

Lecture 1: The Liar Paradox

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What is truth good for?

Truth is a centrally important notion in philosophy:

- *Truth* is an inherently interesting concept.
- *Truth* plays a central role in many important philosophical analyses (e.g. Plato's analysis of knowledge as justified *true* belief).
- More generally: the post-Fregean linguistic turn in philosophy involves investigating philosophically interesting or difficult notions via studying the language we use to talk about those notions. This often involves providing *truth* conditions for such talk.

Nevertheless, unrestricted talk about truth leads to paradoxes!

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What is a paradox, and what do we do about them?

A *paradox* is an argument that:

- Begins with apparently unobjectionably true premises.
- Proceeds via apparently unobjectionable reasoning.
- Ends with a conclusion that is contradictory, false, or otherwise absurd or inappropriate.

Four options for 'solving' paradoxes:

- 1 Reject one or more premises.
- 2 Reject the reasoning.
- 3 Accept the conclusion.
- 4 Reject the central concept.

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Why are contradictions so bad?

Theorem (Explosion, or *Ex Falso Quolibet*):

Proof: $\Phi \wedge \neg\Phi \vdash_C \Psi$

1	$\Phi \wedge \neg\Phi$	Assumption
2	Φ	1, \wedge Elimination.
3	$\Phi \vee \Psi$	2, \vee Introduction.
4	$\neg\Phi$	1, \wedge Elimination.
5	Ψ	3, 4, Disjunctive Syllogism.

Note: This also holds for intuitionistic logic H, so that's no help here!

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The Liar paradox

Premise₁: The Tarskian T-schema (informally):
Any meaningful, declarative sentence is *true*
if and only if *what it says is the case*.

Premise₂: The Liar sentence:
This sentence is false.
is a genuine, meaningful declarative sentence.

Conclusion: Contradiction.

The argument (informally)

- 1 By the *law of bivalence*, the Liar sentence is either true or false.
- 2 If the Liar sentence is true, then what it says must be the case. The Liar sentence says that it is false. So the Liar sentence must be false. But then the Liar sentence is both true and false. This violates the *law of non-contradiction*!
- 3 If the Liar sentence is false, then, since it says that it is false, what it says is the case. So the Liar sentence is true. Hence, again, the Liar sentence is both true and false. And again, this violates the *law of non-contradiction*!
- 4 Contradiction!

An ancient problem

Philetas of Cos am I.
Twas the Liar who made me die.
And the bad nights caused thereby.

(340 - 285 BC, epitaph)

Logical presuppositions

The Law of Bivalence (Biv):

Every sentence is either true or false.

The Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC):

No sentence is both true and false.

- These two assumptions are the cornerstones of classical logic.
- Any strategy of type 2 (reject the reasoning) will require jettisoning at least one of Biv and LNC.

More formally

The Tarskian T-schema:

For every sentence Φ :

$$T(\ulcorner \Phi \urcorner) \leftrightarrow \Phi$$

The Liar Sentence:

There exists a sentence λ such that:

$$\lambda \leftrightarrow \neg T(\ulcorner \lambda \urcorner)$$

[Where $\ulcorner \Phi \urcorner$ is an appropriate name of the sentence Φ]

The argument formally

The Derivation:

- 1 $T(\ulcorner \lambda \urcorner) \leftrightarrow \lambda$ T-schema.
- 2 $\lambda \leftrightarrow \neg T(\ulcorner \lambda \urcorner)$ Liar sentence.
- 3 $T(\ulcorner \lambda \urcorner) \leftrightarrow \neg T(\ulcorner \lambda \urcorner)$ 1, 2, logic.

Note on defining “contradiction”

- *Syntactic*: A contradiction is a formula of the form $\Phi \wedge \neg\Phi$.
- *Semantic*: A contradiction is a formula that cannot be true (as a matter of logic).

Other versions

- **Question:**

Is the answer to this question “no”?

- **Command:**

Do not obey this command!

The Liar Game

The rules:

- I will give you a \$10 bill and a \$20 bill.
- The next slide will then have a single sentence on it.
- The sentence is either true or false.
- If the sentence is true, you must give me the \$20 bill and keep the \$10 bill.
- If the sentence is false, you must give me the \$10 bill and keep the \$20 bill.

The Sentence:

Either you will give me the \$10 bill,
or you will give me \$1,000,000.

What went wrong?

Answer:

Either you will give me the \$10 bill,
or you will give me \$1,000,000.

is equivalent to:

Either this sentence is false,
or you will give me \$1,000,000.

which is, in classical logic, also equivalent to:

If this sentence is true,
then you will give me \$1,000,000.

This is a version of the Curry paradox.

The Curry Paradox

The Curry Sentence (C)

If this sentence is true, then the moon is made of green cheese.

Theorem

Using the Curry sentence above, we can prove:

The moon is made of green cheese

Proof.

Assume that C is true. Then what it says must be the case. It says that if it is true, then the moon is made of green cheese. It is true. So the moon is made of green cheese.

The previous paragraph amounts to a proof that, if C is true, then the moon is made of green cheese. But this is just what C says. So C must be true. But C says that if it is true, then the moon is made of green cheese. Since C is true, it follows that the moon is made of green cheese! \square

The Curry paradox formally

$$C \leftrightarrow (T(\ulcorner C \urcorner) \rightarrow \Phi)$$

1	C	Assumption
2	$T(\ulcorner C \urcorner) \rightarrow \Phi$	1, Df. of C
3	$T(\ulcorner C \urcorner)$	1, T-schema
4	Φ	2, 3, Modus Ponens
5	$T(\ulcorner C \urcorner) \rightarrow \Phi$	1 - 4, Conditional Proof.
6	C	5, Df. of C
7	$T(\ulcorner C \urcorner)$	6, T-schema.
8	Φ	5, 7, Modus Ponens.

Generalizing

Note:

- There is nothing special about:

The moon is made of green cheese

- Along similar lines, we can use:

If this sentence is true, then $1 + 1 = 5$.

If this sentence is true, then grass is pink.

If this sentence is true, then $1 + 1 = 2$.

to prove:

$$1 + 1 = 5.$$

Grass is pink.

$$1 + 1 = 2.$$



Bonus Question

Question: Is there anything wrong with using:

If this sentence is true, then $1 + 1 = 2$.

to prove:

$$1 + 1 = 2.$$

After all, unlike:

The moon is made of green cheese.

it turns out that:

$$1 + 1 = 2.$$

is true!



The Curry Paradox and Conditionals

Some Thoughts:

- The Curry paradox involves neither falsity nor negation (i.e. “not”).
- The Curry paradox does, of course, still involve talk of truth (just like the Liar paradox).
- Instead, the Curry paradox seems to involve the conditional – that is, phrases of the form:

If ...then ...

- Thus, a solution to the Curry paradox will likely involve giving up one or more of our basic intuitions about “If...then...”.

Clarification: Of course, our proof that the Curry sentence generates a paradox does involve talk of falsity. The point is that the Curry sentence itself contains no mention of falsity.



Defining Negation In Terms of the Conditional

Definition

Let \perp be an abbreviation of your favorite contradiction. Then:

“It is not the case that Φ ” $=_{df}$ “If Φ then \perp ”.

So the Liar sentence:

This sentence is false.

is just a special case of the Curry paradox:

If this sentence is true, then \perp .



Some (informal) definitions

Definition

- A sentence Φ (or set of sentences Σ) is paradoxical if and only if there is no way to coherently assign it a truth value (or to assign the sentences contained in it truth values).
- A sentence Φ (or set of sentences Σ) is determinate if and only if there is a unique way to coherently assign it a truth value (or to assign the sentences contained in it truth values).
- A sentence Φ (or set of sentences Σ) is indeterminate if and only if there is more than one way to coherently assign it a truth value (or to assign the sentences contained in it truth values).

Note: This terminology violates the point I made earlier about paradoxes being arguments, not sentences. It's technical terminology, unfortunately, and there's nothing we can do about it.



Examples

Given a background of classical logic:

- The Liar sentence:
This sentence is false.
is paradoxical.
- The tautology-teller:
This sentence is either true or false.
is determinate.
- The (badly named!) truth-teller sentence:
This sentence is true.
is indeterminate.

Note: Whether or not a sentence falls into one of these categories is dependent on the background logic!



The plan for the rest of this section

We are going to:

- Briefly talk about strategies of types:
 - 3 Accept the conclusion
 - 4 Reject the central concept
- Set up the main approaches addressed in the remaining sections:
 - 1 Reject a premise
 - 2 Reject the reasoning.



Strategy 4: Reject the concept

Idea: There is something wrong with the notion of *truth*. Hence, we need to either reject it altogether or replace it with a different concept. But:

- Rejecting truth altogether seems (to me at least) too extreme.
- Especially given the rich extant work along the lines of the other options!
- Nevertheless, in general this option should always be kept in mind:
 - 1 For example, we might think that the Russell paradox shows that there just aren't such things as *extensions*!
 - 2 Kevin Scharp's idea: Replace truth with two notions – *ascending truth* and *descending truth*, where:

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi &\rightarrow T_A(\ulcorner \Phi \urcorner). \\ T_D(\ulcorner \Phi \urcorner) &\rightarrow \Phi.\end{aligned}$$



Strategy 3: Accept the conclusion

In other words, accept that the Liar sentence really is *both true and false* at the same time. But:

- This amounts to accepting a contradiction!
- Thus, we need some means by which to block *explosion*!
- As a result, we *still* need to formulate a non-classical logic!
- So, adopting strategy 3 in this case requires also adopting strategy 2!
- We'll talk more about strategy 3 in later lectures.

Strategy 1: Reject a premise: Attempt 1

Idea:

Give up Tarski's T-schema (in its fully general form).

Hence, adopt some form of the restricted Tarskian T-Schema:

For every sentence Φ of some special sort:

$$T(\ulcorner \Phi \urcorner) \leftrightarrow \Phi$$

Or, replace the T-schema with some other collection of axioms for truth. We'll spend a lot of time on these sorts of approaches later today.

Strategy 1: Reject a premise: Attempt 2

Idea: Give up the claim that the Liar sentence is a meaningful sentence.

- Historically, this has been the traditional response to the problem.
- The thought is that the circularity present in the Liar sentence is somehow *bad*, and the sentence is thereby somehow faulty.
- But Gödel's theorems and recursion theory rely on exactly the same sort of self-reference as is found in (some versions of) the Liar paradox!
- In addition, there are variants of the Liar paradox that seem to be devoid of circularity (although they have other weird properties). For example, the Yablo paradox (two slides from now!)
- It has turned out to be extremely difficult to formulate a criterion for "goodness" that rules out the stuff we don't want (i.e. the paradoxes and other pathological constructions) while retaining the stuff we do want (e.g. the Gödel sentence).

Kripke on rejecting the Liar

Self-referential sentences just *are* meaningful!

A simpler, and more direct, form of self-reference uses demonstratives or proper names: Let "Jack" be a name of the sentence 'Jack is short', and we have a sentence that says of itself that it is short. I can see nothing wrong with "direct" self-reference of this type. If 'Jack' is not already a name in the language, why can we not introduce it as a name of any entity we please? In particular, why can it not be a name of the (uninterpreted) finite sequence of marks 'Jack is short'? (would it be permissible to call this sequence of marks "Harry", but not "Jack"? Surely prohibitions on naming are arbitrary here.) There is no vicious circle in our procedure, since we need not interpret the sequence of marks 'Jack is short' before we name it. Yet if we name it "Jack", it at once becomes meaningful and true. (Kripke 1975: 693)

The Yablo Paradox

Very New: Discovered by Stephen Yablo and Albert Visser in 1980s!

S_1 : For all $n > 1$, S_n is false.
 S_2 : For all $n > 2$, S_n is false.
 S_3 : For all $n > 3$, S_n is false.
⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮
 S_m : For all $n > m$, S_n is false.
 S_{m+1} : For all $n > m + 1$, S_n is false.
⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮

Note: I wrote an entire book on this paradox!



The Argument

Theorem

The Yablo sequence of sentences (plus Bivalence, the Law of Non-contradiction, and the T-schema) entail a contradiction.

Proof.

Let S_n be any sentence in the Yablo sequence. Assume S_n is true. Then, by the T-Schema, what it says must be the case. S_n says that, for every $m > n$, S_m is false. So, for every $m > n$, S_m is false. This entails that S_{n+1} is false. But this also entails that, for any $m > n + 1$, S_m is false. This is exactly what S_{n+1} says. So, by the T-schema, S_{n+1} is true. Hence S_{n+1} is both true and false. This violates the Law of Non-Contradiction. So S_n cannot be true. Thus, S_n is false. But n was arbitrary. So, for every $m \in \mathbb{N}$, S_m is false. This entails that S_1 is false. But this also entails that, for every $m > 1$, S_m is false. But this is exactly what S_1 says. So, by the T-schema, S_1 is true. Hence, S_1 is both true and false. This violates the Law of Non-Contradiction. □

No circularity!

- The Yablo paradox does not contain any sentence of the form:
This sentence is ...
- Instead, each sentence in the Yablo sequence is of the form:
Those sentences are ...
- Of course, the Yablo construction does trade *circularity* for *ungroundedness*! (That is, there is no circularity, but there is an *infinitely descending* chain of reference!)



Strategy 2: Reject the reasoning

The Idea: Adopt a *non-classical logic* where some inference crucial to the Liar reasoning turns out to be invalid.

- *General approach 1* (Gaps): Give up the law of bivalence. So some sentences are *neither true or false*.
- *General approach 2* (Gluts): Give up the law of non-contradiction. So some sentences are *both truth and false*.
- *The Big Question:* How do we know that such logics will evaluate all sentences correctly (or even coherently)?
- *The Bigger Question:* What if there are sentences that can't be any of true, false, or neither (or true, false, or both)?



The rest of the day in more detail

- Part II will be devoted to examining the most well-known *reject a premise* solution to the Liar paradox and related puzzles: *Tarski's hierarchy*.
- Part III will then look more closely at a number of *reject the reasoning* approaches to the Liar paradox obtained via *many-valued logics* (including both “gap” and “glut” approaches).
- Part IV will then return to the *reject a premise* approach, looking at a more recent *axiomatic* approaches to truth.
- If there is time, Part V will look more closely at the formal details of the many-valued logics discussed in Part III.

Part III: Many Valued Logics, Informally

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The Plan:

- 1 Provide a brief introduction to many-valued logics.
- 2 Provide an introduction to the *revenge problem*.

Classical Logic

Bivalence:

Every sentence is either true or false.

Law of Non-Contradiction:

No sentence is both true and false.

Negation (not):

“not: Φ ” is true if and only if “ Φ ” is false.

Conjunction (and):

“ Φ and Ψ ” is true if and only if “ Φ ” is true and “ Ψ ” is true.

Disjunction (or):

“ Φ or Ψ ” is true if and only if “ Φ ” is true or “ Ψ ” is true.

More Classical Logic:

Validity

An argument with P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n as premises, and C as conclusion – that is:

$$\frac{P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n}{C}$$

is logically valid if and only if it is impossible for P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n to all be true and C fail to be true.

Logical Truth:

A sentence is a logical truth if and only if it is impossible for it to fail to be true.

Classical Truth Tables

Negation (“not”):

Φ	$\neg\Phi$
T	F
F	T

Conjunction (“and”):

\wedge	T	F
T	T	F
F	F	F

Disjunction (“or”):

\vee	T	F
T	T	T
F	T	F

Classically Valid Arguments and Logical Truths

Disjunctive Syllogism:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi, \quad \Phi \text{ or } \Psi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi, \quad \Phi \vee \Psi}{\Psi}$$

Explosion:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi \text{ and } \Phi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi \wedge \Phi}{\Psi}$$

Excluded Middle:

$$\Phi \text{ or } \text{not} : \Phi$$

$$\Phi \vee \neg\Phi$$

First-Degree Entailment (FDE)

Give Up Bivalence:

Some sentences can be neither true nor false.

Give Up the Law of Non-Contradiction:

Some sentences can be both true and false.

Historical Note:

The logic of First-Degree Entailment was introduced by Alan Anderson and Nuel Belnap.

More FDE

Reword Validity:

An argument with P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n as premises, and C as conclusion – that is:

$$\frac{P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n}{C}$$

is logically valid if and only if it is impossible for P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n to all be true (or both) and C fail to be true (or both).

Reword Logical Truth:

A sentence is a logical truth if and only if it is impossible for it to fail to be true (or both).



The Connectives:

Negation (not):

not: Φ (i.e. $\neg\Phi$) is true if and only if Φ is false.

not: Φ (i.e. $\neg\Phi$) is false if and only if Φ is true.

Conjunction (and):

Φ and Ψ (i.e. $\Phi \wedge \Psi$) is true if and only if Φ is true and Ψ is true.

Φ and Ψ (i.e. $\Phi \wedge \Psi$) is false if and only if Φ is false or Ψ is false.

Disjunction (or):

Φ or Ψ (i.e. $\Phi \vee \Psi$) is true if and only if Φ is true or Ψ is true.

Φ or Ψ (i.e. $\Phi \vee \Psi$) is false if and only if Φ is false and Ψ is false.



FDE Truth Tables

Negation:

Φ	$\neg\Phi$
T	F
B	B
N	N
F	T

Conjunction:

\wedge	T	B	N	F
T	T	B	N	F
B	B	B	F	F
N	N	F	N	F
F	F	F	F	F

Disjunction:

\vee	T	B	N	F
T	T	T	T	T
B	T	B	T	B
N	T	T	N	N
F	T	B	N	F



Validity and Logical Truth in FDE:

Disjunctive Syllogism:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi, \quad \Phi \text{ or } \Psi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi, \quad \Phi \vee \Psi}{\Psi}$$

This is not valid in FDE (just let Φ be both true and false, and Ψ be false).

Explosion:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi \text{ and } \Phi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi \wedge \Phi}{\Psi}$$

This is not valid in FDE (just let Φ be both true and false, and Ψ be false).

Excluded Middle:

$$\Phi \text{ or } \text{not} : \Phi$$

$$\Phi \vee \neg\Phi$$

This is not a logical truth in FDE (just let Φ be neither true nor false).



Logic of Paradox (LP)

Accept Bivalence:

Every sentence is either true or false.

Give up Law of Non-Contradiction:

Some sentences can be both true and false.

Note:

This sort of logic is often described as *glutty*.

Note:

This logic has been extensively studied by Graham Priest.

LP Truth Tables

Negation:

Φ	$\neg\Phi$
T	F
B	B
F	T

Conjunction:

\wedge	T	B	F
T	T	B	F
B	B	B	F
F	F	F	F

Disjunction:

\vee	T	B	F
T	T	T	T
B	T	B	B
F	T	B	F

Validity and Logical Truth in LP

Disjunctive Syllogism:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi, \quad \Phi \text{ or } \Psi}{\Psi} \qquad \frac{\neg\Phi, \quad \Phi \vee \Psi}{\Psi}$$

This is not valid in LP (just let Φ be both true and false, and Ψ be false).

Explosion:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi \text{ and } \Phi}{\Psi} \qquad \frac{\neg\Phi \wedge \Phi}{\Psi}$$

This is not valid in LP (just let Φ be both true and false, and Ψ be false).

Excluded Middle:

$$\Phi \text{ or } \text{not} : \Phi \qquad \Phi \vee \neg\Phi$$

This is a logical truth in LP.

Note: In fact, every logical truth in classical logic is a logical truth in LP!

Strong Kleene Logic (K3)

Give Up Bivalence:

Some sentences are neither true nor false.

Accept Law of Non-Contradiction:

No sentence can be both true and false.

Note:

This sort of logic is often described as *gappy*.

Note:

This logic has been extensively studied by Stephen Kleene.

K3 Truth Tables

Negation:

Φ	$\neg\Phi$
T	F
N	N
F	T

Conjunction:

\wedge	T	N	F
T	T	N	F
N	N	N	F
F	F	F	F

Disjunction:

\vee	T	N	F
T	T	T	T
N	T	N	N
F	T	N	F

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Validity and Logical Truth in K3

Disjunctive Syllogism: Disjunctive Syllogism:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi, \quad \Phi \text{ or } \Psi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi, \quad \Phi \vee \Psi}{\Psi}$$

This is valid in K3.

Explosion:

$$\frac{\text{not} : \Phi \text{ and } \Phi}{\Psi}$$

$$\frac{\neg\Phi \wedge \Phi}{\Psi}$$

This is valid in K3.

Excluded Middle:

$$\Phi \text{ or } \text{not} : \Phi$$

$$\Phi \vee \neg\Phi$$

This is not a logical truth in K3 (just let Φ be neither true nor false).

Note: In fact, no sentence is a logical truth in K3!

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Do we have to choose?

Logical Monism:

The is exactly one logic that describes correct reasoning.

Logical Pluralism:

The is more than one logic that describes correct reasoning.

Logical Nihilism:

The is no logic that describes correct reasoning.

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Summing up the Liar paradox: Tarski's Theorem (Informally)

Proposition

Given a classical base language \mathcal{L}_0 (i.e. a language \mathcal{L}_0 interpretable in terms of the classical truth values $\{\top, \perp\}$), extend the language \mathcal{L}_0 to \mathcal{L}_1 by adding expressive resources sufficient to characterize \top and \perp (i.e. add "is true" and "is false"). Then:

This sentence is false.

cannot receive either of the values $\{\top, \perp\}$.

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Kripke's Solution

Add a third truth-value ρ_1 !

Note: At the moment we don't care if this is a "glut" or a "gap".

Revenge

Proposition

Extend the language \mathcal{L}_1 to \mathcal{L}_2 by adding expressive resources sufficient to characterize the pathological value ρ_1 (i.e. add "is pathological₁"). Then:

This sentence is false or pathological₁.

cannot receive either of the values $\{\top, \perp, \rho_1\}$.

The Obvious Move?

Add a fourth truth-value ρ_2 !

Super-revenge

Proposition

Extend the language \mathcal{L}_2 to \mathcal{L}_3 by adding expressive resources sufficient to characterize the pathological value ρ_2 (i.e. add "is pathological₂"). Then:

This sentence is false or pathological₁ or pathological₂.

cannot receive either of the values $\{\top, \perp, \rho_1, \rho_2\}$.

The Ultimate Revenge

Theorem

Given any definite collection of exclusive semantic values Σ , there is a sentence λ_Σ that cannot receive any of the values in Σ .

Proof.

The required sentence λ_Σ is:

This sentence has one of the values in Σ other than the true.

Assume for *reductio* that the semantic value of λ_Σ is in Σ .

Assume further that the value of λ_Σ is \top . Then what λ_Σ says is not the case, so the semantic value of λ_Σ is \perp (i.e. λ_Σ is false). Contradiction.

Hence, the semantic value of λ_Σ is not \top . So the semantic value of λ_Σ is in Σ and is not \top . But this is just what λ_Σ says. Hence the semantic value of λ_Σ is \top (i.e. λ_Σ is true). Contradiction.

So the value of λ_Σ cannot be in Σ . \square

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Negations strong, weak, and choice

Φ	$\neg_S \Phi$	$\neg_W \Phi$	$\neg_C \Phi$
\top	\perp	\perp	\perp
ρ	\perp	\top	ρ
\perp	\top	\top	\top

- LP and K3 only work if we use *choice* negation (for reasons we might see more formally later).

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The Conditional

Definition

$$\Phi \rightarrow \Psi =_{df} (\neg_C \Phi) \vee \Psi$$

What we get:

\rightarrow_S	\top	ρ	\perp
\top	\top	ρ	\perp
ρ	\top	ρ	ρ
\perp	\top	\top	\top

What we want:

\rightarrow_S	\top	ρ	\perp
\top	\top	ρ	\perp
ρ	\top	\top	ρ
\perp	\top	\top	\top

Again, for “revenge” reasons we can’t have the second conditional.

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Two Options

- Cut our losses, and accept that at some point our linguistic resources fall short of expressing all of these ‘pathological’ semantic notions (and, in particular, accept that there is some definite set of exclusive semantic values Σ such that λ_Σ is not expressible).
- Accept the picture just sketched, and *embrace revenge* as an inherent feature of semantic theorizing itself, and of the language(s) within which we carry out such endeavors.

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