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## PROXY “ACTUALISM”★

**ABSTRACT.** Bernard Linsky and Edward Zalta have recently proposed a new form of actualism. I characterize the general form of their view and the motivations behind it. I argue that it is not quite new – it bears interesting similarities to Alvin Plantinga’s view – and that it definitely isn’t actualist.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It certainly seems as though I could have had a sister, even though I do not actually have one. The fact that I do not have one is about as contingent as they come; it is the result of one accidental fact piled upon another. However, I am an actualist. I deny that there are any mere *possibilia*, and instead insist that everything that exists actually exists. I deny that a merely possible sister of mine exists. So how can I account for the actual truth of ‘possibly, I have a sister’? Well, here is one answer – there actually exists a thing that could be my sister.

Bernard Linsky and Edward Zalta have recently proposed just such a view. They defend a new form of actualism according to which each possible world contains exactly the same domain of individuals (1994, 1996). Timothy Williamson has also recently defended a very similar view (1998, 2000, 2001), but he does not claim to be an actualist, and therefore remains mostly outside the scope of this paper. I propose to carefully examine the actualist version of this kind of view. Yet although I shall take Linsky and Zalta’s view as my starting point, my interest lies more in the general shape of their view than in the details. Indeed, I shall argue that their view bears some surprising but significant structural similarities to Alvin Plantinga’s modal metaphysics – both are forms of a view that I shall call “proxy actualism”. My goal in this paper is to

characterize this general style of view, explore the motivations behind it, and, eventually, to argue that it is not in fact actualist at all.

## 2. LINSKY AND ZALTA

Linsky and Zalta want to bring back what they call “the simplest quantified modal logic” – basically, a version of quantified K in which the quantifiers range over a fixed domain of individuals (1994). They reject the popular Kripke semantics (1963), with its world-restricted quantifiers and varying domains, and instead claim that the same things exist in every world. Consequently, their semantics validates both the Barcan Formula (BF) and its converse (CBF), as well as the claim that everything necessarily exists (NE):

BF:  $\Diamond \exists x \alpha \rightarrow \exists x \Diamond \alpha$  (or  $\forall x \Box \alpha \rightarrow \Box \forall x \alpha$ ),

CBF:  $\Box \forall x \alpha \rightarrow \forall x \Box \alpha$  (or  $\exists x \Diamond \alpha \rightarrow \Diamond \exists x \alpha$ ),

NE:  $\forall x \Box \exists y x = y$ .<sup>1</sup>

Yet a good part of the appeal of Kripke semantics is precisely that it avoids validating these claims. After all, the CBF entails the NE<sup>2</sup> – but it certainly does not *look* as though everything necessarily exists. Surely there could have been more – or fewer – things than there actually are. And the BF famously appears to entail the existence of mere *possibilia*; it seems to say that there are things that do not actually exist. Consequently, Linsky and Zalta set themselves the task of making these claims both more reasonable-sounding and consistent with actualism.

They begin by pointing out, quite rightly, that it is not really fair to characterize the BF as entailing the existence of mere *possibilia* (see also Marcus, 1986). After all, the BF does not say that the possible existence of a Keebler elf entails the actual existence of some kind of shadowy, see-through, merely possible Keebler elf. All the BF says is that the possible existence of a Keebler elf entails the actual existence of something that has the modal property *possibly being a Keebler elf*. Of course, this does not by itself help all *that* much, at least not if we want to

maintain some semblance of our normal modal intuitions. What actually existing thing could have been a Keebler elf? Me? My couch? We could deny various essentialist intuitions here, and claim that actual things are rather more modally malleable than we might have thought. But that move still wouldn't help with the claim that there could have been *more* things than there are. No actually existing thing could be distinct from all actually existing things – not unless it is so modally malleable that it could be distinct from itself! So this kind of attempt to defang the BF runs smack into the NE. Nothing has yet been said that will accommodate the possibility of alien individuals – things that do not exist but could. And nothing has yet been said that even purports to accommodate the contingency of most actual individuals – things that do exist but need not.

Thus far, though, I have been assuming that the actual world contains more or less what we standardly think it does – and Linsky and Zalta's key move is to deny precisely that. They claim that the actual world contains an awful lot more stuff than we might have thought. We have never noticed these extra objects because they are not concrete. However, they are *possibly* concrete, and worlds in which they are concrete are worlds that we would normally describe as being worlds in which they exist. Thus there indeed is a thing that is possibly a Keebler elf, but it is neither me nor my couch nor any of the other normal objects on which we throw our mail and stub our toes. The thing that is possibly a Keebler elf is a contingently nonconcrete object.

Linsky and Zalta think that there are a lot of contingently nonconcrete objects. They also think that there are a lot of contingently *concrete* objects – namely, all of the concrete objects that there actually are. My couch is a concrete object, but it need not have been. In some worlds it is not concrete. We usually describe those worlds as worlds in which it does not exist, but strictly speaking it *does*. Strictly speaking, of course, it exists in every world – after all, strictly speaking, everything necessarily exists. But it is not the case that everything is necessarily *concrete*, and that, say Linsky and Zalta, is enough to preserve our intuitions about contingent existence. Their claim,

in short, is that our everyday notion of existence is really the notion of *concreteness*.

This requires them to interpret modal claims in a somewhat deviant fashion. To say that I might not have existed, in the way that we normally mean that claim, is to say that I might not have been concrete – that there is a world in which I exist, but am not concrete. To say that I am possibly a few inches taller is to say that there is a world in which I am concrete and a few inches taller. To say that I am essentially human is to say that I am human in every world in which I am concrete (1994, p. 447). By distinguishing between concreteness and existence in this way, and reinterpreting everyday modal claims accordingly, Linsky and Zalta get to have both the simplicity of a fixed domain modal semantics *and* our intuitions about contingent existence and the possibility of aliens. While the quantifiers in the problematic theorems range over what exists, the quantifiers in the intuitions range over what is concrete at a world.

Many questions arise at this point. But before getting to them, I want to sketch the broad outlines of Plantinga's view, and the similarity between the two. This will allow me to back away from the details of either account, and pull to the surface the basic picture that the two views share.

### 3. PLANTINGA

Plantinga thinks that possible worlds – including the actual world (1976, p. 144; 1974, p. 45) – are abstract objects; they are maximal possible states of affairs. The actual world is the one maximal possible state of affairs that in fact obtains. What is true in a world is what would be true if that world were actual (1974, pp. 45–47).<sup>3</sup> What exists in a world is what would exist if that world were actual. However, fully understanding Plantinga's treatment of existence in a world, and of *de re* modality, requires understanding his notion of an individual essence.

An individual essence is a property E such that (a) it is possible for something to have E, (b) anything *x* that has E has

it essentially,<sup>4</sup> and (c) necessarily, any  $y$  that has  $E$  is identical to  $x$  (1974, p. 72). More intuitively, individual essences are properties possession of which is necessary and sufficient for *being* a certain thing. An object exists in a world just in case its essence(s)<sup>5</sup> would be exemplified if that world were actual – or, more loosely, just in case its essence is exemplified there. An object has a property in a world just in case its essence is co-exemplified with that property in that world. So, for example, "I could have been a bartender" is true because there is a possible world in which my essence is coexemplified with bartenderhood.

Plantinga has no trouble with the intuitions about contingency and aliens that were a bit tricky for Linsky and Zalta. A thing exists only contingently just in case its essence is only contingently exemplified; I might not have existed because there is a world in which my essence is not exemplified (1976, p. 155). And there indeed could be a thing distinct from all actual things, because there are essences that are exemplified in other possible worlds but that are not *actually* exemplified.

Importantly, this treatment does not commit him to the existence of nonactual things, for the relevant essences *do* actually exist. They just are not actually exemplified. Plantinga thinks that the same set of propositions exists in every world, even though the same ones are not true at every world (1974, p. 47). Ditto for properties; they exist necessarily, though few of them are necessarily instantiated (1976, p. 155). Like all properties, then, individual essences are necessary beings; they exist in every possible world (see esp. 1976, p. 155).

#### 4. PROXY "ACTUALISM"

Those final remarks probably make the similarity between Plantinga's view and Linsky and Zalta's view self-evident. On *both* accounts, there is a class of entities that in some sense or other is "in" every world, and another class of entities that varies from world to world. Where Plantinga has essences, Linsky and Zalta have things. Where Plantinga has *exemplified*

essences, Linsky and Zalta have *concrete* things. Things and essences exist in every world, but which things are concrete, and which essences are exemplified, varies from world to world.<sup>6</sup> Both views in some sense (yet to be explained) utilize both varying domains and a single fixed one.

That fixed class of necessarily existing entities contains what amounts to a stand-in for each possible thing – a stand-in that in each world  $w$  mirrors the existence or nonexistence of that thing in  $w$ . Because these actually existing stand-ins, or *proxies*, are in some metaphorical sense waiting to be drawn upon to populate other possible worlds, I shall call them the *stock*. And I shall call the class of things that are concrete, or whose essences are exemplified, in a world  $w$  the *display case* of  $w$ . This is the class that varies from world to world; it is what ordinary English speakers say exist in a world.

Both Plantinga and Linsky and Zalta distinguish between the stock and the display case; both postulate certain entities that exist in every world, but that have some other special property in some worlds but not in others. These entities can be captured by more than mere qualitative descriptions; they can in principle if not in practice be named. That is, they at least have Lagadonian names in Lewis' sense (1986, p. 145). Since there is one of them for each possible object, they stand proxy for *possibilia*.

I hereby dub the shared view that is emerging “proxy actualism”. However, elucidating it further requires elucidating the respects in which Plantinga's view differs from Linsky and Zalta's. After all, my claim is not that the two views are the *same*, but rather that they have a deep structural similarity. They differ in three connected ways. The first and most obvious of these differences is that they have different ontological commitments. Linsky and Zalta need not countenance the special sort of properties that are individual essences, and Plantinga need not claim that everyday objects are only contingently concrete. However, the fact that they postulate different entities to play the two required roles is obviously compatible with the claim that the roles themselves are just alike. It is the other two differences that are more interesting. I

shall now explore these in more detail, towards the end of characterizing the core similarity as clearly as possible.

The second difference can be brought out by considering a point that appears to be a rather serious stumbling block to my claim that the two views are structurally similar. The apparent stumbling block is this: we have already seen that Linsky and Zalta utilize a fixed domain semantics that validates the BF, NE, and CBF. But Plantinga utilizes the more standard varying domain Kripke semantics, and hence claims that the BF is invalid, and denies that everything necessarily exists.<sup>7</sup> Is not this a rather important difference?

Not really. It is largely explained by the fact that they differ on which of their two classes they label the "domain" of a world. Linsky and Zalta say the entire stock is the domain of a world, whereas Plantinga says that the smaller display case is. That is, Linsky and Zalta say that what exists in a world is everything in the stock, concrete or not; that is what their quantifiers range over. Plantinga, in contrast, says that only the things whose essences are exemplified in a world exist there; that is what *his* quantifiers range over. (See also Jager, 1982, esp. pp. 337–340).<sup>8</sup> So although the two parties do make claims that sound as though they contradict each other, this is largely due to disagreement about how to use the word "exists". For example, Linsky and Zalta say that my couch exists necessarily, and Plantinga says, more intuitively, that it exists only contingently. However, Linsky and Zalta can capture Plantinga's claim by saying that it is only contingently concrete – they also use the word "populates" for this (1996, p. 289). And Plantinga can capture Linsky and Zalta's claim by saying that its essence, though only contingently exemplified, necessarily exists.

Indeed, this difference between the two views can be erased simply by switching which class gets labeled as the domain of the quantifiers. Plantinga's view can be Linsky–Zaltafied by taking the domain of a world to be the entire class of essences – exemplified or not – that exist there. The Linsky–Zaltafied Plantinga would take his quantifiers to range over all of the essences that exist in a world – and would endorse the BF, CBF, and NE when thus understood. Similarly, Linsky and

Zalta's view can be Plantingafied by taking the domain of a world to be the class of *concrete* things – rather than the class of all things – that exist there. The Plantingafied Linsky and Zalta would take their quantifiers to be restricted to the concrete objects in each world, and would therefore deny the BF, CBF, and NE thus understood. However, in neither direction do these transformations affect much of metaphysical substance. They are just a matter of shuffling around the tags that say “domain”, and hence “exists in a world”.

The third difference is connected, but matters more. Plantinga, unlike Linsky and Zalta, does not take the display case of any world to be a subclass of the stock. That is, not only does Plantinga not take the domain of a world to be the entire class of essences; he also does not take the domain of a world to be the class of essences that are *exemplified* at that world. He instead takes the domain of a world to be the things that *do* the exemplifying, the class of *things* whose essences are exemplified there. So Plantinga denies both that the domain of a world *is* the stock and that it is a subclass of the stock. For Plantinga, the domain/display case of a world is another class entirely.

Consider Hank, a possible Keebler elf, and his individual essence E. E exists in every world, and is exemplified in some worlds and not in others. But *Hank* only exists in some worlds. In those worlds in which he exists, he exemplifies E, and nothing other than Hank ever exemplifies E. Necessarily, Hank exists when and only when E is exemplified. But Hank is not identical to the exemplified essence E. Note that this underscores Plantinga's rejection of the Barcan formula. Because it is *Hank* that could exist and be a Keebler elf, not the essence E, no actually existing thing has the modal property *possibly being a Keebler elf*. E could be exemplified – and only by Hank the Keebler elf – but it is not itself possibly a Keebler elf. Of course, the Barcan formula *does* hold for quantifiers ranging over the set of all essences. If it is possible for an essence to be coexemplified with Keebler elfhood, then there is an essence that is possibly exemplified with Keebler elfhood. But it does not hold for quantifiers ranging over



objects themselves. In worlds in which an object's essence is not exemplified, it does not exist at all. Objects are not themselves members of the stock.

Now, it is worth mentioning in passing that some of Plantinga's interests are arguably better served by the simplified view that results from identifying what exists in a world with the class of essences exemplified there. For example, the formal semantics that Jager provides (1982) – and that Plantinga accepts (1976, 160n8) – requires the simplified version. Jager takes the domain of a world to be the class of essences that are exemplified at that world, not a *further* class of things that exemplify those essences there.<sup>9</sup> Further, Plantinga's famous insistence upon genuine transworld identity (1974, ch. 6; see also van Inwagen 1985) *might* – depending on what exactly he wants that phrase to cover – also require the simplified view.<sup>10</sup> I have relegated various details to footnotes because I do not want to dwell on them. I merely want to point out that this simplified view – basically, what I described above as the Plantingafied version of Linsky and Zalta's view – does have certain advantages. But there really is no case to be made for the claim that the view is *Plantinga's*; it clearly does not fit his explicit claims.

At any rate, here is the upshot of this third difference between Linsky and Zalta's and Plantinga's views. Linsky and Zalta treat the inhabitants of the various possible worlds like the lightbulbs on an old fashioned scoreboard. The same lightbulbs are always *there*; what differs from goal to goal is which ones are lit up. Plantinga, however, treats the inhabitants of the various possible worlds more like further entities that are tethered to particular lightbulbs than like the lightbulbs themselves. Plantinga does not think that the same class of things exists in every world, and that some members of *that very class* have some other special property in some worlds and not in others. Plantinga's proxies are not identical to the things they go proxy for. But they are indeed proxies. Plantinga's essences, just like Linsky and Zalta's plethora of objects, witness the existence or nonexistence of every possible object in each possible world.

It is time to stop exploring the differences and get a bit more precise about the core structural similarity. Define the notion of a proxy relation as follows: entity  $p$  stands proxy for an object  $o$  just in case  $p$  necessarily exists, and there is some property  $F$  such that, necessarily,  $o$  exists in the standard English sense—i.e., is in the display case—if and only if  $p$  has  $F$ . Define proxy actualism as the view that there is a proxy relation such that every possible object has a proxy. More formally, proxy actualism is the view that the following holds, where  $E$  is the existence predicate, and  $D$  means ‘is in the display case’:

$$\Box \exists F \forall x \exists y [\Box E y \& \Box (F y \leftrightarrow D x)]^{11}$$

Call the relation between things and their proxies the *proxy relation*, call  $F$  the *witness property*, and call  $D$  the *display property*.

For Linsky and Zalta, the proxies are normal objects, and both the witness property  $F$  and the display property  $D$  are *being concrete*. For Plantinga, the proxies are individual essences, the display property  $D$  is just existence, and the witness property  $F$  is the second-order property *being exemplified*. On Linsky and Zalta’s view, the proxy relation is identity; objects stand proxy for themselves. On Plantinga’s view, the proxy relation is the nonidentity relation that holds between a thing and its individual essence. The essences constitute an additional class of individuals, each of which stands in the relevant relation to one and only one possible thing. But in both cases, there is a class of necessary existents that stands in an interesting and important isomorphism to the class of all *possibilia*. And that is what makes both views count as proxy actualist.

So although Plantinga’s view and Linsky and Zalta’s differ in three important and connected ways – in their ontologies, in their choice of domain, and in their choice of proxy relation – these differences are swamped by the fact that both say that each possible thing has a particular nonqualitative witness or stand-in in the actual world. Both views are forms of proxy actualism.

## 5. SOME OTHER MODAL – ISMS

The alternative to proxy actualism is a view that I shall unsurprisingly call "nonproxy actualism". The nonproxy actualist says that there are no proxies. She says that there are no particular, nonqualitative, actual stand-ins for possible individuals. She rejects the idea of an enlarged stock, and says that things that are not contained within the display case of a world do not exist in that world at all. The distinction between proxy and nonproxy actualism is basically the same as what G. W. Fitch describes as the distinction between "Platonic" and "Aristotelian" actualism (1996). However, it does not line up perfectly with more well-entrenched labels – in particular, it does not line up perfectly with Lewis' well known categorization of forms of ersatzism as linguistic, pictorial, or magical (1986, p. 141ff).

This is simply because Lewis is primarily concerned with a question about how various kinds of ersatz worlds represent what is possible – by language, by picture-like structure, or by magic. But the question here is instead about the ontology available to *do* the representing. Because Lewis takes it for granted that the linguistic ersatzist has no proxies, and thus cannot name alien individuals (1986, p. 158), linguistic ersatzism as he in fact discusses it is a form of nonproxy actualism. However, it need not be, not insofar as it is characterized in terms of the representation of possibilities by language. The proxy actualist can simply adopt a Lagadonian language, in which everything in the stock serves as a name of itself, and call himself a linguistic ersatzist. Now, there is certainly reason to think that there is something mysterious and "magical" about such a language, about how it represents particular possibilities about things that are not in the display case. This is the source of the pull to characterize proxy actualists as magical ersatzists, as Lewis characterizes Plantinga (141). I do not want to dwell on this; my point here is just that the distinction between proxy and nonproxy actualism is slightly orthogonal to Lewis' distinctions among forms of ersatzism. The proxy/nonproxy

distinction should be further clarified by my discussion of the motivations for proxy actualism in the next section.

Before discussing those motivations, however, I must address a further question about how to situate proxy actualism with respect to another one of the -isms that abound in this area. How does proxy actualism relate to serious actualism? Serious actualism is the view that “nothing has any properties in any world in which it does not exist” (Plantinga 1983, p. 4). Plantinga both coined the term and endorses the view, as do Linsky and Zalta. But the connection between serious actualism and proxy actualism is complicated.

The main complication is that once proxy actualism is on the table, we need to distinguish between two ways to be a less-than-fully-serious actualist. One way to do so is to say that things can have properties in worlds in which they are not present in any way – or, better, that things can have properties without even having a proxy in the stock. For a nonproxy actualist, this just reduces to nonserious actualism. But a proxy actualist has another, less deeply nonserious way to be a nonserious actualist. This is to say that things can have properties in worlds in which they are merely not in the display case.

Now, any proxy actualist should definitely reject the first form of nonserious actualism. That is, they should endorse what I’ll call minimally serious actualism:

Minimally serious actualism: Nothing can have any properties in a world unless it has a proxy in the stock.

Again, for a nonproxy actualist, this reduces to serious actualism. All proxy actualists should endorse it, because for them the alternative is to claim that objects can have properties in worlds in which they are not even *possible*. After all, proxy actualists think that each possible object – anything that could be a member of the display case of any world – has a proxy in the stock of every world. They think that only impossible objects fail to have proxies in the stock in the first place, and

therefore must think that only impossible objects could falsify minimally serious actualism.

Both Linsky and Zalta and Plantinga unquestionably endorse minimally serious actualism. Indeed, both accept something stronger – something more in the ballpark of the denial of the second form of nonserious actualism above. That is, neither thinks that things can have whatever properties they like in worlds in which they are not in the display case. Now, the other differences between their views mean that they differ on the details of just what stronger claim they endorse.<sup>12</sup> But all that matters for present purposes is that both clearly accept minimally serious actualism, as they should.

Although I am not going to defend minimally serious actualism here, I will assume it in what follows. That is, I will hold fixed the claim that objects cannot have properties in worlds in which neither they nor their proxies exist. It is an interesting question how the nonserious actualist view that they *can* stacks up against (minimally serious) proxy actualism. As we shall see in the next section, the two share certain advantages. But in order to focus on the question of proxies, I shall hold minimally serious actualism fixed. The question, then, is this – why would anyone be a minimally serious proxy actualist rather than a minimally serious nonproxy actualist? Or, since “minimally serious proxy actualist” is somewhat redundant, why would anyone be a proxy actualist rather than a serious nonproxy actualist? Sorting out what advantages the proxy actualist has over the *nonserious* nonproxy actualist will have to wait for another occasion.

## 6. MOTIVATIONS AND VIRTUES

So what *are* the advantages of proxy actualism? There are at least three. It provides easy answers to a cluster of problems about (1) iterated modalities, (2) contingent existence, and (3) the possibility of alien individuals. The first two of these problems can also be accommodated by rejecting (minimally) serious actualism.

First, then, proxy actualism completely avoids Alan McMichael's concern about iterated modalities (1983), which is basically the same as Lewis' second problem of descriptive power for linguistic ersatzism (1986, p. 158).<sup>13</sup> This should hardly be surprising, given that McMichael initially raised the problem in the wake of rejecting Plantinga's view, and that Lewis similarly raises it specifically against (nonproxy) linguistic ersatzism. Here is the worry. As I noted at the beginning of the paper, I do not have a sister. But it appears to be true that I could have had a sister who was an architect, and that she – that very sister – could have been a truck driver instead. Some claims of the form  $\diamond \exists x(Fx \& \diamond Gx)$  appear to be both true and genuinely *de re*. But serious nonproxy actualists cannot accept that. Their nonproxy-ness means that they cannot say that my sister in some sense exists to have the modal property *possibly being a truck driver*. And their seriousness means that they cannot say that she has the modal property despite not existing at all.

Now, serious nonproxy actualists are not, on the whole, very worried about this.<sup>14</sup> But all that matters here is that proxy actualists have not got even a semblance of a problem; their view is tailor-made for tracking particular individuals across multiple possible worlds. They can countenance genuinely *de re* modal claims about things that are not in the display case, and hence that normal English speakers would not count as existing. And although these issues were introduced only after Plantinga developed his view, Linsky and Zalta are explicitly motivated by the desire to handle iterated modal claims (1994, p. 449).

Second, the proxy actualist has a ready answer to a problem that arises from the assumption that some things exist only contingently – a problem that is, at heart, about negative existentials. It goes like this. Sadly, I might not have existed. So the singular proposition *Bennett does not exist* is possibly true. So there is a world in which it is true, despite my nonexistence there. But how can a singular proposition about me be true in a world in which I do not exist? If I do not exist in a world, neither do singular propositions about me, and propositions

that do not exist cannot be true (cf. Plantinga, 1983; Williamson, 2001).

Now, there is a *lot* to be said about this argument-sketch, but I am not going to say much of it here. Nonserious actualists can say that I have the property of nonexistence in worlds in which I do not exist; they can reject the claim that singular propositions have to exist in order to be true (see Salmon, 1998). And nonproxy actualists have their own tricks up their sleeve.<sup>15</sup> But all I want to say is that regardless of what answers are available to others, proxy actualists have their own easy answer readily available. Their answer is that I am not exactly straightforwardly *absent* from the world  $w$  in which I do not exist. Even though I do not quite exist in  $w$ , a proxy for me does. Perhaps I exist but am not concrete, or perhaps my essence exists but is not exemplified, etc. Either way, the existence of my proxy is apparently enough to demystify the existence and truth in  $w$  of the singular negative existential proposition *Bennett does not exist*. Indeed, the above argument spelled out more carefully, of course – is one of Plantinga's two main reasons for postulating the existence of uninstantiated essences (1974, 1983; it is a big motivator for Williamson as well (2001)).

Plantinga's other main reason (1976) is what I am counting as the third motivation for proxy actualism. Proxy actualism permits a certain straightforward and putatively actualist-friendly treatment of the possibility of alien individuals. Actualists want to say that there are not any things that do not actually exist, but they also want to say that there *could be* things that do not actually exist. Actualism is not supposed to rule out the possibility of talking donkeys, Keebler elves, and the like. Yet it does require that the only possible worlds are ersatz worlds, concocted in one way or another from actually existing materials – and it is not obvious how such worlds can contain anything that the actual world does not contain. This is a familiar worry. What is less familiar is that given a certain understanding of actualism – an understanding that both Plantinga and Linsky and Zalta endorse – the *only way* to render actualism compatible with the possibility of aliens is to postulate the existence of proxies.

The understanding in question is one according to which actualism requires that anything that exists in any other possible world be included in the actual world as well. On this understanding, then, actualism requires that the contents of each possible world must in some sense be found among the contents of the actual world. This is a pretty strong requirement. I myself do not think that this is the best form of actualism on the market; I explore the relations between various candidate versions of actualism elsewhere (Bennett, 2005). But anyone who *does* endorse it, and who also wants to accommodate the possibility of aliens, is forced into believing in proxies.

After all, taken at face value, the form of actualism on the table is one according to which the *domain* of the actual world includes the domain of every other possible world – that is, according to which every possible thing actually exists. But *that* is clearly incompatible with the claim that there could have been a thing distinct from all actual things. The only way to even approximately reconcile the two is to draw a distinction between two classes of things within the actual world. The claim just has to be that the way in which possible things are contained within the actual world is not the same as the way in which *actual* things are. The aliens intuition is an intuition about the display case, whereas the “domain” inclusion version of actualism is really about the stock. Without this distinction, the two claims are straightforwardly incompatible with each other.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the distinction between stock and display case is being used here in just the way that Linsky and Zalta use it to defang the BF. And that should not be surprising, given that the form of actualism on the table straightforwardly entails the BF (see note 1). Now, many actualists will be rather taken aback at the suggestion that actualism entails the BF, and will deny that their own versions of actualism commit them to anything of the sort. That is true. But fairness requires noting that the inclusion requirement *is* a perfectly natural way to understand the slogan “everything is actual”. It just is not the *only* way to understand it (again, see 2005).



But it is certainly the way Linsky and Zalta and Plantinga understand it. Plantinga is quite explicit about this: "the domain of any possible world  $W$ , from the actualist perspective, is a subset of  $\psi(\alpha)$  [the domain of the actual world]" (1976, p. 155).<sup>17</sup> Note that by "domain" here Plantinga clearly means what I am calling the stock – for him, the set of all essences (see note 8). Linsky and Zalta are not so explicit, but the fact that they understand actualism in the same way can be clearly seen in a complaint that they lodge against Kripke (1994, pp. 439–440) – a complaint that Plantinga lodges as well (1974, pp. 128–130; 1976, p. 154; see also Jager, 1982, p. 336). They claim that Kripke's varying-domain modal semantics is possibilist. Why? Because of the very fact that it lets the domains vary without constraint: "there are perfectly good Kripke models in which there are objects in the domains of other worlds that are not in the domain of the actual world" (1994, p. 439). Those objects, they claim, are *possibilia*; they exist but do not actually exist. They admit that the fact that Kripke's object language only contains world-restricted quantifiers means that in no world can it ever truly be *said* that there are nonactual objects. In any given world, the quantifiers range only over what exists in that world. But they claim that this does not affect their point. As Linsky and Zalta put it, the *possibilia* "are there in the semantics, even though the object-language quantifiers can't reach them" (1994, p. 440).

The thought that a view's ontological commitments can outrun what its official language allows us to say is a good one. And it is true that all actualists must be careful with their Kripke semantics (2005). But the claim that Kripke's meta-language is possibilist simply because the domains of other worlds contain things not contained in this one obviously depends on taking actualism to be the claim that the actual world includes the domain of every other possible world. Whatever you think of this idea, it does seem to be both Plantinga and Linsky and Zalta's conception of actualism. And given that conception, their desire to accommodate something like the possibility of alien individuals flat out requires them to

postulate proxies in the actual world.<sup>18</sup> That, then, is the third and final motivation for proxy actualism.

Now, there are alternate responses available to all three of the issues I have discussed in this section. None of them would inspire conversion; none of them would move a committed nonproxy actualist. The committed nonproxy actualist will count his inability to handle iterated modal claims as a strength (see note 14), will provide an alternate treatment of otherworldly negative existentials (see note 15), and will claim that the thought that proxies are needed to accommodate the possibility of aliens rests on a misunderstanding of actualism. I am very much in sympathy with all of these moves. Let me be clear, then, that I have not yet been trying to either support or undermine proxy actualism. I have instead simply been exploring the motivations behind it in order to further elucidate the different packages of views held by the proxy and nonproxy actualist.

#### 7. PROXY “ACTUALISM” IS NOT ACTUALIST

So what should we think of proxy actualism, now that we have a better grip on what it is? There are a number of worries here that I am simply going to set aside. For example, there are worries about the requisite ontology, as well as worries about how the proxies are supposed to stand in for particular possibilities. Can nonqualitative individual essences really exist uninstantiated (cf. Adams, 1981; McMichael, 1983; Fine, 1985)? Do we really want to allow ordinary middle-sized dry goods to be possibly nonconcrete? Do we really want to postulate such vast numbers of either nonconcrete things or unexemplified essences? And how are we to individuate them? What makes *this* one my possible sister and *that* one just a possible toaster oven?<sup>19</sup> But I raise these questions simply to set them aside. There is only one problem that I am going to pursue here – namely, the fact that proxy actualism *is not actualism at all*. Now, I have come across occasional hints to the effect that one or the other of Linsky and Zalta’s or Plantinga’s view is possibilist.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see in a moment, however, that is not quite my claim.

A first, and very natural, attempt to make the point here would be to complain that all the proxy actualist is doing is stuffing the entire space of possibility into the actual world (and indeed, into *every* world). But while that claim has a nice ring to it, it alone would not do. It does not really show that the view is not actualist. Note, for example, that someone who both accepts possible world semantics and believes that the actual world is the only world – and who therefore believes that everything that actually exists necessarily exists – could be described as “stuffing the entire space of possibility into the actual world”. But such a person is surely an actualist *par excellence*! The real problem, then, is not that the proxy actualist says that the actual world contains all the possible things. It is rather that he does so while insisting upon the possibility of aliens as discussed just above; it is that he draws a distinction between two sharply different groups of things within the actual world. It is the fact that he distinguishes between the stock and the display case. Let me try to explain this a bit more carefully.

Bear in mind that one standard way of characterizing the distinction between actualists and possibilists is in terms of the fact that possibilists countenance two kinds of existential quantifier, and actualists refuse to do so (see Lycan, 1991, p. 217). That is, the possibilist quantifies over *both* what exists within a particular world, *and* over what exists across the entire space of possibility. So when the possibilist says “there exist nonactual things”, what she is saying is that there exist in the inclusive sense things that do not exist in the narrower sense. David Lewis is well known for this, of course, but Meinong makes a similar maneuver (see Lewis, 1990; Lycan, 1991). Actualists, in contrast, recognize one and only one use of the existential quantifier – it means “there is”, “there exists”, and “is actual”, all at the same time.

But if this is a reasonable characterization of the actualist/possibilist divide – and I challenge the reader to come up with a better one – then the proxy actualist is in trouble. He is precisely, though surreptitiously, introducing a second existential quantifier. However, his two quantifiers are not the same as the possibilist’s, and this is important. The possibilist’s inclusive

existential quantifier ranges over the entire space of possibility, and her narrower one only ranges over the actual world. In contrast, the proxy actualist's inclusive quantifier ranges over the stock – all of whose members actually exist – and his narrower one ranges over the display case of the actual world. Thus they *do* both range over actual things. Consequently, although the proxy actualist does surreptitiously distinguish between two senses of the existential quantifier, he does not make the classic possibilist claim that there exist things that are not actual. What he *does* say, though, is that there exist in the stock things that do not exist in the display case. And since normal English speakers elide “exist in the display case” as “exist”, full stop – the normal English quantifier is the narrow one – it is natural, if tendentious, to translate that claim as saying that *there are actual things that do not exist*.

Consequently, the proxy actualist is quite right to insist that he is not committed to mere *possibilia*. He is committed, instead, to mere *actualia*. He does not believe that anything exists without actually existing; what he believes is that some things are actual without existing. On his view, the actual world is *full* of things like Hank the possible Keebler elf – things that hover in the actual stock, but only enter the display case in other worlds. These things are mere *actualia*. And they are why proxy “actualism” is not actualism at all.

However, it is not possibilism either, not if possibilism is defined by a commitment to *possibilia*. I think it is best to take actualism to be defined by a biconditional between existence and actuality; everything that exists is actual *and the other way 'round*. Possibilism is the result of denying one direction of that biconditional, the direction that says that everything that exists is actual. Proxy actualism is the result of denying the other direction of the biconditional, the direction that says that everything that is actual exists. On this usage, then, actualism and possibilism are not contradictories. Proxy actualism is *neither*; it falls into the gap between the two. Now, I realize that this is to some extent terminological, but I do very much think that it is a helpful way to map the landscape here. Nonetheless, what really matters is that their sharp distinction between stock

and display case entails that proxy actualism is not actualism. My further claim that it does not thereby count as possibilism is of less importance.

There are some important objections that arise at this point, and I shall consider them in a moment. But before doing so, I want to quickly draw one further moral from what I have said thus far – namely, that the domain inclusion version of actualism described in the previous section is not a particularly stable position. As I argued there, the only way for such a view to accommodate the possibility of aliens is by postulating proxies, by distinguishing between two importantly different domains of quantification within the actual world. But as I have just argued here, drawing that distinction amounts to giving up on actualism. The consequence is clear – characterizing actualism in terms of domain inclusion requires denying the possibility of aliens. Or, to put the point another way 'round, accommodating aliens requires either denying actualism, or else denying that it is properly characterized in terms of domain inclusion. I know which choice I would make. But those who do want to adopt that very strong form of actualism should at least acknowledge the costs of their view.

## 8. TWO OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

I want to consider two main objections to my two-part claim that (i) Linsky and Zalta and Plantinga are proxy actualists, and (ii) proxy actualism is not actualism at all. The first of these mostly just gives me an excuse to clarify what my complaint about proxy actualism is. The second is an attempt to defend Plantinga from that complaint.

First, then, someone might object that proxy actualists are not committed to the existence of Keebler elves, talking donkeys, and fat men in the doorway. Not even the proxy actualist thinks such things exist in *any* sense. At best, what exist are things that *could be* Keebler elves, talking donkeys, and fat men in the doorway – not any things that actually *are*. Linsky and Zalta, for example, say that “there are nonconcrete objects

which, at other worlds, are (variously) fat men, b's sister, and million carat diamonds. They are not, of course, fat men, b's sister, etc., at our world, but they exist and are actual" (1994, p. 446). And Plantinga will similarly say that although there are essences that, at other worlds, could be exemplified by such oddities, there certainly are no essences that *are*. Both, recall, endorse something stronger than minimally serious actualism; both think that only things in the display case can have properties like *being a Keebler elf*. Both will deny that their proxies instantiate any nontrivial, nonnegative – henceforth, “interesting” – nonmodal properties at all.<sup>21</sup>

Now, the more the proxy actualist insists that his proxies do not instantiate any interesting nonmodal properties, the more mysteries he monders about how to individuate them and how to make sense of how they stand in for the individual possibilities that they do. After all, every proxy instantiates the *same* trivial and negative properties. They differ from one another *only* on their modal properties; they differ from one another only on what properties they *would* instantiate if they were concrete or were exemplified. Are these differences utterly bare? Again, however, these are not the sorts of objection I want to pursue in detail. So let us continue to assume that something stronger than minimally serious actualism is true, and that the proxies have not got any interesting nonmodal properties.

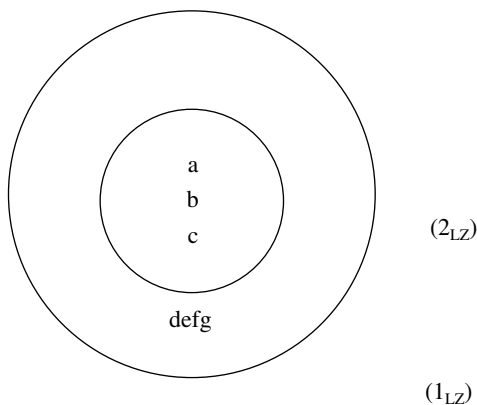
It does not affect my claim that proxy actualism is not actualism. My complaint was not that the proxy actualist says that the actual world is full of Keebler elves and zillions of fat men in the doorway. I did not say that, when he speaks with his quantifiers “wide open”, the proxy actualist is just as committed to the actual truth of “there are Keebler elves” as Lewis is. All I said is that the proxy actualist distinguishes between two very different domains of quantification within the actual world, and therefore that the actual world contains a lot more individuals than we might have thought. These individuals can be utterly bare and simple particulars for all I care. After all, *we do not need to pick them out qualitatively*. They can be *named*, at least Lagadonianly. There is Hank – or at least his essence.

Hank would be a Keebler elf if he were concrete; the essence would be exemplified by a Keebler elf if it were exemplified at all. If only the proxy could make its way from the stock into the display case! But seeing as it has not done so, it is no more a Keebler elf than it is an emperor penguin or bright purple. But we can in principle name it, and we can certainly quantify over it. And that is all my point requires.

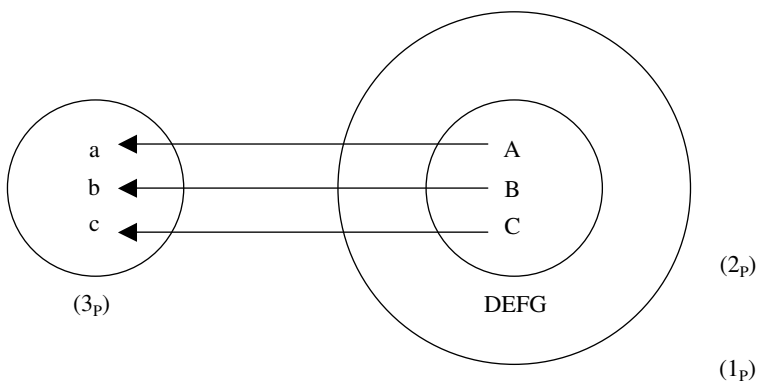
The second objection will come from Plantinga, who will want to defend himself against the charge that he is not really an actualist. He might claim that even though I am right about Linsky and Zalta, I am wrong about *him*. He will claim that the fact that he denies that the proxy function is identity – that the display case of each world is a subclass of the stock – gives him a major advantage. He does not say that Hank himself actually exists. Linsky and Zalta, in contrast, *do*. Oh, he is not concrete, he is not a Keebler elf, and he is not in the display case, but he does straightforwardly exist. And, the objection continues, *that* is why Linsky and Zalta are not really actualists. They have simply replaced the possibilist's distinction between the actual and the possible with a distinction between the concrete and the contingently nonconcrete. They have simply moved the line closer to home, as it were. But the same cannot be said of *Plantinga*. Because he denies that Hank himself is a member of the stock, he denies that he is contained in the actual world in any sense – and can consequently rebuff the suggestion that he has simply moved the possibilist's distinction between actual and possible existence within the realm of the actual.

I will be the first to admit that the problem with Plantinga's view is harder to *say*. Many parts of this paper would have been much easier to write if he, too, were committed to the actual existence of *possibilia* themselves rather than just the essences that go proxy for them. But the fact remains that he is as committed as Linsky and Zalta to quantifying over particular, namable entities that stand in the important one–one relationship to *possibilia* that I defined on p. 272. I cannot see how the fact that that one–one relationship is not identity is supposed to help. If anything, it makes matters worse. After all, in saying that the proxies are distinct from the things they go

proxy for, Plantinga is committed to *more stuff*. To see this, notice that, at the level of essences, Plantinga’s view is *exactly parallel* to Linsky and Zalta’s. His view also entails that each world contains a crucially important subclass of the stock – namely, the class of essences that are exemplified in that world. Consider the following schematic representation of their two accounts of a toy possible world *w*:



Linsky and Zalta’s version of proxy ‘actualism’



Plantinga’s version of proxy ‘actualism’

Capital letters represent properties, and lower case letters represent individuals. In both cases, the largest circle (1)



represents the stock. For Linsky and Zalta, ( $1_{LZ}$ ) is also the domain of  $w$ , while the inner circle ( $2_{LZ}$ ) is the display case of  $w$ ; it is the class of concrete objects. For Plantinga, the inner circle ( $2_P$ ) is the class of exemplified essences, and the additional circle ( $3_P$ ) is the class of things that exemplify them – it, not ( $2_P$ ), is the display case and domain of  $w$ . That should all be familiar. The point that I am trying to make now is that the relationship between ( $1_P$ ) and ( $2_P$ ) is precisely the same as that between  $1_{LZ}$  and  $2_{LZ}$ . The right-hand side of Plantinga's diagram is precisely Linsky and Zalta's entire picture. It is hard to see how the addition of the left-hand part can erase or undermine the problem that this objector agrees that Linsky and Zalta's picture faces.

At this point, the objector will presumably claim that it is the ontological difference between Plantinga's view and Linsky and Zalta's that does the work; she will put a lot of weight upon the fact that Plantinga's proxies are properties rather than objects. But the weight is too much to bear. Perhaps there is a lot of ontological difference between things like the Eiffel Tower and properties like *being made of metal*. But, as others have pointed out before me (McMichael, 1983; Fine, 1985), there is not that much ontological difference between things like the Eiffel Tower and properties like *being the Eiffel Tower*. And the objector certainly cannot rest content with the claim that there is nothing funny about postulating whatever properties are needed, because everyone's ontology requires properties and the notion of exemplification anyway. Everyone's ontology requires objects and the notion of concreteness, too, but surely that is not going to deflect any suspicions about Linsky and Zalta's view.

We have seen two attempts to avoid the charge that Plantinga and Linsky and Zalta are proxy actualists, and therefore not really actualists at all. Neither of them come to much. The actual existence of a proxy for Hank the Keebler elf really is a threat to actualism, despite the fact that (1) that proxy is not itself actually a Keebler elf, and (2) Plantinga does not think that it is even itself *possibly* a Keebler elf. It does not

matter whether the proxy function is identity, whether it is Hank himself or merely his unworn essence that actually exists.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Proxy actualism, then, is not actualism at all. Whether it is *true* is of course another matter. Perhaps there is compelling reason to think that we must be proxy actualists – or perhaps instead nonserious actualists, or even possibilists. Perhaps the intuitions that motivate such views really must be accommodated, and cannot be accommodated in any other way. I do not think so, but I have not tried to argue that here. In particular, I have not provided any response to Timothy Williamson’s recent arguments in favor of fixed domain semantics and its attendant *possibilia* or proxies (esp. 1998, 2001). Note, though, that Williamson ducks the question of actualism (1998, p. 259). He is right to do so, or at least to avoid calling his own view actualist. It is not.

The only genuine kind of actualism is *nonproxy* actualism. Genuine actualists acknowledge that there is a world of difference between actual individuals and nonactual individuals. There just *are not* any of the latter. Nonactual individuals do not exist *in any sense*. Perhaps I could have a sister, perhaps there could be a Keebler elf named “Hank”. These things *could* exist, but they do not exist – and possibly existing is not a way of existing. Those of us who really want to be actualists should say, with Adams, that “all possibilities are purely qualitative except insofar as they involve individuals that actually exist” (1981, p. 3), and with Lycan and Shapiro that “nonexistents figure in no “singular propositions”, and that they are the objects of neither *de re* modalities nor *de re* propositional attitudes” (1986, p. 346). No actually existing thing could have been my sister, and there are no *de re* possibilities about that sister. There is the *de dicto* possibility of my having a sister, and that is all. It is, in short, crucial to actualism that we can only qualitatively describe nonactuals. Whether the alleged problems this generates suffice to undermine actualism remains,

for all I have said here, an open question. The point is just that actualism must face those alleged problems head on, not by postulating proxies.

## NOTES

★ I would like to thank Rae Langton, Jim Pryor, Robert Stalnaker, Ed Zalta, and, especially, an anonymous referee for *Philosophical Studies* for very helpful comments. Thanks also to Andrew Cortens, Michael Jubien, and an audience at the ANU for helpful discussion of an early version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> The BF is valid just in case worlds can only access worlds whose domains are a (possibly improper) subset of theirs. That is, letting " $wRw^*$ " mean " $w^*$  is accessible to  $w$ ", the BF is valid just in case for all  $w$ ,  $wRw^*$  only if  $D(w) \supseteq D(w^*)$ . The CBF is valid just in case worlds can only access worlds whose domains are a (possibly improper) *superset* of theirs. That is, the CBF is valid just in case for all  $w$ ,  $wRw^*$  only if  $D(w) \subseteq D(w^*)$ . See Hughes and Cresswell, 1996, pp. 275, 289–292. Further, brief reflection will show that, in S5 – in which each world is accessible to every other – the BF, the CBF, and the claim that every world has the same domain stand or fall together. (Note, though, that the BF and the CBF could both be valid even without fixed domains as long as some worlds are inaccessible to others).

<sup>2</sup> To see this, substitute  $\exists yx = y$  for  $\alpha$  in the CBF – the antecedent is true, and the consequent is the NE. See Linsky and Zalta, 1994, pp. 437–438 for a nice discussion of further details of the relationship between the CBF and the NE.

<sup>3</sup> More precisely, a proposition  $p$  is true in a world  $w$  just in case it is not possible for  $w$  to obtain and  $p$  to be false; *mutatis mutandis* for the other definitions. Nothing I have to say will turn on my use of the more counterfactually flavored shorthand; Plantinga uses it too.

<sup>4</sup> Plantinga's so-called "serious actualism" requires him to distinguish between necessary and essential possession of a property. A thing  $a$  has  $F$  essentially just in case  $a$  has  $F$  in every world in which  $a$  exists. Only necessarily existents can have properties necessarily.

<sup>5</sup> Plantinga actually thinks that things have multiple essences. Any property a thing has uniquely becomes an essence when world-indexed (1974, p. 72). For the sake of simplicity, I shall speak in the main text as though each thing only had one essence; this does not affect anything of substance.

<sup>6</sup> Plantinga is reasonably explicit about this. See 1974, p. 47, and Jager, 1982, p. 337.

<sup>7</sup> Because of the way he defines the ' $\square$ ' operator, Plantinga in fact claims that the CBF is valid (1974, pp. 59–60), and is also committed to the validity

of NE as formulated in the main text. He says that  $\Box Fa$  is true just in case  $a$  has  $F$  in every world in which it exists – that is,  $a$ 's essence is coexemplified with  $F$  in every world in which it is exemplified at all. Consider existence, the case that makes the CBF entail the NE. On Plantinga's view,  $\Box \forall x \exists y x = y$  does entail  $\forall x \Box \exists y x = y$ . But that latter claim does not say that everything necessarily exists. It simply says that everything is necessarily such that if it exists, it is identical to something.

<sup>8</sup> I am oversimplifying a bit. Plantinga sometimes uses "domain" to refer to the set of essences that exist in a world, and "essential domain" for the set of essences *exemplified* at a world. See 1976, pp. 155–156, for a very clear statement of this. But this is not very helpful terminology, given that (a) Plantinga clearly wants to say that the things that exist in a world  $w$  are the things whose essences are exemplified there, and (b) standard philosophical usage dictates taking the domain of a world to be what the quantifiers range over – i.e., to be what exists there. I have therefore opted in the main text to avoid the notion of an essential domain, and just speak of domains *simpliciter*. Thomas Jäger does the same in the formal semantics that he offers Plantinga; see especially 1982, p. 339. (Plantinga accepts Jäger's offer; see 1976, p. 160n8).

<sup>9</sup> The domain of a world is what exists there. Consequently, the fact that Jäger takes the domain of a world to be the set of essences that are exemplified there means that what really exists in a world are exemplified essences, not things that exemplify them. On Jäger's semantics, Hank the Keebler elf's essence is exemplified in some worlds – it would be exemplified (by Hank) if such a world were actual – but *Hank* is not in the domain of any world. Not unless we identify him with his exemplified essence.

<sup>10</sup> What I mean is this. The less simple interpretation does allow Plantinga to say that one thing can exist in many worlds, and this may very well be all that he wants. However, it does not allow him to say that *de re* representation works by identity. Suppose that there is a world in which I am 6 feet tall. If that world were actual, my essence would be exemplified and I – really, me – would exist. Plantinga can therefore say that I exist in  $w$  in just the way that I exist in  $\alpha$ , the actual world. I exist in both worlds. But he cannot say that the thing in  $w$  given that it is *not* actual, the thing that *represents* me in that nonactual world, is really numerically identical to me. It is my essence, but it is not me. I would exemplify that essence if that world were actual, but I am not a literal constituent of that world given that it is not actual. What represents me as existing there is my essence, and on the second interpretation I am not my essence. Only on the simplified interpretation I gave, which identifies things with essences, can he say that identity is the *de re* representation relation. So *if* Plantinga cares about that, he has strong reason to endorse the simplified interpretation. If not, not.

<sup>11</sup> Notice that the existential quantifier over properties is outside the scope of the universal quantifier over objects. This means that on any given ver-

sion of proxy actualism, there is only one witness property, and thus that the view cannot be trivialized by assigning properties like being *such that Bennett exists* to arbitrary necessary existents like the number 4. Thanks to Robert Stalnaker for helping me avoid this error.

<sup>12</sup> Plantinga, I think, can simply say that nothing has any properties in worlds in which it is not in the display case. But because they say that the proxy function is identity, Linsky and Zalta can only endorse the weaker claim that nothing has any nontrivial, nonnegative, nonmodal properties in worlds in which it is not in the display case. Even in the actual world, our friend Hank has properties like *being self-identical*, *being not an uncle*, and *being possibly a Keebler elf*.

<sup>13</sup> More accurately, Lewis' second problem of descriptive power (for alien individuals) is a special case of McMichael's problem of iterated modalities. Lewis' problem is as follows: if alien individuals can only be picked out *via* purely qualitative description, as nonproxy-linguistic-ersatzism has it, then there will be no way to capture the apparent possibility of alien individuals swapping qualitative roles. So such views are forced to conflate distinct possibilities; they cannot describe all the possibilities that there are (see 1986, § 3.2). Letting Q and R stand in for full qualitative descriptions, then, the claim is that nonproxy-linguistic-ersatzists cannot accommodate claims of the form:  $\diamond\exists x\exists y[(Qx\&Ry)\&\diamond(Rx\&Qy)]$ . This is just an instance of the iterated modalities objection as laid out in the main text.

<sup>14</sup> See Adams (1981), McMichael (1983), Lycan and Shapiro (1986), Fitch (1996). Also note Lewis' recognition that the problem of descriptive power for alien individuals is "a haecceitist's problem" (1986, p. 158). Nonproxy actualists will deny that modal claims about nonactuals can be genuinely *de re* – after all, there is no *re* for them to be *de*. So what can they say about claims like  $\diamond\exists x(Fx\&\diamond Gx)$ ? While they could deny that it is true, they typically instead deny that true existential quantifications must have instances. That is, they say that the truth of an existentially quantified claim at a world *w* does not require a *witness* in the domain of *w*. This allows them to say that there is a world *w* in which  $\exists x(Fx\&\diamond Gx)$  is true (and thus that  $\diamond\exists x(Fx\&\diamond Gx)$  is actually true) while denying that *w* contains a particular thing that is *F* and possibly *G*. See especially McMichael (1983, pp. 53–54), Lycan and Shapiro (1986, pp. 359–362), and Fitch (1996, pp. 65, 67).

<sup>15</sup> See Fine, 1985, esp. pp. 160–163 for detailed discussion of the argument, and Plantinga, 1985 for a response. See also Adams, 1981 for a view on the matter very similar to Fine's. Both Adams and Fine (and Prior before them; 1957, see also Fine, 1977) distinguish between two ways a proposition can be true of a world. A singular proposition can only be true *in* a world if its subject exists there, but it can be true *at* worlds in which the subject does not exist. On their view, negative existentials like "[author] does not exist" are true at many worlds but true in none. (The terminology is Adams'; Fine calls

them the “inner” and “outer” notion of truth, respectively). See Williamson, 2001 for a recent defense of Plantinga’s argument.

<sup>16</sup> What, you ask, about an Armstrong-style combinatorialism (1989)? On such a view, every possible world is built out of actually existing atoms; all possible combinatorial atoms are included in the domain of the actual world. Yet combinatorialists do say that there could have been things that do not actually exist. Is this a counterexample to my claim in the main text? No. The combinatorialist must do one of two things. She could claim that the alien individuals resulting from possible recombinations of the actual atoms *do* actually exist – as scattered objects that could be non-scattered (whose atomic parts could be spatio-temporally contiguous). This amounts to postulating proxies and accepting a distinction between stock and display case. Alternatively, she could claim that the alien individuals do not actually exist in any sense – which amounts to denying the domain inclusion characterization of actualism under discussion. A domain inclusion requirement on *atoms* is not the same as a domain inclusion requirement full stop. The claim in the main text stands; the only way to say that there could have been things that do not actually exist while maintaining the full domain inclusion requirement is by distinguishing between stock and display case.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, he runs through the argument from that conception of actualism, and the belief in aliens to the existence of proxies – for him, unexemplified essences – nearly as explicitly as I have:

“the actualist must hold, therefore, that  $\psi(W)$  [the domain of  $W$ ] is a subset of  $\psi(\alpha)$  [the domain of the actual world  $\alpha$ ] – despite the fact that  $W$  includes the existence of an object that does not exist in  $\alpha$ . How can this be managed? ... Easily enough; he must appeal to essences” (1976, pp. 155–156).

<sup>18</sup> Notice that it is at least arguable that *this* motivation for proxies could be satisfied simply by filling the actual world  $\alpha$  with proxies and letting it be the largest world. Arguably, that is, reconciling this conception of actualism with the possibility of aliens does not require postulating a fixed stock of proxies in *every* world; they would just all have to be in  $\alpha$ . Such a view would not validate the BF, CBF, or NE – though the BF would come out true at  $\alpha$ . However, this raises complicated issues about the modal status of actualism, and about the sense in which other worlds are possibly actual, that I have no intention of pursuing here. Besides, the *other* two motivations for proxies do motivate putting them in every world.

<sup>19</sup> C.f. Lewis on magical ersatzism (1986, § 3.4). Williamson, to his credit, faces these latter worries head-on (see especially 2001).

<sup>20</sup> For example, although McMichael’s primary objection to Plantinga’s view is that he does not believe in unexemplified nonqualitative essences, he also remarks in passing that the view “bears a striking structural resemblance to the possibilist theories we have rejected. In place of every

nonactual possible object, there stands an unexemplified Haecceity" (1983, p. 60). And Christopher Menzel suggests that Linksy and Zalta's view is "nothing but thinly veiled possibilism ... nothing but terminology distinguishes a mere *possibile* from a possibly (but not actually) concrete individual" (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Presumably, the proxies do instantiate properties like *being not a fat man* (if that is a property), and *being self-identical*. But since all proxies instantiate all the *same* negative and trivial properties, such properties are not going to do any interesting work.

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