MODALITY

Ted Sider, Fall 2004
Davison 37, (732) 932-9861 xt. 158
sider@philosophy.rutgers.edu
http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider/

Description

Modal notions (e.g., possibility and necessity) raise philosophical questions. There are epistemological questions: how do we know what might or must be the case, given that all we ever observe is what *is* the case? Metaphysical questions: in virtue of what are modal statements true? Can they be reduced? Can they (and should they) be made to fit into a naturalistic or scientific ontology? Logical/semantic questions: what analysis of modal statements can be given, which captures the logical behavior of these statements but does not make the epistemological and metaphysical questions unanswerable? This seminar will focus primarily on the latter two sorts of questions, and will examine various reductions of modal notions, including:

> *P is necessarily true iff ...*

... P is true in all possible worlds	(Lewis)
... P is true in all rearrangements of the actual world	(combinatorialism)
... the fiction of worlds says that P is true in all worlds	(fictionalism)
... P's truth is grounded in essences or entailments	(Fine, Jubien)
... P's truth is guaranteed by linguistic conventions	(conventionalism)

I am especially interested in conventionalism, which was popular in the 30s and 40s, but was nearly universally abandoned by the 70s. Why did philosophers give up on conventionalism? Are any neo-conventionalist theories still defensible?

Readings

Copies of David Lewis's *On the Plurality of Worlds* are available at the Student Coop Bookstore (in the building next to the philosophy department). Other readings will be available for xeroxing in Susan Viola's office, Davison 124. A bibliography on modality is available at

> http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider/teaching/modality_bib.pdf

Bibliographic references in the schedule (below) are to this bibliography. I have copies of many articles on the bibliography; feel free to borrow them from me to xerox.

Requirements

Three very short (around three pages double-spaced) papers plus a term paper. The short papers should in most cases be about assigned readings. They can make a small point, clarify some matter, raise a question, etc. While they are not a big deal, they should be properly laid out as papers (e.g., they should cite references properly.) They are due on October 5, November 2, and December 7. As for the term paper, let me know in advance what your topic is.

SCHEDULE (* = we will probably skip this section)

Introduction Plantinga 1974, chapter 1; Kripke 1972 (especially Lectures 1 and 3)

Optional: Sider 2003; Melia 2003, chs. 1, 2

Modal realism Lewis 1986, 1.1-1.3, 1.6-1.9, ch. 2; Divers and Melia 2002

Optional: Nolan 1996; Shalkowski 1994; Bremer 2003; Divers and Melia 2003; McGinn 2000; Divers 1997; Roy 1993

Abstract possible worlds Plantinga 1976; Lewis 1986, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4; Sider 2002

Optional: van Inwagen 1986; Melia 2001; Roy 1995

*Combinatorialism Armstrong 1989, chs. 3-8; Lewis 1992; Sider Forthcoming

Optional: MacBride 1999; Thomas 1995, 1996

*Fictionalism Rosen 1990, 1993; Brock 1993; Sider 2002, sec. IV

Optional: Noonan 1994; Rosen 1995; Nolan 1997; Nolan and Hawthorne 1996

Fine, Jubien Fine 1994a, 1994b; Jubien Forthcoming

*Anti-realism Blackburn 1986; Wright 1984; Divers 2004

Conventionalism Ayer 1952; Hempel 1945; Lewy 1940; Pap 1958, 5A-5B, 7A-7D; Soames 2003a, pp. 257-264

Optional: Carnap 1952; the rest of Pap 1958, part 2; Lewy 1976

Quine on analyticity and convention Quine 1936, 1951, 1960b; Soames 2003a, pp. 264-270; Boghossian 1997; Prior 1960; Belnap 1961-62

Optional: Grice and Strawson 1956; Harman 1999, chs. 5-7; Tennant 1987

De re modality and essentialism Quine 1953b, 1953c; Putnam 1973; Lewis 1968 plus postscript C (from Lewis 1983), 1986, pp. 8-13; Sidelle 1989, chs. 1, 2; Chalmers 1996, pp. 52-69

Optional: Parsons 1967; Fine 1989; Burgess 1997; Neale 2000; Davies and Humberstone 1980; Yablo 1992; Gibbard 1975

Neo-conventionalism Sider Unpublished

Optional: Peacocke 1999, ch. 4; *PPR* symposium on Peacocke 1999: Peacocke 2002b, Rosen 2002, Williamson 2002b, Wright 2002