

# Jan Plate – Curriculum Vitae

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## Office:

Université de Neuchâtel  
Institut de philosophie  
Espace Louis-Agassiz 1  
CH-2000 Neuchâtel  
Switzerland

Email: [jan.plate@gmail.com](mailto:jan.plate@gmail.com)

## Home:

Chemin de la Favarge 107  
CH-2000 Neuchâtel  
Switzerland

Phone: ++49 151 212 58485

## Areas of specialization:

- Metaphysics
- Philosophical logic
- Epistemology

## Areas of competence:

- Philosophy of mind
- Philosophy of language
- Logic

Further professional interests include: Philosophy of mathematics, and history of analytical philosophy.

## Employment

January 2014 – present: Université de Neuchâtel, Postdoc  
July 2013 – December 2013: Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Postdoc  
August 2012 – May 2013: Washington University in St. Louis, Lecturer

## Education

2012: Ph. D. in philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis  
Graduation date: December 2012  
Dissertation advisor: Thomas Sattig  
Dissertation title: Essence and Ontology

2005: M. Sc. in cognitive science, Universität Osnabrück, Germany  
Grade: *Hervorragend mit Auszeichnung* (excellent with distinction)  
Thesis advisor: Achim Stephan  
Thesis title: Physicalism and Subjectivity

2002: B. Sc. in cognitive science, Universität Osnabrück, Germany, having previously studied computer science and psycholinguistics at the university of Exeter (UK) and psychology and philosophy at Philipps-Universität Marburg (Germany).  
Grade: *Hervorragend* (excellent)

## Languages

German (native), English (fluent), French (intermediate), Latin (reading), Mandarin (basic)

## Publications

1. 'An Analysis of the Binding Problem', *Philosophical Psychology* **20** (2007), pp. 773-92.
2. 'Faces and Brains: The Limitations of Brain Scanning in Cognitive Science' (with Christopher Mole et al.), *Philosophical Psychology* **20** (2007), pp. 197-207.

Under review:

- 'In Defense of Relational Roles', under review at *Dialectica*.
- 'Relational Primitivism', under review at *Synthese*.
- 'Do We Have a Convincing Argument for the Sparseness of Perfectly Natural Properties and Relations?'
- Simplicity, Qualitativeness, and Intrinsicity, under review at *Mind*

In preparation:

- 'Essence and Ontology' (monograph)

## Presentations and Comments

1. Comments on Stephan Leuenberger's "Total Logic" at the Tübingen Metaphysics Workshop on "Existence, Truth and Fundamentality" (July 2013)
2. 'Who Needs Perfectly Natural Properties?' (June 2012)
3. 'Essence and Ontology' (April 2012)
4. 'Individuational Ontology' (September 2011)
5. 'Objections and Replies' (May 2011; the title refers to potential objections that might be leveled at an argument that I develop in an early version of my dissertation.)
6. 'The Problem of Essence' (October 2010)

## Awards

1. Annaliesa Hanebrink Tribute Scholarship in Arts and Sciences (both 2007 and 2008)
2. “Mind and Cognition” Essay Prize, University of Osnabrück 2002

## Teaching Experience

a) As lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis:

Spring 2013	Problems in Philosophy
Fall 2012	Problems in Philosophy
Summer 2011	Logic and Critical Analysis
Summer 2008	Problems in Philosophy

b) As teaching assistant at Washington University in St. Louis:

Spring 2012	Philosophy of Language
Fall 2011	Great Philosophers
Spring 2010	Philosophy of Mind
Fall 2010	Philosophy of Mind
Spring 2009	Logic and Critical Analysis
Fall 2008	Problems in Philosophy
Spring 2008	Great Philosophers
Fall 2007	Problems in Philosophy
Spring 2007	Introduction to Cognitive Science
Fall 2006	Symbolic Logic

c) As teaching assistant (*Tutor*) at Universität Osnabrück:

Fall 2003	PROLOG
Fall 2002	LISP

## Professional Service

- Reviewer for Philosophical Psychology

## Other academic work

- Translation of Achim Stephan’s *Emergenz: Von der Unvorhersagbarkeit zur Selbstorganisation* into English. To appear in *Synthese Library*.

## References

Thomas Sattig, research professor  
Department of Philosophy  
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen  
Germany  
Phone: ++49 7071 297 6079  
[thomas.sattig@philosophie.uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:thomas.sattig@philosophie.uni-tuebingen.de)

John Heil, professor  
Department of Philosophy  
Washington University in St. Louis  
USA  
Phone: ++1 314 935 5427  
[jh@wustl.edu](mailto:jh@wustl.edu)

Dennis Des Chene, professor  
Department of Philosophy  
Washington University in St. Louis  
USA  
Phone: (001) 314 935 6290  
[ddeschen@wustl.edu](mailto:ddeschen@wustl.edu)

Gillian Russell, associate professor  
Department of Philosophy  
Washington University in St. Louis  
USA  
Phone: (001) 314 935 6686  
[grussell@artsci.wustl.edu](mailto:grussell@artsci.wustl.edu)

## Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation provides an account of essentiality that satisfies two main desiderata:

- (1) The account should offer an explanation as to why the following two intuitions are true:
  - (i) It is essential to the set {Socrates} to have Socrates as a member.
  - (ii) It is not essential to Socrates to be a member of that set.
- (2) The account should do justice to the sense of philosophical significance that has traditionally been attached to the notion of essence.

The two intuitions mentioned in (1) together form what I call ‘Fine’s asymmetry’, after Kit Fine, whose paper ‘Essence and Modality’ has persuasively undermined the traditional modal account of essentiality by pointing out (among other worries) that this account cannot plausibly accommodate both of those intuitions.

The account of essentiality proposed in this dissertation offers an alternative to the modal account. It is reductive, in the sense that it provides truth-conditions for essentialist claims without in turn relying on any fundamental notions of an entity’s ‘nature’ or ‘identity’; nor does it rely on any concepts of metaphysical modality. Instead, it is based on a framework of sets, attributes, and states of affairs, which is introduced in chapters 2 and 3. The account itself is then developed in chapters 4 to 7. The first major step in this direction is the introduction, in chapter 4, of the concept of an *individuation ontology*, which results from a generalization and modification of Peter Aczel’s approach to the theory of non-well-founded sets. On this basis, chapter 5 introduces relativized concepts of essence and essentiality, where the relativization in question is to individuation ontologies.

The question of what conditions an individuation ontology  $O$  has to satisfy in order for essences-relative-to- $O$  to count as essences *simpliciter* is the topic of chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 sets out to develop a fairly straightforward approach, but this is quickly seen to face apparently insuperable difficulties. Chapter 7 develops a fundamentally different approach, which turns out to be more successful. In chapter 8, it is shown how the resulting account of essentiality manages to accommodate Fine’s asymmetry, and in the final chapter, the account is applied to an elucidation of *de re* modal discourse.