305 Lecture 13.1 - Two Kinds of Conditionals

Brian Weatherson

Plan

- Starting the discussion of conditionals.

Associated Reading

- Boxes and Diamonds, chapter 6

Compare These Examples

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- So it must be wrong to write both of them as $\neg A \rightarrow B$.

Terminology

1. If Shakespeare didn't write Hamlet, then someone else did.
2. If Shakespeare hadn't written Hamlet, then someone else would have.

There are some common, if misleading, names for these kinds of conditionals.

- 1 is called an **indicative** conditional.
- 2 is called a **subjunctive** or **counterfactual** conditional

What's in a Name

- Apparently 2 isn't really subjunctive, though you'd have to speak to a language teacher to explain precisely why this is so.
- The class of sentences that 2 is meant to pick out are all **counter** to the facts either, as examples like this show.

  If Billy had stolen the cookies from the cookie jar, then we would have found exactly the clues that we actually did find.

What the Hamlet Example Shows

- That we can’t represent each of these conditionals with the same formalism.

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- Whether there even is a binary distinction here, or whether this is part of some n-way division.
- How the difference is encoded in language.
- Whether it is really 'if' that is ambiguous, or something in the A or B.

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- It should cover both kinds, though maybe in different ways.
- You can read the truth tables as giving a very particular theory of conditionals.
- But it's an incredibly implausible theory of conditionals.

For Next Time

We'll discuss the so called material conditional.