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The basic machinery of Stalnaker’s view (see especially 26-27, 31)

* There are points in logical space.
* Propositions are sets of these points. They are ways of dividing up logical space.
  + The same point in logical space can be a member of any number of propositions.
  + Any proposition partitions logical space.

A partition of a set S is a collection of non-empty subsets of S such that every member of S is a member of exactly 1 of the subsets.

* + The maximally consistent propositions, taken together, partition logical space in a maximally fine grained way.

A set of propositions Γ is maximallyconsistent iff it is consistent (for Stalnaker, consistency is primitive) and such that every proposition p such that Γ∪p is consistent is a member of Γ.

* + Each maximally consistent proposition is a cell in the maximally fine partition of logical space.
* Possible worlds = maximally consistent propositions = cells in the maximally fine partition.
* Logical space is actually partitioned a certain way, by some equivalence relation R. The cells into which logical space is *actually* partitioned = the maximally consistent propositions that actually exist = the possible worlds that actually exist (but are not actually true). But this is not the only possible way to partition logical space. It could be partitioned differently. *Each* point *p* is associated with an equivalence relation that partitions the space. If *p* were actual—“were that point to represent the possible state of the world that is realized” (31)—logical space would be partitioned differently.

Note two key features of the set-up so far:

* + Cells can contain >1 point.
  + How logical space is partitioned varies from point to point. Had a different point been actual, logical space would have been carved up differently—different sets of the points would be cells of the maximally fine partition.
* There are two ways for a proposition to be true with respect to a world.
  + A proposition is true *in* a world w just in case it exists in w and “[has] the property of truth” (47)
  + A proposition p is true *at* or *of* a world w just in case it correctly describes w. Stalnaker: w is a subset of p, i.e. p is entailed by w. Adams: it would be true if w were actual. If that world were actual, the proposition would be true.
* But what exactly is it for a proposition to exist at a world?

p exists at w = w is a subset of p (treating w as a set of points), or perhaps w is a member of p (treating w as a point)?

p exists at w = p’s constituents exist at w?

p exists at w = the properties and individuals it is ‘about’ exist at w?

A question

Are the worlds cells or points? What ought we make of this vacillation?

How this machinery is supposed to help

• How it allows (is supposed to allow) worlds/propositions/things to exist contingently, and makes it possible that there be worlds/propositions/things that don’t actually exist.

For a world to exist contingently is for it to be contingent that those points constitute a cell in the maximally fine partition.

For it to be possible that a world exist that doesn’t actually exist is for it to be possible that some points that do not actually constitute a cell in the maximally fine partition do so.

Propositions? For a proposition to exist contingently is for the things it is “about” to exist in or according to some worlds and not others.

The Hoffman objection.

• How it helps with Kripke’s dice/iterated modalities

We’re asked to buy that it is possible that there is a die that is rolled and comes up 5 but could have come up 6, and a die that comes up 6 but could have come up 5.

On Stalnaker’s view, that’s not quite right. All that’s *actually* possible is that there be two dice that are rolled, one coming up 5 and one coming up 6. But if that possibility were realized, two further possibilities would have to be distinguished: that this one comes up 5 and that one 6, and *vice versa*.

As it is, logical space is partitioned like so. But had it been like so—had the dice (which do not actually exist) existed and been rolled—logical space would have been partitioned differently.

• How it helps with Stalnaker’s argument for the Barcan formula??

• How it helps render Kripke semantics consistent with actualism??

• How it helps with the Williamson argument

Stalnaker explicitly discusses Plantinga’s version in more detail, but let’s do Williamson 2001. (See last week’s handouts for more citations.)

1. Necessarily, if Socrates doesn’t exist then the proposition that S doesn’t exist is true.
2. Necessarily, if the proposition that S does not exist is true then the proposition that S does not exist exists. (application of “serious actualism”)
3. Necessarily, if the proposition that S does not exist exists then S exists. (“existentialism”/ontological dependence of a proposition on what it is about)
4. Necessarily, if S does not exist then S exists (1-3)

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Necessarily, S exists.

Like Fine and Adams, Stalnaker thinks this can be resisted by means of the distinction between truth in and truth at a world (inner and outer truth). 1 is only true when it says “…the proposition that S doesn’t exist is true **at w**”, and 2 is only true when it says “if the proposition that S does not exist is true **in w**…”. So Stalnaker would say that the argument equivocates.

Williamson doesn’t like the truth in/at distinction. One of his reasons is that it requires possible worlds, and he apparently takes the Stalnaker-like approach to be circular.

Worlds are maximally consistent sets of propositions

A set of propositions Γ is consistent iff for any proposition p, if there’s a valid argument from Γ to p (if Γ entails p) then there isn’t a valid argument from Γ to ~p (Γdoesn’t entail ~p).

But validity/entailment involves *necessary* truth preservation: e.g. p entails q iff necessarily, if p is true q is true.

So we need the notion of necessity to characterize possible worlds, and need possible worlds to characterize what it is for something to be necessary. Circular.

Stalnaker responds

1. He takes consistency as primitive
2. He rejects the definition of entailment as necessary truth preservation.

A further wrinkle:

How ought we treat counterfactuals of the form, “if KB had never existed, her existence would still have been possible”?