk? Why is the monist better equipped to accommodate the possibility of gunk?

14. What is the 'asymmetry of existence'? Do you agree with Schaffer that there is such an asymmetry?

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Yablo, S., 2002, "Abstract Objects: A Case Study", *Philosophical Issues*, 12: 220–40.

Questionnaire

1. What are Yablo's main questions about the *metaphysics* of abstract objects?

2. What are Yablo's main questions about the *epistemology* of abstract objects?

3. Why, according to Yablo, does truth about abstract objects such as numbers seem absolute rather than relative?

4. Yablo describes two possible answers to the question why abstract objects (seem to) exist necessarily. What are these two possible answers and what does Yablo think of them?

5. In what way could one try to "explain away" the intuition that numbers and arithmetical truths exist necessarily? What does Yablo think about such attempts?

6. Yablo sets out to find a way to keep the advantages of the conservativeness-proposal (i.e. the advantage that existence does not "follow" from being abstract) without giving up the intuition that numbers are 'really' necessary (rather than "possibly impossible", as on Field's account) and without having some kind of relativism creep into the picture. How does he achieve that?

7. What examples does Yablo give in order to illustrate the fact that introducing quantifiable number-vocabulary greatly simplifies expression? How does he argue that the real content of any arithmetical truth is a logical truth?

8. Yablo describes his view as 'Kantian logicism'. What does he mean by that?

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Fine, Kit. 2003. 'The Non-Identity of a Material Thing and Its Matter'. *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy*. Ap 03. 112(446), 195-234.

Questionnaire

1. What is the question Fine addresses in this paper? What kind of response does he argue for?

2. How does Fine use the term monism? Do you know any other way in which this term is used in contemporary metaphysics?

3. What is the difference between spatial and material coincidence? What is the difference between worldly and necessary coincidence? What are the corresponding notions of 'extreme', 'moderate', and 'mild' monism? What is Fine's take on these distinctions?

4. What is the 'deadlock' Fine describes as the current state of affairs in the debate? What strategy does he propose to break this deadlock?

5. What is the 'standard' reference of a term? What are the two general ways in which, according to Fine, a monist might argue against a pluralist inference such as $\varphi(s)$, not-$\varphi(t)$, therefore $s \neq t$?

6. Why, according to Fine, does the concept of a referential shift not support the monist's argument?

7. Fine argues that the monist has difficulty in explaining context-opacity – how does he argue for that and why is that a problem for the monist?

8. Even though the monist could theoretically come up with a bunch of (ad hoc) qualifications to explain and invoke the predicational shift needed for his monist theory to stand, Fine identifies a class of cases that are fatal for the monist's theory of predicational shift. What are these cases and why can the monist not handle them?

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<u>Hawley, Katherine., 2009, "Identity and Indiscernibility", *Mind*, 118: 101-19.</u>

Questionnaire

1. What is the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (PII) and what kinds of scenarios threaten this principle?

2. What is the Special Composition Question (SCQ)?

3. What is the two-step process Hawley argues we need in order to construct a counterexample to PII?

4. Hawley describes a certain puzzle everyone who rejects PII must confront. What is that puzzle, and which possible answers does Hawley suggest in response to it?

5. What is Della Rocca's objection against a simple principle of quantitative parsimony about indiscernible objects?

6. What is 'qualitatively significant' duplication and what differentiates it from qualitatively insignificant duplication?

7. Hawley discusses three possibilities of defending PII in light of cases like Black's two-spheres-world. What are these possibilities, and which one does she ultimately endorse?

8. In what way could we mount an 'identity' defence of PII and what is problematic about such a defence?

9. In what way could we mount a 'discerning' defence of PII and what is problematic about such a defence?

10. In what way does Hawley mount her 'summing' defence of PII? What do you think about this defence of PII?

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Sider, Theodore. 2006. 'Bare Particulars'. Philosophical Perspectives Vol. 20: pp. 387-397.

Questionnaire

1. What is the *substratum theory* of particulars?

2. What is the *bundle theory* of particulars?

3. Sider sees no problem with rejecting the identity of indiscernibles (see footnote 1), which entails rejecting Leibniz' Law. Can you think of a reason why this might be problematic?

4. Sider considers several interpretations of what it could mean for a bare particular to have no properties (in itself). Which interpretations are these and what does he think about them?

5. Sider states that he is tempted by the argument that universals are exactly similar to numbers in that they facilitate talk about the physical world without playing a role in the metaphysics of how things are. What do you think about this parallel?

6. What are 'truly bare particulars' and why might they be a counter-argument to bare particulars?

7. Sider names a few candidates for truly bare particulars – which? What do you think about them?

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Fine, Kit. 2006. 'The Reality of Tense'. *Synthese* Vol. 150: pp. 399-414.

Questionnaire

1. On which four assumptions do arguments against tense-realism rest?

2. What is the standard response for the tense-realist to get out of the Incoherence worry and why does this response seem so attractive? What does Fine think about this response?

3. Which two forms of non-standard tense-realism are there and what do they look like?

4. What is the difference between antirealism, presentist realism, and relativism when it comes to integrating tensed facts into our ontology?

5. What is the difference between antirealism, presentist realism, and fragmentalism when it comes to integrating tensed facts into our ontology?

6. What are the three standard objections against standard tense-realism and how does adopting a non-standard view of tense-realism help us get around them?

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Chalmers, David. 2004. "Imagination, Indexicality, and Intensions." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 68, No. 1: 182–190.

Questionnaire

1. Chalmers defends an anti-physicalist view of consciousness against physicalist arguments by John Perry. What are the three objections to physicalism that Chalmers discusses in his paper?

2. What is epiphenomenalism and why does Perry reject Zombie-arguments against materialism?

3. How does Chalmers argue against Perry's refutation of the Zombie-argument?

4. What is the Knowledge Argument and why does Perry reject it as an argument against materialism?

5. What is the modal argument against materialism and what is Perry's objection against it?

6. How does Chalmers argue against Perry's objection?

7. What are your intuitions about materialism?

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Peter Godfrey-Smith. 2009. 'Models and fictions in science'. *Philosophical Studies* (2009) 143:101–116.

Questionnaire

1. What is Godfrey-Smith's overall argumentative goal?

2. How should we understand model-based science? What motivations are there to conduct model-based science?

3. What different kinds of models are used in model-based science? Is there a uniform use of the term 'model'?

4. What exactly does the comparison of two systems consist in?

5. Can you give a few examples of model systems in model-based science?

6. What is the 'folk-ontology' way of understanding analogies between models/fictions and reality?

7. What is problematic about this way of understanding model-based science?

8. Godfrey-Smith compares mathematical objects, models in science, and literary fictions: how do they differ and what's the common underlying tension?

9. What is the difference between the role impossibilities/impossible objects play in mathematics, science, and literary fictions?

10. Godfrey-Smith discusses three ways of treating fictional model systems: as abstract objects; as ``make-believe''; and as psychological prop. Explain the different approaches and their respective advantages and disadvantages.

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Questionnaire

1. What is the goal of Everett's argument?

2. In what way does fiction-talk seem to commit us to the existence of fictional objects? Everett describes two main cases – which ones are they and which one does he focus on?

3. What are the two basic claims a fictionalist is committed to?

4. What is Everett's objection from indeterminacy of identity? What is the difference between 'benign' and 'pernicious' indeterminacy?

5. What do you think of Evans' argument against indeterminacy?

6. What is the objection from indeterminacy of existence? Which three ways of answering this objection does the fictional realist have, according to Everett? What does he think about those three ways?

7. What is the objection from logical incoherence?

8. What is the *No Character* response the fictional realist could give to the objection from logical incoherence? Do you think it works?

9. What is the *Coherent Character* response the fictional realist could give to the objection from logical incoherence? What do you think about it?

10. Everett dismisses fictional realism. What alternative way of understanding fiction does he propose?

11. What does Everett mean when he says that we should pretend that fictional characters have a 'dual nature' (P2-pretense)?

12. What, according to Everett's 'pretense theory', determines whether a given claim counts as true-in-a-fiction or not?

13. Everett points out that the fictional realist should deny the literal truth of sentences such as 'Conan Doyle's most famous character, Sherlock Holmes, saves the life of Queen Victoria'. Why?

14. However, if the fictionalist denies the literal truth of the above sentence, he must also deny the literal truth of other Fictional Object Sentences (FOSs) – but then the fictional realist's theory would collapse. How could the realist try to save his theory? What are the consequences of such a saving attempt?

15. How does Everett explain our intuition that FOSs are literally true when in fact, as he argues, they are not?