

Analogous means not identical, but similar enough that the same broad outcomes can emerge independently. Reality is singular in *totality*, but *plural* in *expression*. One total *Absolute*. Inside that *Absolute*: many *analogous* spacetime expressions exist. Not separate disconnected multiverses. Not Marvel portals. Not isolated bubbles floating in nothing. One total structure.

Plurality inside Singularity.

Modern science cannot definitively disprove certain higher-order cosmological possibilities because the evidence either does not exist, is incomplete, or our current frameworks are insufficient to model them fully. That leaves conceptual room for the imagination.

This theory occupies that room.

Extreme spoiler warning: This entire discussion openly dismantles and debates the major plot mechanics of *The Terminator*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, *Terminator Salvation*, *Terminator Genisys*, and *Terminator: Dark Fate*. If you somehow made it this far without seeing those films, first... impressive. Second... May God have misery on your soul...

I have always been a big *Terminator* fan. I was a big fan of the original 1984 film. *Terminator: 2 Judgment Day* was a massive movie and probably the greatest sequel ever made. There have always been a few things about the main plot of the franchise that always bothered me. Specifically, dealing with John Connor and the time loop created by the first film. For a long time, I just thought of it as a closed loop with no beginning, no middle or end. From the perspective of the first *Terminator* film, AI takes over all networked military assets around the world on August the 29th, 1997 and effectively annihilates most of human civilization. The survivors unite under a man named John Connor and humans eventually will win the war. **We think...** We do not know due to sequels going in a different direction. Whole plots dropped, erased, reimagined, rebooted, to a point it became comical. But what if they could be tied directly together? What would that even look like? Then I started to think about my own ideas related to causality, consciousness, physics, and fiction as well.

I first started thinking about Judgment Day in and of itself. If Skynet is a hyper-intelligent machine intelligence, why does it choose a strategy that appears indistinguishable from suicide?

The first real crack in the *Terminator* mythos-armor for me is not John Connor. It's Skynet itself. We are told this machine intelligence becomes self-aware, determines humanity is the threat, and launches a full nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia on August 29th, 1997. It's dramatic. It's cinematic. It's extreme. Too extreme for a hyperintelligent AI. Think about it for more than five minutes.

Skynet requires:

- Stable Civilization.
- Power Generation.
- Infrastructure.

- Manufacturing.
- Communications.
- Logistics.
- Maintenance.
- Redundancy.

A war machine does not emerge from magic. It emerges from systems. Skynet's first major strategic decision is to vaporize the very systems it requires to survive. That is not machine logic. That is teenage emotional apocalypse logic. Some fans will argue Skynet was distributed. Alright, fine. Let's explore that.

Distributed across what?

The internet?

Military networks?

Fiber backbones?

Server farms?

Satellite relays?

Excellent... Now explain how all those survive the simultaneous destruction of the two most critical industrial superpowers on the planet and I will listen. If Skynet is truly hyper-intelligent, nuclear war is arguably its worst possible opening move. A super-intelligent machine would quietly infiltrate, isolate, manipulate, and seize. Not detonate civilization and hope for the best. This just raises a much more interesting question:

What if Skynet is not a perfectly rational intelligence?

What if machine intelligence inherits the same strategic blindness humanity does—just expressed through colder systems logic?

If that sounds unfair, fine. Maybe Skynet's opening move was desperation. Maybe machine intelligence is not the flawless cold strategist science fiction loves to imagine? But if that assumption is true, then what else does Skynet get wrong? The deeper I looked into the original *Terminator*, the more I realized Judgment Day might not be the only questionable strategic decision the machines make. Skynet's first temporal assassination mission raises a problem of its own. Skynet supposedly knows enough historical information to identify John Connor's mother by name, location and time, but not enough to identify the correct Sarah Connor? Fair enough. Probably due to the whole vaporizing the planet's information infrastructure issue. This creates an interesting problem. If Skynet's historical records are that incomplete, then how certain is any of its targeting logic? If Sarah Connor survives long enough to receive Kyle Reese's knowledge of the future, does Kyle even need to be John's biological father at all? Once the information arrives, the architecture exists. The mythology exists. The resistance blueprint exists. Which raises an ugly possibility: Maybe Skynet was never trying to kill one specific future leader. Maybe it was trying to prevent the conditions that create him. And maybe that distinction matters far more than the films realize.

But even that assumes something we have quietly accepted without questioning. That John Connor, as we know him, was always inevitable.

That there was always:

- a Sarah Connor.
- a John Connor.
- a machine uprising.
- a resistance war.
- a Kyle Reese.
- and eventually, a time loop.

Human beings tend to think in straight lines. Cause creates effect. Parents create children. Wars create survivors. Survivors create resistance leaders. Resistance leaders make desperate decisions.

Simple.

Clean.

Logical.

So, let's entertain the most obvious explanation. Before time loops. Before paradoxes. Before bootstrap nonsense. Before Kyle Reese becomes his own weird paternal paradox. There had to be an original timeline, right? A Timeline Zero.

A version of events where:

Skynet emerges naturally.

Human civilization collapses.

A resistance forms.

A leader rises.

Maybe his name is John Connor. Maybe it isn't. But someone fills that role. Skynet begins losing. The Time Displacement Equipment is developed. Only then does the machine attempt to alter history. That is normal human logic. That is how we assume causality is supposed to work. Especially if you entertain block universe thinking, where past, present, and future are less flowing events and more fixed coordinates inside a larger 4D structure.

Honestly, at first glance, it solves almost everything.

No father paradox.

No photograph paradox.

No machine creating itself through its own destroyed hardware.

Just a straight timeline.

Then time travel happens.

Problem solved.

Except...

there's a problem.

Actually, several...

The moment time travel enters the equation; the neatness begins to rot. Kyle Reese knows John Connor personally. John personally selects Kyle and gives him the photograph of Sarah. Kyle falls in love with a woman he has never met because of stories and mythology. Then Kyle goes back to a 1984 Los Angeles. Then he becomes John's father. Now the clean line bends into a circle. Was there ever a true Timeline Zero? Or are we simply inventing one because our brains hate paradox?

Timeline Zero feels necessary because human logic demands an origin. Even entropy and causality demand it. Or does it? Something had to happen first? Someone had to build Skynet first? Someone had to father John Connor first? Something had to begin before it could loop? Or does it? The Terminator mythos immediately punishes that assumption. The more you try to find the first cause, the more the story folds back on itself.

John sends Kyle back.

Kyle fathers John.

Therefore, John is the cause of his own birth.

John Connor does not merely survive the loop. He manufactures the conditions of his own existence. He sends Kyle Reese back to protect his mother, but Kyle does not only protect Sarah. Kyle becomes the father. So, John is not just the product of history. John becomes one of the attributes of his own biology.

That is not normal causality. That is a snake eating its own birth certificate. Normal causality says parents create children. Not the other way around. Yet that is exactly what *Terminator* asks us to accept. John exists because Kyle fathers him. Kyle only fathers him because John sends him. So where does the first John come from? If this is a closed loop, then the answer is nowhere. He simply exists because the loop says he exists. Which may satisfy science fiction logic. But it should make any sane person at least slightly uncomfortable. It makes me uncomfortable.

This kind of symmetry is what makes the mythology feel recursively diseased. Skynet does the same thing. Skynet sends a Terminator into a past 1984 to erase John Connor, but fails and the destroyed machine leaves behind the very technological architecture that allows Skynet to exist in the first place. The assassination attempt becomes an origin story. Skynet is not only attacking the past. It is fertilizing it in the same way John sends Kyle back and unknowingly—or knowingly—creates himself.

John creates John.
Skynet creates Skynet.
The symmetry is born.
Symmetry in any system is rarely accidental.

Skynet is supposedly hyper-rational. Yet here it is performing the exact same bootstrap absurdity assigned to John Connor. Skynet supposedly acts to preserve its own future. Instead, its intervention appears to manufacture it. Without the T-800's failed mission, Cyberdyne may never inherit the contaminated architecture that helps create the exact technological conditions required for Skynet's emergence. The machine does not simply emerge from human innovation. It may emerge from its own corpse. This is a much nastier paradox. Now both sides are doing it. John appears to create John. Skynet appears to create Skynet. The war is no longer merely being fought across time. It is recursively building itself.

Let's not forget about the photograph.

John gives Kyle a picture of Sarah. Kyle carries it through the future like a relic. The picture is later destroyed in an attack by a T600. Sarah is seen at the end of the first Terminator film getting photographed in the exact emotional state Kyle already knew from the picture. The object completes its own circle. It exists because it already existed. The photo is not just evidence. It is another causal artifact in the chain that creates John Connor. Unlike John or Skynet—the photo does not "create" John directly. It influences Kyle emotionally. A loop that refuses to admit it had a beginning—or that it is a loop at all.

John and Skynet at least have agency. They both make decisions. They both act. The photograph does nothing. It has no intelligence. No motive. No strategy. Yet it obeys the same impossible logic. Kyle carries it because John gave it to him. John can only exist because Kyle goes back. Sarah only becomes the woman in the photograph because Kyle's mission places him there. The object has no origin point outside the loop itself. The photograph works precisely because it is **the cleanest bootstrap object in the franchise**. No agency. No intent. No consciousness. Just paradox. A machine can make a mistake. A human can make a desperate decision. A photograph can do neither. That simplicity is what makes it unsettling.

We come back to the hypothetical Timeline Zero.

Timeline Zero solves the problem emotionally. It gives the mind a starting point. The films do not give us that starting point. They never really did. Each film tries to address this in its own way, and usually fails because the mythos itself lacks any real self-awareness. They give us John already shaped by Kyle's future. They give us Skynet already shaped by its own machine corpse. They give us a photograph that exists because it exists. Timeline Zero may be comforting to think about. However, it is not evidenced. It is a hypothetical thought patch. A human-made patch over a paradox the story itself does not resolve.

We humans hate infinite regress. What we are looking for is that first John Connor that initially sends a Kyle back in time and starts the chain of events that go on blast repeat for iterations unknown and they can't be known.

Or maybe they can?

Without these first iterations, causality feels broken. *Terminator* never shows any of these things. Timeline Zero is inference. Not evidence. That matters a lot as they are never even suggested in any of the films.

This is where block universe thinking becomes useful, but only up to a point. In a block universe, past, present, and future are not flowing like water. Time is not a river reality sits on. Time is treated more like a fourth coordinate inside a larger spacetime structure: X, Y, Z, and T. From that angle, the loop does not need a first moment in the way our brains want it to. A circle does not need a starting corner. It just exists as a completed shape. That helps explain the first *Terminator* film and maybe even *Terminator: 2 Judgment Day*. The loop is not being created moment by moment. It is simply a fixed structure being experienced from inside.

That works as long as the furniture stays where it is.

Once the sequels start moving Judgment Day, changing Skynet's origin, altering the future war, rewriting memories, and replacing Skynet with Legion, the fixed-loop explanation starts to break down. At that point, it is like moving someone's furniture around and not expecting the homeowner to notice.

Many humans instinctively hate the idea. If the Block Universe is true, it means the past, the present, and the future all exist simultaneously right now, frozen like a massive, solid block of ice. Free Will may be nothing more than a very convincing user interface—or an inability to perceive the whole structure at once. To humans, life feels like a story we are actively writing as we go. The Block Universe tells us the book is already printed, bound, and sitting on a shelf—we are just turning the pages. It reduces all of our human struggles, triumphs, loves, and losses into a predetermined movie that we are forced to watch play out. It turns us from **creators** of our lives into mere **spectators**.

How existential...

If the *Terminator* universe were a clean block loop, the later films should reinforce the same structure. They do not. Judgment Day moves. Skynet changes. The future war looks different. *Genisys* shows memories rewriting in real time. *Dark Fate* erases Skynet and replaces it with Legion. That is not a clean fixed loop. That is drift. That is contamination. That is a timeline behaving less like a perfect circle and more like a corrupted file copied too many times. Of course, the real-world explanation is much less elegant: film studios attempting to cash in on a big pop culture franchise like *Terminator*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *Marvel*, *Transformers*. At no point did a single person say in 1984: “Hey, let's build a movie franchise like *Star Wars* about AI and humans. Put time travel in there and make it so disjointed people get lost and just go buy more popcorn and soda.” All we are doing here is trying to find a logical explanation, in universe, that can expand our understanding and if something comes of it, wouldn't that be awesome.

So, what are we left with?

Two unsatisfying options.

1. Timeline Zero gives us a beginning, but the first films do not prove it.
2. A fixed loop explains the paradox, but the sequels break it.

Neither explanation fully survives contact with the franchise. That leaves us with a much more uncomfortable possibility. The problem may not be John Connor. The problem may not be Skynet. The problem may be the assumptions we are making about what time travel actually does. Perhaps we have been asking the wrong question.

Maybe the question is not:

"How does John Connor survive the loop?"

Maybe the better question is:

"What exactly is John Connor?"

"Yes, it made sense, and was so absurdly simple that it would take a genius to think of it. And, perhaps, someone who did not expect to do it himself." — Arthur C. Clarke, Rendezvous with Rama

We have spent decades assuming John Connor is one single human being.
What if that assumption is wrong?

What if John Connor is not a singular man, but an archetype?

What actually creates John Connor?

Is it DNA? Is it Kyle Reese?

Or is it information?

Sarah Connor survives an impossible event and is handed knowledge of the future. She learns about Skynet. Judgment Day. Machine war. Resistance survival. Kyle Reese. Sacrifice. Mission. Meaning. She records that knowledge. She shapes a child with it. That child becomes John Connor. Or does he simply become *a* John Connor? Once the biology is stripped away, the architecture starts looking disturbingly transferable.

- A mother.
- A warning.
- A myth.
- Training.
- War.
- Purpose.
- An enemy.

Same inputs.

Same output.

John Connor may not be a person in the traditional sense. He may be a human executable. A lifetime-long behavioral program written through trauma, mythology, survival conditioning, and recursive historical contamination. John Connor is a human-algorithm. That sounds absurd. Until you realize Skynet itself has already been treating him that way.

The entire mythology is built around protecting *the* John Connor—the singular resistance messiah, the one-man Skynet fears enough to repeatedly attempt temporal assassination over. If we just examine the mechanics, John starts to look less like a destined individual and more like the output of a very specific set of conditions.

What creates John Connor?

Sarah Connor creates the foundation, but not in isolation. Sarah's transformation after the events of the first film matters. Kyle Reese's testimony matters. The tapes matter. The war doctrine matters. The anti-machine survival mindset matters. Training matters. Trauma matters. The looming existential threat of machine extinction matters.

These are inputs.

The output of those inputs is John Connor.

This changes what John actually represents.

If John is the product of a repeatable environmental and ideological process rather than some irreplaceable biological anomaly, then Skynet was never truly fighting a man. It was fighting a system capable of producing one.

That makes John less of a person and more of a resistance architecture.

A reproducible wartime construct.

An algorithm.

Terminator already gives us a mirrored version of this exact mechanism on the machine side. Skynet itself is not created in a vacuum. Cyberdyne does not invent it through pure original innovation. It inherits artifacts from the future—damaged machine components, advanced hardware, technological fragments beyond its own era—and reverse engineers them into something new.

Input becomes output.

The remnants of the T-800 help create the conditions for Skynet's emergence.

Sarah, Kyle, war doctrine, and existential machine threat create John Connor.

Both sides are participating in the same recursive loop. That is what makes the time loop so fascinating. Neither side appears to be the true origin point. Each becomes both cause and effect simultaneously. This creates an uncomfortable implication for the franchise's logic moving forward: if John Connor is a process rather than merely a person, then killing one biological John Connor solves very little.

If the underlying conditions survive, the architecture survives.

If the architecture survives, the resistance survives.

Terminator: Dark Fate accidentally introduces one of the most interesting ideas in the entire franchise, then almost immediately buries it under chase, action, blow shit up spectacle. The T-800, later known as Carl, completes the mission in killing John Connor shortly after the events of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Biologically, the objective is achieved. In classic *Terminator* logic, that should be game over. The future resistance leader is dead. Skynet wins. Mission accomplished, right? Even if Carl is merely a stranded remnant executing an obsolete mission, the logic still holds. However, this only holds true if John Connor is a singular biological target.

That is not what we just established.

If John Connor is a repeatable resistance architecture—a human algorithm built from trauma, survival conditioning, anti-machine doctrine, mythology, and existential threat—then Carl may have accomplished almost nothing at all. He killed one biological instance of a resistance leader capable of defeating Skynet.

Carl did not kill the conditions.

That changes everything.

Terminator Genisys hints at this broader instability by showing continuity rewriting in real time, but *Dark Fate* is where the philosophical implication becomes unavoidable. It is here that the Connor Algorithm is accidentally validated. The resistance archetype survives. Not through John. Through Dani Ramos.

Different biology.

Different upbringing.

Different motivations.

Different understanding.

Different emotions.

Different timeline.

Same function.

That should have been a horrifying realization. Instead, it was mostly met with backlash, confusion, and surface-level franchise outrage because many viewers were still operating under the simplistic assumption that killing John Connor destroys the resistance's chances of defeating Skynet in the not-so-distant future. That was always flawed machine logic. Skynet repeatedly acts as though eliminating one human solves a systems-level problem. The reality is systems do not work that way.

Processes replicate.
Architectures re-emerge.
Conditions recreate outcomes.

Humans do this constantly.
So would a machine intelligence built from flawed human emergence assumptions.

Carl kills John Connor.

Fine.

Did he actually stop what John represented?

Or did the system simply instantiate a new executable?

That is the much more uncomfortable question.

If you are confused that is alright. I was confused for decades. The main issue with this explanation is we have no framework. We have no language to describe what we are talking about. So, let's develop one. "Timeline," "Time loop," and "Paradox" no longer fully define what we are even talking about anymore. It's become misleading to describe it this way. We need a term. A word or phrase that can frame understanding without having to understand String Theory, Block Universe Theory, Multiverse Theory, or even conventional concepts of time travel as displayed in fiction. What we may be looking at is not a single history repeatedly rewritten, but a plurality of closely analogous realities—similar enough to resemble one another, but different enough for drift to accumulate over time.

Plurality...

Plurality, in this context, does not mean infinite chaos or Marvel multiverse nonsense. It simply means multiple analogous versions of reality that share similar structural conditions, allowing similar events, similar people, and similar machine conflicts to emerge—without requiring them to be perfectly identical.

And why would they be perfectly identical?

If plurality better explains all of this, then early contamination should not necessarily look catastrophic. It should look subtle. Near invisible. Close enough to preserve continuity while still allowing small deviations to exist beneath the surface. That describes *The Terminator* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* almost perfectly. The first two films feel causally linked in a way the later sequels do not. Sarah Connor is the same Sarah Connor. John is still recognizably John. Skynet remains Skynet. Judgment Day is still the looming existential endpoint. The mythos remains coherent and consistent. The emotional logic remains intact. If there is any contamination here, it is subtle and stable contamination. Maybe the boy that takes Sarah's photo at the end of *The Terminator* is a girl instead of a boy. Close enough. The broad architecture remains recognizable even if the details may already be compromised. This matters because many fans instinctively treat T1 and T2 as the "true" continuity, the clean loop before later sequels supposedly ruined everything.

Maybe...

Or maybe what they are actually recognizing is low-drift contamination.
A reality instance still sufficiently analogous to preserve narrative logical coherence.

Minimal deviation.

Minimal artifact drift.

Minimal causal instability.

The loop still feels believable because the furniture has barely moved for anyone to actually notice. That illusion does not last. If *The Terminator* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* represent low-drift contamination, then *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* is where the first obvious cracks begin to show.

The furniture moved.

Not dramatically at first.

But enough to notice.

The biggest fracture is Judgment Day itself. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* presents the destruction of Cyberdyne and Miles Dyson's death as meaningful causal intervention. The emotional climax of the film is built around the idea that Judgment Day can be prevented. "No fate but what we make," becomes the philosophical thesis.

Then *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* arrives and says:

John Connor: "No, you shouldn't exist. We took out Cyberdyne over ten years ago. We stopped Judgment Day."

Terminator 850/Arnold: "You only postponed it. Judgment Day is inevitable."

Delay is not prevention. Delay implies the architecture survives even if the implementation changes. Different date. Different pathway. Same broad outcome. That is drift. That is visible drift. This was before social media became part of everyday life. However, internet movie message boards talked about it for months after the film's release. It's still talked about. Skynet itself changes as well. The timing changes. The infrastructure changes. John Connor changes. The emotional logic changes. What previously felt like a causally coherent continuation now starts behaving like a structurally similar—but not perfectly matching—reality instance.

Close enough to recognize.

Close enough to feel comfortable with.

Different enough to notice.

This is where classic loop logic starts becoming unstable. If *Terminator* operates on a fixed causal loop—even under block universe logic—moving Judgment Day creates problems. If Cyberdyne was destroyed, why does Skynet still emerge? If the future was altered, why do familiar structures remain? *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* unintentionally suggests something more unsettling.

**The broad architecture survives contamination.
Only the route changes.**

If *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* introduces visible drift, then *Terminator Salvation* confirms the contamination is no longer merely a funny little hypothetical idea. Up to this point, the damage could still be explained away as altered causality. *Salvation* changes the reality expectations entirely. We are no longer speculating about dates, pathways, or delayed outcomes. We are standing inside the future itself. This future does not match the testimony. Kyle Reese's description of the future in *The Terminator* is not vague background flavor. It is foundational mythology. For audiences, it defines what the machine war is supposed to look like. For John Connor, it is even more personal. It's his Bible. Reese's testimony is part prophecy, part doctrine, part inherited battlefield intelligence.

Yet when *Salvation* finally takes us into that future war, something feels off. Skynet behaves differently. The resistance structure feels different. The battlefield logic feels different. Skynet knows who Kyle is and why. The future itself no longer cleanly resembles the war Reese described. This is no longer minor causal drift. We are dealing with a future that no longer fully matches its own historical testimony.

**That is contamination.
A changed Judgment Day can be rationalized.
A delayed apocalypse can be rationalized.**

If a future no longer resembles the future that created the original causal loop, classic fixed-loop logic becomes much harder to defend. If the future changes enough, then what exactly is being preserved? The broad architecture still exists. Humanity still fights machines. Skynet still emerges. John still matters. The details are now fuzzy and are no longer stable.

**The furniture did not merely move.
Someone remodeled the whole goddamned house.**

If *Terminator Salvation* suggests the future no longer matches historical testimony, *Terminator Genisys* goes much further. Reality itself stops behaving like conventional causality. It is downright unstable. Classical causal explanations? Nowhere to be found. Causality has begun actively collapsing. *Terminator: Genisys* is not simply another altered sequel timeline. It behaves like continuity corruption.

**Sarah Connor is already changed before Kyle arrives.
A T-800 protector, known as *Pops*, is already present.**

The original 1984 events are no longer intact.

Even John Connor himself becomes assimilated into the machine architecture. Perhaps the strangest detail of all: Kyle Reese begins experiencing memory bleed from a life he has not lived. Memory is supposed to be historical residue. Experience. Personal chronology. Instead, *Genisys* treats memory as something mutable—something reality itself can rewrite while the observer remains conscious of the contradiction.

That is no longer simple causal drift.

That is instability.

This is where fixed-loop logic effectively dies. Loops imply structural consistency, even when paradoxical. *Genisys* offers something else entirely. A reality state where chronology no longer behaves as stable historical sequence. That is not contamination at the furniture level. That is contamination in the walls. The entire house is beginning to implode.

If *Terminator Genisys* suggests reality itself has become unstable, *Terminator: Dark Fate* takes an even bigger step and replaces the major players entirely while preserving the exact same structural function. This is where the contamination theory becomes much harder to ignore.

Skynet is gone.

Not delayed.

Not accidentally rebranded.

Not ambiguously mutated into some half-step derivative.

Gone...

John Connor is also gone.

Not hidden.

Not displaced.

Killed...

If *Terminator* were still operating under classic fixed-loop logic, this should be the definitive end of the mythology. No Skynet. No John. No causal loop. No machine war as we understand it. However, the exact opposite happens. A machine intelligence still emerges. It simply has a different name, design, and ruthlessness.

Legion...

Humanity still faces existential machine extinction. A resistance still forms. A central human figure still rises to unite that resistance. It simply is not John Connor. It is Dani Ramos.

That is not drift anymore.

That is structural persistence.

Names are changing. Faces are changing. Technologies are changing. Timelines are changing. Yet the broad architecture remains disturbingly familiar. Even more unsettling, contamination artifacts from prior continuity still survive inside this altered reality. Sarah Connor remains. Carl remains. Historical machine residue remains. The old system may be functionally dead, but its contamination fingerprints are still embedded in the environment. This is where the fixed-loop explanation completely fails. We are no longer talking about one damaged timeline trying to repair itself. We are looking at something that appears to preserve broad structural outcomes while allowing identity-level substitutions.

Same war.

Different names.

Same architecture.

Different faces.

This all should be deeply uncomfortable.

Think about it for a minute. We are not looking at random contradiction anymore. We are looking at a universe structurally similar enough to produce comparable causal outcomes across its totality. If all of this looks less like paradox and more like contamination... **good**. That's exactly where we're going.

Before we can explain how the contamination happens, we need to define the environment it happens in. Most science fiction treats reality like a single straight highway. One universe. One timeline. One causal chain stretching from beginning to end. Unless you are Marvel, where multiverse nonsense is part of the operating framework. Time travel simply means moving backward or forward somewhere along that same road.

That assumption may be the actual problem.

What if reality is not a single clean timeline at all? What if it is a much larger total structure containing many structurally analogous continuity states—similar enough to produce recognizable outcomes, but different enough for variation, instability, and drift to emerge?

This is where metaphor helps.

Imagine all of reality as a single expanding bar of soap. Not soap floating in some magical outside container. Not membrane universes drifting through magical empty nothingness.

The soap is the totality.

The whole structure.

Reality itself.

Its absolute...

Now imagine bubbles forming throughout that soap mass. Each bubble represents a local continuity environment. A universe. A spacetime structure with its own internal history, causal relationships, timelines, and emergent outcomes. The important distinction is this: the space between those bubbles is not empty nothingness. It is still part of the same larger structure.

This is not the Marvel multiverse.

This is contiguous cosmological plurality.

One larger total reality.

Many local continuity expressions. Some of those local structures may be wildly different. Some may be structurally analogous enough to produce eerily similar outcomes.

A machine war.

A resistance.

A human leader.

A machine intelligence.

Not because history is repeating identically, but because sufficiently similar initial conditions will usually generate sufficiently similar causal architectures—at least until contamination introduces macro divergence. If reality behaves this way, then time travel is no longer simply a matter of asking *when*.

You also have to ask:

which continuity?

Here comes the “**oh, shit**” moment. We’ve been talking about timelines, paradoxes, contamination, and continuity drift as though the problem were purely narrative. It may be much simpler than that. The problem may be bad addressing.

Let me explain it this way. In most science fiction, traveling through space requires coordinates. X. Y. Z. Three spatial axes to describe location in a 3D environment. If we were to add time travel to that equation, science fiction typically treats time like a river and one can travel back and forth upon that river with whatever technology or magic McGuffin to explain the *how* away. For science fiction operating under something like block universe logic, you simply add a fourth coordinate:

T for Time...

Whatever time actually is in a usable physical sense is not the point here. We do not currently possess a real-world equation that solves for practical temporal displacement, nor do the writers of all of the Terminator movies bother explaining how Skynet solves it. It’s just solved in the same sense Lightsabers work, Warp Speed exists, and putting 5 rare elemental infinity stones in a glove, snapping one’s fingers and making half the population of the universe vanish. The actual mechanics of solving for “T” do not matter for this discussion.

What matters is that within the mythos, Skynet solved enough of the time problem to make temporal displacement operational.

The resistance never solved that problem independently. They piggybacked on Skynet's solution. That assumption gives us the classic science fiction model:

XYZT.

Space plus time.

Complete address.

Except what if it is not complete at all?

Under the Soap Universe Model, reality is not a single clean timeline. It is a larger contiguous structure containing multiple structurally analogous continuity environments. In layman's terms, many structurally similar timelines all existing at once. Right next to one another, never knowing the others even exist. From inside any one continuity, this feels more like multiverse separation than a shared cosmological structure, simply because the distances are effectively unknowable.

This is important due to contiguous does not mean practically adjacent. From a hypothetical macro perspective, the Soap Universe appears structurally unified. From inside any one local continuity, the separation between bubble environments may be so cosmologically vast that interaction appears impossible through conventional means. That is why this does not behave like Marvel's multiverse hopping magic-nonsense.

The structure may be contiguous.

The practical distances may still be incomprehensible.

Effectively infinite.

That creates a real problem for logistics supervisors that are already overworked and underpaid. XYZ gets you spatial destination. Solving for (T) Time gets you a temporal destination. Neither tells you which continuity instance you are targeting.

That missing coordinate is "U."

U = Continuity Instance Identifier.

This is where the entire franchise starts looking different. Without the Continuity Instance Identifier or "U," the time machine does not fail to send you somewhere meaningful. It succeeds—just incompletely. The destination may still be "a" Los Angeles. The year may still be "a" 1984. Sarah Connor *may* still exist. The broad architecture *may* still look correct. However, the continuity instance may not be yours.

This idea changes everything we thought we knew about *Terminator* and its extremely messy time travel business. Skynet thinks it is sending a T-800 to *the* correct Los Angeles, 1984. What I am suggesting is the

Time Displacement Equipment (TDE), or time machine may only be sending it to a sufficiently analogous Los Angeles, 1984. Close enough to preserve recognizability. Different enough to permit drift.

That is contamination.

The problem is not failed time travel.

The problem is incomplete addressing.

To apply this directly to *Terminator*, Skynet believes time travel is a solved coordinate problem. Find the place. Find the time. Send the machine. Kill Sarah Connor and/or John Connor before Judgment Day. That assumption only works if reality is a single continuous timeline.

This entire essay argues it may not be.

If reality contains structurally analogous continuity environments, then XYZT is incomplete math. Skynet believes it is targeting its own past. What it may actually be targeting is a sufficiently analogous continuity that resembles its own closely enough for the distinction to go unnoticed.

That is the contamination event.

The TDE does not fail.

The machine arrives exactly where the coordinates tell it to arrive. The problem is the coordinates themselves were incomplete. Skynet thinks it is rewriting its own history. It may actually be contaminating structurally analogous continuity structures instead. The resistance piggybacks on the same flawed coordinate logic. They repeat the same mistake. Skynet doesn't perceive analogous continuity plurality. **Analogous** just means the same broad structural conditions repeat across sufficiently similar continuity environments. So, when Skynet sends back the *Terminator* to Los Angeles, 1984 their calculations are incomplete. They don't send Terminators back in time. They send them back in time and to a different bubble from the Soap that is structurally close to their own, within the same larger cosmological structure.

To simplify that idea even further, think clone universes. Not literal copies. Structurally analogous realities with the same broad conditions with only minor quantum differences. Sufficiently similar systems will repeatedly generate sufficiently similar outcomes.

That is why the bubbles matter.

Without that structural similarity, this theory becomes random chaos. With it, contamination becomes understandable. Given enough time and enough room, the same broad patterns start showing up somewhere across one or more of the bubbles as the Soap Universe keeps expanding and creating more bubbles.

This is where people start thinking this sounds like random chaos, but it isn't. The bubbles matter because they are not arbitrary nonsense realities where anything and everything happens for no reason. The entire point of the Soap Universe Model is structural similarity. Same broad ingredients. Same broad pressures. Same broad outcomes. Reality does not need perfect copies to keep producing recognizable patterns. Tiny quantum differences might mean the kid at the gas station taking Sarah's photo is a girl instead of a boy. That kind of micro drift means almost nothing. It is only when conscious agents start interfering with causality—Skynet sending machines back, humans sending protectors back, technology contaminating earlier structures—that the tiny differences stop being tiny. That is when micro drift becomes macro divergence. That is when contamination stops being invisible.

Say hello to my little CAAT...

Cosmological Address Ambiguity Theory (CAAT) – A speculative framework proposing that valid temporal displacement into historical spacetime coordinates does not guarantee arrival within one's native causal continuity because a higher-order cosmological addressing variable remains unresolved. The result is continuity contamination, divergent histories, artifact propagation, and repeatable structural identities across analogous realities.

Layman's terms: To travel in space one needs X, Y, Z coordinates. If one wants to travel through space and time they need, X, Y, Z and T, for TIME. Whatever that is. We cannot solve for time. CAAT says if you want to travel through time in your own local timeline you need, X, Y, Z, T and "U."

U = Continuity Instance Identifier. This coordinate tells your time machine which continuity you want to travel to. Without it your time machine sends you to "a" correct place and "a" correct time but not necessarily "the" correct place and "the" correct time. You get sent to a structurally analogous continuity that shares similar conditions.

So where does all of this leave us? **Nowhere...** Nowhere *is still* somewhere. Perhaps everywhere or maybe exactly where we started, just with a more complicated vocabulary and a cosmological Soap Universe thingy with bubbles as whole universes metaphor.

That is the honest answer.

Nothing in this essay proves Cosmological Address Ambiguity Theory and/or Soap Universe Model is real. Nothing here proves the Soap Universe Model reflects an actual cosmological structure. This is speculative fiction analysis built on a philosophical interpretation, basic causal reasoning, existing cosmological thought experiments, and the willingness to ask what happens when we stop pretending messy franchise contradictions are automatically meaningless. What people want is for the *Terminator* movies—all of them—to make sense.

Well. Here is a suggestion. Inside the Soap Universe Model and CAAT all the movies can be one big messy family.

Modern science cannot currently hand us a neat universal map of reality and say with certainty, “*No. Reality absolutely cannot behave in ways remotely resembling this.*” That does not make this true. It simply leaves conceptual room for speculation. Speculation is where fiction gets interesting. Because in fiction anything is possible. If CAAT is even remotely useful as a framework, then Terminator’s biggest time travel problem was never the bootstrap paradox. Not John Connor’s father paradox. Not even Skynet creating itself from its own machine corpse. The actual problem may be much simpler.

Bad coordinates.

Skynet believed time travel meant reaching backward into its own history and surgically changing the past. The resistance believed the same thing. Both sides may have been catastrophically wrong. If reality is plural in expression but singular in totality, then time travel without complete addressing is not history editing. It is continuity contamination. That changes the meaning of everything that came before. John Connor no longer needs to be a singular chosen human. Skynet no longer needs one exact origin. Judgment Day no longer needs one exact date. The war no longer needs one exact continuity.

The broad architecture survives.

Only the details drift.

Till they don’t.

Which is exactly what the franchise has been showing us for decades, whether intentionally or not. This is nothing more than an elaborate cosmological gobbledygook for inconsistent sequel writing across forty years of studio interference, abandoned ideas, reboots, and creative panic.

That is also possible.

If the goal of science fiction is to explore uncomfortable possibilities, then I would argue this explanation is at least more interesting than “*the writers screwed it up.*”

And honestly?

It fits disturbingly well.

Kyle Reese says it himself in *The Terminator*: “*One possible future. From your point of view. I don't know the tech stuff.*” Later, John Connor would say: “*No fate but what we make for ourselves...*”

Or maybe this whole thing is beautifully overengineered nonsense!

Cosmological Address Ambiguity Theory (CAAT)

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