

METAMETAPHYSICS

TIME AND PLACE: Thursdays 14:30-16:00, 23.21/02.26

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For better or for worse, metaphysics continues to be one of the main branches of philosophy. One way to describe its content is as the study of the general conditions of existence and the nature of reality. Those practicing it try to answer questions such as the following: What are the fundamental categories of existence (e.g. platonic universals or tropes)? Is the domain of mental entities (e.g. thoughts, feelings, experiences) somehow independent of the physical domain of quarks, atoms and molecules? What makes claims about possibility and necessity true/false? How can we account for the difference between causal relations and mere correlations? Metaphysicians debate not only how to best answer such questions but sometimes also the legitimacy of those questions. When they do the latter they put on the hat of the metametaphysician. That is, they study metaphysics itself. Metametaphysics asks questions like: What is metaphysics? Is metaphysical discourse meaningful? If so, can we ever make any progress in answering its questions? For example, can we ever discover any metaphysical truths? Is there a correct methodological approach to metaphysics? In what way can empirical discoveries in physics affect metaphysics? What is the relationship between logical and metaphysical categories? In this seminar we will immerse ourselves in these and other metametaphysical questions in the hope of getting a better grip on the subject matter of metaphysics and its potential worth.

Surveys:

Eklund, M. (2006) 'Metaontology', *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 1(3): 317–334.

van Inwagen, P. (1998) 'Metaontology', *Erkenntnis*, vol. 48: 233–250.

Main Text:

Chalmers, D. et al. (eds.) (2009) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coursework:

- Two presentations (about 20 minutes); each presentation covering one of the assigned readings. [for normal credit]

- One essay (about 2,500 words), **deadline 19/01/12**. [for extra credit]

NB: Presentations will be assigned on the second week. Suggested essay topics will be distributed in December.

WEEK 1: Introduction

WEEK 2: What is Metaphysics?

van Inwagen, P. (2007) 'Metaphysics', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphysics/>

WEEK 3: What is Metametaphysics?

Manley, D. (2009) 'Introduction: A Guided Tour of Metametaphysics', in D.

Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-37.

WEEK 4: The Quine-Carnap Dispute

Soames, S. (2009) 'Ontology, Analyticity, and Meaning: the Quine-Carnap Dispute', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 424-443.

WEEK 5: Internal vs. External Questions

Eklund, M. (2009) 'Carnap and Ontological Pluralism', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 130-156.

WEEK 6: The New Metaphysics

Price, H. (2009) 'Metaphysics after Carnap: The Ghost Who Walks?', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 320-346.

WEEK 7: Revising the Quinean Picture of Ontology

Fine, K. (2009) 'The Question of Ontology', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 157-177.

WEEK 8: Conceptual and Linguistic Schemes

Hirsch, E. (2009) 'Ontology and Alternative Languages', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 231-259.

WEEK 9: Dismissivism Analysed I

Bennett, K. (2009) 'Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 38-57.

WEEK 10: Dismissivism Analysed II

Bennett, K. (2009) 'Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 57-76.

WEEK 11: The Ontological Realism Debate I

Chalmers, D. (2009) 'Ontological Anti-Realism', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 77-92.

WEEK 12: The Ontological Realism Debate II

Chalmers, D. (2009) 'Ontological Anti-Realism', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 92-104.

WEEK 13: The Ontological Realism Debate III

Chalmers, D. (2009) 'Ontological Anti-Realism', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 104-129.

WEEK 14: Anti-Deflationism

Hawthorne, J. (2009) 'Superficialism in Ontology', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 213-230.

WEEK 15: Fundamental vs. Derived

Schaffer, J. (2009) 'On What Grounds What', in D. Chalmers et al. (eds.) *Metametaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 347-383.