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No longer true

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The plan



The plan

- ▶ Three unremarkable points



The plan

- ▶ Three unremarkable points
- ▶ A crazy conclusion: **the past has changed**



First unremarkable point



First unremarkable point

We say true (false) things about the past ...



First unremarkable point

We say true (false) things about the past ...

... and the truth (falsity) of what we say depends on how the past is.



Some terminology



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- I. People utter sentences at *contexts*, which we represent as pairs $\langle w, t \rangle$.



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- I. People utter sentences at *contexts*, which we represent as pairs $\langle w, t \rangle$.
- II. Sentences express *propositions* at contexts.
- III. A sentence S is *temporally specific* if and only if, for any context c , the proposition expressed by S at c is about a specific time.



Some terminology

- I. People utter sentences at *contexts*, which we represent as pairs $\langle w, t \rangle$.
- II. Sentences express *propositions* at contexts.
- III. A sentence S is *temporally specific* if and only if, for any context c , the proposition expressed by S at c is about a specific time.
- IV. A sentence S is *about the past* in a context c if and only if the proposition expressed by S at c is about a time that precedes c .



More precisely



More precisely

- ▶ A temporally specific sentence S that is about the past in a context c is **true in c** if and only if the time the proposition p expressed by S in c is about has, relative to the past of c , the property that p ascribes to it.



More precisely

- ▶ A temporally specific sentence S that is about the past in a context c is **true in c** if and only if the time the proposition p expressed by S in c is about has, relative to the past of c , the property that p ascribes to it.
- ▶ ‘Obama was born in 1961’ is **true in $\langle @, 1^{\text{st}} \text{Sept } 2014 \rangle$** if and only if, relative to the past of $\langle @, 1^{\text{st}} \text{Sept } 2014 \rangle$, the year 1961 has the property of being a time in which Obama was born.



A true story



July 2000: The champion



July 2000: The champion



Context A: <@,
Christmas 2002>



July 2000: The champion



Context A: <@,
Christmas 2002>

(1) Lance Armstrong
won the Tour de
France in 2000



October 2012: No longer the champion



October 2012: No longer the champion



Context B: <@,
Christmas 2013>



October 2012: No longer the champion



Context B: <@,
Christmas 2013>

(1) Lance Armstrong
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Another definition

- v. A context c' is a *successive same-world context* to context c if and only if:
 - (i) the world of c' is the same as the world of c ,
 - (ii) the time of c' follows the time of c .



Second unremarkable point



Second unremarkable point

- ▶ Sentence (1) is a **temporally specific** sentence: for any context c , the proposition expressed by (1) at c is about the year 2000.



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- ▶ Sentence (1) is a **temporally specific** sentence: for any context c , the proposition expressed by (1) at c is about the year 2000.
- ▶ Context B is a **successive same-world context** to Context A.



Second unremarkable point

- ▶ Sentence (1) is a **temporally specific** sentence: for any context c , the proposition expressed by (1) at c is about the year 2000.
- ▶ Context B is a **successive same-world context** to Context A.
- ▶ Sentence (1) is **about the past** in both Context A and Context B.



Second unremarkable point

- ▶ Sentence (1) is a **temporally specific** sentence: for any context c , the proposition expressed by (1) at c is about the year 2000.
- ▶ Context B is a **successive same-world context** to Context A.
- ▶ Sentence (1) is **about the past** in both Context A and Context B.
- ▶ Sentence (1) takes **different truth-values** in Context A and Context B.



Third unremarkable point



Third unremarkable point

- VI. A sentence is *context-insensitive* if and only if it expresses the same proposition at all contexts.



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(1) Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000



Third unremarkable point

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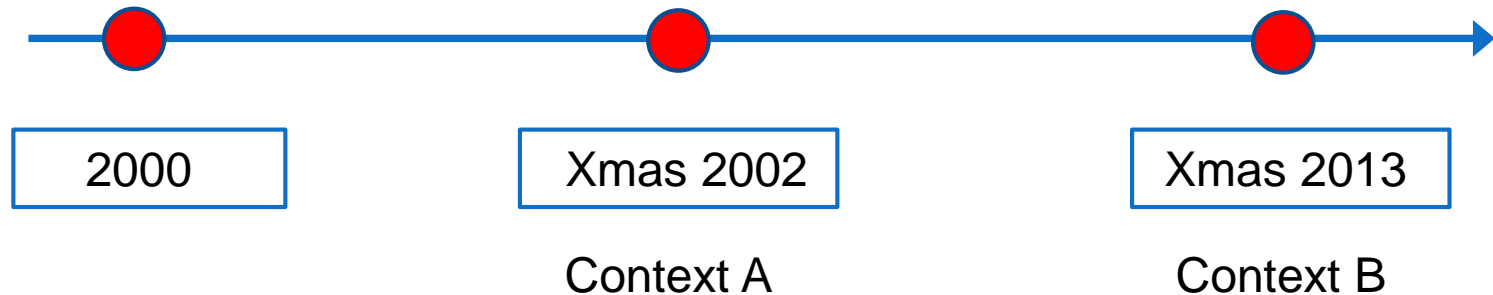
(1) Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000

(2) *that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000.*



Putting things together

(1) Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000



The past has changed!





Two objections:





Two objections:

1. No truth value change



Two objections:

1. No truth value change
2. Different propositions

Objection 1: No truth value change



First variant of Objection 1

- ▶ Sentence (1) was **already false** in Context A because Armstrong got the lowest time only by doping himself, thus by *cheating*.



First variant of Objection 1

- ▶ Sentence (1) was **already false** in Context A because Armstrong got the lowest time only by doping himself, thus by *cheating*.
- ▶ One cannot be the winner if one cheats!



Our reply

- ▶ This objection conflates the property *being the winner* with the property *being the person who deserves to win*.



Our reply

- ▶ This objection conflates the property *being the winner* with the property *being the person who deserves to win*.
- ▶ The property *being the winner* only depends on a **deliberation by a competent authority**:

if an authority declares x to be the winner, x is the winner—regardless of whether x cheated or not.



La mano de dios



Second variant of Objection 1

- ▶ Sentence (1) was **still true** in Context B.



Second variant of Objection 1

- ▶ Sentence (1) was **still true** in Context B.
- ▶ Sincere and informed speakers seem to assert (1), or sentences implying (1), after the revocation of Armstrong's titles.



Second variant of Objection 1

- ▶ Sentence (1) was **still true** in Context B.
- ▶ Sincere and informed speakers seem to assert (1), or sentences implying (1), after the revocation of Armstrong's titles.

(3) Armstrong won the Tour de France seven times from 1999 to 2005. He was later stripped of those titles for doping.

(USA Today, June 28th 2013)



Our reply: step 1

- ▶ Sincere and informed speakers assert sentences that imply that (1) would be **false** if uttered after the revocation of Armstrong's titles:



Our reply: step 1

- ▶ Sincere and informed speakers assert sentences that imply that (1) would be **false** if uttered after the revocation of Armstrong's titles:

(4) Who won the Tour de France 1999-2005? No one.

(Law, Economics & Cycling, October 22nd 2012).

(5) Lance Armstrong is no longer the winner of the Tour de France from 1999-2005.

(Christian Prudhomme, Director of the Tour de France, from CBSNews, October 22nd 2012).



Our reply: step 2

- ▶ If (3) implied (1), adding to (3) the sentence ‘*Armstrong never won any Tour de France in the end*’ should result in a contradiction, given that the latter sentence and (1) are incompatible.



Our reply: step 2

- ▶ If (3) implied (1), adding to (3) the sentence ‘*Armstrong never won any Tour de France in the end*’ should result in a contradiction, given that the latter sentence and (1) are incompatible.
- ▶ However, (6) is perfectly consistent!

(6) Armstrong won the Tour de France seven times from 1999 to 2005. He was later stripped of those titles for doping. So, *Armstrong never won any Tour de France in the end.*



Objection 2: Context-sensitivity



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- ▶ The verb phrase ‘win the Tour de France in 2000’ is **context-sensitive**.



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- ▶ The verb phrase ‘win the Tour de France in 2000’ is **context-sensitive**.
- ▶ (1) expresses **different propositions** at Context A and Context B:
 - (7) *that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to the declaration of Context A* (Declaration α)



Objection 2: Context-sensitivity

- ▶ The verb phrase ‘win the Tour de France in 2000’ is **context-sensitive**.
- ▶ (1) expresses **different propositions** at Context A and Context B:
 - (7) *that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to the declaration of Context A* (Declaration α)
 - (8) *that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to the declaration of Context B* (Declaration β)



Our reply

- ▶ Having come to know that Armstrong's titles have been revoked by declaration β , you assert (9) at Context B:

(9) It is no longer the case that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000.



Our reply

- ▶ Having come to know that Armstrong's titles have been revoked by declaration β , you assert (9) at Context B:

(9) It is no longer the case that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000.

- ▶ **(9) is true in Context B.**



Our reply

On the contextualist analysis, (9) expresses proposition (10) at Context B:

- (10) *that it is no longer the case that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to declaration β .*



Our reply

On the contextualist analysis, (9) expresses proposition (10) at Context B:

(10) *that it is no longer the case that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to declaration β .*

- ▶ However, (10) has a **presupposition that is false** in the circumstance of Context B, namely: *that it was once the case that Armstrong won the Tour de France in 2000 according to declaration β .*



Conclusion



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- ▶ The attempts to block our conclusion do not work. So, maybe, the past can really change.



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- ▶ One should stop asking *whether* the past can change and start to think *how* this could be.



Conclusion

- ▶ The attempts to block our conclusion do not work. So, maybe, the past can really change.
- ▶ One should stop asking *whether* the past can change and start to think *how* this could be.
- ▶ How to make sense of this idea? Suggestions are welcome!



THANKS!

