

REPLY TO WILLING

WILLING shows that on my account it is a causal law that all pebbles that are tailless offspring of second generation tailless Manx cats are feeble kittens. Call the law L; note that L is a consequence of the law that all tailless offspring of second generation tailless Manx cats are feeble kittens, and therefore has stronger claims to lawhood than are given just by what I say. Willing argues that this entails the conditional 'if this pebble were a tailless etc. then it would be a feeble kitten'. Call it S. Two observations:

(a) I don't see that L does entail S. Using the principle I suggested one can only derive from L the conditional 'this pebble is a tailless etc. \supset if this pebble were a tailless etc. it would be a feeble kitten'. This is true on anyone's principles. Why might one think that L entails S? One reason might be that S's antecedent and consequent are instances of the antecedent and consequent of L. But if my counter-examples show anything it is that this reason alone is not very compelling.

(b) Is L a law? Whether or not L entails S, my account is wrong if L is not a law. I think that L is a law. It is a logical consequence of a law, as I noted above. And it is not only true but true under just about any circumstances that seem possible, since worlds in which cats give birth to pebbles are a long way away.

Therefore I don't consider myself refuted. But Willing's arguments are troubling all the same. For they raise the difficult problem of the conditions under which laws entail subjunctive conditionals. As my reply in (a) indicates I have little to say on what conditionals a law entails. But there should be general principles governing such entailments, and I don't think we know many of them.

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