

TEMPORAL MODALITIES AND THE FUTURE

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In [1]¹ Robert McArthur defends the challenging thesis that the apparent semantic distinction between the factual future tense, e.g., 'There will be a sea fight tomorrow', and the modal future tenses, e.g., 'There may/must be a sea fight tomorrow', is without foundation. His strategy involves attempting to show that a semantical distinction between factual and modal future tenses cannot be sustained in either deterministic or indeterministic worlds.

The argument for the deterministic case follows traditional lines by showing how, on a linear model of temporal succession, all three of the above statements have equivalent interpretations. In the indeterministic case the argument utilizes a branching model to demonstrate that only (future) possibility and (future) necessity admit of interpretations. ([2], p. 13.)

McArthur's claims strike us as puzzling, not least because we find it difficult to believe that metaphysical assumptions about determinism and indeterminism could have any direct bearing on the semantical interpretation of future-tensed statements. Of course it is not impossible to imagine metaphysical "scenarios" in which certain tensed expressions have no obvious application. However, we believe that the very conceivability of such cases testifies to the independence of the relevant semantical and metaphysical questions.

Our aim in this paper is thus to show, *contra* McArthur, that the distinction between factual and modal future tenses has a firm semantical foundation, and that this can be established independently of assumptions about the truth or falsity of determinism or indeterminism. In the process of demonstrating the semantical distinctness of factual and modal future

1. McArthur's paper along with an earlier version of the present article were both presented at the Western Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association in April, 1973.