



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SEMINAR

A theory of conditional assertion

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Abstract:

Some people have thought that when you utter a conditional sentence, you perform a special kind of speech act: a conditional assertion. This speech act asserts the consequent when the antecedent is true, and otherwise has no effect. In this talk I will offer a new theory of what conditional assertion is. The main idea will be to interpret conditional assertion epistemically, as a constraint on learning. On this approach, conditional assertion requires that anyone who learns a conditional and then learns that the antecedent is false ends up with the same information as she would have if she had simply learned the antecedent was false in the first place. I show that this simple idea has a variety of consequences for the logic and semantics of conditionals.

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