

Intentions and the Future in Buridan's Bridge

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Abstract: A chapter of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (II, 51) confronts Sancho Panza to a version of the Liar Paradox, also known as Buridan's Bridge (*Sophismata*, chap. 8, sophism 17). The law declares that whoever comes to cross a certain bridge will be hanged at the gallows if they make a false statement as to the goal of their passing, and will pass free if they tell the truth. Then, "one man said that by the oath he took he was going to die upon that gallows that stood there, and for nothing else" ("iba a morir en aquella horca que allí estaba, y no a otra cosa"). The judges face a quandary: if the man passes free, he will have lied, and must be hanged; but if he is hanged, he will have spoken truly, and should be set free. The goal of this paper is twofold: my main motivation is to examine the sense in which the problematic sentence can be considered both true and false, in line with dialetheism (Priest 2006), and with the strict-tolerant account of the Liar (Ripley 2012, Cobreros et al. 2013), but also with earlier remarks by Jacquette (1991), suggestive of a dialetheist analysis. A subordinate goal, more specifically related to the topic of the conference, is to assess whether taking into consideration the utterer's intention is of any help in solving the paradox. Buridan's own solution is that because it pertains to a future contingent, the utterance is neither true nor false (see also Ulatowski 2003). In Cervantes' case, Sancho judges that the utterance is both true and false, and lets the man pass freely. One issue there is whether this outcome is compatible with the man's oath and intention to die at the gallows, assuming the utterance is true. I will discuss whether and how a dialetheist account can deal with this problem.