THE REASONER

CONTENTS

The Logic of Conceivability

Imagination in Rome   Last time, Franz introduced the project the Logic of Conceivability and discussed some of the logical issues we aim to address. This time, I will say more about a philosophical issue that we engage with: *Modal Epistemology*. Modal Epistemology concerns issues about *how we can know what is possible and necessary*. For example, consider the couch that you want to move and you wonder whether there is a way to get the couch through the door. That is, you wonder whether *it is possible* that the couch fits through the door. This is a very mundane, everyday situation and modal epistemology aims to explain *how* we acquire (or fail to acquire) such knowledge. Obviously, there are also less mundane questions of this sort such as whether it is possible that this table is made out of ice, or whether it is possible whether there is transparent iron. (Peter has an interesting paper on the distinction between mundane and 'exotic' possibilities, following work by Peter van Inwagen.)

Now, as you remember, in work by Franz on the logic of imagination (e.g., here); imagination is allowed to 'reach the impossible'. That is, in certain, restricted cases, we can imagine the impossible. However, one of the oldest accounts of how we acquire knowledge of possibility (and necessity) is through *the use of imagination* (this goes, at least, back to Hume and Descartes). But, if we can imagine the impossible, how can imagination then be a good guide to what is possible and necessary? We will not solve the issue here, but let me make some remarks about it. First of all, note that it is (still) very controversial to hold that we can imagine the impossible. So, we will need to argue for this in and of itself. Secondly, if we allow our imagination to reach the impossible, then we need to make some remarks with regards to modal epistemology—i.e., if not imagination, then what is a reliable guide to the possible?

There are many theories of modal epistemology that are currently discussed in the literature (e.g., Timothy Williamson's counterfactual analysis is one of them, as is George Bealer's modal intuitions account) and which one is most suitable for a modal epistemology constitutes a large part of the *philosophical* side of the Logic of Conceivability project. For example, last June the *Conceivability and Modality* conference at the Sapienza Uninversity in Rome revolved around these issues and the Logic of Conceivability project was well represented. All of us were present and both Franz and myself had the opportunity to speak at the conference, alongside Albert Cassullo, Boris Kment, Tito Magri, Antonella Mallozzi, Daniel Nolan, Jonathan Schaffer, Anand Vaidya, and Barbara Vetter.

Franz presented new work on aboutness in imagination. That is, the talk aimed to address the question of what we can imagine, *given a certain input*. Franz develops a new model theoretic framework, using only possible worlds, where he incorporates the notion of 'aboutness'. This captures the idea that our imaginary developments (have to) remain *on topic*. Franz' work on this resulted in another publication under the LoC-flag (more on this below). My presentation concerned a more philo-

sophical analysis of imagination and in particular how imagination can figure into a theory of modal epistemology. The aim of my presentation was to critically evaluate a recent attempt to build an imagination-based modal epistemology. For, as should be clear by now, we at the Logic of Conceivability project (or at least some of us), think that we *can* imagine the impossible.

More Conceiving People   When Franz wrote the last entry, we were hiring. Now that we have it is time to introduce you to the complete Logic of Conceivability dream-team. As noted, the principal investigator is Franz Berto, with Peter Hawke as the first four-year postdoc, and me as the PhD candidate of the project. In addition, we hired two more four-year postdocs and it is my pleasure to introduce you to Aybüke Özgün and Karolina Krzyżanowska.

Aybüke works on Dynamic Epistemic Logics, which she analyses using mathematical techniques from topology. She will join us in October, right after she has defended her PhD, which is a joint degree from the Institute for Logic, Language, and Computation and LORIA, CNRS, Université de Lorraine under the supervision of Hans van Ditmarsch, Nick Bezhanishvili, and Sonja Smets.

Karolina works in the psychology of reasoning and, in particular, the semantics and pragmatics of conditionals and how we use these in reasoning. She finished her PhD at the University of Groningen under the supervision of Igor Douven, where she worked on an analysis of conditionals from both a philosophical and empirical perspective. Currently, she is a postdoc at the LMU Munich, where she works with Stephan Hartmann on the Scientific Reasoning and Argumentation project.

We are really happy that both Aybüke and Karolina will join us.

More Conceived Outputs   Since the last post, we have not sat still and there are more articles out under our project's flag. First of all, Franz has published a joint paper with Rohan French, Dave Ripley, and Graham Priest in response to Williamson's rejection of counterpossibles. The paper, *Williamson on Counterpossibles*, evaluates and responds to all objections given by Williamson and then they go on to propose a simple semantics for a non-vacuous counterpossibles.

Secondly, as I mentioned above, Franz has published his paper on *Aboutness in Imagination*. In it, he develops a modal framework for imagination that incorporates aboutness conditions in a logic for imagination, using only possible worlds. This is different from his previous paper, where he presents a logic of imagination with non-normal, or impossible, worlds.

There is more work in the pipelines, so keep your eyes open for what's to come.

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