

thoroughly empirical turf—none of that artificial idealized stuff!

Now let me provide two very broad assumptions plus the rules of the game. The first assumption is that advancing the ball down the field is physically doable in the familiar football way. The players genuinely possess the competence for blocking, tackling, passing, catching, and running. That's *the competence assumption*, and it means that the game is winnable (and of course losable). The second assumption is that there is a single reality connecting the turf to the End Zone. Call this *the metaphysical assumption that grounds epistemological continuity*. The two assumptions taken together mean that an offense can (rationally) only get to the End Zone from the turf or field of play. So not even a trick play can be a magical play. Scoring a touchdown, therefore, will always imply the exercise of "football" competence, from the field of play, by following the rules.

And here are the rules. As even the cheerleaders know, the offense gets four downs (four plays) to go ten yards. If ten yards are traversed, the cycle of four downs repeats, and so on. If the offense hasn't made their ten yards after *three* downs, however, the primary concern becomes field position *after* the opposing team has again handled the ball. Field position, of course, is vital, and in our analogy it represents degrees of confirmation within data space. If the Thumbs and Blockheads were *ordinary* teams, what to do on fourth down would (of course) depend on such factors as where that down occurs, the score, and the time remaining left to play. But as we will see, these two teams are hardly ordinary! Anyhow, fourth down is where *punting* comes in. Punting (which we will say is technically legal on any down), is fraught with its own special peril, but still counts *indirectly* as an offensive play, but in a farsighted way, for a good punt swiftly gets the ball forty or more yards down the field and gives the opposing team a lot of work to do.

(Lucy is laughing hysterically at a sudden reminiscence of pulling the ball away as Charlie tried to kick it. I don't think she's paying attention.)

Of major importance for our purposes is that it is impossible to score a touchdown by punting into the End Zone. When that happens the ball goes over to the other side on their own twenty yard line. Punting