

# Re: An argument against modus ponens

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.logic/2008-09/msg00208.html>

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- *From:* John Jones <[jonescardiff@xxxxxxx](mailto:jonescardiff@xxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Mon, 08 Sep 2008 20:18:14 +0100
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OP wrote:

John Jones wrote:

The significance of "if" statements is that they allow for at least two possibilities— that something (P) is the case, or not the case (R). Our disagreement falls on the description of 'not the case', or 'absent' as I describe it below.

1) Firstly, both cases need a syntactical representation if we are to retain the grammatical significance of 'if' statements.

2) Let's argue against me: 'If P' entails either only P or the absence of P, but does not entail R. However, I argue that in this case, the absence of P entails the absence of the context of P.

Explanation: If the absence of P did not entail the absence of the context of P, and the context of P is retained, then the absence of P must be represented in that context. For example, if P is a physical object and if we retain the context of physical objects, then the absence of P is a vacuum (R), or a lost or hidden object (R), or some such (R). But if P is a physical object and if both P AND its context is absent, then there are no physical objects, period. This would say more than we intended about the specifications laid out by our 'if P ..' statement, and undermine 1) above (undermine the scenario laid out by if statements). More importantly, we cannot represent the two outcomes – P being the case or not the case, if only P has a context.

Are you arguing against abstraction itself? I ask because in this reply you seem to switch suddenly from talking about logical or abstract relationships to talking about concrete "contexts," without signalling that you're doing so, and without justifying it. As soon as you say, "for example, if P is a physical object" I think, huh? Where'd he get the idea that P could be a physical object?

I think your (R) is just the same as "not P." If you're making a point about the nature of abstraction, please say so. Can you explain what you mean by "context" without using any philosophical jargon? I think that would really advance the ball.

Re: An argument against modus ponens

I don't know what is meant by abstraction. Anyway, I argued that not-P can mean either R, or the elimination of the framework for the expression of P. I don't see any other alternatives.