

A-Theory and Temporal Experience

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1 PAUL'S QUESTION

Do our temporal experiences, for example our experience of change, support the idea that there is (i) a privileged present and (ii) that events literally *pass* from the present into the past?

Some terminology: Paul talks of 'anti-reductionists'. By this she just means people who believe A-theory is true, or equivalently, people who believe the present is privileged.

2 CHANGE

The eternalist's (or reductionist's) account of change is that something changes when it has one property at one time and a different property at another time. But you might not like this definition, because the facts about what properties things have at what times do not change.

The A-theorist (or antireductionist) might instead think that change requires an event to be (objectively) present and then later for a different event to be objectively present. The first event 'moved' or 'flowed' or 'passed' from the present into the past. (What does this movement or flow or passage consist in for the presentist? Or for the moving spotlight theorist? Or the dynamic branching theorist?)

Central idea is that our experience of change gives us reason to think the eternalist is wrong and the A-theorist is right because the eternalist cannot explain our experience of change. The rest of the paper is about whether this idea is right. Paul will claim that it is not.

3 TEMPORAL AND OTHER TYPES OF EXPERIENCE

Every experience we have (not just temporal experiences) are experiences of things *now*. 'What it is to have an experience as of nowness is part of what it is to have an experience simpliciter.' [p. 342] So explaining what any experience is will explain temporal experience. For example, just explaining what it is to experience redness will explain what it is to experience redness-now.

4 EXPLAINING THE EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE

What is it to experience time passing? Paul claims that it is just to experience change. So all the reductionist needs to do is give an account of experiencing change.

Is experiencing change about internally comparing experiences at different times? No, because we are stuck in one time, we can't do the comparison. Is it about seeing variation at a time? No, that is not change.

We can generate the experience of change or motion without there being any motion (e.g. the dots example) similarly Paul thinks we do this with experiencing passage. We see the flow of the world just as we see the flow of a movie. Our brain 'fills in the gaps'.