

Plantinga on Necessity and Possibility

Please answer all **QUESTIONS** in a sentence or two. The **BONUS QUESTIONS** are especially difficult; correct (or even plausible) answers to **BONUS QUESTIONS** will receive extra credit. Bring **two copies** of your answers (one to turn in, one to keep) to class with you on Monday, 23 Jan 2023. **No electronic submissions will be accepted.**

1. TERMINOLOGY:

- ‘**modal**’:
a philosopher’s term of art meaning *pertaining to what’s necessary, contingent, and possible*. Thus, **modal claims** are claims about what’s necessary, possible, or contingent; **modal facts** are facts regarding the same. This term has a complicated and obscure etymology.
- ‘**contingent**’:
pertaining to what is true but might not have been; opposed to ‘**necessary**’ which means *pertaining to what is, and had to have been, true*.

QUESTION: Plantinga gives a number of examples of necessary truths. Give an example of a **contingent truth**, *i.e.*, a claim that is in fact true, but might have been false.

2. Plantinga notes that

NEC-IMP CORR p is necessary if and only if its **denial** is **IMpossible**.

This yields an equivalence between claims of necessity and impossibility.

QUESTION: For each of the following claims of necessity, state the equivalent impossibility claim:

- (1) It is necessary that $7 + 5 = 12$.
- (2) It is necessary that if all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal.
- (3) It is necessary that no numbers are human beings.

3. (**NEC-IMP CORR**) also implies

POSS-NONNEC CORR the **denial** of p is **NOT** necessary if and only if p is possible

QUESTION: For each of the following claims of possibility, state the equivalent non-necessity claim:

- (4) It is possible that Kamala Harris become president.
- (5) It is possible that all swans are black.
- (6) It is possible that there be no human beings.

BONUS QUESTION: Explain why (**NEC-IMP CORR**) implies (**POSS-NONNEC CORR**).

4. **QUESTION:** How does Plantinga distinguish **causal** necessity from **broadly logical** necessity?
5. **QUESTION:** How does Plantinga distinguish **necessary** truths from “**ungiveupable**” truths?
6. **QUESTION:** How does Plantinga distinguish **necessary** truths from **self-evident** truths?
7. **QUESTION:** Plantinga starts talking about *a priori* truths before he explains what those are supposed to be. He does eventually get around to giving a short explanation of what makes a truth *a priori*. How does he explain the notion?
8. **QUESTION:** How does Plantinga distinguish **necessary** truths from *a priori* truths?
9. **Modus Ponens:** Plantinga alludes to something called *modus ponens*. What is *modus ponens*? (If you don't know already, Google is your friend.)
10. **QUESTION:** What is **modality de dicto**?
11. **QUESTION:** What is **modality de re**?
12. **BONUS QUESTION:** State two claims which are as alike as possible, except that one expresses a de dicto modal claim, while the other expresses a *de re* modal claim.