

The Tenseless Theory Of Time A Critical Examination

Studies in Analytic Philosophy Series Editor: Quentin Smith, Western Michigan University [T]his is an excellent book. It represents an exceptionally useful guide to nearly all aspects of the contemporary debate ... [and] is an excellent, insightful and powerful contribution to the debate and should be read by everyone working on the philosophy of time.

-The Philosophical Quarterly Nathan Oaklander has for many years been the most indefatigable and effective developer and champion of the new - and true - tenseless theory of time. This book is an invaluable collection of his major papers on the topic, many of them not easily accessible elsewhere. It is a formidable armoury of arguments for the tenseless theory, and against its rivals, in both its ontological and its semantic aspects. Oaklander's detailed responses to his many allies and opponents down the years also make his book an indispensable guide to the recent history of work in the philosophy of time.

-D. H. Mellor, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Cambridge University What emerges very strongly from these essays is a conviction that significant and exciting metaphysical results can be extracted by a careful and rigorous attention to the nature of temporal language, and a deep sense of the human relevance of the philosophy of time, as evidenced by the subtle connections drawn here between time, experience, identity and freedom. The collection as a whole is a testament to Nathan Oaklander's place at the forefront of contemporary metaphysics.

-Robin Le Poidevin, Professor of Metaphysics, University of Leeds This book is a carefully edited and cross-referenced compilation of some of Professor Oaklander's most significant work in the philosophy of time, and serves beautifully as both an up-to-date reference as well as an introduction to the ongoing debate between 'tenser' A-theorists and 'detenser' B-theorists. Not only does Professor Oaklander herein offer up the latest version of the 'new' B-theory of time, of which he is a chief architect, but he outlines a 'newer' B-theory of language that may well untangle the riddle of how tensed language may be essential to daily life, yet itself depend only upon tenseless facts for its ultimate significance.

-Professor V. Alan White, University of Wisconsin--Manitowoc [A] sustained defense of the new B-theory of time and a penetrating critique of a range of A-theories of time. . . . an impressively coherent and unified work constituting one of the most complete and thorough defences of the new B-theory to appear in recent years.

-Heather Dyke, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Otago, New Zealand L. Nathan Oaklander is one of the leading philosophers of time defending the tenseless or B-Theory of time. He has remained at the forefront of this field since the early 1980s and today he is arguably the most formidable opponent of the tensed or A-theory of time. Much of the direction of the debate in this field for the past twenty years or so, especially in regards to the new tenseless theory of time, has been influenced by Oaklander's work. This book presents a carefully argued defense of the tenseless theory of time. The topics discussed include: the ontology of A- and B-theories of time; presentism; the open future theory; the A/B theory; defending the B-theory of time; temporal experience; temporal semantics; and time, identity, responsibility, and freedom.

L. Nathan Oaklander (Flint, MI) is professor of philosophy and chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, Flint. He is the author or editor

of numerous books on philosophy and the problem of time, including *Time, Change and Freedom* and *The Importance of Time*.

The present volume is part of a larger project, which is the attempt to draft a coherent doctrine of divine eternity and God's relationship to time. In my *God, Time, and Eternity*, I argued that whether one construes divine eternity in terms of timelessness or of omnitemporality will depend crucially upon one's views about the objectivity of tensed facts and temporal becoming. If one adopts a tensed, or in McTaggart's terminology, an A-Theory of time, then a coherent doctrine of divine eternity requires that one construe God, at least since the moment of creation, to exist temporally, which implies that divine timelessness can be successfully maintained only if a tenseless or B-Theory of time is correct. Accordingly in my companion volumes *The Tensed Theory of Time: a Critical Examination* and *The Tenseless Theory of Time: a Critical Examination* I set for myself the task of adjudicating the A- vs. B-Theory of time. In the former volume; I examine arguments for and against the A-Theory of time, and in the latter I turn to an examination of arguments for and against the B-Theory. This inquiry took me into a study of relativity theory, its presuppositions and implications. The paucity of integrative literature dealing with the concept of God and relativity theory is striking. Michael Tooley presents a major new philosophical study of time and its relation to causation. The nature of time has always been one of the most fascinating and perplexing problems of philosophy; it has in recent years become the focus of vigorous debate between advocates of rival theories. The traditional, 'tensed' accounts of time which hold that time has a direction and that the flow of time is part of the nature of the universe have been challenged by 'tenseless' accounts of time, according to which past, present, and future are merely subjective features of experience, rather than objective features of events. *Time, Tense and Causation* offers a new approach, in many ways intermediate between these two rivals. Tooley shares with tensed approaches the views that the universe is dynamic, and that the past and present are real while the future is not; but he rejects the view that this points to the existence of irreducible tensed facts. Tooley's approach accounts for time in terms of its relation to causation; he argues that the direction of time is based upon the direction of causation, and that the key to understanding the dynamic nature of the universe is to understand the nature of causation. He analyses tensed concepts, and discusses semantic issues about truth and time. Finally, addressing the formidable difficulties posed for tensed accounts of time by the Special Theory of Relativity, he suggests that a modified version of the theory, compatible with the account of time in this book, is to be preferred to the standard version. *Time, Tense, and Causation* is rich in sophisticated and stimulating discussions of many of the deepest problems of metaphysics. It will be essential reading for anyone specialising in this area of philosophy.

This book explores the important yet neglected relationship between the philosophy of time and the temporal structure of perceptual experience. It examines how time structures perceptual experience and, through that structuring, the ways in which time makes perceptual experience trustworthy or erroneous. Sean Power argues that our understanding of time can determine our understanding of perceptual experience in relation to perceptual structure and perceptual error. He examines the general conditions under which an experience may be sorted into different kinds of error such as illusions, hallucinations, and anosognosia. Power also argues that some theories of

time are better than others at giving an account of the structure and errors of perceptual experience. He makes the case that tenseless theory and eternalism more closely correspond to experience than tense theory and presentism. Finally, the book includes a discussion of the perceptual experience of space and how tenseless theory and eternalism can better support the problematic theory of naïve realism. *Philosophy of Time and Perceptual Experience* originally illustrates how the metaphysics of time can be usefully applied to thinking about experience in general. It will appeal to those interested in the philosophy of time and debates about the trustworthiness of experience.

"The most important debate among twentieth-century philosophers of time has been whether events that have happened, are happening, or will happen are equally real (the tenseless theory of time) or whether there is a fundamental distinction between past, present, and future, with only present events possessing full existence (the tensed theory). In the 1980s a new version of the tenseless theory of time emerged. While advocates still posit that all events are equally real, they depart from the old tenseless theory by conceding that tensed expressions cannot be translated into tenseless ones, and support their view of time using other arguments." "This anthology offers the latest turns in the debate over the new theory of time, with essays written by many of the most prominent contemporary thinkers in the philosophy of time. There are discussions on the role - or nonrole - of language in determining which theory is true; McTaggart's paradox and the logical difficulties that defenders of the tenseless theory say are inherent in tensed theory; and the nature of our experience of time, which proponents of both theories claim can now be explained. The Preface and the General Introduction to the book set the debate within the wider philosophical context and show why the subject of temporal becoming is a perennial concern of science, religion, language, logic, and the philosophy of mind."--BOOK JACKET. Title Summary field provided by Blackwell North America, Inc. All Rights Reserved

The Philosophy of Time Society grew out of a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar on the Philosophy of Time offered by George Schlesinger in 1991. The members of that seminar wanted to promote interest in the philosophy of time and Jon N. Turgerson offered to become the first Director of the society with the initial costs underwritten by the Drake University Center for the Humanities. Thus, the Philosophy of Time Society (PTS) was formed in 1993. Its goal is to promote the study of the philosophy of time from a broad analytic perspective, and to provide a forum as an affiliated group with the American Philosophical Association, to discuss the issues in and related to the philosophy of time. The society held its first meeting during the Eastern Division of the AP A in Atlanta, Georgia, in December 1993. In 1997 I began my tenure as Executive Director of PTS and with my term ending in 2000, I decided to put together a volume of selected papers read at PTS meetings over the years. The result is the present volume. It contains some of the latest developments in the field, including discussions of recent books by Michael Tooley, *Time, Tense, and Causation*, and D. H. Mellor, *Real Time II*, and much more. The main issue in the philosophy of time is and remains the status of temporal becoming and the passage of time.

A new view of the metaphysics of time, arguing that the traditional tensed-tenseless debate within analytic philosophy should be seen as the first stage in a philosophical investigation of time, and that the next stage belongs to phenomenology. How does

time pass? Does time itself move, or is time's passage merely an illusion? Analytic philosophers belong, for the most part, to one of two camps on this question: the tensed camp, which defends the reality of time's passage, conceiving the present as "ontologically privileged" over the past and future; and the tenseless camp, which denies time's passage and holds that all events, whatever their temporal location, are ontologically equal. In *Time and Realism*, Yuval Dolev goes beyond the tensed-tenseless debate to argue that neither position is conclusive but that the debate over them should be seen as only the first stage in the philosophical investigation of time. The next stage, he claims, belongs to phenomenology, and, he argues further, the phenomenological analysis of time grows naturally out of the analytic enterprise. Dolev shows that the two rival theories share a metaphysical presupposition: that tense concerns the ontological status of things. He argues that this ontological assumption is natural but untenable, and that leaving it behind creates a new viewpoint from which to study central topics in the metaphysics of time. Dolev shows that such a study depends on the kind of meticulous attention to our firsthand experiences that drives phenomenological investigations. Thus, he argues, phenomenology is the venue for advancing the investigation of time. *Time and Realism* not only analyzes the tensed-tenseless debate, resolving some of its central difficulties along the way, it transcends it. It serves as a bridge between the analytic and the continental traditions in the philosophy of mind, both of which are shown to be vital to the philosophical examination of time.

L. Nathan Oaklander is one of the leading philosophers of time defending the tenseless or B-Theory of time. He has remained at the forefront of this field since the early 1980s and today he is arguably the most formidable opponent of the tensed or A-theory of time. Much of the direction of the debate in this field for the past twenty years or so, especially in regards to the new tenseless theory of time, has been influenced by Oaklander's work. This book presents a carefully argued defense of the tenseless theory of time. The topics discussed include: the ontology of A- and B-theories of time; presentism; the open future theory; the A/B theory; defending the B-theory of time; temporal experience; temporal semantics; and time, identity, responsibility, and freedom.

This remarkable work offers an analytical exploration of the nature of divine eternity and God's relationship to time.

The central question in the philosophy of time is whether time is tensed or tenseless, viz., whether the moments of time are objectively past, present or future, or whether they are ordered merely by the tenseless temporal relations earlier than, simultaneous with, and later than. In this book and the companion volume *The Tensed Theory of Time: A Critical Examination*, Craig undertakes the first thorough appraisal of the arguments for and against the tensed and tenseless theories of time. The discussions range widely over issues in the philosophy of language, phenomenology, relativity theory, philosophy of space and time, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. *The Tenseless Theory of Time* sets out to discover whether the ineliminability of tense from language and our experience of tense warrants a belief in its objective ontological status, or whether the defeaters raised by McTaggart's paradox and the Myth of Passage serve to undermine any warrant that the tensed theory of time may be supposed to enjoy.

Editor Gregory Ganssle calls on four Christian philosophers to present and defend their views on the place of God in a time-bound universe. The positions taken up here include divine timeless eternity, eternity as relative timelessness, timelessness and omnitemporality, and unqualified divine temporality.

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The first edition (2001) of this title quickly established itself on courses on the philosophy of time and space. This fully revised and expanded new edition sees the addition of chapters on Zeno's paradoxes, speculative contemporary developments in physics, and dynamic time, making the second edition, once again, unrivalled in its breadth of coverage. Surveying both historical debates and the ideas of modern physics, Barry Dainton evaluates the central arguments in a clear and unintimidating way and is careful to keep the conceptual issues throughout comprehensible to students with little scientific or mathematical training. The book makes the philosophy of space and time accessible for anyone trying to come to grips with the complexities of this challenging subject. With over 100 original line illustrations and a full glossary of terms, the book has the requirements of students firmly in sight and will continue to serve as an essential textbook for philosophy of time and space courses.

In a series of thought-provoking and original essays, eighteen leading philosophers engage in head-to-head debates of nine of the most cutting edge topics in contemporary metaphysics. Explores the fundamental questions in contemporary metaphysics in a series of eighteen original essays - 16 of which are newly commissioned for this volume. Features an introductory essay by the editors on the nature of metaphysics to prepare the reader for ongoing discussions. Offers readers the unique opportunity to observe leading philosophers engage in head-to-head debate on cutting-edge metaphysical topics. Provides valuable insights into the flourishing field of contemporary metaphysics. Questions of Time and Tense brings together new essays on a major focus of debate in contemporary metaphysics: does time really pass, or is our ordinary experience of time as consisting of past, present, and future an illusion? The international line-up of contributors broaden this debate by demonstrating the importance of questions about the nature of time for philosophical issues in ethics, aesthetics, psychology, science, religion, and language.

The present book and its companion volume *The Tensed Theory of Time: A Critical Examination* are an attempt to adjudicate what one recent discussant has called "the most fundamental question in the philosophy of time," namely, "whether a static or a dynamic conception of the world is correct." I had originally intended to treat this question in the space of a single volume; but the study swelled into two. I found that an adequate appraisal of these two competing theories of time requires a wide-ranging discussion of issues in metaphysics, philosophy of language, phenomenology, philosophy of science, philosophy of space and time, and even philosophy of religion, and that this simply could not be done in one volume. If these volumes succeed in making a contribution to the debate, it will be precisely because of the synoptic nature of the discussion therein. Too often the question of the nature of time has been prematurely answered by some philosopher or physicist simply because he is largely ignorant of relevant discussions outside his chosen field of expertise. In these two complementary but independent volumes I have attempted to appraise what I take to

be the most important arguments drawn from a variety of fields for and against each theory of time.

In this highly original and ground-breaking work, the author brings together discussions in the philosophy of time and space, philosophy of language, phenomenology, philosophy of science, Special and General Relativity, classical cosmology, quantum mechanics, and so forth, with the concerns of philosophy of religion and theology, in order to craft a philosophically informed and scientifically tenable doctrine of divine eternity and God's relationship to time.

This book brings together, in a novel way, an account of the structure of time with an account of our language and thought about time. Joshua Mozersky argues that it is possible to reconcile the human experience of time, which is centred on the present, with the objective conception of time, according to which all moments are intrinsically alike. He defends a temporally centreless ontology along with a tenseless semantics that is compatible with - and indeed helps to explain the need for - tensed language and thought. This theory of time also, it is argued, helps to elucidate the nature of change and temporal passage, neither of which need be denied nor relegated to the realm of subjective experience only.

The book addresses a variety of topics including whether the past and future are real; whether temporal passage is a genuine phenomenon or merely a subjective illusion; how the asymmetry of time is to be understood; the nature of representation; how something can change its properties yet retain its identity; and whether objects are three-dimensional or four-dimensional. It is a wide-ranging examination of recent issues in metaphysics, philosophy of language and the philosophy of science and presents a compelling picture of the relationship of human beings to the spatiotemporal world.

Bradford Skow presents an original defense of the 'block universe' theory of time, often said to be a theory according to which time does not pass. Along the way, he provides in-depth discussions of alternative theories of time, including those in which there is 'robust passage' of time or 'objective becoming': presentism, the moving spotlight theory of time, the growing block theory of time, and the 'branching time' theory of time. Skow explains why the moving spotlight theory is the best of these arguments, and rebuts several popular arguments against the thesis that time passes. He surveys the problems that the special theory of relativity has been thought to raise for objective becoming, and suggests ways in which fans of objective becoming may reconcile their view with relativistic physics. The last third of the book aims to clarify and evaluate the argument that we should believe that time passes because, somehow, the passage of time is given to us in experience. He isolates three separate arguments this idea suggests, and explains why they fail.

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I defend and develop the new tenseless token-reflexive theory of time. I begin by charting the development of the debate between the tensed and the old tenseless theories of time. The tensed theory of time maintains that time exists and is intrinsically tensed. According to the old tenseless theory, time exists and is intrinsically tenseless, the notions of past, present and future being analytically reducible to tenseless temporal relations. The new tenseless theory of time concedes that tense is an irreducible feature of language and thought. However, it rejects the claim of the tensed theory that tense is an irreducible feature of temporal reality. Tensed sentences have truth conditions statable in entirely tenseless terms, so the irreducibility of tensed language and thought does not imply that the metaphysical nature of time is such that it is intrinsically tensed. The new tenseless theory of time must be defended on two fronts. It must be shown that the truth conditions of tensed sentences can indeed be stated in entirely tenseless terms. I consider and reject the date version of the new tenseless theory of time. I then consider and defend the token-reflexive version of this theory. It must also be shown that tense is not a feature of reality. I argue that the notion of tense has two essential features. It involves the ontological distinction between past, present and future, and the objective reality of temporal becoming. A careful examination of these two essential features reveals that they cannot, under any interpretation, be consistently held together. The supposition that tense is an objective feature of reality is thus logically unsustainable. I develop the new tenseless token-reflexive theory of time in three substantial areas. I argue that, despite appearances, there is no analogy between this theory of time and the theory of genuine modal realism, according to which all possible worlds, including the world we inhabit, are equally real. This comparative analysis between these two theories reveals that the new tenseless theory of time is on firmer ground than both its apparent modal counterpart and various tensed theories of time. I undertake a conceptual analysis of the notion of the direction of time. I argue that the tensed theory of time is singularly unable to account for this notion, while the new tenseless theory has the conceptual equipment necessary

to provide a satisfactory and perspicuous account of it. Finally, I consider the notion of tensed meaning. I argue that the distinction between character and content can be combined with the token-reflexive account of the truth conditions of tensed sentences to yield a highly illuminating account of tensed meaning that is consistent with a tenseless ontology.

This book offers a defense of the tensed theory of time, a critique of the New Theory of Reference, and an argument that simultaneity is absolute. Although Smith rejects ordinary language philosophy, he shows how it is possible to argue from the nature of language to the nature of reality. Specifically, he argues that semantic properties of tensed sentences are best explained by the hypothesis that they ascribe to events temporal properties of futurity, presentness, or pastness and do not merely ascribe relations of earlier than or simultaneity. He criticizes the New Theory of Reference, which holds that "now" refers directly to a time and does not ascribe the property of presentness. Smith does not adopt the old or Fregean theory of reference but develops a third alternative, based on his detailed theory of de re and de dicto propositions and a theory of cognitive significance. He concludes the book with a lengthy critique of Einstein's theory of time. Smith offers a positive argument for absolute simultaneity based on his theory that all propositions exist in time. He shows how Einstein's relativist temporal concepts are reducible to a conjunction of absolutist temporal concepts and relativist nontemporal concepts of the observable behavior of light rays, rigid bodies, and the like.

Four-Dimensionalism defends the thesis that the material world is composed of temporal as well as spatial parts. Along the way many topics concerning the metaphysics of time and identity over time are addressed. These include the status of past and future objects, the nature of motion and change, the existence of composite objects, and examples involving two things in the same place at the same time (such as statues and lumps of clay). An original and highly readable study of the metaphysics of time and identity.

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Naturalism provides a rigorous analysis and critique of the major varieties of contemporary philosophical naturalism. The authors advocate the thesis that contemporary naturalism should be abandoned, in light of the serious objections raised against it. Contributors draw on a wide range of topics including: epistemology, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mind and agency, and natural theology.

Real Time II extends and evolves DH Mellor's classic exploration of the philosophy of time, Real Time. This new book answers such basic metaphysical questions about time as: how do past, present and future differ, how are time and space related, what is change, is time travel possible? His Real Time dominated the philosophy of time for fifteen years. Real Time II will do the same for the next twenty. GET

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Our engagement with time is a ubiquitous feature of our lives. We are aware of time on many scales, from the briefest flicker of change to the way our lives unfold over many years. But to what extent does this encounter reveal the true nature of temporal reality?

To the extent that temporal reality is as it seems, how do we come to be aware of it? And to the extent that temporal reality is not as it seems, why does it seem that way? These are the central questions addressed by Simon Prosser in *Experiencing Time*. He defends the B-theory of time, according to which the apparently dynamic quality of change, the special status of the present, and even the passage of time are all illusions. Prosser goes on to explore solutions to certain puzzles raised by experiences of temporal features such as changes, rates, and durations, and in doing so sheds light on broader issues in the philosophy of mind.

In a critical dialogue with the metaphysical tradition from Plato to Hegel to contemporary schools of thought, the author convincingly argues that traditional rationalist metaphysics has failed to accomplish its goal of demonstrating the existence of a divine cause and moral purpose of the world. To replace the defective rationalist metaphysics, the author builds a new metaphysics on the idea that moods and affects make manifest the world's felt meanings; he argues that each feature of the world is a felt meaning in the sense that each feature is a source of a feeling-response, if and when it appears. The author asserts that we must synthesize our two ways of knowing—poetic evocations and exact analyses—in order to decide which mood or affect is the appropriate appreciation of any given feature of the world. Smith gives evocative and exact explications of such features as the world's temporality, appearance, and mind-independency, as these features appear in the appropriate recitations.

The God of Western religion is said to be eternal. But what does that mean? Is God somehow beyond time, living a life that does not involve one thing after another? Or is God's relationship to time much more like ours, so that God's eternity just consists in there being no time at which God doesn't exist? Even for non-believers, these issues have interesting implications for the relation between historical and scientific findings on the one hand, and religion on the other. This Element introduces the reader to the requisite metaphysical background, and then examines reasons for and against thinking of God as timeless.

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Roberto Mangabeira Unger and Lee Smolin argue for a revolution in our cosmological ideas. Ideal for non-scientists, physicists and cosmologists.

First published in 1995. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor & Francis, an informal company.

McTaggart's argument for the unreality of time, first published in 1908, set the agenda for 20th-century philosophy of time. Yet there is very little agreement on what it actually says—nobody agrees with the conclusion, but still everybody finds something important in it. This book presents the first critical overview of the last century of debate on what is popularly called "McTaggart's Paradox". Scholars have long assumed that McTaggart's argument stands alone and does not rely on any contentious ontological principles. The author demonstrates that these assumptions are incorrect—McTaggart himself explicitly claimed his argument to be dependent on the ontological principles that form the basis of his idealist metaphysics. The

