

Ph.D. Student Cesare Cherchi¹

Dissertation Supervisor Professor Vojtech Kolman

Department of Philosophy (Úfar)

Title What is a Paradox?

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BA module+Erasmus

Credit value 5

Description of the course What is a paradox? We often say that something is “paradoxical” but we rarely try to define the concept. The reality is that a paradox is not a well defined entity even in philosophy: we call a paradox a correct argument that gives us a surprising conclusion, a fallacious one that leads us to impossible, or sometimes even to surprisingly true, results, and finally – and most prominently – we call paradox an apparently correct line of reasoning that lead to a contradiction.

This course is designed for Philosophy’s students, or at least for students that have some basic knowledge of the topics treated.

Aim of the course The course’s aim is to explain and define the different kind of paradoxes by their structure and features, while also describing the logical and philosophical accounts, and solutions that arose in the last centuries. By the end of the course the students should have new means to face logical problems that arise in different philosophical topics.

Structure The course will be divided in four different sections, **A**, **B**, **C** and **D** respectively. Ontological paradoxes, such as vagueness’ and Eleatic paradoxes, will be dealt with in section **A**. In section **B** we will present semantical paradoxes, with a keen eye for the Liar Paradox and various account of it. In section **C** we will deal with the concept of self reference, set theoretical paradoxes, the way in which they resemble semantic paradoxes. Finally in section **D** we will talk about the logical and philosophical theory of dialetheism, the claims for it to be a cure-all for paradoxes and consider some objection against it.

¹ cherchicesare42@gmail.com

Methodology The course will consist in twelve seminars of ninety minutes each in which we will deal with the different topics according to the schedule by reading and discussing the material. The material will consist of relevant passages and articles taken from the relevant **bibliography**, and it will be provided by the teacher a week in advance.

Timetable

- Week 1** Introduction and technical details.
- A** **Week 2** Eleatic paradoxes.
- Weeks 3 and 4** Vagueness and vagueness' paradoxes.
- B** **Weeks 5 and 6** Semantical paradoxes: the Liar.
- Week 7** Revenge paradoxes.
- C** **Week 8** An overview on some set-theoretical paradoxes.
- Week 9** Semantic paradoxes and set-theoretical paradoxes.
- D** **Weeks 10 and 11** Theories of Truth.
- Week 12** What's so bad about contradictions?

Materials

- 1** —
- A** **2** Sainsbury (2009) pp. 4-21, Priest (1999).
- 3** Varzi (2003), Evans (1978), Lewis (1988).
- 4** Williamson (2003).
- B** **5** Sainsbury (2009) pp. 127-136.
- 6** Łukowski (2011) pp. 80-98.
- 7** Beall (2004) pp. 53-76.
- C** **8** Aczel (2000) pp. 99-110, 139-148.
- 9** Field (2008) pp. 47-55.
- D** **10** Varzi (2010), Kripke (1975) pp. 690-699.
- 11** Beall (2009) pp. 67-79, Field (2008) pp.72-78.
- 12** Priest (2004b), Sainsbury (2009) pp. 150-159.

Evaluation (evaluation type: Zkouška) Active in-class participation and a short paper – between 2000 and 3000 words – are required to successfully complete the course. The topic for the paper, based on the material discussed in class, has to be previously agreed upon with the teacher.

Relevant bibliography

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- Kripke, S., (1975)** “Outline of a Theory of Truth”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 72:19: pp.690-716.
- Lewis, D.K., (1988)** “Vague identity: Evans misunderstood” *Analysis* 48: pp.128–30.
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- Priest, G., (2004b)** “What’s So Bad About Contradictions?” in Priest & Beall & Armour-Garb (2004), pp. 23-40.
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- Sainsbury, R.M., (2009)** “Paradoxes”, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Varzi, A.C., (2003)** “Vagueness” In (L. Nadel ed.), “*Encyclopedia of cognitive science*” (pp.459-464), Macmillan, London.
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- Williamson, T., (1994)** “Vagueness” Routledge, London.
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