FATALISM AND CLOSURE

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Johannesburg, 2008

Abstract

In “Fatalism, Incompatibilism and the Power to Do Otherwise” (2003), Penelope Mackie presents new objections to logical fatalism. One of her objections shows that the principle of *Closure* is invalid. The principle of *Closure* is the inference principle used by logical fatalism. In this paper, I give a response to Mackie’s objection by drawing a distinction between logical action-fatalism and logical event-fatalism. I argue that whereas logical-action fatalism presupposes *Closure* and is so susceptible to Mackie’s objection, logical event-fatalism does not presuppose an inference principle that fails by Mackie’s objection.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work apart from the acknowledged assistance from my supervisor. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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14th day of February, 2008.

Acknowledgments

This essay is the final draft of my research report. I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor Dr David Martens for his in depth comments and advise on my earlier drafts, as well as, all his help during the research proposal stages. I would like to thank the Philosophy Department of the University of the Witwatersrand for their remarks and input at my proposal presentation. I also want to acknowledge Michael Pitman for the issues he pointed out in his Reader's Report.

Contents

Introduction

The concern of this paper is fatalism. Fatalism is the name given to a number of differing theses. In general, a fatalist thesis is committed to the position that some happenings are unavoidable.[1] Broadly put, something that happens is unavoidable if an agent cannot prevent it from happening.[2] The relevant happenings are more often than not taken to be the actions that an agent performs.[3] A fatalist in this sense holds that an agent cannot prevent herself from performing certain actions.

Commentators on fatalism often assume that a fatalist holds that an agent cannot prevent herself from performing certain actions because she does not have free will. By free will the commentators mean to at least sometimes have "the power to do otherwise than we actually do".[4] Fatalism might very well entail that an agent cannot act freely. But the intuition I shall explore in this paper is that a fatalist is not committed to the view that not acting freely is the reason we call something fated.[5] Even though a fatalist might be committed to saying that we cannot act freely.

This intuition I think makes sense when we consider what is meant in everyday usage as a fated happening. When people talk about a happening being fated I don't think they

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[1] Edward Craig "Fatalism", in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* edited by E. Craig, London: Routledge, 1998, in first paragraph, http://0-www.rep.routledge.com.innopac.wits.ac.za:80/ article/N096 (accessed 8 May, 2007); Hugh Rice, "Fatalism". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2004, in introduction, http://plato.stanford.edu/ entries/fatalism (accessed 1 July, 2007).
[2] Craig, in first paragraph.
[3] Penelope Mackie, "Fatalism, Incompatibilism, and the Power To Do Otherwise", *Noûs*, vol.37, no.4 (2003): 673; Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Fatalism" (*A Companion to Metaphysics*, edited by Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa. Blackwell: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1995), 168.
[4] Mackie, 673. I go into this definition in a bit more detail in Part 1.
[5] Craig, in second paragraph.

only mean that an agent was not acting freely.[6] There is something else involved. I think what is also meant is that the fated happening in some sense had to happen or that for some reason it was supposed to happen.[7] Just exactly in what sense they mean a happening is supposed to happen is hard to pin down.

However, taking this intuition as a starting point there are no reasons on the face of it for restricting the happenings relevant to a fatalist to the actions of an agent. A fatalist could also be interested in happenings that an agent is ineffective in preventing, but are nevertheless not the actions of an agent. In other words, events that have to happen not because the agent does not have free will, but rather for some other reason.[8] The fatalist in this event sense is interested in whether an agent can prevent an event from happening.

The action and event distinction is not usually made. I believe the reason for this has to do with the abundance of literature on fatalism as an implication of arguments for a thesis called determinism.[9] Determinism is concerned with how the past and things true about the world determine the future.[10] In particular, the thesis is interested in how an agent's actions are determined. Accordingly, if fatalism is thought to follow from determinism, the fatalist is thought to only be interested in an agent's actions.[11] It is not immediately

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[6] Robert. C. Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 53, no. 4. (Oct., 2003): 435. Solomon analyses the various ways that happenings have been thought to be inevitable.
[7] Solomon, 435; Craig, second paragraph.
[8] Solomon, 435. Solomon explores a similar intuition.
[9] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism". I give a discussion of the relationship between fatalism and determinism in Part 1.
[10] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism"; Peter van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism", *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 27 (1975): 186.
[11] Rice, introduction. Rice takes fatalism to be a view about what actions we can perform.

obvious how the action and event distinction can be made in terms of fatalism as an implication of determinism.

There is no apparent reason to think that fatalism can only be defined in relation to determinism. It might be the most prominent way, but even then there is a debate over whether determinism really entails fatalism. Indeed, many philosophers are sceptical over whether this is the case.[12] In light of this scepticism, and coupled with my motivation to draw the action and event distinction, the fatalism that will be the concern of this paper will not be the kind entailed by determinism.

In this paper the fatalism that I am interested in comes from an argument for logical fatalism. Logical fatalism holds that some happenings have to happen as a matter of averting contradiction.[13] There would be a contradiction with certain commonly held beliefs about the world and logic if specific happenings did not happen.

The particular argument that I will consider is one presented by Penelope Mackie.[14] Mackie is not an expressed advocate of the argument. She proposes new potential objections to the argument. Her method is to frame the argument for logical fatalism in

[12] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Fatalism". Simon Blackburn says that it is a mistake to assume that fatalism is entailed by determinism. I will discus these issues in greater depth in Part 1.
[13] I wanted to avoid the circular way of defining logical fatalism as the kind of fatalism generated by the laws of logic. In the first part of the paper I give a detailed discussion. It seems that taking logical fatalism as a position of non-contradiction might avoid circularity to an extent. I think this way is consistent with what is given as logical fatalism by Mackie, 685; A definition of this sort is also implied in Craig, third paragraph.
[14] Mackie gives the argument on 672-673. She presents a revised version later on 676.

the context of a prominent debate over another metaphysical issue.[15] Her proposed objections stem from the other metaphysical issue. She carries the objections across to the argument for logical fatalism.[16]

The argument for logical fatalism is supposed to show that under certain conditions an agent "cannot do otherwise" than a given action.[17] The conditions concerned are those logically sufficient for the action.[18] Logically sufficient conditions for an action are those that were they to pertain the action would pertain.[19] The premises of the argument are intended to be obviously true or at least acceptable to most conventional sets of metaphysical beliefs. If we accept the premises as true, as we seem to be committed to doing, then it appears that we must also accept that some actions have to happen.[20]

One of Mackie's objections is to question whether it is really the case that by accepting the premises we are committed to the conclusion.[21] She questions whether the principle that is used to justify the inference from the premises to the conclusion is valid.[22] Questioning the validity of the inference principle consists in showing that the principle does not generate logically sufficient conditions for the truth of the conclusion. The inference principle is called *Closure*.[23] *Closure* is meant to show that an agent's actions

[15] I account for aspects of this other metaphysical issue in Part 1 of this paper. However, this other issue will not play a big part in my paper. Mackie explains her method in the introduction to her paper on 672.
[16] Mackie, 672.
[17] Ibid., 673.
[18] Ibid., 687. In footnote 22, Mackie says the concern of her interest is in logically sufficient conditions.
[19] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Condition, necessary/sufficient".
[20] Mackie, 673.
[21] Mackie's other objection questions the truth of one of the premises (679-681).
[22] Mackie, 677-679.
[23] Ibid., 677.

are "closed off" under entailment.[24] Mackie gives reason to think that an agent's actions are not "closed off" in the way the principle suggests.[25] If logical fatalism presupposes *Closure*, and *Closure* is invalid, then Mackie claims logical fatalism is invalid.

The distinction between actions and events will be the basis for my response to Mackie.[26] I will suggest that there are two corresponding types of logical fatalism. One, that says that the happenings that have to happen are actions. I call this type of logical fatalism, logical action-fatalism. Logical event-fatalism is the other type, which takes the happenings that have to happen as events.[27]

I will maintain that the kind of logical fatalism Mackie considers, and presents objections against, is logical action-fatalism. My research question is whether logical event-fatalism needs to presuppose *Closure* to justify the inference to its conclusion, as does logical action-fatalism. I aim to show that logical event-fatalism does not presuppose *Closure* and as such Mackie's objection does not apply to logical event-fatalism.

In Part 1, I shall explain in more depth what I mean by fatalism and differentiate the thesis that concerns this paper from the other theses that could be called fatalism. This part of the paper will also cover the distinctions between terms like actions and events. In Part 2, I will present Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism. I will give an account of the premises of the argument. I then move onto an analysis of the principle of *Closure*.

[24] Ibid., 677.
[25] Ibid., 678-679.
[26] In Part 1.2, I consider ways of drawing this distinction.
[27] In Part 1.2 I work out these positions in depth.

In the last section of this part I will give Mackie's objection against *Closure*. Part 3 concerns logical event-fatalism. I shall give the argument for logical event-fatalism, before assessing whether logical event-fatalism needs to presuppose *Closure*. Finally, I shall consider whether Mackie's objection is applicable to the argument for logical event-fatalism.

The conclusion of this paper will be that for the reasons that logical action-fatalism needs to presuppose *Closure* logical event-fatalism does not need to presuppose *Closure*. Nonetheless, I will conclude that the inference to the conclusion of logical event-fatalism does presuppose a principle equivalent to *Closure*. I will argue that even though *Closure* fails by Mackie's objection the equivalent principle that logical event-fatalism presupposes is not invalid by Mackie's objection. My reasoning will be that while the principle that logical event-fatalism presupposes is equivalent to *Closure*, it is presupposed for different reasons to the reasons that logical action-fatalism presupposes *Closure*. I will claim that the reasons that logical action-fatalism needs to presuppose *Closure* are what make *Closure* invalid by Mackie's objection. I will show that the reasons that logical event-fatalism presupposes the equivalent principle do not make it invalid by Mackie's objection. Accordingly, I will claim that logical event-fatalism is not invalid, at least insofar as Mackie's objection is concerned.

1. Terms and Definitions

In this the first part I consider how the crucial terms should be used and understood. I introduce some of the sentences and concepts that Mackie utilises. I make a pivotal distinction on which I believe answering my research question hinges. My intention is to lay the groundwork for the argumentation that will follow in the subsequent parts. The definitions presented here will hopefully be as metaphysically neutral as possible. I aim to just clarify what is meant by some of the terms. I don't think that accepting these definitions requires accepting any particular set of metaphysical beliefs.

1.1 *Fatalism*

There are at least three different types of theses that have been called fatalism. There is a type of fatalist thesis that concerns the "acceptance of determinism".[28] Another type of thesis involves the denial of free will.[29] A third type deals with the unavoidability of some future happenings.[30] In this section I will consider each type of thesis in turn. I point out problems with the first two types. I shall suggest that a variety of the third type of thesis seems to offer a useful definition of fatalism for my purposes.

1.1.1 *Fatalism and Determinism*

[28] Craig, in first paragraph.
[29] Sayre-McCord, 168.
[30] Craig, in first paragraph; Rice, in introduction.

To begin with there is a type of fatalist thesis that involves the "acceptance of determinism".[31] Determinism is not an unambiguous and uncontroversial thesis in its own right. But I think it would be fair to say that when philosophers compare fatalism to determinism they are usually referring to determinism in the form similar to that offered by Peter van Inwagen.[32] I also consulted Simon Blackburn's entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* in what follows.[33]

According to van Inwagen, determinism is a position concerned with propositions.[34] Now a lot can be said about propositions. But what I think is meant by them, and what I will take them to mean for the task of this paper, is things that are capable of either being true or false.[35] They are the sorts of things that express states of affairs or things that happen.

Determinism says that what an agent does is related in some sense to past states.[36] The sense in which an agent relates to past states is that if it is true that the past state exists, then certain things have to be true about what the agent does now.[37] Past states and what the agent does now are things that either exist or don't exist, or happen or don't happen. They are not things we would ordinarily say are true or false. When it is said that a past

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[31] Craig, in first paragraph.
[32] Van Inwagen, 186. There is another reason for taking determinism as the thesis offered by Peter van Inwagen. The other reason is that the metaphysical issues that concern Mackie stem from van Inwagen's work. And of course, I don't mean to imply that van Inwagen's fatalism has any special characteristics that predispose it to comparisons with fatalism.
[33] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism".
[34] Peter van Inwagen, "Reply to Narveson", *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 32 (1977): 94.
[35] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Proposition". I am aware that there is a lot more that can be said about propositions and that probably there are problems with taking such a simple definition. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper I find this definition to suffice and to be quite useful. But I don't think the argument of this paper depends on this definition. So if the definition needs to be adjusted I think the argument of this paper can accommodate such changes.
[36] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism"; van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 186.
[37] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism"; van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 186.

state is true or not, I believe, what is meant is that the propositions are true or not by which the state is expressed. Propositions are true or not, depending on whether the past state exists or not. Likewise, when it is said that certain things should be true about what an agent does, I believe, what is meant is that the propositions should be true that express that an agent does certain things.

The determinist also utilises some propositions that nobody can show to be false.[38] The idea is if certain things are true in the past then the present is determined in someway as a consequence of the propositions that cannot be shown to be false. Say it was true in the past that an apple was released from a hand. Also, suppose that it is a proposition that nobody can show to be false that apples fall toward the ground. The conjunction of the past state and the proposition determine that the apple will fall toward the ground.

These propositions that determine the future in someway are sometimes called "the laws of nature".[39] Indeed, the propositions that determinism is interested in, in this regard, are what are taken to be laws of nature. However, the group of propositions that nobody can show to be false does not only contain laws of nature.[40] Nobody can show that it is false that there are an odd number of sand grains in the Karoo.[41] But I would not want to call it a law of nature that there are an odd number of sand grains in the Karoo. So even though the determinist is interested in propositions that nobody can render false, these propositions cannot exclusively be called laws of nature.

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[38] Van Inwagen, 186.
[39] Ibid., 186. I have taken "laws of nature" as equivalent to "laws of physics".
[40] I owe this point to David Martens.
[41] This example I adapted from the one David Martens gave.

Van Inwagen explains that very few if any philosophers have succeeded in giving a "set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions" for the laws of nature.[42] So it seems the most we can say is that a proposition that somebody could potentially show to be false is not a law of nature.[43] Say it is the case that given a certain critical mass bodies will tend to attract other bodies towards them.[44] If someone could conceivably show that apples were not pulled to the earth in accordance with the attraction law, then the attraction law would not be a law of nature.

Thus, for my purposes here all I will say is that determinism utilises propositions that nobody can show to be false that are laws of nature. But I don't think I need to distinguish just exactly how we can separate laws of nature from propositions that nobody can show to be false that are not laws of nature. All that I think is needed for the definition of determinism that follows is that if a proposition can be shown to be false it is not a law of nature.[45]

We are now in a position to state a definition of determinism. The following is an adaptation of the one given by Blackburn.[46] Let X be a happening. Y denotes a

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[42] Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 188.
[43] Ibid., 193.
[44] I am not sure if this actually is something that is true in nature. But regardless, it doesn't make a difference to the example.
[45] I think this is a reasonably fair account of van Inwagen's "laws of nature". Although there is more to his account. I think what is given here will be sufficient for this paper. But if there are problems with the "laws of nature" here they should probably be attributed to the way that I have explained them, and not van Inwagen's account.
[46] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism". I hope not to have distorted what Blackburn gives as determinism.

proposition that expresses some past state related to X. Z can be the laws of nature. Determinism is defined thus,

- (D) "For any X there is some Y such that, if Y is true and Z is true, then X occurs".[47]

Given Y and Z, they are sufficient for any happening X. If Y was true and X was not to happen it would "break a law of nature".[48] If Y was not true and X was not to happen then it wouldn't break a law of nature. I think this will be sufficient for my purposes.[49]

The relationship between determinism and fatalism has two key dimensions. Firstly, whether determinism entails fatalism. Secondly, whether a fatalist is committed to determinism of any kind. The first issue is usual dealt with by philosophers who wish to show that fatalism is an undesirable consequence of determinism. I am inclined to be sympathetic to this view. The fatalism that is believed to be a consequence of determinism is not a desirable position. The second point is what interests me. I believe that fatalism can be defined independently of determinism and I believe that this fatalism is potentially desirable. I will now attempt to unravel these issues.

Usually, if fatalism is taken to be the acceptance of determinism, it is presupposed that fatalism is a thesis that denies free will.[50] Free will is another concept that is tricky to

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[47] I owe this formulation of (D) to David Martens. He correctly pointed out that my original formulation was not well formed.
[48] Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 185; *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism"
[49] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Determinism".
[50] I suppose there could be other things one could presuppose fatalism to be in order to count fatalism as a thesis that accepts determinism. I have not however come across any other presuppositions. Although, Paul Russell, seems to think that some level of fatalism has to follow from determinism ("Compatibilist-Fatalism", In *Moral Responsibility and Ontology*, edited by Ton van den Beld [Kluwer: Dodrecht, 2000], 200). It appears that Russell takes fatalism as the thesis that human action is "ineffective" (199).

define. As my paper is concerned with Mackie's article I will take it that if you have free will it means you have "the power to do otherwise".[51] If a person is running, and they have the power to do otherwise, then they could also walk or stand still and so forth. Having free will doesn't amount to the fact that one always has the power to do otherwise. It is sufficient to say that someone has free will if they have the power to otherwise at least sometimes.[52] So to deny free will means to deny that someone ever has the power to do otherwise.

I will explain shortly why the presupposition that fatalism is a thesis about the denial free will is intuitively problematic. But assuming the presupposition is correct there are two ways that fatalism could be defined as a thesis that involves the acceptance of determinism. Firstly, fatalism as the denial of free will is a consequence of determinism. Let W stand for free will.

- (DF1) "If, (for any X there is some Y such that, if Y is true and Z is true, then X occurs), then W is false".

(DF1) should be read that if determinism is true, it is sufficient to show that we don't have free will.

Nevertheless, Russell is dealing with a different issue. He maintains that fatalism follows from determinism. More than likely, if we grant that fatalism is the thesis that human action is ineffective, then Russell is correct. My concern though is not whether fatalism follows from determinism. My concern is whether fatalism needs to accept determinism. So even if we concede that Russell is correct about fatalism, we could still argue that there are other ways in which human action can be said to be ineffective. And thus, that fatalism does not need to accept determinism (although determinists would have to accept fatalism).

[51] I am, however, aware that there might be problems with such a definition. Daniel Dennett expresses concern with this definition, although, his emphasis is slightly different ("I Could not have Done Otherwise – So What?", *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 81, no.10, Eighty-First Annual Meeting American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division (Oct., 1984): 555).

[52] I owe this observation to David Martens that only sometimes having the power to otherwise could be sufficient for free will.

The problem with (DF1) is that W cannot be shown to be false from determinism on its own. Determinism on its own does not carry with it any commitments toward denying free will.[53] This seems to be a generally accepted and fairly uncontroversial claim.[54] As determinism does not entail the denial of free will, and fatalism was thought to accept determinism because determinism did entail the denial of free will, then fatalism does not have to accept determinism. All this shows is that fatalists don't need to accept determinism insofar as they aim at showing that we don't have free will. The denial of the free will thesis is not entailed by determinism on its own.

However, this does not rule out that determinism might entail fatalism of some other sort. In fact I think some philosophers who equate being ineffectual with fatalism try to show that determinism does entail fatalism of this sort. Naturally, it is disputed whether determinism does entail this sort of fatalism. Insofar as it is possible in this paper I would like to avoid the issue of whether determinism entails fatalism. Of course, I can only avoid the issue if I can show that a fatalist is not committed in any way to determinism. Thus, the important point about (DF1) is that it gives no reason for thinking that a fatalist is committed to determinism.

Fatalism can also be seen to be committed to determinism, when determinism is taken in conjunction with the denial of the free will thesis.[55]

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[53] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Fatalism".
[54] R.D. Bradley, "Must the Future Be What It Is Going to Be", *Mind*, New Series, vol. 68, no. 270 (Apr., 1959): 205.
[55] Craig, first paragraph. I take as self-evident that under the denial of free will presupposition a fatalist couldn't be (I) "It is not the case that ((for any X, if Y and Z, then X), & W)". (I) is incompatibilism and few philosophers (if any) would equate incompatibilism and fatalism.

- (DF2) "(For any X there is some Y such that, if Y is true and Z is true, then X occurs), & W is false".

Now one can either be a compatibilist or an incompatibilist in terms of the relationship between determinism and free will.[56] People who think determinism and free will can both be true are called compatibilists.[57] People who think determinism and free will can't both be true are called incompatibilists.[58]

The problem with (DF2) is that incompatibilists who accept determinism and deny free will are not generally called fatalists. Incompatibilists who accept determinism and deny free will are usually called "hard determinists".[59] So unless one is willing to equate hard determinism with fatalism, which I doubt many philosophers would be willing to do, fatalism cannot be this position.

While, I would not want to equate hard determinism and fatalism, it seems that a position many philosophers would call fatalism is entailed by hard determinism. By entailed by hard determinism I mean that if hard determinism is true, fatalism of some sort is also true. The hard determinist seems to be committed to saying that agents are not capable of influencing the outcome of happenings and that these happenings are unavoidable. In other words, what agents will do later is determined by the past and that agents cannot contribute at all towards determining the future. So it seems to be the case that hard

[56] Michael McKenna, "Compatibilism", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2004, under 1.4 "Compatibilist's Competitors", http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compatibilism/ (accessed 1 November, 2007).
[57] Ibid., under 1.4 "Compatibilist's Competitors".
[58] Ibid., under 1.4 "Compatibilist's Competitors".
[59] McKenna., under 1.4 "Compatibilist's Competitors"; Mackie, 675. Mackie defines hard determinism as "the combination of determinism and incompatibilism".

determinism entails a kind of fatalism. For the purposes of my paper however I will not take the fatalism that is potentially entailed by (DF2) as my definition of fatalism. In large part I don't want to define fatalism according to (DF2) because I don't think it is correct to assume that fatalism is a thesis that denies free will. I will explain further in the next subsection.

However, there could still be other things we could presuppose fatalism to be in order to think that fatalism would accept determinism. But, it is hard to know what other presuppositions one could make as to why fatalists would accept determinism. I don't think there are many philosophers who claim that fatalists should accept determinism for reasons other than that it must ultimately have some bearing on the effectiveness of human action. It would be hard to know what other views would mean. Fatalism, I guess, would be something like the view that fate determines the future. It seems implausible to me to say that fate determines the future. It seems implausible because I would not know how to come up with a credible explanation of just what fate would be in such an account.[60]

1.1.2 *Fatalism and Free Will*

We come now to the second type of fatalist thesis. The second type is the view that fatalism concerns the denial of the free will thesis. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord's entry, under

[60] There are the more "contentious" versions of fatalism that Solomon mentions, which have arguments about fate that "imply…an agent" (435).

fatalism, from *The Companion to Metaphysics* is useful here.[61] According to Sayre-McCord fatalism is "[t]he thesis that the laws of logic alone suffice to prove that no person ever acts freely".[62] We have taken free will to mean the power to do otherwise. So fatalism is the thesis that we are powerless to do otherwise. Let A stand for an agent. Let B stand for something that A might do.

- (WF) "(For every A, if A cannot do otherwise than B, then A will do B) & A cannot do otherwise than B".

(WF) is an expansion on what I have said some philosophers presuppose fatalism to be when they think fatalism must accept determinism. However, (WF) says that a fatalist is someone who denies free will, but does not take a position on determinism.[63] (WF) says that because a person can't act freely we should be fatalists. This is in accordance with what Sayre-McCord says. Regardless, of the reason that we might not be able to act freely, it is the fact that we can't that generates fatalism. Using (WF) it would be up to the fatalist to give an account of why we might not be able to act freely.

The problem I have with (WF) is an intuitive one. When people speak about a happening being fated I don't know that they mean that a person was not acting freely. Or at least I don't think that they only mean that the person was not acting freely. There seems to something else involved. I think people also mean that the happening that was fated in some sense had to happen.[64] The intuition is that fatalism might entail that we cannot act

[61] Sayre-McCord, 168.
[62] Ibid., 168. For now I ask the reader to ignore the "laws of logic" bit. I will explain the laws of logic under the third type of fatalism below. For now what is important is the denial of free will part.
[63] Although, this position seems to be what is sometimes called "hard incompatibilism" (McKenna, under 1.4 "Compatibilist's Competitors").
[64] Solomon, 436. Solomon expresses this view.

freely, but not acting freely is not the reason we call something fated. We call something fated when it has to happen in some sense and that might be the reason we can't act freely.

Edward Craig gives this definition. Fatalism is the view "that there are certain things destined to happen irrespective of what we do".[65] "Irrespective of what we do" it appears means no matter what we do. No matter what we do certain happenings will happen. While I think it is plausible that a fatalist thesis denies free will, it seems to me that a good definition of fatalism should predominantly be concerned with accounting for the way in which a future happening can be said to happen "irrespective of what we do". If we had such an account, then we could have two potential fatalisms open to us. A hard fatalism that interprets the "no matter what we do" part as equivalent to not having free will. Also, there could be a soft fatalism that doesn't equate the "no matter what we do" part with the denial of free will. No matter what we do some happenings will happen but we are free to do what we want leading up to the happening.

I am aware that conflicting intuitions might make this account seem unconvincing. I will continue to differentiate fatalism from the denial of free thesis throughout the paper.[66] But I think considering the third type of fatalist thesis should make my point clearer.

1.1.3. *Fatalism and What Has to Happen*

[65] Craig, in second paragraph.
[66] Most notably on 39 and 58.

The third type of fatalist thesis concerns happenings that in some sense have to happen.[67] Just exactly in what sense the happenings have to happen depends on what argument is employed in defence of fatalism so stated. There are three sorts of arguments that can be used.

The first argument is a theological one. The theological argument for fatalism dates back several hundred years and was the subject of many Christian thinkers.[68] The theological argument deals with God's supposed foreknowledge of the future.[69] The argument assumes that God is all knowing and infallible.[70] The happening that God already knows about has to happen otherwise God's knowledge would be fallible.[71] Therefore, a future happening has to happen because God already knows that it will happen. Theological fatalism can thus be broadly defined as the thesis that some happenings have to happen in the sense that God already knows about them.

The second argument is a causal one. I don't want to get into the difficulties of what it means for something to cause another thing. Causation is an extremely difficult term to define in a metaphysically neutral and uncontroversial way. The history of the causal argument is an entangled one. Causation and determinism are often confused.[72] The causal argument for fatalism must be distinguished from determinism.[73] However, I am

[67] Craig, in first paragraph; Rice, in introduction.
[68] Rice, under 5 "Theological Fatalism: Pike's Argument and God's Omniscience". Rice provides an analysis on variations on this theme, such as "middle knowledge".
[69] Ibid., under 5 "Theological Fatalism: Pike's Argument and God's Omniscience".
[70] Ibid., under 5 "Theological Fatalism: Pike's Argument and God's Omniscience".
[71] Ibid., under 5 "Theological Fatalism: Pike's Argument and God's Omniscience".
[72] Bradley, 205. Bradley distinguishes a causal way of arguing for fatalism and determinism respectively, from a logical way in each case.
[73] Ibid., 205.

not entirely convinced that they can be distinguished adequately. Nonetheless, determinism and causal fatalism are supposed to be different positions. To work out the details of this position would require some work and careful distinctions. Fortunately, the details are not material to my paper.

The third argument is a logical one. The logical argument is the argument with which Mackie is concerned. Accordingly, it is the argument I will focus on. The logical argument has a long and venerated past.[74] The logical argument is also an argument about propositions. We say a proposition is true or false depending on whether the happening it expresses happens or not. Logical fatalism says that some things that will happen now are connected in some way to propositions true before now.[75] The way in which what will happen now is connected to propositions true before now is that they can be expressed by propositions true before now.[76]

The reason what happens now can be expressed by propositions true before now has to do with "the laws of logic". Laws of logic are propositions that when true it is never the case that their negation can also be true.[77] While, it would be a contradiction for any proposition and its negation to be true at the same time, there are propositions that can sometimes be true and have instances where the propositions negation is also sometimes

[74] Rice, under 1,2,3 "Logical Fatalism". Rice gives a useful survey of the various forms that the logical argument has taken in history.
[75] Mackie, 673. I will explain how Mackie shows this to be true in Part 2.
[76] Ibid., 672-673.
[77] That is assuming that the law of non-contradiction might hold a special position in accordance with the other laws of logic (*The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Contradiction"). Moreover, there are obviously other conditions that would have to be met in order to classify a law as a law of logic. I am not interested though in what would be sufficient to call a law a law of logic. My point here is that this is a necessary feature. This feature is important because it has bearing on the nature of logical fatalism.

true (though not at the same time).[78] That it is true that the sun shines in the sky is a true proposition. But there are instances at night when the sun is not shining in the sky. The sun shining in the sky is clearly not a law of logic. Say, the law is true that every proposition is either true or false.[79] If it is true that the law of bivalence is the case, and when the law of bivalence is true it can never also be true that the law of bivalence is not the case, then the law of bivalence is a law of logic.

Unlike, laws of nature, it might be possible to call a proposition a law of logic, but maintain that it is false. Some philosophers think that the law of bivalence is false. But it appears they could still maintain that it is a law of logic, just a false one, i.e., if it was true, its negation could never be the case. From van Inwagen's laws of nature, if a law is thought to be a law of nature, and it turns out to be false, then it is not a law of nature.[80]

Logical fatalism can be defined as follows. X is a happening now. N is a proposition that X is true before now. Let L be the laws of logic.

- (LF) "For some X there is some N such that, if N is true and L is true, then X occurs".[81]

(LF) should be read that given N and L it is sufficient for X to occur. If N was true and X was not to happen it would contradict a law of logic. If N was not true and X was not to happen it would not contradict a law of logic. By contradict a law of logic, I mean that

[78] I owe this way of expressing this sentence to David Martens.
[79] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Bivalence, law of".
[80] Van Inwagen, 193.
[81] I think this definition is in accordance with what Mackie calls logical fatalism (673).

the law of logic would be true and its negation. From our definition of a law of logic, a law of logic cannot be contradicted. Hence, X has to happen.

There is a school of thought that (LF) is just a logical form of determinism.[82] On the one hand, it is sometimes claimed that (LF) is a form of determinism that is mistakenly called fatalism.[83] The viewpoint is held by those who wish to show that determinism does not have fatalistic commitments. The reasoning is that (LF) is the same as determinism, but (LF) is not fatalistic. On the other hand, a case is at times made for thinking that (LF) is a variation on the definition of determinism. This is the viewpoint of those who think that determinism might have fatalistic commitments. The idea is that (LF) is the same as determinism, and (LF) is fatalistic.

I naturally don't agree with either viewpoint. I don't think that (LF) is the same as determinism. I believe the crucial difference lies in distinguishing N as a proposition true before now, from the propositions about past states involved in determinism. Say N is the proposition that it is true yesterday that an apple will hit Newton today. N is not about some state that occurred yesterday. N is a proposition about something today that was true yesterday. (LF) says that if N is true, then by the laws of logic the apple will have to hit Newton today. (LF) does not take it that N is the expression of some past state. (LF) does not take it that the apple hitting Newton is the outcome of a sequence of happenings determined by the laws of nature that would follow from N being true. If (LF) said this it wouldn't be fatalistic as Newton's actions could help determine whether the apple hits

[82] Bradley, 205. Bradley doesn't explicitly state that LF, as such, is the equivalent of logical determinism. But logical determinism is one of the positions he considers.
[83] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Fatalism".

him or not. Rather (LF) has it that the apple hitting Newton is an inevitability that must follow from N being true. Newton would be ineffective in preventing the apple from hitting him if N really was true, otherwise it would contradict a law of logic.

I have consciously avoided saying that it would break a law of logic. I am not sure what it means to break a law of logic, but if the laws of nature are anything to go by, it would mean showing the law to be false. Showing laws of logic to be false seems to be a legitimate, yet not necessarily effective, and moreover costly, way of refuting fatalism.[84] Nonetheless, to dispel any presumptions that (LF) is a logical form of determinism I thought it prudent to emphasise that (LF) is a matter of propositional contradiction. By propositional contradiction I mean that (LF) utilises a proposition that it is true that something will happen before it happens. This proposition is contradicted if what it expresses will happen doesn't happen. In contrast, determinism makes use of a proposition about a past state that determines that something will happen. If the past state does exist and what it determines doesn't happen, then it would break a law of logic. In sum, (LF) has it that a happening will happen irrespective of what it is done, whereas, determinism has it that a happening will happen because of what is done. In Part 2, I will provide the premises and the form of an argument for logical fatalism.

1.2 *Events and Actions*

In this section I will discuss the term happenings as it is given in my definition of fatalism. I suggest that the term can be understood in two separate ways – either to mean

[84] Mackie, 673; Rice, under 1.1 "Aristotle's Solution".

events or to mean actions. I will consider what philosophers generally take events and actions to mean. At the end of the section I reach what I consider to be the best way to understand events and actions so that the difference between them is clear.

Many things can be said to happen – sunrises and sunsets, the revolution of the earth, political revolutions, lightning, meteor strikes, floods, seismic activity, life, the extinction of species, the sinking of a ship, a plane crash, getting shot, getting born, deaths and so forth.[85] There are also things like murder, business deals, running, playing golf, pulling a trigger, crying, laughing, helping people, flying a kite, driving a car, flipping a coin, drinking poison etc.[86] Both the first and second groups I believe list things that can happen. The first group lists what I will call events. The second group lists what I will take as actions. How to account for the difference between actions and events is what concerns me here. I will now consider a few ways to draw the distinction.

1.2.1 *The Agent Relative Distinction*

First of all, the distinction between actions and events might be drawn relative to an agent.[87] Simply put, an event for Jack is an action for Kate. It happens to Jack that he gets shot and Kate makes it happen that a rifle is fired. Ostensibly, we are dealing with the same happening in this instance, but relative to the agent concerned the happening is an

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[85] Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi, "Events", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2006, in introduction, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ events/(accessed 1 November, 2007). This list is inspired by the one Casati gives.

[86] Ibid., in introduction. Again this list is motivated by the one found in Casati's entry. However, this list gives candidates for what I will take as actions, as opposed to events.

[87] It was pointed out to me by Lucy Allais and Jason Werbeloff that this was the way I was drawing the distinction (I initially implicitly drew the distinction in this way).

event or an action. There are two main problems with the relative distinction. The first problem is a worry that drawn in a subject relative way the difference between actions and events becomes the difference between causes and effects. The event of Caesar's getting stabbed is the effect caused by the action of Brutus' stabbing.[88] Now there is nothing really wrong with the cause and effect distinction in itself. However, as I have already said causation is a tricky concept and requires a careful analysis. Moreover, intuitively I think there is something more to the event action distinction then just the cause and effect distinction. For a start, there clearly must be events that are brought about by causes that are not agent relative. On my list of events there are a number of happenings that are independent of agents, such as lightning and meteor strikes. But also, the cause and effect distinction only really applies to causal fatalism. Or at least it is easier to see how it applies to causal fatalism. My concern is with logical fatalism and I believe the action event distinction is more neutral in this regard.

The second problem with the agent relative distinction is perhaps the more serious of the two main problems. The subject relative distinction battles to give a clear and perhaps accurate description of what actions are. It seems that actions are just things that agents make happen or things that agents do.[89] The reason this is not a clear description of actions is that they appear to be like events only with agents involved. It is unclear how they are different from events. Indeed, the commonsensical view is sometimes just that

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[88] Casati and Varzi, under 1.2 "Events vs Facts"; Susan Schneider, "Events", *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, 2006, in introduction, http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/events.htm. Caesar's death seems to be a common example used in the literature on events.

[89] George Wilson, "Action", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2002, under 1 "The Nature of Action and Agency", http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ action/(accessed 1 November, 2007).

actions are a subclass of events.[90] Of course, if you happen to think that actions are just a subclass of events then you might not have a problem with the clarity of the description. Nonetheless, it also seems to be the case that actions as a subclass of events is not a very accurate description.[91]

The subject relative distinction results from a way in which the question of how events and actions are different is framed. The question is framed using a shared conception for both actions and events. I think it is because of the way it is framed that the subject relative distinction is problematic. The same probably applies to most of the other distinctions that can be drawn under this conception.[92]

The conception I have in mind here is taking things that happen as "existing at times" as opposed to "existing in spaces".[93] For example, a car accident exists during a period of time. It starts roughly when a person jumps a red light and ends roughly when the collided cars are stationary. But a motorcar on the other hand exists in places. We do not say that at twelve the car exists but at a quarter after twelve the car does not exist only for it to reappear at half past. Obviously, we can talk about the existence of a motorcar being

[90] Ibid., under 1 "The Nature of Action and Agency".
[91] Ibid., under 1 "The Nature of Action and Agency". Wilson points out the problems with thinking of actions as events or happenings that agents do. According to Wilson the verb "do" is controversial.
[92] There are other ways of drawing the distinction under this conception. I will not consider them because I think they suffer from the same inherent flaw.
[93] Schneider, under 2C "Events or Objects?". According to Schneider, Donald Davidson frames the issue in this way. Schneider quotes Davidson in this regard; Casati and Varzi, under 1.1 "Events vs Objects". The issue Schneider, and Casati and Varzi, are dealing with (differentiating events from objects) is different to the one here (differentiating events and actions)

over a certain period of time. But when we talk about where it is we usually use a space and not a time as a reference point.[94]

Now I think there is nothing wrong with using this conception for events. In fact, this is the conception that I will use. Broadly put, we can say events are things that happen which "exist at times".[95] Nonetheless, the mistake of the agent relative distinction, and the others like it, is to try and differentiate actions within this conception. Where instead, I believe, a different conception for actions should be used altogether.

1.2.2 *The Different Conception Distinction*

So this leads me to the other way in which the difference between actions and events might be described. This other way frames the question differently and I believe gives a more accurate portrayal of actions. The question is framed not by asking how actions and events are distinct under one conception of happenings. Instead the question asks how happenings can be conceptualised differently for actions and events.

A way to conceptualise actions not as things that exist at times is to take them as relationships. Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi, in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, point out that philosophers who wish to draw the distinction between actions and events analyse actions as the relationship between agents and events.[96]

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[94] Schneider, under 2C "Events or Objects?"; Casati and Varzi, under 1.1 "Events vs Objects".
[95] Schneider, under 2C "Events or Objects?"; Casati and Varzi, under 1.1 "Events vs Objects"
[96] Casati and Varzi, under 2.3 "Actions and Bodily Movements".

I am not sure that broadly defining actions as the relationship between agents and events is that much clearer than the subjective relative approach. However, at least actions are not taken as a type of event, rather they are the relationship with an event. There is something intuitively appealing about this approach also. When we speak about a person acting we do seem to be describing how they relate to an event. I don't foresee that taking a happening as a relationship should be a problem either. However, it might be a worry that actions are not defined independently of events.

To a degree I think the worry can be placated by defining the action relationship in terms of the two prominent ways that events taken as "existing at times" are understood. A central debate in the literature on events is whether they should be understood as individuals or as facts.[97] Take the example of Caesar's death once again.[98] On the one hand, his death could be thought about as a fact.[99] Say the fact that in 50AD Julius Caesar Emperor of Rome was stabbed to death by a group of senators. On the other hand we could describe his death more as an individual case capable of being repeated.[100] Say the individual cases of getting stabbed and the case of dying. Moreover, if events are like facts, we could take the fact that Caesar was stabbed as identical to the fact that senators

[97] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Events".
[98] Schneider, under 1 "Kim's Property Exemplification Account of Events" and under 2 "Davidson's Theories of Events". Schneider observes two principle ways (or at least prominent ways) of taking events. The "fine-grained" approach of Kim. Here events Schneider says are almost like facts. The other is Davidson's coarser approach; Casati and Varzi, under "Events and Other Categories". Casati and Varzi give four categories to which events are compared – objects, times, properties, and facts. To some degree the conjunction of the first two types is what is meant by individuals, and the conjunction of the second two types we can take as equivalent with facts; *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Events". Blackburn explicitly draws the individual/fact distinction.
[99] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Events"; Casati and Varzi, in introduction.
[100] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Events"; Casati and Varzi, in introduction.

stabbed him. Or we might say there are two events here. And if events, are like individuals we could take his getting stabbed as the same as him dying.[101]

Regardless of how the debate is settled it seems likely that the relationship of agents that describe actions can be understood either to be with events as facts or events as individuals. This is clearly not the place to work out the details. But it seems a more precise understanding of actions as relationships could be given.

In sum, there is of course, a whole lot more that can be said about actions and events.[102] There is a whole host of analyses of events out there.[103] I hope at least to have given a reasonable picture of what events are without ruling out any of these analyses. Likewise for actions. The most amount of work on actions has been done by philosophers in the philosophy of the mind.[104] I am aware that in the philosophy of the mind distinctions are important between actions, mental acts, bodily movements and intention.[105]

1.3 *Summary*

Logical fatalism can now be defined as the thesis, that if true, there would be some happenings that have to happen as a matter of non-contradiction. Happenings can be

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[101] Casati and Varzi, in introduction; Schneider, in introduction.
[102] The claim in this paper is that logical fatalism is only concerned with certain actions and events as the case may be. I had originally wanted to give an account of which type of actions and events are the ones with which logical fatalism is concerned (This would of course have been a different sort of account to an epistemological account). I suspect that an account could be devised along universal/particular or type-token lines. However, such an account I think would deserve a paper of its own.
[103] Scheinder, in introduction. Schneider considers three prominent ones given by Jaegwon Kim, Donald Davidson and David Lewis.
[104] Wilson, in introduction.
[105] Ibid., in introduction.

understood as either actions or events.[106] Events can be broadly defined as occurrences at times. Actions are defined broadly as agents' relationships with events. Where the happenings relevant to the definition of logical fatalism are restricted to actions, we get logical action-fatalism.[107] Where the happenings relevant to the definition of logical fatalism are restricted to events, we get logical event-fatalism.[108] In the next part I will present Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism that can be adapted to logical event-fatalism.

[106]According to Russell, there is a similar distinction, to the action and event one, in the compatibilist literature between "contributory fate" and "origination fate" (p. 200). The former refers to "the causal influence *of* an agent" and is the interpretation usually given by compatibilists (p. 200). The latter is the interpretation of fate by incompatibilists and concerns "the causal influence *on* an agent" (p.200). Where I think Russell's contributory/origination-fate distinction is only meant to apply to causal fatalism, the action/event distinction applies to both *causal* and *logical* fatalism. Moreover, by saying that certain events have to happen I mean something independent of the causal influence on an agent. The event could happen without there being any causal influence on an agent. And in the sense that there would be limited causal influence of an agent, compatibilists take this to be the fated happening. Event-fatalists take the limited causal influence of an agent as indicative of a second happening that is taken as fated. There is naturally some overlap and it would be interesting to work out how logical fatalism could be spelled out in these terms.

[107] I owe the formulation of this sentence to David Martens.

[108] I also owe the formulation of this sentence to David Martens.

2. Logical Action-Fatalism

This part of the paper concerns Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism. I shall account for the truth of the premises and the inference principle used. Finally, I will give Mackie's objection to the inference principle of logical action-fatalism.

2.1 *Argument*

According to Mackie the following argument can be presented in favour of logical action-fatalism.[109] Let G stand for an agent. The relationship between the agent G and an event of a golf ball getting struck can be the action of striking a golf ball with a 3-iron golf club.[110] H denotes the proposition that yesterday it was true that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today.[111] E denotes the proposition that it is true that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today. We are to think of the action of striking a golf ball with a 3-iron as fated when G "cannot do otherwise" than strike a golf ball with a 3-iron.[112] No matter what actions G performs before striking the golf ball with the 3-iron G will end up striking the golf ball with the 3-iron.[113]

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[109] Mackie calls the argument one for logical fatalism. But the kind of happening she is concerned with is clearly human action.

[110] The example used here is more detailed than the one Mackie gives (672-73). However, I don't think my example constitutes any fundamental change to her argument. I just found it easier to explain the argument with this kind of an example.

[111] In an earlier presentation of Mackie's argument I opted to use variables to 'stand' for or 'refer' to actions. Like F standing for the action of striking a golf ball with a 3-iron. However, to avoid confusion in the explanation of the inference principle later on I have opted to let the variables 'denote' propositions.

[112] Mackie, 673.

[113] No matter what relationships G holds to events leading up to the event of the golf game G will be in the relationship to the event as a golf player later.

(a1) There is an "antecedent truth" H that yesterday it was true that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today,

(a2) If there is an antecedent truth H that yesterday it was true that that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today, then the proposition E that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today is true, and

(a3) G cannot alter the truth value of an antecedent truth, and hence

(a4) That G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today, expressed by the proposition E, cannot be otherwise.[114]

2.1.1 *(a1)*

(a1) makes use of the notion of an "antecedent truth". An antecedent truth is not I believe a metaphysically extravagant concept at all. H is a proposition that is either true or false. The principle of bivalence states that any statement is either true or false.[115] The statement that Socrates drank a hemlock based poison is either true or false. It cannot be both true and false and it cannot be neither true nor false. Likewise, H the statement that yesterday it was true that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today is either true or false. It cannot be true that G will swing the 3-iron and G will not swing the 3-iron. It also cannot be true that G will neither swing the 3-iron nor not swing the 3-iron. Of course, yesterday we cannot know if H is true or not.[116] But we assume for the argument

[114] Mackie, 672-673. (a1),(a2), (a3), and (a4) are adapted from the premises of the argument for fatalism Mackie presents (672-673). She formalises and changes the argument slightly on 676.
[115] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Bivalence, principle (or law) of".
[116] The epistemological uncertainty of its truth-value is of course a different point that I won't explore here.

that yesterday H was true.[117] We assume that H the proposition that expresses that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today was true yesterday.

So all that is meant by an antecedent truth is that if our assumption is right that the proposition H was true that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today, then H was in fact true. An antecedent truth doesn't mean that H has to be true in anyway. H does not appear to be any different from what is conventionally taken as a true proposition. It is either true or false that it is raining right now. Suppose, for whatever reason, we might not know if it is raining. If we assume correctly that it is raining – our assumption of course makes no difference one way or the other to the truth of there being rain outside – then it is true that it is raining.

The only reason I believe H is dubbed as an antecedent truth, as opposed to just a truth, is to mark it as different from propositions true about, say, the past. It is historically true that Socrates drank a hemlock based poison in 399BC. Socrates drinking a poison is true one way or the other and history reflects that he did drink the poison. Naturally, history, like our assumption about rain, does not make a difference to whether Socrates did in fact drink the poison. Historians gather information decide that it is likely to be true, and if it happens to have been true, then we get an historical truth.

So all (a1) states is that if we assume correctly that H is true yesterday, and H is in fact true, then it is an antecedent truth that H is true. An antecedent truth does not carry with it any fatalistic consequences on its own.

[117] We could also I suppose assume that H is not true and adapt the argument accordingly.

2.1.2 *(a2)*

(a2) means that it is true that G will do today what G will do today. That G will do what G will do today is just a matter of non-contradiction.[118] We cannot say that G will not do whatever G will do because that would be a contradiction. It is akin to saying that you cannot not look at what you are looking at. Whatever you are looking at is what you are looking at and you cannot be looking at something else, that would be a contradiction. Of course, if you were looking at a water bottle you could move your eyes to look at, say, a table. But then the table would be what you are looking at and not the water bottle. If you are looking at the table, then you are not looking at the water bottle. That G will do what G does today is just what it means to say that G will do what G will do. Again, (a2) doesn't have any fatalistic commitments. Anyone who accepts the law of non-contradiction appears would also accept (a2).[119]

2.1.3 *(a3)*

(a3) is perhaps obviously true. We cannot change propositions true yesterday. Mackie explains (a3) by saying that "one cannot affect the past".[120] Although, care must still be taken to not confuse antecedent truths here with historical truths. We cannot affect historical truths. We cannot affect that it was true that Socrates drank hemlock poison in 399BC. We also cannot affect that it was historically true that it was true that G will

[118] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Contradiction".
[119] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Contradiction".
[120] Mackie, 673.

strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today. Although, the historical truth of the antecedent truth is different from just the antecedent truth. I don't believe we can change either one. But it is worth noting that (a3) concerns the latter and not the former. (a3) is about the truth yesterday that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today. (a3) is not about the truth of whether it was true yesterday that G will strike a golf ball with a 3-iron today.

2.1.4 *(a4)*

(a4) is the conclusion for the argument for logical action-fatalism.[121] The happening that has to happen is the action of striking a golf ball with a 3-iron. Clearly, because the happening is an action, and G cannot do otherwise than that action, G does not have free will with respect to that action. Although, it is worth pointing out that the action of striking a golf ball with a 3-iron does not have to happen because G has no free will in this case. Rather, because the action of striking the golf ball has to happen G has no free will in this case. Even though this conclusion ends up denying free will, it is still different from the type of fatalism that denies free will in order to generate a fatalist conclusion. Moreover, I think it can still be worked out whether the free will thesis is incompatible with this type of conclusion generally speaking. G could have free will leading up to and after swinging the 3-iron.

2.2 *The Principle of Closure*

[121] Ibid., 673.

According to Mackie, the argument for logical action-fatalism relies on the principle of *Closure* to infer (a4) from (a1), (a2) and (a3).[122] The principle of *Closure* states that "if G cannot render H false, and H entails E, then G cannot render E false".[123] In this section I will give an analysis of *Closure.*

2.2.1 *The "Cannot Render False" Phrase*

Closure makes use of van Inwagen's "cannot render false" phrase.[124] As our definitions go in this paper a proposition can be made false if the happening the proposition claims happens doesn't happen. So to make a proposition false G must make the happening not happen that the proposition expresses happens or will happen.[125]

The looking example might make this clearer. The proposition that I am looking at a water bottle now is either true or false. The proposition is true if the happening it expresses as true happens, which means that I look at a water bottle now. I can only look at what I am looking at. If the proposition is true that I am looking at a water bottle now, then I am in fact looking at a water bottle now. But I can move my eyes and look at a table, in which case the happening that the proposition expresses as true as happening now does not happen now. If I look at the table, the proposition that I am looking at a water bottle is false. I believe this is what is meant by the "render false" phrase. I can

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[122] Mackie, 677; Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 192. The principle is the fourth premise in van Inwagen's argument.
[123] Mackie., 677. I have changed the variables slightly.
[124] Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 189. Van Inwagen introduces and gives an analysis of his phrase; Jan Narveson, "Compatibilism Defended", Philosophical Studies, vol. 32 (1977): 84. I also consulted the analysis Narveson gives of van Inwagen's phrase.
[125] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Proposition". In Part 1.1, I gave a more detailed account of how propositions and happenings might relate.

"render it false" that I am looking at a water bottle now by looking at the table now. So if G cannot render a proposition false it means that G cannot make not happen the happening that the proposition expresses as true.

The "cannot render false" phrase is important in the inference that *Closure* draws because of entailment. When one proposition entails another, the entailed proposition has to be true if the proposition that entails it is true. For example, assuming that Hobbes is a talking tiger, the proposition that Calvin likes Hobbes is true if the proposition that Calvin likes all talking tigers is true. The reason is that the proposition that Calvin likes all talking tigers, entails that Calvin likes Hobbes. Calvin likes all talking tigers entails Calvin likes Hobbes because Hobbes is a talking tiger.

The argument for logical action-fatalism shows that H entails E. The argument also shows that H is a proposition that cannot be rendered false. The argument presupposes that because H cannot be rendered false and H entails E then E also cannot be rendered false.[126] This is what the principle of *Closure* is meant to show. If Calvin cannot render it false that he likes talking tigers then he cannot render it false that he likes Hobbes. Calvin's action today, that is his ability to render something false, is closed off under entailment. The point of *Closure* is thus to close off E in (a4) under entailment. In this way E can be said to be fated.

This might not be an entirely clear explanation of how the "cannot render false" phrase is supposed to work. In the next two sections I will address the question of why it is that E

[126] Mackie, 677. I adapted this explanation from the one Mackie gives of the principle of *Closure*.

in (a4) needs to be closed off under entailment. Hopefully, this discussion on why *Closure* is needed will further illuminate how *Closure* is supposed to work.

2.2.2 *Y-type Happenings*

I will now consider the first of two reasons why logical action-fatalism presupposes *Closure*. In order to explain the first reason I will introduce what I have called y-type happenings. The basic idea is that in order for the proposition E in (a4) to be fated there are certain happenings that have to be true. These happenings are the ones that must be true if the antecedent truth H is true. I will now explain.

Let E denote the proposition that Hume will save a woman from drowning today. That Hume swims out and rescues the woman and prevents her from drowning is what E denotes. That Hume saw the woman and was capable of saving her are happenings that make what E denotes true. If he hadn't seen her or was not capable of saving her E would not be true.

So there is a distinction between the happening that E expresses as true and the happening that makes what E expresses true. Mackie describes the latter as that "in virtue" of which a proposition is true.[127] That Hume saved a woman from drowning is true in virtue of the fact that he saw her and was able to help.

[127] Mackie, 679.

Now it seems that if E is in fact true, then some of the happenings in virtue of which E is true must be necessary for the truth of E. By "necessary for the truth of E" I mean the following – if the happening did not happen then E would not happen. For example, for Hume to have saved the woman from drowning, it is necessary that he saw that she was drowning. If he hadn't seen her, he couldn't have saved her from drowning.

There are also happenings in virtue of which E could be true that are not necessary for the truth of E. For example, E could be true in light of the fact that Hume had a lifejacket to give to the drowning woman. But it is not necessary that Hume had a lifejacket to give to her in order to save her. He could have saved her without a lifejacket.

The happenings that are necessary for rendering E in (a4) true are the happenings that would have to be true if the antecedent truth H was true. H is the antecedent truth that yesterday it was true that Hume would save a woman from drowning today. If H was in fact true, then I think it follows that some happenings also have to be true. These are not happenings that make H true. But they are the ones we would assume would have to be true if H was. For example, that Hume can swim wouldn't make H true. But we would assume that Hume would have to be able to swim if H was true. The happenings that are true if H is true are what I will call y-type happenings. They are important because they are the happenings in virtue of which E is true.

- "Y-type happenings are the happenings that have to be true if what H designates is true".

If the y-type happenings were different then E would not be true. If Hume was not able to save the woman, then she would drown. In order for E to be fated then, it must be the case that the y-type happenings cannot be changed. And this is one of the reasons then that *Closure* is required since *Closure* closes off under entailment y-type happenings that render E in (a4) true. By closed off under entailment I mean that the only way the y-type happenings could be changed is if the antecedent truth H that entails E was changed.[128] In short, y-type happenings are the first reason that the argument for logical action-fatalism needs to presuppose *Closure*.

2.2.3 *X-type Happenings*

The second reason that *Closure* is needed for the inference to (a4) is a result of what I have called x-type happenings. These are the happenings that play no actual part in the happenings in virtue of which E is true, but if they were to happen they would nevertheless be sufficient to make E false.

- "X-type happenings are the happenings sufficient for rendering E in (a4) false".

X-type happenings cannot happen if E is to be true. If E is to be true, x-type happenings have to be closed off in the sense that they cannot be allowed to happen. If on swimming out to the woman Hume was to drown her himself it would be sufficient to render it false that he saved her from drowning. Clearly, the act of drowning her is not an action that

[128] Mackie, 677.

was necessary for E being true. But it is clearly an act that were it to happen E would be false.

Thus, if E is to be fated, happenings that could render E false must not be allowed to happen. And for that *Closure* is presupposed. The x-type happenings are closed off under entailment because the only way a happening could be sufficient to render E false is if it could render the antecedent truth that entails E false. There are no happenings that can render the antecedent truth false, hence there are no happenings that can render E false.

Finally, I am aware that the distinction between y-type and x-type happenings might seem tenuous. I have used the y-type and x-type labels to make things simpler so that it is not necessary each time to spell out what happenings I have in mind. I hope it seems reasonable to assume that the happenings I have called y-types and x-types would have to be involved in some way if *Closur*e is valid. So while I have introduced the labels I don't think I have introduced that there are these happenings. The introduction of the labels is just meant for convenience.

In the literature that I have considered for this paper attention is not drawn to the x-type and y-type distinction and the distinction is not explicitly made. The reason for this I believe is because the reasons why *Closure* is presupposed are not of central importance in these papers. That *Closure* needs to be presupposed is of course an issue. But the specifics of why the inference to a logical fatalist conclusion might need *Closure* is not analysed. So I hope my introduction of the distinction has helped to give a passable

account of why *Closure* is presupposed. But it is important to emphasise that I think the distinction is an actual one and I have only given the labels for clarity.

2.3 *Mackie's Causal Influence Objection for Actions*

The overall aim of my paper is to respond to one of Mackie's objections to the argument for logical fatalism. In this section I will lay the groundwork for that response. In order to do this, I will firstly clarify Mackie's position in relation to mine. Secondly I will give Mackie's objection. The objection is "the causal influence objection".[129] Thirdly, I will work out the details of a counterexample to *Closure* from Mackie's objection.[130] It is important to clarify that the purpose of my presentation here is to get to a position where I can give a response to Mackie's objection. My aim is not to defend the objection.

2.3.1 *Mackie's Position*

Mackie questions the validity of *Closure*. Up until now I have discussed *Closure* as the inference principle that the argument for logical action-fatalism uses. However, Mackie is primarily concerned with *Closure* as the inference principle that an argument for incompatibilism uses.[131] Not much needs to be said about the incompatibilist argument here, except that it shares the same logical form as the argument for logical fatalism.

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[129] Mackie, 678.
[130] Mackie, 677-679. She also considers, but rejects, another objection to Closure. The objection uses the "conditional" interpretation of *Closure*. The interpretation roughly says that it suffices to show that *Closure* fails if G *could* do differently, even if he *won't* (678).
[131] Mackie gives the incompatibilist argument on 674-675.

Showing *Closure* to be invalid is originally one of the objections Mackie presents against the argument for incompatibilism.[132] She claims that *Closure* is presupposed by the argument for incompatibilism and then she shows that *Closure* fails.[133] There is a precedent in the literature for this way of objecting to the incompatibilist argument.[134] Indeed ever since van Inwagen used *Closure* in an argument for incompatibilism, *Closure* has been the subject of objections.[135] The objections have come from compatibilists. There have in turn been responses to those objections from incompatibilists.

As Mackie is objecting to *Closure* it seems that she will have to engage with these discussions and potential rebuttals available to the incompatibilist. But Mackie does not do this. The aim of her paper is to see whether the objection to the incompatibilist argument is equally applicable to the logical fatalist argument. All Mackie wants to see, is whether the objection to *Closure* can also be applied to logical fatalism. If it can she claims that we would then have a new objection to fatalism.[136] If it can't, then there might be reason for thinking that the objection is also inapplicable to the incompatibilist argument.[137]

So it is not important to the aims of her paper to respond to potential rebuttals against her objection. It is not important what options the incompatibilist would have in responding to the objection. Naturally there are these responses. But, Mackie says that she "need not

[132] Mackie, 674.
[133] Ibid., 677.
[134] Narveson, 85.
[135] Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 192.
[136] Mackie, 672.
[137] Ibid., 672.

attempt to adjudicate this issue".[138] What is important to her paper is only whether the objection can also be levelled at the argument for logical fatalism.

In this paper I have taken it that the objection can also be applied to the argument for logical fatalism. It stands to reason though that some of the incompatibilist responses might also be available to the logical fatalist. However, my aim is to defend logical fatalism in a specific way from the objection. Mackie does not work out the specifics of a counterexample to *Closure* as it is used by logical fatalism. Thus, once I have given her objection I will work out such a counterexample.

2.3.2 *The Causal Influence Principle*

The causal influence principle is what does the work in Mackie's objection. She says it is the principle that it is true that "G can render E false only if E is true in virtue of events or states of affairs over which G has some causal influence".[139]

To be noted first is that Mackie doesn't use the distinction between events and actions as I have used it. What she means by events here is just a happening. "E is true in virtue of *happenings* over which G has some causal influence".[140]

Secondly, the term "causal influence" is worth noting. The term sticks because of the "causal" part. I explained the difficulties of using causation in Part 1. Moreover, it

[138] Ibid., 679.
[139] Ibid., 679. I have changed the variables slightly.
[140] Ibid., 679.

appears incongruent with logical fatalism to apply a causally based objection. Nonetheless, I don't think Mackie uses the term idiosyncratically.[141] The term should be taken in a straightforward way, or at least, that is how I will take it. By causal influence is meant what an agent can make happen or not happen. A human agent can make an orange in her hand drop to the floor but can't make the sun go on and off. That is all I will take the term to mean. I don't think it begs the question against logical fatalism to assume that agents can have causal influence.[142]

Now if I understand Mackie correctly the causal influence principle is supposed to undermine the following assumption about *Closure*. We assume that if an agent has causal influence over the events in virtue of which E is true that the agent also has causal influence over the events in virtue of which H is true.[143] According to Mackie, by the causal influence principle this assumption is false.[144] Not all the happenings in virtue of which H is true are always under the causal influence of an agent. This is the case even if the happenings in virtue of which E is true are under the causal influence of an agent. Thus, there are instances where an agent might have causal influence over the happenings that make E true, but not the happenings that make H true.

In such a case, an agent might be able to render E false, because she has causal influence over E, but would not be able to render H false. This is significant because to show that

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[141] Ibid., 679.
[142] It could be thought to beg the question because the whole point of logical action fatalism is to show that an agent cannot do otherwise. But causal influence I don't think is the same as free will. Things have causal influence that are not free.
[143] Mackie, 679.
[144] Ibid., 679.

Closure fails one needs to make E false but keep H true. To show that there is a case where E is false despite H being true is to show that sometimes *Closure* doesn't completely entail E. I will present an example of such a case in the next section. This example will be my counterexample to *Closure*.

2.3.2 *Counterexample*

To show that *Closure* is invalid one would need the following situation. A situation where H entails E and where G cannot render H false, but G can render E false. Naturally, this is something tricky to do given that *Closure* protects E from both x-type and y-type happenings. To reiterate from 2.2, *Closure* protects E from alterations in y-type happenings because if H is true and entails E then the y-type happenings also have to be true. If H is true, then certain happenings have to be true and these are the y-types.

Closure also protects E from x-type happenings because the only way a happening could be sufficient to render E false is if it could render the antecedent truth that entails E false. There are no happenings that can render the antecedent truth false, hence there are no happenings that can render E false.

- Under *Closure* E is true, because there are y-type happenings, these are happenings that can't be otherwise.
- Under *Closure* E is true, because there are no x-type happenings, these are happenings that could be otherwise.

So the difficulty is that if H is true y-type happenings cannot be otherwise. Whereas, x-types could make E false, but under *Closure* there are no x-type happenings. Hence, it is problematic to show how G can render E false while being unable to render H false.

The strategy that presents itself from Mackie's causal influence principle is as follows.[145] The y-type happenings that are underwritten by the truth of H should be true as they must be. These y-type happenings are necessary for E being true, are true, as they must be, because E is entailed by H. But, even though the y-type happenings are true that should make E true, they nevertheless don't make E true.

The reason they would not make E true is because of causal influence. Our agent cannot influence whether the y-type happenings are true. But our agent can influence whether the y-type happenings make E true. According to the causal influence principle in some instances an agent might have causal influence over the happenings that make E true but not the happenings that are true if H is true.[146] As it is the case that y-type happenings follow from H and are responsible for the truth of E it seems that our agent cannot affect the one without affecting the other.

However, we have it that the y-types are true if H is true and E is true if the y-types make E true. Thus, our agent might not have causal influence over whether the y-types are true.

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[145] Mackie does not explicitly state that her objection works in this way. This is the way I think an objection against *Closure* must be taken to work if it is to work. I take it that the way I have described this route to an objection does not distort what she means, or at least, I hope I haven't distorted it.
[146] Mackie, 679.

But nevertheless could have causal influence over whether the y-types make E true. If this was ever the case I think it would be a situation where the agent couldn't render H false, where H entails E, but could render E false. *Closure* could be invalid in this situation. Those things in virtue of which E is true, are still true, as they have to be, but nevertheless don't make E true.

Now the question is whether we can come up with such a case. Suppose, H is true. H is the antecedent truth that yesterday it was true that G will win against a child skimming stones. H cannot be rendered false. Let E be the proposition that today G will win against a child skimming stones. Imagine that G's superior skimming stone skills and experience is a y-type happening. His superior skills and experience count as y-type happenings because they would be necessary for him to win. If the child had better skills, then G could not beat him. They are also y-types in the sense that G cannot change if they are true or not. If he has better skills and more experience he would not presently have causal influence over whether this is the case. However, G has influence over how his skills and abilities are implemented.

I think this example would count as a counterexample to *Closur*e.[147] G cannot render H the antecedent truth false. G cannot change that H was true yesterday. Furthermore, G cannot change that the y-type happenings are true. He cannot make it so he has less experience than the child. However, the truth of E seems to depend on whether the y-type happenings necessary for E being true, do in fact make it true. In other words, E depends

[147] I don't think it is any different to "playing tennis" that Mackie says G would have causal influence over (679).

on G's implementation of his superior stone skimming skills and experience. The implementation of G's skills seems to be something that would qualify as being under his causal influence. So G would be able to render E false if he failed to implement his superior skills. But G would not be able to render H false.

In this example, the y-type happening is not made otherwise and E is not made false by x-types being made otherwise. Rather E is rendered false because the y-type happening does not make E true. This then seems to be an example of Mackie's causal influence principle and so a counterexample to *Closure*.

2.3.4 *Responses*

I will not engage with potential rebuttals to Mackie's objection. However, I would like to address a few points on whether or not my example counts as a counterexample to *Closure*. The first issue is on the designation of y-type happenings. By designation of a y-type happening I mean labelling certain happenings as y-type happenings. An advocate of *Closure* might query the legitimacy of calling G's superior stone skimming skills a y-type but not calling the implementation of his skills a y-type happening. It seems that if E is true both the fact that he has those skills and that he implements them are necessary for E being true. This is apparent because if he doesn't implement his skills what E expresses doesn't happen. Therefore, the *Closure* advocate could point out that both the skills and the implementation of them are in fact necessary if what E designates is to be true. So the question is why is it that his skills count as a y-type and not his implementation of them.

If this criticism were to be correct, it would mean that G cannot keep the y-type happenings true and make E false. G makes E false by not implementing his skills. But if the implementation of his skills counts as a y-type, then he would make a y-type happening false by not implementing his skills. Thus, my example would not count as a counterexample to *Closure*. E would be false but so would a y-type and it was required of a counterexample that E should be false where the y-types are true.

My response has to do with how y-type happenings are defined. Y-type happenings are defined as the happenings that have to be true if what H designates is true. I did not define them as the happenings that are necessary for E being true. The idea is that if an antecedent truth is true certain things would also have to be true about the world. To reiterate from earlier, say it is true yesterday that Hume will save a woman from drowning today. Then it seems reasonable to assume that if this is true then it must also be true that Hume can swim. Hume's ability to swim does not make the antecedent truth true. But he would have to have that ability if the antecedent truth was true.

However, if the antecedent truth was true, I don't think it follows that it is already true that Hume has swam out and saved the woman. I don't think yesterday it can be true that he has already swam out. Yesterday, it can be true that he will swim out today, but it can't already be true that he has swam out today. Accordingly, I think Hume's ability to swim would have to be true if the antecedent truth was true. But I don't think it follows from the antecedent truth that Hume has already swam out and saved the woman.

Thus, my response to the criticism is that it is not the case that the implementation of G's skills has to be true if H is true. But it is the case that his skills have to be true if H is true. The reason is that H is a truth true yesterday. Thus, if H is true it might follow that his skills are true. His skills can be true yesterday. But it cannot be the case that it is already true that he has implemented those skills. It cannot be the case that yesterday he had already implemented those skills today. Although, it can be true that he will implement those skills. So y-type happenings only include the happenings that are true if H is true.

The second issue I want to deal with is on how we can know what counts as y-type happenings. It might be objected that there is no way we can know whether what I have taken as y-types in the counterexample are indeed y-types. How do we know, it might be asked, that it follows from the truth of H that it is true that the agent has those skills. In other words how is it that these skills would be what would have to be true if H was.

To illustrate the point, the objector might say that although we might think that Hume would need to be able to swim to save the woman it is not necessarily so. He might have a boat or some other way of saving her that would not require that he could swim. So even if the antecedent truth is true, we cannot know what happenings would have to be true.

My response is that in terms of the counterexample what counts as a y-type has just been stipulated. I think it is reasonable to assume that G would have to have superior stone

skimming skills. Likewise, I believe there would be good reason to think that Hume would have to be able to swim. Of course, I cannot state that these happenings actually follow from what we take as an antecedent truth. However, I don't think it is important that we actually know what y-type happenings would follow from which antecedent truth. What counts in the counterexample is only that if the said y-types were to follow from H, then *Closure* would fail. Provided that there aren't any reasons for thinking that the y-types wouldn't follow from H, I don't think there is a problem.

2.4 *Summary*

Logical action-fatalism relies on the principle of *Closure* to justify its conclusion. The "causal influence objection" gives reason to doubt *Closure's* validity. To the extent that there is reason to think that *Closure* is invalid, logical action-fatalism is undermined. In the next part I will consider whether the same applies to logical event-fatalism.

3. Logical Event-Fatalism

Part 2 gave Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism and her objection to the inference principle it uses. Part 3 is concerned with an equivalent argument for logical event-fatalism and if *Closure* is the inference principle it uses. I will move toward showing that the argument for logical event-fatalism does not presuppose *Closure* and consequently suggest that Mackie's objection is not applicable to this argument.

3.1 *Argument*

The equivalent argument from antecedent truth for logical event-fatalism would look as follows.[148] Let S denote the proposition that yesterday it was true that lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today.[149] Let T denote the proposition that lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today. Let Q stand for an agent.

(e1) There is an "antecedent truth" S that yesterday it was true that lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today,

(e2) If there is an antecedent truth S that yesterday it was true that lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today, then T is true that lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today, and

[148] I think this argument is equivalent to the one Mackie gives for logical action-fatalism. The argument she gives definitely takes the happening as a relationship with an agent and not as an occurrence at a time. The argument here is for occurrences at times.

[149] Using an example that involves no agents in the actual event was suggested to me by Thaddeus Metz. There are happenings that I think should classify as events where the lines are less clear in terms of how to separate the occurrence from a relationship with an agent.

(e3) (No matter what) Q cannot alter the truth-value of an antecedent truth, and hence

(e4) No matter what Q does, lightning will strike a certain 3-iron golf club today, expressed by the proposition T.[150]

(e1), (e2), and (e3) can be justified in much the same way that (a1), (a2), and (a3) are justified.[151] Indeed, I don't mean anything different by them, only that they concern events and not actions.

(e4) is the conclusion of logical event-fatalism. The happening that has to happen is the event of lightning striking a certain 3-iron golf club. Arguably, because the happening is an event, Q is still free to relate to that event however she chooses, despite not being able to alter the event. I am not ruling out that Q's free will could still be doubted here or at least thought to be restricted or limited to an extent. But like with logical action-fatalism, crucially Q's free will or lack thereof has nothing to do with generating the fatalist conclusion.

Another point about (e4) that should be highlighted is how it is different to events that happen no matter what we do but that we don't ordinarily think of as fatalistic. There are events like solar flares, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions on distant planets that also will happen no matter what we do. But this is not what the argument for logical event-fatalism is arguing. If it was what was being argued, logical event-fatalism would be a trivial thesis, or at least not a very interesting thesis. There is a difference in the no matter

[150] Adapted from Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism (672-673).
[151] I gave justifications for (a1), (a2) and (a3) in Part 2.1.

what phrases of the lighting striking a certain 3-iron and the volcanic eruption on a distant planet. The volcanic eruption will happen no matter what we do, if it is going to happen, because we can't get to the planet, and even if we could there is very little we could do. Moreover, if the volcanic eruption is going to happen it is only a probability in the ordinary sense we speak of such events. Lightning striking a certain 3-iron will happen no matter what we do, if it is going to happen, not because of physical limitations on our part. Rather it happens no matter what we do because we cannot change the past. It is an antecedent truth, which if it is true, is not a probability, but actually already true. Like with logical action-fatalism we of course cannot know if it is true. And if we thought it was true and found some physical way of stopping it, then it clearly wasn't true to begin with.

3.2 *The Principle of Closure for Events*

This section deals with the way that (e4) is justified. The central question of my paper is whether the inference to (e4) in the argument for logical event-fatalism presupposes *Closure.* In 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, I will show that logical event-fatalism does not need to presuppose *Closure* for the reasons that logical action-fatalism does. However, I will conclude that the inference to (e4) does presuppose an equivalent principle to *Closure*. This inference principle I will call *Closure* for Logical Event Fatalism (CLEF). CLEF

states that "if no matter what Q does S is true, and S entails T, then no matter what Q does T is true".[152]

3.2.1 *The "No Matter What is Done" Phrase*

Before I make a case for thinking that logical event-fatalism presupposes the CLEF principle I first need to explain the "no matter what is done" phrase.[153] The "no matter what is done" phrase is about effectiveness or efficacy.[154] The phrase is meant to be used for propositions that express happenings where agents are ineffective. It is shorthand for saying that even though an agent was able to perform certain actions the actions couldn't stop an event from happening. I have in mind here situations where someone is ineffective in stopping an event for a specific reason, but they would be able to stop the event if there wasn't that reason.

For example, take the proposition that NASA cannot bring the R2 space shuttle back from space. Say the space shuttle R2 suffered irreparable damage while in space. The damage prevents re-entry of the shuttle. Now I intend that the "no matter what is done" phrase is used for propositions like these. No matter what NASA does they cannot bring

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[152] I owe the idea to David Martens that logical event-fatalism presupposes on equivalent principle to *Closure*. Subsequent developments in my paper have led me to believe that the *Closure* equivalent is slightly different to his suggestion.

[153] The terminological discussion given here is quite different, on many levels, to the one given by Narveson (83-87). But I want to acknowledge that the discussion given here was (indirectly) influenced by the article.

[154] Russell, 199. Russell uses the "no matter what is done" expression in his discussion on fatalism; Craig, in second paragraph. The "no matter what is done" phrase is similar to the "irrespective of what we do" phrase that Craig discusses.

space shuttle R2 back from space. However, if the space shuttle hadn't suffered the irreparable damage they would be able to bring it back from space.

The phrase should not be used for propositions like NASA could not prevent the space shuttle D2 from exploding on re-entry. Suppose that there was a mechanical flaw of some sort that led to the D2's shuttle's explosion on re-entry. Also suppose that NASA's engineers were extremely diligent in checking every mechanical part. This would nevertheless not be the sort of proposition I would want to use the no matter what is done phrase for. It seems that if the mechanical flaw had been corrected the shuttle wouldn't have exploded. It doesn't matter how statistically small or unlikely it was to have found that problem. Thus, in this case it is not strictly true that no matter what NASA did the shuttle wouldn't have exploded on re-entering earth's atmosphere.

The "no matter what is done" phrase should be seen in contrast to "the cannot render false phrase". The cannot render false phrase was about ability.[155] Admittedly, in some senses being inefficacious amounts to being unable. I don't want to dispute that there are senses in which inefficacy can be equated with inability. A sports team that is unable to win a match also cannot affect the result of winning. But there are also sports teams that are able to win but that on a certain night cannot produce the result of winning. *Closure* was presupposed to show that an agent was unable to prevent herself from performing a given action. Hence the need for the "cannot render false" phrase. I will show that the CLEF principle is used to show that even though an agent might be able by her actions to

[155] Van Inwagen, "Incompatibility", 189.

prevent a given event, her actions are ineffective. Thus the need for the "no matter what is done" phrase.

3.2.2 *Y-type Happenings for Events*

In 2.2, I gave two reasons why the argument for logical action-fatalism relies on *Closure*. The first reason was that the argument for logical action-fatalism requires that the happenings are closed off that have to be true if what H designates is true. I called these happenings y-type happenings. In the inference to (a4) the y-type happenings had to be true of an agent. My aim now is to assess whether logical event-fatalism has this same requirement. I will conclude that the inference to (e4) does not presuppose that any y–type happenings have to be true of an agent. But that nevertheless the inference to (e4) does presuppose that other y-type happenings are closed off and for this the CLEF principle is needed.

In order to show that logical event-fatalism does not presuppose *Closure* I need to show that the inference to (e4) does not need y-type happenings that concern an agent to be closed off. My thinking is that if (e4) did need these y-type happenings to be closed off the inference to (e4) would need to show that an agent is not able to do differently. In other words, if the y-type happenings concerned an agent, the agent's ability would have to be closed off. Therefore, logical event-fatalism would need to presuppose *Closure*.

I want to show that logical event-fatalism does not need to close off an agent's ability. So, I need to show that no happenings that concern an agent have to be true if what S designates in the argument for logical event-fatalism is true. In other words, I need to show that no happenings that concern an agent are in the y-type happenings of S.

In the argument for logical event-fatalism, S is the proposition that it was true yesterday that lightning would strike a 3-iron golf club today. It seems clear that if lightning was to strike a 3-iron golf club today nothing would have to be true of an agent. The event that takes place is one that is true in virtue of happenings that don't necessarily involve an agent acting in any particular way. If Q, our agent, was holding the golf club or the golf club was in his bag it appears that lightning could still strike the club either way. We can imagine situations where lightning would strike the 3-iron if Q picked up the club. We can also imagine situations where lightning would strike the 3-iron if the club was in the bag. So it is not necessary that Q picks up the club if S is true. Likewise, if S is true it is not necessary that Q leaves the club in the bag.

Admittedly, though, it seems, that depending on the way the case is set up Q might have some necessary involvement. We might stipulate that the 3-iron is wrapped up in a material that is non-conductive. Thus, lightning would not strike the 3-iron unless Q unwrapped it. This might very well be a likely scenario however I don't think it need worry the logical event-fatalist. For the purposes of the argument we assume S is true. Part of that assumption requires that it is possible that S could in fact be true. So if we wanted the scenario where Q would have to unwrap the 3-iron we would have to let the

antecedent truth S denote that lightning would strike a 3-iron wrapped up in a non-conductive material. However, S would not be true if it was denoted in this way. Lightning can't strike a material that is non-conductive. Hence, it would not be assumed to be true by the logical event-fatalist.

We could also let S denote that lightning would strike a 3-iron that was wrapped up in a non-conductive material. However, taking S in this way would still not necessitate any involvement by Q. Q is not involved because if its true that the 3-iron was wrapped in the material, it means the club is no longer wrapped up. If the club is no longer wrapped up, then it is not necessary for Q to unwrap it.

Therefore, in this example it seems to be the case that the inference to (e4) does not presuppose that any y–type happenings have to be true of an agent. I think that the example probably demonstrates what is true for all events that S could designate. However, there is no way to show this conclusively. If someone could show that I am incorrect here, then I would probably have to concede that the inference to (e4) does presuppose an agent's involvement in the y-types. But I don't think this is very likely, especially considering the way events have been defined in Part 1.

To be clear, all I am claiming here is that for an event, like a lightning strike, there are no happenings that concern an agent that are necessary for the event to happen. I think it is improbable that there are counterexamples to my claim. As a result, I think we can say

with a fair degree of certainty, that there aren't any events where happenings that concern an agent would be in the y-type happenings.

We now come to a crucial part. I have hopefully shown that if S is true then there are no y-type happenings that have to be true of an agent. This is significant because if there were such y-type happenings the inference to (e4) would need to show that an agent is not able to do differently. In other words, if the y-type happenings concerned an agent the agent's ability would have to be closed off. Therefore, logical event-fatalism would need to presuppose *Closure*.

But as the y-type happenings don't involve an agent the agent's ability to do otherwise does not need to be closed off. An agent can do otherwise and the y-type happenings that follow from S would still be true. Thus, logical event-fatalism does not need to presuppose *Closure* for this reason.

Nevertheless, in order to infer (e4) the logical event-fatalist would need to presuppose that the agent's actions could not affect the y-type happenings. And for this the CLEF principle is presupposed. The reason is that to infer (e4) it does not need to be the case that an agent cannot do otherwise. But it does need to be the case that if an agent does do otherwise her actions cannot make the y-type happenings not be true. And this is what I think the no matter what is done phrase of CLEF captures. By the CLEF principle the

only way Q could make the y-type happenings false, is if the things Q could do to make S false had the effect of making S false.[156]

In the way that I have explained the "no matter what is done" phrase a clarification is needed on what is meant by no matter what is done Q cannot makes S false. S is an antecedent truth. I want the no matter what is done phrase to be shorthand for saying that even though an agent was able to perform certain actions the actions couldn't stop an event from happening. So while it is the case that an agent's actions here are ineffective in making S false, I am not sure that the agent was ever able to make S false. The agent's actions are ineffective in making S false because S was a truth true yesterday. However, because S is a truth true yesterday it seems that Q might never have had the ability to make S false in the first place.

I defined the "no matter what is done" phrase by saying that Q has an ineffective ability. Hence, the fact that Q never had the ability to make S false seems that it might cause a problem for my position. I am not sure that the following justification will suffice. If it doesn't then either I will need an alternative explanation or to reevaluate what is meant by the CLEF principle. The justification I have in mind is that Q might never have actually been able to make S false. However, this is for a specific reason. Namely, that S is an antecedent truth. If S was not an antecedent truth then Q would have been able to make S false. Hence, the fact that S is an antecedent truth makes Q's actions ineffective. But if S wasn't a truth true yesterday Q would be able to make S false.

[156] This is in accordance with the justification Mackie gives for *Closure* on 677; van Inwagen, 192.

To elaborate on the justification, I want no matter what Q can do to mean that Q is ineffective in what she does. I don't want it to mean that Q is unable to do something. Therefore, to apply the phrase to S it must be the case that Q would in fact be able to make S false if S was not true yesterday. But Q is ineffective in making S false for the reason that S is true yesterday. From this justification we can say that Q would be ineffective in making the y-type happenings not true. The reason is that no matter what Q does S is true. As the y-type happenings have to follow from S, then no matter what Q does the y-type happenings also have to be true. In this way the y-type happenings are closed off.

3.2.3 *X-type Happenings for Events*

I will now look at the second reason the argument for logical action-fatalism requires *Closure*. The second reason that the argument for logical action-fatalism requires *Closure* is that the happenings sufficient in rendering (a4) false need to be closed off. I called these happenings x-type happenings. In the inference to (a4) there couldn't be any x-type happenings true of an agent. My aim now is to assess whether logical event-fatalism has this same requirement. I will conclude that the inference to (e4) does not presuppose that there can't be any x–type happenings true of an agent. But it does presuppose that (e4) is closed off from x-type happenings.

In order to show that logical event-fatalism does not require *Closure* I need to show the following. I need to show that the inference to (e4) does not need it to be the case that

there can't be any x-type happenings true of an agent. X-type happenings are the happenings that are sufficient to make T in (e4) false. So I need to show that T will remain true even if there are x-type happenings that concern an agent.

The CLEF principle allows us to show this. Like with *Closure* T is closed off under entailment. However, unlike with *Closure* Q's abilities are not closed off. So Q is still able to make T false. And yet, S entails T and no matter what Q does S is true. Thus, no matter what Q does T will also be true.

According to the CLEF principle if T is the proposition that lightning will strike a 3-iron golf club today, Q is able to prevent the lightning from striking the golf club. Suppose Q could put the 3-iron in such a location where it could not get struck by lightning. Or Q could wrap it up in a non-conductive material and so forth. Nonetheless, Q's action of burying the golf club will not affect T because T is entailed by an antecedent truth.

At first this seems like quite a stretch and that the CLEF principle must be invalid in some way. But if the antecedent truth is true then altering x-type happenings is akin to trying to change an historical truth with new evidence. If Socrates really did drink a hemlock based poison, then it would not matter how convincing the evidence was for him dying some other way. He would still have died drinking a hemlock based poison.

Likewise, if it really was true yesterday that lighting will strike a 3-iron golf club today Q would be ineffective in her attempts to prevent the event. I am not claiming that a golf

club buried under ground could get struck by lightning if such an event was actually physically impossible. I am only claiming that Q's efforts to bury the golf club would be ineffective. So although Q is able to perform actions that should prevent T those actions are nevertheless ineffective.

3.3 *Mackie's Causal Influence Objection for Events*

In this the last section of the paper the point will be to show that the principle that logical event-fatalism presupposes is not susceptible to Mackie's objection. There are two ways I think her objection could apply. The first way is in keeping with how the objection works for *Closure* and logical action-fatalism. I will point out that this way is quite simply not applicable. The second way I think causes more of a problem for the logical event-fatalist and I will consider the available responses.

3.3.1 *Objection 1*

In order to show that *Closure* was invalid we needed a situation where the antecedent truth was true, but that the proposition the antecedent truth entailed was not true. Mackie's causal influence objection worked by exploiting the way an agent contributed toward a y-type happening making (a4) true.[157] The idea was that an agent can by her causal influence make a y-type happening not make (a4) true. But that nevertheless the y-type happenings remain true. It is important that the y-type happenings remain true

[157] Mackie, 679.

because they are the happenings that have to be true if the antecedent truth is true. In this way *Closure* fails.

The issue now is whether taking Mackie's objection in this way will show that the CLEF principle also fails. To show that CLEF fails one would also need a situation where the antecedent truth was true but that the proposition T it entailed was not true. But it seems that Mackie's objection does not apply. The reason is that an agent does not contribute toward a y-type happening making T true. An agent's ability to prevent a y-type happening making T true was the way to make T false while keeping the antecedent truth true. As an agent cannot make T false while keeping the antecedent truth true CLEF is not susceptible to the causal influence objection. I will now elaborate on this point.

By Mackie's causal influence principle Q would only be able to make an event not happen if the event was true in virtue of something that fell within Q's causal influence.[158] But for events like lightning strikes, agents play no part in the y-type happenings. If there was an antecedent truth true yesterday that lightning would strike a 3-iron golf club today, then nothing has to be true of an agent. The reason is that a lightning strike is not true in virtue of anything that an agent does. Thus, lightning is not within Q's causal influence. Hence, quite simply, Q has no opportunity to exert her causal influence, in terms of the y-types, to make the event otherwise. So Q cannot make the event not happen.

[158] Ibid., 679.

I think this is a reasonable way of applying Mackie's objection to the CLEF principle in terms of y-type happenings. I am not entirely sure that it is the only way. But it is at least the way I applied her objection to *Closure*. It is important then that the objection is not applicable to the CLEF principle in this respect.

3.3.2 *Objection 2*

This leads to the second way to object to the CLEF principle in light of Mackie's causal influence objection. It may be said that under CLEF x-type happenings are not to antecedent truths as evidence is to historical truths. The idea behind the objection I believe is that it is absurd to claim in some cases that no matter what an agent did she couldn't influence an event.[159] It would be absurd because in some cases certain things that an agent was able to do would have to be effective. The logical event-fatalist's distinction collapses between what an agent can do and what an agent effects.

Suppose it is an antecedent truth true yesterday that Kate's car will crash today. Also, suppose that Kate was able to perform actions that could make it false that her car will crash today. In other words, happenings that concerned her could be included in the x-type happenings. Then it seems that some of her actions would have to be effective. Or at the very least if she did them it would be hard to know how they could be ineffective. For example, suppose Kate locked her car in the garage and threw away the only key. If she was to do this, it is hard to accept that somehow her car will get out and crash. Of course,

[159] Craig, in second paragraph. Craig discusses ways in which fatalism would be "absurd"; Mackie, 685. In footnote 2 of her paper, Mackie points out "absurd" claims that can be made.

it might be possible that this somehow could happen. She might have been ineffective in throwing away the only key and so forth. Or not really locked the door. But I don't think that critics of logical event-fatalism would be prepared to accept that she did these acts ineffectively. Surely if she had the ability to throw away the key, the objection would go, she could in actual fact make the act of throwing the key away effective.

I am sure that there are probably more convincing examples an opponent of logical event-fatalism could present. There are almost certainly instances where the gap between what an agent can do and what an agent effects is close to negligible. It seems that in these cases the logical event-fatalist would be forced into making some apparently absurd claims. I have in mind here unreasonable claims that contradict what we know about how the world works and claims that no serious philosopher would accept.

Nevertheless, I think the logical event-fatalist can respond to cases where there is almost no gap between what an agent can do and effect without making any unreasonable claims. The logical event-fatalist could say that in cases where it would be unreasonable to think that an agent would be ineffective it would equally be unreasonable to assume that it was an antecedent truth that the agent would be ineffective.

So if it is unreasonable to assume that Kate would be ineffective in throwing away the key or locking her garage, then it would also be unreasonable to think that it was an antecedent truth that her car would crash today. There is no way of knowing what is in fact an antecedent truth. For the argument for logical event-fatalism we just assume that

the antecedent truth could be true. But it could just as easily have been the case that it was true yesterday that her car wouldn't crash today. Thus, I don't think the logical event-fatalist is committed to any of the assumptions about antecedent truths. If for some reason the logical event-fatalist was committed to saying something was an antecedent truth, then the situation would be more problematic. It would be especially problematic if it was shown to be unreasonable to take the agent's actions as ineffective. But short of showing why the logical event-fatalist needs to be committed to assumptions on antecedent truths I don't think anything more needs to be said about the objection here.

We have now reached the end of my defence against Mackie's causal influence objection applied to CLEF principle. It appears that CLEF can withstand the objection. There is naturally a lot more to be said about CLEF. An assessment needs to be given on whether it can stand up to critical scrutiny outside of Mackie's objection. I suspect that many more counterexamples could be levelled at CLEF. But, at least in the respect of Mackie's causal influence objection it doesn't appear to fail, and that is all I wanted to show.

3.4 *Summary*

There is an equivalent argument to logical action-fatalism for logical event-fatalism. The argument for logical event-fatalism does not need to presuppose *Closure*. Nevertheless, the argument for logical event-fatalism does presuppose a *Closure* equivalent. The *Closure* equivalent is the CLEF principle. Under the CLEF principle, logical event-fatalism is not susceptible to Mackie's causal influence objection. The reason that the

CLEF principle does not fail by Mackie's objection is because logical event-fatalism does not presuppose the CLEF principle for the same reasons that logical action-fatalism presupposes *Closure*. The reasons the logical action-fatalism presupposes *Closure* are why logical action-fatalism is susceptible to Mackie's objection. Therefore, because logical event-fatalism does not presuppose its inference principle for the same reasons that logical action-fatalism does, logical event-fatalism is not invalid.

Conclusion

In sum, in this paper I addressed the position of logical fatalism. My approach was to focus on the happenings relative to an agent with which a logical fatalist is concerned. In this regard, I drew a distinction between actions and events. This distinction allowed me to explore the intuition that there is something more to fated happenings than just the absence of free will. I looked at Mackie's argument for logical action-fatalism and discussed how she showed the principle of *Closure* to be invalid. I then assessed whether an argument for logical event-fatalism would run into the same difficulties.

My conclusion is that logical event-fatalism does not need to presuppose *Closure* for the reasons that logical action-fatalism does. In this respect logical event-fatalism is not invalid. However, I did find that the inference to (e4) does presuppose an equivalent principle to *Closure*. This principle I called *Closure* for Logical Event-Fatalism (CLEF). Even though the CLEF principle is equivalent to *Closure* it is not susceptible to Mackie's causal influence objection as is *Closure*. The reason is that the CLEF principle is presupposed for different reasons to the reasons that *Closure* is presupposed. The reasons that *Closure* is presupposed are what make it invalid by Mackie's objection.

I am aware that this is not a full assessment of the validity of the CLEF principle. I expect that there might be potential counterexamples. Nonetheless, I don't anticipate that the CLEF principle is any more vulnerable to objection than is *Closure*. Moreover, the aim of this paper was only to see if logical event-fatalism is valid where logical action-fatalism

is not. Thus, I have only shown that logical event-fatalism is not invalid in light of Mackie's one objection.

I conclude then that logical fatalism, in its event version, can withstand Mackie's causal influence objection. The event version of logical fatalism is to me the more interesting of the two theses anyway. Logical action-fatalism is limited in the extent of what it can tell us about human action outside of the free will problem. It is the kind of fatalism that I think is usually seen to offer a competing account of the free will problem to mainstream philosophy. The observation is marked by the fact that few philosophers defend the thesis. Logical event-fatalism, on the other hand, I think has the potential to offer an independent but not necessarily competing account of human action. I think that if steps are taken to develop the position, it might shed new light, or at least light from a different angle, on the metaphysical issues on human agents.

Appendix A

The point of this appendix is to address the points raised by Michael Pitman in his Reader's Report on my research proposal. I aim to explain how I have dealt with his concerns in my essay and address the issues that I perhaps didn't deal with in the essay.

1. The first issue is the distinction between fatalism as a view about unavoidable actions or events versus fatalism as a view about agents making no difference to actions or events. I would like to thank Pitman for pointing out that how I understood this distinction was not clear in my research proposal. I agree that for fatalism the emphasis should lie on the effectiveness of agents. I am sympathetic to Blackburn's criticism of mistakenly equating determined events with fated events.[160] By the definition I chose I did in fact mean that agent's were ineffective in avoiding certain inevitable events. I think in this case that my action and event distinction confused the issue by shifting the focus from agents at the centre of that which is fated to happenings as the primary focus of the things fated. But I nevertheless still intended that it was how agents related to these happenings that was of interest.

2. The importance of logical fatalism as I see it is based on the difference between calling something fated as a consequence of not having free will and not having free will as a consequence of something being fated. Intuitively the latter option makes more sense to me. In my proposal, I took it that causal action/event fatalism was a case in point of the former option. I took it that logical action/event fatalism utilised the latter option.

[160] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Fatalism".

Mackie's causal influence objection I think is meant to show that if an agent did have free will we couldn't call something fated. But I don't think this necessarily implies that the argument calls something fated because an agent does not have free will (which I suppose would have collapsed the issue).

3. I did not adequately explain what I meant by 'antecedent truths' in my proposal. In this paper, in section 2.1.1 *(a1)* I discuss 'antecedent truths'. I hope my discussion here satisfactorily addresses this concern.

4. For issues of time and space I was not able to include the recommended readings. But nevertheless I hope my essay has shown that logical event-fatalism is a thesis "that agents might worry about".

Appendix B

The point of this appendix is to discuss how the definitions I gave for determinism and logical fatalism relate to Aristotle's position on logical fatalism. His view was that if the law of the excluded middle applied to future contingent propositions logical fatalism would be true.[161] Future contingent propositions are propositions that express now that a happening will happen later.[162] The law of the excluded middle states that either a proposition or its negation must be true.[163]

1. I assume that if the law of excluded middle does not apply to future contingent propositions then Aristotle's position would not be logically fatalistic.

I defined determinism thus,

(D) "For any X there is some Y such that, if Y is true and Z is true, then X occurs", where X is a happening, Y denotes a proposition that expresses some past state related to X, and Z is the laws of nature.

If the law of the excluded middle does not apply, I assume Aristotle's position would be deterministic by my definition. Furthermore, I assume that the point of saying the law of the excluded middle does not apply would in fact be to avoid logical fatalism.

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[161] Rice, under 1. "Logical Fatalism: Aristotle's Argument and the Nature of Truth".
[162] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Future Contingents".
[163] Rice, under 1.1 "Aristotle's solution". Rice gives ways that the law of the excluded middle can be defined.

2. I assume that if the law of excluded middle does apply to future contingent propositions then Aristotle's position would be logically fatalistic.

I defined logical fatalism thus,

(LF) " For some X there is some N such that, if N is true and L is true, then X occurs", where X is a happening now, N is a proposition that X is true before now, and L is the laws of logic.

If the law of the excluded middle applies, I assume Aristotle's position would be logically fatalistic by my definition. But I don't think that Aristotle thought the law of the excluded middle does apply.

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