Metaphysics MA exam/Winter 2016

Answer one question from each part. Time limit: 3 hours

Part I

1. What is Quine’s criterion for ontological commitment? Argue for or against it.

2. Philosophers as diverse as Kant, Moore and Kripke have struggled with the question “Is existence a predicate?” Exactly what hangs on this question, and how is it to be answered?

3. Are there fictional objects? Sketch and assess the most plausible responses to this question.

Part II

4. How should one distinguish intrinsic and relational properties? Why might one want to?

5. Do macroscopic objects cause anything? If so, is there pervasive causal overdetermination? Does it matter if there is?

6. Can causation be understood as a kind of dependence of one event upon another? Discuss why one might think it can, and why one might think it can’t.

Part III

7. What’s an essential property? What connection is there, if any, between something A having a property P in every possible world in which it exists and P being an essential property of A?

8. What is a criterion of identity? Of what importance are such criteria? Does either the identity of indiscernibles or the principle of the identity of relative indiscernibles provide such a principle?

9. Call Lumple the lump of clay a statue is made of. Call the statue Goliath. Evaluate the reasons for thinking Lumple and Goliath are the same object.