



Why the warnings of B. Russell (1922), R. Carnap (1955), J. Franklin (2001) and H. Kyburg (2003) about Ramsey's "interpretation" of logical probability failed: None of the warnings identified Ramsey explicitly by name

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Abstract: Ramsey's fictional, fictitious definitions concerning Keynes's logical theory of probability do not exist in the *A Treatise on Probability*. Ramsey simply made them up and invented them out of thin air. No philosopher, historian, economist, social scientist or academician in either the 20th or 21st centuries has been able to come to this conclusion. Ramsey's entire position is that Keynes's relational, propositional logic, as presented in his *A Treatise on Probability*, involves the logical analysis of unrelated, irrelevant propositions. This is simply pure nonsense, since the very title of Keynes's approach, as defined by Boole in chapter I of his *The Laws of Thought* in 1854, requires the propositions to be related. Ramsey's "My carpet is blue; Napoleon was a great general" "is made up of two unrelated propositions and is, hence, eliminated from consideration.

However, four philosophers did publish warnings that demonstrated that the basic foundation of Ramsey's critique of logical probability was based on absurdities like the carpet, Napoleon example above. Unfortunately, they never explicitly identified Ramsey as the target of their warning. Therefore, readers of the works containing their warnings had no idea about who was being identified.

The result is that Ramsey's nutty types of examples that supposedly demonstrate the severe problems with logical probability, such as "My carpet is blue, Napoleon was a great general" or "This is round, that is red", became unanimously accepted examples of what was wrong with logical probability. The best, most recent, examples of this are in Clarke (2023) and Gerrard (2023).

I believe that it is highly probable that the Ramsey Myth, as constructed by R B Braithwaite and published by the intellectually deficient economist, Donald Moggridge, as an editorial foreword placed at the very front of the 1973 CWJMK edition of Keynes's *A Treatise on Probability*, could have been stopped dead in its tracks if Ramsey had been clearly identified as the writer making up absurdities like "My carpet is blue, Napoleon was a great general." as being representative of logical probability constructs.

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Section 1. Introduction

The paper will be organized in the following manner. Section Two will examine Russell's 1922 simple and direct refutation of Ramsey's absurdities, as his counter example to Ramsey's "My carpet is blue, Napoleon was a great general" "presented below was

set up to mimic Ramsey's nutty example: "2+2=4, Napoleon disliked poodles."(Russell, 1922, p. 120, * footnote).

Unfortunately, Russell's crushing counter example would only have had an impact on a reader if the reader had already read Ramsey's 1922 review first. A critical error, in hindsight, made by Russell was his decision not to mention Ramsey by name in the

foot note or even put Ramsey's review in his bibliography. The decision of Russell NOT to mention Ramsey by name or put his article in his bibliography was most likely a result of oral discussions with Keynes, who was afraid that Ramsey's absurdities, if identified publicly by name in an academic journal article, would require a reply by Keynes, which would have put an end to Ramsey's potential career at Cambridge immediately.

Section Three will examine Carnap's similar decision not to mention Ramsey by name, given that Carnap wanted to include Ramsey as a philosopher working within the logicist framework, which simply was not possible. Section Four will examine Franklin's 2001 article on resurrecting logical probability. However, no academician in history has ever actually buried or come close to refuting logical probability, so a better title for Franklin's paper might have been "The sleeping, giant awakens. The return of logical probability" Franklin's example definitely shows the absurdities inherent and manifested in Ramsey's diatribe against logical probability, but fails to link or tie Ramsey explicitly by name to the kind of shoddy work put forth by Ramsey. Therefore, no reader of Franklin's paper would be able to identify who the individual was who had promoted such a ridiculous type of construction. Section Five examines Kyburg's counter example.

Again, a reader will not be able to recognize who Kyburg is talking about, even though the article is explicitly dealing with the Keynes versus Ramsey debate. Kyburg needed to have explicitly identified Ramsey by name as the individual making the idiotic assertion.

With the exception of my own work, there are no citations to any of these articles in the 20th or 21st centuries that deal explicitly with Ramsey's idiotic assertions about Keynes's version of logical probability or logical probability in general.

Section 2. Russell in 1922

Russell's counter example occurs on p.120. It will have an immediate effect on any reader by leading the reader to ask "What type of a looney would come up with this kind of an example?" Consider the following analysis from Russell's 1922, July; review of Keynes's a treatise on probability:

"The above form is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of equiprobability. In order to arrive at a sufficient condition, it is first necessary to define irrelevance. It would be natural to say: h_1 is irrelevant to x on evidence h if $x/h_1 h = x/h$, i.e. if the addition of h_1 to our data makes no difference to the probability of x . But h_1 may consist of two parts, one of which increases the probability of x while the other diminishes it. To exclude this possibility, we define: h_1 is irrelevant to x/h if there is no proposition h_1' , inferrible from $h_1 h$ but not from h , such that $x/h'h \neq x/h$.

A proposition is defined as relevant when it is not irrelevant* (Russell, 1922, p. 120). Russell's* footnote provides the following refutation of all of Ramsey's examples in his 1922 review, as well as his 1926 review:

*I do not know whether Mr. Keynes has considered and rejected a definition of irrelevance which, prima facie, would be simpler than his. He does not state definitely whether every pair of propositions has some probability-relation, but I think he does not hold this view. I think he would say, e.g., that there is no probability-relation between the propositions' $2+2=4$ 'and' Napoleon disliked poodles.'

If so, it would seem natural to define h as irrelevant to a when a/h does not exist."(Russell, 1922, p. 120).

Of course, Ramsey's main example in his January, 1922 review involves and revolves around the use of Napoleon. It is not a coincidence that Russell has chosen his second proposition to involve Napoleon, just as Ramsey's second proposition involved Napoleon. Now Keynes had made it clear on pp.4-6 of the TP that propositions that were not related, similar, associated, or connected were excluded from use in his relational propositional logic.

Keynes's exposition of his relevance -irrelevance logic in chapter 4 of the TP confirms Russell's conjecture that "...He does not state definitely whether every pair of propositions has some probability-relation, but I think he does not hold this view."

Russell overlooks pp.4-6 where it is made explicit that there must be a connection between the propositions. This is most forcibly seen in Keynes's analysis on p.55, which is not alluded to by Russell: "Some propositions regarding irrelevance will be proved in Part II. If h_1 is the contradictory of h and $x/h_1 h = x/h$, then $x/h_1 h = x/h$. Thus, the contradictory of irrelevant evidence is also irrelevant. Also, if $x/yh = x/h$, it follows that $y/xh = y/h$. Hence if, on initial evidence h , y is irrelevant to x , then, on the same initial evidence, x is irrelevant to y , i.e. if in a given state of knowledge one occurrence has no bearing on another then equally the second has no bearing on the first." (Keynes, 1921, p.55).

Both Keynes's 1921 analysis and Russell's published 1922 analysis basically reveal that nothing that Ramsey is asserting is factual as regards Keynes's analysis in his TP. See Brady (2004a, 2004b), Brady (2021a) and Brady (2021b) for a more complete examination of the many, many errors committed by Ramsey in both the 1922 and 1926 reviews.

Section 3. Carnap in 1955

Consider Carnap's counter example: "Thus one might come to the result that, on the basis of available knowledge, it is more probable that the next child of a specified couple will be male rather than female: but no comparison could be made between the probability of the birth of a male child and the probability of the stocks of General Electric going up tomorrow." (Carnap, 1955, p.6; I thank William Peden for this example from Carnap's works).

Unfortunately, I can find no such counter example in his Logical Foundations (1950, 1962). Carnap wants to argue that Ramsey can be represented as being within the logicist school. He accurately quotes selected parts of Ramsey's 1926 review and discusses Ramsey (Carnap, 1962 [1950], pp. 44-47):

"F. P. Ramsey's conception of probability seems at first inspection more psychological and subjectivistic than the conception of most of the other authors ([Truth] and [Considerations], both published in [Foundations]; my references are to the latter book). He says that the theory of probability is "the logic of partial belief" (pp. 159, 166); "we must therefore try to develop a purely psychological method of measuring belief" (p~166); "I propose to take as a basis a general psychological theory" (p. 173).

Thus it is not surprising that many authors have judged Ramsey's conception as a particularly clear case of subjectivism. However, it seems to me that a closer examination is apt to evoke serious doubts about this judgment. It is true that the psychological method of measuring the actual degree of belief of a person in a

proposition plays a central role in Ramsey's discussion. But he does not define probability as or identify it with actual degree of belief. He says: "It is not enough to measure probability; in order to apportion correctly our belief to the probability we must also be able to measure our belief"; "if the phrase 'a belief two thirds of certainty' is meaningless, a calculus [viz., the theory of probability] whose sole object is to enjoin such beliefs will be meaningless also" (both on p. 166; the italics are mine). Thus, he regards the theory of probability not as a part of psychology describing the actually occurring degrees of belief but rather as a part of logic giving standards or norms which tell us which degrees of belief we should entertain if we want to be rational and consistent in our beliefs. This interpretation seems confirmed by his statement that "the laws of probability are laws of consistency, an extension to partial beliefs of formal logic, the logic of consistency" (p. 182); "having degrees of belief obeying the laws of probability implies a further measure of consistency, namely such a consistency between the odds acceptable on different propositions as shall prevent a book being made against you". This shows that the standard imposed upon our beliefs by the theory of probability is regarded as an objective one, viz., avoiding certain unfavorable results in betting. Later (p. 191) he characterizes logic "as the science of rational thought. We found", he continues, "that the most generally accepted parts of logic, namely, formal logic, mathematics, and the calculus of probabilities, are all concerned simply to ensure that our beliefs are not self-contradictory". This conception of the nature of logic as normative for, rather than descriptive of, beliefs is clearly expressed in the following words: "Logic, we may agree, is concerned not what men actually believe, but what they ought to believe, or what it would be reasonable to believe" (p. 193).

This formulation must clearly be judged as qualified rather than primitive psychologism. Therefore, our previous consideration that the step from primitive to qualified psychologism shows an underlying objectivist conception applies also to Ramsey. This judgment seems confirmed by Ramsey's own later remark (written in 1929) concerning his earlier paper ([Truth], written in 1926): "The defect of my paper on probability was that it took partial belief as a psychological phenomenon." (Carnap, 1962, pp. 45-47).

This, of course, represents Ramsey's capitulation to Keynes and his repudiation of his subjective theory of probability IN 1929 and an acceptance of an objective logical conception of probability. However, it is clear that Ramsey regarded his theory in 1922 and 1926 as having nothing to do with an objective, relational, propositional logic:

"Let us now return to a more fundamental criticism of Mr. Keynes' views, which is the obvious one that there really do not seem to be any such things as the probability relations he describes. He supposes that, at any rate in certain cases, they can be perceived; but speaking for myself I feel confident that this is not true. I do not perceive them, and if I am to be persuaded that they exist it must be by argument; moreover I shrewdly suspect that others do not perceive them either, because they are able to come to so very little agreement as to which of them relates any two given propositions." (Ramsey, (1926 [1931], In Kyburg and Smokler, 1980, 2nd ed., p. 26. See also Clarke, 2023, p.129).

I find it extremely difficult to accept Carnap's assessment of Ramsey as being a sort of logical probability theorist in 1922 or 1926 when Ramsey's view of propositions rests on examples like

"My carpet is blue, Napoleon was a great general." or "This is red, that is round."

Carnap is correct that Ramsey eventually decided that Keynes was right, repudiated his subjective theory of probability in 1929, and assented to probability as being objective and logical, but not in 1922 and 1926.

Section 4. Franklin in 2001

Consider the following statement: "Let us take first the defense involving the fuzziness of priors. It is obvious that, elsewhere, the logical probabilist should resist demands to supply numbers to all enquirers on all problems. If one is asked for P (the moon is made of green cheese | Marilyn Monroe was murdered by the CIA) then the correct response should be that there is no such number. Logical probability was intended to express a "degree of partial entailment" (cf. Keynes 1921, p. 15) so that, if propositions h and e are irrelevant to each other (in the sense of relevant logic, of having no logical connections between their constituents), there is no partial implication, and hence no number expressing it." (Franklin, 2001, p. 281).

Unfortunately, Franklin's Russellian like refutation of the entire basis for rejecting logical probability, as made by Ramsey, is not linked to Ramsey's 1922 or 1926 reviews of Keynes. Ramsey appears very briefly on p. 278 and Franklin's solid critique of Ramsey starts on p.288. However, the reader of Franklin's article is not ever informed that the example discussed by Franklin on p. 281 encompasses Ramsey's main, direct attack on logical probability.

Section 5. Kyburg in 2003

Consider the following statement: "Ramsey despaired of making sense out of "partial entailment" but as we have seen he was fully committed to taking probability and degree of belief to be real valued. The only path that assumes that given a set of sentences (as evidence) and a sentence there is just one real number that measures the degree to which the former entails the latter follows the trail blazed so thoroughly by Carnap [1]—and as even Carnap came to realize, that trail ends in a swamp. How can you sensibly expect to find a real number that measures precisely the degree to which "Charles is a frog" entails "Alice is capable of flight?" Given Keynes's rich manifold of probabilities and degrees of belief, however, it turns out that we can give an account of partial entailment. We cannot do so on the basis of Keynes's vague references to "intuition" but require more in the way of semantics." (Kyburg, 2003, p. 144).

Kyburg does not explicitly identify Ramsey by name as entertaining propositions like "...the degree to which "Charles is a frog" entails "Alice is capable of flight?" (Kyburg, 2003, p. 144) in his 1922 and 1926 reviews of Keynes. If he had done so, then he might have prevented the types of journal papers and books being published in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, like B Gerrard (2023, pp.199-200) and by Cambridge University Press, like P. Clarke's *Keynes in Action* (2023, chapter 5, pp.121-123,126-130,135-137).

Section 5. Conclusions

The decisions of Keynes and Russell in the 1920's, Carnap in the 1950's, and Franklin and Kyburg in the 2000's, to not directly challenge the many errors made by Ramsey in 1922 and 1926, created a situation where no one else was able to explicitly

challenge the Frank P. Ramsey Myth, which has become a supposed historical truth with the publication of C. Misak's 2020 biography on Ramsey.

The Myth is that an 18 year old teenager arrived at the University of Cambridge in 1921 and published a three page review of Keynes's *A Treatise on Probability* in 1922, still at the age of 18, which completely refuted the logical theory of probability that Keynes had presented in his *A Treatise on Probability*. Ramsey supposedly demolished, decimated and destroyed Keynes's logical theory of probability again in 1926. Supposedly, according to the myth, Keynes then waited until 1931, when the 1926 review was published, to (a) capitulate to Ramsey and (b) repudiate the foundation of his logical theory of probability, which was Boole's relational, propositional logic presented in 1854 in *The Laws of Thought*.

This fable has been repeatedly published in economics journals and books [For just a few examples, see Bateman(1996, 2021), Skidelsky(1992), Runde (2004a,b), Davis (1994, 2021), Winslow (1989), Gerrard (2023a,b) and Clarke (2023)] and philosophy journals and books [For a few examples, see Braithwaite (1973), Gillies (1972, 2000), Mellor (1983, 1995), Hacking (1980), Monk (1991, 2016), Methven (2015), Wheeler (2012), Misak (2020, 2016), Blackburn (2021), and Zabell (1991)].

An example of the very severe errors that is representative of all of the individuals cited above is the following:

"Keynes is recognized as having profound respect for the intellectual powers of Ramsey and taking his criticisms of the logical theory very seriously. However, there has been much debate over whether Keynes changed his views on probability theory in response to Ramsey's critique. In part, this debate has been fueled by the limited textual evidence of Keynes's views." (Gerrard, 2023b, p.2).

The belief, that Keynes ever felt threatened by Ramsey's critique, which was based on absurd and preposterous examples like "My carpet was blue, Napoleon was a great general" and "This is round, that is red", is itself ludicrous. The fact that Gerrard is able to get such error filled papers published is more than sufficient evidence that journals such as *Cambridge Journal of Economics* and *Journal of the History of Economic thought*, are not scientific.

The failure of the economics and philosophy professions to correct the extensive 103 year old literature on Ramsey and Keynes provides prima facie evidence that these fields are not scientific or arts. They have had 100 plus years to do so and have egregiously failed.

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