Classical Readings in Theoretical Philosophy

David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed*

Thomas Müller

In this course we’ll be reading David Wiggins’s book *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge UP 2001; ISBN 0-521-45619-3).

My idea is to devote the whole course to close reading of the book, possibly with an additional sessions on Aristotle. For each session there are a number of questions on the text that will be read, and each participant is expected to prepare an answer to a fair share of those questions for each session. Also, for every session one or two students will have the task of introducing the text to be read by giving a short presentation.

**Course layout**

**Periode 1**

**15 Sept:** First session: Introduction, distribution of topics for class presentations.  
Reading: Preface and Preamble.

**29 Sept:** Reading: Chapter 1.

**13 Oct:** Reading: Chapter 2.

**27 Oct:** Reading: Chapter 3.

**Periode 2**

**10 Nov:** Reading: Chapter 4.

**24 Nov:** Reading: Chapter 5.

**8 Dec:** Reading: Chapter 6. **Deadline for research problems.**

**5 Jan:** Reading: Chapter 7.

**19 Jan:** Additional slot.

**26 Jan:** (No class) **Deadline for final papers.**
Course requirements

Active participation and interaction with others

You are expected to attend all seminar sessions and prepare for them carefully. Among other things this means that you have to prepare in writing a brief answer to a fair share (nr. of questions / nr. of participants) of the questions on the text for each of the sessions. These questions are mostly not substantive in the sense that they directly pertain to Wiggins’s argument, but are rather meant to point at issues that may stand in need of clarification. We will collect your answers (preferably in LaTeX format; precise modus to be decided upon) in order to compile a sort of reading notes that will help us to make the text more transparent. — Furthermore you have to give one short presentation introducing one of the chapters (15min; joint presentations are welcome). This presentation and our discussions will proceed on the assumption that everybody has studied the respective text in detail. — You are also expected to interact with your fellow students by commenting on their work and continuing discussion with them after class. We should decide on appropriate online support for such discussions.

Final grade

Each student will write a 3000 word final paper (in English) on a subject related to the themes discussed in the course. The topic of the paper, in the form of a written research problem (one page giving your name and e-mail address, a title, a clearly stated question, an outline and some literature), has to be distributed among the course participants in the session before the winter break, i.e., on 8 December 2009. Please provide the necessary number of hardcopies. We will use some time the the session of 5 January to discuss these problems together and give feedback. The deadline for the final paper is 26 January 2010. The paper has to be turned in both as a printout (in my mailbox, Bestuursgebouw, 1st floor) and as an email attachment in PDF format (Thomas.Mueller@phil.uu.nl).

The paper needs to have (i) a cover sheet indicating the title, your name, student number and e-mail address, the course number and the date; (ii) an introduction stating the research problem and the goal of the paper; (iii) a main part; (iv) a conclusion and (v) a list of references consistently formatted in some standard style. — Deadlines are strict.

In the assessment of the paper, emphasis will be placed on the research problem and goal, on argumentative coherence and fairness, understanding of the relevant issues, originality, form, and clarity of writing. The final grade for the course will be equal to the grade for the final paper.
Questions on the Preamble (session of 15 September 2009)

1. List the three things that are to be done (p. 1) and give a brief description of options (A) and (B). Does Wiggins choose for one of them? Refer to the text in giving your answer.

2. Repair p. 2n1.

3. Give the argument referred to at p. 3n2.

4. Give a benign description of Noonan’s attempt referred to at p. 4, l. -5. Provide quotes and a full bibliographical reference.

5. Make the comparison with Wittgenstein’s Tractatus at p. 5, l. -15, explicit.

6. Describe Aristotle’s experiment referred to at the bottom of p. 5. Provide quotes and a full bibliographical reference.

7. Try to defend Kant against Wiggins’s protest given at the top of p. 6. Provide quotes, including the original German and full bibliographical references.

8. Resolve the Wittgenstein reference at p. 6, l. 10f. Give some context and quote the original German as well as an English translation, giving full bibliographical references.

9. Give an example of the use of “individuate” referred to at p. 6n4.

10. If a thing has spatio-temporal boundaries (cf. p. 6, l. 20), doesn’t this mean that it must have temporal parts?

11. Give an example supporting the sentence at p. 6, l. -14f.

12. Give some context, and a full reference, for the Prior quote at p. 8n6.

13. Explain the discrepancy between Wiggins and Strawson mentioned at p. 9, l. 3f. Provide quotes and full bibliographical references.

14. Give us the diagram mentioned at p. 9n8.

15. Are there other usages of “real definition” (p. 11, §6)? Comment on Kant’s usage of the term.


18. Resolve the parenthetical remark at p. 13, l. 15f.

19. Give a brief summary of the Peacocke article referred to at p. 14n16.

20. Look up the definition of, and give some background for, the Principia notation used at p. 16, l. 9.

21. Explain the sentence at p. 17, l. 3f.

22. Give examples where the three notions of priority that Wiggins excludes at p. 18, l. -13, do hold.
Questions on the text of Chapter 1 (session of 29 September 2009)

1. List a number of passages in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that pick up the theme from the two quotes on p. 21. Provide at least three quotes from a standard translation, giving a full bibliographical reference.

2. Give a brief summary of Quine’s review of Geach (cited at p. 23n2), providing some pertinent quotes and giving full bibliographical references. Try to be fair to Geach.

3. Follow at least two of the references of p. 23n2 and provide pertinent quotes from these texts, giving full bibliographical references.


5. Comment on Wiggins’s subscription to Quine’s doctrine at p. 27n9, 3rd para. (This should be taken up by someone with a Fine background.)

6. Explain Lewis’s terminology that is used at p. 31n12 and summarize Wiggins’s discussion of the matter that he points to in this footnote; give pertinent quotes and a full bibliographical reference.

7. Try to give a more favourable reading of Broad, cited at p. 31n13. Quote from the context of that passage, giving a full bibliographical reference.

8. Try to defend Geach’s position with respect to the examples mentioned at p. 34f. Give quotes from Geach, including a full bibliographical reference.

9. List some heretical readings of ($\lambda$) — Wiggins mentions one at p. 45 — and provide quotes including full bibliographical references of relevant official texts of relevant Christian institutions.

10. Explain the use of “non-Anaxagorean” at p. 38, l. -9, preferably giving relevant quotes including full bibliographical references.

11. Give a brief summary of the doctrine of the Pole mentioned on p. 38, including a few quotes, a full bibliographical reference and the correct spelling of his name.

12. List key differences between Simons and S.L. (cf. p. 38n23), again giving quotes and full bibliographical references.

13. Explain the use of “zeugma” at p. 44n30. Additionally, find three further places where you have difficulties understanding the text (this may be a difficult word or a curious grammatical construction) and provide your reading, with reasons supporting that reading.


15. Give an English translation of the Latin quote at p. 48n32. Provide full bibliographic references.

16. Give a summary of Cartwright’s essay cited at p. 50n34, including quotes and a full bibliographic reference.

17. Write up Wiggins’s proof of §10 (p. 53f.) in a system of natural deduction.
Questions on the text of Chapter 2 (session of 13 October 2009)

1. Wiggins claims that Heraclitus, cited at p. 55, continues to be misunderstood (p. 68). Find at least two pertinent passages in the secondary literature and argue why Wiggins would claim these to be misunderstandings. As always, provide quotes and full bibliographical information (I will not state this requirement any more).

2. Explain the use of “obverse” (p. 55, l. -4), “exigency” (p. 58, l. 20), “numen” (p. 59, l. -12), “worth the candle” (p. 71, l. 5), and two other words or constructions you find difficult to understand.

3. Explain Wiggins’s parenthetical remark at p. 57, l. 17.

4. Give a reasoned explanation for Wiggins’s use of single quotes at p. 58, l. 14–16.

5. Spell out what Wiggins alludes to at the end of the 1st para. on p. 59. (Give quotes of the relevant texts!)

6. List all references to Frege in Chap. 2. Give the texts Wiggins refers to in German and in English. Find at least one error in Wiggins’s quotes.

7. At p. 63, l. 3ff., Wiggins insinuates that Leibniz has a good argument for excluding spatial and temporal determinations in his principle of indiscernibles. Spell out that argument and comment on it.

8. Give a brief description of Black’s two spheres thought experiment, referred to at p. 63. Expose parallels to the discussion about a “rotating discs argument” that plays a role in a discussion in recent philosophy of science. Give a brief explanation of the relevant background.

9. Give a reasoned guess at what Wiggins would say about “grue”, or about Davidson’s emeroses (cf. p. 65).

10. Expand on Wiggins’s remark about stories at p. 66, l. 7f. Which notion of “possible” is he using?

11. Explain two cases of cross-classification and explain why Wiggins wishes to make room for them at p. 67n7.

12. Expand on p.67f.n8. What exactly is so difficult?


14. What, if anything, is wrong with Prior’s account referred to at p. 73n14?

15. Give a brief summary of Woodger’s logic of division and fusion (cf. p. 73n14). Can you do better than Wiggins, i.e., find any other thorough attempts of such a logic? (Has Simons got anything to say on this?) If so, provide a summary as well.


17. Reprase the passage at p. 73, l. 17-26.

18. Give some background on the story of Proteus, including more literary references if possible (cf. p. 74).

19. Relate the history of the Pope’s crown. Find some more examples of (purported) homeomery.

20. Give a concise summary of Wiggins’s D principles and their interrelation.
Questions on the text of Chapter 3 (session of 27 October 2009)

1. Follow Wiggins’s Leibniz references given at p. 78n1.

2. Spell out explicitly the contrast that is invoked in the word “counter-proposal” at p. 79, l. 1.

3. Trace out some of the difficulties w.r.t. deuterium (cf. p. 79n1). E.g., why is a definition of “Vienna standard mean ocean water” needed? (And what sense does that expression make, given the geographical location of Vienna?)

4. Comment on Wiggins’s terminology given at p. 79n2. Do you find [5] convincing? Think of hearts and kidneys. Trace the Fregean text on which this is based. What is the difficulty for Frege? Can you sketch an alternative for Wiggins?

5. Give a brief historical sketch of the three examples Wiggins cites at p. 80n3. Trace the Frege reference and give the German quote as well as the standard English translation.

6. Trace the Nietzsche quote given at p. 81f.n4. Give the original German text from the standard edition.

7. Wiggins paraphrases Heraclitus at p. 82, l. 13f. Give a quote from a translation of the respective fragment and, if possible, some secondary literature on it.

8. Translate the brief quote from Leibniz at p. 83n5. Make the comparison with Heraclitus explicit.

9. Give an account of Wiggins’s attempt at showing Putnam to be a good Fregean (or the other way round) alluded to at p. 84, l. 9ff.

10. Expand on Wiggins’s remarks about ordinary and physical necessity at p. 85, l. -12, including the Ishiguro reference. (A Fine background will be helpful.)

11. Assume that, as many philosophers of science (e.g., Giere, van Fraassen) claim, there are no laws of nature. Can you give a rendering of Wiggins’s point made at the end of § 1 (p. 86) that would still remain valid?

12. Give the relevant biological facts for the locust/grasshopper, axolotl/salamander examples on p. 86.

13. Do what Wiggins suggests at p. 87n10, i.e., contrast a human heart and a sheep’s heart.

14. Whom is Wiggins referring to at p. 87, l. 9ff.? (Quotes!)

15. Give some background on the Conger Eel (p. 88) from a recent biological source.

16. At p. 88, l. 13, Wiggins says that biological discoveries about maggots/flies or tadpoles/frogs change our conceptions but not our concepts. Elucidate this view and try to defend the alternative standpoint that our concepts did change. Where is the difficulty?

17. Give a brief summary of what Putnam has to say about pencils (cf. p. 88n11).

18. Follow the references of p. 88n12.

19. Try to construct a problem for Wiggins claim at p. 88, l. -2f. by considering the evolution of one species out of another. Evaluate your attempt.

20. Why does Wiggins say “return” at p. 89, l. 10?


22. Explain “Chesil Bank” (p. 90, l. 18) and the other two geographical examples. Are these apt examples here? If so, why?
23. Expand on Wiggins’s example of the India rubber ball (p. 90, l. -8).

24. Give some more background on the examples from Roman law that Wiggins refers to at p. 92, l. -12f.

25. Rephrase the long sentence at p. 92, l. 13ff., making the two-stage argument in favour of Leibniz explicit (i.e., why may one think that he was prey to a misconception, and why would this be too quick?).

26. Spell out the two additional problems mentioned at the end of p. 93n16.

27. Give a summary of the debate between Smart and Dauer referred to at p. 94n18.

28. Give the German original of the Frege quote at p. 94f.n19 and report what Dummett says about it.

29. Explain Wiggins’s parenthetical remark about “casuistic” at p. 96, l. 14f.

30. Try to reconstruct the history of the rediscovery referred to at p. 96n21. Give the mentioned proof (including the full name of its author).

31. Comment on Wiggins’s phrase “third thing” at p. 97, l. 5f.; find a further similar occurrence of “third thing”.

32. Explain the word “sobriquet” (p. 98, l. 2) and the contrast made at that place in the text.

33. Rephrase Wiggins's argument (if he has one) at p. 99, l. 1–11, without using the word “absurd”.

34. Give a summary of H.M. Cartwright's theory referred to at p. 100n26.

35. As a comment on p. 100, find out the actual legal rulings in at least two countries for a case in which two people tear an official bank note in two and each claims to possess the money. Refer to authoritative texts.

36. Spell out the “one conceivable case” of p. 101n27 in more detail.

37. Rephrase Wiggins’s discussion of the pros and cons of the locution “coincides” (p. 104, (vi)).
Questions on the text of Chapter 4 (session of 10 November 2009)

1. Read out the first sentence of §2 (p. 108).

2. Explain the Quine reference at p. 108n1.

3. Give a brief outline of Wiggins’s argument, referred to at p. 109n24, that Leibniz was not an essentialist.

4. Explain the meaning of “or” in the first line of p. 110n5. Comment on what is implied by Wiggins.

5. Comment on Wiggins’s use of “possible” at p. 111, l. 1. Do you see a threat of psychologism here? (Cf. also p. 121, l. 9f.)


7. Give an outline of Hacking’s analysis referred to at p. 112n8.

8. Spell out the argument implied by the last sentence of the 1st paragraph on p. 112.

9. Make the parallel mentioned at p. 112n10 explicit.

10. Give a Quinean comment on the derivations on p. 113.

11. Explain what happens at the end of the 1st paragraph on p. 114 (“Following the parallel . . .”).


13. Does the necessity of inequality defended on p. 116f. entail that all possible worlds are inhabited by exactly the same individuals? Give arguments pro and contra and assess them.


16. Make explicit what Wiggins is alluding to in the parenthetical remark at l. 3 of p. 118n14. Repair the reference and draw a conclusion about the superiority of ISITX.

17. Explain the “Parthian shot” mentioned at p. 119n19 — both the word and the argument implied.

18. Give some biographical information on the individual mentioned at p. 120, l. -10. Explain the famous definition named after that individual. (Requires a math background.) Can you see how that definition could be pertinent to the matter discussed here?

19. Dig out Wiggins’s definition of “flat”, used at p. 121n21.

20. Explain the proviso implied by the parenthetical remark at p. 123, l. -6f.


22. Give some relevant details from Strawson’s review mentioned at p. 124n26.

23. Rephrase the sentence at p. 125, l. 11–16.

24. Rephrase the sentence at p. 126, l. 10–15. Try to resolve the Strawson reference and a reference to the mentioned controversy.

25. Is the parenthetical remark at p. 127, l. 10f. funny?

27. Give some more background on the Wittgenstein references at p. 127n30, including the German original texts.

28. Find a striking (but argumentatively insignificant) blunder on p. 128. Exercise your charity in explaining how this may have come about.

29. Translate the quotes from Leibniz at p. 128f.n31 into English.

30. Translate the quote from Leibniz at p. 130n32 into English.

31. Spell out the change in view that Wiggins alludes to at p. 131n34.

32. One may read p. 132f.n36 as suggesting that Mackie may have been too timid to follow her suggestion to the extreme. Describe the respective extreme position and comment on it.

33. Give a little context of the passage from Kripke referred to at p. 134n37 and comment on Wiggins’s assessment of the matter.

34. Explain the distinction between the three Latin verb forms mentioned at p. 135, l. 13f.

35. Give some background on “Scotist” (p. 136).

36. Be historically more specific about the “culture of the West” mentioned at p. 137, l. 10f.
Questions on the text of Chapter 5 (session of 24 November 2009)

1. Repeat the “piece against this school” referred to at p. 140, l. -4, and give some reasoned guess at who is targeted here.

2. Give the exact reference, some context, and an explanation of the quote at p. 141, l. 15–17.

3. Assume that the “he” of p. 142, l. 4, is a certain philosopher of science of Dutch origin. Find the paper that almost bears the sentence of l. 3f. as its title and give a brief summary.


5. Give some items on the “longish list” referred to at p. 143, l. 17f. Give brief justifications for putting your candidates on that list.

6. Track the Hart reference of p. 143n6. Explain what Wiggins finds amusing; is he right?

7. Assuming you are charmed by Van Fraassen, do the exercise Wiggins suggests at p. 147, l. 1f., at least for natural numbers. (Is that a good example?)

8. Explain Russell’s position mentioned at p. 147n9.

9. Give a realistic story that vindicates § 4, (1) (p. 147f.). (E.g., think of how birds might individuate caterpillars and suchlike.)

10. Why is there a past verb form in the title of § 5 (p. 148)?

11. Provide a little background on L.K. (p. 148, l. -1) and the correct pronunciation of his name.

12. Would “stone” fit into the list of p. 149, l. -17? Give reasons pro and contra and assess them.

13. Describe two cycles of an instance of the back and forth process mentioned at p. 150, l. 5.


15. Elaborate on the argument that Wiggins gives in the last three sentences of p. 150n12.

16. Do what Wiggins says he’s happy to let you do at the end of p. 150f.n13 (l. -5).

17. Rewrite the first sentence of § 6 (p. 151).


19. Explain the end of the last sentence of the 1st paragraph on p. 152.

20. Quote the passage from Fisk that Wiggins alludes to at the end of p. 153n16 and give a reason for Wiggins’s assessment.

21. Explain the word “hold” in the 2nd line of the second paragraph of the Woodger quote at p. 156n18.
Questions on the text of Chapter 6 (session of 8 December 2009)

1. Explain the use of “one” at p. 158, l. 14.

2. Check the translation from Kant in the 2nd full paragraph on p. 158. Give the German including the standard reference.

3. Expand on the parenthetical remark at p. 159, l. 2ff.

4. Give a concise overview of the three claims and the three positions introduced in § 1 (p. 157–159).

5. Why are there single quotes at p. 160, l. 9ff.? (Check the source.)


7. Check Evan’s use of “Δ” and describe his argument, partly fulfilling Wiggins’s remark at p. 162n8.

8. Follow the Williamson reference at p. 163n10.

9. Explicate the argument against Thomason that Wiggins alludes to at p. 164n11, 2nd sentence.

10. Explain the use of “trade off” at p. 164n12.

11. Explain the remark about intuitionistic contraposition at p. 165, l. 10f.

12. Rephrase the last full paragraph on p. 165 (“The first . . . ”).

13. Why is an ISBN given at p. 166n14?

14. What is the effect of the parenthetical remark at p. 167, l. 10?

15. Explain p. 167n17.

16. Give an example each of the cases mentioned at p. 173n22.

17. Trace the reference to the Stoics at p. 174n23 (preferably giving a translation) and give a brief account of Sedley’s commentary.

18. Spell out the “faint but interesting analogy” mentioned at p. 175n26.

19. Rephrase the first full paragraph of p. 177 (“Anyone who . . . ”).


21. Give an outline of the Lewis-Johnston discussion mentioned at p. 178n32 and report which passage(s) in Aristotle Wiggins finds relevant.

22. Is it true that “change is more primitive than any ontology of times” (p. 179n32)? Explain what is at issue.

23. Expand on p. 179n33.

24. Translate sentence (6) of p. 179 into a language you know very well and comment on how it sounds there.

25. Find an example of a cancelling out fallacy (cf. p. 179n34), preferably an unintended one from the philosophical literature.

26. Can you supply a date for the reference at p. 180n35?

27. Give an example of “lamentably unofficial” usage in the laboratory, preferably from the Methods section of a recent paper in a scientific (e.g., medical) journal (cf. p. 182, l. 12ff).
28. Give an argument for the claim Wiggins makes at p. 182, l. -12ff.

29. Repair the reference at p. 184, l. -15 and praise \LaTeX.

30. How much will it cost to follow the reference of p. 185n41? Given what Wiggins says in the text, do you think it is necessary to do so?

31. Give some background on “feature placing” and “pointillist” (p. 187, l. 20).

32. Find the Wittgenstein text that Wiggins refers to at p. 187, l. -8.

33. Comment on the derivation on p. 192: isn’t Wiggins missing a Gricean point about “almost” when he says that (ii) is true? If so, does this matter? And what about anaphora?
Questions on the text of Chapter 7 (session of 5 January 2010)

1. Give an argument for the non-synonymity that Wiggins claims at p. 194n1.

2. Comment on the use of “or” at p. 196, l. 20.

3. Give an overview of what Suppes has to say about creative definitions (cf. p. 196n4).

4. Where in Reid is the example used on p. 197?

5. Give a better reference for the Butler quote on p. 197 and rephrase Butler’s argument.


7. Contrast Wiggins’s list of M-predicates at p. 198f. with Descartes, Meditationes, II.8.

8. Explain the “But . . . two other” at p. 199, l. -8.

9. Give a general definition of “ancestral” (p. 201, l. 6f.).

10. Is the “iff” in the definition of I_p on p. 201 really warranted? Comment on a presupposition of that definition.

11. Whom, if anyone, is Wiggins quoting at p. 201, l. -2?

12. Elaborate one the two examples given at p. 202, l. -5ff. Why are they problematic, and for whom?

13. Did the event mentioned at p. 203, l. -18f. really take place?

14. Trace Butler’s original account and expose some of the confusion that Wiggins alludes to at p. 205n13. Give a summary of the passage from Reid referred to in that footnote.

15. Expand on p. 205n14: Why is strength lost by inserting “apparent”, and how could a causal ad-dendum remedy the situation?

16. Find out what McDowell has to say in defense of Locke (cf. p. 211n23).

17. Trace the reference to Stead at p. 212n24 and give some context on the use of “clone” in the article referred to. Translate the title of that article and give some background on that as well. Look up what the OED says about the history of “clone”.

18. Expand on the second paragraph of p. 214n27: What did Wiggins choose to say, and what would he rather have said? Refer to the main text, giving a quote and the rewritten version.

19. Why “blue pencil” (p. 219, l. 5)?

20. Translate, and give some context for, the quote at p. 219n33.

21. Elaborate on the parenthetical remark at p. 219, l. -10ff. Is the comparison apt? And can you give a reason why Wiggins says “older pictures”?”

22. Look up Parfit’s response to Evans, referred to at p. 220n34, 5th line, and do your best trying to understand it.

23. Spell out the argument needed to support the last sentence of the last full paragraph on p. 221 (“For thoughts . . . ”).

24. Give an argument in support of the first sentence of the first full paragraph on p. 223 (“Interpreted exclusively . . . ”).

25. Describe the contrast between an “inner” vs. an “outer” view of memory, referred to at p. 225n37.
26. Rephrase the first sentence of p. 227 ("But in so far . . . ").

27. Expand on the Plato reference at p. 229, l. 9f.

28. Whom is Wiggins alluding to at p. 231, l. -16f.? Give a little background.

29. Explain Wiggins’s parenthetical remark at p. 233, l. 20f.

30. Expand on p. 236n43.

31. Explain the parenthetical remark at p. 236, l. -6f.

32. Make the parallel to Aristotle at p. 237, l. -3, explicit.

33. Look up the 1982 conclusion that Wiggins refers to at p. 239n45. Give a few relevant quotes. Is there at the moment any legally binding rule based on that conclusion in the UK? Explore the situation in another country of your choice.

34. Is Schopenhauer an optimist? Comment on the context of the quote given on p. 244.