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metaphysics, meaning, and modality
themes from the work of kit fine

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Themes from Kit Fine

EDITED BY
Mircea Dumitru

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Mircea Dumitru

Bucharest,
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Introduction

Kit Fine—A Philosopher's Philosopher

Mircea Dumitru

This book is the first edited volume on the philosophy of one of the most seminal and profound contemporary philosophers. Over the last forty-odd years, Kit Fine has been one of the most influential and original analytic philosophers. He has made provocative and innovative contributions to several areas of systematic philosophy, including philosophy of language, metaphysics, and the philosophy of mathematics, as well as a number of topics in philosophical logic, such as modal logic, relevance logic, the logic of essence, and the logic of vagueness. These contributions have helped reshape the agendas of those fields and have given fresh impetus to a number of perennial debates.

Fine originally focused on mathematical logic, specifically addressing issues in modal and relevance logic, with the publication of "An Incomplete Logic Containing S4" in 1974, "Failures of the Interpolation Lemma in Quantified Modal Logic" in 1979, and "Models for Entailment" in 1974, and "Semantics for Quantified Relevance Logic" in 1988, within which he showcased his independent discovery of the ternary relation semantics for the system R.

Fine also contributed to issues in the field of modal theories, where, in particular, he delved into the *de re–de dicto* distinction, analyzed the formal properties of modal theories of set theory, as well as the reduction of possibilist to actualist discourse (see "Model Theory for Modal Logic," in three parts in 1978, and 1981, and *Worlds, Times, and Selves*, with A. N. Prior, 1977).

In a series of consecutive publications from 1994 and 1995, Fine argued for a revision of the standard modal account of individual essence, according to which "P is essential to x" on condition that "x has P in every world where x exists." Contending that such a definition is incomplete and lacks nuance, Fine resurrected an Aristotelian thesis, arguing that real definitions as opposed to *de re* modalities give a better account of essence (see "Essence and Modality," 1994 and "The Logic of Essence," 1995).

Fine's work has embraced many philosophical subdisciplines, with significant contributions to topics in: (1) philosophy of vagueness, where he argued for super-valuationism (see "Vagueness, Truth, and Logic," 1975); (2) philosophy of logic, where he developed an account of reasoning with existential statements wherein an

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instance is taken to follow from an existential statement in virtue of its containing reference to an appropriate arbitrary object (see *Reasoning with Arbitrary Objects*, 1985); (3) philosophy of mathematics, where he contributed to discussions on abstraction and postulation (see *The Limits of Abstraction*, 2002, "Our Knowledge of Mathematical Objects," 2005); and (4) philosophy of language, where he developed the doctrine of semantic relationism (see *Semantic Relationism*, 2007). More recently, Fine's work focuses on topics such as: essence and ground, realism, material constitution, truthmaking, response dependence, and vagueness (see "The Question of Realism," 2002, "The Pure Logic of Ground," 2012, *Vagueness. A Global Approach*, 2020). He has, in addition, contributed to several other areas in the course of his career, including the history of philosophy ("Aristotle on Matter," 1992, "A Puzzle Concerning Matter and Form," 1994, "Husserl's Theory of Part-Whole," 1995, which is a formal reconstruction of Husserl's third *Logical Investigation*), formal language theory ("Transparency," 1992), the semantics of programming languages ("The Justification of Negation as Failure," 1989), and social choice theory ("Social Choice and Individual Ranking," 1974, with B. Fine).

Often eschewing mainstream topics and trajectories in analytical philosophy, Fine's work, encompassing six books and over one hundred papers and critical reviews, has been original, profound, and prolific. The impact of Fine's work on the field is constantly growing, as can be seen in the steady stream of papers and books written in reaction to Fine's own work. Recently, philosophical engagements with Fine's work have resulted in a conference entitled "Fine Philosophy—The Philosophy of Kit Fine." Papers presented at this conference were collected and published in the journal *Dialectica*, 61, 2007, under the editorship of Professor Kevin Mulligan.

Fine's work is greatly appreciated by analytic philosophers, undoubtedly due to both its technical sophistication and its impressive philosophical breadth. According to British philosopher Timothy Williamson, Fine's groundbreaking arguments are often advanced "with characteristic brilliance and rigor."

Fine's impulse towards stepping outside the narrow confines of contemporary analytic philosophy and towards grappling with a multitude of complicated questions have arguably contributed to the philosopher's far-reaching appeal and recognition. Rather than simply engaging in arguments aimed at dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes in thought and language, Fine's work recalls the original purpose of analytic philosophy: that of constructing theories and proposing concepts that enable us to make sense of our own experience.

Were one to distill the importance of Fine's estimable body of work, it would surely be found to reside in the philosopher's opposition towards the current orthodoxy and in his commitment to rescuing sound philosophical common sense from "the adoption of a theory-driven methodology, one that favours considerations of a broadly theoretical sort over strong and seemingly compelling intuitions" (*Modality and Tense*, 2005, p. 1). This characteristic of his work is perhaps best exemplified by Fine's position with respect to the Quinean tradition in metaphysics and semantics. Indeed, Fine self-reflexively contextualizes his own modal actualist thinking as a reaction (or "animosity," in Fine's own phrasing in his introduction to *Modality and Tense* [2005, p. 2]) towards W. V. O. Quine's conception of

modality. Fine's *modal actualist* theories were also defined in opposition to David Lewis's so-called *modal realism*, with its "lavish [ontological] extravagance" (p. 2), according to which whatever is merely possible is on an ontological par with whatever is actual.

This book contains nineteen original essays which critically assess the work of Kit Fine. These papers dwell on both perennial and more recent developments in Kit Fine's philosophical work, and are organized under a number of specific headings, which cluster around eight topics that fall under the main areas to which Kit Fine contributed; namely, Metaphysics, Modality, Logic, and Language. Specifically, the eight topics are the following: Reality, Arbitrary Objects, Identity, Kinds, Essence, Logic, Semantic Relationism, and Truthmaking, a diversity of topics which bears witness to the scope and richness of Kit Fine's work.

Moreover, the systematic character of Fine's philosophy provides the ground for an organic growth of, and an interconnection between, those various topics, which are likely to be of interest to largely overlapping groups of individual philosophers, as long as a topic from one area naturally leads to, or shows an affinity for, a topic from another area.

This is why we expect the volume to be of interest both to professional philosophers and to graduate and undergraduate students who are interested in metaphysics, language, and philosophical logic. It is our hope that these readers will benefit from the general level of scholarship in the book and from the more particular debates over Kit Fine's novel theories on meaning and representation, arbitrary objects, essence, ontological realism, metaphysics of modality, and constitution of things. More generally, it is our hope that a thorough discussion of the work of a very innovative and profound author such as Kit Fine can contribute to a better understanding of what is at stake within contemporary analytic philosophy.

Concretely, under the rubric Metaphysics (Part I), the contributors to this volume address the following issues: *Reality* (Fred Kroon and Jonathan McKeown-Green, "Ontology: What's the (Real) Question?"; Philip Percival, "Beyond Reality?"; Joseph Almog, "One Absolutely Infinite Universe to Rule Them All: Reverse Reflection, Reverse Metaphysics"); *Arbitrary Objects* (Alasdair Urquhart, "Fine on Arbitrary Objects"; Gabriel Sandu, "Indefinites, Skolem Functions, and Arbitrary Objects"); and *Identity* (Kathrin Koslicki, "Essence and Identity"; Kit Fine, "Indeterminate Identity, Personal Identity, and Fission"; Graeme Forbes, "Fine's New Semantics of Vagueness");

Under Modality (Part II), the authors of the essays discuss Kit Fine's contribution to the metaphysical issues of *Kinds* (Steven T. Kuhn, "Necessary, Transcendental, and Universal Truth"; Gideon Rosen, "What is Normative Necessity?"); and of *Essence* (Bob Hale, "The Problem of *de re* Modality"; Penelope Mackie, "Can Metaphysical Modality Be Based on Essence?"; Fabrice Correia, "More on the Reduction of Necessity to Essence"; Jessica Wilson, "Essence and Dependence"; Scott Shalkowski, "Essence and Nominalism").

The groundbreaking contribution of Kit Fine to the model-theoretic approach to modal logic is summarized and examined by Robert Goldblatt in his "Fine's Theorem on First-Order Complete Modal Logics."

The section devoted to Fine's very recent and novel views on the nature of Language (Part III), as well as meaning and truthmaking, includes expository and

critical essays on *Semantic Relationism* (Gary Ostertag, "Fine on Frege's Puzzle"; Paolo Bonardi, "Coordination, Understanding, and Semantic Requirements") and on *Truthmaking* (Friederike Moltmann, "Variable Objects and Truth-Making").

Each chapter in this volume, with the natural exception of Kit Fine's own essay, is followed by his response and provides dialectical exchange that is not only a tribute to the contribution of Fine to contemporary philosophy but also a critical overview of his philosophical work.

An up-to-date list of Kit Fine's philosophical works concludes this volume, which we hope will soon become a resource for all those interested in contemporary approaches to metaphysics, modality, logic, and language.

In the remaining part of this Introduction I shall briefly present and comment upon the main upshot of each essay and connect it to Kit Fine's own response to some of the points that have been made.

In "Ontology: What's the (Real) Question?" Fred Kroon and the late Jonathan McKeown-Green address issues of ontological interconnectedness that stem from Kit Fine's work in the area. One important case in this regard concerns Fine's views about what sorts of entities we should, as philosophers, commit ourselves to. In "The Question of Ontology" Fine challenges existing accounts of the philosophical task of ontology, rejecting a Quinean concern with what there is in favor of a focus on what entities are *real.* But what is it to be *real*? Adverting to the metaphysical view he formulated in "The Question of Realism," Fine thinks that the notion of (being the case in) reality is primitive and that the reality of entities should be understood in terms of this primitive notion of reality. Kroon and McKeown-Green's chapter critiques Fine's interconnected set of ideas about the task of ontology. It attempts to defend the use of quantificational constructions in capturing ontological commitments, and questions the usefulness to ontology of a primitive concept of reality.

Philip Percival's focus is on the divide between reality and that which is beyond reality, what he calls an "all-encompassing" view of reality. This is the divide between everything and nothing: reality encompasses everything, and beyond it there is nothing at all. Opposed to the all-encompassing view is what he calls a "restriction" view of reality: reality is coincident with some kind of restriction on, or partition of, what there is; it is not the case then that what resides beyond reality is nothing. Consequently, Percival has two main aims: first to classify restriction views of reality, and then to assess a species of the restriction view that pertains to time and modality.

Joseph Almog deals in his chapter with *de re* universe skepticism, which is a form of skepticism about the universe as an objectual unity. Its clearest origin lies in Kant's doubts about objectual totalities that conform neither to intuition nor to individual concepts. Subsequently, this form of skepticism was taken further by the founders of bottom-up set theory and their conception of sets as limited in size (as, for example, with Zermelo, Von Neumann, Bernays, and, most prominently, Gödel). We witness a reduction of absolute infinity theory and global *de re* universe theory to localist and assemblage-ist set theory based on the iterative set-of operation. Set theory becomes the official universal language of combination-theory and synthesis-of-unities-theory envisaged by Kant. Almog finds this neo-Kantian idealist and concept-driven account in the essentialist ideas of Kit Fine. Key to it is a certain

conceptual-essentialist constructionism. The chapter contrasts this Kantian view with a top-down globalist *de re* universe, the *ens originarium* and absolutely infinite unitary object at that. The expressive incompleteness of the language of set theory (via reflection) is dissected. The epistemological question that fanned Kant's skepticism viz. how we grasp/think-of this ur-object, is also addressed. The answer is found to rest on the mundanity (in both senses) of our contact with (if not grasp of) the universe. What was classed as impossible for thinking by concept-essence-driven Kantians is found to be such that: without contact-with-it no thinking is possible at all.

Alasdair Urquhart's "Fine on Arbitrary Objects" surveys Kit Fine's theory of arbitrary objects. It includes a historical survey of earlier writers on arbitrary objects, including Newton, Euler, and Czuber. Then it looks at objections to arbitrary objects, concluding with a sketch of the construction of models containing arbitrary objects.

In his chapter, Gabriel Sandu deals with Kit Fine's notion of arbitrary objects and the relation of dependency between them. In the chapter, Sandu introduces a syntactic notion of dependency between variables which defines a notion of functional dependence on teams (sets of assignments). The idea comes from logics of dependence and independence and the so-called team semantics (Hodges, Väänänen, among others). Sandu argues that this metaphysically much lighter framework can account for some of the natural language examples (anaphora) that Fine mentioned as possible applications of arbitrary objects. At the end of his chapter Sandu touches upon the multi-dependencies between arbitrary objects vs. multi-dependencies in the framework of team semantics.

Kathrin Koslicki evaluates six competing accounts that essentialists might involve in order to meet the Quinean challenge of providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the crossworld identity of individuals: (1) qualitative character; (2) matter; (3) origins; (4) haecceities or primitive non-qualitative thisness properties; (5) world-indexed properties; and (6) individual forms. The first three candidates, she argues, fail to provide conditions that are both necessary and sufficient for the crossworld identity of individuals; the fourth and fifth criteria are open to the charge that they do not succeed in meeting the Quinean demand in an explanatorily adequate fashion. On balance, then, individual forms deserve to be taken very seriously as a possible response to the Quinean challenge, especially by neo-Aristotelians who are already committed to a hylomorphic conception of composite concrete particular objects. Theorists who also accept a non-modal conception of essence, that is, a conception according to which essence is not reducible to modality, face, in addition, the further difficult task explaining how an object's *de re* modal profile in some way follows from facts about its essence. Haecceities and world-indexed properties, as Koslicki indicates, are unlikely to be of much help with respect to this second challenge, while the forms of hylomorphic compounds are in fact well suited for this purpose.

Kit Fine proposes a new theory of vagueness, radically different from his earlier supervaluationist account, and considers the application of the theory to the question of vague identity.

In his response to Fine's paper, Graeme Forbes is mainly concerned with Fine's new semantical account of vagueness, which he calls "compatibilism," while also

including a brief discussion of Fine's earlier theory, supervaluationism. Forbes explains compatibilism at some length and discusses its motivation. He ends with a comparison between compatibilism's treatment of three different versions of the Sorites paradox and their treatment within fuzzy logic of the sort he favors.

In his chapter, Steven T. Kuhn addresses the vexing metaphysical problem of how is it that we judge it to be absurd that Socrates might be human and not exist, yet true that he is necessarily human and true that he might not exist. Following Fine's groundbreaking work in the field, Kuhn says that the answer to that question has profound implications for our understanding of the concepts of existence, identity, and modality. For it requires, according to Fine, that we distinguish between *worldly* sentences, whose truth values depend on circumstances, and *unworldly* ones, which are true or false independently of circumstances. Unworldly sentences like *Socrates is human* express *transcendental propositions*. Although these are not, strictly speaking, true in every (or indeed in any) possible world, we accept them as necessary in an extended sense. Unless the context gives us special reason, however, we are reluctant to extend the concepts of necessity and possibility further to include worldly-unworldly hybrids like *Socrates is human and does not exist*. Kuhn argues that this understanding of the relation between necessary and transcendental truth is backwards, and perhaps contrary to what Fine himself has advocated in some of his works. What is taken for (unextended) necessity in the puzzle analysis, Kuhn calls *universal* truth and he suggests that universal and transcendental truths are both necessary. To further clarify this view he presents a simple formal system with distinct operators for necessary, transcendental, and universal truth. It turns out that the logic for universal truth coincides with something that Arthur Prior had once labeled *System A*. With the benefit of now-familiar techniques, it is shown that Prior's conjectured axiomatization for this system is correct. Finally, the formal system is enriched by the addition of an operator for *actually true*. This raises philosophical questions that sharpen our understanding of the worldly–unworldly distinction. The extended system is axiomatized and shown to correspond to the system *S5A* of Crossley and Humberstone in much the same way that the system without actuality corresponds to *S5*. The new logical systems lose the simplicity of having connectives that apply uniformly to all sentences, but has simpler axioms and greater fidelity to the notions that are to be formalized.

Gideon Rosen's chapter "What is Normative Necessity?" explores Fine's suggestion that the ethical facts supervene on the natural facts, not as a matter of metaphysical necessity, but rather as a matter of normative necessity. The first part develops an explicit argument against the metaphysical supervenience of the ethical, the main premises of which are ethical non-naturalism and Fine's essentialist analysis of metaphysical necessity. The second part defends an analysis of normative necessity according to which P is normatively necessary if and only if P would have been the case no matter how the nonnormative facts had been. The last part argues that the basic principles of ethics as the non-naturalist conceives them are indeed normatively necessary in this sense.

Bob Hale tackles the issue of how, if at all, one can make sense of the problem of *de re* modality. Most who have discussed this problem have assumed that modality *de dicto* is relatively unproblematic. It is, rather, the interpretation of sentences

involving, within the scope of modal operators, singular terms or free variables (or their natural language equivalents, relative pronouns) which is thought to give rise to grave—and in the view of some, insuperable—difficulties. Why? If, as Hale believes, we should reject a broadly linguistic conception of the source of necessity, that disposes of one major source of the idea that *de re* modality is especially problematic. Does any serious problem remain? Is there any further, independently compelling, reason to doubt that *de re* modalities are intelligible? According to Fine, Quine has two arguments against the intelligibility of *de re* modality: a "logical" and a "metaphysical" one. That the "logical" argument is central to Quine's attack is surely indisputable. But Hale's claim that it is his basic argument is, in effect, denied by Kit Fine. Hale can (and does) agree with Fine that there are some significant differences between the two arguments. The most important question, for Hale's purposes, is whether Fine is correct in thinking that the two arguments have force independently of one another.

In his hugely influential paper "Essence and Modality" (1994), Kit Fine argued that the then orthodox view that essence can be understood in terms of metaphysical modality is fundamentally flawed. He proposed, in its place, the view that all metaphysical modality has its source in the essences or natures of things, where the notion of a thing's essence or nature can be understood in terms of a broadly Aristotelian notion of real definition. This theory appears to require that the relevant conception of real definition can itself be isolated without appeal to metaphysical modality. In her chapter, "Can Metaphysical Modality Be Based on Essence?," Penelope Mackie argues that this requirement cannot be met. She then briefly considers the implications of her argument for the relation between essence and metaphysical modality.

In previous work, Fabrice Correia has developed Kit Fine's view that metaphysical modality should be understood in terms of essence, making use of his suggestion that the essence of the logical concepts is given by rules of inference rather than by propositions. Correia here strengthens the case for this "rule-based account" by criticizing alternative accounts and by suggesting replies to some objections to the account.

Jessica Wilson argues that Kit Fine's essence-based account of ontological dependence is subject to various counterexamples. She first discusses Fine's distinctive "schema-based" approach to metaphysical theorizing, which aims to identify general principles accommodating any intelligible application of the notion(s) at issue. She then raises concerns about the general principles Fine takes to schematically characterize the notions of essence and dependence, principles which enter into his account of ontological dependence. According to Wilson, the problem, roughly speaking, is that Fine supposes that an object's essence makes reference just to what it ontologically depends on, but various cases suggest that an object's essence can also make reference to what ontologically depends on it. As such, Fine's essence-based account of ontological dependence is subject to the same objection he raises against modal accounts of essence and dependence—that is, of being insufficiently ecumenical.

After sketching Kit Fine's deflationary approach to modality, Scott Shalkowski argues for a similar approach to essentialism. Shalkowski argues that nominalizing

strategies regarding truth, predication, and similarity permit us to give priority to object-language formulations of essentialist claims, thus making essentialism safe for nominalists. Shalkowski does not present these points as a decisive argument against radical nominalism (or radical forms of anti-realism, in general). But the problematic character of the concept of quasi-truth, the need to go meta-linguistic, the apparent inadequacy of the resulting reductions, and the difficulty to provide straightforward justifications of those reductions should give considerable pause to anyone with an appreciation for the kind of simplicity and systematicity that good methodology is able to offer.

Robert Goldblatt gives a general overview of Kit Fine's seminal contributions to the formal development of modal logic. In his chapter, "Fine's Theorem on First-Order Complete Modal Logics," he presents the technical details of Fine's influential Canonicity Theorem, which states that if a modal logic is determined by a first-order definable class of Kripke frames, then it is valid in its canonical frames. This chapter reviews the background and context of this result, and the history of its impact on further research. It then develops a new characterization of when a logic is canonically valid, providing a precise point of distinction with the property of first-order completeness. The critical point is that the construction of the canonical frame of a modal algebra does not commute with the ultrapower construction.

Gary Ostertag, in his "Fine on Frege's Puzzle," addresses issues pertaining to Fine's Semantic Relationism program, which gives a new and original framework for understanding the notion of meaning. Thus, in Ostertag's interpretation, the fact that (1) "Cicero = Tully" is informative, whereas (2) "Cicero = Cicero" is not, presents a familiar challenge to the view that the semantic contribution of a name is exhausted by its referent. According to Fine, the problem for this pure form of referentialism is that in (2), but not in (1), the singular term occurrences are *coordinated*—they represent their common referent "as the same." The notion of coordination, or representing as the same, needs unpacking and Ostertag argues that Fine's account of this notion in *Semantic Relationism* is inadequate. We thus need an alternative way of understanding it, one on which coordination facts do not enter into the content of what is said or asserted. To borrow from Wittgenstein, coordination lies not with what they *say*, but with what my words *show*. To demystify the notion of showing—which will be met with skepticism by some—Ostertag indicates how it can be understood in terms of Grice's notion of conventional implicature.

Paolo Bonardi, in "Coordination, Understanding, and Semantic Requirements," aims at answering the following question: What is coordination between proper names? Fine proposes two characterizations of coordination (or *representing as the same*): an intuitive test; and a technical definition. In regard to the intuitive characterization, Bonardi maintains that coordination has been grounded in a notion of understanding distinct from the notion of linguistic competence. Whereas, according to Bonardi, we need a (proper) characterization of understanding in order to elucidate Fine's coordination, it is unclear how to provide one. Three prima facie appealing proposals to characterize are examined and then dismissed as intrinsically implausible or as incompatible with Fine's relational semantics. Not even his technical characterization of coordination, in terms of the notion of semantic requirement, will enable us to escape the impasse and so, ultimately, the problem of determining what exactly coordination between names is remains open.

In her chapter, Friederike Moltmann argues that terms like *the number of people that can fit into the bus* and *the book John needs to write* stand for variable objects, objects that have manifestations as particular, concrete entities in different actual or counterfactual circumstances that are satisfiers of, for example, some need. The notion of a variable object is a development of Kit Fine's notion of a variable embodiment and involves the notion of exact truthmaking or satisfaction, again a key concept in Fine's philosophy.

* * *

Since it is the first edited volume on the philosophy of this seminal, original, and profound contemporary philosopher, this whole book on Kit Fine's contributions to metaphysics, philosophical logic, and philosophy of language will likely have an impact on new generations of young analytic philosophers attracted to the topics, style, and techniques of Kit Fine's philosophy and will engender a multitude of critical responses.

We do hope that this time-slice through Kit Fine's work and the critical exegeses will encourage the younger generation of philosophers to pursue the topics and the theories that Kit Fine has developed over the last fifty years. After all, as readers can easily appreciate by themselves, Fine's work is distinguished by its great technical sophistication, philosophical breadth, and independence from current orthodoxy. A blend of philosophically sound common sense combined with a virtuosity of philosophical argumentation and construction, meant to back up the former, seems to me to lie at the heart of Kit Fine's lasting contributions to the current trends in analytic philosophy.

This volume is intended for both professional philosophers and graduate and undergraduate students interested in metaphysics, language, and philosophical logic. It is our hope that readers will benefit from the general level of scholarship in the book and from the more particular debates over Kit Fine's novel theories on meaning and representation, arbitrary objects, essence, ontological realism, metaphysics of modality, and constitution of things. More generally, it is my hope that a thorough discussion of the work of a very innovative and profound author such as Kit Fine can contribute to the better understanding of what is at stake within contemporary analytic philosophy.

PART I
Metaphysics

1

Ontology

What's the (Real) Question?

Fred Kroon and Jonathan McKeown-Green

Introduction

One way to philosophize is to ontologize: about physical objects, moral properties, properties, possibilia, numbers, sets, and much else. For Kit Fine, ontologizing differs from what happens in ordinary life when I affirm that there are chairs and from what happens at school when I explain that there is a prime number less than three. We agree, of course, that ontologists typically pay little attention to chairs, except as examples of purported human artifacts or physical objects, and that they normally focus on the ontological status of numbers generally, rather than of primes specifically; but aside from this, we discern no interesting difference between what philosophers do and what happens in ordinary life and school. We also remain unconvinced by his reasons for rejecting a quantificational account of ontological theses. Although we acknowledge the power of some of these considerations, we nonetheless think that quantificational structures suffice for capturing ontological claims at home, at school, and in philosophy.

Fine's most extensive treatment is to be found "The Question of Ontology" (Fine 2009) and related considerations are advanced in "The Question of Realism" (Fine 2001). In the first three, expository, sections of this chapter, we present Fine's ideas in the context of broader views that he elaborates in "What is Metaphysics?" (Fine 2012b). Then we offer our responses.

1 What is Metaphysics?

In "What is Metaphysics?" (WM, for short), Fine declares that "Metaphysics is concerned, first and foremost, with the nature of reality" (WM, 8). But he adds that this alone doesn't mark metaphysics off from other subjects. For example, "Physics deals with the nature of physical reality, epistemology with the nature of knowledge, and aesthetics with the nature of beauty." So what kind of investigation gets to be metaphysics? For one thing, it is distinguished from special sciences like physics by the a priori character of its methods. For another, it is distinguished from a priori disciplines like mathematics and other branches of philosophy by the

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generality of its concerns: it "deals with the most general traits of reality" (which for Fine include value and mind; WM, 9).

But metaphysics can also be described, at least in part, in terms of certain tasks that seem peculiar to it: in particular, metaphysics might serve to supply a *foundation.* Fine thinks this can happen in at least two ways. One (which, as he points out, has "received considerable attention of late") is supplying a foundation for the whole of reality. According to this conception of the tasks of metaphysics,

> some facts are more fundamental or "real" than others; and metaphysics, on this conception, attempts to characterize the most fundamental facts which are the "ground" for the other facts or from which they somehow derive. (WM, 9–10)[1]

There is also the conception of metaphysics as supplying a foundation, "not for reality as such, but for the *nature* of reality" (10), the sort of foundation that might, in response to a question like "Why is water by its nature H_2O?," invoke the metaphysical claim that any substance with a given composition is by its nature of that composition. Fine in fact thinks that if the concepts at play in such explanations are sufficiently general they will also have the right degree of modal and epistemic "transparency," thereby allowing such explanations to terminate—satisfyingly—in general a priori truths of metaphysics.[2]

Taken out of context, however, this (partial) account of the enterprise of metaphysics gives a misleading picture of Fine's metaphysical views. What it doesn't show is how different Fine's conception of foundational metaphysical reflection is from that of most other philosophers. It doesn't, for example, make it clear that Fine's version of a prioristic "armchair" metaphysics is very different from the kind defended by David Lewis (1994) and Frank Jackson (1998). Even the notion of a substance's *nature* is for Fine a metaphysical rather than a modal notion (not even a modal notion explained in terms of metaphysically possible worlds rather than logically possible worlds). And while Fine happily allows an appeal to conceptual analysis as part of the methodology of metaphysics, such an appeal bears directly on the investigation of the nature of things, rather than, say, on the way that semantics, or conceptual frameworks, might provide an entry into that investigation (as in Jackson's work). This might appear to align him with someone like Michael Devitt (1997), another philosopher eager to disassociate metaphysics from semantics. But for Devitt reality consists of entities that exist in a robust, mind-independent sense. That can't be Fine's view, however, since "What is Metaphysics?" cites mind as among the most general traits of reality, and that is incompatible with Devitt's focus on mind-independence.

[1] Apart from Fine, the main proponent of such a view is Jonathan Schaffer (see Schaffer 2009), although Schaffer finds elements of such an Aristotelian conception of metaphysics in, for example, the use David Armstrong makes of the notion of "the ontological free lunch" and Lewis's appeal to perfectly natural properties (Schaffer 2009, 353).

[2] Fine characterizes this second conception of the task of metaphysics as follows: "Metaphysics should be concerned with the nature of reality; it should operate at a high level of generality; its method of enquiry should be a priori and its means of expression transparent; and it should be capable of providing a foundation for all other enquiry into the nature of reality" (WM, 24).

More important for our project, the account sketched above of the enterprise of metaphysics presents a misleading picture of Fine's *ontological* views. What he says about reality in "What is Metaphysics?" suggests that the ontological commitments that go with his kind of realism are generous, including the posits of science, mathematics, common sense (water, say), and much more. That it also includes familiar philosophical posits, for example, is confirmed by Fine's early work on first-order modal theories and on nonexistence (Fine 1980, 1981, 1982). He thinks philosophy and logic are well placed to comment on the nature of propositions, facts, possible worlds, and nonexistent entities and, indirectly, to show why we are right to suppose that there are such things. It is true that his comments on the way facts may be grounded in other facts, bottoming out in the fundamental facts, suggest that many of the putative facts about reality may not be fundamental facts, but there is nothing in "What is Metaphysics?" (or indeed his other works) to suggest that non-fundamental facts are anything other than bona fide facts about reality. (Admittedly, he is prepared to call these facts less "real" than fundamental facts, but in the context it is hard to read much into this.[3]) There is nothing, in short, to compromise the thought that Fine's talk of reality is talk by someone who has robust *metaphysically* realist views.

But this picture of Fine's realism is seriously incomplete. Fine's view is more nuanced: not only is there a distinction to be drawn between a realist and anti-realist interpretation (in *one* sense of that distinction) of talk purporting to be about reality, but there is a further sense in which some true claims about reality may not, even on such a realist interpretation, reflect what is real in the deepest sense: what is true of reality *in itself*. It is the latter notion, Fine thinks, that best captures and unifies what philosophers are (or should be) concerned with when they speculate about what it takes for a proposition to be genuinely descriptive of the real.

To see these refinements, we must turn to other papers.

2 The Question of Realism

"The Question of Realism?" (Fine 2001; QR, for short) adds a new dimension to the question of how to characterize realism and, indirectly, of how to understand the project of "What is Metaphysics?" Fine begins by noting that although anti-realism in philosophy has a long and illustrious history, it encounters a problem. Take a familiar kind of anti-realist about numbers who claims that there are no numbers. Fine points out that in our non-philosophical moments most of us, including such an anti-realist, are inclined to say, "There are prime numbers between 2 and 6," even though this claim implies that there are numbers (QR, 2). Similarly, the anti-realist about morality maintains that there are no moral facts, while also thinking that killing babies for fun is wrong, even though this second claim implies that it is a moral fact that killing babies for fun is wrong.

[3] See the above quote from WM. While Fine here implies that any fact grounded in other facts is ipso facto less "real" than these other facts, the overall thrust of this passage seems to be that even the less "real" is still part of reality.

Fine comments that if we take the conflict in such cases to be genuine, we obtain an "eliminative" or "skeptical" conception of anti-realism, one that disputes what we ordinarily believe. Anti-realism on this conception urges a reassessment of our ordinary commitments.[4] Fine's response to such a form of anti-realism is firm:

> . . . in this age of post-Moorean modesty, many of us are inclined to doubt that philosophy is in possession of arguments that might genuinely serve to undermine what we ordinarily believe. . . . [and in so far] as the pretensions of philosophy to provide a world-view rest upon its claim to be in possession of the epistemological high ground, those pretensions had better be given up. (QR, 2)

Fine's "post-Moorean modesty" explains why he unashamedly continues to accept "what we ordinarily believe," suggesting an account of reality on which it includes the ordinary objects encountered in perception, say, but also the objects we encounter in mathematics and science, as well as facts involving these objects (and no doubt much more, including moral and aesthetic facts). Even if he doesn't explicitly say so, when Fine talks about the metaphysical tasks associated with the investigation of reality in "What is Metaphysics?," he is best read as talking about metaphysics in relation to a notion of reality on this Moorean, common-sense understanding, not an understanding that remains in thrall to skeptical anti-realism.

But Fine also wonders whether there is another form of anti-realism that does not put it into conflict with received opinion in this way. Such an anti-realism, he thinks, "requires . . . a metaphysical conception of reality, one that enables us to distinguish, within the sphere of what is the case, between what is really the case and what is only apparently the case" (QR, 3). The project of QR is to develop such a metaphysical conception of reality. In fact, Fine develops two such conceptions, answering to two different ways of understanding the above contrast, and yielding two different ways in which propositions may fail to "correspond" to the facts. According to the first, what is real is what is "factual," and the corresponding type of anti-realist about a given domain denies that there are any facts "out there" that make the propositions of this domain true or false. According to the second, what is metaphysically real is what is "irreducible" or "fundamental," and the corresponding type of anti-realist about a given domain claims that the facts involving this domain are all reducible to facts of some other sort.

Non-factualism, the first of the above kinds of anti-realism, is familiar, but it cannot, on its own, capture the range of positions in which Fine is interested. Consider a refusal to accept moral facts into one's ontology despite a willingness to assent to "killing babies for fun is wrong." Admittedly, this might well be explained in terms of an account of moral discourse as expressivist and hence as non-factual. But such an imputation of non-factuality cannot, without a great deal more argument, be the general basis for saying that a class of assertible propositions fails to reflect reality. There are philosophers who are prepared to question the reality of numbers, for

[4] It is worth noting that this revisionary aspect does not seem essential to anti-realism: somebody who was skeptical or nonbelieving about ley lines, yeti, or non-actual possible worlds is not necessarily in the business of questioning standard worldviews; if anything, he or she is in the business of ensuring that certain views don't become more widely accepted. This point is discussed briefly in §5.

example, but without denying that ordinary number talk is assertoric or factual (Hartry Field is a prominent example). The same goes for certain ways of dismissing the reality of moral facts. Indeed, the project of fictionalism is founded on the idea of discourses that are assertoric and worth retaining, but useful rather than true.[5] To find room for such forms of metaphysical anti-realism we need to look to Fine's second conception of what is real.

This second metaphysical conception of the real—the real as fundamental—is, in Fine's view, even more central to metaphysics. It is not, he thinks, a relational notion, definable in terms of the notion of reduction, say. It is simply the conception of Reality as it is in itself. The example he gives is of the true proposition that two nations are at war, where "we may deny that this is how things really, or fundamentally, are because the entities in question, the nations, and the relationship between them, are no part of Reality as it is in itself" (QR, 25). More generally:

> One might think of the world and of the propositions by which the world is described as each having its own intrinsic structure; and a proposition will then describe how things are in themselves when its structure corresponds to the structure of the world. (QR, 25)

Armed with this notion of the fundamentally real as a primitive, Fine thinks that we can define the notion of reduction, using the notion of ground. First, propositions Q, R, . . . are said to *ground* proposition P just if its being the case that P consists in nothing more than its being the case that Q, R, ...[6] Second, with "real" understood as "fundamentally real," the true proposition P can then be said to *reduce* to the propositions Q, R, . . . iff (i) P is not real, and (ii) P is grounded in Q, R, . . . , where each of the latter is either real or grounded in what is real (QR, 26).

But which propositions are real in this sense? For a start, any true basic (i.e., ungrounded) *factual* proposition will be real, since "any true factual proposition is real or grounded in what is real" (QR, 26) (indeed, Fine takes being real or grounded in what is real to be both necessary and sufficient for being factual).[7] Fine also thinks that there is a presumption that any given basic proposition is real, and any given non-basic proposition unreal. But, importantly, he admits exceptions to the second presumption. Thus he mentions the case of water, under the assumption that Aristotle is right about the nature of water: any body of water is both indefinitely divisible and water through-and-through. In that case, it is best to see propositions about the location of a body of water as being real, even if they are grounded in other (real) propositions about the location of water (e.g., that the left half of the body of

[5] Of course, non-factualists are rarely non-factualist about every domain of discourse. Domains where they tend to be factualist include ordinary discourse about both observable objects and the non-observable objects of science. A contrasting kind of pervasive non-factualism is defended by Huw Price (see, for example, Price 1988, 2004).

[6] Fine argues in QR that the notion of ground can also be used to settle whether to be a factualist about a discourse. In the end, he says, "the question of whether or not to be a factualist is . . . the question of whether or not to adopt a representational account of what grounds our practice" of dealing with the "facts" in a certain area (QR, 23). For recent work on the notion of ground and its logic, see Fine (2012b) and Clark and Liggins (2012).

[7] The reason: "if a proposition is factual, then it must be rendered true by the real world, and [so] if it is not itself real it must be grounded in the real" (QR, 28).

water in front of me is here, on the left, and the right half there, on the right). Such propositions will count as both irreducible and grounded (ad infinitum, as it were).

One significant consequence of Fine's remarks about this kind of exception is that it highlights the fact that the fundamentally real, as that notion is used in QR, is a primitive notion. In particular, it is *not* the notion of what Fine elsewhere calls reality at its "most fundamental," with the relational notion of *more fundamental than* understood in terms of the relation of grounding. Recall Fine's reference in "What is Metaphysics?" to a conception of metaphysics that seeks to determine "the most fundamental facts which are the 'ground' for the other facts or from which they somehow derive" (10). The notion of the real as comprising "the most fundamental facts" is not Fine's conception of the real in QR, although he certainly acknowledges connections between the two notions. Instead, the use of the qualifier "fundamental" in QR's phrase "reality as fundamental" is perhaps best seen as reminding us that this notion of reality is the fundamental one for Fine, that "our interest in other categories of reality [like the factual] derives from their connection with this more fundamental category" (QR, 28).[8]

The overall picture we get, then, is one of a unified realist metaphysics that provides a structural overlay to what Fine has to say about reality in works like "What is Metaphysics?" Reality in that work appears to involve whatever there is, with whatever properties it has and whatever relationships it stands in to whatever (else) there is. If we take "true" to mark out correspondence to the facts in this reality, then the true propositions are the (true) factual propositions. But not all factual propositions about reality in this sense are descriptive of reality in a more metaphysically fundamental sense—Reality as it is in itself. To enquire into what is metaphysically real in this sense is to be embarked on a metaphysical task, not a task open to standard techniques of investigation such as those offered by science, say. It requires us to

> look to the propositions of the given domain, assuming them to be factual, and attempt to ascertain from the overall structure of their grounds how the division into what is and is not real is best effected. (QR, 28)

3 The Question of Ontology

More surprises are in store when we turn from "The Question of Realism" to "The Question of Ontology" (Fine 2009; QO for short). We might have expected that Fine's metaphysical conceptions of reality, as the factual and the fundamental, would directly inform his conception of ontology. Not so—and, on closer inspection, it becomes difficult to see how such a project could work. We can construe *Real*, as it is deployed in QR, as either a property of propositions or an operator on propositions. Assuming Fine's second account of the metaphysically real, "p is real" then either means something like "p describes fundamental reality" or "it is descriptive of fundamental reality that p." But in asking ontological questions we are surely not

[8] This is how we think Fine *should* be understood, although his divergent uses of "fundamental" and his various uses of "real" mean that piecing together the whole picture is not always an easy task.

asking questions about the status of *propositions*. We are asking questions about what there is in fundamental reality (whether it contains numbers, for example). And far from this being at bottom a debate about the status of certain propositions, modern ontology as initiated by Quine began with an attack on the thought that propositions formed *any* part of reality (Quine 1948). Hence, a theory of the nature of ontology that requires there to be propositions seems unattractively biased from the outset.

Like most contemporary philosophers, Fine is impatient with Quine's doubts about propositions. But his impatience with Quine on the matter of ontology runs much deeper. He thinks Quine misconstrued the whole enterprise of ontology, a mistake that has virtually become orthodoxy. On the Quinean construal, when we ask whether numbers exist we are asking whether *there are* numbers, and this latter question is in turn regimented into a question involving quantifiers. Let "$\exists$" be the existential quantifier, taken as (relatively) unrestricted. The question whether numbers exist then becomes the question whether $\exists$x(x is a number). The commonly accepted view, inherited from Quine, is that ontological questions are thus quantificational questions.[9]

But the philosophical question of ontology, Fine insists, is not the question of what there is. The question of what there is is the question that the skeptical anti-realists, discussed in QR, foolishly address. Recall Fine's insistence that we all agree that there are chairs and numbers. The existence question is different. He identifies a number of arguments for this conclusion: what we might call the *cognitive* argument, the *disciplinary* argument, and the argument from *autonomy*. The cognitive argument claims that it is an obvious truth that $\exists$x(x is a number) (for it is obvious that $\exists$x(x is a prime number greater than 2); and this latter claim immediately implies that $\exists$x(x is a number)). Despite this, we can still sensibly ask, Do numbers exist? So the ontological question—a non-trivial question—cannot be the quantificational question—a trivial question. The disciplinary argument, by contrast, claims that ontological questions are *philosophical* questions, arising from within philosophy and to be answered on the basis of philosophical enquiry, while the (strictly quantificational) question of whether there are prime numbers, for example, and hence numbers, is a mathematical question, to be answered on the basis of mathematical, not philosophical, considerations. So the ontological question—a philosophical question—cannot be the quantificational question—a question open to modes of investigation from other disciplines. Finally, the argument from autonomy holds that ontology is appropriately autonomous. We may agree with the mathematician that there are prime numbers between 7 and 17, say, and hence that there are numbers, but as ontologically minded philosophers we should still be able to raise the question whether there really are numbers. So the ontological question—a question that philosophers can legitimately raise—cannot be the quantificational question—a question that should often be regarded as closed.

But what, then, distinguishes genuine ontological existence claims from quantificational claims—how, in Fine's words, might we create a distance between these

[9] Quine famously thinks they are first-order quantificational questions, rejecting second-order versions. We think second-order versions and versions admitting plural quantifiers (§5) have certain advantages.

two forms of commitment? Not, Fine thinks, by following Quine and counseling ontological commitment to posits that are indispensable to our best overall scientific theory of the world. Fine thinks that indispensability of this kind is neither necessary nor sufficient for an ontological construal of our commitments.[10] Nor can we create distance by downplaying the *significance* of ordinary commitments—suggesting, for example, that they are in some way figurative or to be taken in a make-believe spirit. As Fine complains,

> in claiming that there is a prime number between 8 and 12 or that there is a chair over there, I would appear to have as good a case of a strict and literal truth as one could hope to have. If these are not strict and literal truths, then one is left with no idea either of what a strict and literal truth is or of what the strict and literal content of these claims might be. (QO, 162)[11]

Nor, finally, can we create a distance between the two forms of commitment in terms of the strength of their contents, with the help of a distinction between a thin (light-weight, non-ontological) and a thick (heavy-weight, ontological) sense of the existential quantifier.[12] For how is such a distinction to be drawn? Presumably a quantifier in the thick sense is just a restriction of the quantifier in the thin sense, but that seems to change the focus of ontological claims, so that they concern, not the kind of *ontological status* things possess, but the kind of *thing* they are.

In Fine's view, the best way of drawing the distinction falls out of a certain natural feature of existence statements. Fine asks us to consider the difference between the claims "Integers exist" and "Natural numbers exist," noting that the first seems stronger than the second, even though construing them in the standard manner as existentially quantified claims is to take the first as weaker than the second. But if the usual quantifiers don't help us, how then does "Integers exist" succeed in expressing the right kind of ontological commitment to integers? (Call this *Fine's quandary*.) Fine's response:

> The commitment to integers is not an existential but a universal commitment: it is a commitment to each of the integers, not to some integer or other. And in expressing this commitment in the words "Integers exist," we are not thereby claiming that there is an integer but that every integer exists. (QO, 167)

But of course for that to be our claim "x exists" can't just mean "$\exists y(x = y)$," for this would turn "every integer exists" into the logically trivial "$\forall x(x \text{ is an integer} \supset \exists y(x = y))$." What it seems is needed to express genuine ontological commitment is a special ontologically committing predicate of existence, for which Fine prefers the term "real." "Real" designates a property of objects and should not, therefore, be confused with Fine's use of the same word in QR, where it is associated with propositions. Armed with this predicate, we can say that realism about integers

[10] Indeed, Fine thinks that "Quine's approach to ontology appears to be based on a double error. He asks the wrong question, by asking a scientific rather than a philosophical question, and he answers the question he asks in the wrong way, by appealing to philosophical considerations in addition to ordinary scientific considerations" (QO, 161).

[11] A similar point is made by Schaffer (2009, 357) in the context of his general argument for permissivism about existence.

[12] For discussion of such quantifiers, see Chalmers (2009).

proclaims that, for each integer x, x is real, while realism about natural numbers proclaims that, for each natural number x, x is real. So long as all the various objects are there in at least the quantificational sense—are there to be quantified over—it will follow that the first claim is indeed stronger than the second, since the natural numbers are properly included in the integers. And we already know from Fine's anti-skeptical attitude towards our ordinary commitments that he thinks such objects are indeed there to be quantified over. (In general, Fine thinks that the intended import of the various *ontological* realist/anti-realist positions about numbers, integers, physical objects, and so on, rests upon adopting a realist position in the usual *non-ontological*, quantificational, sense.)

But what is it to be real, in this special ontological sense? Is it yet another primitive notion? No; at this point Fine relates the predicate "real," which applies to objects, to a cognate operator "Real" on sentences, where "Real(...)" ("*R*(...)," for short) means something like "It is constitutive of reality that...." Given this operator, we can say what it is for an object to be real in the QO sense. An object x is real if, for some way the object might be, it is constitutive of reality that it is that way. (That is, x is real $=_{df} \exists\phi\, R[\phi x]$.[13])

Fine obviously thinks that the debate between realists and anti-realists should *include* a debate about ontology. So we might have expected that the deployment of "real" discussed in QR would comport with its ontological counterpart discussed in QO. In particular, we might have expected Fine to contend that an object x is real if, for some way the object might be, it is constitutive of reality *in itself* that it is that way, where the latter notion is as understood in QR. We think that this is indeed the way Fine should be understood, although there is some unclarity in the way Fine articulates his position. Fine has this to say:

> There have been a number of attempts to clarify the idea of realism in the recent literature; and a critical examination of some of them is to be found in my paper "The Question of Realism"... One that has recently found some favor in connection with ontology is to identify what is real with what is fundamental; and one might likewise identify what is in reality the case with what is fundamentally the case. (QO, 174)

But Fine dissociates himself in QO from this attempted clarification:

> I myself do not see any way to define the concept of reality in essentially different terms; the metaphysical circle of ideas to which it belongs is one from which there appears to be no escape. (QO, 175)

Although it looks as if Fine is here explicitly rejecting his earlier account of reality as fundamental, we doubt that this is the case. "Fundamental" in these passages means "not grounded in anything else," and we have suggested that this is not its meaning when Fine talks of "reality as fundamental" in QR. Recall that in QR Fine sees a strong connection, *not* an identity, between the real in itself and the real as

[13] Note that the combination of a special predicate with the usual quantifiers allows us to recapture the contrast between thin (light-weight) and thick (heavy-weight) quantifiers: the heavy-weight ontological quantifiers are just the light-weight quantifiers restricted to things that are real.

ungrounded. QR simply supplies more grist for that mill. In QO, as in QR, Fine takes the notion of the real as it applies to propositions to be primitive.[14]

For want of a better term, we will call QO's account of what distinguishes the subject-matter of ontology *partitive*—it holds out the prospect that what there is in reality is only *part* of what there is (in the colloquial, non-mereological sense of the word), and takes this division to be the concern of ontology. In the remainder of this chapter, we argue against such a partitive account. We think that Fine has not adequately motivated this bifurcation, and fails to show that ontological import cannot be expressed with standard quantifiers. We begin (in the next section) by taking issue with his view that ontologizing is distinct from the enterprise that people are ordinarily engaged in when they say that there are chairs and the one that mathematicians are engaged in when they say that there is a prime greater than 2. Section 5 continues this critique by suggesting that when Fine casts doubt on the translatability of ontological claims into a quantificational idiom, he not only appeals to an impoverished corpus of examples but also fails to confront what initially looks to be a compelling alternative strategy for salvaging a quantificational construal of ontologizing, one that invokes plural quantifiers. Section 6 suggests that this alternative strategy nonetheless fails as it stands, and that its failure highlights an important respect in which we think Fine is right concerning the implications for ontology of the examples he considers. With that in mind, we propose an alternative to Fine's account of these examples, one that combines quantification with a weak notion of pretense in what we call an *as-if*-ist account. In §7, we return to Fine's account, and argue that it is far from clear how Fine's deployment in QO of the predicate "- is real," and the operator "It is constitutive of reality that . . . " and their cognates is supposed to elucidate the business of ontology, and far from clear, therefore, how Fine's approach to the question of ontology can do better than the kind of broadly Quinean approach we have defended.

4 The Ontological versus the Rest: Ontology for All!

We have seen that part of Fine's case for denying that philosophers' ontological concerns can be formulated quantificationally arises out of his conviction that there is a distinction between ontological "existence" claims and quantificational "there is" claims. He seems to trace this distinction in turn to one between pure inquiry about ontology, on the one hand, and less lofty talk and thought about what there is, on the other: when people not engaging in professional ontologizing talk about whether there are chairs, numbers, or prime numbers, they have a different, perhaps more "ordinary," quarry. This distinction is clearly at work when he rules, in QR, that skeptical anti-realists who deny fairly ordinary claims about chairs, or mere mathematical claims about numbers, are on shaky ground. Surely I am just right, he thinks, when I say that there is a chair beneath me, or that there is a prime number greater than 2; but of course I am not concerned with ontology when I say this. As he

[14] Part of the problem in interpreting Fine's views is that these various papers, QR, QO, and WM, may not have been written in the order in which they were published (WM, for example, dates back to the early 2000s, according to Fine).

comments in QO, "We talk that way—indeed, correctly talk that way—but [an enlightened anti-realist can still assert that] there is no realm of numbers out there to which our talk corresponds" (QO, 159). The distinction also surfaces elsewhere in QO: Fine supposes that fairly ordinary claims about chairs and primes can be regimented quantificationally, but he holds that ontological claims cannot.

We are suspicious of this distinction between the ontological and the more mundane. As we saw in §3, Fine presents three arguments for denying that quantification tracks ontological commitment and these rely on this distinction between the ontological and the more mundane. Take the cognitive argument first. Fine points out that the answers to ontological questions should not be trivial, but says that

> given the evident fact that there is a prime number greater than 2, it trivially follows that there is a number (an x such that x is a number); and, similarly, given the evident fact that I am sitting on a chair, it trivially follows that there is a chair (an x such that x is a chair). (QO, 158)

True, if I am, as a matter of fact, sitting on a chair, then it follows trivially *from that fact* that there are chairs. An ontologist, however, should be concerned with the question whether I am indeed sitting on a chair. How, in a context where the reality of chairs is a live issue, can Fine declare this to be evident? He may be right to say that the question of whether there are chairs or tables is "an everyday matter that is to be settled on the basis of common observation" (QO, 158), but it is surely not to be settled *for good* on that basis, any more than questions about ghosts or yeti are.

The contrast Fine has in mind appears in his disciplinary argument: "ontological questions are philosophical—they arise from within philosophy, rather than from within science or everyday life, and they are to be answered on the basis of philosophical enquiry" (QO, 159). But why think this? Philosophers might be more interested than scientists are in whether properties exist, whereas scientists might be more interested than philosophers are in whether the Higgs Boson exists, and crypto-zoologists might be more interested than almost everybody else is in whether yeti exist; but it is not at all obvious that these are different sorts of question, so that the former is somehow more ontological. Both philosophers and theoretical physicists might take just the same kind of interest in whether space exists, even if their methodological preferences for how to investigate that question diverge. One can also imagine any of the above questions surfacing in lay discussions. Maybe these various questions should be approached via different investigative procedures, some more empirical than others. Maybe some ontological questions require philosophical scrutiny, while others do not, but (so far, at least) this seems to be the most that Fine can claim.[15]

With his argument from autonomy, Fine explicitly seeks to distinguish ontologizing from various things that mathematicians, scientists, or regular folk do when they

[15] Interestingly, our conclusion problematizes the relationship that Fine presumably seeks between metaphysics and ontology. In "What is Metaphysics?," he wants (quite reasonably) to carve out a niche for metaphysics that is distinct from that of, say, physics, and that is distinctively philosophical. This is, at least partially, a matter of working out what sensible projects are being served by what passes for metaphysics. We have just argued that, in QO, he fails to show that ontology is distinctively philosophical. A fortiori, he fails to show that it is fully contained within metaphysics.

say that there are prime numbers, chairs made from electrons, or just chairs. However, it is not clear that there are any claims about what there is that are merely mathematical, merely scientific, or merely ordinary, and that cannot be challenged through the reflections of ontologists. True, it may be entirely reasonable for me to say "there are chairs in the spare room," or to hold a belief that I would express with that sentence, while simultaneously doubting that there are any chairs. (I might, for instance, be attracted to phenomenalism and take it to be analytic that chairs are physical.) It may be equally reasonable for me to tell the class that there is a prime number between 8 and 12, while doubting that there are numbers. But none of this requires that there be some ordinary sense of this talk that is importantly different from professional ontology. It may merely reflect variations in standards of communicative precision and other pragmatic niceties.[16] After all, my companion might respond, "*You* don't really believe that there are chairs in the spare room, do you?," to which I might respond that I am indeed unsure about this, but that drawing attention to my ontological scruples would be conversationally wrong in this context. Meanwhile, my student with nominalist sympathies might complain that although he gets my drift when I talk of a prime number between 8 and 12, I should phrase matters more carefully; if there are no numbers at all, my claim is false.

In short, I might carelessly or disingenuously report that there are chairs in the spare room or that there is a prime between 8 and 12, believing that my doubts or pet theories are irrelevant, obfuscatory, pedantic, or embarrassing. After all, most people *do* believe that there are chairs and prime numbers. Minority views, such as the old-fashioned, pre-Moorean, skeptical anti-realism that Fine dismisses are sometimes casualties of acceptable imprecision. Such loose talk is ubiquitous and doesn't always sink ships. The candidate asserts that nobody here is denying the importance of stable government, conveniently ignoring the possibility that somebody is. The genial host tells the men that all of their wives are welcome, implicitly assuming that any unmarried men with female partners will take them to be included. Any researcher hoping to pinpoint a speaker's ontological commitments must search beyond the words uttered to other contextual factors, but the commitments that emerge will be as ordinary as they are ontological.

In this connection, it is worth noting that there seems to be nothing special about the words "exist" or "real" that would link them with serious ontology, or about the phrase "there are" that would render it more homely. I might say "there are no unicorns," "unicorns are not real," or "unicorns don't exist" and mean precisely the same thing whichever I say. It may well be possible to understand a metaphysically exercised mathematician when she says that, although there is a number less than every prime, numbers do not exist. Nevertheless, we could understand her to be making the same claim if she said that although a number less than every prime exists, there are in fact no numbers, or that although there is a number less than every prime, numbers have no being and are not really there to be quantified over. Similarly, you may understand me when I say that although Hermione is not real,

[16] Or it may reflect engagement in make-believe or "as if" talk. It will emerge in §7 that we are more sympathetic to this possibility than Fine is, but our arguments against estranging the ordinary from the ontological do not require this commitment from us.

she nonetheless *exists*, since a complete account of the world in all its richness includes her. Allowing for the unusualness of the subject-matter, however, you might understand me just as well if I made the same point by saying that although Hermione does not exist, she is nonetheless real. To be sure, it is likely that the following constructions are pragmatically out-of-bounds: "There's a number smaller than every prime, although there are no numbers" and "A number smaller than every prime exists, but numbers don't exist." But that can be explained: if, as seems very likely, more than one sort of attribution is in play in each of these sentences, it would be sensible to distinguish them by using different locutions; but this does not require that the same locution is always matched up, as a matter of usage, with the same sort of attribution.

To summarize: Despite Fine's arguments in QO, we so far see no distinction between ontology and ordinary talk and thought about what there is, and hence no special relationship between quantification and one or the other of these. Instead, we have noted that people often speak (and perhaps think) loosely and also that expressions like "there is," "there exist," and "is real" are routinely used for a variety of purposes.

5 Gods, Integers, and Plural Quantifiers

As we saw in §3, Fine has another objection to the quantificational formulation—one that does not turn on distinctions among usages or between more or less ontological projects. What we termed *Fine's quandary* suggests the quantificational formulation cannot capture the obvious difference in strength between "Integers exist" and "Natural numbers exist." His solution is to interpret these as universally quantified claims that use a special predicate of existence or reality. But in our view, Fine overstates his case. One way in which we think he does so will be clear from the previous section. It is not clear to us that existential and quantificational locutions differ in the way Fine says they do. If a professor announces a series of lectures that will prove, in the first week, that there are natural numbers, and in the second week that there are integers, her students are not likely to think that it is a repeat lecture, even though on a standard quantificational reading the first claim entails the second. Fine may, of course, argue that this is because of pragmatic rather than logical considerations, but note that the same point applies to existential locutions. Suppose, for example, that I say that gods exist. In that case I am certainly not committing myself to the existence of, or to the reasonableness of talk about, all the gods that have been posited, or of any particular pantheon, or of any particular god. I think I can express much the same sentiment by saying instead that there is a god, or that there are (some) gods or that there is at least one god or that gods are real. All of these formulations seem to be ways of making the same claim in ordinary language.

Now replace gods with integers. If I say that integers exist or that there are integers, I need not be committing myself to all the integers that have ever been posited, or to all of the standard integers. After all, I might also think that there are only finitely many numbers, and so I might simply be saying, using existential quantification, that there's an integer, or that there are some integers. Of course, this is not very likely. An

explicit commitment to the existence of one or more integers, unlike a commitment to the existence of one or more gods, is a difficult commitment to motivate. So Fine is probably right to deny that ontological claims about integers are, in practice, existential quantifications over integers. But we should think more about what, in practice, somebody who said "Integers exist," or "there are integers," would thereby be committed to. Sometimes, that utterance would only commit the speaker to the existence of negative numbers. After all, a speaker who already knew that there were (at least some) natural numbers would arguably not be saying anything about those when asserting, "There are integers! I learned that last week." What is meant here, as a matter of pragmatics, can be expressed by existential quantification: "$\exists$x(x is an integer)" is here to be interpreted as a claim about negative, rather than all, integers. Of course, if I was rightly interpreted as being committed to the existence of negative numbers, I might well be prepared to acknowledge the existence of all the negative numbers. Even so, it is unlikely that I can be saddled with this view, simply because I use the words "integers exist." If I am indeed committed to the existence of all the negative integers, this is at least partly because of facts about the context in which I uttered those words. (To see this even more starkly, note that a student of higher mathematics might, in a different context, say, "integers exist" in order to make a different claim. Such a student might be impressed with the way that you can take the set of natural numbers and build the set of integers out of it using an equivalence relation. When this person says "integers exist," she is opposing, among others, those who believe in natural numbers without believing in the constructs—the equivalence classes—that, on some set-theoretic accounts, are the members of the set of integers, negative and nonnegative. Again, context will be needed to tell us that this is what's being claimed.)

In short, we worry that Fine has made unwarranted assumptions about what people are committed to when they use particular locutions. Still, we can imagine Fine saying that in some contexts it is clear that no quantificational formulation suffices to express what we mean, and that while pragmatic considerations might be needed to show us which these are, that does not mean the claims aren't ontologically distinguished in the way he thinks they are. We disagree, but do think that in many cases, arguably including those that interest Fine, quantificational formulations *on their own* don't suffice to express what speakers mean. Before we say why, and what lessons to draw from this, we should mention one other way in which Fine appears to overstate his case: he neglects to consider a familiar alternative to the classical first-order way of formalizing claims of existence.

Why shouldn't we use *plural* quantifiers to formalize statements like "Integers exist" and "Natural numbers exist" in cases where our interest is in *all* integers and *all* natural numbers? Once plural quantifiers are made available, we could say,

(E_{PQ}) Ys exist = There are one or more xs such that everything that is one of the xs is a Y, and everything that is a Y is one of the xs. (Formally, $\exists$xx $\forall$z(z$\prec$xx $\leftrightarrow$ Yz), where "-$\prec$…" symbolizes "- is one of the….")[17]

[17] Here we use the symbolism for plural quantifiers used in Linnebo's *PFO* (Linnebo 2003, 2017).

Satisfyingly, this ensures that the claim "Integers exist" amounts to the claim that *all* integers exist, while "Natural numbers exist" amounts to the claim that *all* natural numbers exist. (It is easy to capture the difference between "Integers exist" and our earlier "Gods exist": simply omit the second conjunct in the corresponding formulation, so that "Gods exist" = "There are one or more xs such that everything that is one of the xs is a god.") Plural quantifiers are arguably what we need to formalize the role of plural definite descriptions in claims such as "The people in Auckland like the outdoors" (Brogaard 2007). The above formulations simply extend such a theory to the case of plural existence claims, on the model of Russell's account of existential statements involving ordinary definite descriptions. (There is some independent motivation for this, since "*The* integers exist" sounds rather more precise than "Integers exist," which, as we argued above, stands in need of contextual disambiguation.)

Now consider "[The] integers *don't* exist." Given plural quantifiers, the most obvious reading of this statement is as the straight negation ($\neg E_{PQ}$) of (E_{PQ}), that is, "It is *not* the case that there are one or more xs such that everything that is one of these xs is an integer and everything that is an integer is one of these." Again, this is a satisfying result. Of course, the statement is true even if there are some integers but none less than -1, say, but context will make it clear that this is unlikely to be an option for the speaker; in any case, she could always clarify her statement to show that she means *all* integers by adding "In fact, *no* integers exist." (Note that the same demand to clarify whether we mean *all* or *some* will arise on Fine's formulation of "Integers don't exist," i.e., "$\neg\forall$x(x is an integer $\supset$ Real(x))".)

So on the face of it the case for a quantificational reading of "Integers [don't] exist" looks far from hopeless, assuming we are permitted to use plural quantifiers to regiment such locutions. In the end, however, we think that matters are rather more complicated than this. To see why, we now turn to another class of statements. These show both why we think Fine may well be right about his preferred logical form for statements like "Integers [don't] exist" (despite the apparent attractions of an account like (E_{PQ})) but also why the sense in which he is right may have little bearing on the more important issue of whether quantifiers (whether first-order, higher order, or plural) suffice for expressing ontological commitment.

6 Quantification, Pretense, and *as-if*-ism: An Alternative to the Partitive Account

Consider a very different kind of case. Suppose you ask someone whether "those people exist / are real" (looking at a painting featuring a group of people in front of a building). And suppose she answers:

(1) Those people do indeed exist
    or, as the case may be,
(2) Those people do *not* exist

Notice the use of the demonstrative, "those." The speaker might use language that is even more overtly perceptual to answer the question. She might say: "If you look

carefully, you can see that the one on the left looks quite inebriated. That's not artistic license. He really was like that."

Whatever we think of the case of *integers*, this case cannot be handled in terms of plural quantifiers alone. The reason is implicit in the use of the demonstrative. There is a clear sense in which the speaker is assuming that there are people able to be designated with a plural perceptual demonstrative ("those people") in order to affirm that "they" exist or to deny that "they" exist. This sense can be brought to the fore with the use of certain coordinate clauses. Thus consider the statement: "Those people—the ones depicted as standing in front of the building—do not exist" where the non-restrictive clarificatory clause yields an affirmative statement identifying "those people." If we use plural quantifiers alone to analyze this statement, the statement turns into an explicit combination of an affirmative quantificational statement (formalizing "The people being demonstrated are the people depicted in the picture as standing in front of the building") with a negative quantificational statement inconsistent with it (formalizing "Those people don't exist").

Note that we avoid inconsistency by adapting instead Fine's solution to his quantificational quandary. Fine's partitive strategy yields something like:

(2a) $\forall x(x \prec \text{those people} \supset \neg \text{Real}(x))$

(uttered at a context where there is an attempt to demonstrate certain people by way of their being depicted as standing in front of the building) as the appropriate way of understanding the statement "Those people do not exist." It should be clear, however, that such an account is no more satisfactory in the present case than an account that simply invokes plural quantifiers. There surely is little temptation in this kind of case to think that the painting *literally* depicts a number of people, with the only question being whether these people are real.

Nonetheless, we think that something like this is indeed the correct logical form of the statement. In our view, the speaker's sentence should be taken at face value as having the logical form

(2b) $\forall x(x \prec \text{those people} \supset \neg \text{Exist}(x))$,

where "those people" is a complex plural demonstrative and "Exist(. . .)" is a trivial predicate of existence that matches the existential quantifier (that is, Necessarily, Exists(x) iff $\exists y(x=y)$). We avoid the problems facing a literalist understanding of what is *asserted* with such a statement by invoking the idea of pretense or make-believe. The speaker pretends that she is able to single out certain demonstratively salient people, ones that therefore *exist* (from the point of view of the pretense), continuing this pretense when she clarifies whom she has in mind with the further clause "the ones depicted as standing in front of the building." She then declares (from inside the pretense) that these people do not exist, aiming thereby to say something about how things stand existentially *apart* from her pretense. (Such a reading is pragmatically justified by the observation that the speaker cannot be intending to ascribe nonexistence *from the point of view of the pretense*, since the entities quantified over do exist from the point of view of the pretense, and this renders salient the question of how things stand with the reference of the complex

demonstrative "those people" once we set aside the pretense.[18]) What she succeeds in asserting is at a first approximation something like:

> (P2) Outside of the pretense that there are people picked out by the plural demonstrative "those people," there do not exist people who are picked out by the plural demonstrative. (Or, more simply, ¬∃xx(xx are people demonstrated via being depicted in the painting).)[19]

This account of relevant claims of (non)existence is very different from Fine's partitive account. It holds that the question of reality concerns what is the case outside the operation of pretense or make-believe that the world is a certain way. There is no special apparatus here for signaling ontological import of the kind allegedly in play on a partitive account. Ordinary quantifiers (in this case, plural quantifiers) suffice.

Could a pretense account do equally well for all the cases that concern Fine? Consider again the anti-realist who wants to deny the reality of chairs or integers, but continues talking as if there are chairs and integers. Earlier we suggested that such an anti-realist could simply be talking loosely. She doesn't explicitly deny that there are chairs or integers, because it would be conversationally wrong to do so. But how then should we construe her attitude towards statements she sees it would be wrong to deny? Could this too be a case of pretense? (If so, anti-realist denials of existence could again be construed as affirming how things are apart from the pretense.)

Perhaps in some cases. (If Hartry Field tells us he merely make-believes that mathematics is true, who will be the first to tell him that he misconstrues his attitude of belief for make-belief?) But we are also sure that on the most familiar way of construing the notion of pretense it is at least contentious to say that philosophers inclined to anti-realism are merely *pretending* when they claim that there is a prime number between 8 and 12 or that there is a chair in the room. In particular, cases of this sort are not accompanied by the usual imaginative phenomenology attending pretense, and to that extent Fine surely has a point when he says that in such cases a speaker "would appear to have as good a case of a strict and literal truth as one could hope to have" (QO, 162).

Assuming, then, that pretense is accompanied by a distinctive introspectible phenomenology, it is doubtful that pretense offers a good general explanation of any failure of ontological import that might attach to these statements when proffered by anti-realists.[20] However, we should not overlook the apparent tension

[18] A question rendered even more salient if we take ourselves to be asking whether "those people" *really* exist, since this wording suggests that, while "those people" do of course exist at the relevant context of pretense, there is a question whether our words succeed in singling out any person when the context is real, not pretense.

[19] The question of how the speaker manages to assert something like this won't concern us here. For two rather different pretense accounts of such locutions, see Walton (1990) and Kroon (2004). These turn on different ways of understanding the meaning of "exists," both entirely consistent with a quantificational way of understanding what is asserted by means of statements of (non)existence.

[20] This condition on pretense may be too strong. What Walton calls prop-oriented make-believe, for example, is pretense that is oriented towards the external world, not focused on some fictional world, and it typically lacks the thick phenomenological features of *content*-oriented make-believe (Walton 1993). See

between saying, first, "There is a prime number between 8 and 12" (or even "There *definitely* is a prime number between 8 and 12"; anti-realists are allowed to be as dogmatic as anyone else) and, in the next breath, "But numbers don't exist." We noted in §4 that there are contexts in which such a sequence of utterances is intelligible, but there needs to be a story about what is being attributed by each utterance. Let's agree that pretense is unavailable here. Should we then accept Fine's partitive account as a likely explanation for the coupling of these claims?

No, for we think there are more promising alternatives. For a start, people sometimes claim that Xs do not exist, or are not real, because the debate about Xs occurs against a background that takes them to have a certain nature, or to have certain essential features. The background thesis might be that numbers are Platonistic entities, or that chairs and tables are substances in a radically mind-independent sense. In claiming that Xs do not exist a person may be claiming that nothing with the features assumed by the background exists, or is real. This is consistent with believing that there are Xs (or that Xs exist), since one might be happy to agree that thought and talk about Xs does latch on to items that exist, though such items would lack the features assumed by the background. The assertion that numbers, chairs, and so on do not exist, where this is uttered on the background assumption that they have a certain nature, can even be converted into an equivalent absolute claim of nonexistence, one that explicitly states that the purported entities have the features mentioned in the background assumption. Thus one can say that numbers *construed as Platonistic entities* don't exist / are not real, or that chairs *construed as mind-independent substances* don't exist / are not real, and so on. Here the corresponding quantificational claims do not seem distinct from the claims of nonexistence: there simply are no numbers construed as Platonistic entities if numbers so construed do not exist.

This is anti-realism applied to someone *else's* conception of a certain kind of entity, and not the kind of anti-realism that Fine takes to be up for discussion. Suppose, then, that you yourself have come to believe that numbers, should there be any, are by their nature Platonistic entities, but that you also deny that there are any Platonistic entities, just as you deny that there are any yetis. Once you are aware of this, you surely cannot rationally assert or endorse the claim that "There (*definitely*) is a prime number between 8 and 12" if you take this to require genuine belief.[21] Yet, as Fine insists, it seems that you can assert or endorse the claim. You can think that (standard) mathematics is simply too good and important a theory to give up. How can this be? The possibility of conversations held in the context of background assumptions reminds us of options other than pretense. As noted in §4, we sometimes go with the flow—asserting claims that we do not strictly believe, especially if our disbelief is heterodox and our utterance allows us to express some proposition

also Brock (2013), which presents a general argument against the so-called "phenomenological objection" to pretense versions of fictionalism.

[21] You might at first have thought that there are no numbers construed as Platonistic entities, still believing that there are numbers but disbelieving the Platonistic nature of numbers. When you next recognize the Platonistic nature of numbers, it is surely natural to express your newly found belief as the belief that there are no numbers, not merely as the belief that numbers do not exist.

that we do believe, or some attitude that we have adopted. If this is what is going on here, there may be no general tactic for recovering the nearby proposition that is believed absolutely, or the attitude that is genuinely adopted. If an anti-realist says "There is a prime number between 8 and 12" in order to convey some information that she takes to be true, or to express an attitude that she takes to be apt, we may need to explore the details of her (nominalist, instrumentalist, expressivist, or other) view as well as the context of her utterance to learn what she thinks.

But how then should we describe her tolerant attitude to what she doesn't strictly believe in such cases? While there may be nothing going on that counts as pretense (assuming, as before, that pretense involves a phenomenologically thick imaginative stance), that doesn't mean that she takes the statements as an expression of the "strict and literal truth." Given her honest belief that there are no numbers or chairs, then, in continuing to engage in number- or chair-talk (whatever her purposes may be in doing so), she is not taking her statements to express the "strict and literal truth"—she is only doing *as if* they express the "strict and literal truth" for the purposes at hand. (If, on the other hand, she does believe that there are numbers or chairs, she not only does *as if* there are numbers or chairs—very easy, in this case—but her doing *as if* is backed by actual belief.) In short, it may be that we can do no better than say that these are cases in which the anti-realist *does as if* the statement is true and *does as if* she believes it, without really being committed to the truth of the statement.[22]

Now consider explicit claims denying or affirming existence. We think that there is much to be said for Fine's claim that such statements sometimes, or even typically, involve us in quantification over the entities whose existence we are affirming or denying. As before, there are locutions that make such a view look almost inescapable. Having announced that

(3) There are denumerably many integers < 1

I might make my philosophical scruples known by adding that

(4) None of those integers exists.

Here "None of the Xs" quantifies over Xs, but deliberately quantifying in this way is easy if it occurs from the perspective of the speaker's doing *as if* there are Xs to quantify over. As in the case of speakers' exploiting a pretense, such a claim can be profitably construed as an attempt to describe how things really are (setting aside the way they are represented to be in the speaker's doing *as if* the world is a certain way), using a simple predicate of existence to do so. (4) can be represented as

(4′) $\exists xx(\forall z(z \prec xx \leftrightarrow (\text{Integer}(z) \,\&\, z < 1)) \,\&\, \forall z(z \prec xx \supset \neg \text{Exist}(z)))$,

where (4′) is used to assert that

[22] See also Yablo's figuralist account of mathematical talk: the idea that mathematical language shares a lot with metaphor (e.g., Yablo 2001). This is a pretense account of sorts, although one that again de-emphasizes the phenomenological aspects of our standard notion of pretense. (In more recent work, Yablo puts a notion of presupposition in place of the role played by pretense; see, for example, Yablo 2010.) For doubts about the distinction between "doing as if" a claim is true and being genuinely committed to its truth, see Horwich (2004). For a response, see Daly (2008).

(A4) [Apart from my doing *as if* there exist all the integers < 1] it is not the case that there exist any of these integers. (That is, $\neg\exists xx(\forall z(z \prec xx \rightarrow (\text{Integer}(z) \,\&\, z < 1)))$.)

By contrast, saying that

(5) All of the integers < 1 exist

is to utter a sentence that can be represented as

(5′) $\exists xx(\forall z(z \prec xx \leftrightarrow (\text{Integer}(z) \,\&\, z < 1))) \,\&\, \forall z(z \prec xx \supset \text{Exist}(z)))$,

where this is used to assert that

(A5) [Apart from my doing *as if* there exist all the integers < 1] there exist all the integers < 1. (That is, $\exists xx(\forall z(z \prec xx \leftrightarrow (\text{Integer}(z) \,\&\, z < 1)))$.)

This mirrors the manner in which in our earlier case the speaker was able to describe how things really are with her statement that "Those people do (not) exist."

Here, then, we have a general alternative to the partitive account, what we might call an *as-if*-ist account of existence-affirming or -denying locutions according to which the primary work of identifying ontological commitment is assigned to quantifiers. (To the extent that it doesn't insist on any special phenomenology, we can take such an *as-if*-ist account to be more general than a pretense account, and hence to include such an account.)

7 Really?

We have defended an augmented quantificational thesis. What, then, of Fine's special predicate "real" and its associated operator *R*? Would it do equally well, or better, at signaling genuine ontological commitment? At the very least, we think this has not been shown. The problem is not that we have no grasp of a concept of the *real*, or of how things *really* stand. The problem, rather, is one of identifying and articulating the philosophically appropriate such concept. Some of the most familiar concepts of the real, it turns out, are bereft of the kind of ontological or metaphysical significance Fine is looking for, despite offering initial hope. Thus consider a typical statement of nonexistence that is formulated in terms of a "really" operator, and where at first glance the operator serves to accord the sentence ontological significance:

(6) Barchester Towers doesn't *really* exist / Barchester Towers isn't real.

But seeing such an ontological role for "really" or "real" in this kind of sentence is to misunderstand its function. For sentences of this type are naturally juxtaposed with sentences that declare what the entity *really* is like (in order to elucidate features that show why it doesn't really exist):

(7) Barchester Towers is really just a fictional place / In reality, Barchester Towers is just a fictional place

Similarly, we can say "Phlogiston doesn't really exist; it is really just a failed posit of eighteenth-century chemistry," "The little green man at the bottom of the garden

doesn't really exist; he is really just a figment of your imagination"; and so on. Only the most literally minded will think that "really" and "real" have any serious ontological or metaphysical role to play in such statements.

To understand Fine's project, then, we should move away from such commonplace occurrences of words like "real" and "really." We should instead consider Fine's story about the way that the concepts designated by these words in his *own* account function in our thought. It is significant, however, that in QO Fine offers no analysis of these concepts. As we saw earlier, he treats them as primitive:

> I myself do not see any way to define the concept of reality in essentially different terms; the metaphysical circle of ideas to which it belongs is one from which there appears to be no escape. (QO, 175)

Fine is unperturbed by the circle, declaring that we seem "to have a good *working* grasp of the notion [of reality]. We know in principle how to settle claims about the constitution of reality even if we have difficulties in settling them in practice" (ibid.)

We doubt this. True, one can apparently insist intelligibly that the objects we normally regard as physical, for example, are in fact nothing more than mental or phenomenal objects, or are complexes rather than simples, and to that extent are unreal. It also seems as though one knows what an argument that confirms or disconfirms this contention would look like, even if it is unclear whether such an argument could ever be available to us. Such an argument would almost certainly tell us something important about the way things are. We suspect, however, that once such arguments are in, and even supposing that they confirm some sort of idealism or phenomenalism, many folk and many philosophers will feel uncomfortable ruling on which of the following is the upshot:

(a) that there are physical objects, including chairs, but all the facts about them are grounded solely in facts about the mental or phenomenal;
(b) that there are no physical objects and hence no chairs (since any chair is physical), though mental or phenomenal facts make it seem to us that there are these objects;
or
(c) that there are no physical objects, but there are chairs—mental or phenomenal ones.

Maybe some of us have deeply engrained intuitions about which way to go, but some folk and some philosophers may suspect that the choice among these options is merely a matter of bookkeeping and that couching the original question in terms of what is real misleads us into assuming that something more significant is at stake. If this worry about the debate is legitimate, any working grasp of the notion of reality seems not to get us very far, in at least some central cases.

Fine's own illustration of our alleged intuitive grasp of the concept of reality raises even more problems than the one we have just outlined.

> Democritus thought that there was nothing more to the world than atoms in the void. I take this to be an intelligible position, whether correct or not. I also assume that his thinking that there is nothing more to the world than atoms in the void can be taken to be shorthand for

there being nothing more to the world than this atom having this trajectory, that atom having that trajectory, . . . or something of this sort. I assume further that this position is not incompatible with his believing in chairs and the like. To be sure, the existence of chairs creates a prima facie difficulty for the view but as long as the existence of chairs can be seen to consist in nothing more than atoms in the void, the difficulty will have been avoided. I assume finally that had he been prepared to admit that there was nothing more to the world than atoms and macroscopic objects, then he would not have been prepared to admit that there was nothing more to the world than atoms.

But someone who is willing to go along with me so far will thereby have endorsed a metaphysical conception of reality. (QO, 175)

We object, first, that people who understand what it means to claim that there is, in reality, nothing more than atoms in the void might nonetheless wonder whether anything ontological turns on the question of whether we want to include, as denizens of reality, some or all of the ordinary things that one seems to get when one sticks atoms together. That is, if I claim that chairs are real, because there are atoms arranged chairwise, and you claim that chairs are not real, because there are only atoms arranged chairwise, people might still be unclear whether there is any metaphysically revealing difference between our stories. Such puzzlement undermines the claim that we know what it takes for somebody to endorse a particular metaphysical conception of reality.[23]

We object, second, that some people will surely deny that the atomism of Democritus, as elaborated by Fine, "is not incompatible with his believing in chairs and the like." How, those people might ask, can somebody believe in things that one assumes are not real? Even if somebody can, many will find it counterintuitive. This too is a reason for doubting that the folk generally share Fine's sort of intuitive grasp of the concept of reality.

Even if most of us shared an intuitive grasp of the concept of reality, that grasp would probably not, contra Fine, suffice to inform philosophers' investigations of what counts as real in any significant way. Maybe the folk do regard it as obvious that certain things are real and maybe they have a systematic way of sorting the real from the unreal, but this does not stop philosophers from disagreeing with one another about what is real. The reality of chairs and other would-be composite physical entities is not taken for granted by all philosophers in our post-Democritian, mereologically savvy, intellectual environment. It is likewise not obvious that there are purported entities whose unreality is taken for granted by all philosophers. Perhaps the most promising candidates are the would-be referents of empty designators that occur in ephemeral discourses like the following:

GUILDENSTERN: We'd better not take the path through that thicket, or the Branagh of Hurk will leap out and ask us an empty question.

GLADYS: The What of What will do what?

GUILDENSTERN: Sorry. I was making stuff up. It looks dodgy in there, that's all.

[23] This kind of doubt lies behind the theory of quantifier variance that has been advanced by Eli Hirsch. See, for example, Hirsch (2005, 2009).

But some of those who affirm that Hermione and other mainstream entities of fiction are real might be driven by their ontological assumptions to countenance the Branagh of Hurk's reality too.[24]

It is far from clear what would settle, once and for all, the matter of which things exist and which things do not. Suppose we knew everything there is to know about the structure of the universe, the distribution of matter and energy throughout it, any spiritual, supernatural, or nonphysical, mental aspects of it and the roles they play, the relationship between normative, semantic, and natural facts and what is grounded in what. Suppose that we even knew all of this from every possible external and every possible imbedded perspective, so that the phenomenology of consciousness was no mystery. Still, without an analysis of reality, of a kind that currently eludes us, we could have disputes about what, in reality, is the case. We could disagree about whether numbers, propositions, and centers-of-gravity are mere instrumental conveniences and, if so, whether this disqualifies them. We could argue about the ontological credentials of fictional events, events generally, things that are mere parts or composites of other things, free will, properties, and possibilia. Even a complete description of the universe in a comprehensible first-order language would hardly shut us up, or down. No matter what was in its intended domain of quantification, we could speculate about whether there was a perfect translation into a first-order language with a different intended domain.

So there is good reason to doubt not only Fine's allegation of a robust intuition about what is at stake when we pose questions about what is real, but also the claim that there are any paradigms of realness or non-realness that might anchor or steer our ontological inquiry and from which lessons could be drawn for the debates that ontologists *really* engage in. Philosophers must try to demystify claims about what is real and there is too much mystery left if the concept of reality is taken to be primitive.

8 Conclusion

We have considered Fine's case for his partitive account, focusing on his reasons for rejecting quantification as the principal vehicle for encoding ontological commitment, and showing why, despite sharing some of his central concerns, we are not persuaded. The problems we have discussed would not matter if Fine's concerns were different from those of run-of-the-mill ontologists, but he is clear that they are not. Thus when criticizing Quine's approach to ontology, he remarks that even after it has been judged that numbers are indispensable for the purposes of science, "it will still be in order for the anti-realist to insist that numbers (and perhaps theoretical entities in general) do not really exist—that we talk that way, and even correctly talk that way, despite the fact that there is no realm of objects 'out there' to which our talk corresponds" (QO, 161). We find Fine's construal of such a claim counterintuitive.

[24] Especially because it would also have been natural for Guildenstern to say "The Branagh of Hurk doesn't exist," and one might be led by one's semantics of negative existentials to conclude that the Branagh of Hurk does after all exist (although not as a person).

Given that ordinary number talk assumes that numbers are mind-independent,[25] we think that if we talk correctly when we say that there are numbers it has to be true that there is a realm of objects "out there" to which our talk of numbers corresponds. Numbers in that case form part of reality, even if not part of fundamental reality, and that seems reality enough for most of us.

In short, we reject Fine's estrangement of ontology from ordinary talk and thought about what there is, and urge that the centrality of quantification should be maintained. But we have also agreed that a quantificational story cannot succeed on its own. We noted that, for various pragmatic reasons, people often speak loosely, rely on shared presuppositions, or, most interestingly, behave as if certain claims are true, all the while not believing them. These are facts that we need to appeal to in order to supplement a quantificational story. The result explains the data that impresses Fine, without, as it seems, the need for Fine's primitive notion of reality.[26]

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[25] Ordinary number talk allows, for example, that the number of species of mammal that existed before the evolution of humans is far greater than a thousand.

[26] Thanks to Glen Pettigrove and Justine Kingsbury for useful comments on an earlier draft.

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2

Beyond Reality?

Philip Percival

My focus is the divide between reality and that which is beyond reality. On what I call an "all-encompassing" view of reality, this is the divide between everything and nothing: reality encompasses everything, and beyond it there is nothing at all. Opposed to the all-encompassing view is what I call a "restriction" view of reality: reality is coincident with some kind of restriction on, or partition of, what there is; it is not the case that what resides beyond reality is nothing.

I have two main aims: to first classify restriction views of reality (§1), and then to assess a species of the restriction view that pertains to time and modality (§2).

1 A Classification of the Restriction View of Reality

There are different species of the restriction view of reality. I will structure them around what Kierland and Monton (2007: 487) call the "Reality Principle":

(RP) Reality consists, and only consists, in things and how things are.

Some might accept the Reality Principle but object that it is *misleading*: its talk of *both* things *and* how things are implies that there is significant contrast when in fact this is not so.

An extreme criticism along these lines would be to the effect that "how things are" is superfluous because, trivially, how things are is among the things: the phrase "how things are" is a nominal, and so is either empty (and therefore superfluous) or else non-empty on account of naming one of the things (and therefore superfluous).

In response, I agree that "how things are" may be read as a nominal. This fact, and the thrust of the objection, is captured in an utterance such as "There are two things that really annoy me: one is Gordon Brown, the other is how things are." I take it, however, that the intended reading of the Reality Principle invokes a different use of "how things are." On this alternative usage, "how things are" is more akin to propositional variable. This use is exemplified by the following exchange:

A: What do you mean by "how things are"?
B: I mean grass is green, and Gordon Brown is Prime Minister, and so on.

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Assuming this alternative reading to be intended, one acquainted with the writings of Arthur Prior and amused by his neologisms might be tempted to rewrite the Reality Principle as:

(RP*) Reality consists, and only consists, of things and thethers.

Nevertheless, it might still be objected that the Reality Principle remains misleading even when "how things are" is given some such non-nominal interpretation. This objection has two forms, depending on whether it is talk of "things," or talk of "how things are," that is taken to be superfluous.

To facilitate my discussion, I shall take the matter of "things" to be the concern of ontology, and the matter of how things are to be the concern of what I shall call "ideology." I shall use "how things are" non-nominally.

Incorporating ideology into ontology: truthmaker maximalism—It might be thought that from the viewpoint of truthmaker maximalism, the Reality Principle's talk of "how things are" is superfluous: according to truthmaker maximalism, ontology incorporates ideology because the things determine how things are: the things include e.g. *states of affairs*, things that *embody* how things are.

In my view truthmaker maximalism is more pain than gain. It does not eliminate the necessity of conceptualizing reality in terms of how things are. An ontology of states of affairs might seem like a reduction of ideology to ontology, but it is not: it is a reduction *within* the category of ideology. It is the reduction of how things are in general to how things are in particular vis-à-vis what exists. This fact is masked by those truthmaker maximalists who maintain that their theory invokes a primitive relation R such that both

(TM) Necessarily, if <p> is true then for some x, R(<p>, x).
(**) For all x: necessarily, if R(<p>, x), then <x exists> entails <p> is true.[1]

The primitive relation R is supposed to hold between true propositions and entities. Clearly, if (TM) is true then ideology is determined by ontology. The need for (**) is suspicious, however. We must ask, how come (**) is true? How does the actual obtaining of a relation between two entities guarantee that necessarily, one is true if the other exists? Surely, it cannot be the actual obtaining of this relation that guarantees this much; rather, it is *the entities themselves* that guarantee it. R is therefore entirely superfluous. We could have instead:

(P) Necessarily, if <p> is true then for some x, <x exists> entails <p> is true.

If (R) is now defined as holding between a true proposition and an entity iff the existence of the entity entails the truth of the proposition, given (P) we can recover both (TM) and (**). Of course, the objection is that the truthmaking relation cannot be defined in terms of entailment in this way. If this objection is conceded, however, the correct response is not to resort to a primitive (true) proposition–object

[1] Obviously (TM) and (**) are independent, although Rodriguez Perreira (2006) writes as if (TM) entails (**).

relation; rather, it is to replace "entails" by a primitive proposition–proposition relation R* to obtain:

(P*) Necessarily, if <p> is true then for some x, R*(<p>, <x exists>).

i.e. where, *ex hypothesi*, "R*(<p>, <x exists>)" entails "<x exists> entails <p> is true."

While the external reduction of ideology to ontology is an illusion, the internal reduction of propositions to propositions specifically about existence is no advance. For one thing, at least for some species of the doctrine the entities invoked are highly obscure: for example, states of affairs qua values of first-order variables are constructed by means of non-mereological composition. For another, *existence* of the kind Truthmaker Maximalists require—is at best obscure. (As Williamson (1999) has pointed out, to avoid the absurdity that every truth is necessary, the truthmakers of contingent propositions must be contingent existents. But it is not possible for a thing to fall outside the domain of unrestricted quantification![2])

Reality without things? Once it is recognized that the *how things are* component of the reality principle is non-nominal, and as such not superfluous, one might object that the reality principle is misleading from the other direction. For it can appear that nothing substantial would be omitted were the reality principle to have taken the form:

(RP*) Reality consists, and only consists, in *how things are*

It would seem that some thing might be omitted from *how things are* only if some thing makes no contribution whatsoever to how things are. That much seems impossible, however. No thing could be such that *how things are* is entirely insensitive to how *it* is. Accordingly, someone who advocates (RP*) might well think that (RP) is true but misleading.

Kierland and Monton's preference for (RP) above the simpler (RP*) is therefore puzzling. My suspicion is that they prefer (RP) because, somewhat paradoxically, they mean to exploit the fact that adding the further qualification "things" encourages a *narrower* interpretation of "how things are" than would otherwise be natural. The most natural interpretation of "how things are" (and therefore of (RP)) takes "how things are" to be captured by, or, even, to consist in, that which could be judged truly. The most natural interpretation of "how things are" in the context "things and how things are," however, takes "how things are" to be captured by, or, even, to consist in, that which could be judged truly *of some thing or things*. This latter interpretation, which I suspect Kierland and Monton intend, is narrower than the former to the extent that that which could be judged truly includes, but is not exhausted by, that which could be judged truly of some thing or things: not all judgement is *de re* judgement (singular or plural)! On this interpretation, then, (RP) amounts to the thesis:

(DR) Reality consists, and only consists, in things and *how the properties and relations of those things stand.*

[2] For an argument in addition to Williamson's: Every proposition that is singular with respect to x strictly implies its particular quantification with respect to x: for the latter *weakens* it (see Percival 2011).

Later, we will identify interpretations of the Reality Principle that are even narrower than (DR).

There are two ways reflection on the Reality Principle might lead one to the view that there are matters beyond reality.

First, one might accept that there is nothing beyond things and how things are, but reject the Reality Principle as embodying an inflated view of reality: reality is confined to some element of a partition of things and how things are. Second, one might accept the Reality Principle, but reject an all-encompassing view of things and how things are.

1.1 First route to a restricted view of reality: rejection of the Reality Principle

The first line of thought denies the Reality Principle on the grounds that:

(a) Reality does not encompass things and how things are in their entirety: things and how things may be partitioned into reality and that which is beyond reality.

The partitioning of things and how things are may be a partitioning of ontology (things) or ideology (how things are), or both.

1.1.1 PARTITIONING THE THINGS THERE ARE

At least with respect to ontology, there is a case for the view that rejection of the Reality Principle is common sense. Isn't it common sense to hold that the things include *the fictional* (fictional characters, and how these characters are), and that what is fictional is not part of reality? According to common sense, the fictional is contrasted with reality, not included within it! And of course there is an ontological tradition that follows suit.

The most prominent strand in this tradition is Meinongian. It divides the things in the domain of unrestricted first-order quantification into the existent and the nonexistent, and typically equates the existent–nonexistent distinction with the real–unreal distinction.[3] A less prominent strand in the tradition identifies nonexistence with exclusion from the domain of unrestricted first-order quantification. For example, Nathan Salmon (1987) holds that notwithstanding the fact that Socrates is an object of singular thought, Socrates escapes unrestricted quantification: *Socrates* is a thing such that *no* thing is identical to it.

In response, Nathan Salmon's viewpoint strikes me as absurd. *If* Socrates is an object of singular thought then Socrates *must* belong to the domain of unrestricted quantification. Every proposition <Socrates ()> that makes some claim regarding Socrates may be unrestrictedly quantified (particularly, and with respect to Socrates) so as to generate a proposition <something ()> that makes that very same claim not of Socrates, but of some object or other. The latter proposition is weaker because it involves removing some information—namely, the identity of the object quantification is effected with respect to. It is therefore entailed by the former: every proposition entails its weakenings. Accordingly, if *any* proposition <Socrates ()> is true, so

[3] Cf. Routley 1980; Parsons 1980; Fine 1982, 2009; Routley's position is subtle: in at least one publication it is *not* the view that there are nonexistent things, since the locution "there are" is viewed as restricted quantification, i.e. the restriction being to things that exist.

too is <something ()>. But of course, as Salmon is keen to point out, some proposition <Socrates ()> *is* true.

To my mind, Salmon's alternative is a desperate attempt to recover a presentist viewpoint in the face of Quinean scruples about existence and recognition of Kripke's observations about names and singular thoughts. Salmon learnt from Kripke's knee that we are able to have singular thoughts about Socrates and other past objects, and he learnt—or, as I would prefer, *takes* himself to have learnt—from Frege/Russell/Quine that existence is membership of the domain of unrestricted first-order quantification (better, that "exists" is a predicate such that any member of the domain of unrestricted quantification satisfies this predicate automatically). Having conceded this much, then, the only way of preserving the presentist credo that Socrates does not exist is to adopt the absurdity that Socrates enters singular thought but escapes membership of the domain of unrestricted quantification.

This reasoning shows that Salmon's strand of the doctrine of nonexistent/unreal things is untenable, and that any development of this doctrine should be Meinongian: no values of first-order variables fall outside the domain of unrestricted quantification, and the real–unreal (existent–nonexistent) distinction must be made *within* that domain, i.e. by means of a predicate "real" or "exists" that some but not all things are taken to satisfy.

Any partition of ontology by means of a predicate "real" or "exists" would surely lead to a partition of ideology: for if e.g. Socrates is unreal, how could reality extend to how Socrates is? Call this a *Meinongian* route to a restricted view of reality. Standard formulations of this route either take "real/exists" to be a primitive, or else define "real/exists" in such a way that it is trivial that the entities deemed to be unreal/nonexistent do not satisfy the predicate "real/exists."

I have no sympathy for van Inwagen's (2009) extreme anti-Meinongian line to the effect that there is no such sense of "exists." The term "exists" is sufficiently vague/unclear for *explication* of it (in Carnap's sense) to be legitimate, and a Meinongian definition may well be a permissible explication.[4] However, anti-Meinongian explications, i.e. such as the definition "x exists" = "x is identical to something," are equally legitimate. But I am skeptical of the alternative line that "exists" or "real" express clear *primitive* notions with respect to which inquiry into what is real/exists in this sense—or even an opinion as to the matter—is profitable.

This is not to say that I am paid-up member of the Quinean fan club, however. Like Frege, contemporary Quineans take it for granted that if "x exists" is defined, using unrestricted quantification, as "something is identical to x," then it is trivial that everything in the domain of unrestricted quantification satisfies this predicate. I do not take it for granted, since I think the question as to whether the domain of quantification is included within the domain of predication remains open. It is possible—epistemically, and for all any of us know metaphysically—that the domain of quantification is broader than the domain of predication.[5]

[4] Fine's (2009) neo-Meinongian analysis of "exists" presupposes a partitioning of how things are, and therefore cannot be employed to motivate a partioning of how things are (see below).

[5] See Percival 2011.