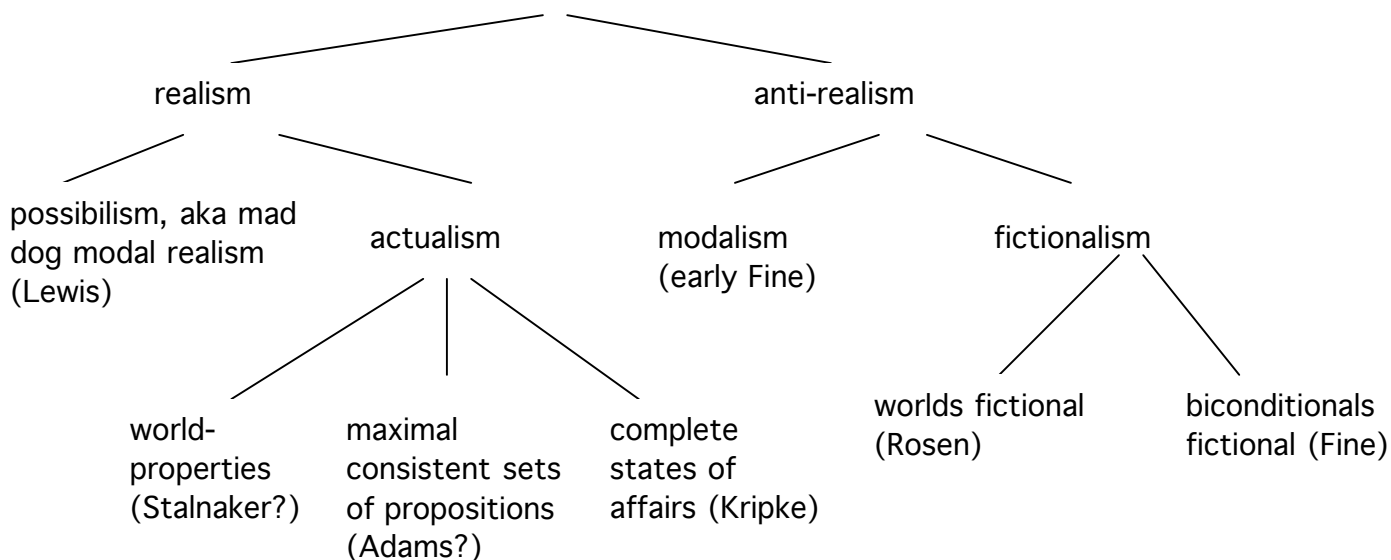


Worlds Everyone agrees that possible worlds are indispensable; we can't stop using biconditionals along the lines of *S is possible iff there is a world where S is true*. What entitles us to talk this way?



Possibilism: $\Diamond S$ iff $\exists w (S \text{ true in } w)$, worlds w are humongous concrete objects

Actualism: $\Diamond S$ iff $\exists w (S \text{ true according to } w)$, w only *represents* a concrete world

Modalism: $\Diamond S$ iff $\Diamond \exists w (S \text{ true in } w)$, there is only one world, *could* have been others

Fictionalism₁: $\Diamond S$ iff according to a certain story PW, $\exists w (S \text{ true in } w)$

Fictionalism₂: according to a certain story PW, $\Diamond S$ iff $\exists w (S \text{ true in } w)$

Rosen is a fictionalist₁. How does he get there? Ed thinks blue swans might have existed. The standard account of modality says they might have iff there's a world where they do. If Ed accepts the account, and if commitment is closed under logical entailment, Ed is committed to non-actual worlds with blue swans in them. "Ed just cannot bring himself to endorse this commitment." (The incredulous stare objection.) So on pain of inconsistency, "he must reject the possible worlds approach to modality." He can't bring himself to do that, either; it offers SO many advantages.

But wait, talking about fictional characters offers advantages too, and we don't feel committed to them. Usual way out is this: "Holmes lived on Baker St." is *elliptical*. The claim fully spelled out is "According to the Holmes stories, Holmes lived on Baker St."

Why not say the same here? Let PW be your favorite theory of worlds — let's fix on Lewis's theory of a huge concrete pluriverse — considered now as a story. Treat " $\exists w \dots w \dots$ " as short for "according to PW, $\exists w \dots w \dots$ " The objectionable commitment vanishes, for "when you assent to 'In F, P' you incur no obligation to assent to 'P' by itself" (332). On more step and we're done. The

mad dog modal realist already has a non-modal paraphrase of modal claim S in the language of worlds. Call it S^* . Where the realist says, S iff S^* , the fictionalist says S iff according to PW , S^* .

Problems

1. London is capital of England. So \Diamond London is capital of England. Fictionalist says this holds iff according to PW , there's a world where London is capital of England. But PW doesn't say anything about the contents of particular worlds! Solution: Think of PW as containing an "encyclopedia" specifying what goes on (non-modally speaking) in the actual world. Other recommended postulates: (a) Reality consists of a plurality of universes or 'worlds'; (b) One of these is the *actual* world: the largest spatiotemporal system of which we are parts. (c) The other worlds are of roughly the same kind as the actual world. (d) Each universe is spatiotemporally isolated. (e) The totality of universes closed under a principle of *recombination*: for any collection of objects from any number of universes, there is a single universe containing intrinsic duplicates of each in any arrangement. (f) No arbitrary limits on the number and range of universes. (g) Our universe is nothing special. Get used to it.
2. Isn't the fictionalist committed to PW , an abstract object? If you're going to admit that into your ontology, why not go for actualist-type worlds? Answer: Mad dog realism is more fruitful and easier to work with than the various actualisms. We get to have our mad dog cake and eat it too.
3. Incompleteness problem. Consider a modal claim "with a determinate truth value of which we are ignorant," say, *there could have been κ objects*. Does PW address this question? Presumably not, else it might address it wrong. The story is silent on this point. So it is false both that according to PW , there is a world with κ objects and that according to PW , there are no worlds with κ objects. Our biconditional S iff according to PW , S^* , now tells us it false both that there could have been κ -objects and that there couldn't have been that many objects. That's a contradiction! And the realist thinks one of the disjuncts is true. Solution: Change the biconditional to S is true iff S^* is true- according-to- PW , and false iff it is false-according-to- PW . Now it is neither true nor false that there could have been κ objects. Realist objects it must be one or the other; we can reply that intuitively there is no fact of the matter, the realist can't make sense of this, we can.
4. Argument from concern. Humphrey cares a lot that he could have been president, not at all that a counterpart in some other world is president. Kripke thinks that's a reason not to identify the two facts. But Humphrey cares even less whether according to a certain story, there's a world where he's president! Or consider regret at not having taken the other road. Solution: Stipulate that the story has worlds to witness all and only the genuine possibilities. Humphrey cares if a story appropriately sensitive to what's really possible has a world where he wins. But then we have to give up reduction of modality to "something else."
5. Self-defeat objection. According to the story, there are lots of world. More than that, it is true at each world that there are lots of other worlds. Formally, according to PW , $\forall w$ (it is true in w that there are worlds other than w). But the translation scheme says $\Box S$ iff according to P , $\forall w$ (it is true in w that S). It seems we can conclude that \Box (there are lots of worlds). And from that it follows that as a matter of actual fact, there are lots of worlds. The fictionalist is realist malgré lui (despite himself)! Solution: Nobody quite sure. Perhaps Fine-style fictionalism?