

Review of *Debates in the Metaphysics of Time*
Edited by L. Nathan Oaklander
Bloomsbury, 2014

This lively and diverse collection discusses several central issues in contemporary philosophy of time and argues for a number of novel conclusions. Part I is divided into two sub-sections: the first is centred on Yuval Dolev's recent charge that framing debates in the philosophy of time in terms of the ontology of past and future objects and events is incoherent, motivating an "anti-metaphysical perspective". In "Dolev's Anti-Metaphysical Realism: A Critique" Nathan Oaklander argues against Dolev's charge, claiming that the central debate in philosophy of time concerns the ontological status of temporal relations. Dolev's chapter, "Motion and Passage: The Old B-Theory and Phenomenology", responds directly to Oaklander's and argues against the B-theorist's notion of the present as specious. He claims that phenomenological considerations support the view that presentness is an objective, simple property of events. In "Two Metaphysical Perspectives on the Duration of the Present" Francesco Orilia argues, I think persuasively, that Dolev has failed to show that the debate is not at heart an ontological one and, despite his claims to the contrary, Dolev is taking a stand in the metaphysical debate rather than transcending it, as he claims. Orilia goes on to defend a view that he terms "moderate presentism" which I discuss in greater detail below.

The second sub-section of Part I focuses on temporal succession, becoming, and change. In "Temporal Succession and Tense" Erwin Tegtmeier discusses a number of issues concerning temporal succession, however his bold historical claims about Aristotle, Russell and McTaggart go largely unsubstantiated and it is difficult to discern a central argument. In "Becoming: Temporal, Absolute and Atemporal", M. Oreste Fiocco identifies two seemingly conflicting features of time: that we have experience of a world constantly in flux and that the temporal order of events in time remains unchanging. Fiocco claims that these features can be reconciled by appealing to a notion of *atemporal becoming* in addition to temporal becoming. Fiocco attempts to defend the coherence of atemporal becoming, "coming into being outside of time" (p.102) and argues that it holds the key to reconciling these seemingly incompatible experiences. I am unconvinced that appeal to atemporal becoming is needed in order to reconcile the features Fiocco highlights, and the coherence of the notion is dubious since *coming* into being seems to presuppose a temporal order. In "Temporal Predicates and the Passage of Time" Joshua Mozersky presents an interesting and well-argued discussion of the problem of change. He rejects the temporal parts account and the presentist account of change in favour of a relational account according to which a banana's turning from green to yellow involves the banana standing in the *is-green-at* relation to one time and the *is-yellow-at* relation to another. Mozersky argues that such a view can provide a satisfactory account of temporal becoming and has distinct advantages over its rivals.

One of the highlights of this collection is the discussion of temporal experience in Part II. In their respective chapters, Michael Pelczar, Geoffrey Lee, and Barry Dainton all consider the structure of experiences of temporal succession such as hearing the first five notes of a song. Lee argues for atomism, the view that the experience of temporal succession has no temporal extension and against Dainton's extensionalism, the view that the structure of temporal experience mirrors the temporal structure of the events being experienced. Pelczar and Lee each provide interesting and persuasive arguments against extensionalism and Dainton responds directly to Pelczar and Lee providing new objections against atomism and new arguments in favour of extensionalism. These three chapters contribute valuably to recent literature on the nature of temporal experience. The chapters in Part III focus on metaphysical issues concerning God's relation to time and the problem of freedom and foreknowledge; and I discuss them in greater detail below.

One of the many interesting positions argued for in this collection is Orilia's defence of what he calls "moderate presentism". Moderate presentism "retains the basic intuition of typical presentism, according to which only present events exist, but is prepared to acknowledge past and future durationless instants in addition to the present one" (p.63). Orilia's motivations for adopting this view come from challenges to traditional presentism arising from intervals and dynamic events. Our talk makes frequent reference to intervals, like the year 2013, and our experiences seem to require intervals, as do dynamic events like the event of a ball moving from p_1 at t_1 to p_2 at t_2 . Orilia's proposal is to grant that there are past, present, and future instants, and intervals can be constructed out of them. Objects and events, however, only exist in the present. Furthermore, Orilia claims that presently existing objects have past- and future-directed properties. The presently existing ball has the property of *having been in position p_1 at t_1* . Dynamic events like the ball moving from p_1 at t_1 to p_2 at t_2 supervene on presently existing events together with their past- and future-directed properties.

I applaud Orilia for taking the problem that intervals and dynamic events raise for the presentist seriously, however moderate presentism strikes me as an unmotivated mixture of traditional presentist strategies for accommodating truths about the past, on the one hand, and taking seriously the problem of cross-temporal relations and grounding past truths, on the other hand. In one sense, Orilia's proposal fails to go far enough: it can only accommodate dynamic events involving objects that presently exist but is unable to accommodate dynamic events involving dinosaurs in which the relevant objects are no longer around. In another sense, it seems to go too far: if one is willing to countenance the existence of past directed properties like *having been at p_1 at t_1* , why not use such ontological cheats (to use Ted Sider's disparaging label) to account for truths

concerning past and future instants as well? If one is motivated, as Orilia seems to be, to posit past instances in order to ground truths concerning them and to serve as *relata*, similar considerations ought to motivate positing past objects and events as well.

Whereas Orilia takes dynamic events to supervene on instantaneous, presently existing events, in "Divine Events" Joseph Diekemper denies that it is possible for events to be instantaneous. He argues that events are processes of change and change requires duration, so events must also have duration. Diekemper takes it to be part of the common-sense conception of events that they have duration. Diekemper considers four lines of argument that Brian Leftow gives in favour of instantaneous events and argues that they are unsuccessful.

Overall, I find Diekemper's motivations for denying the existence of instantaneous events unpersuasive. I'm not convinced that it is part of our common-sense conception of events that they have duration. As Leftow points out in his response chapter to Diekemper, common-sense acknowledges the existence of events like reaching the halfway point or winning a race which we may pre-philosophically take as having zero duration. Diekemper argues against Leftow's claim that the notion of having instantaneous velocity supports the existence of instantaneous events, however his reasons are unpersuasive. Echoing Zeno, he claims "In fact it seems wholly implausible that some contiguous set of instances of zero duration could somehow add up to an interval or event of non-zero duration" (p.217). However, as Leftow points out in his chapter, Diekemper's (and Zeno's) mistake has been known since the advent of measure theory: the measure of a set of instants is not a function of the measures of the instants in the set.

In his "Foreknowledge and Fatalism: Why Divine Timelessness Doesn't Help" Alan Rhoda provides a critique of Katherin Rogers' recent defence of an Anselmian response to the problem of freedom and foreknowledge. The first half of the paper provides a number of important and often overlooked distinctions between different kinds of openness with respect to the future: alethic, ontological, epistemic, and causal. He argues that appeal to God existing "outside of time" does not solve the problem of freedom and foreknowledge. He also argues for the bold philosophical claim that the existence of future ontology entails fatalism; however I find his argument unpersuasive. Rhoda writes, "... to avoid fatalism, the ontically settled future must be preventable...But if a unique, complete, and linear sequence of future events exists, it cannot exist now (because the events are future), and it so presumably it must exist tenselessly...But then for the same reason that divine timelessness...precludes a preventable future, it seems as if an ontically settled future does so too" (p.267-268). In her response chapter, Rogers correctly points out that Rhoda's insistence that future events cannot exist now is too hasty given that the eternalist grants that it is true now that future events exist. Rhoda's reason for thinking that tenseless existence is incompatible with preventing

future events is that preventing future events requires that the future events are future contingents, however “future contingency seems to be an inherently tensed status because there invariably comes a time when the event in question is no longer future, or no longer contingent” (p.268). But I see no reason why future events cannot exist *simpliciter* and have the property of being future contingents *relative to times*. My act of choosing vanilla ice cream over chocolate on Wednesday may be a future contingent relative to Tuesday yet be past and fixed relative to Thursday. Just as the claim that August 5, 2015 is future relative to some times and past relative to others raises no problem for the B-theorist, the claim that my choosing vanilla is future contingent relative to Tuesday and past and fixed relative to Thursday similarly raises no problem for the B-Theorist.

There is much more of interest to discuss in this volume, and much more to agree and disagree with. That many of the chapters are direct responses to other chapters makes this an engaging collection and highlights the lively nature of current debates in philosophy of time. Oaklander has once again succeeded in editing a volume that anyone working in the philosophy of time is encouraged to read.

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