Notice the difference here from the gravitational case. Our inner experiences are not, really, up and down from one another. No harm then in dissociating our inner experience of down from the real down next relation in the world and then identifying the latter with a relation characterized in terms of the gradient of the gravitational potential. But inner experiences are really later and earlier than one another and our 'pretty simple, immediate experience' of this relation cannot without impurity be detached in nearly a causally induced secondary quality not properly thought of as a direct experience of the real allerness relation which exists in the world only as an epistemologically characterize relation.

The following quote from Eddington suggests that it is something like this argument which is at the root of many of the wrongly felt but not very well expressed objections to the possibility of the entropic theory. It is important to note that this quote is from one of the earliest expositions of the entropic theory of time direction as I have described it.

In any attempt to bridge the domain of experience belonging to the spiritual and physical natures of our nature Time occupies the key position. We have already referred to its dual entry into our consciousness—through the sense organs which relate it to the other realities of the physical world, and directly through a kind of private door into the mind... Whilst the physicist would generally say that the nature of this familiar time is really a correlation of states, and its colour is really electromagnetic wavelength, I do not think he would say that the familiar moving on of time is real as an energy-gradient,... Our trouble is that we have to associate two things, both of which we more or less understand, and, as so many understand them, they are utterly different. It is almost to pretend that we are in ignorance of the nature or organization of the external world in the same way that we are ignorant of the intrinsic nature of potential. It is about to pretend that we have no justifiable conception of 'becoming' in the external world. This dynamic quality—the significance which makes a difference from future to past—has to do much more than pull a trigger of sorts. It is so welded into our consciousness that a moving of time is a condition of consciousness. We have direct insight into becoming which swells aside all symbolic knowledge as on an inferior plane. If I grasp the notion of becoming because I myself exist, I grasp the notion of becoming because I myself become. It is the immense ego of all which it all becomes.

I don't pretend to understand all that Eddington is saying here, nor to be able to give a really coherent version of my own arguments above. I do think, however, that it is very close that our ultimate view of the world will require a total and careful weaving together of the naturalistic reduction of science which proceeds by theoretical identification with the conceptual reduction of philosophy—which proceeds by epistemological analysis. Until we have such a systematic overall account I think that the ultimate status of an entropic theory of time order will be in doubt.

the world is such as to make appropriate a notion of causality associated with the earlier-to-later temporal direction rather than its reverse; (ii) we can conceive of a world in which a notion of causality associated with the opposite direction would have been more appropriate and, so long as we conceive ourselves as mere observers of such a world, there is no particular conceptual difficulty about the conception of a backwards causation. There are, of course, regions of which we are mere observers, in which we cannot intervene: the heavens, for example. Since Newton, we have learned to apply the same causal laws to events in this region. In earlier times it was usually assumed that a quite different system of laws must operate there. It could have turned out that this was right; and it then could also have turned out that the system of laws we need to explain events involving the celestial bodies required a notion of causality associated with the temporal direction from later to earlier.

When, however, we consider ourselves as agents, and consider causal laws governing events in which we can intervene, the notion of backwards causality seems to generate difficulties. If an event $C$ is considered as the cause of a preceding event $D$, then it would be open to us to bring about $C$ in order that the event $D$ should have occurred. But the conception of doing something in that direction, rather, we should have to substitute a system of explanations of events in terms of the processes that led back to them from some subsequent moment. If through some extraordinary chance we, in this world, could consider events from the standpoint of the microscopic, the unpredictability would disappear theoretically ("in principle") although not in practice; but we should be left—so long as we continued to try to give casual explanations on the basis of what leads up to an event—without inextricable coincidences. 'In principle' we would, by observing the movements of the molecules of the soil, predict that at a certain moment they were going to collide in such a way as to combine to give a slight impulse to the apple, and that this impulse would be progressively reinforced by other molecules along a certain path, so as to cause the apple to accelerate in such a way that it would end up striking the apple tree. But not only could we not make such predictions in practice; the fact that the 'random' movements of the molecules should happen to combine in just such a way so as to strike the apple is so unlikely that it would seem absurd to attempt to explain it in such a way. We should, then, that so far as the concept of cause is measured by mere observers rather than agents is concerned, the following two theses hold: (i)
drowned; this is the most natural thing in the world. Still, there are things which is very natural to say which make no sense; there are actions which cannot naturally be performed with intention—which could not be fulfilled. Are the Jewish theologians right in stigmatizing my prayer as blasphemyous?

They characterize my prayer as a motif that, if my son has drowned, God should make him not have drowned. But why should they view it as asking anything more self-contradictory than a prayer for the future? If, before the ship set sail, I had prayed that my son should make a safe crossing, I should not have been praying that, if my son was going to drown, God should have made him not to go down. Here we stumble on a well-known awkwardness of language. There is a use of the future tense to express present tendencies: English speakers sometimes print announcements of the form 'The marriage this was arranged between X and Y will not now take place'. If someone did not understand the use of the future tense to express present tendencies, he might be surprised by this 'now'; he might say, 'Of course it will not take place now: either is is taking place now, or it will take place later'. The presence of the 'now' introduces a use of the future tense according to which, if anyone had said earlier, 'They are going to get married,' he would have been right, even though their marriage never subsequently occurred. If, on the other hand, someone had offered a bet which he expressed by saying, 'I bet you will not be married on that date,' this 'will' would normally be understood as expressing the genuine future tense, the future tense so used that what happens on the future date is the decisive test for truth or falsity, irrespective of how things looked at the time of making the bet, or at any intervening time. The future tense that I was using, and that will be used throughout this paper, is intended to be understood as this genuine future tense.

With this expectation, I will repeat what, before the ship sailed, I pray that my son will make the crossing safely. I am not praying that God should perform the logically impossible feat of making what will happen not happen (that is, not be-going-to-happen); I am simply praying that it will not happen. To put it another way: I am not asking God that He should now make what is going to happen not going to happen; I am asking that He will at a future time make something not to happen at that time. And similarly with my retrospective prayer. Assuming that I am not asking for a miracle—asking that, if my son has died, he should now be brought to life again—I do not have to be asking for a logical impossibility. I am not asking God that, even if my son has drowned, He should now make him not to drown; I am asking that, at the time of the disaster, He should now have made my son not to drown at that time. The former interpretation would indeed be required if the list of survivors had been read out over the radio, my son's name had been on it, and I had not envisaged the possibility of a mistake on the part of the news service; but in my ignorance of whether he was drowned or not, my prayer will have another interpretation.

But this still involves my trying to affect the past. On this second interpretation, I am trying to pray for my son now to bring it about that the God made something not to happen; and is that this absurd? In this particular case, I can provide a rationale for my action—that is why I picked this example—but the question can be raised whether it is not a bad example, on the ground that it is the only kind for which a rationale could be given. The ratio is this. When I pray for the future, my prayer makes sense because I know that, at the time about which I am praying, God will remember my prayer, and may then grant it. But God knows everything, both what has happened and what is going to happen. So my retrospective prayer makes sense too, because, at the time about which I am praying, God knew that I was going to make this prayer, and may then have granted it. So it seems relevant to ask whether foreknowledge of the kind can meaningfully be attributed only to God, in which case the example will be of a quite special kind, from which it would be illegitimate to generalize, or whether it could be attributed to human beings, in which case our example will not be of purely theological interest.

I have heard three opinions expressed on this point. The first, held by Russell and Ayer, is that foreknowledge is simply the mirror image of memory, to be explained in just the same words as memory save that 'future' replaces 'past', and so forth, and as such, conceptually unsophisticated: we do not have the faculty but we perfectly well might. The second is a view held by a school of Dominican theologians. It is that God's knowledge of the future should be compared rather to a man's knowledge of what is going to happen, when this lies in his intention to make it happen. For example, God knows that I am going to pray that my son may not have drowned; because He is going to make me pray so. This leads to the theologians' and philosophically disagreeable conclusion that everything that happens is directly effected by God; and that human freedom is therefore confined to wholly interior movements of the will. This is the view adopted by Wigenstein in the Tractatus, and there expressed by the statement 'The world is independent of my will'. On this view, God's foreknowledge is knowledge of a type that human beings do have; it would, however, be difficult to construct a non-theological example of an action intelligently designed to affect the past by exploiting this alleged parallelism. The third view is that which it is difficult to make a clear sense. It is that foreknowledge is something that can be meaningfully ascribed only to God (or perhaps also to He directly influences the prophets; but again, perhaps these would be regarded not as themselves possessing this knowledge, but only as the instruments of
not, all precautions you take are superfluous. Therefore it is pointless to take precautions.' This belief was extended even to particular bombs. If a bomb was going to kill you, then it 'had my number on it', and there was no point in my attempting to take precautions against being killed by that bomb: if it did not have my number on it, then of course precautions were pointless too. I shall take it for granted that no one wants to accept this argument as cogent. But the argument is formally quite parallel to the argument supposed to show that it is pointless to attempt to affect the past; only the terms are different. Someone may say, 'But it is just the difference in tense that makes the difference between the two arguments. Your son has either already been drowned or else already been saved, whereas you haven’t yet been killed in the raid, and you haven’t yet come through it.' But this is just to reiterate that the one argument is about the past and the other about the future: we want to know what, if anything, there is in this fact which makes the one valid, the other invalid. The best way of asking this question is to ask, 'What refutation is there of the fatalist argument, to which a quite parallel refutation of the argument to show that we cannot affect the past could not be constructed?'

Let us consider the fatalist argument in detail. It opens with a tautology, 'Either you are going to be killed in the raid or you are not'. As is well known, some philosophers have attempted to escape the fatalist conclusion by faulting the argument at this first step, by denying that this two-valued logic applies to statements about contingents. Although this matter is worth investigating in detail, I have no time to go into it here, so I will put the main point very briefly. Those who deny that statements about future contingents need be either true or false are under the necessity to explain the meaning of those statements in some way; they usually attempt to do so by saying something like this: such a statement is not true or false now, but becomes true or false at the time to which it refers. But if this is said, then the fatalist argument can be reconstructed by replacing the opening tautology by the assertion 'Either the statement “Yes you will be killed in this raid” is going to become true, or it is going to become false'. The only way in which it can be consistently maintained not only that the law of excluded middle does not hold for statements about the future, but that there is no other logically necessary statement which will serve the same purpose of getting the fatalist argument off the ground, is to deny that there is, or could be, what I called a ‘genuine’ future tense at all; to maintain that the only intelligible use of the future tense is to express present tendencies. I think that most people would be prepared to reject this as unacceptable, and here, for lack of space, I shall simply assume that it is true. In fact, it is not quite easy to refute someone who consistently adopts this position; of course, it is always much easier to
that they can both be true only when a stronger consequence follows, namely, that not only am I as a matter of fact taking precautions to keep you, but that I could not fail to take them, that it was in my power to refrain from taking them. But, as I have said, it is not my purpose here to inquire whether there are such uses of "if" or whether, if so, they are important or typical uses. Now let us say that it is correct to say to you that you are capable of being efficacious in preventing my death in the raid if the two conditional statements are true that, if I take them, I shall not be killed in the raid, and that, if I do not take them, I shall be killed in the raid. Then, since, as we have seen, the truth of these two statements is quite compatible with the truth of the statement that, if I do not take precautions, I shall not be killed, the truth of this latter statement cannot be used to clear the truth of your taking precautions that will not be effective in preventing my death.

Thus, briefly, my method of rebutting the fatalist is to allow him to infer from 'You will not be killed' to 'If you do not take precautions, you will not be killed'; but to point out that, on any sense of 'if' on which this inference is valid, it is impossible to pass from 'If you do not take precautions, you will not be killed' to 'Your taking precautions will not be effective in preventing your death'. For this to be possible, the truth of 'If you do not take precautions, you will not be killed' would have to be incompatible with the truth of 'If you take precautions, you will be killed'; for, on the sense of 'if' on which the first step was justified, these would not be incompatible. I prefer to put the matter this way than to make such a statement as the sense of 'if' on which these two are indeed incompatible, but on which the first step is unjustified, because it is monstrously difficult to elucidate such a sense of 'if'.

Having arrived at a formulation of the fallacy of the fatalist argument, let us now consider whether the parallel argument to demonstrate the absurdity of attempting to bring about the past is fallacious in the same way. I will abandon the theological example in favour of a magical one. Suppose we come across a tribe who have the following custom. Every second year the young men of the tribe are sent, as part of their initiation ritual, on a lion hunt: they have to prove their manhood. They travel for two days, hunt lions for two days, and spend two days on the return journey; observers go with them, and report to the chief upon their return whether the young men acquired themselves with bravery or not. The people of the tribe believe that various ceremonies, carried out by the chief, influence the weather, the crops, and so forth. I do not want these ceremonies to be thought of as religious rites, intended to dispel the gods favourably towards them, but simply as performed on the back of a wholly mistaken system of causal beliefs. While in the young men are away from the village the chief performs ceremonies—
dances, let us say—intended to cause the young men to act bravely. We notice that he continues to perform these dances for the whole six days that the party is away, that is to say, for two days during which the events that the dancing is supposed to influence have already taken place. Now there is generally thought to be a special absurdity in the idea of affecting the past, much greater than the absurdity of believing that the performance of a dance can influence the behaviour of a man two days' journey away; so we ought to be able to persuade the chief of the absurdity of his continuing to dance after the first four days without questioning his general system of causal beliefs. How are we going to do it?

Since the absurdity in question is alleged to be a logical absurdity, it must be capable of being seen to be absurd however things turn out; so I am entitled to suppose that things go as badly for us, who are trying to persuade the chief of this absurdity, as they can go; we ought still to be able to persuade him. We first point out to him that he would not think of continuing to perform the dances after the hunting party has returned; he agrees to that, but replies that that is because at that time he knows whether the young men have been brave or not, so there is no longer any point in trying to bring it about that they have been. It is irrelevant, he says, that during the last two days of the dancing they have already either been brave or cowardly; there is still a point in his trying to make them have been brave, because he does not yet know which they have been. We then say that it can only be the first four days of the dancing which could possibly affect the young men's performance; but he replies that experience is against that. There was for several years a chief who thought as we did, and danced for the first four days only; the results were disastrous. On two other occasions, he himself fell ill after four days of dancing and was unable to continue, and again, when the hunting party returned, it proved that the young men had behaved as we supposed.

The brief digression into fatalism was occasioned by our noticing that the standard argument against attempting to affect the past was a precise analogue of the usual fatalist argument against attempting to affect the future. Having diagnosed the fallacy in the fatalist argument, my announced intention was to discover whether there was not a similar fallacy in the standard argument against affecting the past. And it indeed appears to me that there is. We say to the chief, "Why go on dancing now? Either the young men have already been brave, or they have already been cowardly. If they have been brave, then they have been brave whether you dance or not. If they have been cowardly, then they have been cowardly whether you dance or not. If they have not been brave, then your dancing will not be effective in making them have been brave, since they have been brave even if you do not dance. And if they have not been brave, then your dancing will certainly not be effective."

Thus your continuing to dance will in the one case be superfluous, and in the other fruitless: in neither case is there any point in your continuing to dance. The chief can reply in exactly the way in which we replied to him above: He can say, "If they have been brave, then indeed there is a sense in which it will be true to say that, even if I do not dance, they will have been brave; but this is not incompatible with its also being true to say that, if I do not dance, they will not have been brave. Now what saying that my continuing to dance is effective in causing them to have been brave amounts to is that it is true both that, if I go on dancing, they have been brave, and that, if I do not dance, they have not been brave. I have relevant empirical grounds for believing both these two statements to be true, and neither is incompatible with the truth of the statement that, if I do not dance, they have been brave, although, indeed, I have no reason for believing that statement. Hence, you have not shown that, from the same hypothesis that they have been brave, it follows that the dancing I am going to do will not be effective in making them have been brave; on the contrary, it may well be that, although they have been brave, they have been brave just because I am going to go on dancing; that, if I were not going to go on dancing, they would not have been brave." This reply sounds speculative but cannot be speculative if our answer to the fatalist was correct, because it is an exact analogue of that answer.

We now try the following argument: 'Your knowledge of whether the young men have been brave or not may affect whether you think there is any point in performing the dances; but it cannot really make any difference to the effect the dances have on what has happened. If the dances are capable of bringing it about that the young men have acted bravely, then they ought to be able to do that even after you have learned that the young men have not acted bravely. But that is absurd, for that would mean that the dances can change the past. But if the dances cannot have any effect after you have learned whether the young men have been brave or not, they cannot have any effect before, either; for the mere state of your knowledge cannot make any difference to their efficacy.' Now since the causal beliefs of the two are so different from our own, I could imagine that the chief might simply deny this: he might say that what had an effect on the young men's behaviour was not merely the performance of the dances by the chief as such, but rather their performance by the chief when in a state of ignorance as to the outcome of the hunt. And he might say this, I think there is really no way of dissuading him, short of attacking his whole system of causal belief. But I still will not allow him to say this, because it would make his causal beliefs so different in kind from ours that there would be no moral to draw for our own case. Before going on to consider his reaction to this argument, however, let us first pause to review the situation.
Suppose, then, that he agrees to our suggestion: agrees, that is, that it is his dancing as such that he wants to consider as bringing about the young men's bravery, and not his dancing in ignorance of whether they were brave. If this be his belief, then we may reasonably challenge him to try dancing on some occasion when the hunting party has returned and the observers have reported that the young men have not been brave. Here at last we appear to have hit on something which has no parallel in the case of affecting the future. If someone believes that a certain kind of action is effective in bringing about a subsequent event, I may challenge him to try it on in all possible circumstances: but I cannot demand that he try it out on some occasion when the event is not going to take place, since he cannot identify any such occasion independently of his intention to perform the action. Our knowledge of the future is of two kinds: prediction based on causal law and knowledge in intention. If I think I can predict the non-occurrence of an event, then I cannot consistently also believe that I can do anything to bring it about; that is, I cannot have good grounds for believing, of any action, both that it is in my power to do it, and that it is a condition of the event's occurring. On the other hand, I cannot be asked to perform the action on some occasion when I believe that the event will not take place, where this knowledge lies in my intention to prevent it taking place: for as soon as I accede to the request, I thereby abandon my intention. It would, indeed, be different if we had foreknowledge: someone who thought, like Russell and Ayer, that it is a merely contingent fact that we have memory but not foreknowledge would conclude that the difference I have pointed to does not reveal a genuine asymmetry between past and future, but merely reflects this contingent fact.

If the chief accepts the challenge, and dances when he knows that the young men have not been brave, it seems that he must concede that his dance does not ensure their bravery. There is one other possibility favourable to us. Suppose that he accepts the challenge, but when he comes to try to dance, he unconsciously cannot do so; his limbs simply will not respond. Then we may say: 'It is not your dancing (after the event) which causes them to have been brave, but rather their bravery which makes possible your dancing; your dancing is not, as you thought, an action which it is in your power to do or not to do as you please. So you ought not to say that you dance in the last two days in order to make them have been brave, but that you try to see whether you can dance, in order to find out whether they have been brave.'

It may seem that this is conclusive: for are not these the only two possibilities? Either he does dance, in which case the dancing is proved not to be a sufficient condition of the previous bravery; or he does not, in which case
and the observers have reported that the young men have not acquitted themselves with bravery. He does so, and we claim another weakening of his belief that the dancing is correlated with preceding bravery. But later it turns out that for some reason or other, the observers were lying (say they had been bribed by someone); so after all this is not a counter-example to the law. So we have a third possible outcome. The situation now is this. We challenge the chief to perform the dances whenever he knows that the young men have not been brave, and he accepts the challenge. There are three kinds of outcome: (i) he performs the dances; (ii) he is prevented from performing the dances by some occurrence which has a quite natural explanation totally independent of the behaviour of the young men; and (iii) he performs the dances, but the evidence is that the young men had not been brave. We may imagine that he carries out the experiment repeatedly, and that the outcome always falls into one of these three classes, and that outcome of class (i) is sufficiently infrequent not to destroy his belief that there is a significant correlation between the dancing and the young men's bravery, and outcomes of class (ii) sufficiently infrequent not to make his say that the young men's cow-facade renders him incapable of performing the dances. Thus our experiment has failed.

On the other hand, it has not left everything as before. I have exploited the fact that it is frequently possible to discover that one has been mistaken in some belief about the past. I will do this to the best of my ability. Now before we challenge the chief to perform this series of experiments, his situation was as follows. He was prepared to perform the dancing in order to bring it about that the young men had been brave; but as we have no information about whether they had been brave or not. The rationales of his doing so was simply this: his experience showed that there is a positive correlation between the dancing and the young men's bravery; hence the fact that the dances are being performed makes it more probable that the young men have been brave. But the dancing is something that is in my power to do if I choose: experience does not lead me to recognize it as a possibility that I should try to perform the dances and to fall. Hence it is in my power to do something, the doing of which will make it more probable that the young men have been brave: I have therefore every reason to do it. Once the fact that the dancing is something that I can do, and that I am doing it, the attitude changed: he no longer had a motive to perform the dances. We do not have to assume that he was unaware of the possibility that the observers were lying
attempts to devise a series of experiments to convince the chief of this. I tried to show, however, that these experiments could turn out in such a way as to allow the chief to maintain both beliefs. But in the process a third belief, which we naturally take for granted, has had to be abandoned in order to hang on to the first two: the belief, namely, that it is possible for me to find out what has happened whether the young men have been brave or not, independently of my intentions. The chief no longer thinks that there is any evidence as to whether the young men have been brave or not, the strength of which is unaffected by whether he intends subsequently to perform the dance. And now it appears that there really is a form of incompatibility among these three beliefs, in the sense that it is always possible to carry out a series of actions which will necessarily lead to the abandonment of at least one of them. Here there is an exact parallel with the case of affecting the future. We never combine the beliefs (i) that an action A is positively correlated with the subsequent occurrence of an event B, (ii) that the action A is in my power to perform or not as I choose; and (iii) that I can know whether B is going to take place or not independently of my intention to perform or not to perform the action A. The difference between past and future lies in this: that we think that, of any past event, it is in principle possible for me to know whether or not it took place independently of my present intentions; whereas, for many types of future event, we should admit that we are never going to be in a position to have such knowledge independently of our intentions. (If we had forgotten, this might be different.) If we insist on hanging on to this belief, for all types of past event, then we cannot combine the two beliefs that are required to make sense of doing something in order that some event should have previously taken place; but I do not know any reason why, if things were to turn differently from the way they do now, we could not reasonably abandon the first of these beliefs rather than either of the other two.

My conclusion therefore is this. If anyone were to claim, of some type of action A, (i) that experience gave grounds for holding the probability of A as increasing the probability of the previous occurrence of a type of event E; and (ii) that experience gave no grounds for regarding A as an action which it was ever not in his power to perform—that is, for entertaining the possibility of his trying to perform it and failing—then we could either force him to abandon one or other of these beliefs, or else to abandon the belief (iii) that it was ever possible for him to have knowledge, independent of his intention to perform A or not, of whether an event E had occurred. Now doubtless most normal human beings would rather abandon either (i) or (ii) than (iii), because we have the prejudice that (iii) must hold good for every type of event; but if someone were, in a particular case, more ready to give up (iii) than (i) or (ii), I cannot see any argument we could use to dissuade him. And so long as he was not dissuaded, he could evidently speak of performing A in order that E should have occurred. Of course, he could adopt an intermediate position. It is not necessarily necessary, for him to be able to speak of doing A in order that E should have occurred, that he deny all possibility of his trying and failing to perform A. All that is necessary is that he should not regard his being infirmed, by ordinary means, of the non-occurrence of E as making it more probable that if he tries to perform A, he will fail: for, once he does so regard it, we can claim that he should regard the occurrence of E as making possible the performance of A, in which case his trying to perform A is not a case of trying to bring it about that E has happened, but of finding out whether E has happened. (Much will here depend on whether there is no ordinary causal explanation for the occurrence of E or not.) Now he need not really deny that learning, in the ordinary way, that E has not occurred makes it all the more probable that, if he tries to perform A, he will fail. He may conceive that it makes it so much more probable, while at the same time maintaining that, even when he has grounds for thinking that E has not occurred, his intention to perform A still makes it more probable than it would otherwise be that E has in fact occurred. The attitude of such a man seems paradoxical and unanswerable to us, but I cannot see any rational considerations which would force him out of this position. At least, if there are any, it would be interesting to know what they are: I think that none of the considerations I have mentioned in this paper could serve this purpose.

My theological example thus proves to have been a bad—that is, untypical—example in a way we did not suspect at the time, for it will never lead to a discounting of our ordinary methods of finding out about the past. I may pray that the announcer has made a mistake in not including my son's name on the list of survivors; but once I am convinced that no mistake has been made, I will not go on praying for him to have survived. I should regard this kind of prayer as something to which it was possible to have recourse only when an ordinary doubt about what had happened could be entertained. But just because this example is untypical in this way, it involves no tampering with our ordinary conceptual apparatus at all: this is why it is such a natural thing to do. On my view, then, orthodox Jewish theology is mistaken on this point.

I do not know whether it could be held that part of what people have meant when they have said 'You cannot change the past' is that, for every type of event, it is in principle possible to know whether or not it has happened, independently of one's own intentions. If so, this is not the mere tautology it appears to be, but it does indeed single out what it is that makes us think it impossible to bring about the past.