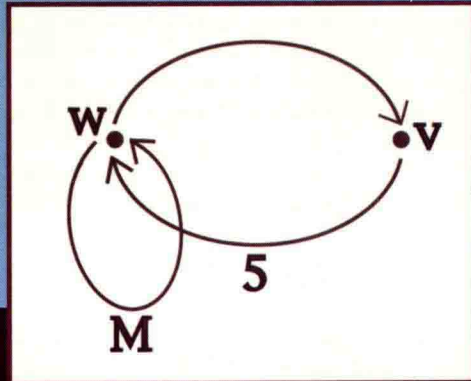


James W. Garson



# MODAL LOGIC

for

# PHILOSOPHERS

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Second Edition

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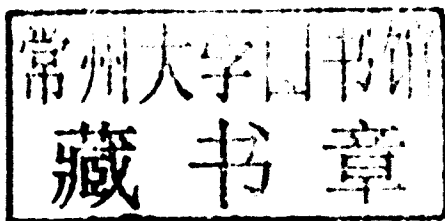
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# Modal Logic for Philosophers

*Second Edition*

JAMES W. GARSON

*University of Houston*



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# Modal Logic for Philosophers

## *Second Edition*

This book on modal logic is especially designed for philosophy students. It provides an accessible yet technically sound treatment of modal logic and its philosophical applications. Every effort is made to simplify the presentation by using diagrams instead of more complex mathematical apparatus. These and other innovations provide philosophers with easy access to a rich variety of topics in modal logic, including a full coverage of quantified modal logic, non-rigid designators, definite descriptions, and the *de-re de-dicto* distinction. Discussion of philosophical issues concerning the development of modal logic is woven into the text. The book uses natural deduction systems, which are widely regarded as the easiest to teach and use. It also includes a diagram technique that extends the method of truth trees to modal logic. This provides a foundation for a novel method for showing completeness that is easy to extend to quantifiers.

This second edition contains a new chapter on logics of conditionals and an expanded bibliography, and is updated throughout. A number of technical results have also been clarified and streamlined.

James W. Garson is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Houston. His research interests include logic, especially modal logic, the philosophy of mind, neural networks, formal semantics, natural language processing, and philosophical issues concerning the impact of information technology. He has held grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and the Apple Education Foundation to study the use of computers in education and to develop software for training students in logic and computer science. He is the author of numerous articles in logic, semantics, linguistics, the philosophy of cognitive science, and computerized education. His review article on quantified modal logic in the *Handbook of Philosophical Logic* is a standard reference in the area. His new book, *What Logics Mean: From Proof Theory to Model-Theoretic Semantics*, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

*for Nuel Belnap, who is responsible for anything he likes about  
this book*

## Preface to the Second Edition

In the years since the first publication of *Modal Logic for Philosophers*, I have received many suggestions for its improvement. The most substantial change in the new edition is a response to requests for a chapter on logics for conditionals. This topic is widely mentioned in the philosophical literature, so any book titled “Modal Logic for Philosophers” should do it justice. Unfortunately, the few pages on the topic provided in the first edition did no more than whet the reader’s appetite for a more adequate treatment. In this edition, an entire chapter (Chapter 20) is devoted to conditionals. It includes a discussion of material implication and its failings, strict implication, relevance logic, and (so-called) conditional logic. Although this chapter still qualifies as no more than an introduction, I hope it will be useful for philosophers who wish to get their bearings in the area.

While the structure of the rest of the book has not changed, there have been improvements everywhere. Thanks to several classes in modal logic taught using the first edition, and suggestions from attentive students, a number of revisions have been made that clarify and simplify the technical results. The first edition also contained many errors. While most of these were of the minor kind from which a reader could easily recover, there were still too many where it was difficult to gather what was intended. A list of errata for the first edition has been widely distributed on the World Wide Web, and this has been of some help. However, it is time to gather these corrections together to produce a new edition where (I can hope) the remaining errors are rare.

I am grateful to the authors of the many messages I have received concerning the first edition, which are far too numerous to list here. I am also

indebted to my student Alireza Fatollahi and especially to my colleague Gregory Brown, who joined with me in a semester-long collaboration covering just about every part of the first edition. Their sharp eyes and helpful suggestions made invaluable contributions to the new edition.

## Preface

The main purpose of this book is to help bridge a gap in the landscape of modal logic. A great deal is known about modal systems based on propositional logic. However, these logics do not have the expressive resources to handle the structure of most philosophical argumentation. If modal logics are to be useful to philosophy, it is crucial that they include quantifiers and identity. The problem is that quantified modal logic is not as well developed, and it is difficult for the student of philosophy who may lack mathematical training to develop mastery of what is known. Philosophical worries about whether quantification is coherent or advisable in certain modal settings partly explain this lack of attention. If one takes such objections seriously, they exert pressure on the logician to either eliminate modality altogether or eliminate the allegedly undesirable forms of quantification.

Even if one lays those philosophical worries aside, serious technical problems must still be faced. There is a rich menu of choices for formulating the semantics of quantified modal languages, and the completeness problem for some of these systems is difficult or unresolved. The philosophy of this book is that this variety is to be explored rather than shunned. We hope to demonstrate that modal logic with quantifiers can be simplified so that it is manageable, even teachable. Some of the simplifications depend on the foundations – in the way the systems for propositional modal logic are developed. Some ideas that were designed to make life easier when quantifiers are introduced are also genuinely helpful even for those who will study only the propositional systems. So this book can serve a dual purpose. It is, I hope, a simple and accessible introduction to propositional modal logic for students who have had a first course



in formal logic (preferably one that covers natural deduction rules and truth trees). I hope, however, that students who had planned to use this book to learn only propositional modal logic will be inspired to move on to study quantification as well.

A principle that guided the creation of this book is the conviction that visualization is one of the most powerful tools for organizing one's thoughts. So the book depends heavily on diagrams of various kinds. One of the central innovations is to combine the method of Haus diagrams (to represent Kripke's accessibility relation) with the truth tree method. This provides an easy and revealing method for checking validity in a wide variety of modal logics. My students have found the diagrams both easy to learn and fun to use. I urge readers of this book to take advantage of them.

The tree diagrams are also the centerpiece for a novel technique for proving completeness – one that is more concrete and easier to learn than the method of maximally consistent sets, and one that is extremely easy to extend to the quantifiers. On the other hand, the standard method of maximally consistent sets has its own advantages. It applies to more systems, and many will consider it an indispensable part of anyone's education in modal logic. So this book covers both methods, and it is organized so that one may easily choose to study one, the other, or both.

Three different ways of providing semantics for the quantifiers are introduced in this book: the substitution interpretation, the intensional interpretation, and the objectual interpretation. Though some have faulted the substitution interpretation on philosophical grounds, its simplicity prompts its use as a centerpiece for technical results. Those who would like a quick and painless entry to the completeness problem may read the sections on the substitution interpretation alone. The intensional interpretation, where one quantifies over individual concepts, is included because it is the most general approach for dealing with the quantifiers. Furthermore, its strong kinships with the substitution interpretation provide a relatively easy transition to its formal results. The objectual interpretation is treated here as a special case of the intensional interpretation. This helps provide new insights into how best to formalize systems for the objectual interpretation.

The student should treat this book more as a collection of things to do than as something to read. Exercises in this book are found embedded throughout the text rather than at the end of each chapter, as is the more common practice. This signals the importance of doing exercises as soon as possible after the relevant material has been introduced. Think

of the text between the exercises as a preparation for activities that are the foundation for true understanding. Answers to exercises marked with a star (\*) are found at the end of the book. Many of the exercises also include hints. The best way to master this material is to struggle through the exercises on your own as far as humanly possible. Turn to the hints or answers only when you are desperate.

Many people should be acknowledged for their contributions to this book. First of all, I would like to thank my wife, Connie Garson, who has unfailingly and lovingly supported all of my odd enthusiasms. Second, I would like to thank my students, who have struggled through the many drafts of this book over the years. I have learned a great deal more from them than any of them has learned from me. Unfortunately, I have lost track of the names of many who helped me make numerous important improvements, so I apologize to them. But I do remember by name the contributions of Brandy Burfield, Carl Feierabend, Curtis Haaga, James Hulgan, Alistair Isaac, JoBeth Jordon, Raymond Kim, Kris Rhodes, Jay Schroeder, Steve Todd, Andy Tristan, Mako Voelkel, and especially Julian Zinn. Third, I am grateful to Johnathan Raymon, who helped me with the diagrams. Finally, I would like to thank Cambridge University Press for taking an interest in this project and for the excellent comments of the anonymous readers, some of which headed off embarrassing errors.

# Contents

<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
Introduction: What Is Modal Logic?	1
1 The System K: A Foundation for Modal Logic	3
1.1 The Language of Propositional Modal Logic	3
1.2 Natural Deduction Rules for Propositional Logic: PL	5
1.3 Derivable Rules of PL	9
1.4 Natural Deduction Rules for System K	17
1.5 A Derivable Rule for $\diamond$	20
1.6 Horizontal Notation for Natural Deduction Rules	27
1.7 Necessitation and Distribution	30
1.8 General Necessitation	32
1.9 Summary of the Rules of K	35
2 Extensions of K	38
2.1 Modal or Alethic Logic	38
2.2 Duals	44
2.3 Deontic Logic	45
2.4 The Good Samaritan Paradox	46
2.5 Conflicts of Obligation and the Axiom (D)	48
2.6 Iteration of Obligation	49
2.7 Tense Logic	50
2.8 Locative Logic	52
2.9 Logics of Belief	53
2.10 Provability Logic	55
3 Basic Concepts of Intensional Semantics	57
3.1 Worlds and Intensions	57

3.2	Truth Conditions and Diagrams for $\rightarrow$ and $\perp$	59
3.3	Derived Truth Conditions and Diagrams for PL	61
3.4	Truth Conditions for $\Box$	63
3.5	Truth Conditions for $\Diamond$	66
3.6	Satisfiability, Counterexamples, and Validity	67
3.7	The Concepts of Soundness and Completeness	69
3.8	A Note on Intensions	70
4	Trees for K	72
4.1	Checking for K-Validity with Trees	72
4.2	Showing K-Invalidity with Trees	81
4.3	Summary of Tree Rules for K	91
5	The Accessibility Relation	93
5.1	Conditions Appropriate for Tense Logic	93
5.2	Semantics for Tense Logics	99
5.3	Semantics for Modal (Alethic) Logics	104
5.4	Semantics for Deontic Logics	108
5.5	Semantics for Locative Logic	111
5.6	Summary of Axioms and Their Conditions on Frames	112
6	Trees for Extensions of K	114
6.1	Trees for Reflexive Frames: M-Trees	114
6.2	Trees for Transitive Frames: 4-Trees	119
6.3	Trees for Symmetrical Frames: B-Trees	121
6.4	Trees for Euclidean Frames: 5-Trees	127
6.5	Trees for Serial Frames: D-Trees	131
6.6	Trees for Unique Frames: CD-Trees	133
7	Converting Trees to Proofs	134
7.1	Converting Trees to Proofs in K	134
7.2	Converting Trees that Contain Defined Notation into Proofs	145
7.3	Converting M-Trees into Proofs	147
7.4	Converting D-Trees into Proofs	149
7.5	Converting 4-Trees into Proofs	150
7.6	Converting B-Trees into Proofs	152
7.7	Converting 5-Trees into Proofs	158
7.8	Using Conversion Strategies to Find Difficult Proofs	162
7.9	Converting CD-Trees into Proofs in CD and DCD	162
7.10	A Formal Proof that Trees Can Be Converted into Proofs	164
8	Adequacy of Propositional Modal Logics	170
8.1	Soundness of K	170
8.2	Soundness of Systems Stronger than K	178

8.3	The Tree Model Theorem	180
8.4	Completeness of Many Modal Logics	186
8.5	Decision Procedures	187
8.6	Automatic Proofs	189
8.7	Adequacy of Trees	189
8.8	Properties of Frames that Correspond to No Axioms	190
9	Completeness Using Canonical Models	193
9.1	The Lindenbaum Lemma	193
9.2	The Canonical Model	196
9.3	The Completeness of Modal Logics Based on K	199
9.4	The Equivalence of PL+(GN) and K	208
10	Axioms and Their Corresponding Conditions on R	209
10.1	The General Axiom (G)	209
10.2	Adequacy of Systems Based on (G)	213
11	Relationships between the Modal Logics	219
11.1	Showing Systems Are Equivalent	219
11.2	Showing One System Is Weaker than Another	222
12	Systems for Quantified Modal Logic	226
12.1	Languages for Quantified Modal Logic	226
12.2	A Classical System for Quantifiers	229
12.3	Identity in Modal Logic	232
12.4	The Problem of Nondenoting Terms in Classical Logic	237
12.5	FL: A System of Free Logic	240
12.6	fS: A Basic Quantified Modal Logic	243
12.7	The Barcan Formulas	246
12.8	Constant and Varying Domains of Quantification	248
12.9	A Classicist's Defense of Constant Domains	252
12.10	The Prospects for Classical Systems with Varying Domains	254
12.11	Rigid and Nonrigid Terms	258
12.12	Eliminating the Existence Predicate	260
12.13	Summary of Systems, Axioms, and Rules	261
13	Semantics for Quantified Modal Logics	263
13.1	Truth Value Semantics with the Substitution Interpretation	263
13.2	Semantics for Terms, Predicates, and Identity	266
13.3	Strong versus Contingent Identity	268
13.4	Rigid and Nonrigid Terms	274
13.5	The Objectual Interpretation	276
13.6	Universal Instantiation on the Objectual Interpretation	279
13.7	The Conceptual Interpretation	284

13.8	The Intensional Interpretation	286
13.9	Strengthening Intensional Interpretation Models	291
13.10	Relationships with Systems in the Literature	292
13.11	Summary of Systems and Truth Conditions	298
14	Trees for Quantified Modal Logic	301
14.1	Tree Rules for Quantifiers	301
14.2	Tree Rules for Identity	305
14.3	Infinite Trees	307
14.4	Trees for Quantified Modal Logic	308
14.5	Converting Trees into Proofs	312
14.6	Trees for Systems that Include Domain Rules	317
14.7	Converting Trees into Proofs in Stronger Systems	319
14.8	Summary of the Tree Rules	320
15	The Adequacy of Quantified Modal Logics	321
15.1	Preliminaries: Some Replacement Theorems	322
15.2	Soundness for the Intensional Interpretation	324
15.3	Soundness for Systems with Domain Rules	327
15.4	Expanding Truth Value (tS) to Substitution (sS) Models	330
15.5	Expanding Substitution (sS) to Intensional (iS) Models	335
15.6	An Intensional Treatment of the Objectual Interpretation	337
15.7	Transfer Theorems for Intensional and Substitution Models	340
15.8	A Transfer Theorem for the Objectual Interpretation	345
15.9	Soundness for the Substitution Interpretation	346
15.10	Soundness for the Objectual Interpretation	347
15.11	Systems with Nonrigid Terms	348
15.12	Appendix: Proof of the Replacement Theorems	349
16	Completeness of Quantified Modal Logics Using Trees	354
16.1	The Quantified Tree Model Theorem	354
16.2	Completeness for Truth Value Models	359
16.3	Completeness for Intensional and Substitution Models	359
16.4	Completeness for Objectual Models	360
16.5	The Adequacy of Trees	362
17	Completeness Using Canonical Models	363
17.1	How Quantifiers Complicate Completeness Proofs	363
17.2	Limitations on the Completeness Results	366
17.3	The Saturated Set Lemma	368
17.4	Completeness for Truth Value Models	371
17.5	Completeness for Systems with Rigid Constants	375

17.6	Completeness for Systems with Nonrigid Terms	377
17.7	Completeness for Intensional and Substitution Models	380
17.8	Completeness for the Objectual Interpretation	381
18	Descriptions	383
18.1	Russell's Theory of Descriptions	383
18.2	Applying Russell's Method to Philosophical Puzzles	386
18.3	Scope in Russell's Theory of Descriptions	388
18.4	Motives for an Alternative Treatment of Descriptions	390
18.5	Syntax for Modal Description Theory	392
18.6	Rules for Modal Description Theory: The System !S	394
18.7	Semantics for !S	398
18.8	Trees for !S	400
18.9	Adequacy of !S	401
18.10	How !S Resolves the Philosophical Puzzles	405
19	Lambda Abstraction	407
19.1	<i>De Re</i> and <i>De Dicto</i>	407
19.2	Identity and the <i>De Re</i> – <i>De Dicto</i> Distinction	411
19.3	Principles for Abstraction: The System $\lambda S$	413
19.4	Syntax and Semantics for $\lambda S$	414
19.5	The Adequacy of $\lambda S$	420
19.6	Quantifying In	422
20	Conditionals	430
20.1	Why Conditional Logics Are Needed	430
20.2	Strict Implication	433
20.3	Relevance Logics	438
20.4	Semantics for Relevance Logics	445
20.5	Conditional Logics	450
20.6	Semantics for Conditional Logics	454
20.7	Unifying Logics for the Conditional	461
	Answers to Selected Exercises	463
	<i>Bibliography of Works Cited</i>	477
	<i>Index</i>	481

## Introduction: What Is Modal Logic?

Strictly speaking, modal logic studies reasoning that involves the use of the expressions ‘necessarily’ and ‘possibly’. The main idea is to introduce the symbols  $\Box$  (necessarily) and  $\Diamond$  (possibly) to a system of logic so that it is able to distinguish three different *modes* of assertion:  $\Box A$  ( $A$  is necessary),  $A$  ( $A$  is true), and  $\Diamond A$  ( $A$  is possible). Introducing these symbols (or operators) would seem to be essential if logic is to be applied to judging the accuracy of philosophical reasoning, for the concepts of necessity and possibility are ubiquitous in philosophical discourse.

However, at the very dawn of the invention of modal logics, it was recognized that necessity and possibility have kinships with many other philosophically important expressions. So the term ‘modal logic’ is also used more broadly to cover a whole family of logics with similar rules and a rich variety of different operators. To distinguish the narrow sense, some people use the term ‘alethic logic’ for logics of necessity and possibility. A list describing some of the better known of these logics follows.

<b>System</b>	<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Expression Symbolized</b>
Modal logic (or Alethic logic)	$\Box$	It is necessary that
	$\Diamond$	It is possible that
Tense logic	G	It will always be the case that
	F	It will be the case that
	H	It has always been the case that
	P	It was the case that
Deontic logic	O	It is obligatory that
	P	It is permitted that
	F	It is forbidden that



Locative logic	$Tx$	It is the case at $x$ that
Doxastic logic	$Bx$	$x$ believes that
Epistemic logic	$Kx$	$x$ knows that

This book will provide you with an introduction to all these logics, and it will help sketch out the relationships among the different systems. The variety found here might be somewhat bewildering, especially for the student who expects uniformity in logic. Even within the above subdivisions of modal logic, there may be many different systems. I hope to convince you that this variety is a source of strength and flexibility and makes for an interesting world well worth exploring.