

*Modality and Tense: Philosophical Papers.* By KIT FINE. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).  
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*Modality and Tense* brings together eleven of Kit Fine's articles on these topics, spanning the past three decades. The collection does not include his influential work on essence and dependence or his technical work on modality. Aided by a terrific introduction that sets the stage and provides a useful overview, the collection is quite well unified. The result is a demanding book that abounds in insights, penetrating analysis, and subtle distinctions.

The overarching theme of the collection is a two-front battle concerning modality and kindred notions. On one front, Fine is arguing against a broadly empiricist tradition represented by W.V. Quine and David Lewis, which attempts to reduce all modal claims to claims about regularities (within respectively our actual universe and Lewis's pluriverse). In contrast to this empiricist tradition, Fine is a *modalist* (that is, he insists on the distinctive and irreducible character of modal notions) and an *actualist* (that is, he holds that there is a fundamental ontological difference between actual and merely possible objects). On another front, Fine is arguing against a metaphysical tradition initiated by Saul Kripke, which accepts a primitive notion of metaphysical possibility and attempts to reduce all other modal notions to this one notion. In contrast to this "modal monism," Fine holds that there are a variety of related but distinct notions of modal significance. I describe each front in turn. (Space prevents me from commenting on the only essay explicitly concerned with time, the previously unpublished "Tense and Reality.")

The main concern of the first group of essays is to defend *de re* modality against Quine. The previously unpublished opening essay provides a useful and accessible overview. Here Fine argues for a strict separation of three issues. First, does natural language contain directly referring expressions? This is a question in the philosophy of language, which the Fregean tradition (at least on Fine's reading) answers negatively, and the Russellian tradition, positively. Second, are there *de re* necessities? This is a question in the metaphysics of modality, having to do with whether there are irreducibly singular modal facts or whether all

such facts are implicitly general. The former view is associated with Aristotle, and the latter, with the above-mentioned empiricist tradition. Thirdly, must the identities of objects be explained in terms of purely qualitative features and relationships? The metaphysical Haecceitist answers *no*, whereas the anti-Haecceitist answers *yes*. Fine argues convincingly that each question must be answered independently of the other two, and that failure to see this has led to serious confusion.

The two next essays, “The Problem of *De Re* Modality” and its shorter twin “Quine on Quantifying In,” discuss Quine’s famous argument against the coherence of quantification into modal contexts. It is argued that Quine and others conflate two different problems. First there is the *metaphysical* problem of making sense of necessary satisfaction of a condition by a sequence of objects. Focussing on the logical modalities, Fine shows how to do this by assigning logical form not just to propositions but also to sequences of objects. This enables him to define a notion of *logical satisfaction*, according to which the sequence  $\langle a, a \rangle$  logically satisfies the condition ‘ $x = y$ ’. Next there is the *logical* problem of making sense of quantification into non-extensional contexts. Quine’s argument that this cannot be done is analysed into five steps, each of which is subjected to a ‘microscopic examination’ (p. 5). Although most steps are found to be subject to counterexamples, Fine very usefully examines what additional assumptions and refinements would eliminate them. He also examines a variety of interpretations of the quantifiers.

The second group of essays discuss how an actualist, who denies the existence of any non-actual possible objects, should understand our widespread talk about possibilia. “The Problem of Possibilia” provides a very useful overview. One option is to *identify* each possible object with some actual object, say its individual essence (as Plantinga proposes) or some abstract description. Fine objects that this gets the modal properties wrong. A possible human is possibly concrete, whereas some abstract representation of a human is necessarily abstract. A better option is to let proxies *represent* possibilia. Fine cleverly shows how to bypass the problem posed to this option by indiscernible possibilia. He regards as more serious the objection that there won’t be *enough* actual objects to represent all possibilia. For a

construction based on Cantor's theorem appears to show that there are more possibilia than there are actual objects, from whose ranks the proxies must be taken. A possible response, not discussed by Fine, would be to articulate a notion of an *absolutely infinite domain* and to explain why the power set operation is impermissible on such domains. Fine's own preferred option is a non-proxy reduction that eliminates 'there is a possible object  $x$ ' in favour of 'possibly there is an object  $x$ ', coupled with a "back-reference" device that allows us to evaluate "other-worldly" predications at the actual world. A translation procedure based on this idea is outlined. However, the translations of even quite simple statements about possibilia end up so complicated as to make it unlikely that this is what ordinary speakers implicitly had in mind all along. (Try applying the translation to Timothy Williamson's sentence "From two blades and two handles four possible knives can be made.") The essay finishes by arguing that fictionalist interpretations offer no advantages over Fine's preferred option.

Other essays in this group offer more in-depth discussions of particular approaches to the problem of possibilia. "Plantinga on Possibilist Discourse" provides a terrific critique of Plantinga's identification of possibilia with individual essences. Here Fine's main charge is that, for this approach to succeed, Plantinga will need individual essences that "depend for their identity" on possibilia. But this dependence makes such essences unacceptable to an actualist like Plantinga. More generally Fine argues that, for a property or proposition to exist, so too must every entity on which the identity of this property or proposition depends. This makes the existence of many properties and propositions contingent. For instance, the property of being identical to Socrates will exist only in worlds in which Socrates exists. Unfortunately, the relevant notion of dependence isn't explained here; nor is the reader referred to Fine's more recent work on essences where an explanation *is* provided.

The third group of essays defend "modal pluralism"—the view that there are many different and irreducible modal notions. In "The Varieties of Necessity" Fine argues that there are (at least) three different and irreducible concepts of necessity—the metaphysical, the natural, and the normative—each with its distinct source in respectively the identities of

things, the natural order, and the normative order (p. 260). I do not find the arguments for the distinctness and irreducibility of these concepts entirely convincing. The intuitions adduced to show that something can be naturally yet not metaphysically necessary are controversial; it is for instance said to be naturally impossible for other natural kinds to be instantiated than those that actually are instantiated (p. 243). There are also methodological worries. Many philosophers would gladly let such intuitions be trumped by a desire for greater theoretical simplicity. Indeed, of Fine's three notions of necessity, the metaphysical one not only receives the best explanation but seems by far the most explanatory. For instance, only this concept supports *de re* necessities.

In the previously unpublished "Necessity and Non-Existence," Fine seeks to distinguish *necessary* truths, which are true whatever the circumstances, from *transcendent* truths, which are true regardless of the circumstances. Necessary truths are also said to be distinguished from the transcendent ones by *depending on* the circumstances. An example of a necessary truth is 'Either Socrates exists or he doesn't'; an example of a transcendent one is 'Socrates is self-identical'. I do not find this distinction entirely clear. (Consider for instance the actualist's claim that everything is actual. If true, is this necessary or transcendent?) Perhaps it would be more informative to say that a truth is transcendent if it serves as an "external constraint" on the space of possible worlds. But this definition would require an account of how possible worlds are "constructed" subject to such constraints. Fine hints at such an account in his work on essences, but no mention of that is made here. Fine also wants to extend his new distinction to properties and objects. All these distinctions are supposed to earn their keep by being intuitive (which this reviewer fails to see) and by providing attractive solutions to some metaphysical puzzles (where a stronger case is made). For instance, Fine uses the distinction to provide a solution to the puzzle that, although Socrates is necessarily self-identical, it is still possible that he does not exist: Since self-identity is a transcendent property, Socrates need not exist to possess it.

Fine's essays often make for harder reading than those of opponents such as Quine, Lewis, and Kripke. Where his opponents always strive for theoretical simplicity and unity,

Fine is inclined to accept that reality is rich and complicated and to let this be reflected in our concepts and theories. But whether or not one in the end accepts Fine's wealth of distinctions and ideas, thinking through them will be well worth the labour. The volume is warmly recommended to anyone interested in metaphysics and philosophical logic.

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