

Jan Plate – Curriculum Vitae

Contact details

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Areas of specialization

- Metaphysics
- Philosophical logic

Areas of competence

- Philosophy of mind
- Philosophy of language
- Logic

Further professional interests include: Epistemology, philosophy of mathematics, and history of analytical philosophy.

Employment

June 2017 – present	Università della Svizzera italiana, Postdoc
January 2014 – December 2016	Université de Neuchâtel, Postdoc
July 2013 – December 2013	Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Postdoc
August 2012 – May 2013	Washington University in St. Louis, Lecturer

Education

2012	Ph.D. in philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis Graduation date: December 2012 Dissertation advisor: Thomas Sattig Dissertation title: <i>Essence and Ontology</i>
2005	M.Sc. in cognitive science, Universität Osnabrück, Germany Grade: <i>Hervorragend mit Auszeichnung</i> (excellent with distinction) Thesis advisor: Achim Stephan Thesis title: <i>Physicalism and Subjectivity</i>
2002	B.Sc. in cognitive science, Universität Osnabrück, Germany. This included nine months of study in computer science and psycholinguistics at the university of Exeter (UK). Grade: <i>Hervorragend</i> (excellent)

Languages

German (native), English (fluent), French (intermediate), Chinese (basic), Latin (reading)

Publications

1. 'Intrinsic Properties and Relations', *Inquiry* **61**(8), pp. 783-853 (2018).
2. 'Logically Simple Properties and Relations', *Philosophers' Imprint* **16**(1), pp. 1-40 (2016).
3. 'An Analysis of the Binding Problem', *Philosophical Psychology* **20**(6), pp. 773-92 (2007).
4. 'Faces and Brains: The Limitations of Brain Scanning in Cognitive Science' (with Christopher Mole et al.), *Philosophical Psychology* **20**(2), pp. 197-207 (2007).

In preparation:

- 'Essence and Ontology' (monograph)
- 'An Analysis of a Form of Metaphysical Ground'
- 'Purely Qualitative Properties and Relations'

Presentations and Comments

1. 'Basic Positionalism', University of Neuchâtel, March 2017
2. 'Intrinsic Properties and Relations 2', University of Neuchâtel, October 2016
3. 'Intrinsic Properties and Relations', University of Neuchâtel, March 2016
4. 'Logically Simple Properties and Relations', University of the Azores, September 2015
5. Comments on Andrea Bottani's 'Outline of a Locationist Theory of Properties', University of Bergamo, July 2015
6. 'On the Categorization of Properties', University of Neuchâtel, March 2015
7. 'Do We Need a Primitive Notion of Fundamentality?', University of Neuchâtel, October 2014
8. 'Do We Need Schafferian Grounding?', University of Geneva, September 2014
9. 'Simple Properties and Relations', University of Bucharest, August 2014
10. 'Simple Properties and Relations', Cambridge University, April 2014
11. 'Reductive and Essential Grounding', University of Neuchâtel, March 2014
12. 'Simplicity, Qualitativeness, and Intrinsicity', University of Neuchâtel, February 2014
13. 'Two Kinds of Metaphysical Grounding', University of Gothenburg, February 2014
14. Comments on Stephan Leuenberger's 'Total Logic', University of Tübingen, July 2013
15. 'Who Needs Perfectly Natural Properties?', Washington University in St. Louis, June 2012
16. 'Essence and Ontology', Washington University in St. Louis, April 2012
17. 'Individuational Ontology', Washington University in St. Louis, September 2011
18. 'Objections and Replies', Washington University in St. Louis, May 2011 (The title refers to potential objections that might be leveled at an argument that I develop in an early version of my dissertation.)
19. 'The Problem of Essence', Washington University in St. Louis, October 2010

Awards

1. Annaliesa Hanebrink Tribute Scholarship in Arts and Sciences (both 2007 and 2008)
2. "Mind and Cognition" Essay Prize, University of Osnabrück 2002
3. Prize of the Riedel-de Haen Study Foundation, February 2000

Teaching Experience

a) As lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis:

Spring 2013	Problems in Philosophy
Fall 2012	Problems in Philosophy
Summer 2011	Logic and Critical Analysis
Summer 2008	Problems in Philosophy

b) As teaching assistant at Washington University in St. Louis:

Spring 2012	Philosophy of Language
Fall 2011	Great Philosophers
Spring 2010	Philosophy of Mind
Fall 2010	Philosophy of Mind
Spring 2009	Logic and Critical Analysis
Fall 2008	Problems in Philosophy
Spring 2008	Great Philosophers
Fall 2007	Problems in Philosophy
Spring 2007	Introduction to Cognitive Science
Fall 2006	Symbolic Logic

c) As teaching assistant (*Tutor*) at Universität Osnabrück:

Fall 2003	PROLOG
Fall 2002	LISP

Professional Service

- Member of the editorial board of *dialectica*.
- Reviewer for *Analysis*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Erkenntnis*, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophical Psychology*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Synthese*, and *Theoria*.
- Co-organizer of a workshop with the title 'Grounding & Existence', University of Geneva, September 2014.
- Co-organizer of a summer school for Swiss Ph.D. students (title: 'First-order and second-order problems of metaphysics'), Ovronnaz, Switzerland, June 2015.
- Co-organizer of a workshop entitled 'Logical and Metaphysical Perspectives on Grounding', Universität Osnabrück, September 2015.
- Main organizer of a workshop entitled 'The Fragmentation of Reality', Lugano, July 2018.

References

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Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation provides an account of essentiality that satisfies two main desiderata:

- (1) The account should offer an explanation as to why the following two intuitions are true:
 - (i) It is essential to the set {Socrates} to have Socrates as a member.
 - (ii) It is not essential to Socrates to be a member of that set.
- (2) The account should do justice to the sense of philosophical significance that has traditionally been attached to the notion of essence.

The two intuitions mentioned in (1) together form what I call ‘Fine’s asymmetry’, after Kit Fine, whose paper ‘Essence and Modality’ has persuasively undermined the traditional modal account of essentiality by pointing out (among other worries) that this account cannot plausibly accommodate both of those intuitions.

The account of essentiality proposed in this dissertation offers an alternative to the modal account. It is reductive, in the sense that it provides truth-conditions for essentialist claims without in turn relying on any fundamental notions of an entity’s ‘nature’ or ‘identity’; nor does it rely on any concepts of metaphysical modality. Instead, it is based on a framework of sets, attributes, and states of affairs, which is introduced in chapters 2 and 3. The account itself is then developed in chapters 4 to 7. The first major step in this direction is the introduction, in chapter 4, of the concept of an *individuation ontology*, which results from a generalization and modification of Peter Aczel’s approach to the theory of non-well-founded sets. On this basis, chapter 5 introduces relativized concepts of essence and essentiality, where the relativization in question is to individuation ontologies.

The question of what conditions an individuation ontology O has to satisfy in order for essences relative-to- O to count as essences *simpliciter* is the topic of chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 sets out to develop a fairly straightforward approach, but this is quickly seen to face apparently insuperable difficulties. Chapter 7 develops a fundamentally different approach, which turns out to be more successful. In chapter 8, it is shown how the resulting account of essentiality manages to accommodate Fine’s asymmetry, and in the final chapter, the account is applied to an elucidation of *de re* modal discourse.