Why fatalism is not a logico-semantic doctrine

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Abstract

Peter van Inwagen defines fatalism as a thesis about the logical or conceptual necessity of every action performed by any agent. In van Inwagen's words: "*Fatalism, as I shall use the term, is the thesis that it is a logical or conceptual truth that no one can act otherwise than he in fact does*". Richard Taylor defines fatalism as a thesis about the inevitability of all facts and events. Van Inwagen criticises Taylor's definition as inadequate, especially concerning two possible senses of the word 'inevitable': a strong sense and a weak sense. In the strong sense, a fact is inevitable when it occurs regardless of one's actions. For instance, when a person's actions have no relevance or causal connection with what happens to them, every fact that becomes actual is totally independent of that person's actions. The weak sense of 'inevitable' is that if a fact is inevitable and one has tried to avoid its occurrence by taking preventive actions, then it is necessary that one should take the wrong actions. In that case, ignorance regarding how to proceed would be inherently inevitable. In this article, I defend Taylor's definition of fatalism, address van Inwagen's criticism and explain how the notion of 'inevitability' can be understood through Taylor's definition. In addition, I connect the discussion with some themes on modality and philosophy of religion, showing how 'inevitability' interacts with the existence or nonexistence of God, a point relevant for the correct understanding of 'inevitable' or 'inevitability'.

Keywords: fatalism, logical fatalism, inevitability, necessity, free will.

1 On fatalism: Introduction

How is fatalism defined? This article begins with the following definition inspired by the work of Taylor (2015):

> Fatalism df = The thesis that everything happens or fails to happen by being inevitable. As a consequence, everything I do or do not do is inevitable.[1]

For a criticism of Taylor's thesis, this paper considers the views of van Inwagen (1986). According to the latter, fatalism is strongly connected with logico-conceptual notions, and the concept of 'inevitability' is inadequate for defining this doctrine: "Fatalism, as I shall use the term, is the thesis that it is a logical or conceptual truth that no one can act otherwise than he in fact does" (van Inwagen 1986: 23). Van Inwagen acknowledges, however, that fatalism is usually associated with the existence of inevitable facts.[2] He also acknowledges, as it could not be otherwise, that if all facts are logically or conceptually necessary, then there will be what may be called the inevitability of everything.[3] Here are some reasons why I think Taylor's definition is better than van Inwagen's:

1) The definition of 'fatalism' does not need to include the grounds that support it, as in at least some classical arguments on this issue (e.g. Aristotle's sea battle argument, the master argument from Diodorus Cronus, theological fatalism, as discussed by Augustine (1963) and Pike (1965). Otherwise, confusion could arise between the doctrine itself and the arguments for it.

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[1] In the words of Richard Taylor, "Fatalism is the belief that whatever happens is unavoidable. That is the clearest expression of the doctrine, and provides the basis of the attitude of calm and acceptance that the fatalist is thought, quite correctly, to embody" (Taylor 2015, p. 42).

[2] Van Inwagen acknowledges that his definition, though not similar to Taylor's, has consequences that follow from Taylor's definition (van Inwagen 1986: 24).

[3] One might argue that fatalism is a thesis that some facts, though not all, are inevitable. However, a response may be made to that in the following terms: a) if fatalism were a thesis that only some facts were inevitable, then fatalism would be trivially true. It must be true that at least some facts are inevitable—the death of a human being, that it will rain tomorrow in some places, that people must become older, etc; and b) the philosophical reasons to believe in fatalism, such as the logico-semantical ones presented in the classic arguments, apply to a great diversity of facts—actually, all of them.

2) The fact of knowing how to avoid something does not entail success in avoiding it (i.e. a person may know, theoretically, how to avoid something without actually managing to avoid it).

In the next section, I will discuss in detail van Inwagen's reasons against Richard Taylor's definition—a definition that I will defend in this paper with original arguments.

2 On the strong and weak senses of inevitable: van Inwagen's criticism of Taylor

Van Inwagen seems to reject Taylor's definition of fatalism based on the intelligibility of two senses of 'inevitable'. These senses correspond to the following, according to van Inwagen:

The strong sense of inevitability holds that if something is inevitable, it occurs regardless of what one might do to prevent it. For instance, when a person's actions have no relevance or causal connection with what happens to them, every fact that becomes actual is totally independent of their actions (van Inwagen 1986: 28). The weak sense of inevitability holds that if an event is not strongly inevitable and one were to try to prevent it, one would take the wrong measures to do so. This suggests that it is strongly inevitable that a person would be ignorant of the right measures to take to prevent something.

(van Inwagen 1986: 25)[4]

We shall not defend the strong sense of inevitability in the terms presented by van Inwagen, since it is incompatible with what we think we know about the world and its coherent chain of causally connected events. In fact, the strong sense of inevitability could be defended only by

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[4] Van Inwagen's strong sense of inevitability is similar to the idea explored by Leibniz in theodicy (cf. Leibniz 1990), expressed by *fatum mahometanum*. Fatum derives from Fari and is used by Leibniz to mean 'to pronounce' or 'to decree', from which the meaning of 'divine providence' results. The idea that people cannot influence the course of events would have led some of the Turkish ethnic group to take no precautionary measures, thus failing to avoid pestilential places, for instance.

a naïve notion of fatalism (cf. Mackie 2003). Thus, critiquing the weak sense of fatalism is more urgent following van Inwagen's reasoning.

On the one hand, it can be true for all events that, should a person try to avoid them, their ignorance would lead them to fail. That is perfectly compatible with the existence of inevitable things. Van Inwagen's objection to this understanding of inevitability starts with the consideration that one can always, when in possession of good reasons to believe that a certain fact is destined, know how to prevent its occurrence. Therefore, it should be *prima facie* possible for someone to avoid a fact by taking preventive actions, unless those actions are not, in any way imaginable, relevant to the occurrence of any event.

However, do the points above consist of a strong objection to Taylor's definition of fatalism? I will use van Inwagen's definition to argue that they do not. Specifically, I claim that the author's criticism is self-defeating, as it should exclude as inadequate the concept of inevitability. This is so because van Inwagen's thesis on fatalism, with its logical-semantic clauses, implies inevitability in the relevant sense. If van Inwagen has shown that the concept of inevitability is unsuitable as a definition, then the definition of fatalism provided by the author must have the same problem.

Van Inwagen's example of how the concept of inevitability is not adequate runs as follows: consider the set of individuals that will die tomorrow by 10:00 pm. Naturally, many of them enjoy perfect health today and have no reason to suspect they will die so soon (i.e. in an accident, as victims of murder, or by some other tragic event). Van Inwagen imagines someone among them who, for some reason, knows they will die tomorrow at the specified hour. That same person also knows how they will die; that is, they know, among other things, the cause of their death (van Inwagen, 1986: 26–27). The author then suggests that it is scarcely reasonable to believe that someone in those circumstances could not know how to avoid the would-be lethal event, since we seem to be able to avoid many things in our lives. As such, that event should not be considered inevitable. Let us consider a possible argument inspired by the considerations above:

1. If I know how to avoid something, it must be avoidable.
2. I know how to avoid many things.
3. So, there are avoidable things.

How to proceed against the argument above? I reject the first premise based on a difference between 'to know how to avoid something theoretically' and 'to be successful in avoiding something in fact'. What makes the debate subtle is the fact that 'knowing how to avoid P' is often treated, in ordinary contexts, as implying that avoidance is within one's power. Van Inwagen does not claim that knowledge guarantees success, but rather that if something is avoidable, it can be avoided. This implies that it is not inevitable, making any fatalism on that basis suspect, since I know how to avoid many things. My point is that even granting this reading, avoidability does not follow from knowledge-how.[5] The distinction I want to stress is therefore between *theoretical know-how* and *practical success*. One may possess knowledge of the relevant means and yet fail to act (accidentally, coercively, irrationally, etc.). Thus, invoking knowledge-how does not remove inevitability; it merely relocates it to the inevitability of the failure of the avoidance attempt. For the purpose of this paper, in what follows, I must refrain from defining 'inevitability' using the terms 'strong' and 'weak' after clarifying their meanings. My suspicion is that if I use the same categories that van Inwagen did, I will experience the same issue with his account.

First, being powerless to avoid an event does not entail that one does not know theoretically how to avoid it. Even if, for unknown reasons, a victim in van Inwagen's example feels justified in thinking that they will die, in knowing the circumstances of their death and in knowing, at least in theory, what they must do (or avoid doing) to stop the event related to their death, none of this guarantees that death will be successfully avoided. For instance, the victim may know they will die from poisoned wine. It is clear that they will feel justified in believing that to avoid dying, they must avoid ingesting wine. It is true that, in a sense, they know how to avoid death. One avoids dying from wine by avoiding wine. But it is not true that knowing how to avoid something entails success in avoiding it—to know how to avoid anything may not be sufficient to actually avoid it.

There are many conceivable and plausible circumstances in which I could fail in a resolution of avoiding something that I know, theoretically, how to avoid (e.g. by being under an illusion and forming a false belief that 'the liquid in front of me' is not wine, by being forced to drink wine

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[5] Of course, I am not attributing to van Inwagen the thesis that the verb 'to know' is factive. I am instead addressing the idea that 'to know would result in success' just to create some tension and not to attribute it literally.

under hypnosis, by ingesting wine accidentally, by consuming something seasoned with wine, etc.). Effectively, knowing how to avoid P is not incompatible with the failure in the resolution to avoid it.

This point resonates with Ludovicianism in the literature on time travel ('Ludovicus' being the Latin version of 'Lewis', referring to David Lewis, cf. Effingham 2020: 4). Ludovicianism is one response to paradoxical scenarios involving time travel. Although Lewis was not the first proponent of this idea, his 1976 classic 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel' certainly made him the most famous author regarding this idea. Ludovicianism comprises two related steps. The first states the problematic fact that having causal influence over the past is a condition for time travel—at least having the past as destiny. The second states that having some causal influence on the past does not imply being able to modify it, especially in such a way as to realise or actualise a contradiction. In scenarios such as the well-known 'grandfather paradox', altering the past implies an inconsistency or contradiction (Effingham 2020: 67).

The most common Ludovician solutions are of the 'trips-on-a-banana-peel' type, involving random events that could prevent the occurrence of an inconsistent causal chain. 'The standard scenario is to imagine going back into the past and killing your grandfather before he met your grandmother, ultimately preventing your birth. The paradox itself is then obvious: If your grandparents never met, how did you come into existence to go back and kill one of them?' (Carroll, S. 2010: 100). Consequently, the traveller could never have carried out the resolution to kill his grandfather. In this case, the attempt to kill one's own grandfather would be prevented by a random event, such as slipping on a banana peel, before pulling the trigger of the gun. Since the random event in question is possible, a consistent narrative is maintained throughout the entire scenario at a relatively low cost (the cost of introducing an *ad hoc* factual 'defeater' for the purpose of not having an inconsistent causal chain).

Here, the grandfather's paradox becomes relevant to the point I wish to make. The scenarios are kept fully consistent for a compelling reason: the scenario in which the grandfather's death is realised implies a contradiction and is therefore impossible. The scenarios are similar in that the time traveller's failure to kill his grandfather is inevitable; killing him is impossible because the causal chain in which the traveller kills his grandfather would prevent his own existence, which is inconsistent. The parallel with the case we are considering must be well established: just as

circumstantial events, however *ad hoc* they may seem, could maintain a consistent causal chain in time travel scenarios, so must events that result in the failure of a resolution to avoid a destined event be possible.

These somewhat circumstantial (and disconcerting) events must result from the thesis that 'knowing how to avoid,' in such a way that logically implies the satisfaction of intent, always requires vast knowledge—a kind of omniscience about the set of relevant relationships that, when present, determine the event.[6] But would it be possible to have this degree of knowledge about a single event?[7]

Not coincidentally, as Effingham aptly explains, Ludovicianism considers the future to be as closed as the past.[8] The parallel between Ludovicianism and fatalism thus becomes evident. Just as Ludovicianism is coherent, so too are the events that could lead one to fail in the resolution to avoid something in the future, even when one knows how, at least in theory, the event could be avoided. Thus, the notion of inevitability is coherent in the above terms.

2.1 When one knows 'sufficiently'

A way to escape the difficulties above would be to say that one must know how to prevent something from happening once one knows

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6 It should be noted, however, that subscribing to the thesis that complete knowledge about future events is impossible, whatever they may be, is not equivalent to saying that one's ignorance of how to avoid these events is necessarily inevitable, in van Inwagen's strong sense of inevitability. One can know how to avoid (theoretically) an event—let's say event P—without knowing how to avoid failing to take the steps to effectively avoid P. I carefully examine examples to clarify this idea below.

7 Ismael argues that the set of information that is nomologically sufficient to make an infallible prediction about the future would be unavailable to a natural oracle—an oracle that is part of the chain of causes that includes its own prophecy as a relevant factor. That is so for physical reasons, according to her—for reasons related to the causal structure of events in Minkowski space-time. The reasoning in my argument is analogous. As a participant in events, anyone who tried to avoid the fulfilment of a prophecy would be successful only if they had at their disposal a set of information that was too extensive—perhaps impossible—for any individual who is also part of the causal chain in question to obtain (cf. Ismael 2019).

8 The reasoning underlying this is intricate but compelling. Effingham considers a possible world in which a shooter fires at a wall in T10. Now one can think that, in T10, a black hole opens up over the target, swallowing the shot that returns to T5. In T5, time travel occurs when the shot returns to the past. To argue that events at T5 are fixed, immutable or necessary, it would also be necessary to maintain that events at T10 have the same status, as they are related in the same causal chain (cf. Effingham 2020: 70).

enough about how that event will take place. This means that, upon knowing enough about how an event will take place, it would be hardly believable that one cannot avoid the occurrence of that event. But how much does one need to know to be in the position of 'knowing enough' about a given event? This is a vague notion that is perhaps impossible to analyse. Knowing enough, however it is defined, must always consist of possession of wide-ranging knowledge. Usually, a person does not know so much about any event that is part of their life. If an individual was never to be mistaken about the wine, they would have to know, for instance, the 'mistake factor' (i.e. the fact by virtue of which he fails to avoid the wine) that would prevent them from avoiding its ingestion or any sort of contact with it—that at dinner, there was a seasoning of poisoned wine and that, accordingly, their death would occur by ingestion of that poisoned wine.

However, the problems with van Inwagen's criticism continue, and it may be possible, despite all diligence, to fail to avoid a dish seasoned with wine. For instance, a little before dinner, our victim could strike their head and suffer from momentary amnesia, which would prevent them from avoiding the wine, or the person could fall asleep and suffer an episode of sleepwalking, during which they would not refrain from attending dinner. It seems that to 'know enough,' the person would also have to know the whole chain of events if they are part of the special event in question—the death by poisoned wine.

Finally, it seems that a person would have to be 'omniscient' regarding the events of their death to be able to never fail in their resolution of avoiding it. To be omniscient about a single event might entail being omniscient about many of them. In certain circumstances (determinism, holism, etc.), this might entail being omniscient about all events in the same chain of causes.

3 Logical fatalism

Logical fatalism is the thesis that accepting principles consecrated by classical logic (such as the bivalence principle and the excluded middle) would imply the necessity of every fact. If classical logical principles such as bivalence and excluded middle apply unrestrictedly to propositions about the future, then all future events are already fixed (necessary), and genuine contingency is impossible. This is the version of fatalism usually referred to in philosophical contexts, van Inwagen being one proponent

of this definition, among many others that explore the doctrine in that version (cf. Prior 1967; Inwagen 1983; Łukasiewicz 1930, etc.). One of the motivations of this paper is to widen the philosophical scope of what is understood as 'fatalism'. Taylor's definition allows a world where everything is inevitable to be called 'fatalistic', regardless of whether this is so for logico-semantic reasons or not. For instance, if everything is inevitable because God wanted it to be so, this should likewise be an instance of fatalism in any relevant sense.

Logical fatalism follows from thinking that any proposition is either true or false. If a proposition about the future is true now, then what is reported in the proposition must happen; the same holds for false propositions, as their falsity entails the impossibility that the proposition occurs. Take, as an example, the proposition 'It will rain in London tomorrow': if the proposition were true now, how could it be possible that it did not rain the next day in the British capital? If it's false now, how could it be possible that it might rain tomorrow in London? Although this article does not purport to be an exegesis of the doctrine of fatalism, its distinctive trait—that fatalism is, *prima facie*, a doctrine incompatible with contingency and free will—should be emphasised.

All definitions should demonstrate that, if fatalism is true, there is not only a certain inevitability concerning future facts but also a certain impossibility concerning what may be expected. As some authors suggest, the notion of 'inevitability' has some degree of coincidence with the notion of 'predictability' (cf. Emery, Markosian, and Sullivan 2016).[9] Naturally, the overlap between inevitability and predictability can raise important questions, some of which are classical issues from the history of philosophy. One example is that of divine omniscience and its relation with the future fact that God knows. Issues regarding divine omniscience have been debated since the Middle Ages by philosophers interested in the philosophy of religion, rational theology, or the epistemology of religious belief. A pertinent question for this area of interest is whether God's knowledge of the future (if any) entails the nonexistence of free will.

There are two ways by which the philosophical tradition has rejected the so-called logical fatalism. One is to reject the principle of bivalence, replacing classical logic by multivalued logics (cf. Łukasiewicz, 1930). Another is to defend the compatibility between bivalence and future

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[9] See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/time/#Fat

contingency. The second strategy, prevalent in the literature, has the following defenders, among many others: Schlick (1931), Ryle (1954), Haack (1978), Iacona (2007), etc.

This line of response to fatalism aims to show that the principle of bivalence is compatible with contingency and free will.[10] In this case, philosophers reject the validity of the argument for fatalism or try to answer it properly, showing why it is not cogent. Contemporary Ockhamism is one of those proper responses to fatalism. Ockhamism, as we understand it, is a widely discussed solution to the problem of logical fatalism. In Ockhamism, future-tensed propositions are evaluated relative to a privileged history—the so-called *thin red line*—which allows the preservation of classical bivalence despite the openness of the future (Prior 1967; Øhrstrøm and Hasle 1995). According to Iacona (2022), if Ockhamism is true, then contingent futures are true or false now, although they are neither determinately true nor false. The central idea of this doctrine is that truth and falsity depend on what happens in the actual future (*soft facts*), while determinate truth and determinate falsity depend on what happens in all possible futures (cf. Iacona 2022).[11]

Although Prior discusses both Ockhamist and non-Ockhamist strategies, he does not explicitly endorse either. While recognizing the logical virtues of Ockhamism, he expresses reservations about the metaphysical implications of the thin red line, particularly the suggestion that there is already a fact of the matter as to which future history is actual. For this reason, Prior's position is best understood as methodologically exploratory and metaphysically cautious, rather than as a clear commitment to Ockhamism avant la lettre (Prior 1967; Øhrstrøm and Hasle 1995).[12]

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[10] There are different ways in which the authors intend to demonstrate the compatibility between the principle of bivalence and free will. Although it is not possible to go into detail here, since this article is not an exegesis of fatalism, we will outline in this paper a well-known solution, the Ockhamist solution, developed mainly by Prior, who later opted for other ways of solving the issue.

[11] 'Soft facts' concerns facts about the past that are, at least partially, about the future. With this thesis, the Ockhamist wants to protect contingent futures by saying that certain truths about the past have a relationship of dependence on the future. In this relationship, once it is guaranteed that there are truths now about the future that are dependent on what will happen in the future, an agent seems to find no major obstacles to interfering with the truth value of these past truths. 'Hard facts', on the other hand, are truths that are independent of any subsequent facts or that have no relation to subsequent events to fulfil their condition of truth (cf. Rea and Finch 2008).

[12] Supervaluationism is another important class of solutions in the literature. Supervaluationists reject the privileging of any single future history. On this

In the case of an Ockhamist solution, the fatalistic argument is taken by the authors in its valid version (a version that includes the 'necessity of the past' as a principle), in contrast to the accusation of modal fallacy on the fatalistic argument, according to several authors since the Middle Ages (Aquinas 1964, 1929–56, 1961–67; Anscombe 1956; Haack 1978).[13] That is why fatalism requires an answer from compatibilists.[14] It is not the purpose of this article to offer an extensive treatment of this debate, including the many possible responses to it. The purpose is rather to defend Taylor's thesis on the definition of fatalism, as well as to explain the most obscure notions involved in his definition.[15]

4 Fatalism *per se*

After characterising fatalism in logico-semantical terms, I now return to a Taylorean definition to further elucidate its core tenets: The thesis that everything happens or fails to happen by being inevitable. As a consequence, everything I do or do not do is inevitable (Taylor 2015, p. 42).

If the world is fatalistic, then, in some sense, people's power to act over it is questionable. What can be understood by having or not having the 'power' to do or refrain from doing something? To have 'power' can mean, for instance, not having any impediment to performing a certain action (e.g. to be able to play guitar because the instrument is available,

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approach, future-tensed propositions are evaluated globally over the totality of admissible histories: a proposition is true if it holds on all histories, false if it fails on all, and otherwise lacks a truth value. This semantics avoids commitment to a uniquely determined future, but at the cost of abandoning bivalence for statements about future contingents (Thomason 1970; Belnap et al. 2001, chap. 6).

[13] Aquinas uses the distinction between necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent. While it is true that something must be the case on the supposition that God knows it, that same thing may nevertheless be the effect of causes that operate contingently. Thinking otherwise is a result of a confusion of scope for the operator of necessity, assuming under a mistake 'L((p&q)→ p)–necessity of consequence; therefore (p&q)→ Lp–necessity of the consequent' (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum I.38.1.5, Summa contra gentiles I.67, Summa theologiae I, 14.13, De veritate 2.12*).

[14] In fact, there is a version of the argument for fatalism in which a modal fallacy occurs, and also perfectly valid and therefore more interesting versions. The valid version uses a known principle of the 'necessity of the past' to establish fatalism, making a strong argument for it. For a reconstruction of such an argument, see Jakobsen (2023: 15-16).

[15] Note that the existence of logical versions of a fatalistic argument does not mean that fatalism, per se, is a logico-semantic doctrine.

etc.). To have power can also mean that an action takes place solely as a result of deliberations carried through, so that to have power implies being capable of and responsible for the act performed. In this case, it would be normal to hold that a person could have acted other than the way they did—if this sense of 'to have power' is true. The second sense of the phrase is relevant to a discussion of fatalism. A person may not be able to play the guitar merely because they do not have the instrument at their disposal or because they lack the minimal technical skills to do so. However, nobody would say that, in this case, the person is destined to never play guitar in the relevant sense for any fatalistic consideration.[16]

The natural question is then: when does a person have power in the relevant sense? The answer affords the conditions under which it would be possible to ground fatalism. The following question can thus be asked with the same degree of success: what are the conditions for fatalism to be true? The answers coincide with different pro-fatalistic arguments (Aristotle 1963; Diodorus Cronus 284–322 a.C.; Taylor 1962; Pike 1965; Molina 1988; Plantinga 1974a, 1986; Bobzien 1998).[17] Given this literature, what cuts across fatalism most conspicuously is the idea that the existence of truths or falsehoods about the future is incompatible with the supposition that people have freedom. In that case, prudential concerns would not be justified, either, nor would the possibility of imputing blame on people for their actions. The conditions for satisfying the fatalistic thesis coincide with the conditions that guarantee the inevitability of all phenomena, and, as we will see below, they transcend what appears in literature as logical fatalism.

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[16] Again, there is a possible parallel with Ludovicianism. Philosophers who have inherited the Lewisian debate are always confronted with two ways in which the temporal assassin might carry out the task of killing his own grandfather in the past, before the latter can have children. In the first sense, it seems that the time traveller can (under the right circumstances, because he has the ability to do so) perfectly pull the trigger, shoot as under normal circumstances and thus kill his own grandfather in the past. In another sense, it seems that he cannot do so successfully, because if his purpose were fulfilled, an inconsistent causal chain would be set in motion. The way out of this dilemma may be similar to the one stated in this paper: having the ability, under the right circumstances, to perform an action does not imply being successful in the purpose or resolution of that action. For a detailed analysis of this case, see especially Effingham (2020: 97)—the 'non-morietur' paradox version of the Grandfather Paradox.

[17] Of course, this body of literature does not purport to exhaust the subject, but is only a good sample.

4.1 On how to understand 'inevitable'

As I understand fatalism according to Taylor's definition, it is important to present the meaning of 'inevitability'. According to the thesis defended here, fatalism pertains to the inevitability of facts, regardless of whether the reasons for that inevitability are logico-conceptual.[18] Taylor argues that 'inevitable' should not be understood as a logical or modal concept (Taylor 2015: 52–53). Taylor may understand 'inevitable' to differ from 'metaphysical necessity'. However, what is necessary in all worlds must be inevitable, thus satisfying the concept as needed.

The following states the truth conditions for 'Φ (the set of all that occurs in a world) is inevitable':

1 If Φ is metaphysically necessary, then Φ is inevitable in Taylor's sense, and, hence, the world is fatalistic;[19]

2 If Φ is logically necessary, then Φ is inevitable in Taylor's sense, and, hence, the world is fatalistic;[20]

3 If Φ is nomologically necessary, then Φ is inevitable in Taylor's sense, and, hence, the world is fatalistic.

The only caution concerns statement 3. Something is nomologically necessary but avoidable when it is subject to some miracle. In Lewis' words, if a 'divergent miracle' occurs, then a law of nature must be broken (Lewis 1981: 117). Consider, for instance, Sehon's thesis (Sehon 2011) that the mere logical possibility of the existence of an Interventionist God (*IG*) entails that, in a deterministic world, miracles are a possibility (i.e. if there is some IG, then '$P0 \land L \land \neg P$' must be possible, where '$P0$' means 'initial conditions', 'L' means laws of nature, and '$\neg P$' means 'it is not the case that

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[18] As we considered before, if everything that happens is by divine decree, the world is fatalistic and should be considered as such. The world would be fatalistic, and even if bivalence is true by virtue of this fact, the main reason for fatalism in this case would be the divine decree—the real factor of necessity involved.

[19] If that is the case, it could be argued that there is only one world, the only metaphysically possible one.

[20] For those who think that logical necessity implies metaphysical necessity, then since Φ is logically necessary, there would be no possible world in which Φ is not true. This could imply that there is only one possible world, if fatalism is true, since everything occurs by logical and metaphysical necessity. If there are many worlds, they are numerically distinct, despite being qualitatively identical.

P' [Sehon 2011: 31]). Sehon debates van Inwagen's famous consequence argument, which states the deterministic thesis as '$\Box(P0 \land L \supset P)$', and concludes incompatibilism after some intricate reasoning.[21] The following is Sehon's formulation against the definition of determinism used in the consequence argument:

1. $\Box(IG \supset \Diamond(P0 \land L \land \neg P))$ Assumption
2. $\Diamond IG$ Premise
3. $\Diamond(P0 \land L \land \neg P))$ From 1 & 2, assuming S4
4. $\therefore \neg\Box((P0 \land L) \supset P)$ From 3

The formalization of fatalism through the 'Consequence Argument' maintains that, under determinism, our actions are inevitable because they result from the laws of nature (*L*) and past states (*P0*) over which we have no choice (NP); formally, if $\Box(P0 \land L \land \neg P)$, then the rule of transfer of necessity implies NP. However, following Sehon's reasoning, we should argue that fatalism is not a necessary truth because there is a logical possibility of a "Divine" or "Interventionist Angel" ($\Diamond IG$). This means that the conjunction of *P0* $\land$ *L* does not necessarily guarantee *P*, which breaks the modal clause $\Box((P0 \land L) \supset P$. Nevertheless, this breakdown of logical necessity does not invalidate Taylor's definition: fatalism persists as a thesis about factual inevitability. In scenarios where intervenors are not present, the occurrence of all events is unavoidable due to nomological necessity, illustrating that fatalism does not necessitate a purely logico-semantic foundation to be fully realized.

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[21] Consequence argument: Rules of inference, assuming 'NP' means 'P and no one has or will have any choice regarding it':
    (α) $\Box P \vdash NP$ (β) $N(P \rightarrow Q)$, $NP \vdash NQ$
    1 $\Box((P0\& L) \rightarrow P)$ from determinism;
    2 $\Box(P0 \rightarrow (L \rightarrow P))$; from 1
    3 N $(P0 \rightarrow(L \rightarrow P))$ from 2 and (α);
    4 NP0 Premise:
    5 N $(L \rightarrow P)$ from 3, 4 and (β);
    6 NL Premise
    7 Therefore, NP From 5, 6 and (β)

When in disagreement with Sehon, one may question whether the *IG* also exists in deterministic worlds.[22] In the case of the Anselmian God, He, as usually represented by the tradition, exists in all possible worlds.[23] Therefore, He can work miracles in all of them. If God can work miracles in all worlds, then there will be no fatalism in any deterministic world. Following Sehon's reasoning, the existence of an 'Interventionist Angel' (IA) can also be postulated (Sehon 2011: 7) as logically possible. There are no strong reasons to ascribe necessary existence to any angel. Imagining a situation in which IAs exist only in a few of them (or have their actions restricted to some worlds) results in a very different consideration. This being so, some worlds would be available for the performance of an *IA*; others, however, would not. In those worlds in which *IA*s can work miracles, there will be no fatalism because of the nomological necessity of all facts. In those worlds in which there are no *IA*s, fatalism will be satisfied, because nothing can prevent any event destined by the laws of nature, thus satisfying the condition in Taylor's definition. Obviously, I am deliberately ignoring the fact that, in this same world, given what has been established above—the metaphysical necessity of the God of the tradition—there would still be a God above any angel as an existent and necessary being. The existence of God works as a guarantee that determinism and a minimal amount of contingency are compatible. So the scenarios in which there are only IAs (and no God) are scenarios in which an IG like God is an impossible being. This follows versions of the ontological argument in which if God is possible (exists in some world), then he is necessary (cf. Plantinga 1974b; Gödel 1970; Hartshorne 1962; and Malcom 1960). Only then there would not be any IG, but just some IA acting in a certain world.

Note, therefore, that the correct understanding of this thesis takes the inevitability as a doctrine on different meanings of necessity, as long as inevitability is sufficiently strong. Thus, if there is nomological necessity

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[22] Take De Marco's thesis against Sehon. According to the author, an IG is possible (exists in some world) but not compossible with deterministic worlds (cf. De Marco 2016).

[23] While different traditions have different definitions of 'God,' with some rejecting the prerogatives found in Anselm's well-known defence of the existence of God, I believe it would not be improper to apply this interpretation to the majority of Abrahamic religions. The God of the Abrahamic traditions, including Christianity, is therefore believed to exist and be active in every possible world.

for all facts, without a God (or angels, gods, daimones, space invaders,[24] spirits from other dimensions, etc.) that might defeat the laws of nature, there must be fatalism because everything is truly unavoidable.

7 Conclusion

Taylor's thesis is intelligible and adequate, despite van Inwagen's criticisms. The latter, who identifies fatalism with a particular doctrine—logical fatalism—is not successful in critiquing the concept of 'inevitability'. Something is inevitable, in the relevant philosophical sense, if and only if it is necessary in some sense, nomological fatalism being questionable (i.e. something can be nomologically necessary and avoidable, according to some perspectives; cf. Sehon 2011, Handfield 2001, etc.). The metaphysical sense, logical sense, or both undoubtedly satisfy the desired sense of necessity, but the nomological sense may not. I conclude that fatalism is a thesis that all facts are inevitable, whether for logico-semantic or metaphysical reasons, deterministic reasons, or other reasons one may be able to indicate.

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[24] A well-known analysis of a space invader by Handfield could also help us to understand how 'to break' a law in a deterministic world (cf. Handfield 2001 for an argument in this line).

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