

ALETHIC DETERMINISM. OR: HOW TO MAKE FREE WILL
INCONSISTENT WITH TIMELESS TRUTH

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Πᾶν τοῦξ ἀνάγκης δοῦλόν ἐστ’ ἐν τοῖς σοφοῖς

Euripides

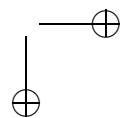
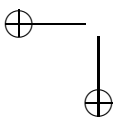
0. *Introduction*

Having free will, according to many philosophers, entails having the power to do otherwise. This contention is sustained by the following intuition. Suppose that Max shaves himself at t ; arguably, Max is performing a free action — acting free-willingly — on condition that he could have done otherwise, namely, could have, at t , refrained from shaving himself, *e.g.*, by deciding shortly before t to refrain from shaving himself at t .¹ If no alternative is available at t to Max other than shaving himself — so the intuition goes — hardly does he deserve the title of a free agent. In what follows we shall stick to this intuition, and thus discuss of free will in terms of power to act otherwise, which is alleged to constitute (at least) a necessary condition for free will.

1. *Kinds of Fatalism, and Free Will*

According to quite a deal of theorists, power to do otherwise is incompatible with physical determinism, *i.e.*, the claim that the laws of nature, given a set of initial conditions of a world, entail everything that is the case in that

¹That free will entails power to do otherwise does not go uncontested, Frankfurt 1969 counting for a good deal of theorists as a powerful case against that entailment. For argument’s sake, in what follows we shall avoid entering into the hot debate about so-called Frankfurt cases, and assume the entailment as correct. For thorough investigations about Frankfurt cases, see McKenna-Widerker 2002.



world.² So, according to these philosophers, there is no power to do otherwise if physical determinism holds. In what follows, however, we shall not address the so-called "incompatibilist" claim that physical determinism is inconsistent with power to do otherwise; what we set out to assess is, rather, whether power to do otherwise is consistent with an altogether different threat, namely, a family of different theses about the behaviour of truth and truth-bearers with respect to time.

Also this topic has a long tradition in the literature. Many authors, in particular, have tried to establish the claim that power to do otherwise is incompatible with the claim, known as Omnitemporalism or Bilateral Sempiternalism, that a proposition never acquires or loses its truth-value. According to this view, if a proposition is true (false), it is true (false) throughout *all* the times. This incompatibilist claim, to differentiate it from the claim that power to do otherwise is incompatible with God's infallible omniscience, often goes under the popular label of Logical Fatalism.³ Since we believe that the qualifier *logical* is somewhat misleading, as it tends to conceal the relevance of the behaviour of truth to the argument for the fatalist conclusion under consideration, we shall call it *Semantic Fatalism* (hereafter SF). In a nutshell, the standard argument for SF is the following.

Consider any proposition P , describing the event that a subject S performs a given action a at a future time t^+ . For S to dispose of power to do otherwise with respect to a , it must be possible for her so to act that P is true, and so to act that P is false. However, according to Omnitemporalism, the truth-value of P is already settled *now*, as it is settled since eternity: if true (false), P is true (false) *now*, will be true (false) at any *future* time t^+ and was true (false) at any *past* time t^- . Accordingly, for S to have within her power to act otherwise, it must be possible so to act that P was *not* true, if it has always been true, or so to act that P was true, if it has always been false. Yet, so acting in fact amounts to changing the past, and this is something generally regarded as impossible. So, Omnitemporalism is inconsistent with power to do otherwise: for any action a , either it has always been settled that a will be performed, and there is nothing one could do to avoid it, or it has always been true that a will not be performed, and there is nothing one could do to perform it.

As the claim that power to do otherwise is incompatible with physical determinism, also the claim that power to do otherwise is incompatible with Omnitemporalism, *i.e.* SF, has not stayed unchallenged. Three main strategies stand out within the debate.

²The standard argument for incompatibility is widely known as *Consequence Argument* and is due to van Inwagen 1983. Earlier formulations of this kind of argument can be found in Ginet 1966, Wiggins 1973, Lamb 1977.

³See, for instance, Rice 2010.

The first strategy to rebut SF has been to deny Omnitemporalism, and to argue that a proposition never acquires nor loses its truth-value because truth has no dealing with time and tense. This view is known as Atemporalism. According to Atemporalism, "if something is true, there is neither a time in which it is true nor a time in which it is not true".⁴ (*A fortiori*, there is no time in which a proposition becomes true, or becomes false.) The allegation of the proponents of this strategy is that, once Atemporalism is assumed, the claim that *P* was true in the past becomes meaningless, or false altogether. Were it so, the argument above would obviously count as unsound.

The second line of resistance to SF is known as Ockhamism. The philosophers who belong to this tradition have tried in various ways to distinguish between *hard facts* about the past, which are fixed and thereby inalterable, and *soft facts* about the past, which are not fixed and thereby not inalterable.⁵ The fundamental claim put forward by the Ockhamists is that the past fact that

(F) it was true that *P* would have been true in the future

should be counted as a soft fact; so the premise of the argument above, saying that this fact is inalterable because is past, is to be rejected; and so is the argument, which turns out unsound on account of its false premise about the inalterability of a soft fact.

The third and most radical strategy against SF consists in a straightforward revision of the very notion of power to do otherwise. The argument above presupposes that an agent *S*, actually performing *a* at *t*, had within her power to act differently only if, at *t*, refraining from performing *a* constituted a genuine possibility. Since (a) changing the past is alleged to not constitute a genuine possibility, but (b) acting otherwise involves changing the past, the conclusion is supposed to follow that, if Omnitemporalism is true, then *S* has not within her power to act differently. The same conclusion, however, does not necessarily follow if one understands power to do otherwise in *counterfactual* terms. A suggestion for so interpreting the notion of power to do otherwise could be, for instance, the following:

⁴ Künne 2002: 289. It is widely held that Frege is the main source of this thesis, *e.g.*, Frege 1918. A contemporary upholder of this thesis is van Inwagen 1983: chap. 2.

⁵ Philosophers belonging to this tradition are, among others, McCord Adams 1967, Plantinga 1986, Widerker 1989. Notice that, by the Ockhamist wording, a hard (soft) *fact* about the past is just a *true* hard (soft) *proposition* about the past. Throughout this paper we shall stick to this nomenclature.

(C-PDO) For any agent x , time t , action-token a , such that x performs a at t , x has within her power to do otherwise $=_{df}$ were x to intend before t to not perform a , x would not perform a .⁶

Once C-PDO is in place, the following reply to the argument above seems to become available. If the past at a world w entails the future at w , and the past is unalterable, then in a clear sense it is true that the agent was always going to do one thing rather than another, say performing a ; however, it can still be true that in the nearest possible world in which the agent intends to do otherwise, she does succeed, thereby fulfilling the truth-conditions of the counterfactual encapsulating her actually being endowed with power to do otherwise with respect to a .

Having in view this possible reply, it is often suggested that C-PDO indeed gives an account of what it takes for an agent to be endowed with power to act otherwise, one though that is strongly biased *in favour of* the possibility of free will. Our fundamental aim, in this paper, is to counter this suggestion. We shall put forth a novel argument to the effect that, if certain theses about truth and time are correct, no one could be endowed with power to do otherwise *even* in the counterfactual sense captured by C-PDO. (Terminological remark: hereafter, power to do otherwise will be systematically referred to in the sense specified by C-PDO.)

Not only, though, does our argument purport to rebut the *third* anti-SF-ist strategy; it also features additional virtues. On the one hand, our argument is for the conclusion that even Atemporalism is incompatible with power to do otherwise, thus rebutting the *first* anti-SF-ist strategy. (Notice, moreover, that since a parallel and simpler argument can be run to the effect that Omnitemporalism is incompatible with power to do otherwise, our conclusion achieves greater generality, and the possible shift from the claim that truth is omnitemporal to the claim that it is atemporal becomes useless for the purpose to resist it.) On the other hand, our argument for the conclusion that both Atemporalism and Omnitemporalism are incompatible with power to do otherwise will be shown independent of the debated assumption that the past is inalterable. So our argument goes through independently of the *second* anti-SF-ist strategy, namely, whether Ockhamists are right in insisting that the soft facts about the past are alterable.

To differentiate our argumentative strategy from the standard one mentioned above, and to convey more immediately the higher generality of the conclusion it is aimed to establish (namely, the thesis that both Omnitemporalism and Atemporalism are inconsistent with power to do otherwise), we propose the label *Alethic Determinism* (hereafter AD). In order to save space, we shall only argue for the claim that Atemporalism is inconsistent

⁶The counterfactual approach is commonly associated with Moore 1912.

with power to do otherwise, the parallel claim that Omnitemporalism too is inconsistent with power to do otherwise being a simpler case from the same argument.

2. *The Argument for AD*

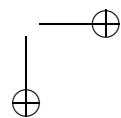
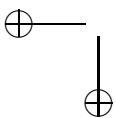
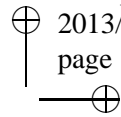
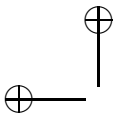
This said, let us step back to the opening example. Take the proposition that Max shaves himself at t , and assume that it is true (that is, true in the actual world — hereafter referred to also as @). For Max to have within his power to act otherwise, namely, to refrain from shaving himself at t , it must be the case that:

(C-PDO_M) were Max to intend, before t , to not shave himself at t , he would refrain from shaving himself at t .

In many worlds in which Max exists and intends, before t , to not shave, he does not shave at t . Just consider the following two examples (that could be multiplied at will). In a world w_1 , the Government has introduced a law that forbids shaving oneself; since Max is willing to abide by the law, some time before t he deliberates to not shave himself at t , and ends up not shaving at t . In a different world w_2 Max dates Una; for some $t^- < t$, he recalls to his mind at t^- that Una is only driven crazy by designer stubble. He therefore decides to not shave himself because he believes that being unshaved will maximise his odds with Una. Max sticks to this decision and does not shave himself at t .

Is the existence of w_1 or w_2 sufficient to conclude that C-PDO_M is true? Notoriously, the semantics for counterfactuals is a very elusive matter, two alternative theories — Stalnaker's and Lewis's — standing out as the more palatable options. In what follows we shall assume, with Robert Stalnaker, the claim that the similarity relation has a limit, while staying neutral on the question as to whether there is a unique world that is closer to @ than any other world, or there is a set of worlds such that (a) any world in the set is as similar to @ as any other world in the set and (b) any world outside the set is less similar to @ than any world in the set. So, we shall assume that a counterfactual of the form

(C) if P were the case, Q would be the case



is true if and only if no member of the closest set⁷ of worlds verifying P fails to satisfy Q , and false otherwise.

That said, we can proceed to address the question above, namely, whether either w_1 or w_2 make $C\text{-PDO}_M$ true. As noted, both worlds verify both the antecedent and the consequent of $C\text{-PDO}_M$. However, are they *closer* to @ than any other world in which, though the antecedent of $C\text{-PDO}_M$ is true, its consequent is false? Hardly so, as the following considerations manage to show.

Just consider the second example. In w_2 Max decides to not shave himself, and successfully sticks to his decision. His intention, in particular, is due to the fact that in w_2 Max has dated Una, and he is willing to please her by looking rougher. In @, however, Max does *not* date Una. Since refraining from dating Una is consistent with forming the intention to not shave himself at t , a whole class of possible worlds exists in which Max intends to refrain from shaving himself at t , yet he does not date Una therein. Many worlds within this class will probably diverge from @ more than w_2 . This, however, does not prevent from there existing a third possible world w_3 that is a member of the class, and is such that, under every respect unrelated with Max's dating Una, is at least as similar to @ as w_2 . Arguably, w_3 is more similar to @ than w_2 , and this is sufficient to conclude that the latter is not the closest possible world in which Max intends to not shave himself.

More in general, it seems that, for any pair of propositions P and Q and worlds w_1 and w_2 such that in @ it is true that P and it is true that Q , w_1 is not the closest world to @ in which Q is false, if w_1 is also a world in which P is false *but* P is consistent with $\sim Q$. In this case, there will exist a different possible world w_2 in which Q is false that will be more similar to @ than w_1 because, in it, P will be true as it is in @. This line of reasoning seems to be available for any proposition P whatsoever. So, it seems to suggest the following principle:

(SP) For any event e , time t and world w , such that e occurs at t in w : the closest world w^* to w in which e does not occur at t is such that any proposition P , that (i) makes essential reference to a time $t^* < t$ and (ii) is such that P is consistent with e 's failing to occur at t , is true in w iff it is true in w^* .⁸

Along with SP, the world w (or class of worlds W) that comes in consideration when one wants to evaluate $C\text{-PDO}_M$ — namely, the closest world(s) in which Max intends to not shave at t — must have a past that is as similar

⁷ This way of spelling the truth-conditions for (C) is compatible with the truth of the Uniqueness Assumption (UA), though not committal to it. Were UA correct, the closest set of P -worlds would simply be a singleton.

⁸ Consistency is here conceived in the broad sense encompassing logical, metaphysical and nomic modalities.

as possible to @.⁹ Let us call the relevant world(s) w_{PAST} (W_{PAST}). As is clear, C-PDO_M is true only if, in w_{PAST} (W_{PAST}), Max ends up not shaving at t . (As we shall shortly see, SP is a debatable principle. In particular, we shall illustrate and discuss the objection that w_{PAST} should comply with a weaker principle — to be labelled SP* — which requires it to verify only a subset of the past propositions that it should verify according to SP. For the time being, however, let us uncover what follows from SP alone, and defer the discussion of SP* to the next section.)

Our fundamental suggestion is that Atemporalism imposes the conclusion that w_{PAST} is such that *Max does shave himself therein*. Consequently, if Atemporalism forces to concluding that Max does shave himself at t in w_{PAST} , then actual Max has no power to do otherwise. Since the argument can be easily generalised so to apply to any agent, world, time, and action-token whatsoever, our intended conclusion is indeed AD; since, as assumed at the outset, it is a widely held conviction that power to do otherwise is necessary for free will, the conclusion is that Atemporalism is inconsistent with free will.

Let us now proceed with the argument for AD. To begin with, we need to focus on the following principle:

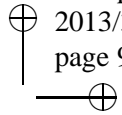
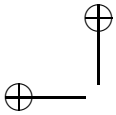
(B) for any proposition P , time t , speaker x : (a) if P is true, then x can truthfully assert P at t ; (b) if P is false, then x can truthfully deny P at t .¹⁰

(B) seems both meaningful and plausible: it merely says that, (even) if truth is timeless, namely, even if there is no time in which a proposition is true (false), any time in which one asserts P , and P is true (false), is a time in which one is making a true (false) assertion. In a way, (B) delivers the means for embedding timeless truth into temporal matters: if a proposition is true (false) at no particular time, then it is truthfully assertable (deniable) at any time.

Let us now put (B) into work. Assume that the proposition that Max shaves himself at t is true in @. In order to vindicate AD, we need to show that, in w_{PAST} , the proposition that Max does not shave himself at t is false. Let us now consider the following argument, where t^- stands for any time antecedent to the instant in which Max forms or does not form the intention to shave himself:

⁹ According to the above proviso about consistency, w cannot be required to verify a past proposition P that is true in @ if P 's truth is logically, metaphysically or nomically inconsistent with e 's failing to occur therein.

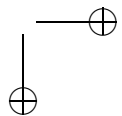
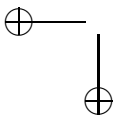
¹⁰ Thus spelt, this principle is already found in Ciprotti 2012.



1. that Max shaves himself at t is true in @ [assumption]
2. that Max shaves himself at t is false in w_{PAST} [*reductio* assumption]
3. in w_{PAST} , at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max does not shave himself at t [(B), 2, semantic bivalence]
4. in @, at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t [(B), 1]
5. any proposition P , relative to times up to t , which is consistent with Max's intending to not shave himself at t , is true in @ iff it is true in w_{PAST} [SP, df. of w_{PAST}]
6. the proposition that at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t is relative to a time earlier than t and is consistent with Max's intending to not shave himself at t [premise]
7. the proposition that at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t is true in @ iff it is true in w_{PAST} [5, 6]
8. the proposition that at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t is false in w_{PAST} [3]
9. the proposition that at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t is true in @ [ES, 4]
10. the proposition that at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t is true in @ and in it is false in w_{PAST} [8, 9]
11. \perp [7, 10]
12. \therefore that Max shaves himself at t is true in w_{PAST} .

The intuitive thrust of the argument above is the following. If SP is accepted, the most similar world to @ in which Max does intend to not shave at t must be w_{PAST} , namely, a world that satisfies the condition that, for any time $t^- < t$ and proposition P describing a possible state of the world at t^- consistent with Max's intending to not shave at t , P is true in @ iff P is true in w_{PAST} . Once w_{PAST} is recognised as the relevant world for the purpose to evaluating C-PDO_M, there is no escaping the conclusion that this counterfactual is false, as the assumption that w_{PAST} differs from @ over whether Max shaves himself at t leads to a contradiction.

As should be clear, a parallel and simpler argument is available to show that Omnitemporalism is inconsistent with power to do otherwise. The argument, in particular, will replace premises 3 and 4 with, respectively,



3*. in w_{PAST} it was true at t^- that Max would not shave himself at t ;

and

4*. in @ it was true at t^- that Max would shave himself at t .

The argument runs, then, in a parallel way, by showing that a world that diverges from actuality in that it falsifies 1 — being a world that also falsifies the past truth conveyed by 4* — could not be w_{PAST} .

3. The Main Objection to AD

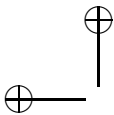
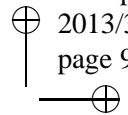
As anticipated, a way in which one could attempt to circumvent the conclusion of the *reductio* — and the attendant generalisation that Atemporalism is inconsistent with power to do otherwise — is to deny SP. One could observe, in particular, that SP is an excessively demanding principle, for its requirement that w_{PAST} agree with @ over as many past propositions as possible does range over *every true proposition* that makes reference to times up to t . If this principle is accepted, our *reductio* goes through. However, a slight weakening of the principle is sufficient to block it. For instance, one could require that w_{PAST} simply share a sub-set of the set of truths relative to times up to t , namely, the set of those truths that do not entail propositions being time-indexed later than t .¹¹

It is easy to see that, premised with this amended principle (henceforth, SP*), our *reductio* no longer goes through. Once SP is replaced with SP*, w_{PAST} is no more required to share with @ future-entailing past true propositions. So, in particular, the world that is more similar to @, and in which Max does intend to not shave at t , is no more required to be one in which, as in @, the following proposition is true:

(i) at t^- it is truthfully assertable that Max shaves himself at t .

Being so, however, neither is the world that is more similar to @, and in which Max does intend to not shave at t , required to be one in which, as in @, Max shaves himself at t . So, the counterfactual encapsulating Max's

¹¹ An anonymous referee has suggested that SP could be weakened thus: the relevant propositions to be reckoned with by SP should not number those reporting factive propositional attitudes whose content makes essential reference to future times. To achieve greater generality, we consider the following weakening of SP: the exclusion from the relevant past propositions of those entailing propositions that make essential reference to future times. The argument that we shall propose against this second proposal will be rephrased, with just minor reformulation, to specifically address the first one.



power to do otherwise with respect to shaving himself — namely, $C\text{-}PDO_M$ — is possibly true under SP^* .

The question that naturally comes next is whether one should replace SP with SP^* . The answer that we shall argue for in what follows is that one should *not* replace SP with SP^* . So, even if we grant the point that our *reductio* would fail, if SP^* were accepted, we shall stick to its actual conclusion, as we believe that SP is better supported than its weaker variant SP^* .

4. Countering the Main Objection

Suppose, to explain, that the following proposition is true in @:

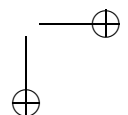
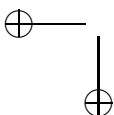
- (i) at t Max buys the winning ticket of the State’s lottery.
- (ii) entails, relative to t , the future truth that, for some $t^+ > t$,
- (iii) at t^+ the number written on Max’s ticket is picked by chance as the winning ticket.

If one assumes SP^* , it follows that, if (ii) is true in @, then two worlds w_1 and w_2 may bear the *same* similarity to @ even if (ii) is true in one of them and false in the other, and every other proposition P , time-indexed to a time up to t , is such that P is true in w_1 iff P is true in w_2 . We think that this is scarcely credible, as the only difference between w_1 and w_2 , in the case at issue, is that the happy event reported by (iii) occurs in one of them, as in @, and not in the other. It is intuitive that a world in which (iii) is true, and so at t Max does buy the winning ticket, is more similar to @ — where Max is now a wealthy fellow — than a world in which Max buys at t a ticket with the very same number, yet at t^+ it is the number of the ticket bought by Thomas — Max’s archenemy — that is picked up by chance at t^+ .

Admittedly, one could reply that the above argument does not yet show that the most similar world to @ must coincide with it also over the past reporting factive propositional attitudes whose contents are indexed to future times. To counter this objection, we invite to consider the following proposition:

- (iv) having seen the weather forecasts, Max knew at t that it would have rained in the afternoon.

This proposition reports Max’s factive attitude towards the (relative to t) future-oriented proposition that:



(v) it rains in the afternoon.

Suppose now that the meteorological event reported by (v) occurs in @. The further weakening of SP under consideration allows two possible worlds w_1 and w_2 to bear the same similarity to @ even if:

(a) (v) is true in one of them and false in the other;

(b) every other proposition P , whose content is time-indexed to a time up to t , is such that P is true in w_1 iff P is true in w_2 .

We believe that this consequence is also counterintuitive. For, it seems that a world in which (v) is true, and so Max did possess knowledge at t , is more similar to @ — where Max is caught in an afternoon rainstorm well-prepared — than a world in which Max has at t only a justified belief that it will rain in the afternoon, yet it does not rain in the afternoon and Max, sadly looking at his bulky umbrella, regrets having trusted one more time the weather forecasts.

The above reply, in fact, is available on account of a feature of our argumentative strategy that deserves emphasis. SP* differs from SP in that it says that the similarity between two worlds w_1 and w_2 varies with the number of propositions, which describe the past *and* have no implication about the future, that get the same truth value in each of them. SP, in contrast, says that the similarity between two worlds w_1 and w_2 varies, without further qualifications, with the number of propositions, which describe the past, that get the same truth-value in each of them. Both principles provide a recipe that allows determining, when one places oneself at a given time t in the history of w_1 , how the history up to t of the world w_2 that is most similar to w_1 must be constituted. However, it should not be overlooked that SP* and SP are *not* provided as principles governing the similarity between worlds *relative to t* . In other words, SP* and SP are being considered as guides for the selection of the set of worlds which comes into question for the purpose to evaluate counterfactuals from the point of view of a given world; hence, they are meant as guides for the selection of the set of worlds that are *tout court* more similar to the target world. Once the aim of SP* and SP is correctly understood, their plausibility must be assessed against the principles that *in general* constrain the similarity between worlds; and there is no denying that, among such principles, one says that, if w_1 and w_2 are indistinguishable (save for the fact that w_1 verifies a truth of @ that is falsified by w_1), w_2 should count as less similar to @ than w_1 . SP requires that also the future-entailing past of the most similar world be the same as the future-entailing past of the target world. So, it has a two-fold advantage over SP*: first, it guarantees the congruence between both worlds with respect to

the truth-value of the future-entailing past propositions; second, it also guarantees congruence with respect to the truth-value of the future propositions that the former propositions entail. Therefore, set against this general principle governing the similarity between worlds, there is no denying that SP* is worse sustained than SP.

It is worth stressing, in conclusion, that the same considerations sustain the contention, anticipated above, that the Ockhamist distinction between a hard and a soft past is irrelevant to the success of our argument. It might be helpful, in the present context, to illustrate this point by inspecting the possible suggestion that the Ockhamist distinction indeed *motivates* the weakening of SP considered above, and by showing that this suggestion in fact is wrong.

As briefly rehearsed above, the most central tenet of Ockhamism is the thesis that the past at a world is constituted by two different categories of facts, the hard facts about the past and the soft facts about the past. Though the Ockhamists grant the point that no one could be endowed with the power to make it the case that a hard fact about the past had not obtained, still they contend that someone could be endowed with the power to make it the case that a soft fact about the past had not obtained. In a clear sense, then, the Ockhamists can be read as trying to differentiate between a genuine and a less-than-genuine past: to the extent that *fixity* is regarded as a constitutive feature of the genuine past, there is no denying that a non-fixed past should count as less-than-genuine a past. Having in view this distinction between a genuine and a less-than-genuine past, it might appear natural that two worlds' failing to share their soft past should count immaterial to questioning whether these worlds are close enough; for, in a sense, these worlds would be simply failing to share features of their histories that are not genuine constituents of them.

How, exactly, the distinction between hard and soft facts about the past should be drawn is a debated question.¹² The general idea, however, is clear enough: a soft fact about the past is a true proposition, whose content is indexed to a past time and whose truth depends on a future fact.¹³ For instance, the suggestion is that the past fact that

(vi) one million years ago it was truthfully assertable that Hitler would have invaded Poland on September 1st, 1939

is a fact only in virtue of the truth that

(vii) Hitler invades Poland on September 1st, 1939.

¹² For a well-informed survey of the debate, see Fischer 1989.

¹³ Fischer-Todd-Tognazzini 2009.

Given that (vi)'s truth depends on (vii)'s, there is a clear sense in which one can change the past fact reported by (vi). For instance, Hitler could have invaded Poland on September 1st, 1940, thereby making it the case that (vi) had not been a fact. In a clear sense, then, (vi) is bound to appear as a less-than-genuine a feature of the past of a world.

Now, take again the second weakening of SP. According to it, the closest worlds to share the past with @ need not coincide over propositions which, like (vi), report factive propositional attitudes whose content is indexed to future times. This qualification might appear entirely appropriate in view of the Ockhamist distinction; for, apparently, the qualification could now be illuminated as sustained by the suggestion that a less-than-genuine element of the history of a world should not be something in terms of which its similarity with other worlds is assessed.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that it is based on equivocation. Even if, on account of its flexible nature, a soft fact like (vi) could easily be disqualified as less-than-genuine when compared with more robust elements of the past, like (vii), the reason why the coincidence between two worlds over their flexible past should be regarded as irrelevant to their similarity is not apparent. In other words, there seems to be no guarantee that what counts as less-than-genuine — when compared against the standard of a fixed past — should count as less-than-genuine for the purpose to evaluate the similarity between worlds. The more so once it is realised that, in effect, the coincidence over the flexible past guarantees the additional coincidence over facts that, once they will have obtained, will be over and done with.

5. Concluding Remarks

We therefore believe that, even granting that the Ockhamist distinction *hard-soft* is unproblematically clear-cut, the foregoing considerations support our claim that such a distinction fails to defeat our argument for the inconsistency of Atemporalism (and Omnitemporalism) and free will. If we are right on this count, to sum up, our paper successfully establishes the following conclusions: (a) Atemporalism has no edge over Omnitemporalism as a way-out of SF — indeed, it falls prey to it none the less —, (b) no way-out of SF is provided by counterfactualist analyses of free will, such as C-PDO, and (c) Ockhamism is of no help against SF.

It needs to be eventually stressed that our argument for SF is conditional: it does not pretend to qualify as a *sound* defence of SF, for the good reason that Atemporalism might well be an unsound view about truth. Somewhat indirectly, our main objective in this paper could be seen as supporting the contention that the only way to escape SF is to endorse the view that truth is temporal.

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