

Temporal Paradox, Realism, and Subjectivity

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One aim of this chapter is to suggest that central logical and positional features of subjectivity can plausibly be seen as resulting from the structure of *time as given*, rather than conversely. By “time as given,” I shall mean whatever underlies such facts as that what is now present will later be past, that objects may enjoy contradictory determinations at different times, and that temporally indexical facts (such as the fact that it is 9:58 AM now) are irreducibly tensed. It is plausible that these facts, and the formal structures they exemplify, obtain prior to and independently of any activity or process of human thinking, perception, consciousness, or representation. Accordingly, it should be possible, as I argue here, to understand the temporally positional and perspectival structure of these activities or processes on the basis of the prior structure of given time. Such an understanding produces a position according to which tense, change, and becoming are real but are not dependent on the processes or activities of a subject. As I shall argue, this provides a realist alternative to both of two seemingly opposed traditions of thinking about time: first, the long tradition, characteristic of Kant’s idealism and culminating in Husserl’s phenomenology, of thinking about time as constitutively dependent on subjectivity; and second, the objectivist naturalism, typical of the analytic tradition, according to which tense, change, and becoming play no part in reality as it is in itself.

1.

Much discussion about time has begun with the observation that we describe and experience events from the perspective of the present: that is, we understand events as happening *now*, or in *the past*, or in *the future*. Famously, J.M.E. McTaggart made this observation the center of his idealist argument against the reality of time: the placement of temporal events in “B-series” relationships (timeless relations of events standing before, at the same time as, or after other events) requires their prior placement in “A-series” relationships (those, rather, oriented from the perspective of the “now”). The placement of events in the “A-series” is, however, contradictory, for it involves ascribing to one and the same event mutually incompatible determinations. And it is no help to

describe the different determinations (e.g., as (now) “future,” and (later) “present,” and (still later) “past”) as themselves ascribed at different times, since the question of the compatibility of *these* descriptions then arises again and has the same form.

In response to the argument, many philosophers have argued that the temporal indexicals evidently involved in all such determinations might be seen rather as innocuous within the framework of a broader account of the linguistic functioning of indexicals in general, as “token-reflexive” expressions, or as determining functions from “character” to “content” (in the manner of Kaplan).¹ On this kind of analysis, the temporal indexicality of the determination of an event as “present,” “past,” or “future” is analogous (for example) to that of the spatial indexicals “here” and “there,” or (again) to the egocentric indexicals “I” and “you.” This analogy is thought to suggest that all of the facts that are meant to be accommodated within the (putatively basic) A-series relationships can, in fact, be captured, without contradiction, in an indexical-free and non-perspectival objective framework. Just as there is no real contradiction between something’s being “here” (for me) and simultaneously “there” (for you) or between some fact being a fact about “me” (for you) while it is about “you” (for me), so too, on this suggestion, the temporal facts that are expressed by A-series placements are to be understood simply as objective ones free of temporal indexicality or tense, essentially those expressed by the statements of their B-series locations. This approach, then, dissolves the putative contradiction; but as many have noted, it does so only at the cost of rejecting a basic kind of realism about tense, change, and becoming. For in the envisaged objective framework, there are in an evident sense no really tensed facts: no facts, that is, that are *irreducibly* characterized as past, present, and future. There is no fact, for example, that is irreducibly the fact that *I am (now) sitting* (as opposed to the fact that *I am sitting at 11:49 AM on December 23*); and there is no fact that is (irreducibly) the fact that *it is 3:50 PM now*.

Given this, we can ask what an alternative treatment that is, instead, realist about tense, change, and becoming might look like. This question will point, as well, to essential respects in which closer attention to the logical structure of specifically *temporal* indexicality (as opposed to the spatial and egocentric cases) can, in that context, serve to indicate special grounds for its irreducibility. In his 1960 article, “A Defence of McTaggart’s Proof of the Unreality of Time,” Michael Dummett distinguishes the two parts of McTaggart’s argument.² In the first part, McTaggart argues that there will be no time if there are no irreducibly tensed (or A-series) facts; in the second, he states (as we have seen) that the existence of such facts implies a contradiction. If we are to understand the real structure of the argument, we should not pass over part one too quickly by assimilating the temporal cases to those of other indexicals. For, Dummett argues, the application of part one to part two depends on special features of temporal indexicality that do *not* hold with respect to spatial or ego-centric indexicals. In particular, Dummett argues, while the use of indexicals is not plausibly essential to the expression of any real facts in the spatial or egocentric cases, temporal indexicals *do*, by contrast, enter essentially into the expression of at least some facts which they are used to express (in particular, the A-series ones).

Briefly, Dummett’s argument for this is as follows. In the case of the description of an arrangement of objects in space, I can readily envision as determinate such an arrangement in a particular space while I do not, myself, stand anywhere in particular within, or in relation to, the space in question. Dummett here gives the example of the

space of my visual field: "In that space [i.e., that of the visual field as presented to me] there is no here or there, no near or far: I am not in that space."³ On the strength of this analogy, Dummett suggests, we might conceive of a being who could sufficiently perceive objects in our three-dimensional space along with their spatial relations while herself occupying no position in that space. Such a being would apparently have no need for indexical expressions in describing correctly even the totality of the three-dimensional universe, and it follows from this that indexicality does not enter essentially into such a description. Something similar, indeed, seems to be the case with respect to the kinds of facts that we may express using personal pronouns. Barring *essentially* private mental events, at any rate, any fact that I can express in the first person using "I" can also be known and expressed in the second person by you as a fact about me, or equally from an indifferent third-person perspective as a fact about "P.L."⁴

By contrast with these cases, however, the complete description of events and relations in time *does* essentially require indexical (or, as Dummett says, "token-reflexive") expressions. For:

Suppose someone who can observe all events which take place in our universe, or some region of it, during some period of time. We may first suppose that he observes them successively, that he cannot choose which events he will next observe but can observe them only in the order in which they take place. Then even if he knows both what he has observed and what he is going to observe, he cannot give a complete description of his observations without the use of temporally token-reflexive expressions. He can give a complete narration of the sequence of events, but there would remain to be answered the question, "And which of these events is happening *now*?" We can indeed avoid this by putting the observer's thoughts and utterances into the description, but now we have merely made the original observer part of the region observed, and the point may be made again for an observer who gives a description of this enlarged region.⁵

Further, as Dummett goes on to say, if we now envision an observer able to survey the whole sequential course of temporal events simultaneously (or at any rate, in any order she chooses), we may envision her in a familiar way as observing a four-dimensional configuration, one dimension of which represents time. But this would no longer evidently be an observation of that sequence itself but rather only of a (static) *model* of it: not of the events themselves but only of a possible form of representation of them. To mistake the observation of such a model for the observation of the facts modeled would be like, Dummett suggests, mistaking the observation of a path for the observation of the traveler who moves along it. In this way, we would miss the reality of the genuine phenomena of change, tense, and becoming, and thereby exclude from our model what are, in fact, essential features of the facts and relations purportedly modeled.

The observation of the temporal facts thus requires essentially a position that cannot be characterized as external to those facts themselves, and this feature—what we may call the positional *non-externality* of the temporal facts *as observed*—appears to characterize their logic essentially, and by contrast with the spatial or personal cases.

“As observed,” *not* “as described.” For it is evidently quite coherently possible for a *description*, for example, in writing, of any specific course of events to be given at a time which is unrelated to the time of the events described. We might imagine, for example, a narrative of a course of events as written down in a book, where it is not stated whether the course of events described has already taken place or is just being predicted in the future tense. However, what is not coherent, in view of Dummett’s reconstruction of McTaggart’s argument, is to suppose such a course of events to be *observed* at no time in particular: to come to be fully and completely known by a knower, that is, without the knower knowing whether they have already taken place, are now taking place, or are only predicted to take place in the future (with respect to that knower’s temporal position in making the observation itself). Even if, for example, we were to envision such a knower as observing, in advance, a certain course of events as fore-ordained (so to speak), we could only envision that knower as observing the ordination, not the course of events itself: what would be left out of what such an observer observes would be the *actual* unfolding of those events in time, their actual happening itself.⁶

We may put this in more general terms, and switch to (more revealing) phenomenological language, by describing this phenomenon of *non-externality* as characterizing an essential aspect of the *givenness* of temporal facts: of the temporal facts, that is, *as they are* provided to any possible knower or observer who is envisioned as knowing or observing them, themselves. The advantage of this formulation, over formulations in terms of the possible *description* of such facts, is that it brings out the sense in which the temporal facts are themselves irreducibly “given”: available, that is, only to or from a *position* which itself has an essential temporal form.⁷ Here, the crucial underlying consideration is that any determination of temporal relations is itself something that *happens*, and thus something that happens *at a time*; whereas in the analogous spatial case, there is no necessity for the spatial relations to be determined *from* a particular position in space. The requirement, in the temporal case, suffices to determine with respect to any specification of temporal relationships a present *now*, and thus to orient the facts as determined with respect to it. It follows that, as Dummett argues, temporal facts are plausibly, if real, irreducibly indexical: essentially, and as a matter of their underlying form, they are not to be characterized as such and in general without referring to irreducibly indexical facts.

What consequences follow from this, with respect to the reality or unreality of tense, change, and becoming, and (as a consequence) of time itself? In the last part of the chapter, Dummett returns to the question how the essential indexicality of the specification of temporal facts and relations is supposed to establish that time is unreal. Might one not take the first part of the argument rather to establish that time cannot be reduced to anything else, and thus is, far from being an illusion, in a strong sense irreducibly basic and real? However, as Dummett notes, a further premise that is at least implicitly operative in McTaggart’s move from the first to the second part of the argument is that there can be a *complete* description of reality: one, that is, that includes everything that is the case, and can be given from *no* particular point of view. If part one of the argument (the part establishing the irreducibility of indexicality for temporal facts) is granted, then it will follow that if time is real, there can be no such complete and perspective-independent description. Nevertheless, this leaves open, as

Dummett briefly notes, the possibility of a radical alternative that upholds temporal realism while denying the “prejudice” of such a complete description of reality.⁸ On this alternative, there will be no such thing as a single, complete (and coherent) description of reality. Instead, owing to the irreducible indexicality of the temporal facts, there will only be a number of perspective-dependent distinct “maximal” descriptions, in one of which (for example) “the event M is happening” figures, while in another, “the event M happened” does, and in still another, “the event M is going to happen.”⁹

2.

As Dummett’s considerations already begin to indicate, the affirmation of temporal realism, in the sense of an irreducibly tensed reality, has important consequences for our understanding of the overall form of reality; further, these consequences extend to the structure and situation of (what are called) “subjects” within it. In “Tense and Reality,” Kit Fine argues that an accurate assessment of the space of options for the theorization of time requires that we consider closely the bearing of the various possible views on the question of what “overall concept of reality” we should adopt.¹⁰ As with other kinds of cases involving the use of indexical terms (including spatial, personal, and modal ones), the issues that arise on analysis of temporal indexicality and tense require us to determine whether and to what extent we must see reality itself as “aspectual” (e.g., irreducibly tensed, or centered, or actual) rather than treating it as non-aspectual in itself but merely accessed or described from a particular point of view.¹¹ As we have already seen, in the temporal case, the second option produces a familiar kind of objectivist anti-realism. On this view, all that is truly included in reality are four-dimensional positions in spacetime, but there is no possibility of reflecting tense, change, and becoming as real features of things or of the world as a whole. Temporal realism, on the other hand, appears here to require (as we have seen) some sense in which temporal indexicality figures *essentially*—and not merely as a matter of our own point of view—in the givenness of time and the constitution of temporal facts themselves.

For each of the cases, one kind of realist view—what Fine calls “standard” realism—simply maintains that one *single* position is privileged in the constitution of reality.¹² Thus, for example, the “standard” realist about modality maintains that the *actual* world is the only real one, and the “standard” realist about egocentric position maintains solipsism: reality is constituted from a *particular* egocentric point of view. In the temporal case, the “standard” realist view is presentism: the view that the present plays a privileged role in the constitution of reality, so that all other temporal moments enjoy, at most, a secondary status, or are not real at all. Each of these configurations of “standard” realism thereby uphold the claim that reality is *essentially* aspectual (tensed, first-personal, etc.). But as Fine notes, they combine this with the claim that a certain *particular* aspect or position (the present, the self, etc.) is to be privileged. The two claims, however, can be separated, and varieties of what Fine calls “non-standard” realism will uphold the first while denying the second. In particular, on either of the two varieties of non-standard realism that Fine explores, the irreducibly aspectual or perspectival character

of reality is affirmed, while, nevertheless, an assumption of *neutrality* is maintained. No particular position is privileged, and the facts that ultimately constitute reality are not uniformly oriented toward one position rather than any other.

Given the conjunction of aspectual realism with *neutrality*, there are, Fine argues, two possible “non-standard” realist options. The first of these is a *relativist* one: reality is constituted by facts that are themselves relative to positions, so that (in the temporal case) it is true at a time *t* that reality is constituted by (tensed) facts that are present at time *t*, and at any other time that it is constituted by facts that are present at that time.¹³ On this sort of view, the irreducibly indexical and positional character of time is thus affirmed. But what is denied is the claim that there is any “absolute” and non-relative overall constitution of reality at all: what constitutes reality, in the most ultimate sense, changes from moment to moment. Finally, however, there is the possibility of affirming what Fine calls a “fragmentalist” view.¹⁴ On this kind of view, by contrast with the “relativist” one, reality *does* have an absolute constitution: there is a single way that reality is, as such and in general. However, since reality is also constituted by irreducibly aspectual facts, it is not, overall, coherent. Instead, it includes, at a basic level, facts that are (logically) inconsistent with one another. In the temporal case, for example, it will include such mutually incompatible (tensed) facts as that *I am sitting* and *I am standing* (as well as similarly incompatible ones in the past and future tenses).

Given this framework, there are various considerations that favor non-standard varieties of realism over the standard variety and, further, favor the fragmentalist variant over the relativist one. Most broadly, the standard realist in each case has difficulties in accounting for the evident reality of other indexical positions, beyond that of the first person present. It is evidently problematic to argue, in accordance with solipsism, that only I exist, or, with presentism, that the present moment is somehow to be privileged beyond all others. By maintaining neutrality with respect to the possible positions, the relativist overcomes this objection. But she faces further difficulties in accounting for the way in which the constitution of reality is relative, since it is apparently incumbent upon her to explain how the facts to which it is relative in each case obtain, themselves. For example, the relativist in the temporal case holds that the constitution of reality is relative to times; but what are “times,” and how do *they* figure in reality itself? Here, moreover, any coherent account would seem to reinstate times themselves as essential constituents of an *absolute* reality; and, once this is acknowledged, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, since times differ but are all included, this reality will after all include constituent facts that are inconsistent with one another.¹⁵ But this is then just the fragmentalist conclusion, once again, on which there is no overall view of reality that is consistent as a whole.

In considering the advantages of the fragmentalist view over the relativist one in the egocentric case, Fine notes that the relativist view is, here, essentially the view that reality is irreducibly relative to a plurality of (what we may call) “metaphysical” subjects: that is, to a plurality of distinct positions from which the world, as a whole, appears or to which it is presented. Such a “metaphysical subject,” as a bare position of being-appeared-to, is to be distinguished from the “empirical” subject which is the subject of facts about (for example) the psychological continuity and personal identity of individuals over time.¹⁶ The view of the relativist with respect to egocentricity is then, essentially, that each subjective reality is given or constituted only relative to a

metaphysical subject, in this sense. However, it is difficult to see that there *are*, internal to reality, any such metaphysical subjects, once we clearly disjoin the facts about them from facts about empirical subjects or persons. And at any rate, in requiring the various metaphysical perspectives, the relativist view again threatens to make them part of what is, anyway, an absolute conception of reality in itself. This situation is what has led philosophers, Fine suggests, to locate “the” metaphysical subject, in the singular, outside the world; but such a conception is not obviously coherent.¹⁷ This leaves standing only the fragmentalist view, on which there are a variety of mutually inconsistent sets of perspectival facts: facts capturing (as we may put it) how the world is presented from differing points of view or at different moments.

3.

Throughout his chapter, Fine treats the temporal and other cases largely in parallel, arguing that the evident structural analogies between the distinct domains of irreducible indexicality motivate the fragmentalist variety of non-standard realism overall. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I will argue for a further and stronger conclusion: that the structure of given time may itself be seen as *logically founding* that of (what has been called) subjectivity, whereas the converse is not the case. That is, it is sufficient, in accounting for the logical possibility and metaphysical reality of subjectivity, to assume the real existence of irreducibly basic facts of the passage of time, while, on the other hand, it is not possible to account for the reality of temporal facts in general as a product, an outcome, or an aspect of subjectivity or any kind of subjective activity.

As we have seen, the fragmentalist conclusion with respect to time appears to follow, on natural assumptions, from the combination of temporal realism with the further assumptions that the overall character of reality is *neutral*—it does not privilege any one temporal perspective over any others—and that it is *absolute*; that is, not fundamentally relative to anything within it. Any viewpoint that combines these assumptions with respect to aspectual reality will yield a total picture of reality that is logically inconsistent overall. Rather than dismissing them just for that reason, however, it is worthwhile, in view of the positive argument for them, to examine whether they may be seen as illuminating the structure of given time itself. The relationship between temporality and contradiction is, of course, a central theme of Western philosophical thinking about time since (at least) Parmenides. In particular, it is possible to see a wide variety of philosophical theories about time as, essentially, ways of defusing the contradictions that otherwise threaten to arise in our analyses of the phenomena of change and becoming.¹⁸ Given this, these approaches then yield a familiar and problematic kind of oscillation. This is an oscillation between positions that are anti-realist about time, while maintaining the reality of those objects and relations which figure in a tenseless description of the world (today, the objectivist “B-series” theories) and those that see time or its appearance as having a basis in subjective consciousness or activity, while treating the objects of the world as constructions or productions of this subjectivity (the varieties of idealism).

Without following any of these strategies, however, it is also possible to describe temporal change positively as a contradictory structure grounded in (what can be understood as) the contradictory structure of given time itself.¹⁹ On this analysis, the contradictoriness involved on a basic level in something's being one way (at one time) and also another (at another) is to be understood as itself arising from the more basic paradox of the givenness of the *now* as a temporal perspective of presentation: that is, as a point from which the *totality* of facts of reality is, in each case, presented. Under this interpretation, temporal *paradox* emerges as a dynamic structure, and a basic one in the real constitution of all temporal becoming.²⁰ Most centrally, this paradoxical structure is that of the temporal *now* or present: the temporal perspective from which the objects and facts of the world, as a whole and as such, are presented or given. The paradox follows from the fact that, at each moment, this *now* is *already* becoming other, so that whatever facts it comprehends are *already* (now) becoming different. From this there follows the contradiction that the temporal *now*, along with all it comprehends, is both fully present and not, both unitary and essentially divided from itself.

Crucially, the structure of given time underlying this paradox is not one of incommensurability or inconsistency "between" a "subjective" and an "objective" view of reality.²¹ The challenge of temporal realism, to which the analysis of the paradox responds, is not that of combining or fitting together a "view from nowhere" with a "view from somewhere." It is rather of recognizing that, while the idea of a temporal "view from nowhere" is incoherent (Dummett's point), none of the situated "views from somewhere" are to be privileged in a neutral overall description of reality. This implies a basic inconsistency, but it is not the inconsistency between a subjective and an objective view. Rather, as I have suggested, it is intelligibly grounded in the structure of given time itself: that of the "now" as it gives itself in temporal reality. Since this structure is the most basic structure of temporal reality, it is not, itself, produced by or founded on temporal perspectives. Rather, as I shall briefly argue, it is only because of it that such perspectives exist at all.

As we have seen, the challenge of realism in any of the aspectual cases is essentially that of accommodating within an overall conception of reality as a whole the variable and aspectual facts that appear to be understandable only as given from a particular perspective *within* that whole. In the temporal case in particular, the challenge of maintaining an overall neutral realism is that of finding a way to accommodate, within such a neutral overall conception of reality, the facts of temporal position and becoming: that (for example), it can be the case that *it is* 5:13 PM, and that objects may enjoy contradictory but uniformly correct determinations ("sitting"; "standing"). Given this, as we have seen, the only way to accommodate all of the relevant determinations is to suppose that temporal reality is itself fragmented into an irreducible variety of perspectives, each one of which can reflect *all* of the world. But now, switching to the question of subjective perspectives, we may ask: what was meant to be explained, on a realist view, by the introduction of subjective perspectives into reality itself? If we put aside the various facts about the historical and factual constitution of empirical subjects, it is clear that what was supposed to be accounted for *just was* this fragmentation of reality into mutually incompatible perspectives, each of which reflects the *whole* of reality—the totality of the facts. Indeed, as we saw

above in connection with the initially parallel considerations about egocentricity, the temptation to introduce a “metaphysical” subject as an element of reality is, at bottom, rooted in the desire to accommodate the variety of possible, but jointly incoherent, positions from which reality *as a whole* can be viewed.

As we saw, once the idea of irreducible subjective perspectives is introduced, there is a further temptation to reflect the totality of *one* such position—its ability to present the facts of the world as a whole—by locating that position as a “transcendental” one situated *outside* the totality of the world itself. But it is evidently then not coherent to suppose that the occupant of such a position could (so much as) be described: since it is now located outside the world of facts, there can be (for example) no facts about it, nothing that is true of it. And in any case, if we now apply the temporal consideration of *non-externality* that we derived from Dummett’s argument, it is clear that the idea of a constitutive exterior subjectivity is, anyway, incoherent in itself. For such a subjectivity would then have to be able to observe or present to itself the temporal facts, as such and as a whole; and as we saw, this is not possible, without distortion, from a position outside temporal relations themselves. But to introduce, in the face of these difficulties, the position of (now) plural “metaphysical” subjectivities back into the world of temporal facts just *is* to introduce into the world an irreducible plurality of temporally oriented perspectives. And since it is inherent to the structure of given time *itself* that it already produces the plural reality of such contradictory positions, the *further* introduction of the subjective positions now falls away as unnecessary.²²

4.

At *Physics* IV, 219a21–219b1, just after considering the apparent contradiction that the “now” which divides between past and future must be both again and again different and yet always the same, Aristotle appeals to what he sees as the essential link between time and motion that is established by facts about our *apprehension* of a continuous motion:

But we apprehend time only when we have marked motion, marking it by before and after; and it is only when we have perceived before and after in motion that we say that time has elapsed.... When we think of the extremes as different from the middle and the mind pronounces that the “nows” are two, one before and one after, it is then that we say that there is time, and this that we say is time. For what is bounded by the “now” is thought to be time—we may assume this.²³

With this, Aristotle exemplifies an understanding of the logical form of time that continues through much of Western philosophy and yields a variety of familiar conceptions of the form of given time. On this understanding, the *aporia* or contradiction of temporal becoming in itself—the structure which makes it possible that the “now” is again and again both the same and different, and that an identical object may undergo contradictory determinations—is to be resolved by time’s referral to *thought*: that is, to the forms in which we can think, measure, or make determinations

about it. It is, then, the capacity of thought to render non-contradictory judgment that allows for the thinkability of temporal relations and determinations in general; and it is in relation to this capacity that whatever is real, as opposed to merely apparent, about temporal becoming is to be understood.

This understanding of the basis of given time is not simply, or only, idealist, since it may also (as it does in Aristotle) function in tandem with the recognition of *substance* as a substrate of identity in the real: what is supposed to remain the same through the progression of temporal differentiations.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear that it underwrites a variety of idealist positions in a familiar way. One leading example is the position of Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to which the appearance of causality, temporal change, and becoming are to be referred to the prior framework of the categories of pure understanding in their synthesis with the fluid deliverances of the sensibility, of which time and space are forms. Kant theorizes this synthesis, problematically, by appealing to the standing structure of the transcendental unity of apperception, or the capacity of a transcendental subjectivity to unify a given manifold under concepts by means of the imaginative activity of the schematism. This resolves for thought the apparent problem that is posed for it by the fluidity of the sensory and its consequent lack of ability to provide stable identities and non-contradictory categories from itself. But in a broader view, the purported solution only displaces the problem elsewhere. For we can now ask about the time in which the synthetic activity of the transcendental subject takes place: does that activity itself take place within, or outside, the time that is thus constituted? Evidently, once the problem is posed in this way, it replicates the originally aporetic structure we have discussed above. This points, once again, to the essentially contradictory structure at the basis of given time and to the unavailability of any noncontradictory solution to the problem of becoming it poses.

More generally, if idealism can be defined as the strategy of ensuring the consistency of being, in reaction to temporal contradiction, by identifying *thought* as the region in which this contradiction can be overcome, then it is clear that Aristotle's gesture already instantiates a strategy that will be practiced repeatedly, and up to the present, by philosophers committed to the noncontradictory unity of thinking and being (or of the rational and the real).²⁵ For any position of this sort, this noncontradictory unity is assured only by the possibility that thought can occupy a stable overall position, outside the reality of temporal relations, from which it can assess these relations as such. But as we have seen here on the basis of considerations of the structure of given time, there is no such position. Temporal determination is always, just as such, something that happens *in* time, and the temporal relations constitutive of reality and marked in our tensed and indexical language cannot be adequately determined, in their totality, from *any* noncontradictory position. Moreover, and for the same reason, the position of any total determination of the temporal facts—that of the giving of time that is the “present” itself—will be inherently and irreducibly contradictory. If, then, we are to retain as a basic referent the schema of the relationship of thinking and being which has oriented Western philosophy since Parmenides, it is clear that the reality of time itself witnesses its irreducible complication, or even the possibility of its supersession within a still more thoughtfully oriented learning.²⁶

Notes

- 1 David Kaplan, "Demonstratives." In *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Almog Perry and Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 2 Michael Dummett, "A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time." In *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978), 351–7
- 3 Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 354.
- 4 I leave it open here whether this holds also for the relevantly parallel modal case, that is, whether it is coherent to suppose that any fact about the actual world could be given from a (modal) perspective that is exterior to it.
- 5 Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 354–5.
- 6 As Dummett suggests, this would be the case, plausibly, even if it were known *with complete certainty* that the fore-ordained events would (in the future) occur exactly as predicted.
- 7 More generally, recent analytic discussions of the form and implications of "realist" and "anti-realist" positions have suffered from an overemphasis on the question of the possibility of a complete *description* of the facts; as we see in this and other cases, this has tended, in particular, to obscure the equally relevant question of the actual *givenness* of the (possibly) described facts themselves.
- 8 Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 357.
- 9 Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 356.
- 10 Kit Fine, "Tense and Reality" (2009), 2. Available online: <https://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/philosophy/documents/faculty-documents/fine/Fine-Kit-tenseandreality.pdf>; see also Kit Fine, "The Reality of Tense," *Synthese* 150, no. 3 (2006): 399–414.
- 11 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 1.
- 12 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 25–8.
- 13 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 28–32.
- 14 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 32–7.
- 15 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 20.
- 16 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 80–3.
- 17 Fine, "Tense and Reality," 84.
- 18 See, e.g., Paul M. Livingston, *The Logic of Being: Realism, Truth, and Time* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), chapters 1 and 6.
- 19 For a fuller version of this argument, see Livingston, *The Logic of Being*, 161–7.
- 20 This is the structure of what I called the "kairological paradox of passage" or of "becoming in the now" in Livingston, *The Logic of Being*, 165–7.
- 21 And thus the current claim is not that temporality is underlain by something like a "parallax view" (in the sense of the incommensurability between different subjective perspectives: Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006)).
- 22 There are further questions, of course, about the empirical conditions for the constitution of persons as identical over time and (perhaps) as bearers of agency. But these are questions about (what Fine calls) "empirical" rather than "metaphysical" subjectivity; and at any rate the present considerations seem sufficient to me to account for any features of subjects or subjectivity that may reasonably be thought to play a *constitutive* role in reality as such.
- 23 Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), *Physics* IV, 219a21–219b1.

- 24 Compare the argument that immediately follows, at 219b13-33, according to which the “now” is analogous to a body which remains the same while being moved.
- 25 For example, it is the strategy of Sebastian Rödl’s perceptive *Categories of the Temporal*, which aims to identify and describe a number of such categories by developing a “transcendental logic” of the essential forms of temporal thought. The project is a chapter of what Rödl calls “critical metaphysics,” where the latter is guided by the insight that “the order of being is nothing other than the order of the thinking, judging, experiencing subject” (Sebastian Rödl, *Categories of the Temporal: An Inquiry into the Forms of the Finite Intellect*, trans. Sibylle Salewski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 40). [orig. published as *Kategorien des Zeitlichen: Eine Untersuchung der Formen des endlichen Verstandes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005)]). But this makes evident the specific limitation of the deduction which follows: that what is deduced cannot be categories of time as it is in itself, or (at any rate) as having a structural order—a way of being—that is wholly independent of that of “the” subject, in this sense.
- 26 “Each individual and each object in this whole Universe should be glimpsed as individual moments of Time. Object does not hinder object in the same way that moment of Time does not hinder moment of Time. For this reason, there are minds which are made up in the same moment of Time, and there are moments of time in which the same mind is made up. Practice, and realization of truth, are also like this. Putting the self in order, we see what it is. The truth that self is Time is like this. We should learn in practice that, because of this truth, the whole Earth includes myriad phenomena and hundreds of things, and each phenomenon and each thing exists in the whole Earth. Such toing-and-froing is the first step [on the way] of practice. When we arrive in the field of the ineffable, there is just one [concrete] thing and one [concrete] phenomenon, here and now, [beyond] understanding of phenomena and non-understanding of phenomena, and [beyond] understanding of things and non-understanding of things. Because [real existence] is only this exact moment, all moments of Existence-Time are the whole of Time, and all Existent things and all Existent phenomena are Time” (Dōgen, “Uji (Existence-Time).” In *Shobogenzo*, book 1, trans. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross (Bristol: Windbell Publications, 1994), 92).