Ambiguous Conditionals[*]

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Abstract

According to the Principle of Conditional Non-Contradiction (CNC), unless p is impossible, conditionals "If p, then q" and "If p, then not q" are jointly inconsistent. Although intuitively appealing, CNC gives rise to serious problems that semantic theories of conditionals validating it have to face. Most notably, an example of apparent violation of CNC, as presented by Allan Gibbard, may lead to the conclusion that conditionals do not express propositions at all. In the preset paper we propose a new analysis of Gibbard's argument showing that the violation of CNC is only apparent. Subsequently, we suggest a new way of defining truth conditions for conditional sentences.

Indicative conditionals are among the most peculiar phenomena of language. Although clearly important and pervasive in everyday life they are a source of never-ending disagreement among philosophers; even the question whether they have truth conditions lacks an ultimate answer. One of the philosophers responsible for the latter is Allan Gibbard who in "Two recent theories of conditionals" (1981) presented a famous, widely accepted argument against a class of propositional accounts of indicative conditionals which validate the principle of Conditional Non-Contradiction (CNC). According to this principle, unless p is impossible, conditionals "If p, then q" and "If p, then not q" are jointly inconsistent, which seems, at least at first sight, to comply with our epistemic intuitions: either "If the weather is nice, we will go for a trip" is true, or "If the weather is nice, we will not go for a trip" is true, but not both, because in the situation in which the weather is nice, we cannot both go and not go for a trip.

One of the most prominent theories of conditionals validating CNC is Robert Stalnaker's possible world semantics (1968). Stalnaker's theory is a truth-conditional development of Frank Ramsey's idea that people decide whether to accept a conditional by assuming its antecedent and on that basis deciding whether to accept its consequent (Ramsey 1929/1990, p. 155). In Stalnaker's terms, interpreting a conditional "If p, then q" involves selecting the closest p-world, that is the closest possible world in which the antecedent

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p is true, and checking whether q holds in that world. "If p, then q" is true in a world w if q is true in the p-world z that is closest to w. Given Stalnaker's assumption that for any consistent proposition p and any possible world w there is a unique world p-world z which is the closest to w, it cannot be the case that both q and its negation are true in the selected p-world.

In the aforementioned 1981 paper Gibbard attempted to show that CNC can be seen as a reason to reject any semantics that validates it, which together with his arguments against the horseshoe analysis of indicative conditionals leads to the claim that indicative conditionals do not express propositions at all. The aim of the present paper is to show that the violation of CNC Gibbard allegedly points us at is only apparent. Thus, for all Gibbard has shown, a propositional account of conditionals, although not necessarily Stalnaker's semantics in its original form, can be maintained.

1 A Problem with the Principle of Conditional Non-Contradiction

As already mentioned, the intuitively appealing Principle of Conditional Non-Contradiction turns out to be more problematic than one would initially expect. To make his point, Gibbard invites us aboard a Mississippi riverboat where sly Pete plays poker against Mr. Stone. There is no one else in the game and it is now Pete's turn to call or fold. If he decides to fold, he neither wins nor loses anything. But if he calls, the player who has better cards in his hand wins the game (and a lot of money, supposedly), while the other player loses everything. Gibbard introduces also two henchmen, Sigmund and Snoopy,[1] who wander around and try to look into the players' cards. At some point, before Pete makes his final decision, the room will be cleared, but in the meantime one of the henchmen, Sigmund, looks into Mr. Stone's hand, which is quite good, and signals its content to Pete. After he has left the room, Sigmund hands an anonymous note to Gibbard himself saying:

(1) If Pete called, he won.

Sigmund's assertion is based on his belief in Pete's rationality and familiarity with the rules of the game, and his belief that Pete has no desire to lose. Knowing that Pete knows Mr. Stone's hand, Sigmund comes to believe that Pete will not call, unless his cards are better than Stone's. According to Gibbard, because there is no relevant fact of the matter that Sigmund is mistaken about, he is justified in asserting (1), and hence, if (1) expresses a proposition, it is a true proposition.

But while Sigmund was busy signaling the content of Mr. Stone's hand to Pete, Snoopy was snooping around and managed to see the hands of both players. He finds out that Pete's hand is not that good at all, and that it is

[1] For purely mnemonic reasons, the henchmen's names are taken from a version of the argument presented by DeRose (2010).

Stone who has the winning hand. After the room is cleared, Snoopy sends an anonymous note to Gibbard informing him that:

(2) If Pete called, he lost.

There are no doubts that Snoopy's statement expresses a true proposition, if it expresses a proposition at all. Given the rules of the game and the distribution of cards, the consequent of (2) is a straightforward consequence of the antecedent.

Gibbard then reasons as follows: both (1) and (2) are assertable, given what their respective utterers know and neither is asserting anything false, "for one sincerely asserts something false only when one is mistaken about something germane" (Gibbard 1981, p. 231). Neither Sigmund nor Snoopy has any relevant false belief, and neither of them is lying. According to Gibbard, this is a sufficient reason to think that if they are asserting propositions at all, those are true propositions. It thus seems that the sentence (1) uttered by Sigmund must be consistent with

(3) If Pete called, he did not win.

which entailed by (2), the sentence uttered by Snoopy. But this blatantly violates CNC, according to which (1) and (3) are in fact inconsistent. On that basis Gibbard concludes that neither of (1) and (2) can express a true (or false, for that matter) proposition—they do not express propositions at all.[2]

2 A way out?

One line of defence for proponents of possible worlds semantics, or as Gibbard himself puts it, "the only apparent way to reconcile [the above story] with conditional non-contradiction" (p. 232), is saying that (1) expresses one proposition when it is uttered by Sigmund and another one when it is uttered by Snoopy. This solution seems to comply with Stalnaker's own view that conditionals are susceptible to pragmatic ambiguity; that is, their interpretation may depend on the context in which they have been uttered (Stalnaker 1968, p. 109). If two speakers differ in their epistemic states, as it happens on the Mississippi riverboat, they create two different contexts of utterance. Each of them may then employ a different selection function—a semantic device responsible for selecting, for any world w and any proposition p the closest possible p-world. Let us have a closer look in our two henchmen's epistemic situations.

There are, at least *prima facie*, four relevant possibilities to be considered:

[2] It is disputable though whether justification must always lead to true beliefs. One might be justified in asserting p given all the evidence available to him, yet entirely ignorant about something relevant to its truth value. Consequently p may turn out to be false. Therefore, even though we agree that Sigmund and Snoopy are both justified in what they assert, we are not obliged to assign the same truth value to these assertions. However, here we grant Gibbard this point as we want to focus on a different aspect of his argument.

w_{CW}:	Pete calls	Pete has a winning hand
w_{CL}:	Pete calls	Pete has a losing hand
w_{FW}:	Pete does not call	Pete has a winning hand
w_{FL}:	Pete does not call	Pete has a losing hand

Sigmund knows that Pete knows his opponent's cards. He also strongly believes in Pete's rationality and familiarity with the rules of the game. Therefore he does not consider the world w_{CL} possible at all, and only w_{CW}, w_{FW} and w_{FL} are compatible with what he knows. In Sigmund's view Pete will call only in those possible worlds in which he has a winning hand. In Stalnaker's terms, from Sigmund's perspective in the closest (and, in fact, the only available) "Pete calls"-world, "Pete wins" is true, and therefore the conditional "If Pete called, he won" is true.

w_{CW}:	Pete calls	Pete has a winning hand
w_{FW}:	Pete does not call	Pete has a winning hand
w_{FL}:	Pete does not call	Pete has a losing hand

At the same time Snoopy, knowing the exact distribution of cards, eliminates all those worlds in which Pete has a winning hand. Hence the only worlds he considers possible are w_{CL} and w_{FL}:

w_{CL}:	Pete calls	Pete has a losing hand
w_{FL}:	Pete does not call	Pete has a losing hand

As a result the closest "Pete calls"-world selected by Snoopy is w_{CL} in which Pete has a losing hand. The sets of possible worlds that constitute epistemic states of the agents are different and their respective selection function take different values. "If Pete called, he won" can indeed express two different propositions depending on the context, that is, on whether it is uttered by Sigmund or by Snoopy.

2.1 Pragmatic ambiguity

There is nothing intrinsically bizarre about sentences expressing context-dependent propositions. We can find many uncontroversial examples of those, like for instance sentences containing indexicals:

(4) I am a biologist.

If my friend, Susan, sincerely asserts (4), I will believe that the proposition expressed by this sentence is true, but I do not have to immediately believe that I am a biologist. Willing to assert the same propositions as Susan in (4), I would rather say:

(5) Susan is a biologist.

In the case of this or other indexicals we are equipped with a set of rather straightforward rules allowing us to extract the necessary information from the context of utterance. Similarly, scope ambiguity of quantifiers occurring in sentences like:

(6) Everyone has something to drink.

does not pose any particular problem to a competent user of language. If, for instance, I hear (6) uttered during a housewarming party, I will readily interpret the scope of the quantifier as being limited to the people present at that very party.

Although some philosophers actually accepted the idea of treating conditionals as indexical-like expressions,[3] Gibbard puts forward sensible reasons not to do so. As he pointed out, we are equipped with a fairly straightforward set of rules allowing us to detect the relevant contextual information necessary to interpret sentences like (4) or (6), and moreover, those rules are common knowledge between the speaker and the hearer.[4] Indicative conditionals do not *prima facie* provide us with any rules of this sort. Suppose, as in Gibbard's original story, I am the recipient of two notes with two different messages, (1) and (2). The only thing I know about the origin of those messages is that they come from my two trusted and sincere henchmen, Snoopy and Sigmund. I have no idea which of them is the author of which note, nor do I know anything about information supporting their respective claims. Then I have no method whatsoever to find out what kind of selection function each of them has chosen, and so I cannot know what propositions their messages express.

Gibbard is right when he says that a recipient of messages written by Sigmund and Snoopy has no means to interpret the messages, provided that they are so closely tied to the epistemic states of the speakers. But what he overlooked is that the interpretation problem concerning the conditionals in the sly Pete story, as opposite to sentences like (4) or (6), is not those conditionals' fault, but his own, Gibbard's. His story differs in a significant way from the examples he used to show how easy it is to interpret indexicals or scope-ambiguous quantifiers. If, next to the two notes with (1) and (2) on them, I receive a third note with a message:

(7) I saw both Pete's and Mr. Stone's cards.

but I do not know which of my trusted henchmen is the author of the note, I do not know how to fully interpret it as well. Knowing that the author of the note saw both hands is not very helpful: it is as informative as knowing that there is *some* link between Pete's calling and his winning, as well as *some*

[3] See for instance Stalnaker (1984, pp. 109-112), and Bennett (2003) for an overview.

[4] Gibbard says about the difference in contexts in which (1) and (2) occur, that it has "a strange feature", because: "Ordinarily when context resolves a pragmatic ambiguity, the features of the context that resolve it are common knowledge between speaker and audience. If the chairman of a meeting announces "Everyone has voted 'yes' on that motion", what the audience knows about the context allows it to judge the scope of 'everyone'" (Gibbard 1981, p. 232). In the sly Pete story, "in contrast, whatever contextual differences between the utterances there may be, they are unknown to the audience. I, the audience, know exactly the same thing about the two contexts: that the sentence is the content of a note handed me by one of my henchmen. Whatever differences in the context make them invoke different s-functions is completely hidden from me, the intended audience" (*ibid.*).

other link between Pete's calling and his losing. An example with a scope-ambiguous quantifier is even more problematic: if I do not know anything about the context in which (6) was uttered, I will have no clue what is the scope of the quantifier occurring there. As an author of an anonymous message containing an indexical expression violates Gricean conversational principles, so do Gibbard's henchmen in the sly Pete story.

Although Sigmund and Snoopy both made a mistake assuming that the addressee has sufficient information to determine what the meaning of their conditional—and hence, as we are assuming, context-dependent—messages is, they still are warranted in believing that what they are saying is true. Furthermore, both of those conditionals can be true. Or so I shall argue. Specifically, I am going to claim that this is possible because those conditionals are indeed ambiguous, but their ambiguity is of a different kind than what Stalnaker or Gibbard had in mind. Before explaining this in detail let me consider another version of Gibbard's story which will bring out the point about ambiguity even clearer.

2.2 Another story from the Mississippi riverboat

Sly Pete and Mr. Stone are playing poker again, and Gibbard's two henchmen, Sigmund and Snoopy, are doing their respective jobs. It is, again, up to Pete to call or fold, and again Sigmund manages to signal the content of Mr. Stone's hand to him. But contrary to the original story, this time it is Pete who has the winning hand, which is again spotted by Snoopy. This time, after the room is cleared, both Sigmund and Snoopy will sincerely assert:

(1) If Pete called, he won.

If we assume that conditionals are indexical, unfortunately for those who want to know what propositions they are supposed to believe, given that they trust the henchmen, Sigmund and Snoopy still differ in their respective epistemic states, so they employ different selection functions. Then again, (1) expresses a different proposition depending on whether it is Sigmund or Snoopy who asserts it, which would suggest that I should believe one proposition after receiving a message from Sigmund, and another one when it is sent to me by Snoopy, despite the fact that I know nothing about their respective contexts of assertion. As already mentioned, the lack of hints allowing us to interpret conditional assertions makes the indexicality of conditionals problematic.

Yet this is not a good reason to give up the claim that (1) is ambiguous, nor is it a good reason to give up the claim that conditionals uttered by Gibbard's henchmen in his original example are ambiguous. I would like to propose a new analysis of Gibbard's argument which may lead towards a new semantics of conditionals.[5] As the advocates of the indexical account did,

[5]The suggested analysis rests on the asymmetry of the argument as it has been formulated by Gibbard, despite the fact that various symmetrical versions of the argument have been proposed by subsequent authors (see, for instance, Bennett (2003)). This is not without a reason. The poker game scenario reveals certain interesting features of condi-

I will claim that the violation of CNC is only apparent. However, I will also suggest an escape route from the extreme subjectivity the indexical account seems to entail.

3 Conditionals and inferences

It is beyond dispute that there is a close kinship between conditional statements and reasoning patterns. There is already an enormous body of literature devoted to reasoning *with* conditionals, that is to argument structures in which a conditional statement is among the premises. However, conditionals are more than possible premises of arguments: they themselves can be deemed to reflect inferences. This is not an entirely new idea. An inferential relation between a conditional's antecedent and its consequent has already been emphasised by Chrysippus, a stoic logician from the third century BC, to whom scholars attribute the following proposal: "a conditional is true if and only if it corresponds to a valid argument." (Sanford 1989, p. 24). Also some more contemporary authors based their theories on an observation that a conditional "If p, then q" is, as Michael Woods puts it, "to be regarded as a condensed argument from p to q" (2003, p. 15; notation altered for uniformity of reading).

It is debatable whether this holds for *all* conditionals. For instance, it is common practise in linguistics to distinguish between *inferential* conditionals, which reflect reasoning processes—inferences from a conditional's antecedent to its consequent—and *content* conditionals which are roughly defined as indicating relations between states of affairs or events.[6] Even if natural language conditionals do not always reflect an inference, it would be hard to deny that a vast and important class of them do. However, what has been overlooked by most of the authors sharing the inferential view on conditionals, is that there is more than one type of inference, so our hitherto prevailing theories may be just too coarse-grained to be accurate.

In their 2010 paper Igor Douven and Sara Verbrugge introduced a finer-grained typology of inferential conditionals. They followed a well-established philosophical tradition of classifying reasoning patterns into certain and uncertain inferences, and the latter further into inductive and abductive ones. In certain inferences, also called "deductive inferences", the truth of the conclusion is guaranteed by the truth of the premises. For instance, on the basis of the two following sentences:

(4) All well-educated Norwegians can speak English fluently.

(5) Yngwe is a well-educated Norwegian.

we can conclude with certainty:

tional sentences, and taking them seriously shall lead to a better understanding of what conditional sentences mean. Moreover, the resulting semantics makes the right predictions also about the symmetrical cases, though to argue this will have to await another occasion.

[6] See, for instance, Dancygier (1998), Declerck and Reed (2001) or Haegeman (2003)

(6) Yngwe can speak English fluently.

But many reasoning processes we entertain in our everyday life are defeasible, that is, the truth of what is inferred is not guaranteed, but only made likely by the truth of the premises from which it is inferred.

(7) Louis likes Virginia.

does not follow deductively from

(8) Louis frequently hangs out with Virginia.

but nevertheless we are likely to believe the former on a basis of the latter together with a background belief concerning patterns of human behaviour, in particular, that people tend to spend time with those whom they like. Here the conclusion follows from the premises on the basis of explanatory considerations: (7) is taken to be the best explanation of Louis's hanging out with her, or as we will also say, (7) is an abductive consequence of (8). Also, we can conclude (with a certain probability) that Jinny will pass her exam in epistemology with a good grade from

(9) Jinny had studied hard for the exam.

if we know that she usually gets good grades when she studies hard. This is an example of an inductive inference—the conclusion follows from the premises with a certain probability on the grounds of statistical information.

Corresponding to this typology, Douven and Verbrugge categorise inferential conditionals according to the type of inference they reflect (p. 304):

Definition 1. *A sentence "If p, then q" is a deductive inferential (DI, for short), inductive inferential (II) or abductive inferential (AI) conditional if and only if q is, respectively, a deductive, inductive or abductive consequence of p.*

They also define "contextual" versions of all three types of conditionals.

Definition 2. *A sentence "If p, then q" is a contextual DI, II or AI conditional if and only if q is, respectively, a deductive, inductive or abductive consequence of $\{p, p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$, with $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ being background premises salient in the context in which "If p, then q" is asserted or being evaluated.*

For all examples of inferences mentioned above we can provide a conditional sentence reflecting that inference. For instance:

(10) If Yngwe is a well-educated Norwegian, he can speak English fluently.

is a contextual DI conditional, because the consequent (6) follows deductively from the antecedent (5) together with a background premise that all well-educated Norwegians can speak English fluently. Similarly,

(11) If Jinny has studied hard, she will pass her exam in epistemology with a good grade.

is a contextual II conditional, because we need to know that Jinny *usually* gets good grades when she studies hard for

(12) Jinny will pass her exam in epistemology with a good grade

to follow inductively from (9). Finally, we need to have certain beliefs regarding human psychology and people's behavioural patterns, to make an inference from (8) to (7). Hence,

(13) If Louis frequently hangs out with Virginia, he likes her.

is a contextual AI conditional.

As already mentioned, the aim of the present paper is to show that Gibbard's conditionals can be and in fact are ambiguous, but their ambiguity is not purely pragmatic in its nature, but rather semantic. A sentence is semantically ambiguous if, depending on an interpretation, it can mean different things. More precisely, a semantically ambiguous sentence may be interpreted in at least two different ways and each of these interpretations provides different truth conditions for that sentence.

3.1 Towards a new semantics for conditionals

The typology of inferential conditionals presented in the previous section hinges on a diversity of consequence relations between antecedents and consequents. An inferential conditional is true, roughly speaking, when it corresponds to a valid inference. But a valid deductive inference is something different than a valid inductive inference—an argument supported only by statistical data might be deductively invalid, but inductively valid at the same time. Likewise, a true or acceptable abductive conditional may appear blatantly false or unacceptable if interpreted as expressing a deductive inference. Any attempt to provide a uniform truth-conditional account for all those different types of conditional sentences is bound to be a failure. My proposal is to define truth-conditions for indicative inferential conditionals according to their types.

Definition 3. *A (contextual) deductive inferential conditional, "If p, then q", is true if and only if q is a deductive consequence of p (or $\{p, p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$ with $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ being background premises salient in the context in which "If p, then q" is asserted or being evaluated).*

Definition 4. *A (contextual) abductive inferential conditional, "If p, then q", is true if and only if q is an abductive consequence of p (or $\{p, p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$ with $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ being background premises salient in the context in which "If p, then q" is asserted or being evaluated), that is if and only if q is the best explanation of p.*

It seems natural to think that truth conditions for inductive conditionals can be defined in an analogous way:

Definition 5. *A (contextual) inductive inferential conditional, "If p, then q", is true if and only if q is an inductive consequence of p, that is if q follows from p with sufficiently high statistical probability (or* $\{p, p_1, \ldots, p_n\}$ *with* $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ *being background premises salient in the context in which "If p, then q" is asserted or being evaluated).*

This definition faces a problem though, namely, it is vulnerable to a version of the lottery paradox as presented in (Douven 2012). It would take us too far afield to explain this problem in detail, but it suggests that truth conditions for II conditionals cannot be stated as straightforwardly as they can for DI and AI conditionals. However, for our analysis of Gibbard's argument this is not an immediately pressing issue, as will become apparent shortly.

Having the new typology in mind we shall turn back to the archetypal instances of troublesome conditionals, namely, to (1) and (2) from Gibbard's sly Pete story. In the following section we will analyse the grounds on which they have been asserted in order to find out what class of conditionals they belong to. Subsequently, we will argue that conditional sentences that look alike do not have to share their truth conditions, and hence the negation of one of them is not necessarily inconsistent with an affirmation of the other.

4 The way out

People use conditional sentences of different types for different communicative purposes, depending on, among other things, what sort of information they want to express.

(14) If Louis is driving a Maserati, he is driving a car.

is a DI conditional whose striking tautological flavour suggests that, for instance, it might have been used ironically or to ridicule someone's unwise statement. Otherwise it is not obvious at all why anyone would want to say anything like that. By contrast, (13) provides us with some more interesting information on dependencies between Louis's behaviour and his attitude towards Virginia, and in particular, on the speaker's belief that Louis's fondness of Virginia would explain his spending a lot of time in her company. And what are the two Gibbard's henchmen trying to communicate? Let us take a closer look at what is going on at the Mississippi riverboat.

Snoopy, the henchman whose snooping around results in seeing both Pete's and Mr. Stone's cards, is in a privileged position. His evidence is conclusive and the asserted conditional is entirely certain. (2) cannot be falsified because what makes it true are rules of the game and the distribution of cards, all of which Snoopy knows for sure. "Pete lost" is a deductive consequence of "Pete called", together with the set of propositions constituting the rules of Poker, and the propositions describing the situation at the table, namely, that Mr. Stone's is the winning hand. Therefore, (2) is a contextual DI conditional whose consequent follows deductively from the antecedent together with the set of aforementioned background premises.

Does it not mean then that Sigmund's utterance is simply false? For Pete cannot win this game, given the cards he holds in his hand. Yet what Sigmund tries to communicate does not concern the distribution of cards at all—this is a statement about Pete's possible decision to call. Provided that Pete is a skilled and rational Poker player who wants to win, and moreover, he knows his opponent's cards, it seems rational to believe that he will not call unless his card's are better than Mr. Stone's. In other words, if he decides to call, we will be justified in believing that he does that because he has the winning hand, for Pete's having a winning hand would be the best explanation of his decision to call. Sigmund's assertion, (1), can be deemed true *only* if we interpret it as a contextual AI conditional.

Note that Sigmund could have phrased his conditional more precisely, and presumably would have done so, if he had been aware of its ambiguity. Suppose that he asserts (1) in a conversation with someone who is not sure how to interpret it and asks whether it means that Pete has better cards. That should prompt Sigmund to precisify his assertion in, for instance, the following way:

(15) If Pete decided to call, he must have had a winning hand.

The best explanation does not need to be the only possible one. In Gibbard's Poker game scenario we can easily imagine reasons why Pete could decide to call despite his having a losing hand. For instance, we can come up with some conspiracy theory making us believe that Pete has been blackmailed and he is obliged to lose by all means. Or, assuming that Pete plays Poker against Mr. Stone on a regular basis, it might be reasonable for him to lose deliberately once in a while in order to mislead his opponent and protect himself from being caught cheating. But in a given context all of those possible explanations are less convincing than the one we initially accepted: that if Pete decides to call, given that he knows the opponent's cards, he has a winning hand.

AI conditionals, like the abductive inferences that they express, are defeasible—learning some new pieces of information may force us to withdraw earlier drawn conclusions, and analogously, reject once accepted propositions. For instance, suppose that Sigmund overhears some suspicious conversation in which Pete is threatened by Mr. Stone's influential friend who explicitly expressed his wish for Pete to lose. Sigmund may now suspect that Pete will try not to win, and as a result also that if Pete decides to call, he must have a losing hand. In a similar fashion, if the two henchmen met and shared their observations, faced with Snoopy's irrefutable statement Sigmund would withdraw his own assertion, for given the distribution of cards at the table Pete's winning hand would not be the best explanation of his calling any more. It does not mean though that Sigmund's assertion was false before the exchange of information. What has changed is the context in which the assertion takes place. Pete's winning was an abductive consequence of his decision to call, but in the new context it is not for the set of premises salient in the context has changed.

In the light of the above considerations it should be clear that some inferential conditionals, and those used by Gibbard in his famous argument in particular, can have more than one interpretation. The modified version of the scenario presented in section 2.2 should make it even more evident. Both (1) and (2) are ambiguous and without certain additional, contextual information, we may not be able to decide whether we are facing a DI, II or AI conditional, or what are the premises of an argument "condensed" in a conditional. Yet we are not as clueless when it comes to interpreting conditional sentences as figured in Gibbard's argument. Knowing that someone who asserts a conditional sentence believes in some sort of an inferential link between the conditional's antecedent and its consequent, we may be able to come up with relevant possibilities even though we have no means to decide which of those possible interpretations was intended. On our proposal conditionals, although context-dependent, are not more subjective or obscure than sentences with scope-ambiguous quantifiers or indexicals.

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