

# Evolution Nodes in Newtonian Supertasks

Luis Carlos MEDINA

Recibido: 21.10.2008

Versión final: 21.3.2009

BIBLID [0495-4548 (2009) 24: 65; pp. 229-247]

**ABSTRACT:** The present article provides an analysis of the instants of a system that performs a Newtonian supertask. For each instant it studied the possibility of the system having, from the instant in question, more than one possible course of evolution; i.e. the possibility of it being an evolution node. This analysis shows that some supertasks presented as deterministic in Pérez Laraudogoitia (2007) are in fact indeterministic and specifies the difficulties ahead in showing the radical indeterminism suggested by Atkinson & Johnson (2009).

**Keywords:** critical instant, evolution node, failure of energy conservation, indeterminism, Newtonian Mechanics, supertasks.

## 1. Introduction

Two main anomalies are discussed in the literature on Newtonian supertasks: indeterminism and the failure of energy conservation. The prevailing situation is that both appear together; when indeterminism is present, energy conservation fails. Indeed, the only set of examples that generates indeterminism without the failure of energy conservation is the one presented in Pérez Laraudogoitia (2008). The present article is motivated by the possibility of the inverse situation: is the failure of energy conservation possible in deterministic supertasks? Since indeterminism apparently may (or may not) emerge in the same supertask, depending on the instantaneous state of the system performing it, the issue needs to be raised in more precise terms. To begin with, we need to establish a precise terminology to specify the problem and the particular aspect of it we want to discuss.

First, by *Newtonian supertask* we mean an infinite sequence of perfectly elastic binary collisions, between extended bodies or between point particles, which occurs within a finite time interval and within the theoretical framework of Newtonian mechanics. In particular, we focus on supertasks with order type  $\omega$  or  $\omega^*$ . For illustrative purposes, we refer essentially to the behaviour of the supertask presented in Pérez Laraudogoitia (1996), which we call ST. Initially, at time  $t = 0$ , we have an infinite number of particles arranged in a one-dimensional space (the  $x$ -axis, say), so that each particle  $P_n$  (with  $n \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, \dots\}$ ) is initially at  $x = 1/2^n$ , in an inertial frame of reference in which  $P_0$  has a velocity  $v > 0$  while the remaining particles are at rest. If we assume that all particles have the same mass and interact only through perfectly elastic collisions, then we have a Newtonian supertask:  $P_0$  collides with  $P_1$ , and the first particle comes to rest while the second acquires velocity  $v$ ; some time later,  $P_1$  collides with  $P_2$ , and the first particle comes to rest while the second acquires velocity  $v$ ; in general, and following a strict successively sequence, every  $P_n$  in motion with  $v$  collides with  $P_{n+1}$  at rest, and



the first particle comes to rest while the second acquires velocity  $v$ . When such a sequence of collisions concludes, at  $t = 1/v$ , every particle will be at rest.

By *critical instant* we mean an instant of time  $t$  for which there is at least one open neighbourhood  $(t - \delta, t + \delta)$ , with  $\delta$  arbitrarily small, in which at least one Newtonian supertask of order type  $\omega$  or  $\omega^*$  is performed. Stated more intuitively, a critical instant is the first instant in which a supertask of order type  $\omega$  has been performed, or is the last instant in which a supertask of order type  $\omega^*$  has not yet been performed. Thus, for ST, as presented above,  $t = 1/v$  is a critical instant.

By *non-conservative critical instant* we mean a critical instant in which the total energy of the system is different from the energy in at least one of the two intervals that make up its punctured neighbourhood  $(t - \delta) \cup (t + \delta)$ . Intuitively, a non-conservative critical instant is the first instant in which a supertask of order type  $\omega$  has been performed and the total energy of the system is different from the energy during the performance of that supertask; or is the last instant in which a supertask of order type  $\omega^*$  has not yet been performed and the total energy of the system is different from the energy during the performance of that particular supertask. Clearly, the critical instant  $t = 1/v$  in ST is a non-conservative critical instant: in it the energy is null due to the rest of every particle, whereas, during the performance of the supertask, the energy is not null due to the motion of one of the particles.

By *evolution node* we mean an instant at which the system, from that instant on, has at least two different possible courses of evolution. Intuitively, at an evolution node the course of evolution bifurcates; at that bifurcation, the system has to choose only one course from several options. In the system that performs ST, for instance, every instant (before, during, and after the performance of the supertask) is an evolution node. To see this, we need only note that the temporal inversion of ST is also a possible process within the framework of Newtonian mechanics. This reversed process is a supertask of order type  $\omega^*$ , starting from a non-conservative critical instant in which all the particles are at rest. So, the system which performs ST will have in every instant an infinite subset of particles at rest capable of performing, at any time, the temporal inversion of ST. Hence, such a subset always has a bifurcation with at least two courses of evolution: one is to continue with the evolution described for ST and the other is to perform the temporal inversion of ST. It is clear that, in the system performing ST, every instant is an evolution node.

Having established this terminology, the problem of the forms in which indeterminism is related to the failure of energy conservation in Newtonian supertasks can be precisely stated. Note, for example, that the non-conservative critical instant of ST is also an evolution node, i.e. in that instant there is a failure of energy conservation at the same time the system is set for an indeterministic evolution. This is in fact the situation for all the non-conservative supertasks precisely described to date in the literature. But is it possible for a non-conservative critical instant of some supertask not to be an evolution node? In precise terms, the question may be stated as follows:

- (A) Are there Newtonian supertasks with non-conservative critical instants that are not evolution nodes?

Although our main concern is to answer (A), this article addresses a more specific problem of particular relevance to (A). We perform an analysis that focuses on an example of a supertask of order type  $\omega$  that culminates in a non-conservative critical instant, which, unlike the critical instant of ST, is not manifestly an evolution node. The example is just a variation of ST. In the first section this example, which we call STMNC, is presented in detail. The article subsequently focuses on a question of particular relevance to (A):

- (B) Which instants of a system that performs a Newtonian supertask are evolution nodes?

Question (B), always in reference to STMNC and similar examples (specifically, those that initially have an infinite subset of particles at relative rest, and whose total mass is finite), is addressed in two parts. To begin with, in the second section we analyse the instants prior to their critical instant for the supertasks with order type  $\omega$ . We show that, for STMNC and other processes presented in the literature as not manifestly indeterministic (specifically, the ones presented in Pérez Laraudogoitia (2007, pp. 726-8)), the instants prior to its critical instant are actually evolution nodes, and therefore those processes are indeterministic. In the third section, for the supertasks with order type  $\omega$ , we analyse the instants subsequent to their critical instant, as well as the critical instant itself. Under the general model designed by Atkinson and Johnson (2009), the analysis sheds some light on the difficulties to be faced in proving the instants in question are evolution nodes.

*2. A non-conservative and not manifestly indeterministic supertask*

Let us consider the same initial state of the system that performs ST with the following modifications. For the sake of simplicity, we suppress particle  $P_0$  and consider that, initially, particle  $P_1$  is the only one in motion. Additionally, we assume that each particle  $P_n$  has a mass  $m_n = \frac{1}{(n+1)^2}$ , so the total mass of the system is  $\frac{\pi^2}{6} - 1$ , since it is well known that:

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2} = \frac{\pi^2}{6}$$

Thus, the mass ratio  $\gamma_n$  between every pair of adjoining particles  $P_n$  and  $P_{n+1}$  is  $\gamma_n = \frac{m_{n+1}}{m_n} = \frac{(n+1)^2}{(n+2)^2}$ . This system clearly performs a supertask too, which we will call STMNC.  $P_1$ , which has velocity  $v_1'$ , will collide with  $P_2$ , which is at rest;  $P_1$  thereby will acquire velocity  $v_1''$  which, since the mass of  $P_1$  is greater than that of  $P_2$ , will be smaller than velocity  $v_2'$  acquired by  $P_2$ . Some time later,  $P_2$ , now with velocity  $v_2'$ , will collide with  $P_3$ , which is at rest;  $P_2$  will thereby acquire velocity  $v_2''$ , which, since the mass of  $P_2$  is greater than that of  $P_3$ , will be smaller than the velocity  $v_3'$  acquired by

$P_3$ . In general,  $P_n$ , with velocity  $v_n'$ , will collide with  $P_{n+1}$ , which is at rest;  $P_n$  will thereby acquire velocity  $v_n''$ , which, since the mass of  $P_n$  is greater than that of  $P_{n+1}$ , will be smaller than the velocity  $v_{n+1}'$  acquired by  $P_{n+1}$ . To be sure this sequence of collisions occurs, we assume that  $v_{n+1}'' < v_{n+2}'$ ; so the system performs a supertask, since  $P_1$  with  $v_1''$  will at some instant reach the initial position occupied by the accumulation point of the set of particles, which implies that, at that instant, the motion will have already propagated to all the particles under the infinite sequence of collisions.

With this, under momentum and energy conservation in the collision of  $P_n$  (initially moving with  $v_n'$ ) with  $P_{n+1}$  (initially at rest), we know that the particles will acquire respectively velocities

$$v_n'' = \frac{1-\gamma_n}{1+\gamma_n} v_n' \quad (1)$$

and

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{2}{1+\gamma_n} v_n' \quad (2)$$

By recursion, from (2)

$$v_{n+1}' = 2^n v_1' \prod_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{1+\gamma_k}. \quad (3)$$

Thus, from (1) and (3), each particle  $P_{n+1}$  will end up with a velocity

$$v_{n+1}'' = \frac{1-\gamma_{n+1}}{1+\gamma_{n+1}} 2^n v_1' \prod_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{1+\gamma_k}. \quad (4)$$

Now, to ensure that the sequence of collisions actually occurs in the way we have specified, we need  $v_{n+1}'' < v_{n+2}'$ , i.e. taking (4) in account, we need  $(1-\gamma_{n+1})(1+\gamma_{n+2}) < 2(1-\gamma_{n+2})$ , which is equivalent to

$$(3-\gamma_{n+1})\gamma_{n+2} < 1+\gamma_{n+1}. \quad (5)$$

For the case of STMNC, it is clear this inequality holds. Substituting the mass ratio, which is  $\gamma_n = \frac{(n+1)^2}{(n+2)^2}$ , (5) is equivalent to  $0 < 1$ , an inequality that holds independently of the value of  $n$ .

Now we need to prove that the critical instant of STMNC is a non-conservative critical instant; i.e. that the system experiences a loss of energy whenever the supertask STMNC is performed. We know the initial kinetic energy is  $\frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2$ . We know also,

by recursion in the mass ratio, that  $m_{n+1} = m_1 \prod_{k=1}^n \gamma_k$ . Then, considering (4), the final kinetic energy is given by

$$T_f = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2 \left( \frac{1-\gamma_1}{1+\gamma_1} \right)^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2 \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{2^{2n}(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2} \prod_{k=1}^n \frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2} \right] \quad (6)$$

From (6), it is seen that we can express the loss of energy with the following inequality:

$$\frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2\left(\frac{1-\gamma_1}{1+\gamma_1}\right)^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2\sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\left[\frac{2^{2n}(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2}\prod_{k=1}^n\frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2}\right] < \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1'^2$$

which, for our model, is equivalent to

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\left[\frac{2^{2n}(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2}\prod_{k=1}^n\frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2}\right] < 1 - \left(\frac{1-\gamma_1}{1+\gamma_1}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{12}{13}\right)^2 \tag{7}$$

Now, the mass ratios indicate that the product  $\prod_{k=1}^n \frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2} = \prod_{k=1}^n \frac{(k+1)^2(k+2)^2}{(2k^2+6k+5)^2}$ . Expressed in this way, it is clear that each term  $\frac{(k+1)^2(k+2)^2}{(2k^2+6k+5)^2} < \frac{(k+1)^2(k+2)^2}{(2k^2+6k+4)^2} = \frac{1}{2^2}$ ; so we know that the product  $\prod_{k=1}^n \frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2} < \frac{1}{2^{2n}}$ . Therefore, from the sum in (7) (the left side), each term  $\frac{2^{2n}(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2}\prod_{k=1}^n\frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2} < \frac{(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2}$ . Since, under our mass ratios,  $\frac{(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2} = \frac{(2n+5)^2}{(2n^2+10n+13)^2} < \frac{(2n+5)^2}{(2n^2+9n+10)^2} = \frac{1}{(n+2)^2}$ , we finally find that (7) holds:

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\left[\frac{2^{2n}(1-\gamma_{n+1})^2}{(1+\gamma_{n+1})^2}\prod_{k=1}^n\frac{\gamma_k}{(1+\gamma_k)^2}\right] < \sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\frac{1}{(n+2)^2} = \sum_{n=3}^{\infty}\frac{1}{n^2} = \frac{\pi^2}{6} - \frac{5}{4} < \left(\frac{12}{13}\right)^2$$

Hence, the critical instant of STMNC is a non-conservative critical instant.

At first sight, the non-conservative critical instant of STMNC seems not to be an evolution node, which would suggest an affirmative answer to (A). As the next section shows, this is not an obstacle to STMNC being an indeterministic process, i.e. for some other instants to be evolution nodes. And as the section also shows, this is especially relevant for systems presented as deterministic in the literature.

### 3. The evolution nodes prior to the critical instant

Now we show that every instant of STMNC prior to its critical instant is an evolution node. To this end, we designed a general model of supertasks in which all their particles ended at rest.

We called the model G $\gamma$ 1, which is a supertask consisting of an infinite sequence with order type  $\omega$  of perfectly elastic collisions between point particles, as in ST and STMNC, but, unlike ST and STMNC, with the added assumption that all the particles may initially be in motion. We assumed that the mass ratio between adjoining particles  $\gamma_n = m_{n+1}/m_n \neq m_{n+2}/m_{n+1} = \gamma_{n+1}$ . We also reduced our model to cases where  $\gamma_n < 1$  for

all  $n \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$ . At the initial instant  $t_0' = 0$ , the first particle  $P_0$  is in motion at  $x_0' = 0$  at velocity  $v_0' > 0$ , whereas each particle  $P_{n+1}$  (with  $n \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$ ) is located at position  $x_{n+1}$ , such that  $x_{n+1} < x_{n+2} < x_{n+3} < \dots$ , and has a velocity  $v_{n+1}$ , with  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2} > v_{n+3} > \dots$ . Some time later, at the instant  $t_1' > t_0'$ ,  $P_0$  collides with  $P_1$  at  $x_0'' = x_1' = 1/2$ , where  $P_0$  acquires velocity  $v_0'' = 0$  while  $P_1$  acquires velocity  $v_1'$ . After that, at the instant  $t_2' > t_1'$ ,  $P_1$  collides with  $P_2$  at  $x_1'' = x_2' = 3/4$ , where  $P_1$  acquires velocity  $v_1'' = 0$  while  $P_2$  acquires velocity  $v_2'$ . In general, at the instant  $t_{n+1}'$ ,  $P_n$  collides with  $P_{n+1}$  at  $x_n'' = x_{n+1}' = 1 - 1/2^{n+1}$ , where  $P_n$  acquires velocity  $v_n'' = 0$  while  $P_{n+1}$  acquires velocity  $v_{n+1}'$ . This sequence of collisions occurs within a finite interval of time (demonstrated below), successfully performing a supertask in which, in its final state, all the particles are at rest.

Having presented this general model of supertasks, we specified the velocities of the particles required for the evolution described. From linear momentum and energy conservation in an elastic collision, we know the following system of equations that relates the velocities involved in each of the collisions described in the previous paragraph (collision in which initially  $P_n$  has velocity  $v_n'$  and  $P_{n+1}$  velocity  $v_{n+1}$ , to end up respectively with  $v_n'' = 0$  and  $v_{n+1}'$ ):

$$0 = \frac{1 - \gamma_n}{1 + \gamma_n} v_n' + \frac{2\gamma_n}{1 + \gamma_n} v_{n+1} \quad (8)$$

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{2}{1 + \gamma_n} v_n' - \frac{1 - \gamma_n}{1 + \gamma_n} v_{n+1} \quad (9)$$

From (9),  $v_{n+1} = \frac{2}{1 - \gamma_n} v_n' - \frac{1 + \gamma_n}{1 - \gamma_n} v_{n+1}'$ , which, substituted in (8), leads to

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{1 + \gamma_n}{2\gamma_n} v_n' \quad (10)$$

Now, from (10) it is clear that

$$\begin{aligned} v_1' &= \frac{1 + \gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} v_0' \\ v_2' &= \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_1}{2\gamma_1} \right) \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} \right) v_0' \\ v_3' &= \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_2}{2\gamma_2} \right) \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_1}{2\gamma_1} \right) \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} \right) v_0' \\ &\vdots \\ v_{n+1}' &= \frac{1}{2^{n+1}} \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_n}{\gamma_n} \right) \dots \left( \frac{1 + \gamma_0}{\gamma_0} \right) v_0'. \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

On the other hand, from (8) we know that

$$v_{n+1} = -\frac{1-\gamma_n}{2\gamma_n} v_n \tag{12}$$

Then, considering (11) and (12), it is also easy to see that

$$\begin{aligned} v_1 &= -\frac{1-\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} v_0 \\ v_2 &= -\frac{1-\gamma_1}{2\gamma_1} \left( \frac{1+\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} \right) v_0 \\ v_3 &= -\frac{1-\gamma_2}{2\gamma_2} \left( \frac{1+\gamma_1}{2\gamma_1} \right) \left( \frac{1+\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} \right) v_0 \\ &\vdots \\ v_{n+2} &= -\frac{1}{2^{n+2}} \frac{1-\gamma_{n+1}}{\gamma_{n+1}} \left( \frac{1+\gamma_n}{\gamma_n} \right) \dots \left( \frac{1+\gamma_0}{\gamma_0} \right) v_0 \end{aligned} \tag{13}$$

Now, so that  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2} > v_{n+3} > \dots$ , we must add a restriction (that limits our general model a little more, but by no means threatens our aim here). From (13) we know that every velocity  $v_{n+1}$  moves particle  $P_{n+1}$  towards the left (as  $\gamma_n < 1$ , therefore  $v_{n+1} < 0$ ), and to ensure that  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2}$ , it suffices that  $|v_{n+2}| > |v_{n+1}|$ ; which implies that

$$\frac{|v_{n+2}|}{|v_{n+1}|} = \frac{(1-\gamma_{n+1})(1+\gamma_n)}{2\gamma_{n+1}(1-\gamma_n)} > 1$$

which is equivalent, since  $\gamma_n < 1$ , to the following inequality:

$$\gamma_{n+1} < \frac{1+\gamma_n}{3-\gamma_n} \tag{14}$$

This is the restriction we must add to ensure that  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2} > v_{n+3} > \dots$  in the systems this general model covers.

We then verified that, independently of the position  $x_{n+1}$  every particle  $P_{n+1}$  needed to take to move from  $x_{n+1}$  to  $x_{n+1}'$  at velocity  $v_{n+1}$ , the sequence of collisions is actually performed as specified above in the description of the general model; that is to say, that  $P_{n+1}$  (travelling at  $v_{n+1}$ ) collides with  $P_n$  (travelling at  $v_n$ ) before colliding with  $P_{n+2}$  (travelling at  $v_{n+2}$ ). First, since  $P_{n+1}$  travels from  $x_{n+1}$  at  $t_0' = 0$  to  $x_{n+1}'$  at  $t_{n+1}'$  at a constant velocity  $v_{n+1}$ , we know that  $v_{n+1} = \frac{x_{n+1}' - x_{n+1}}{t_{n+1}'}$ , from which it is clear that

$$x_{n+1} = x_{n+1}' - t_{n+1}' v_{n+1} \tag{15}$$

But we previously specified that  $t_{n+1}'$  was the instant in which particle  $P_{n+1}$  acquires velocity  $v_{n+1}'$  after colliding with  $P_n$ , which then comes to rest. We also specified that this collision occurred at

$$x_{n+1}' = 1 - 1/2^{n+1} \tag{16}$$

Thus, each particle  $P_n$  will travel the distance from  $x_n'$  to  $x_{n+1}'$  at a constant velocity  $v_n'$ , during the time interval  $t_{n+1}' - t_n' = \frac{x_{n+1}' - x_n'}{v_n'} = \frac{1}{2^{n+1}v_n'}$ . This leads to

$$\begin{aligned} t_1' &= \frac{1}{2v_0'} \\ t_2' &= \frac{1}{2v_0'} + \frac{1}{2^2v_1'} \\ t_3' &= \frac{1}{2v_0'} + \frac{1}{2^2v_1'} + \frac{1}{2^3v_2'} \\ &\vdots \\ t_{n+1}' &= \frac{1}{2v_0'} + \frac{1}{2^2v_1'} + \dots + \frac{1}{2^{n+1}v_n'} \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

Now, we want to prove that  $P_{n+1}$  (which departs from  $x_{n+1}$  at  $t_0' = 0$  at  $v_{n+1}$ ) collides with  $P_n$  at  $x_{n+1}'$  and at  $t_{n+1}'$  before colliding with  $P_{n+2}$  (which departs from  $x_{n+2}$  at  $t_0' = 0$  at  $v_{n+2}$ ) at a hypothetical position  $x_h$  and at a hypothetical instant  $t_h$ . Clearly, this hypothetical instant can be expressed in two ways:

$$t_h = \frac{x_h - x_{n+1}}{v_{n+1}} \quad (18)$$

$$t_h = \frac{x_h - x_{n+2}}{v_{n+2}}. \quad (19)$$

From the system (18) (19), the hypothetical position is  $x_h = \frac{v_{n+2}x_{n+1} - v_{n+1}x_{n+2}}{v_{n+2} - v_{n+1}}$ , and the hypothetical instant is

$$t_h = \frac{x_{n+1} - x_{n+2}}{v_{n+2} - v_{n+1}}. \quad (20)$$

Taking the symbols specified, what we wish to prove is simply that

$$t_{n+1}' < t_h. \quad (21)$$

If we substitute (15) in (20), (21) can be rewritten as:

$$t_{n+1}' < \frac{(x_{n+1}' - x_{n+2}') + (t_{n+2}'v_{n+2} - t_{n+1}'v_{n+1})}{v_{n+2} - v_{n+1}} \quad (22)$$

As we are only interested in cases where  $|v_{n+2}| > |v_{n+1}|$ , and we know, from (13), that these two velocities are negative, (22) can be multiplied by  $(v_{n+2} - v_{n+1})$  (a factor that switches the direction of the inequality), to obtain that

$$(t_{n+1}' - t_{n+2}')v_{n+2} > x_{n+1}' - x_{n+2}'. \quad (23)$$



From (16) we know that  $x_{n+1}' - x_{n+2}' = -\frac{1}{2^{n+2}}$ , and from (17) that  $t_{n+1}' - t_{n+2}' = -\frac{1}{2^{n+2}v_{n+1}'}$ . If this is substituted in (23), and we multiply both sides by  $(-2^{n+2})$ , then (23) is equivalent to the following inequality:

$$\frac{v_{n+2}'}{v_{n+1}'} < 1$$

If we substitute (12) in  $v_{n+2}$ , this inequality can be rewritten as

$$-\frac{1 - \gamma_{n+1}}{2\gamma_{n+1}} < 1$$

which is equivalent to

$$\gamma_{n+1} > -1. \tag{24}$$

But by definition  $\gamma_{n+1} > 0$ , so (23) always holds. Therefore (22) always holds too; in other words, every particle  $P_{n+1}$  collides with  $P_n$  before it can collide with  $P_{n+2}$ .

To complete our demonstration that the general model designed here corresponds to systems that perform a supertask successfully, we must show that the interval of time in which the entire sequence of collisions occurs is finite. This interval of time can be expressed as the limit of  $t_{n+1}'$  (as written in (17)) when  $n \rightarrow \infty$ :

$$t_T' = \frac{1}{2v_0'} + \frac{1}{2^2v_1'} + \frac{1}{2^3v_2'} + \dots + \frac{1}{2^{n+1}v_n'} + \dots \tag{25}$$

and (25) in turn can be rewritten as

$$t_T' = \frac{1}{2v_0'} \left( 1 + \frac{v_0'}{2v_1'} + \frac{v_0'}{2^2v_2'} + \dots + \frac{v_0'}{2^n v_n'} + \dots \right). \tag{26}$$

It is clear that for condition

$$v_0' < v_1' < \dots < v_n' \tag{27}$$

to hold, it suffices that  $v_n' < v_{n+1}'$  for every  $n$ , which, substituting (10), is equivalent to

$$\gamma_n < 1. \tag{28}$$

As our general model is confined precisely to cases in which (28) holds, all the systems the model covers satisfy (27). It is clear, then, that the following inequality also holds:

$$t_T' = \frac{1}{2v_0'} \left( 1 + \frac{v_0'}{2v_1'} + \frac{v_0'}{2^2v_2'} + \dots + \frac{v_0'}{2^n v_n'} + \dots \right) < \frac{1}{2v_0'} \left( 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2^2} + \dots + \frac{1}{2^n} + \dots \right);$$

since from (27) and (28) we know that  $\frac{v_0'}{v_n'} < 1$ , which implies that each term of the sum expressed inside the parenthesis on the left side is less than its respective term of the sum expressed inside the parenthesis on the right side of the inequality (except the first one, which is equal). As we know, the sum of the right side is convergent. Hence

this inequality shows that the time (expressed with (26)) the system takes to perform the supertask is finite.

In short, all the supertasks covered by the general model  $G\gamma 1$  can be described as follows. To begin with, they have an infinite number of particles  $P_0, P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n, \dots$  in one-dimensional space (the  $x$ -axis). For every  $n$  (with  $n \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, \dots\}$ ), there is a mass ratio  $\gamma_n = m_{n+1}/m_n$ , which relates the mass  $m_n$  of particle  $P_n$  to the mass  $m_{n+1}$  of the adjoining particle  $P_{n+1}$ , such that  $\gamma_n < 1$ ,  $\gamma_n \neq \gamma_{n+1}$  and  $\gamma_{n+1} < \frac{\gamma_n + 1}{3 - \gamma_n}$ . Initially, at time  $t_0' = 0$ , particle  $P_0$  is in motion at a constant velocity  $v_0' > 0$  and is located at  $x_0' = 0$ , whereas each of the other particles  $P_{n+1}$  moves at a constant velocity  $v_{n+1}$  (expressed in (13)) at  $x_{n+1}$  (expressed in (15)), with  $x_{n+1} < x_{n+2} < x_{n+3} < \dots$  and  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2} > v_{n+3} > \dots$  (this inequality considers the negative sign of each velocity, which moves the particles leftwards, so  $|v_{n+1}| < |v_{n+2}| < |v_{n+3}| < \dots$ ). Thus, at time  $t_{n+1}'$  (expressed in (17)), particle  $P_n$  collides with particle  $P_{n+1}$  at  $x_n'' = x_{n+1}' = 1 - 1/2^{n+1}$ , where  $P_n$  acquires velocity  $v_n'' = 0$  while  $P_{n+1}$  acquires velocity  $v_{n+1}'$  (expressed in (11)). So, from the instant  $t_r'$  on (expressed in (25) or in (26))—the critical instant of the supertask—the infinite sequence of collisions will have been performed, and each particle  $P_n$  will be at rest in its final position  $x_n'' = 1 - 1/2^{n+1}$ .

The critical instant  $t_r'$  is clearly a non-conservative critical instant. Prior to it, an infinite set of particles is in motion, whereas from that instant on every particle is at rest. It is equally obvious that the critical instant and its subsequent instants are evolution nodes. The process reversed in time is also a possible process, thus the infinite set of particles at rest has at least two possible evolutions: to continue at rest or to perform the temporal inversion of  $G\gamma 1$ .

This feature of  $G\gamma 1$  is of special relevance to STMNC: among the cases  $G\gamma 1$  covers, there is one whose set of particles coincides exactly with the set of particles of STMNC. This has an important consequence, namely, that as long as the infinite sequence of collisions of STMNC has not finished, there will be an infinite subset of particles at rest located exactly as an infinite subset of  $G\gamma 1$  in its critical instant. Therefore, such a subset of particles has two possible evolutions: either to remain at rest until the performance of STMNC sets the particles in motion, or to perform the corresponding inverse process of  $G\gamma 1$ . In other words, bearing in mind that before STMNC finishes its performance, there is an infinite subset of particles at rest that corresponds exactly to the final state of rest of an infinite subset of particles of  $G\gamma 1$ , and to the initial state of rest of an infinite subset of particles of the process  $G\gamma 1$  reversed in time, the system that performs STMNC is indeterministic as long as the supertask has not yet been finished. Put more concisely, every instant prior to the critical instant of STMNC is an evolution node.

It is easy to verify that the subset of particles of STMNC at rest corresponds to the subset of particles at the critical instant of one of the systems that  $G\gamma 1$  covers. First, every particle  $P_n$  of STMNC still at rest is located at  $x_n = 1 - 1/2^n$ , a position which corresponds to the initial position of the reversed processes of  $G\gamma 1$  (the fact that the trigger particle has an index  $n = 1$  instead of  $n = 0$  is not important). Second, it is clear

that for STMNC  $\gamma_n < 1$ , since  $\gamma_n = \frac{(n+1)^2}{(n+2)^2} \forall n$ . Third and last, the restriction expressed with the inequality in (14) must hold; indeed, if we substitute the mass ratios of STMNC in (14), we find that the inequality is equivalent to  $0 < 1$ , which is an inequality that holds independently of the value of  $n$ . Definitively, every instant prior to the critical instant of STMNC is an evolution node.

Indeterminism generated by G $\gamma$ 1 also has consequences for systems that have been presented in literature as not manifestly indeterministic. Specifically, in Pérez Laraudogoitia (2007, pp. 726-8) a general model of supertasks is presented with the same initial conditions as ST, the only modification being that the mass ratios between adjoining particles are different from each other. In precise terms, the mass ratios this general model covers is given by the following expression:

$$\gamma_{n+1} = \frac{2a - 1 + \gamma_n}{2a + 1 - \gamma_n} \quad (29)$$

with  $a < 1$ . The evolution of all the supertasks included is, indeed, very similar to that of STMNC. Initially, one particle approaches an infinite set of particles at rest. Under the sequence of collisions, each particle, one by one, acquires motion. Once the supertask is performed, each particle  $P_n$  has a velocity  $v_n'' < v_{n+1}''$ . The major difference between these processes and STMNC is that their critical instant is not a non-conservative critical instant; the energy is the same before, during, and after the performance of the supertask.

The indeterminism in the supertasks covered by Pérez Laraudogoitia's general model may be shown in the same way as it is in STMNC. Just as an infinite subset of particles of STMNC can spontaneously perform the temporal inversion of its correspondent process of G $\gamma$ 1 before STMNC is finished, the subset of particles still at rest in the supertasks of Pérez Laraudogoitia's general model (before they finish) can perform the temporal inversion of their corresponding processes of G $\gamma$ 1.

Verifying that the systems included in Pérez Laraudogoitia's general model are among the systems covered by G $\gamma$ 1 is a simple task. First, it is obvious that each particle  $P_n$  of this general model can be initially located at  $x_n = 1 - 1/2^n$ , the position that corresponds to the initial position in the reversed processes of G $\gamma$ 1. Second, (29) corresponds to the function  $f(x) = \frac{2a-1+x}{2a+1-x}$ , which has two fixed points:  $x = 1$ , which is an attractor when  $a > 1$  and a repeller when  $a < 1$ , and  $x = 2a - 1$ , which is a repeller when  $a > 1$  and an attractor when  $a < 1$ . As the general model explicitly includes only the cases in which  $a < 1$  and with finite mass, taking some  $\gamma_n > 1$  would imply, by the repulsion of  $x = 1$ , the total mass to be infinite; then, necessarily  $\gamma_n < 1$ . Third and last, the restriction expressed with the inequality in (14) must hold; indeed, if we substitute the mass ratios (29) in (14), we find that the inequality is equivalent to  $\gamma_n < 1$ , which, as we have just seen, holds. With this, all supertasks included in Pérez Laraudogoitia's general model are clearly indeterministic processes and, specifically, every instant prior to their critical instant is an evolution node.

It is interesting to note that the results obtained in this section under the general model G $\gamma$ 1 could not have been obtained under the general model presented in Pérez

Laraudogoitia (2007, pp. 725-6)<sup>1</sup> nor under the general model presented in Atkinson & Johnson (2009, pp. 946-50). All three generate indeterminism in infinite systems of particles under the final state of relative rest to which these particles come. Nevertheless, the last two, the only ones available until now in the literature, impose an initial state in which all the particles except one are at rest. This forces these general models to cover systems in which mass ratios of adjoining particles cannot correspond to those of STMNC or of those analysed in Pérez Laraudogoitia's model.

#### 4. *Are the critical instant and its subsequent instants evolution nodes?*

We analysed the possibility of the critical instant of STMNC (and of similar systems) and its later instants being evolution nodes. The general model Gy1 designed in the previous section does not work for this purpose, because at the instants we want to analyse we do not have an infinite set of particles at rest (not at least under the most evident evolution). The general model recently presented in Atkinson & Johnson (2009, pp. 942-6, *not* the same as the one mentioned in the previous section) can help us to approach our aim. Even so, we confined our analysis to a specific range of systems included in the general model designed by Atkinson and Johnson, largely because it ranges so widely that little can be said of what interests us here (which is not to say that such breadth of scope is without interest).

The idea on which this model is based, and which suggests that the critical instant of STMNC (and similar supertasks) and its later instants are evolution nodes, is the following. Take STMNC by way of example. The supertask starts with a first particle in motion and the other particles at rest. Could the final state of STMNC also be the result of the performance of a supertask starting from some other initial state? The answer, as we will see below, is affirmative (at least for the range of cases we cover, including STMNC). In other words, the temporal inversion of STMNC (and similar supertasks) is seen to be an indeterministic process because, starting from the critical instant, it has at least two possible courses of evolutions: the performance of the temporal inversion of STMNC or the performance of the temporal inversion of the supertask with a different initial state.

For a more intuitive understanding of this possible kind of indeterminism, it is a good idea to go back to ST and Gy1. To begin with, note that ST is not only indeterministic due to the infinite subset of particles at relative rest capable of spontaneously performing the reversed process of ST. It is also indeterministic because, in this reversed process of ST, velocity  $v$  can take any value. So, in addition to the two possibilities already mentioned (performing the temporal inversion of ST or remaining at rest), there is in fact an infinite number of possible evolutions: the spontaneous performance of the temporal inversion of ST can occur with any value for velocity  $v$ . The same kind of indeterminism is also found, in precise terms, in the processes that Gy1

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<sup>1</sup> Note that, though they belong to the same paper, this general model is not the same as the one analysed in previous paragraphs. The one mentioned here covers a range of supertasks in which the particles end up with velocities  $v_n'' = v_{n+1}''$  whereas the one analysed in previous paragraphs covers a range in which particles end up with velocities  $v_n'' < v_{n+1}''$ .

covers. Here the possible reversed processes may be identified with the value of  $v_0'$  (on which the other velocities depend). As (16) makes clear, the positions of particles at rest before the spontaneous performance of the reversed processes do not depend on  $v_0'$ . Therefore,  $v_0'$  can take any value (given the location of the particles, the direction of this velocity will always be the same).

Although Atkinson and Johnson's general model enables us to prove (as we show below) the existence of indeterministic evolutions of some systems that perform the reversed processes of the supertasks with order type  $\omega$  whose initial state consists of one particle in motion while the other particles are at rest (STMNC included), we have not yet proved, strictly speaking, the existence of indeterministic evolutions of the direct processes of the same supertasks (not, at least, from their critical instant on). The only thing that has been proved (which is, of course, of great value) is the existence of infinite solutions for the velocities that particles can take by means of the infinite sequence of perfectly elastic collisions; that there is an infinite set of initial velocities that would lead the particles to the same unique set of final velocities, if the sequence of collisions were achieved. But this does not imply that the sequence of elastic collisions required is feasible or consistent. Indeed, Atkinson and Johnson (2009, p. 956) acknowledge that their general model does not specify the positions particles can take. And as we shall also see, positions play an important role in the difficulties encountered in proving indeterminism in these systems. Not all positions are valid, and it may be that none is.

In short, under this possible form of indeterminism we cannot be sure that the critical instant of supertask STMNC (the process not reversed in time) is an evolution node. Even so, Atkinson and Johnson's idea certainly helps to clarify the issue. Specifically, we are looking to answer the following question:

(C) Does the state of the system STMNC (and similar supertasks with order type  $\omega$ ) in its critical instant correspond exactly to the state of some other supertask of order type  $\omega^*$  in its critical instant, in such a way that the critical instant of STMNC (of the process not reversed in time) is an evolution node?

Clearly, an affirmative answer would tip the answer to (A) to the negative. Here, for the cases we cover, we specify the difficulties involved in giving an affirmative answer.

Our analysis only covers the cases included in the following general model, which we call G $\gamma$ 2. In this model, the mass ratio of each pair of adjoining particles is such that  $\gamma_n = m_{n+1}/m_n \neq m_{n+2}/m_{n+1} = \gamma_{n+1}$ . Additionally, to verify that the chain of collisions is strictly sequential, we limited our model to the cases in which every  $\gamma_n < 1$  and the final velocities were  $v_0'' < v_1'' < v_2'' < \dots < v_n'' < \dots$ .

Our reference case consists of a supertask in which, initially,  $P_0$  is in motion at velocity  $v_0' = \Omega > 0$  approaching  $P_1$  which is at rest, as are all the other particles, located such that, taken together, they possess an accumulation point. Generally, we know, by linear momentum and energy conservation in an elastic collision between particles  $P_n$  and  $P_{n+1}$ , that velocities resulting from the collision can be expressed in terms of the velocities before the collisions and the mass ratio, as follows:

$$v_n'' = \frac{1-\gamma_n}{1+\gamma_n} v_n' + \frac{2\gamma_n}{1+\gamma_n} v_{n+1} \quad (30)$$

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{2}{1+\gamma_n} v_n' - \frac{1-\gamma_n}{1+\gamma_n} v_{n+1} \quad (31)$$

As, for the reference case,  $v_{n+1} = 0 \forall n$  and  $v_0' = \Omega$ , then, from (30),

$$v_0'' = \frac{1-\gamma_0}{1+\gamma_0} \Omega \quad (32)$$

while, from (31), we know that

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{2^{n+1}}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1}) \cdots (1+\gamma_0)} \Omega$$

which, considering (31) and (32), leads us to

$$v_n'' = \frac{2^n(1-\gamma_n)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1}) \cdots (1+\gamma_0)} \Omega \quad (33)$$

From (33) we find that the condition imposed (namely, that  $v_n'' < v_{n+1}'$ ), is equivalent to

$$\gamma_{n+1} < \frac{1+\gamma_n}{3-\gamma_n} \quad (34)$$

which is the same as restriction (14) obtained for G $\gamma$ 1. So, the general model G $\gamma$ 2 also only covers cases where this relation between mass ratios holds.

This is so far the entire model for the reference case. Now, what we need are the other initial conditions that lead the system to the same final state, for the critical instant of the temporal inversion of this supertask to be an evolution node. So, from (31)

$$\begin{aligned} v_1' &= \frac{2}{1+\gamma_0} v_0' - \frac{1-\gamma_0}{1+\gamma_0} v_1 \\ v_2' &= \frac{2}{1+\gamma_1} \left( \frac{2}{1+\gamma_0} v_0' - \frac{1-\gamma_0}{1+\gamma_0} v_1 \right) - \frac{1-\gamma_1}{1+\gamma_1} v_2 \\ v_3' &= \frac{2}{1+\gamma_2} \left( \frac{2}{1+\gamma_1} \left( \frac{2}{1+\gamma_0} v_0' - \frac{1-\gamma_0}{1+\gamma_0} v_1 \right) - \frac{1-\gamma_1}{1+\gamma_1} v_2 \right) - \frac{1-\gamma_2}{1+\gamma_2} v_3 \\ &\quad \vdots \end{aligned}$$

$$v_{n+1}' = \frac{2^{n+1}}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_0)} v_0' \left( \frac{2^n(1-\gamma_0)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_0)} v_1 \right. \\ \left. + \frac{2^{n-1}(1-\gamma_1)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_1)} v_2 + \cdots + \frac{2(1-\gamma_{n-1})}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})} v_n + \frac{(1-\gamma_n)}{(1+\gamma_n)} v_{n+1} \right) \tag{35}$$

On the other hand, from (30) we know that  $v_{n+1} = \frac{1+\gamma_n}{2\gamma_n} v_n' - \frac{1-\gamma_n}{2\gamma_n} v_n'$ , which, substituting (32) in it, means that

$$v_1 = \frac{1-\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0} (\Omega - v_0') \tag{36}$$

and substituting (33) and (35), that

$$v_{n+2} = \frac{2^n(1-\gamma_{n+1})}{\gamma_{n+1}(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_0)} (\Omega - v_0') + \frac{1-\gamma_{n+1}}{2\gamma_{n+1}} \left( \frac{2^n(1-\gamma_0)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_0)} v_1 \right. \\ \left. + \frac{2^{n-1}(1-\gamma_1)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\cdots(1+\gamma_1)} v_2 + \cdots + \frac{2(1-\gamma_{n-1})}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})} v_n + \frac{(1-\gamma_n)}{(1+\gamma_n)} v_{n+1} \right) \tag{37}$$

Now, to obtain a general expression of  $v_{n+3}$  from (37) is a simple step. If we separate the addend which is multiplied by  $v_{n+2}$  in this expression of  $v_{n+3}$ , it is clear that the rest of the expression is a function of  $v_1, v_2, \dots$ , and  $v_{n+1}$ , as is the general expression of  $v_{n+2}$  (37). Indeed, now it is also easy to see that it may be rewritten exclusively in terms of  $v_{n+2}$ , since it contains exactly the terms of  $v_{n+2}$ , so that  $v_{n+3}$  may be written, now with the addend rewritten exclusively in terms of  $v_{n+2}$  plus the addend originally separated, as follows:

$$v_{n+3} = \frac{2\gamma_{n+1}(1-\gamma_{n+2})}{\gamma_{n+2}(1+\gamma_{n+1})(1-\gamma_{n+1})} v_{n+2} + \frac{(1-\gamma_{n+2})(1-\gamma_{n+1})}{2\gamma_{n+2}(1+\gamma_{n+1})} v_{n+2} = \frac{(1-\gamma_{n+2})(1+\gamma_{n+1})}{2\gamma_{n+2}(1-\gamma_{n+1})} v_{n+2} \tag{38}$$

Moreover, from (36) and (37),  $v_2 = \frac{(1-\gamma_1)(1+\gamma_0)}{2\gamma_1(1+\gamma_0)} v_1$ ; so then we know, better than (38), that

$$v_{n+2} = \frac{(1-\gamma_{n+1})(1+\gamma_n)}{2\gamma_{n+1}(1-\gamma_n)} v_{n+1} \tag{39}$$

Therefore, with (36) and (39), we can already express the initial velocity for every particle  $P_{n+1}$  in terms of the initial velocity of particle  $P_0$  in the reference case,  $\Omega$ , and of the velocity of the same particle in each of the remaining cases,  $v_0'$ :

$$\begin{aligned}
v_1 &= \frac{1-\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0}(\Omega - v_0) \\
v_2 &= \frac{(1-\gamma_1)(1+\gamma_0)}{2^2\gamma_1\gamma_0}(\Omega - v_0) \\
v_3 &= \frac{(1-\gamma_2)(1+\gamma_1)(1+\gamma_0)}{2^3\gamma_2\gamma_1\gamma_0}(\Omega - v_0) \\
&\vdots \\
v_{n+2} &= \left(\frac{1-\gamma_{n+1}}{2^{n+2}\gamma_{n+1}}\right)\left(\frac{1+\gamma_n}{\gamma_n}\right)\left(\frac{1+\gamma_{n-1}}{\gamma_{n-1}}\right)\dots\left(\frac{1+\gamma_0}{\gamma_0}\right)(\Omega - v_0) \tag{40}
\end{aligned}$$

From (40)  $v_0' \geq \Omega$  is obviously convenient if the system is to perform a supertask successfully. Since every mass ratio  $\gamma_n < 1$ , the other factors expressed in (40) –all those different from  $(\Omega - v_0)$ – are greater than zero. Then, if  $v_0' > \Omega$ , the sign of  $v_{n+1}$  is minus. Considering this, it also helps if  $v_{n+1} > v_{n+2} > v_{n+3} > \dots$ , but since every velocity has a minus sign, it suffices to know that  $|v_{n+1}| < |v_{n+2}| < |v_{n+3}| < \dots$ , which will hold when  $|v_{n+1}/v_{n+2}| < 1 \forall n$ . But, from (40), we know that this inequality is equivalent to  $\gamma_{n+1} < \frac{1+\gamma_{n+1}}{3-\gamma_{n+1}}$ , which is the same as (34), so it holds for the entire range of systems this general model covers. Thus, we may be sure it is possible for every pair of adjoining particles to reach each other at some instant in such a way that the infinite set of particles performs a consistent and strictly sequential supertask.

To see that this is feasible, it is not necessary to specify the positions in which particles must locate initially. It is sufficient to show that there are initial conditions (positions included) consistent with the sequence of collisions we have specified. The initial conditions that show this are precisely the ones that are most interesting here: the temporal inversion of the final states that correspond to some time after the completion of the reversed supertasks. Let us look, then, to the reversed processes. Clearly, if the initial positions of particles (for the direct process) have an accumulation point, then the reference case  $v_0' = \Omega$  leads consistently to the sequence of collisions the model specifies; its temporal inversion is also, then, a process consistent with the reversed sequence of collisions. Now, if we assume the state of the critical instant of the reference case reversed in time as an initial condition of the temporal inversion of the remaining cases (supertasks, now with order type  $\omega^*$ , and with any value  $v_0' \geq \Omega$ ), and assume likewise that the particles spontaneously begin to collide with the reversed pattern specified for  $G\gamma 2$ , then  $P_{n+1}$  must acquire velocity  $-v_{n+1}$  (that is, the inverse of the one expressed in (40), which turns out to be positive) before  $P_n$  acquires velocity  $-v_n$  (which also turns out to be positive). Since  $-v_n < -v_{n+1}$  and  $P_n$  acquires  $-v_n$  at some  $x$ -position which is less than the  $x$ -position at which  $P_{n+1}$  acquires  $-v_{n+1}$ , then  $P_n$  cannot reach  $P_{n+1}$  again. This is so, of course, without loss of generality: during the reversed process, once a particle acquires its final velocity (the reversed initial velocity (40)), it will not collide with any other particle. Thus, the free path particles have during the



reversed process for any  $v_0' \geq \Omega$  is exactly the same free path they have during the direct process. Therefore, although we do not know accurately which initial positions particles in  $G\gamma 2$  should take, we are sure that there are some sets of positions consistent with the strict sequence of collisions specified.

To sum up, all supertasks covered by general model  $G\gamma 2$  may be described as follows. Take an infinite number of particles  $P_0, P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n, \dots$  in one-dimensional space (the  $x$ -axis) in that order: the position of each  $P_n$  is always an  $x$ -position less than the  $x$ -position at which each  $P_{n+1}$  is located (except when they collide, when they have the same position). Initially particle  $P_0$  moves at velocity  $v_0' \geq \Omega$  (any real value greater than zero) whereas each of the other particles is moving at velocity  $v_{n+1}$  as expressed in (40). So  $P_1$  will collide only once with  $P_2$ , some time later  $P_2$  will collide only once with  $P_3$ , and, in general and sequentially,  $P_n$  will collide only once with  $P_{n+1}$ . When the supertask is performed successfully, each particle will have a velocity  $v_n''$  as expressed in (33). Now, velocities as expressed in (33) are exclusively functions of  $\Omega$ . Thus, for each  $\Omega$  taken, there is an infinite number of possibilities (any  $v_0' \geq \Omega$ ) in which the particles have the precise velocities and positions in order to perform some different sequential supertask with the same final state.

Once we have this general model, we may return to the supertask STMNC. Clearly, considering what we have just obtained, the temporal inversion of STMNC is an indeterministic process. In precise terms, the critical instant of the temporal inversion of STMNC is an evolution node. Nevertheless, we cannot assure the same for the direct process. We are not yet in a position to give an affirmative answer to (C).

In any case, under the indeterminism generated by  $G\gamma 2$ , there are clearly obstacles to the critical instant of STMNC (for the direct process) and its subsequent instants being evolution nodes. In the states after the performance of STMNC (and similar supertasks) particles have velocities  $v_1'' < v_2'' < v_3'' < \dots < v_n'' < \dots$ ; if the temporal inversion of some other supertask with order type  $\omega$  has such velocities in its initial state, then, from (33), the final velocities of its direct process must be

$$v_n'' = -\frac{2^n(1-\gamma_n)}{(1+\gamma_n)(1+\gamma_{n-1})\dots(1+\gamma_0)}\Omega \tag{41}$$

Therefore, in such a supertask

$$v_1'' > v_2'' > v_3'' > \dots > v_n'' > \dots \tag{42}$$

From the procedure followed to obtain (40), the initial velocities required for the particles to acquire such a final state, by a strict sequence of binary collisions, are

$$v_1 = -\frac{1-\gamma_0}{2\gamma_0}(\Omega + v_0') \tag{43}$$

$$v_{n+2} = -\left(\frac{1-\gamma_{n+1}}{2^{n+2}\gamma_{n+1}}\right)\left(\frac{1+\gamma_n}{\gamma_n}\right)\left(\frac{1+\gamma_{n-1}}{\gamma_{n-1}}\right)\dots\left(\frac{1+\gamma_0}{\gamma_0}\right)(\Omega + v_0')$$

If we assume that the sequence of collisions occurs in such a way that each particle  $P_n$  continues at its final velocity  $v_n''$  until the end of the supertask, then, from (43), we

can use the same argument given for  $G\gamma 2$  to show the existence of initial conditions (positions included) that lead to the successful performance of the supertask. Nevertheless, the problem with a supertask with such features is that considering the particles continue at velocity  $v_n''$  until the end of the supertask is an unwarranted assumption.

Let us see why. From (41) and (42) it is clear that, as  $v_{n+1}$  is greater in magnitude than  $v_n$ , particle  $P_{n+1}$  might collide with  $P_n$  before the rest of the particles could reach the stipulated final velocities; in other words, the stipulated final state of velocities the particles sequentially acquire could suddenly be lost before this final state is definitively achieved, through some collision between particles that have already obtained their stipulated final velocity. Of course, this situation could be solved by adding a certain distance between the particles. The problem with this suggestion is that adding distance between particles should set the system capable of performing the supertask successfully; but this is not however certain to do so. Thus, a difficulty needs to be solved: the positions of particles must be such that the system keeps the final velocities sequentially acquired (expressed in (41)) until the supertask is completely performed, with the certainty that this supertask can in fact be completed.

There is one more difficulty. Suppose that the difficulty expressed in the previous paragraph is solved, and that we know specifically a valid range of initial positions with their corresponding final velocities for such a supertask. Does some set of these valid final positions for such a supertask correspond exactly to some set of valid final positions for supertasks of the same kind of STMNC (the ones that initially have an infinite subset of particles at relative rest and whose total mass is finite)? Clearly, we need an affirmative answer to show the indeterminism  $G\gamma 2$  suggests is present in supertasks of the same kind of STMNC. Nevertheless, it may well be that the correct answer is a negative.

Definitively, we cannot be sure that under the mechanism of indeterminism specified by Atkinson and Johnson the system that performs STMNC is indeterministic once the supertask is finished, that some instants from its critical instant on are evolution nodes. This very interesting issue remains to be settled.

### 5. Conclusion

Although not an exhaustive answer to (B), the answer we give is relevant. We saw that for the supertask STMNC (and for supertasks of the same kind analysed herein) every instant prior to its critical instant is an evolution node. This is not only important to (A), but also to some supertasks presented in the literature as presumably deterministic, since it revealed that these supertasks are in fact indeterministic. On the other hand, the incomplete part of our answer is for the critical instant and instants coming after it. We remain unsure about whether they are, or are not, evolution nodes. Nevertheless, the difficulties that have to be solved to show they are evolution nodes, for a range of cases, have been specified, at least under the indeterminism generated by the general model  $G\gamma 2$ . To solve these difficulties would tip the answer to (A) to the nega-

tive, and would make Atkinson and Johnson's suggestion, namely, that indeterminism in supertasks is very radical, a fact.

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**Luis Carlos MEDINA** is a researcher at the Cátedra Miguel Sánchez-Mazas of the University of the Basque Country. His main interests lie in the field of philosophy of physics, particularly in the philosophy of classical mechanics.

**ADDRESS:** Cátedra Sánchez-Mazas. Av. Alcalde Elosegi 275, 20015 Donostia-San Sebastián. Spain. E-mail: lamedina001@ehu.es