

PHIL 8600: SEMINAR IN METAPHYSICS METAPHYSICS OF TIME AND TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE

Fall 2017

Monday, 3:35 – 6:35 pm

205S Peabody Hall

Instructor: Yuri Balashov

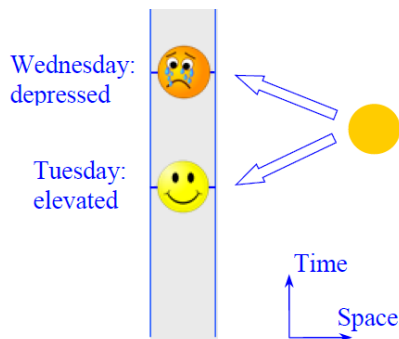
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Office hours: Tuesday 6:15 – 7:15 pm and by appointment

Many philosophers believe in a single Block Universe containing all objects and events – those that we intuitively call past, present, and future. But many of those who endorse this ontology of time also believe (as most people do) that objects persist by *enduring* – by being wholly present (i.e. with no parts absent) at all moments at which they exist. This combination of views has survived the initial assault of the problem of temporary intrinsics and of several later objections. But arguably, it fails to account for several striking features of our temporal experience.

One such feature is illustrated in the following story. Tuesday was my last day on the skiing slopes in a beautiful part of the country with tons of snow, dry air, and out of this world mountains. It was cold and sunny, and I felt extremely elevated. The next day I had to rush back to that warm and wet place, which greeted me with the usual splash of swampy air, and I immediately felt very depressed. The figure below represents my feelings in the Block Universe: elevated on Tuesday, depressed on Wednesday. Think of them as mental episodes tied up to their locations in spacetime, much like concerts or breakfasts.



The shaded rectangle represents my path in spacetime. The circle on the right represents my enduring self, the upper arrow the relations *wholly present at* and *depressed at*, the lower arrow the relations *wholly present at* and *elevated at*.

But the episodes in question are my experiences. Despite the drastic difference in their phenomenal character they are ontologically on a par and have equal claims to represent *my perspective* on the Block Universe; *if* I endure, there is only *one* me in the Block Universe but many times and many experiences. I believe, however, that I am viewing the Block Universe exclusively from the Wednesday perspective (tainted with depression), and not from the Tuesday perspective. This belief may or may not be true; but I have it, and it needs to be explained. But the Block Universe with Endurance lacks the resources to do so because it connects me with my

elevation (and with Tuesday) as well as with my depression (and Wednesday) by equally solid arrows.

This gives the flavor of the sort of problems confronting the very popular Block Universe theory of time, on which different times and their contents are like different places and their contents – all equally real. Our experience of time projects a very different image; we perceive the present as objectively distinguished, and we perceive time as “passing” or “flowing.” The block lovers must categorize such perceptions as systematic illusions, and they owe us an explanation of their origin. This is a challenging task. The block lovers have recently risen up to the challenge. Many interesting new ideas have been developed in the last ten years. The seminar intends to introduce the participants to this booming industry in contemporary metaphysics.

Work in the seminar

The participants in the seminar will be expected to take turns leading our class discussions, develop a research project, and write a final paper.

Readings

- Journal articles and books excerpts, to be provided or available for downloading from electronic journal sites with Galileo or myID password
- Occasional SEP articles (plato.stanford.edu)
- Occasional notes and handouts (to be provided)

Work and evaluation (subject to adjustment based on the final enrollment and class presentation frequency):

- Leading discussions & class participation: 50%
- Research paper: 50%

Schedule, updated 08-28-17 (all the readings will be provided):

- Week 1 (Aug 14): General Intro: time, persistence, and temporal experience
- Week 2 (Aug 19): Rival views of time. General discussion. Readings:
 - Prosser 2016, Preface and Chapter 1 (will be provided, for personal use only)
 - Zimmerman 2008 (the link will be provided)
- Weeks 3 (Aug 28): Rival views of persistence. General discussion. Readings:
 - Sider 2008 (the link will be provided)
 - Hawley, “Temporal Parts,” SEP (the link will be provided)

Mon, Sept 4: No classes at UGA: Labor Day

- Week 4 (Sept 11): McTaggart’s Paradox - I
 - McTaggart’s original “paradox” and Broad’s early response (**Tim**)
 - Smith (2011), “Inconsistency in the A-Theory” (**Manu**)

- Week 5 (Sept 18): McTaggart's Paradox – II
 - Ross Cameron, *The Moving Spotlight*, Introduction and Chapter 2, sections 2.1–2.3 (**Maulik**)

- Week 6 (Sept 25): The Growing Block Theory - I
 - Braddon-Mitchell (2004), “How Do We Know It Is Now Now?” (4 pp.)
 - Heathwood (2005), “The Real Price of the Dead Past” (2 pp.)
 - Forrest (2004), “The Real but Dead Past: A Reply to Braddon-Mitchell” (5 pp.)
 - Merricks (2006), “Good-bye Growing Block” (8 pp.) (**Usman**)

- Week 7 (Oct 2): The Growing Block Theory - II
 - Correia and Rosenkranz (2013), “Living on the Brink, or Welcome Back, Growing Block!”
 - Braddon-Mitchell (2013), “Fighting the Zombie of the Growing Salami” (**Brent**)

- Weeks 8 – 15 (TBA):
 - Temporal experience (3–5 topics)
 - The common present/now
 - Relativity and the metaphysics of time and persistence
 - Specious present and related issues
 - “How fast does time pass”?
 - ...