

DEONTIC ALTERNATIVE WORLDS AND THE TRUTH-VALUE OF 'OA'

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There is a well-known view in deontic logic according to which the truth-conditions of *OA* (*A* ought to be the case) are regulated by means of deontic alternative worlds. This view may be summarized in this way:

(1) *A* proposition of the sort *OA* is true at the actual world *w* if and only if *A* is true at every deontic alternative world to the world *w*.⁽¹⁾

I believe (1) is false. My arguments are as follows:

Let *A!* mean the norm at the actual world *w*, prescribing to do *A* in *w*, and let $w_1 - w_n$ be the deontic alternative worlds to *w*. The conditions of *A!*'s validity and, consequently, of *OA*'s truth exist exclusively in the actual world *w*. They do not exist in its deontic alternatives $w_1 - w_n$. "*OA*" is true at *w* (à la Tarski) if and only if it is obligatory to do *A* at *w*. The proposition: "*A!* is valid" is true at *w* if and only if *A!* is valid at *w*. The sources of *OA*'s truth and of *A!*'s validity exist (if they exist) in *w* itself.

There are several conditions of *A!*'s validity at *w* but *A*'s truth (the performance of *A!* in the overwhelming majority of cases) does not belong to these conditions, still less the performance of *A!* in all cases. A norm is not valid because its addressees perform it. On the contrary, the addressees of a norm perform it, if they perform it, because the norm is valid. In the philosophy of law it is a commonplace that the validity of a norm may not be based only on the overwhelming obedience of its addressees, still less on their obedience in all cases. Every valid norm is violable by its addressees. If it is not, then it is not a norm but a law of nature (or of logic). Therefore,

⁽¹⁾ See e.g. CHELLAS [1], p. 191., KALINOWSKI [4], p. 91., MOTT [6], p. 208., GARDIES [2], p. 81. /He writes: " α est obligatoire dans le monde originaire si et seulement si α est vrai dans tous les mondes admissible..." – KALINOWSKI criticizes GARDIES' conception in [4]./

OA 's truth and $A!$'s validity at w do not depend on A 's truth at w nor at $w_1 - w_n$.

If $A!$ is valid in w (because the objective conditions of its validity are given in w), then its validity does not arise from A 's truth at $w_1 - w_n$. If $A!$ is not valid in w , and, consequently, OA is false at w , because the objective conditions of $A!$'s validity are not given in w (thus $A!$ is only a planned norm, *e.g.* a Bill), then A 's truth alone at every deontic alternative world $w_1 - w_n$ to the world w does not create a valid norm $A!$ from the planned $A!$.

An example. It is quite possible that at every deontic alternative world $w_1 - w_n$ to the actual world w every 'alterego' of us drinks a cup of milk daily. (A is true at every $w_1 - w_n$.) Does it automatically follow from this 'fact' that the norm: "Drink a cup of milk daily" / $A!$ / is valid at the actual world w and the deontic proposition: "It is obligatory to drink a cup of milk daily" / OA / is true at w ? Certainly not. May be that A is true at every $w_1 - w_n$, yet $A!$ is not valid at w .⁽²⁾

The truth of A at $w_1 - w_n$ is neither the *necessary and sufficient* condition, nor a *sufficient* condition of $A!$'s validity, respectively, of OA 's truth at w .

The material biconditional expressed in (1) does not hold. It is a fatal mistake! True is only the following material conditional:⁽³⁾

(2) *If OA is true at the actual world w , then A is true at every deontic alternative world to w .*

(2) is the simple consequence of the definition of the deontic alternativity, of $w_1 - w_n$'s supposed deontic perfection.

(1) is false, because $A \supset OA$ is, of course, invalid, and – therefore – $\sim OA \supset \sim A$ is too. If A obtains, this does not mean that A is obligatory, and if A is not obligatory, this does not mean that A does not obtain.

The deontic alternative worlds – as models – are excellent scientific instruments for handling a lot of scientific problems correctly in

(2) Let us suppose that everybody is drinking a cup of milk daily at the actual world. Does it mean that automatically it is obligatory to drink a cup of milk daily at our world, if there is not such a command? No, it does not.

(3) What here follows is in accordance with the standpoint of Professor HINTIKKA who states that there is an 'if – then' relation/instead of an 'iff' relation/between Op 's truth at w and p 's truth at every deontic alternative world to w . He asserts/in [3], p. 185./only that *if Op is true at w , then p is true at every deontic alternative world to w .*

deontic logic⁽⁴⁾ (Professor HINTIKKA proved it), but they have no such role as to regulate – by means of the biconditional expressed by (1) – the truth/falsehood of OA at the actual world w (the validity of $A!$ at w).

As it is known, one advantage of the possible worlds interpretation is its *extensionality*: the intensional alethic modal notions of necessity and possibility are replaced by quantifiers over possible worlds.⁽⁵⁾ But the intensional deontic notion of “it is obligatory” $/O/$ is not replacable in this way by quantifiers over possible worlds, because (1) does not hold. This is also a difference between the deontic logic and the alethic modal logic, among other differences.

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(⁴) *E.g.* it is possible to clear up collisions in a normative system.

(⁵) See *e.g.* McMICHAEL [5], p. 49.

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