

Modality and dynamical systems theory

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ABSTRACT

What I believe my spring 2026 essay will be about.

My points of departure

This document is about my points of departure for my spring 2026 essay. It takes the form of a handful of theses that I will use in the forthcoming text.

Philosophy is the study of philosophical problem

Philosophers claim, perhaps starting with Bertrand Russell, that philosophy is defined by its problems. Russell gives an example in the first paragraph in the first page of the first chapter of his book *Problems of philosophy*

Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it? This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked. When we have realized the obstacles in the way of a straightforward and confident answer, we shall be well launched on the study of philosophy—for philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas (Russell, 1912, p. 1).

About a century later Floridi (2013) spends an entire essay on just this statement. In particular,

The result is a definition of philosophical questions as questions whose answers are in principle open to informed, rational, and honest disagreement, ultimate but not absolute, closed under further questioning, possibly constrained by empirical and logico-mathematical resources, but requiring noetic resources to be answered.

The law of cause and effect are not a law of nature

Modal reasoning is appears everywhere in science, but not as modal logic

Perhaps my main source of inspiration is the writings of Williamson (2018) on modal logic and dynamic systems.¹

Surprisingly, Hume's argument for scepticism about objective modality continues to be influential, despite its reliance on an eighteenth-century empiricist picture of perception Williamson, 2018.

And Maudlin

¹ The original lecture can be found on YouTube https://youtu.be/ZfaHf_TESEw

Metaphysical grounding and ontological commitment

Quine and more

References

Floridi, Luciano, "What is a philosophical question?" *Metaphilosophy* **44**, pp. 195-221 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1111/meta.12053>.

Russell, Bertrand, *The problems of philosophy*, New York, Dover Publications (1912/1999).

Williamson, Timothy, "Spaces of Possibility" in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* **82** (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S135824611800019X>.

Github project

Scan QR to get project at <https://github.com/siglun/term-paper-spring-2026>

