

IF NOT IF THEN

THE NATURE OF EXCEPTIONS

- WORKSHOP -

Doctoral School of Philosophy. Faculty of Humanities. University of Pécs

**30. 04.
2015.**



LOCATION:

**UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS,
IFJÚSÁG ÚTJA 6.B.
ROOM D546.**

Motivation

If Not If Then – The Nature of Exceptions

Conditional sentences guide our everyday life precisely because they encode causal relations, laws, and rules. By stating what is connected to what else in such a regular manner, conditionals establish the thin line between the normal and exceptions from it. If there is space for exceptions, at all, these are marked by the conditional as negligible, irrelevant, or unlikely. Nevertheless, irregularities are the concern of those working in risk management, psychopathology, or software debugging. Ethicists ask under what circumstances which exceptions are acceptable. On the other hand, exceptions may harbor creative potential, provide unexpected insights, and stimulate new research. The workshop presentations reflect on the structure of irregularities, on ways of modeling exceptions, on deviations from the If-Then scheme and connected problems.

Further Information ...

... on Mathematical Philosophy and the Background of the Workshop

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Program

- 13:10 Roland Poellinger
Welcome and Introduction
- 13:15 Ádám Tamás Tuboly
Exceptions and Expectations – The Late
Carnap on Rationality
- 14:00 Áron Dombrovski
On Sainsbury's Argument Against Abstract
Artifactualism
- 14:45 Coffee Break
- 15:15 Nikoletta Nemesi
Lewisian Conditionals and Indeterminate
Identity: On Barnes's Concept
- 16:00 Roland Poellinger
Nested Difference-Makers
- 16:45 Discussion
- 17:00 End of the workshop

Ádám Tamás Tuboly

Exceptions and Expectations – The Late Carnap on Rationality

In Carnap's *Nachlass* one finds that probability theory was "[Carnap's] latest and in his eyes most valuable baby" (RC-102-13-55). Though Carnap is famous or notorious for many of his radical ideas, his views on probability, induction and rationality, on which he was working at least for 30 years, are almost entirely forgotten.

In my presentation I would like to raise certain mainly philosophical questions that the late Carnap was dealing with and by presenting his explicit and also implicit ideas I will show their relevance to the current debates about these issues. One such question is the assumption of the uniformity of nature. It is claimed that in order to talk about exceptions (and not just randomly particular events) we have to presuppose certain expectations. But the notion of expectation is based on the idea of the invariance of our experiences which in turn assumes the uniformity of nature. I will discuss Carnap's answer from the *Logical Foundations of Probability* (1950) which is quite special in the field.

The other question is concerned with rationality and its various forms which, for Carnap, come down to inductive logic and the theory of probability thus connecting our second questions to the first (about the uniformity of nature) which is articulated also in its connection to probability and inductive logic.

Áron Dombrovski

On Sainsbury's Argument Against Abstract Artifactualism

The *abstract artifact theory* is the most popular version of realism about fictional characters. In this view, fictional characters like Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes or Hamlet are existing man-made abstract entities created by the authors. Mark Sainsbury has a persuasive argument against artifactualism, which I'll call the *category-mistake objection*, following Zsófia Zvolenszky. According to this objection, the fictional characters are in the wrong ontological category for the artifactualist: they are abstract, but "we want them to be as they are said to be in the stories". An abstract entity can't play the violin, can't smoke a pipe or can't wear a deerstalker. Sainsbury concludes that we should reject the artifact theory, the best realist account. According to him, definitely irrealism has the edge over realism.

The aim of my presentation is to show that Sainsbury's argument against abstract artifactualism is at least questionable, since he introduces a weak version of the artifact theory to attack it as a strawman. Nathan Salmon's earlier theory already has an answer to the problem.

In the first section, I'll try to motivate realism about fictional entities and give a general overview of the three main alternative realist positions. Then I'll discuss Sainsbury's version of artifact theory, introducing the category-mistake objection. Finally, I'll show that Nathan Salmon's version is a viable one and avoids the objection, so artifactualism remains a defensible account.

Nikoletta Nemesi

Lewisian Conditionals and Indeterminate Identity: On Barnes's Concept

In his seminal paper "Can there be vague objects?" (1978), Evans presented a proof against the possibility of indeterminate identity. Since then, several authors have attempted to dispute the validity of the argument. Barnes (2009), on the basis of Lewis's notions, develops a counterpart-theoretic account of indeterminacy to provide room for *de re* indeterminate identity. In my presentation, I will examine whether certain Lewisian conditionals – in particular, those pertaining to the counterpart-theoretic concept of contingent identity – can yield an exception to the validity of the Evans argument.

The bulk of Barnes's modal proposal can be summarised as follows: the property ' $\lambda x [\forall (x = a)]$ ' picks out in premiss (2) of Evans's argument is different from the property it selects in premiss (4). More precisely, it allegedly picks out the property *having some b-counterparts that are a-counterparts and some b-counterparts that are not a-counterparts* in the former case, whereas it selects the property *having some a-counterparts that are a-counterparts and some a-counterparts that are not a-counterparts* in the latter case. This way, Barnes contends, there is no conflict with Leibniz's Law; as a consequence, Evans's proof can be regarded as equivocating on a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of the determinacy operators and thus failing to demonstrate the impossibility of *de re* ontically indeterminate identity.

After outlining Barnes's solution, I will discuss Curtis and Noonan's (2014) objection according to which, while

counterpart-theory can serve as a means to establish that the notion of contingent identity is consistent, it cannot do the same trick for the case of indeterminate identity. I will criticise Curtis and Noonan's position on the grounds that their idea of contingent identity ultimately leads to a presupposition of indeterminate identity, and then I will turn my attention to Lewis's revised counterpart theory (1971).

Reviewing Lewis's notions, I will point out that, due to the lack of trans-world identity, Lewisian contingent identity merely asserts that if $\Diamond(a \neq b)$, then there is an actual object a_1 identical to b_1 , and there are a possible object a_2 (different from a_1 and thus from b_1) and a possible object b_2 (different from b_1 and thus a_1) such that a_2 and b_2 are not identical. Similarly, what Barnes in fact supposes is that, due to the lack of trans-precisification identity, in case $\nabla(a = b)$, there is a precise object a_1 identical to b_1 , and there are a precise object a_2 (different from a_1 and thus from b_1) and a precise object b_2 (different from b_1 and thus a_1) such that a_2 and b_2 are not identical.

I will argue that if, on the one hand, ontic indeterminacy of identity is to be understood as there being a possible world with precise object $a_1 = b_1$ and another possible world with precise objects $a_2 \neq b_2$ such that it is ontically indeterminate which of these possible worlds is actualized, then Barnes's concept does not refute Evans's argument which pretty much admits this scenario (although not calling it a case of 'indeterminate identity'). If, on the other hand, neither of the precisifications represents one/more supposedly vague actual object/-s $\nabla(a = b)$, then, contrary to her claims, Barnes's picture of ontic indeterminacy does not uphold bivalence nor excluded middle.

Roland Poellinger

Nested Difference-Makers

The problem of defining a semantics for conditional expressions has a long history in philosophy. Famously, Frank P. Ramsey (in a belief revision way), Ernest Adams (with recourse to propositional logic), David Lewis, and Robert Stalnaker (both in possible worlds) have suggested various approaches to grasping the content of if-then constructions in a formal manner. The proposals essentially differ in (i) how they restrict context and (ii) how they relate antecedent and consequent. In the simple case of $A \rightarrow B$, B is evaluated in light of actually given or counterfactually hypothesized facts of the matter A (differently in the above-mentioned theories). Things get tricky though when A itself relates two propositions in a conditional expression, as in $(A_1 \rightarrow A_2) \rightarrow B$. The question is: How does learning a conditional antecedent contribute to our evaluation of the consequent? It is a much-discussed question in the literature if the antecedent should express a proposition even in the nested case, and – if so – how this proposition can be made operational in evaluating the truth of the consequent. If the antecedent is not to be understood as a proposition, what are the alternatives? In the non-counterfactual case, resort to causal models in a Bayes net framework helps solving the question how my belief in the consequent changes upon learning conditional information. The counterfactual case, in which we hypothesize about conditional information in the antecedent, cannot be dealt with so straightforwardly since what we learn is not a simple proposition but rather the relation (or correlation) between two propositions that are not related in the actual world.

In this talk I propose to treat nested constructions, actual and counterfactual, by analogy with simple constructions: While the difference a simple antecedent makes to a consequent can be evaluated in causal Bayes net structures, I extend Judea Pearl's structure-modifying *do*-operator (which frees a certain variable from its parents' influence) to change the model into one where the conditional antecedent $A_1 \rightarrow A_2$ – causally interpreted – holds. The new revision operator creates causal dependence between A_1 and A_2 by inserting or linking nodes or also by removing edges. In doing so our attention is shifted to precisely those worlds described by the proposition Robert Stalnaker had in mind, $\{w | v(A_2, f(A_1, w)) = 1\}$, since $P(A_2 | do(A_1)) = 1$ holds in the modified model.

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