

Philosophical Implications of Second-Order Modal Logic

Institute of Philosophy
University of London
11-13 March 2010

Keynote Speaker:

Timothy Williamson (University of Oxford)

Commentators:

Ian Rumfitt (Birkbeck College, London)
Øystein Linnebo (Birkbeck College, London)
Gabriel Uzquiano (University of Oxford)

Organizing Committee

Barry C Smith (IP, University of London)
Lee Walters (UCL)
Jonny McIntosh (UCL)
Nick Jones (Birkbeck College, London)
Invited Organiser:
Timothy Williamson (University of Oxford)

Theme of the Workshop

Metaphysicians and other philosophers have made considerable use of both first-order modal logic and second-order non-modal logic. Surprisingly, they have made very little use of second-order modal logic. Yet the interaction of the modal and second-order aspects of the logic raises significant metaphysical issues that do not arise for first-order modal logic and second-order non-modal logic separately. Second-order modal logic also provides a wider context in which to assess metaphysical issues that already arise in first-order modal logic.

One set of questions concerns which logical principles should be valid in second-order modal logic under a given interpretation. For example, they arguably differ between an intensional interpretation of the second-order variables as predicates and an extensional interpretation of them as plural terms, when the modal operators are interpreted as expressing metaphysical possibility and necessity. For example, what is the relation between whether the Barcan schema holds for first-order quantifiers and whether the corresponding schema holds for second-order quantifiers. Those issues are closely related to the fundamental metaphysical question whether existing in the sense of being something is necessary or contingent, which is a clarification of at least much of what was at stake in older debates between ‘actualism’ and ‘possibilism’. Second-order modal logic provides rich resources for evaluating this dispute.

The Workshop will consist of seminars based on pre-circulated papers by Timothy Williamson and presentations by successful applicants. The Workshop will run from Thursday afternoon to Saturday evening. Accommodation will be provided.

Fee: participants will be expected to cover the cost of their travel and pay a fee of £100. Bursaries will be available for those who do not have access to funds. Accommodation and meals will be provided.

Application Criteria: The Workshop is intended for early career researchers with an interest in the topic. Graduate students and post-graduates who have recently completed a Ph.D. (within 3-4 years) are eligible to apply.

Application Process: applicants must submit -

- (i) a description of their current research area and a short statement of the relevance of the Workshop to their interests
- (ii) a recent CV
- (iii) a letter of support from a referee (or the supervisor if still completing the doctorate)

Successful applicants must be prepared to give a presentation at the Workshop on any aspect of the pre-circulated material. Titles for presentation will be requested two weeks before the Workshop.

Selection Procedure:

Selection will be made by the organizing committee on the basis of an applicant's (a) area of expertise, (b) statement of interest, and (c) overall academic merit.

Successful applicants will be notified by 30 November 2009

Deadline for Applications: 30 October 2009

Applications should be sent to:

Dr. Shahrar Ali, Institute of Philosophy, School of Advanced Study, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

We welcome applications by email to IP@sas.ac.uk. Please write in the subject header, "CFP: Modal Logic – Application".

END of this Call.