

Thoughts about the first short paper.

These are just lists of questions, sorted by topic, to remind you of issues that have been raised in class. I'm not suggesting that you should answer all the questions listed under any topic.

1. The 'paradoxes of material constitution', a.k.a. arguments for the possibility / ubiquitousness of coincidence. Assess the plausibility of one or more of the views that might be adopted by those who want to resist this conclusion. EG: things can be statues at one time and not at other times; lumps of clay cease to exist when "made into statues" (see Michael Burke, 'Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (1994), p. 591); arbitrary undetached parts, like "people minus legs" don't exist (Peter van Inwagen, 'The Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts' (*Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (1981), repr. in his *Ontology, Identity and Modality*); statues don't exist (van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, chapter 13; Trenton Merricks, *Objects and Persons*, chapter 2); etc.
2. What should we say about so-called "fission" and "fusion" cases? Extra reading you might want to look at: Derek Parfit, 'Personal Identity' (*Philosophical Review* 80 (1971) and widely anthologised); David Lewis, 'Survival and Identity' (in his *Philosophical Papers: vol. 1*)
3. Not something we discussed, but something you might nevertheless want to write about: to what extent are the "criteria of personal identity" physical or psychological? For example, could a person survive a brain transplant, a teletransportation, etc.? For the psychological view, see the Parfit and Lewis papers mentioned above. For the "physical" view, see Bernard Williams, 'The Self and the Future' (*Phil. Review* 79 (1970)), and Eric Olson, *The Human Animal*. For questions about the objectivity of the debate, see Ted Sider, 'Criteria of Personal Identity and the Limits of Conceptual Analysis' (*Phil. Perspectives* 15)
4. What should we say about the argument from 'gradual change' — the one I presented in the first week of class using an example of hammers undergoing successive replacements of parts — also briefly discussed by Sider? Is the conclusion that (e.g.) it often happens that several hammers are coincident acceptable? If we reject it, what should we say about the argument? If we accept it, what should we say about expressions like 'this hammer', 'the hammer I was using this morning', etc? [Feel free to choose your own example!]
5. To what extent can this or that argument from temporal considerations for the possibility of things that coincide *at a time* be mimicked by an argument from modal considerations for the possibility of things that coincide *permanently*? Are there interesting disanalogies between the temporal and modal arguments?
6. What about arguments for the coincidence of distinct entities that don't appeal to temporal or modal considerations, such as those Fine gives in 'The Non-Identity of a Material Thing and its Matter'?

7. Some rather difficult questions about identity raised in the Hawthorne article we read: What should we take Leibniz's Law to be? (Background reading: Richard Cartwright, 'Identity and Substitutivity', in his *Philosophical Essays*.) Is the concept of identity one we implicitly rely on in saying lots of things that don't explicitly seem to be about identity or counting, or is it relatively unimportant, as Lewis seems to suggest? What is the relation between identity and the Quinean indiscernability relations Hawthorne discusses—in particular, could there be two things that differ 'solo numero', in the sense that the only properties and relations that distinguish them are properties defined in terms of identity?
8. Temporary identity. How should a proponent of temporary identity deal with definite descriptions like 'the object in the middle of the square' [when the objects now in the middle of the square used to be many but now are one]; with names introduced using such descriptions; with pronouns anaphoric on such descriptions, etc? Is the thesis of temporary identity defensible? Extra reading you might want to look at, if you really want to know about the 'state of the art' in discussions of temporary identity: André Gallois, *Occasions of Identity* and the discussion of it in Sider. (Sider does a good job of summarising the Gallois.)
9. Relative identity. The same question about definite descriptions, etc., as in the case of temporary identity. How might the idea of relative identity help us resolve the paradoxes of material constitution? What are the arguments that we should reject the concept of absolute identity, and are those arguments any good? Is relative identity defensible? Extra reading in the Hawthorne and Deutsch bibliographies, but don't feel obliged to delve into the works of Geach or Quine before writing a paper about this.
10. Wiggins. What is a sortal? What does Wiggins mean by the claim (D) near the beginning of Chapter 2 of *Sameness and Substance*? Why does he believe this claim? What is the meaning of Wiggins's 'only *a* and *b* rule', and how plausible is it? How plausible is Wiggins's view about the identity of artifacts? Can there be two things [substances] of the same kind in the same place at the same time? Why / why not? If not, what should we say about Fine's case of the letters?
11. The doctrine of temporal parts. Does it make sense? How should it be stated? How does it bear on the 'paradoxes of material constitution'? What is "endurantism", a.k.a. "three-dimensionalism"?
12. Critically discuss any of the arguments for or against the doctrine of temporal parts that Sider considers.
13. Can we formulate a "doctrine of modal parts" that will stand to modality as the doctrine of temporal parts stands to time? Is such a doctrine plausible? Are there interesting parallels or differences between the arguments for or against such a doctrine and the arguments for or against the doctrine of temporal parts?
14. Yablo: what is the explanatory task Yablo thinks the "essentialist" must discharge? Does Yablo succeed in discharging it? How plausible is the view Yablo ends up arguing for? How significant are the theorems he proves? It would be cool if someone really wanted to get to grips with Yablo's technical

apparatus; but you shouldn't feel obliged to do so in order to write about this paper. Extra reading on the concept of essence you might find relevant: Kit Fine, 'Essence and Modality' (*Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (1994)).

15. Fine, 'Things and Their Parts'. How good are Fine's arguments against the "orthodox mereologist" (who accepts the doctrine of temporal parts)? How plausible is the ontological system Fine develops in the paper? Is Fine committed to too many distinctions between entities? (Think, for example, about a person x ; the rigid embodiment x /self-identity; the rigid embodiment x /personhood; the variable embodiment f , where $f(t) = x$ for every time where x exists...) Would a version of Fine's view that placed more restrictions on what a relation or function has to be like to generate rigid/variable embodiments be plausible?
16. Counterpart-theory. There are all sorts of questions to be raised about this. Start by reading all of part 4 of *On the Plurality of Worlds*, and see what occurs to you.
17. Fine's arguments in 'The non-identity of a material thing and its matter' against the claim that modal predicates are "inconstant" in a way that helps us to avoid the conclusion that there are [permanently] coincident entities. How should the proponent of inconstancy respond to these arguments? What is the upshot?
18. Sider's stage view. Is it credible? How good are Sider's arguments for it, and how bad are the problems for the view that he considers?

Of course, these are just suggestions; you are free to write about anything you like. But I'd like to gently discourage you from paper topics that fall too much within the sphere of 'meta-ontology' — claims about the nature of existence, of our concept of existence, etc. And I'd like to encourage you, whatever you end up deciding to write about, to meet with me to discuss it.