Metaphysics: Problem set 10
April 11
due date: Wednesday, April 18

Don't write more than 2 pages total
NB: Use your own words. No quotation, no paraphrase.

1. (20%) 'According to van Inwagen, chairs are not unified wholes---they are nothing more than collections of particles.' Explain, as clearly as you can, what is wrong with this description of van Inwagen's position.

2. (20%) 'Whenever an object is such that every part of it overlaps some water molecule, if it is at a temperature of 4° centigrade, its density is 1 gram per cubic centimetre.' Give a "paraphrase" of this little theory in mereologically-neutral terms, following the method described on pp. 18-19 of 'Composition as a Fiction'.

3. (30%) Van Inwagen says that his claim that there are no nonliving composite objects 'does not contradict our ordinary beliefs'. Is he right? If he is wrong, is that a problem for his view?

(If you wish, you may take 'our ordinary beliefs' to refer to your own beliefs as they were before you took this class. You might want to refer to section 5 of 'Composition as a Fiction' in your answer to this question.)

4. (30%) Choose any one of the following claims, each of which is defended in 'Composition as a Fiction'.

- The dispute between different theories of composition cannot be resolved by straightforward empirical means.
- The argument 'I exist; I am a composite object; therefore some composite object exists' does not succeed in giving us a decisive reason to reject nihilism.
- The fact that many scientific theories make assumptions about composition is not a good reason to believe those assumptions.
- The dispute between different theories of composition is not a merely verbal dispute.

Briefly explain the reasons the authors give for this claim. Present and evaluate at least one objection to the claim.