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John Woods

Truth in Fiction

Rethinking its Logic

The Istanbul Lectures

Springer

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I dedicate this book to two of my most appreciated teachers, from whose respective example I've learned how difficult it is to get to the bottom of fiction:
Richard L. Cartwright‡
John R. Searle

“The existence of fiction is a powerful argument for absolutely nothing…”
Saul Kripke

Preface

The book arises from my Istanbul lectures in the early summer of 2015. The lectures were a mini-course on the logic of fiction in the Logic School that preceded the Conference on Universal Logic at the University of Istanbul. The mini-course was a compact one, delivered in three consecutive days in 75-minute instalments. Needless to say, much of what I proposed there was issued in the form of promissory notes. This book is an attempt to redeem at least some of them. One of the Istanbul theses was that, given the importance of the distinction between a proposition's having a consequence and someone actually drawing it, a logic for the first couldn't adequately serve as a logic for the second. A related claim was that since consequence-having occurs in logical space, independently of whether anyone knows it, and consequence-drawing occurs in the psychological space of him who draws it, the logic of consequence-drawing (or inference) should be sensitive to empirical facts about how human beings cognitively function. Accordingly, human inference would push its logic to more of a naturalized than mathematical one. The third idea was that a datum of fundamental importance for a naturalized logic of inference lies in the empirically discernible details about the people who read and react to fictional stories and those who take on the task of writing them in the first place. I went on to say that any logic of truth in fiction that overlooked or scanted these details was at risk of suboptimality. The logic I would recommend for fiction would be a naturalized and data-driven one. To the extent that this proved out, the role of a formal semantics would be proportionally diminished.

I achieved first footfall with philosophical problems of fiction at the University of Michigan in Richard Cartwright's graduate course on analytic philosophy. Ayer's *The Problem of Knowledge* was the assigned text, and as far as I can remember, Cartwright made no subsequent mention of it. Instead, he focused his remarks on reference and anaphora in English, and, along the way, he advanced the idea that "Faffner had no fur" and "Faffner wasn't real" are both true statements about Faffner, an idea that just a few months later would appear in Dick's celebrated paper of 1960, "Negative existentials". I liked the idea of reference to the non-existent, but had reservations about whether a general purpose account of negative existentials could handle all the traffic for fiction. Two years later, I did a directed studies course with

John Searle, who was visiting Michigan from Berkeley. Our focus was fiction, and John showed an early preference for pretendism, which at first hearing I took to be a misbegotten idea and still do. Even so, thanks to Dick and John, my pulse for fiction had quickened, and in the following years, I would pay it further mind in publications in 1969 and 1974, the year that *The Logic of Fiction* appeared. I had delivered *The Logic of Fiction* as a course of lectures in the spring-summer term at Stanford and was amply rewarded by nourishing discussions with Julius Moravcsik, Bob Howell and, on the brink of his departure to MIT for doctoral studies, Scott Soames.

In the late 1980s, Dale Jacquette was in Amsterdam for a conference of the International Society for Studies in Argumentation. I was chairing his session (not one on fiction), and, before we started, I was somewhat taken aback by Dale's admiring mention of *The Logic of Fiction,* which I had come to think had gone into a quiet and dignified retirement. Dale's book on Meinong's logic would come shortly after, and I became re-energized about fiction and stayed in fruitful contact with that book's able author until his sudden and untimely death in 2016. Around the time of my introduction to Dale, I was reintroduced to Dov Gabbay, whom I first knew at Stanford when I was giving my fiction lectures. Gabbay is a legend. He thinks that he can formally model anything that catches his interest, even at one point ballroom dancing. I had been working with Douglas Walton on the logic of fallacious argument since 1971 and had developed an awareness of the depth of difference between theoretical reasoning and practical reasoning. It was a difference which had also caught Dov's attention. Since nothing that interests Dov is something he can't model, the two of us embarked on the ambitious project of writing a practical logic of cognitive systems. In the course of writing my part of it, I came to see that practical logic cannot be done independently of a properly crafted philosophy of cognition and, correspondingly, that the best way to handle the theory of knowledge is in naturalistic collaboration with the more mature of the empirical branches of linguistics and cognitive science. My 12-year stint as the Charles S. Peirce Professor of logic in Dov's Group on Logic and Computation in the Department of Computer Science at King's College London was some of the most stimulating of my philosophical life. After publishing our *Agenda Relevance* in 2003 and *The Reach of Abduction* in 2005, the business model of our publisher was radically restructured, and, among other sad comeuppances, North-Holland's *Studies in Logic and the Foundations of Mathematics*, the beloved "Yellow Series", was closed down, as was the newer series in which the Gabbay-Woods books had appeared. In the aftermath, for reasons of copyright, our former publisher denied us the use of the title *A Practical Logic of Cognitive Systems*, and Dov was motivated to start up the amazing not-for-profit College Publications of London, at which academic merit would be the sole criterion for publication, also at affordable prices. In short order, CP's lists would brim with talent.

Meanwhile, Lorenzo Magnani in Pavia was organizing what would soon come to be a flourishing network of conferences on model-based reasoning, and at a number of these conferences, I became absorbed by the role of stipulation in mathematics, logic and theoretical science and the habit of employing empirically false idealizations in scientific modelling. Since stipulation is a form of making some-

thing up, I would be led to reconnect with fiction by way of the expanding enthusiasm for fictionalism in precincts such as these. This led to further thoughts about fiction's attachment to fictionalism (which I think is none to speak of), and I was moved to explore this in papers published in collaboration with Alirio Rosales, who was then a University of British Columbia (UBC) doctoral student. Taken together, the work I'd done in the Walton,[1] Gabbay and Magnani spheres of interest helped me see that not even a modelling virtuoso of the likes of Dov can carry all the water for what we rightly desire from theories of real-life human cognitive practice. My route to this conviction was eased by Maurice Finocchiaro's work on empirical logic, arising in the late 1980s and nicely represented in his College Publications monograph of 2013, *Meta-Argumentation.*

Sometime in the1990s, I was asked to contribute an overview chapter for the expanded edition of the Quine volume in the Library of Living Philosophers, and "A captious nicety of argument" appeared in 1998. In the course of writing it, I had been very favourably impressed by Quine's naturalization of epistemology and gradually came to think that I might do for logic what Quine would never do. I would try my hand at naturalizing it and would recommend a working partnership between logic and epistemology and a further one with linguistics and cognitive science. So as far as I know, Quine never wrote a serious philosophical word about fiction. But it is to Quine that I owe the kind of logic that I think is right for fiction, despite the fact that he would refuse to recognize it as one. Mine would be a naturalized logic in the tradition – not the details – of Bacon, Port Royal, Mill, Husserl and Dewey.

Quine's stern dismissal of dialethic logic in *Philosophy of Logic* had also stirred my interest. It was quickened by the arrival in Lethbridge of Bryson Brown, who would soon be a leading figure in the Canadian preservationist approach to paraconsistent logic. Bryson and I have long shared an interest in dialethism. Mine was first stimulated by Richard Routley in the late 1960s and after that by Graham Priest and later on by Franz Berto and Bradley Armour-Garb. I came to think that the thesis of true logical contradictions, while not true, is not one to dismiss out of hand. This matters for what concerns me in this book. I take it as given that the most semantically distinctive feature of the sentences of fiction is that they are unambiguously true and false together. On the face of it, this is dialethism straight and true. Actually, it isn't in the Routley-Priest sense. One of my objectives in this book is to show why.

In the 16 years that I've been at the University of British Columbia, fiction has been intermittently on my mind. I have benefited enormously from discussions (and sometimes tussles) with UBC colleagues Dom Lopes, Ori Simchen, Roberta Ballarin, Christopher Mole, Visiting Professor Derek Matravers and, during the 3 years of his Banting Fellowship, Gillman Payette and also with graduate students Jill Isenberg and Alirio Rosales. Dom read a fairly mature version of the whole book. Ori read a callow version of Chap. 10. Later, he read a more mature version of it and a less-finished version of Chap. 6. I am grateful to them both for constructive criticisms and valuable suggestions. Chris Mole was also a considerable help when I was preparing the Istanbul lectures. I am obliged to Dom for having persuaded me

[1] Doug, not Kendall.

that *Truth in Fiction* could be read as a natural rival of Walton's *Mimesis as Make-Believe.* He thinks that in both books, there are core premisses having to do with features of lived readerly and writerly experience, from which Ken and I draw opposite conclusions. I also thank the members of the 2017 UBC Aesthetics Reading Group who, apart from Dom Lopes, were Logan Fletcher, Servaas van den Berg, Alirio Rosales, Ryan Manke and, before his return to his duties at the University of Seoul, J. H. Yoon. Jo Wong was the group's convenor.

Jean-Yves Béziau organizes the Conference on Universal Logic (also the ones on the square of opposition and logic and religion). We were hosted in the 2015 Logic School by the Philosophy Department at the University of Istanbul and were ably and selflessly assisted by Dr. Vedat Kamer of the Logic Application and Research Association. My lectures were favoured by a generous and talented attendance, including my late friend Dale Jacquette and my new one Manual Gustavo Isaac. Dale was in the school giving lucid lectures on Boole, and MG was burning up the track with equal lucidity about Husserl. I also benefited from Istanbul discussions with John Corcoran, Graham Priest, JC Beall and, of course, Vedat and Jean-Yves. For helpful post-Istanbul conversation and correspondence, I am grateful to Brad Armour-Garb, James Woodbridge, Lorenzo Magnani, Jeanne Peijnenburg, David Atkinson, Gottfried Gabriel and especially Fred Kroon for alerting me to the importance of Meinong's *On Assumptions.*

The whole burden of the production of my work is borne by Carol Woods, who stands to me in Vancouver as Jane Spurr does to Dov Gabbay in London, with one difference. I am married to Carol and Dov is not to Jane. Even so, Carol runs the Vancouver operation and Jane runs the show in London, without whom Dov's and my research lives would be over. Carol, however, is not a cheap date, and she is well-paid for her indispensable professional support. Because I don't believe in nepotism, I pay the bill myself and consider myself lucky for the occasion to do it.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the publisher's anonymous reader for very helpful criticisms and suggestions, to Springer's project coordinator Palani Murugesan and project manager Avila Priya, and to Otávio Bueno, *Synthese* Library's editor-in-chief, for wise counsel, generous support and excellent scholarly example.

Vancouver, BC, Canada John Woods
Vancouver, October 31, 2017

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