Modest Possibilism

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Introduction
Topics of this Talk

Introduction

Topics of this Talk

➲ Argument Structure

 Possibilism

➲ Sorts of Possibilia

 Résumée
Introduction

Topics of this Talk

GW Topics of this Talk

Argument Structure

Possibilism

Sorts of Possibilia

Résumée

Introduce the following notions:
Topics of this Talk

- Introduce the following notions:
  - Actualism
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- Actualism
- Meinongian Possibilism
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- Actualism
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▲ Introduce the following notions:
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▲ Discuss the following entities:
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▲ Discuss the following entities:
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  - Sherlock Holmes
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  - Elves and Dwarfes in Iceland
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● Caesar
● Sherlock Holmes
● A Halluzinated Oasis
● Elves and Dwarfes in Iceland

▲ Draw the conclusion:
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Discuss the following entities:

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- Sherlock Holmes
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- Elves and Dwarfes in Iceland

Draw the conclusion:

- We should all be modest possibilists.
For the thesis that various notions of existence should be used, I argue in the following way:

▲ The existence of some sort $X$ of objects is established by a set of criteria $K_1$.

▲ The existence of some sort $Y$ of objects is established by a set of criteria $K_2$.

▲ If the criteria differ $K_1 \neq K_2$, then there should be two different notions of existence for $X$ and $Y$ respectively.
Argument Structure

For the thesis that various notions of existence should be used, I argue in the following way:

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This argument is directed against Quine (1948):

“To be is to be the value of a bound variable.”
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▲ If the criteria differ $K_1 \neq K_2$, then there should be two different notions of existence for $X$ and $Y$ respectively.

Quine’s dictum is to be supplemented by Rast (2004):

“To exist is to have the property of being existent in a certain way.”
Possibilism

Introduction

Possibilism

Actualism versus Possibilism

 actuality

Two Arguments Against Round Squares

Sorts of Possibilia

Résumée
Actualism versus Possibilism

(1) This desk is wooden.
(2) Sherlock Holmes is a detective.
(3) Round squares are round.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Actualist</th>
<th>Modest Possibilist</th>
<th>Meinongian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✔️ = can be true

Given that: Sherlock Holmes and round squares do not actually exist.
**Actuality** the totality of what is being given; the Given; what is *Dawider* (Kant); what you can physically interact with.

**Rule of Thumb:** If you can bump against it, then it actually exists.
Two Arguments Against Round Squares

① Refutation by Inconsistency (Russell 1905)
   “Logical Argument”
Two Arguments Against Round Squares

① **Refutation by Inconsistency** (Russell 1905)

“Logical Argument”

▲ Talking of objects only make sense if some non-negative, simple predicative statement about them can be veridical.
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   ▲ $P(\forall x (Px \land \neg Px))$
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   “Ontological Argument”
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   ▲ \( P(\forall x (P_x \land \lnot P_x)) \)  
   ▲ \( \lnot P(\forall x (P_x \land \lnot P_x)) \)  
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② **Refutation by Inconstructibility**  
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   ▲ Objects that are both perfectly round and square have never been observed.
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② Refutation by Inconstructibility  
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▲ Objects that are both perfectly round and square have never been observed.

▲ There exists no method to construct such objects.
Sorts of Possibilia
Temporal Possibilia

(4) Caesar crossed the Rubicon.
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**Existence Criterion** An object *exists temporally* (=as a temporal possibilium) iff it has existed actually or will exist actually.
Fictional Objects

(5) Sherlock Holmes is a detective.
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▲ Even if some real Sherlock Holmes existed, the Sherlock Holmes of Conan Doyle’s writings would still be a fictional entity. (ambiguous proper names)
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▲ Identity: Fictional objects usually differ from each other if they have different names (ignoring differences in spelling or translation).
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Existence Criterion An object exists fictionally iff it is not believed to exist actually, has been invented, and there’s a shared corpus describing it.
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Doxastic Objects

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**Existence Criterion** An object exists according to a person’s belief iff the person believes that the object has such and such properties, among them the property to exist actually.
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- But of course the shared doxastic object exists ‘doxastically’ for all people that believe that it actually exists.
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**Existence Criterion** An object *exists according to the beliefs of some persons* iff the persons believe that the object has such and such properties, among them the property to exist actually.
Résumée
Some General Arguments Against Actualism
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△ Reality comprises more than actuality:
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▲ Actualism is based on the prejudice that all other ontic realms can be reduced to actuality.
Modest Possibilism

Introduction

Possibilism

Sorts of Possibilia

Résumée

➲ Some General Arguments Against Actualism

Modest Possibilism

➲ The End
Modest Possibilism

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To each sort of objects corresponds an existence predicate.
Modest Possibilism

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- To each sort of objects corresponds an existence predicate.
- To each existence predicate corresponds a set of criteria for establishing existence.
Modest Possibilism

▲ The domain contains possibilia as long as they don’t have contradictory properties.
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▲ There may be meaning postulates between different kinds of existence (see fictional objects).
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▲ There may be meaning postulates between different kinds of existence (see fictional objects).
▲ The (possibilist) quantifiers mean nothing, they only serve as a means for defining relativized quantifiers.

\[ \forall x A := \forall x (Ex \supset A) \]
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▲ The (possibilist) quantifiers mean nothing, they only serve as a means for defining relativized quantifiers.

\[ \forall x (Ex \supset A) \]
▲ Requirement: All objects in the domain are in the extension of some existence predicate.
\[ E_1 \cup E_2 \cup \ldots \cup E_n = D \]
Modest Possibilism

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- To each existence predicate corresponds a set of criteria for establishing existence.
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  \[ E_1 \cup E_2 \cup \ldots \cup E_n = D \]
- The various ontic realms have to be explored in a branch of formal ontology, Meinong’s *Gegenstandstheorie* (theory of objects).
Santa Clause Exists!