

Teams and Truthmakers

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ILLC and Philosophy, University of Amsterdam
Bochum, July 7, 2026

Directions in Relevant Logic

Plan for the talk

- *Project:* Develop account of the meaning of OR, (AND, NOT,) MIGHT, MAY, MUST.
- *Two themes:*
 - New semantics for modals
 - Relevance, gluts, gaps, exactness
- *Structure:*
 1. Data and desiderata
 - Epistemic Contradictions
 - Free Choice
 - and more
 2. Our semantics
 3. Its explanations and predictions

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Epistemic Contradictions

Consider:

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| (1) | a. # It is raining and possibly it is not raining | $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ |
| | b. # It is raining and it might not be raining | $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ |
| | c. # It is raining but it might not be raining | $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ |
| | d. # It is not raining but it might be raining | $\neg p \wedge \Diamond p$ |
| | e. # It might be raining but it is not raining | $\Diamond p \wedge \neg p$ |
| | f. # It might not be raining but it is raining | $\Diamond \neg p \wedge p$ |

Compare:

- (2)
- a. It is raining but it could have been snowing
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Task: Explain infelicity of $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ for epist. $\Diamond$.

Epistemic Contradictions: Gricean or not?

Compare **Moorean** sentences:

- (3) a. # It is raining and I don't know that it is raining
- b. # It is raining but I don't know that it is raining

Gricean story supported by **non-assertoric contexts**:

- a. Suppose it is raining and I don't know that it is raining
- b. If it is raining and I don't know that it is raining, then ...

In contrast:

- (4) a. # Suppose it is raining and it might not be raining (Yalcin 2007)
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- (ii) Non-trivial task since $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ is perfectly consistent on standard point-based relational accounts of modality

Free Choice (epistemic)

- (5) a. Mr. X **might** be in Victoria or in Brixton (Zimmermann 2000)
b. $\rightsquigarrow$ Mr. X **might** be in Victoria
- (6) a. Mr. X **might** be in Victoria or he **might** be in Brixton
b. $\rightsquigarrow$ Mr. X **might** be in Victoria
- (7) a. Mr. X **must** be in Victoria or in Brixton
b. $\rightsquigarrow$ Mr. X **might** be in Victoria
- (8) a. Mr. X **must** be in Victoria or he **must** be in Brixton
b. $\rightsquigarrow$ Mr. X **might** be in Victoria

Logical form:

- $\Diamond(p \vee q) \rightsquigarrow \Diamond p$
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- (9) a. You **may** go to the beach or take the canal boat (Kamp 1973)
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Paradox of Free Choice: $\Diamond p \overset{\text{mon.}}{\rightsquigarrow} \Diamond(p \vee q) \overset{\text{FC}}{\rightsquigarrow} \Diamond q$

Consider:

- (13)
- a. Either Robert is following the talk online or he's busy with admin
 - b. $\rightsquigarrow$ Robert might be following the talk online
 - c. $p \vee q \rightsquigarrow \Diamond p$

Consider as well:

- (14) ?? I have two or three children

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- (i) Non-trivial to develop an adequate semantics;
- (ii) TRUTH seems the wrong semantic notion for modal meaning.

Starting point: Aloni's (2022) development of the Zimmermann–Geurts (2000, 2005) idea that **possibility inferences** are part and parcel of the **meaning of disjunction**.

Two **departures** from Aloni's system (called **BSML**):

- (1) Different semantics for modals
- (2) Relevant base rather than classical base
- (2) $\Rightarrow$ account for further phenomena,
- (1) $\Rightarrow$ resolve BSML modal issues, which include:

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- a. It must be here or it must be there $\Box p \vee \Box q$
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- FC across modal flavours, but with
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Formal system

· (Information) states T are nonempty sets of possible worlds FDE-valuations, conceived as van Fraassenian (1969) truthmakers (or facts):

Definition

$$T(p) = \{\{\mathbf{p}\}\},$$

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Proposition: $\varphi \models_{\text{FDE}} \psi$ if and only if $T^*(\varphi) \models \psi$.

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Two clauses for $\Diamond$.

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On one clause, we say that an information state T supports $\Diamond\varphi$ just in case part of T supports φ (' T rules φ in'); formally,

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Theorem (Double-barreled characterization)

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Idea: we care whether φ is consistent *modulo*, or *relative to*, T' .

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$$T \models \Diamond\varphi \quad \text{iff} \quad \exists T' \triangleright T' \models \varphi. \quad (2e)$$

- Let further:

$$T \models \Box\varphi \quad \text{iff} \quad T \models \varphi,$$

$$T \models \Diamond\varphi \quad \text{iff} \quad T \models \varphi,$$

$$T \models \Box_1\varphi \quad \text{iff} \quad \exists T' \triangleright T' \models \varphi,$$

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Epistemic modality II

- Write $\text{Inc}(f) = \{\mathbf{p} \mid \{\mathbf{p}, \bar{\mathbf{p}}\} \subseteq \mathbf{f}\}$
- Say f **consistently extends** g if $f \supseteq g$ and $\text{Inc}(f) \subseteq \text{Inc}(g)$
- Say T' **refines** T , written $T' \trianglelefteq T$, if

each $f \in T'$ consistently extends some $g \in T$.

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Predictions: EC

- Say that T is **locally inconsistent** if it contains an inconsistent fact
- φ is **locally inconsistent** if only locally inconsistent states support φ

Idea: Epistemic contradictions $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$ are odd because they are locally inconsistent

- *The following are all locally inconsistent:*

- $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p, \neg p \wedge \Diamond p, \Diamond p \wedge \neg p, \Diamond \neg p \wedge \neg p$
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- $\Diamond(p \wedge \Diamond \neg p)$
- $(p \wedge \Diamond \neg p) \vee \varphi$

- *We further avoid these BSML-inferences:*

- $\Diamond \varphi \wedge \Diamond \psi \models \Diamond(\varphi \wedge \Diamond \psi)$ (so also $\Diamond p \wedge \Diamond \neg p \models \Diamond(p \wedge \Diamond \neg p)$)
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Epistemic contradictions are **relevant**:

$p \wedge \Diamond \neg p \models p$ but $p \wedge \Diamond \neg p \not\models q$; and

$\Box p \wedge \Diamond \neg p \models p$ but $\Box p \wedge \Diamond \neg p \not\models q$.

Valid FC and possibility inferences

$$\Diamond(\varphi \vee \psi) \models \Diamond\varphi \wedge \Diamond\psi,$$

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Predictions: Zimmermannian puzzles

Invalid inferences:

$$(17) \quad \Box\varphi \vee \Box\psi \not\equiv \Box\varphi \wedge \Box\psi$$

- (18) a. $\varphi \vee \Box\psi \not\equiv \Box\psi$
b. Either these are not the winning numbers or I must have won the lottery
c. $\nleftrightarrow$ I must have won the lottery

- (19) a. $\varphi \vee \Box\psi \not\equiv \psi$
b. $\Box\varphi \vee \Box\psi \not\equiv \varphi \wedge \psi$

And

$$(\Box p \vee \Box q) \wedge \Diamond \neg q \wedge \Diamond \neg p$$

is not locally inconsistent.

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Another Zimmermannian puzzle

$\Box p \vee \Box \neg p$	it must be here or it must be there
$\rightsquigarrow \Diamond p \vee \Diamond \neg p$	it might be here or it might be there
$\rightsquigarrow \Diamond p \wedge \Diamond \neg p$	it might be here and it might be there
$\rightsquigarrow \neg \Box \neg p \wedge \neg \Box p$	it is not that it must be there, and it is not that it must be here
$\rightsquigarrow \neg(\Box \neg p \vee \Box p)$	it is not that it must be there or it must be here
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Deontic modals

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- (ii) Modal flavour modelled via accessibility relation between states

Semantics for deontic $\Diamond_d$

Let R be relation between info states. Define:

$$T \models \Diamond_d \varphi \quad \text{iff} \quad \exists T R T' \models \varphi,$$

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Deontic inferences

$$\Diamond_d(\varphi \vee \psi) \models \Diamond_d \varphi \wedge \Diamond_d \psi, \quad (\text{always})$$

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$$(*) \quad \subseteq \circ R \quad \subseteq \quad R \circ \subseteq$$

More NL phenomena

1. Uncertainty inferences (via **gaps**, **exactness**, and $\Diamond_2$)

- (20)
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2. Indirectness of MUST (via **gluts**)

3. Failure of distributivity (via **non-persistence**)

4. Hurford disjunctions (via **possibility inferences** or **exactness**)

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Thank you!