My Future Research Plans

❖ Some of my future research activities are directly related to my dissertation:

- The Liar Paradox: In the second edition of his book *Truth* (1998) Paul Horwich diagnoses four possible reactions to the liar antinomy: (1) We can deny some law of classical logic. In particular, we can deny (LEM) or (LNC), where the law of the excluded middle says that every proposition is either true or false (i.e. not true), and where the law of non-contradiction says that no proposition is both true and false. (2) We can deny (just as Tarski does for sentences belonging to certain languages) that a truth predicate can be consistently applied to propositions containing this very predicate; instead, we should hold that a truth predicate can be consistently applied only to propositions that do not contain this very predicate. (3) We can deny that the putative liar proposition expresses a proposition at all. (4) Or we can reject certain instances of the schema (P) '<p> is true if and only if p', including paradox-inducing ones obtained by substituting the liar proposition into it. Now, out of these four options Horwich rejects the first three. Choosing the last option in reaction to the liar paradox, however, has serious consequences for Horwich's minimal theory of truth. For the set of axioms constituting the theory must now be restricted to those instances that are not contradiction-implying. And here it is just not clear to me how exactly this restriction may be accomplished. So, it would be fascinating to reconstruct in more detail Horwich's "solution" to the liar paradox (especially in light of his 2005-article *A Minimalist Critique of Tarski on Truth*), and to assess its strengths and weaknesses in comparison with alternative suggestions that have been made in the recent literature. After all, it may turn out that we should take the liar proposition to be neither true nor false (to be "gappy"), or that we should take it to be both true and false (to be "glutty"). Either result would undermine the corner stones of Horwich's (and not only his) philosophical thinking (as I surmise).

- Paul Horwich on Implicit Definitions: It would be interesting to examine Horwich's use-theoretic model (as opposed to what he calls 'the standard truth theoretic model') of implicit definition more closely. According to Horwich's approach of two-way factorization (going back to Russell, Carnap, Ramsey, and Lewis), our acceptance and formulation of any substantive theory (e.g. of phlogiston, the number of F's, God, truth) is jointly determined by two independent decisions: 1. by our decision to accept the so-called *Ramsey sentence* saying that there is a property that satisfies the theory '#___' [for short: (∃x)(#x)], and 2. by our decision to accept the so-called *Carnap conditional* saying that if there is a property that satisfies the theory '#___', then it is f-ness [for short: (∃x)(#x) => #f]. While our first decision is epistemic, our second decision is merely linguistic. While the Ramsey sentence is not a meaning-constituting, but a substantive postulate (which is why its acceptance is empirical if the 'f'-free theory '#___' is empirical), the Carnap conditional is a meaning-constituting, but not a substantive postulate (which is why its acceptance is always a priori, even though it is not analytic). Horwich acknowledges two proper forms of implicit definitions: direct and indirect ones. The Carnap conditional is the *direct* implicit definition of the theoretical term 'f' -- since our acceptance of this conditional is necessary and sufficient to fix the meaning of 'f'. The substantive theory '#f' is only the *indirect* implicit definition of 'f'-- since our acceptance of '#f' is merely sufficient (but not necessary) to constitute the meaning of 'f'; notice that merely our acceptance of '#f' (not its truth) is required for indirectly implicitly defining 'f'. It is a virtue of Horwich's two-factor approach that it can explain how a skeptic about f-ness can nonetheless mean the same by 'f' as a believer in f-ness; for the parties may disagree about the Ramsey sentence, yet nonetheless agree on the Carnap conditional. But does this virtue outweigh apparent downsides of Horwich's approach, for instance, the fact that it requires ontological commitment to properties? This is a fact because an existential generalization such as the Ramsey sentence involves non-standard (second-order) quantification into predicate positions and is thus of 'dubious coherence', as Horwich himself admits. Horwich also says that the Carnap sentence is not a material conditional, because the conditional commitment we

wish to express by it cannot come merely from regarding its antecedent as false. But all we know now is what sort of conditional it is not; so we still need a positive account of the status of the Carnap conditional. Moreover, Horwich holds that not just scientific, but all theoretical terms (including arithmetical, geometrical and logical ones) are implicitly definable via Carnap conditionals. But if so, then, as Horwich admits, implicit definitions are rendered epistemologically impotent, i.e. we cannot argue any more that arithmetic, geometry, or logic are known a priori. Now, since Horwich also thinks that there is such a thing as substantive, a priori knowledge, his way out of the predicament is to distinguish between two different kinds of systems of logic, arithmetic, and geometry: a priori systems outside science (including classical logic, standard arithmetic, and Euclidean geometry), and empirical systems within science -- all of which are subject to Quine's revisability argument, possibly including deviant logic systems (e.g. perhaps paracomplete ones such as quantum or intuitionist logic, or even paraconsistent ones such as relevance logic), possibly including non-standard systems of arithmetic and non-Euclidean geometry. Fair enough; but is this really so? It might also be reasonably queried whether our acceptance of Carnap conditionals and our acceptance of theories containing 'f' are the only and all legitimate forms of implicit definitions that there are. There may be further legitimate forms [e.g. a sort of converse to the Carnap-conditional saying that every property satisfies the theory '#___' if it is f-ness, for short: (∀x)(x=f => #x)]. If so, Horwich's account is rendered incomplete. So, there are many interesting questions in regard to Horwich's two-factor account of implicit definitions that still need to be addressed. Taking them on would be a rewarding philosophical experience for me. [This project is based on section 3.2.4.3. of my dissertation (please see the attached Table of Contents)].

❖ Here are some of my future research interests that go beyond my dissertation; they are still motivated by questions arising in the philosophy of language, in philosophical logic and in metaphysics, but they also relate to other areas of philosophy:

- Sorites Paradoxes: I would find it fascinating to undertake substantive research on the so-called Sorites paradoxes or paradoxes of vagueness. Using such paradoxes one can prove nearly everything, for instance, that a fertilized egg is already a human being. So these paradoxes are not only of theoretical interest (e.g. regarding questions about the general validity of (LEM) or (LNC)), but also have far-reaching practical applications, for instance, in ethics. The approaches to the problem of indeterminacy are usually either semantic (vagueness originates in the meanings of linguistic expressions used in certain contexts), "objective" (vagueness originates in the objects that we describe with language, i.e. is in rebus), or epistemic (either an object has a certain property or not; in the case of vague terms expressing such properties we just can't know when exactly to apply them). So it would be intriguing to scrutinize these accounts in more detail. And it would certainly suit my research interests to examine whether it is possible to come up with a uniform approach to Sorites paradoxes and to liar-like paradoxes (of exemplification, set-membership, reference, and satisfaction).

- Since I did my undergraduate work in Graz (Austria), I have a long-standing interest in Meinong (and also in Brentano). I would be very interested in doing more research on Meinong's views on non-existent objects (including fictional objects -- which would lead to the examination of certain questions that also arise in aesthetics).

- Last but not least, I would like to do more research on Ch. S. Peirce's views on abductive arguments and their connections to explanations. This would fit in a paper on a classification of arguments that I have written but that still falls short in its treatment of abductive inferences and their nature.

❖ My research motto:
"As it is, the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him." (*Euthyphro*, 14c)

Klaus Ladstaetter