

Tense and Reality

There is a common form of problem, to be found in many areas of philosophy, concerning the relationship between our perspective on reality and reality itself. We make statements (or form judgements) about how things are from a given standpoint or perspective. We make the statement 'it is raining' from the standpoint of the present time, for example, or the statement 'it is here' from the standpoint of where we are, or the statement 'I am glad' from the standpoint of a subject. In each of these cases, the statement has a certain 'aspect' or perspectival character in virtue of which its truth is capable of varying from one standpoint to another. Thus the statement 'it is raining' is tensed, the statement 'it is here' is 'spatiocentric' and the statement 'I am glad' is first-personal. The problem we then face is to determine whether this aspect is a feature of the reality which is described or merely a feature of the statement by which it is described. Is reality itself somehow tensed or spatiocentric or first-personal or is it merely that we describe a tenseless or spatially uncentered or impersonal reality from a tensed or spatiocentric or first-personal point of view?

My broad aim in this paper is to get clearer on what the issue is and to make some suggestions as to how it might be resolved. The two will be intimately connected, since the suggestions I make concerning how the issue might be resolved will be very much shaped by the distinctive way in which I think the issue should be conceived. My focus will principally be on the case of tense, although I shall also devote some attention to the first-personal case and to how the different cases of aspect might or might not compare.

My central claim, in regard to the question of clarification, is that essential appeal must

be made to the concept of reality in saying what the issue is. Although the concept of reality or of 'the world' is often invoked in discussions of the topic, I suspect that its use is not usually regarded as essential or even as desirable. My view, on the other hand, is that the issue cannot be properly stated without making explicit use of the concept.

Indeed, it is my view that there is not a single concept of reality to which all sides can adhere in stating their respective positions and that the issue is to a large extent about which concept of reality should be adopted. In distinguishing the different positions, we shall need to make three key distinctions in the concept. These are between how things are and how things are in reality ('mere' versus metaphysical reality), between how things are in reality simpliciter and how things are in reality from a certain standpoint (absolute versus relative reality), and between reality being 'of a piece' and its being fragmented. Each of these concepts of reality will then give rise to its own characteristic species of realism.

My central claim, in regard to the question of resolution, is that there is room for a third view, between antirealism and the standard form of realism. Realism has commonly been thought to involve a combination of two views: that reality is aspectual (tensed, first-personal etc.) and that there is a privileged standpoint (the present, the self, etc.) from which the aspectual character of reality may be discerned. The two naturally go together, since given that there are tensed facts, then one naturally supposes that there must be a privileged standpoint, the present, from which they obtain. But it seems to me that one can hold the first of these views without holding the second. Thus it may be allowed that there are tensed facts (or the like) but denied that the present time is in any way privileged. Although the resulting view is somewhat unfamiliar, I argue that it is much better able to withstand the many objections that have been

leveled against the standard forms of realism.

Nonstandard realism itself comes in two different versions. Under the first, we give up the idea that reality is absolute. Reality is relative to a standpoint; and for different standpoints there will be different realities. Under the second, we give up the idea that reality is of a piece. Reality will divide into fragments, no two of which can be regarded as belonging to a single coherent whole. In what follows, I am mainly concerned to argue for the merits of the nonstandard view; but I shall also provide reasons for preferring the fragmentalist version of that view to the relativist version.

The arguments, in both cases, are conditional in form. I argue that, if one is going to be a realist about tense, then one should be a non-standard realist and that, if one is going to be nonstandard realist, then one should be a fragmentalist rather than a relativist. I do not directly address the question of whether one should be a realist. But there is one important respect in which the considerations of this paper may bear on this question. For many philosophers have found realism about tense to be intuitively very plausible but have despaired of saying what the view is or even of making it coherent. Thus simply showing the view to be coherent removes what, for these philosophers, is one of the principal obstacles to believing it to be true.

The paper is long and it may be helpful to give a general overview of its contents. It is in four main parts. The first begins by criticizing various standard formulations of the issue (§1) and then argues that the difficulties in formulation are to be resolved by introducing a distinctively metaphysical concept of reality (§2). This concept, and its variants, will play a central role in the discussion to follow.

I turn, in the second part (§§3-5), to a consideration of McTaggart's argument against the

reality of time. Although this argument has been much discussed in the literature, I am of the opinion that its full force and value have not been properly appreciated and that this can only be done once considerations of reality are brought explicitly into play. It is this argument, or at least our formulation of it, that will provide us with the principal tool for classifying and investigating the different forms of aspectual realism. I first lay out a simple version of the argument (§3), then present a more sophisticated version which is closer to McTaggart's own argument (§4), and finally consider the different responses one might make to it (§5).

The third part (§§6-10) constitutes the bulk of the paper and attempts to provide a sustained argument in favor of the nonstandard position on realism that emerges from the second part. It will first be useful, for purposes of comparison, to consider the realist response in connection with other forms of aspect (§6). We then consider what I regard as the three main arguments for adopting a nonstandard form of tense-theoretic realism: the argument from passage or the 'flow' of time (§7); the argument from truth and its connection with the 'facts' (§§8, 9); and the argument from special relativity and its denial of an absolute notion of simultaneity (§10).

The fourth and final part (§§11-13) discusses three topics that naturally arise from our discussion of nonstandard realism. I first argue that there are reasons to be a fragmentalist rather than a relativist, to think of reality as not genuinely being 'of a piece' (§11). I then consider how a plausible form of first-personal realism might be developed, one which takes seriously our subjective perspective on the world (§12). Whether or not this position is ultimately to be adopted, it provides a way of making sense of the view that there is an 'empirical' self that stands inside the world and a 'metaphysical' self that stands outside of the

world. It also provides a much more illuminating comparison with the tense-theoretic case than the more usual modal analogy. I conclude with some general remarks on the nature of the debate (§13). It is argued the debate is as much about the *concept* of reality as about the *constitution* of reality and that it is only by getting clear on what we might mean by reality that we can come to a cogent view as to whether tense, or some other form of aspect, is real.

Given the voluminous literature on the subject, it would be difficult to say anything entirely new; and much of what I write will indeed make contact with the work of others. But what I have hoped to achieve, even when I have gone over familiar ground, is the development of a systematic framework within which the issues might be discussed. Anyone familiar with the literature will be aware of its elusive character. The content of the different positions and the cogency of the arguments for them is often far from clear (the wild divergence in the interpretation and assessment of McTaggart's argument being an obvious case in point). I do not want to claim that what was once unclear or unconvincing now becomes clear and convincing. But at least it should now be clearer where the lack of clarity or cogency may lie and what must be done if further clarity or cogency is to be achieved.

§1 The Entailment Test

I should like to begin by considering some of the ways in which other philosophers have attempted to clarify the issue of aspectual realism. The inadequacies in their accounts will help us appreciate the need for an alternative approach.

One common way to present the issue is in terms of what is required for a complete description of reality. Suppose we provide a complete tenseless description of reality; we say

what happens when, and in what order, but without any appeal or orientation towards the present time. We may then ask: is the description complete? Or is it a further fact, not implicit in the description itself, that I am *currently* sitting, for example? The realist about tense will claim that there is a further fact, while his opponent, the antirealist, will deny this (and similarly for other cases of aspectual realism).

Let us remark - though this will not be essential to our subsequent discussion - that, even if these answers are indeed the ones that would be given, they do not fully account for the difference in the two positions. If we give a positive answer, then it is clear why we should think that reality is tensed but, if we give a negative answer, then it is not at all clear why we should think that reality is tenseless. For the claim that one can give a complete description of the world in tenseless terms does not, in itself, rule out the possibility that one can also give a complete description of the world in tensed terms. Indeed, this latter view is quite a plausible one for the antirealist to adopt since, by his own lights, he can get at all of the tenseless facts by saying what is happening at the *present* time and what is happening at any specified interval before or after the *present* time. Thus his reason for thinking that reality is tenseless is paralleled by an equally good reason for thinking that reality is not tensed. And so why does he accept the one conclusion and yet reject the other? Clearly, there is more to his position than the mere unidirectional claim of completeness.¹

¹Similarly, we might note, for other realist issues. That one can give a complete description of the world in physical terms does not in itself guarantee the truth of physicalism since it might also be possible to give a complete description of the world in psychological terms.

But there are more serious difficulties. I take it that reference to ‘reality’ or to a further ‘fact’ - natural as it may be - is intended to be merely incidental to the formulation; for to ‘describe reality’ is merely to say what is the case, and to specify a further ‘fact’ is merely to specify something else that is the case. So at the heart of the formulation, once it is stripped of inessentials, is the following question: is there a true tensed statement, such as the statement ‘I am sitting’, that is not entailed by any true tenseless statements?

If we are to answer this question, then we must know what is meant by ‘entailed’. There are two main possibilities. With any statement - such as ‘I am sitting’ - that is made at a given time t may be associated both a *content* and a *character*. The content is the specific context-sensitive information conveyed, which in the given case we might take to be the tenseless proposition that I am sitting at t . The character, on the other hand, is the context-free manner in which the content is conveyed, which in the given case we might identify with the tensed proposition that I am sitting. Thus character is independent of context while content is dependent both on character and on context.² Entailment can then be with respect to content, or specific information conveyed, or with respect to character. We can be asking ‘is the content of the tensed statement entailed by the content of the tenseless statements?’ or ‘is the character of the one entailed by the character of the others?’. And presumably, what we are asking in the second case is whether the characters are such as to guarantee that the tensed statement will be true at any time at which the tenseless statements are true.

²If we wish, we might follow Kaplan ([89]) in identifying the content with the set of possible worlds in which the proposition is true and the character with the function that takes each time into the content that the statement has at that time.

In the first case, we get the antirealist's answer of 'yes' and, in the second, the realist's answer of 'no', since the truth-value of 'I am sitting' may vary from time to time as the truth-value of the tenseless statements remains the same. But then which of these answers should be taken as our guide to the metaphysical question? We had in mind a notion of entailment with metaphysical import: the absence of an entailment was meant to indicate that reality was tensed; and its existence was meant to indicate that reality was tenseless. But why think that one or other of these notions of entailment captures, or corresponds to, the notion we had in mind?

Indeed, it may be argued that neither notion can *generally* be taken to correspond to the intended metaphysical notion. For each will deliver a uniform verdict in the cases of interest to us. If entailment is by way of content, then it will be denied that there is a further fact in the temporal, spatiocentric and first-personal cases while, if entailment is by way of character, then it will be allowed that there is a further fact in each of these cases. From a metaphysical viewpoint, however, we may well wish to take a differential stand on the issue. We may wish to say that there is a further fact in the tensed and first-personal cases, for example, but not in the spatiocentric case or a further fact in the tensed case but not in the first-personal or spatiocentric cases. We therefore need a further criterion as to which notion of entailment should be our guide in any given case if the test is to be of any help.

Similar difficulties would appear to beset other attempts to elucidate the issue. One common approach is in terms of the distinction between relative and absolute properties. The question, it has been said, is whether the property of *sitting* is an absolute or relative feature of an individual, one that can be understood to hold simpliciter or only relative to a time. But when I ask whether this property is absolute or relative, then what am I talking about? Is it something

on the side of Kaplanesque content, whose ‘completion’ is meant to give a tenseless proposition, such as *Socrates is sitting at t*, or something on the side of character, whose ‘completion’ is meant to give a tensed proposition, such as *Socrates is sitting?* If the former, then the property is relative; and if the latter, it is absolute. But it is not clear, in either case, why our taking the referent one way or the other should be relevant to the metaphysical question; and nor is it clear how the answer to the metaphysical question might sensibly be taken to vary from case to case.

Another common approach is in terms of indexicality. The question, it has been said, is whether such terms as ‘here’ or ‘now’ or ‘I’ are indexical? But what is meant by ‘indexical’? It is presumably some kind of relativity to context. But the use of all these expressions is in a clear sense relative to context and there is also a clear sense in which their use - what one might call their ‘disengaged’ use - is not relative to context. So how does the issue of indexicality get any metaphysical bite or enable one to differentiate between the different possible cases of aspect?

Or again, one might appeal to some neutral notion of content or proposition, one that is not in itself committed to the content being either tensed or tenseless. The question, then, is whether the utterance of a tensed statement expresses a tensed or a tenseless proposition. But what is this neutral notion and why should it not be possible for the realist or the antirealist to go either way on the question depending upon how it is understood? It seems that in so far as the realist or the antirealist feels obliged to go his own way, it can only be because he has somehow already understood the notion with the required metaphysical import.

We appear to face a quite general difficulty. When we attempt to frame the realist issue in the usual terms - by reference to propositions or properties, say, or content and context, then it appears that either there will be no relevant difference between cases which we would like to be

able to distinguish or that the terms will be understood in such a way as to presuppose the very issue in question. Thus the usual formulations appear to be inadequate; and this suggests that some fundamentally new approach to understanding the problem is called for.

§2 The Reality Test

What I would like to suggest is that references to ‘reality’ or to ‘fact’ should be taken seriously in the standard formulations of these issues. It is, of course, common to use such terms as ‘real’ or ‘fact’ in the informal presentation of the issue. Thus one might ask whether tense is real or whether there are any tensed facts. But it is usually supposed that the use of these terms is incidental to the formulation and that a rigorous statement of the issues should be found elsewhere. Our view, on the contrary, is that it is only by reference to some conception of ‘fact’ or ‘reality’ that the issue can be properly understood.

There is a familiar objection to this way of thinking, which perhaps explains why it has not been pursued. The realist about tense wants to say that my currently sitting is a fact or belongs to reality, while his opponent wants to deny this. But I *am* currently sitting; so my currently sitting is a fact; and, since reality consists of all the facts, that fact belongs to reality. The metaphysical issue is thereby trivialized; it simply becomes a question of whether we are prepared to accept a tensed statement.

In order to meet this objection, we must distinguish between *mere* reality, or how things are, and *metaphysical* reality, or how things really are. Whatever is really the case (belongs to metaphysical reality) may, with some plausibility, be taken to be the case (belong to mere reality). But the converse will not in general hold; and so there is the possibility of the concept

of reality doing some genuine work in the formulation of the issue. I might accept that I am sitting and even accept that it is a fact that I am sitting, for example, but not accept that this fact is constitutive of how things really are.

But what is this concept of reality?³ I doubt that it is possible to define the concept in other terms but the general idea behind its application is that, in a representation of reality, there may be features of the representation that do not faithfully reflect what is represented. There are three principal ways in which this may happen. One is ontological; the representation might not faithfully represent *what* there is; it might depict there being nations, for example, when all there is in reality are its citizens. Another is ideological; the representation might not faithfully represent *how* things are; it might depict physical objects as having colors, for example, when in reality they only have certain primary qualities. The third is factive; the representation might represent *that* things are so, when it is not even in the business of stating how things really are; it might depict there being moral facts, for example, when all there is in reality is the expression of certain attitudes.

Of these three ways in which a representation may fail to be faithful to reality, the first two are not strictly relevant to our present concerns. It is true that if we take a particular tensed fact, such as that I am sitting, then it may fail to belong to reality in either of the first two ways. It might be denied, for example, that there really are any *people* or that they really have the property of *sitting*. But these reasons for disputing the reality of the fact are incidental to the issue at hand, for our interest is in the tense or aspect of the statement rather than with its specific ontological or ideological content; we simply wish to know whether the tense or aspect

³See Fine [2000] for further discussion of my general views on the topic of realism.

of the statement might be an impediment to its faithfully representing the facts. Thus it is only the third kind of failure that is relevant - and in a very particular way.

These remarks should at least point in the direction in which we wish to understand the concept. But we shall also attempt to use the concept in a reasonably disciplined way; and, to this end, it will be convenient to suppose that we have an 'official' idiom for making reality claims. My preference, though this may not be the only option, is to take there to be a primitive sentential operator, call it \mathcal{R} , whose intended reading is, 'in reality, it is the case that'. Reality claims may then be formed by affixing this operator to an appropriate sentence S . Thus someone who wished to subscribe to the reality of tense might well endorse the claim that in reality I am sitting ($\mathcal{R}S$), while someone who wished to deny the reality of tense would endorse its negation ($\sim\mathcal{R}S$).

The more formal-minded reader can imagine that all reality claims are made within the official idiom. However, for ease of expression, it will often be helpful to speak more loosely; and we shall find it helpful, in particular, to talk in terms of a 'container' model of reality. Instead of saying 'in reality, I am sitting', we shall say that reality contains - or is constituted by or is composed of - the fact that I am sitting'. Such talk involves a double reification: to reality as a 'container'; and to the facts as what is contained. But the reference to reality or to the facts as entities in themselves is, strictly speaking, inessential and might always be avoided by reverting to the official idiom.

We are now in a position to provide a very simple statement of the realist issue. Let us take for granted that we have the notion of a tensed (or some other kind of aspectual) fact. The realist issue is then the question of whether any tensed (or aspectual) facts are constitutive of

reality or, more precisely, whether for any tensed (or aspectual) statement S it is constitutive of reality that S. It is of course essential here, if this formulation of the issue is to be properly understood, that the reality of the fact that I am sitting, say, not be taken to consist in anything like the reality of the fact that I am sitting at t, where t is the time at which the assertion of reality is made. It is the reality of something intrinsically tensed that is in question.

Modest as this proposal might appear to be, it helps to bring some conceptual order to the topic. It suggests, in the first place, that the issue is to be clarified by appeal to a distinctively metaphysical conception of reality, one that embodies a distinction between what is really the case and what is merely the case. This suggestion does not in itself exclude the possibility of further clarification, but it indicates that further clarification is to be achieved, if at all, through a better understanding of the concept of reality. And this is, indeed, the route we shall take; it is by appealing to various refinements of the concept of reality that we shall attempt to elucidate the different kinds of realist position that might be held.

The present proposal also helps us better to appreciate the defects in the previous proposals and how they might be rectified. Consider first the formulation in terms of entailment. The issue before us, under this formulation, was whether every tensed truth is entailed by all the tenseless truths. We wanted the notion of entailment to be metaphysically relevant but neither entailment with regard to character nor with regard to content seemed well-suited to this purpose. We do better by invoking the concept of reality. Let the *consequences* of a class of statement be its entailments with regard either to character or to content; call a consequence of a class of true statements a consequence *for reality* if it is part of how things really are; and let the *metaphysical import* of a class of statements be the class of its consequences for reality. The

relevant notion of entailment is then containment of metaphysical import; and the question of interest to us is whether some tensed truth has a metaphysical import not included in the metaphysical import of the tenseless truths. Thus we do not choose between the two kinds of entailment; we allow both and then use the concept of reality to filter out those of the consequences that are metaphysically relevant.

We might in a similar way make sense of the formulation in terms of relative and absolute properties. The question was whether *sitting* should be regarded as relative or absolute; and this, in its turn, was a question of what is required for its 'completion'. But in defining the relevant notion of completion, it will not do to appeal to the ordinary notion of fact; we must appeal to those facts that are a part of reality (or, at least, have consequences for reality). So again, it is through invoking the metaphysical concept of reality that we obtain a more adequate account. And once we see this, then it is evident that nothing is gained by adopting these other formulations and that one might just as well go for a direct formulation in terms of what is real.

There are, of course, philosophers for whom none of these explanations would be acceptable. They would reject the whole idea of a metaphysical conception of reality and of anything that might be explained with its help. This is not the place to consider the general question of how we are to make sense of realist claims, but there are two considerations that make a skeptical view seem especially implausible in the present case. In the first place, we do not require a full commitment to the metaphysical concept of reality. As I mentioned before, all that is strictly required is its application in respect of tense or 'aspect'; and so someone who had general misgivings about the concept might well be happy with its application in this particular

case.⁴

But secondly, and more significantly, it is only the most hard-nosed philosopher who would deny the intelligibility of the issue in the cases at hand. Surely, given all the tenseless facts or all the spatial facts, there is a significant metaphysical question as to whether these are all the facts that there are. But it is hard to see how one might make sense of this question without bringing in the concept of reality. For the question concerns the fit, or lack of fit, between the tensed character of our representations and the character of reality itself. But fit is not simply a matter of truth. Both sides to the debate can agree to the truth of particular tensed statements (such as the statement that I am sitting). Fit in some deeper sense is involved; and the metaphysical concept of reality simply provides a way of codifying its presence. It therefore seems that we must either accept the metaphysical concept of reality or deny the intelligibility of the issue.

§3. Simple McTaggart

This concludes our discussion, in the first part, of the proper formulation of the reality of tense. We turn in the next part (§§3-5) to a discussion of the McTaggartian argument against the reality of tense. This is also, of course, an argument against the reality of time should the reality of time be taken to require the reality of tense, but this is an aspect of McTaggart's original argument which will not concern us. Many philosophers dismiss McTaggart's argument as a mere sophism. This is not our view. I believe that the argument has a great deal of cogency; and it is through articulating the assumptions of the argument and seeing how they lead to a

⁴He might be a semi-quietist in the sense of Fine [00].

contradiction (§§3-4) that we are able to discern the different ways in which one might defend the reality of tense (§5).⁵

Although McTaggart's argument is to the conclusion that tense (or time) is unreal, the concept of reality plays no explicit role in the assumptions upon which the argument depends, at least, as these are usually stated. To many this would be no great surprise, since the reference to reality would simply be regarded as a rhetorical flourish. But to us, it is a serious flaw; and we shall try to be explicit as we can about how the concept of reality is being used.

Our version of the argument will rest upon four assumptions, the aim of the argument being to show that they are in conflict. I shall begin with a simple version of the argument in the present section and then present a more sophisticated version in the following section, one which is closer, in certain key respects, to McTaggart's original argument.

The simple argument has four assumptions, the aim of the argument being to show that they lead to a contradiction. They are:

Realism Reality is constituted (at least, in part) by tensed facts.

Neutrality No time is privileged, the tensed facts that constitute reality are not oriented towards one time as opposed to another.

Absolutism The constitution of reality is an absolute matter, i.e. not relative to a time or other form of temporal standpoint.

Coherence Reality is not contradictory, it is not constituted by facts with incompatible

⁵Other accounts of the argument include Baldwin [99], Broad [38], Dummett [60], Christensen [74], Dyke [2002], Horwich [89], Lowe [92], Mellor [98], Shorter [84] and Thomson [2001]. I have made no attempt to compare these accounts or my account with theirs.

content.

Neutrality, as stated, is a little vague but we shall always be concerned with its implications for what one might call the 'orientation' of reality. What this means, in the present case, is that there should be no privileged time t for which the totality of tensed facts constituting reality are ones that obtain at t . It follows, in particular, that the present time t should not be such a time; the totality of facts constituting reality should not be ones that presently obtain.

Absolutism is somewhat different from the other assumptions, since it is an assumption about how the concept of constitution that figures in those other assumptions is to be understood. If this assumption is given up - if, that is to say, the concept of constitution is taken to be relative, then the formulation of the other assumptions must be appropriately modified. Coherence, for example, will now say that reality is not constituted by incompatible facts *at* a given time (or standpoint).

For the purposes of the argument, the absolute notion of constitution that figures in the other assumptions can be taken to be either tensed or tenseless. Thus in saying that a given fact constitutes reality, one can either be speaking about the *present* constitution of reality or about its *eternal* composition. It is natural to suppose that tensed facts constitute reality in a tensed fashion and that tenseless facts constitute it in a tenseless fashion but there is no reason, in principle, why the tense-theoretic status of the fact and of the form of constitution should not come apart.

It is important, if the assumptions of the argument are to have their intended import, that the notion of constitution be properly understood. Suppose, for example, that someone were to take reality to be constituted by a tensed fact f (say, the fact that I am sitting) just in case, for

some time t , it is constituted by the fact f -at- t (the fact that I am sitting at t). The assumption of Realism would then hold but not in its intended sense, since reality's being constituted by a tensed fact would amount to no more than its being constituted by a corresponding tenseless fact. Or again, suppose someone were to understand how reality might be constituted in a relative manner by taking reality to be constituted at time t by the tensed fact f (say, the fact that I am sitting) just in case it is constituted by the fact f -at- t (the fact that I am sitting at t). The assumption of Absoluteness would then fail but not in the intended way, since the underlying notion of constitution, in terms of which the relative notion was understood, is itself absolute.

We may avoid difficulties of this sort by requiring that the relevant notion of constitution be *basic*, i.e. that it not be one that should be understood in terms of some more basic notion of constitution. The deviant forms of realism or relativism or the like will not then arise. The derivation of a contradiction can now be simply given. It follows from Realism that reality is constituted by some tensed fact. There will therefore be some time t at which this fact obtains. Now Neutrality states that reality is not oriented towards one time as opposed to another. So reality will presumably be constituted by similar sorts of tensed facts that obtain at other times (given that there are other times!). We wish to show that it then follows that reality will be constituted by incompatible facts. Now there is no *logical* guarantee that the facts constituting reality which obtain at t will be incompatible with the facts constituting reality which obtain at other times, since reality might be so boring that the same tensed facts hold at every single time. However, any reasonable view of how temporal reality might be constituted should allow for its being reasonably variegated over time; and presumably it will be then be constituted by incompatible facts, i.e. by facts with incompatible contents. If, for example, it

allows for the present fact that I am sitting, then it should also allow for the subsequent fact that I am standing. And this is then contrary to Coherence.

§4. Sophisticated McTaggart

If the realist admits that there is a basic notion of constitution, then he should be willing to assert the assumption of Realism for that notion; and the other three assumptions are also reasonable. The previous simple version of the argument will therefore gain a foothold against the realist's position. But what if the realist is unwilling to admit that there is a basic notion of constitution? He is clear that there is a notion of constitution for which he wishes to assert Realism; and he may admit that there are other notions of constitution. But he is unwilling to make judgments as to which of these notions is most basic. It is not then so clear that there should be a notion of constitution for which all four assumptions hold since, as we have seen, there are various derived notions of constitution for which various of the assumptions do not hold.

The more sophisticated version of the argument is designed to get round this dialectical difficulty. Instead of insisting that the notion of constitution that he uses should be basic, it insists that it should meet certain explanatory demands. The argument uses four assumptions that are analogues of the original assumptions. However, in stating these assumptions we shall use the term 'composition' in place of 'constitution' to signal that the relevant notion may not be basic.

The analogue assumptions (I've kept the old labels) are:

Realism Reality is composed of tensed facts;

Neutrality No time is privileged, the facts that compose reality are not oriented towards one time as opposed to another.

Absolutism The composition of reality is not irreducibly relative, i.e. its relative composition by the facts must be explained in terms of its absolute composition by the facts.

Coherence Reality is not irreducibly incoherent, i.e. its composition by incompatible facts must be explained in terms of its composition by compatible facts.

The dialectical force of Absolutism is this. Suppose that the realist asserts that reality is composed of different facts at different times. Then he must explain how this is possible in terms of the absolute composition of reality. In other words, he must provide an explanation of relative composition in terms of absolute composition which then accounts for how reality might be composed, in the way that it is, by different facts at different times. Similarly for Coherence. Suppose the realist asserts that reality is composed of incompatible facts. Then he must explain how this is possible in terms of a coherent notion of composition, one that does not allow incompatible facts. The apparent incompatibility must disappear on a deeper view of how reality is composed.

Thus in defending his original claim of Realism, the realist may be forced to make use of other notions of composition, ones which may be absolute or coherent when the original notion is relative or incoherent. The assumptions of Neutrality, Absolutism and Coherence are also meant to apply to these other notions of composition. If, for example, the realist uses an absolute though incoherent notion of composition in defending a relative notion, then he must show how the resulting incoherence can be 'removed'.

The Realism assumption can be taken to apply just to the realist's original notion of

composition. But we must then impose a further requirement on the explanations of composition that might result from the other assumptions. I call this the requirement of ‘No Collapse’. It states that, in explaining one notion of composition in terms of another, the realist’s position should not collapse into an antirealist position. In other words, reality’s being composed of certain tensed facts should not be taken simply to be a matter, according to the explanation, of its being composed of tenseless facts. Suppose, for example, that the realist were to provide the following explanation of relative composition; for reality to be composed of a tensed fact f at a time t is for it to be composed of the fact f -at- t . This would then be clearly in violation of No Collapse; and it is also clear, when there is a violation, that the realist’s position is realist in name only. Given No Collapse, it will follow that any of the subsequent notions of composition used by the realist should also conform to Realism since, if they did not, then collapse would be unavoidable.

The argument from these new assumptions can now be stated. Suppose the realist asserts his position using some notion of composition. It can be tensed or tenseless, relative or absolute, coherent or incoherent. However, we know from the original argument that it cannot conform to all four assumptions. Since it is required to conform to Neutrality, it must either be relative or incoherent. Assume that it is relative (the argument being similar in the other case). He is then required by Absolutism to account for the relativity in terms of an absolute notion of composition. This absolute notion will conform to Realism, by No Collapse, and also to Neutrality; and so by the original argument, it must be in violation of Coherence. The realist is therefore required by Coherence to account for the incoherence in terms of a coherent notion of composition. As before, this coherent notion will conform to Realism, by No Collapse, and also

to Neutrality; and so by the original argument, it must be in violation of Absolutism. And so the argument will continue.

Thus any purported explanation of the relativity or incoherence will result in an infinite regress in which the relativity or incoherence constantly reappears. But this means that no purported explanation of the relativity or incoherence can succeed since, in any such explanation, we will ultimately have to appeal to the very feature that we were trying to explain away. Thus Absolutism and Coherence cannot be satisfied, compatibly with the other assumptions, after all.

An analogy may make the point clear. Suppose someone were both a physicalist and a nominalist; he thought that the mental could be explained in terms of the physical and the abstract in terms of the concrete. But suppose now that any explanation of the mental in terms of the physical required the use of the abstract and that any explanation of the abstract in terms of the concrete required the use of the mental. His position would not then be sustainable. There would only be the appearance of explaining the mental in terms of the physical or the abstract in terms of the concrete. For since the physical presupposed the abstract and the abstract presupposed the mental, the purported explanation of the mental in terms of the physical would be circular; and similarly for the purported explanation of the abstract in terms of the concrete.⁶

Our two arguments are clearly McTaggartian in spirit. However, they differ in certain

⁶One might also modify Neutrality in the same way in which we have modified Absoluteness and Coherence and require that any bias in the composition of reality should have an explanation in neutral terms. A somewhat similar form of the argument could then be made to go through.

crucial ways from McTaggart's own version of the argument (in [1908] & [1927]). It will be recalled that McTaggart thinks that the realist about tense is required to hold that any given event is past, present and future. Our own construal of the incompatibility is more abstract: we do not presuppose an ontology of events; and nor do we suppose that the incompatibility lies in the determination of something as past, present and future. Indeed, for our purposes, the simple example of my sitting and my standing, without any explicit reference to events as the subject of the statement or to tenses as their predicate, is sufficient to make the point.

More significantly, our arguments do not begin by supposing that there is a *prima facie* contradiction in the realist's position from which he must somehow extricate himself. Many commentator's have questioned whether there is a *prima facie* difficulty here at all. It is as if one were to tell a free man that he was imprisoned. It would then *look* as if there were no possibility of escape, since there is no relevant change he could make to his condition. But, of course, the correct conclusion for him to draw is that he was not imprisoned in the first place! Our argument, by contrast, attempts to *demonstrate* a contradiction. It is therefore not to the point to show that the contradiction is only apparent. All one can properly do, by way of response, is to impugn the reasoning by which the contradiction is derived or challenge one of the assumptions upon which it rests.

The reasoning in the second version of our argument corresponds in a loose way to McTaggart's. For McTaggart has his protagonist attempting to evade the *prima facie* contradiction by relativizing the claims he makes, which then results, once he adopts a neutral standpoint, in his having to accept further seemingly contradictory claims. Our realist is forced to oscillate in a similar way between an unacceptable form of relativity and an unacceptable form

of incoherence. But whereas there is some question as to whether the resulting regress is vicious in the case of McTaggart's argument, there is no real doubt in the case of our own argument. For our regress is a regress in explanation, which exposes the circularity which must exist in any proposed explanation of the relativity or incoherence.⁷

Finally, we might note that it is crucial to the formulation of the premisses of our argument that explicit appeal be made to a metaphysical concept of reality. Suppose, for example, that we were to drop the reference to the concept of reality in the formulation of Realism and Neutrality. Realism would then become the claim that there are tensed facts, which is not something that can be sensibly denied, while Neutrality would become the claim that the tensed facts are not oriented towards a particular time, which is not something that can be sensibly affirmed. It is through using the metaphysical concept of reality that we can convert these trivial truths and falsehoods into something with genuine metaphysical bite. And I suspect that it has been the failure to recognize a distinctive metaphysical concept of reality of this sort that has primarily stood in the way of finding a satisfactory formulation of McTaggart's argument.

§5. Responses to the Argument

I can think of only one objection with any degree of plausibility to the reasoning of the argument. I claimed that if reality was composed of a tensed fact that obtained at one time and

⁷One possible difference in the arguments is that we make no appeal to embedded tense. However, the role of embedded tenses in McTaggart's formulation of the argument has been a matter of dispute. See Taylor [97] for a discussion.

was also composed of tensed facts that obtained at other times, then it was plausible that some of these facts would be incompatible with one another. But one might adopt a Broad (in fact, narrow!) view concerning the constitution of reality: the only facts constituting reality concern what is-or-has-been (cf. Broad [59], §I.2). These facts will then grow over time (thus if I am-or-have-been sitting then it will always be true that I am-or-have-been sitting); and so any two of them will be compatible.

But it is not clear that this will work, even if we go along with the underlying metaphysics. For we may want reality at any given time to be constituted not merely by the particular facts that are-or-have-been but by there being no other particular facts that are-or-have-been; and the absence of any further particular facts at one time will then be incompatible with their presence at another time. Thus the fact that there are-or-have-been no other particular facts is not one that will continue to obtain.⁸ I might note that there is a further problem should time continue indefinitely into the future, since the compatibility of *all* of the particular facts (not just two of them) would then require the existence of a time beyond all time.

We therefore appear justified in accepting the reasoning of the argument and the only question is which of the four assumptions should be rejected. The original intent behind the argument was that Realism should be given up but, now that the other assumptions have been brought into the open, we may consider whether one of these might reasonably be rejected in its place. There are three possibilities in all.

The first (standard realism) is to retain Realism but reject Neutrality. It will be maintained that there is a privileged time, one to which the facts comprehending reality are

⁸ This difficulty is not considered by Broad ([59], 79-84) in his discussion of the matter.

oriented; and this privileged time will, of course, be the present. Thus on this view, there is an absolute notion of constitution, but it is tensed; and the tensed facts that constitute reality are those that presently obtain.

Some antirealists would object to the idea of a tensed constitution and it will be worth considering what their reasons might be before continuing with our review. To fix our ideas, let us suppose that the realist takes the fact that I am sitting to be a fact that currently constitutes reality (any other example would do). Let us use '*f*' for the fact that I am sitting and '*f-at-t*' for the fact that I am sitting at *t* (or some corresponding tenseless fact). The antirealist objection can then be seen to rest on the following two equivalences:

First Equivalence: that *f* currently constitutes reality is equivalent to the present time *t* being such that *f* constitutes reality at *t*.

Second Equivalence: that *f* constitutes reality at *t* is equivalent to *f-at-t* tenselessly constituting reality.

From these two equivalences, we may infer:

Concluding Equivalence: that *f* currently constitutes reality is equivalent to the present time *t* being such that *f-at-t* tenselessly constitutes reality.

There are then two ways in which the Concluding Equivalence might be used to mount an objection to the realist's position. Under the first, it is claimed that the realist will reject the right-hand side of the equivalence. He is therefore obliged to reject the left-hand side as well, thereby contradicting his own position. (The objection in this form only requires the left-to-right implications of each equivalence under a material reading of the conditional). Under the second, it is claimed that, given the Concluding Equivalence, the truth of its left-hand side can amount to

no more than the truth of its right-hand side and so, in asserting the left-hand side, the realist will not have staked out a distinctive position. His view will simply have collapse into that of his opponent. (The objection in this form only requires the right-to-left implications of each equivalence, under a reading of 'implies' as 'at least amounting to'.)

The first equivalence is beyond reproach (under either reading). The second equivalence might be justified as follows. That a fact constitutes reality is not, properly speaking, a relative matter; it is not something that holds relative to a time (or relative to a 'standpoint' of some other sort). We must therefore make sense of the relative constitution of reality posited on the left of the equivalence in terms of an absolute conception of reality. Yet what could f 's constituting reality at t amount to unless it is that some tenseless counterpart of f , such as f -at- t , should constitute reality?

Let it be granted that some explanation of relative constitution in terms of absolute constitution is called for. It is then critical to the defense of the realist's position that he come up with some alternative account of relative constitution. But this can be done. He may explain relative constitution in terms of his own favored absolute notion of tensed constitution by taking f to constitute reality at t if f currently constitutes reality *when* t is present. Thus if L is the tense-logical operators 'always', then f will be taken to constitute reality at t if $L(t \text{ is present} \supset f \text{ constitutes reality})$, where the 'constitutes' on the right is absolute and tensed. Both sides of the equivalence will then be questionable for the realist. For he can accept that f constitutes reality at t , i.e. that f constitutes reality whenever t is present, without thereby accepting that f -at- t constitutes reality; and in accepting that f -at- t constitutes reality, he is not thereby committed to f 's constituting reality at t in the intended sense, i.e. to f 's constituting reality whenever t is

present.

This line of defense is perhaps even more convincing in the modal case. Let f now be the fact that snow is white. The modal analogue of the second equivalence takes the following form:

that f (the fact that snow is white) constitutes reality at the world w is equivalent to f -at- w (the fact that snow is white at w) constituting reality.

But the left and right hand sides of the equivalence will have a completely different status for the actualist. The left hand side concerns the *hypothetical* constitution of reality. Reality might be different from what it is; and in considering the constitution of reality at a world, the actualist is considering how reality might have been had that world obtained. The right hand side, on the other hand, concerns the *actual* or *categorical* constitution of reality. It is to the effect that reality is actually or categorically constituted by certain world-relative facts. And similarly for the realist about tense. That f constitutes reality at a given time is a hypothetical claim and that f -at- t constitutes reality is a categorical claim; and there is no difficulty in seeing how we might have the one without the other.

Let us continue with our review. The current response has been the standard realist response to the argument and I suspect that many philosophers may have thought that it constituted the only reasonable form of realism about tense (I myself was once of their number!). The thought - and it is a very natural one - is that as realists about tense we should think of tensed facts as obtaining absolutely; and this then serves to distinguish the current temporal standpoint as the one from which the facts which absolutely obtain will obtain. But our version of the McTaggart argument opens up two other ways in which the Realist assumption might be

preserved.⁹

The first (external relativism) is to retain Neutrality but reject Absolutism. It will be maintained that the constitution of reality is relative. Reality is indeed composed of the tensed fact that I am sitting and also the tensed fact that I am standing, but it is composed of these facts through being constituted by them at different times. Of course, both the antirealist and the standard realist can admit a sense in which the constitution of reality might be relative. The antirealist can say that for reality to be constituted by a tensed fact *f* at time *t* is for it to be constituted by the fact *f*-at-*t*, while the standard realist can say that for reality to be constituted by a tensed fact *f* at *t* is for it to be constituted by *f* whenever *t* is present. However, in both of these cases, the relative notion of constitution is explained in terms of an absolute notion. The neutral realist not only rejects these explanations; he rejects any demand to explain the relative notion of constitution in terms of an absolute notion. For him, reality is *irreducibly* relative.¹⁰

⁹Percival ([91], 94-5) has a distinction between ‘dynamism’ and ‘realism’ about contexts, which corresponds loosely to our distinction between standard and non-standard realism, but he takes the two positions, at bottom, to be the same.

¹⁰A view of this sort has occasionally been aired in the literature. Thus Dummett [60] considers rejecting the idea that ‘the description of what is really there, as it really is, must be independent of any particular point of view’, and Horwich [89] (in section 5 of ‘The Moving Now’) considers the possibility that ‘the facts “*e* is past”, and so on, might themselves obtain only relative to a temporal perspective’. Some superficially similar views are expressed in Bigelow [91], Schlesinger ([91], [93], [95]) and Tooley [97]. But it is hard to see any of these authors as subscribing to a form of external relativism as it is understood here. They appear

Since the antirealist, the standard realist and the current nonstandard realist can all meaningfully take reality to be relative to a time, it can sometimes be difficult to keep the views apart. But each of them is operating with a very different conception of what the relative reality is and how it relates to the time to which it is relative. For the antirealist, reality at a time is what one might call a *facet* of reality; and what properly belongs to reality is not the facet itself but the fact that it is instantiated at the given time. For the standard realist, reality at a time (other than the present) is a *hypothetical* reality; what properly belongs to reality are not the hypothetical facts constituting this reality but the fact that they would be the facts were this reality to obtain. For the nonstandard realist, by contrast, reality at another time is an *alternative* reality. It is neither a facet of the one true reality nor a hypothetical determination of the one true reality, but another reality on an equal footing with the current reality; and the facts belonging to such a reality are full-fledged facts, sharing neither in the incomplete status of a facet nor in the insubstantial character of a hypothetical fact.

It is also crucial to a proper understanding of this position that one sharply distinguish between what one might call the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ forms of relativity. There is a sense for the antirealist in which tense is relative. Tensed facts constitute reality only in so far as they assume a relative form; and what properly belongs to reality is not the fact that I am sitting but the fact that I am sitting at a given time (or some other fact of this sort). For the neutral realist, by contrast, tense is not relative in this sense, but absolute. The tensed facts themselves belong to reality, and do not get to belong to reality through being relativized to a time. However, their

either to be standard realists with an odd modal interpretation of the tenses or antirealists with an odd view as to how tensed features might be relativized.

belonging to reality is a relative matter; and so the tensed content of reality can be taken to vary from one moment to another even if the tensed contents are not themselves relativized. For the external relativist, there are different realities at different times and there is no saying how reality is without presupposing a temporal standpoint from which the description is given. For the internal relativist, on the other hand, there is a single reality, which does not vary over time, but in saying how this reality is we must say how things are at each time, thereby relativizing the descriptions themselves to one time as opposed to another.

Philosophers have often debated whether tensed features are absolute or relative and neither view has seemed completely satisfactory. But we can say both! For we countenance two kinds of relativity, one internal to the facts and the other external to the facts; and, in regard to the first, tensed features will be absolute while, in regard to the second, they will be relative. We might say that they are *relatively absolute*, thereby doing justice to both sides of the debate.

When philosophers have considered a view of this sort, they have tended to think of it as collapsing into triviality or some version of the antirealist position. But this is because they have fail to heed the distinction between the internal and external forms of relativism. For them, it is as if the realist has wanted to assert that each time or time-slice of the world is present but subject to the qualification that this should only hold at the time in question; and put this way, it hard to see how it might amount to anything more than a triviality to which even the antirealist could agree. But the proper formulation of the intended claim is that reality is constituted, at each time t , by the fact that t is present.¹¹ This is quite different. The facts that belong to reality

¹¹For the purposes of the present discussion, we should ignore any doubts that the realist might have about times or time-slices being among the basic constituents of reality.

are genuinely tensed though their belonging to reality is a relative matter whereas, for the antirealist, the facts that belong to reality are tenseless while their belonging is an absolute matter.

The final response to the argument (fragmentalism) is to retain Neutrality and Absolutism but reject Coherence. One naturally assumes that in a correct account of reality all apparent contradictions will be 'ironed out'. If something is both hot and cold, it must be because one part is hot and the other cold, or because it is hot and cold at different times, or because being hot is somehow compatible with being cold. But on the present view, this fundamental assumption is given up. It is taken to lie in the character of reality that certain apparently contradictory aspects of it cannot be explained away. Reality may be *irredeemably* incoherent.¹²

Under such a view, reality will be fragmentary. Certain of the facts constituting reality will 'cohere' and some will not. Any fact is plausibly taken to belong to a 'fragment' or maximally coherent collection of facts; and so reality will divide up into a number of different but possibly overlapping fragments.

These fragments will correspond to the external standpoints of the relativist. But their status is quite different; for the fragmentalist will understand the standpoints of the relativist in terms of the fragments rather than the other way round. Thus for a fact to belong to reality *at* a standpoint, according to him, is for the standpoint to be a fragment of reality to which the fact belongs. Similarly, the relativist may acknowledge the ueber reality of the fragmentalist. But for him, it will be explained in terms of the relative realities rather than the other way round. For a fact to belong to the ueber reality, according to him, is for it to be a fact that belongs to a reality

¹²It is this view, or something akin to it, that is dismissed in Moore ([1997], pp. 48-50).

at a time. Thus both are concerned, in their own way, to deny that the existence of a single coherent reality. But the relativist denies that it is single, while the fragmentalist denies that it is coherent.

One might naturally explain the fragmentalist's notion of coherence in terms of conjunction; for two facts that belong to reality to cohere is for their conjunction to belong to reality. But natural as this explanation may be, there is reason to think that it may not be fundamental. For one thing, one might want to explain the obtaining of a conjunctive fact in terms of the obtaining of its conjuncts. Thus conjunctive facts will disappear from reality on this view in favor of their conjuncts. But also, the obtaining of a conjunctive fact may presuppose substantive questions of identity. In the first-personal case, for example, the conjunctive fact of feeling and seeing something will obtain when the *same person* feels and sees something; and one might want to explain in more basic terms what it is for the same person to be involved in these two experiences rather than just building it into the 'metaphysics' of conjunction. For this reason, one might want to take the notion of coherence as fundamental in addition to the notion of reality.¹³ One would then expect there to be various substantive 'rules of coherence' concerning the conditions under which a set of facts were coherent and the way in which the coherence of one set of facts might constrain the coherence of another set. For example, in the classic tense-logical case, one would want that if *f* cohered (i.e. was simultaneous with) *g* and *g* cohered with *h* then *f* cohered with *h* (though, within a relativistic setting, this rule would have to

¹³Coherence is a relation that will hold among one or more facts. Given a primitive relation of coherence, one might take a fact to belong to reality when it is self-coherent. This gives a coherence theory of *fact* or *truth*, though not in the usual sense!

be dropped).

It is very tempting to want to explain away the contradiction that the fragmentalist claims to find in the facts. The facts themselves, one wants to say, cannot be incompatible; and so lying behind the ‘facts’ which the fragmentalist takes to be incompatible must be facts which are compatible and which are what are really in question. Thus it is not the fact that I am sitting and the fact that I am standing that belong to reality but the fact that I am sitting at t and the fact that I am standing at t' ; and if not that, then something else of that same sort. But the fragmentalist, like all realists about tense, is animated by a robust sense of the inviolably tensed character of the facts. In relativizing them, they are destroyed. Combine this sense of what the facts are like with an egalitarian and undifferentiated view of what they are and his position is forced upon one.

Although there is a sense in which the fragmentalist takes reality to be contradictory, his position should not be seen as an invitation to accept contradictions. Even if reality contains both the fact that I am sitting and the fact that I am standing, it will not be correct for me simultaneously to assert both that I am sitting and that I am standing. For any such assertion will only relate to those aspects of reality that ‘cohere’ with the existence of the given assertion; and so, it will only be correct for me to assert that I am sitting if, at the time of the assertion, I am sitting. And nor should his position be seen as a general invitation to accept other, more radical, forms of pluralism. To establish an acceptable form of fragmentalism (or of external relativism) one must show both that our judgements are relative in the relevant respect and that what most plausibly accounts for the relativity in the judgement is a plurality or relativity in the reality with which it deals. In the cases of interest to us, the relativity in the judgements is clear and what is

not so clear is what might account for it. But in the more radical cases - in which it has been supposed that there might be different cultural or social or conceptual realities, for example - it is not even clear that we have the relativity in judgement.

Each of the nonstandard positions is committed, in its own way, to a distinction between a single comprehensive ueber reality and a plurality of more particular realities. However, it is very hard to say what this distinction comes to; and there is a constant temptation to try to understand it in more intelligible, yet ultimately inappropriate, terms. Thus one might think of the particular realities as providing a 'perspective' on the ueber reality.¹⁴ But this is doubly inappropriate. For there need be nothing 'behind' the facts of which they are a perspective; the facts come as they are and there are no underlying facts of which they might provide a different 'take' or version. And there need not be anything in 'front of' the facts which has the perspective. The division of ueber reality into particular realities is indifferent to the presence of an observer; and in so far as different observers have a different perspective on reality at different times, it is because of a difference in the reality upon which they have a perspective, not the other way round. Or again, one might think of the ueber reality as a manifold of possible or potential realities. But there is no possibility or potentiality without actuality; and so, on this view, one of the realities is distinguished as actual, whereas the view is that all are equally real.

One might say that ueber reality 'manifests itself' in the form of the particular realities, that it becomes 'alive' or 'vivid' through the particular realities obtaining. Each particular reality presents itself as the whole of reality. It creates the illusion, if you like, that there are no further facts, even though there are many such realities and each is equally real. But it should be

¹⁴Dummett [78] and Horwich [89] slip into this way of talking.

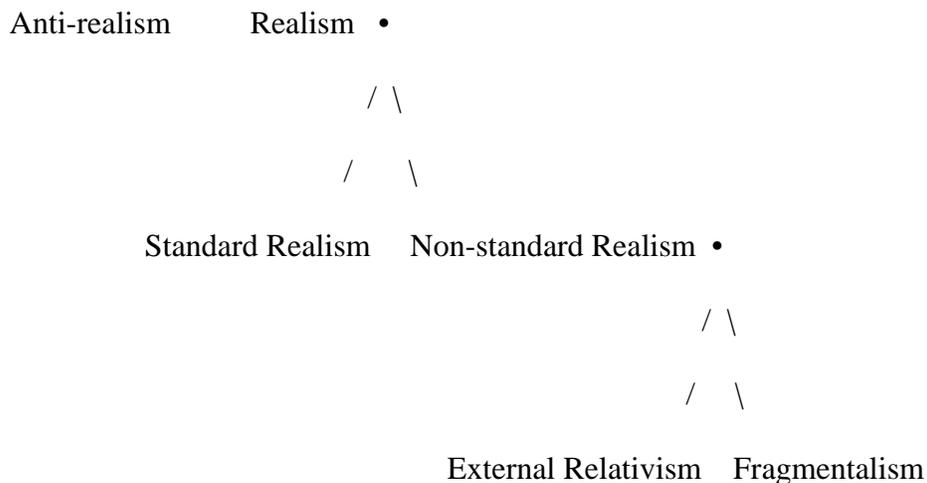
acknowledged that these remarks merely gesture in the direction of a certain idea and that, if we have here a viable conception of a pluralistic universe, then none of the usual models for making sense of it will apply.¹⁵

We conclude with a flow-chart representing the different positions and the way in which they arose:



¹⁵We should distinguish the equal reality of the particular realities from the equal reality of Lewisian worlds (Lewis [1986]). The facts from within one world, for him, are perfectly compatible with the facts from within any other world. The Lewisian semantics is misleading in this regard, since it may be taken to deliver the verdict that ‘Nixon lied’ is true in the actual world w and yet false in some possible world w' . But what makes the sentence true in w is that the actual referent N of ‘Nixon’ lied and what makes it false in w' is that some counterpart N' of N did not lie; and there is no incompatibility in the facts (N 's lying, N' 's not lying) that constitute those two worlds.

We should also distinguish our view from Goodman's [78] despite some superficial similarities in formulation. Goodman's pluralism is animated by a deep hostility to the intelligibility of talking about how the world is in itself; ours, on the other hand, is animated by a desire to understand how the world is in itself. Thus for us the question is what kind of Goodmanian ‘world-versions’ might remain once we exclude those that are not faithful to how the world is in itself.



The beauty and power of McTaggart's argument, as I conceive it, is that it forces us to adopt one of these positions. It does not categorically establish that tense is unreal. But it does show that belief in the reality of tense requires either that one privilege the present or that one takes reality to be relative or that one conceives of it as fragmentary.

§6. Four Types of Realism

This concludes our discussion of McTaggart's argument and its philosophical significance. We turn now, in the third part of the paper, to the defense of realism. Although standard realism has been the most commonly accepted form of realism, I do not believe it to be the most plausible; and, in the following three sections, I want to consider some of the reasons for favoring a non-standard form of realism..

But first it will be helpful to compare the issue of realism in regard to time with some analogous cases. What we have, in the temporal case, is a certain aspectual feature of judgements, their 'tense'; and an associated form of relativity. The question then arose as to the

relationship between these judgements and the reality they describe. Is the tense of these judgements also a feature of the reality? Or is it only the relativized form of these judgements that can properly be said to describe how things are? A similar question arises in other cases in which there is an ‘aspectual’ feature of judgements and an associated form of relativity. Three main cases of this sort have been considered: the modal, the spatial and the first-personal. In the modal case, the aspect is that of being contingent (or ‘worldly’) and the relativity is to a world; in the spatial case, the aspect is that of being spatiocentric (as with ‘here’ or ‘there’) and the relativity is to a location; and in the first-personal case, the aspect is that of being first-personal (as with ‘I’ or ‘you’) and the relativity is to a person.¹⁶

In each of these other cases, we can construct an analogue of our McTaggart-style argument and a similar range of responses can then be distinguished. In the modal case, for example, the assumption of realism takes the form:

Worldly Realism Reality is composed of worldly facts,

and the principle of neutrality takes the form:

Worldly Neutrality No possible world is privileged, i.e. the facts that compose or constitute reality are not oriented towards one possible world as opposed to another.

The standard realist will claim that there is a privileged world, viz. the actual world, while the non-standard realist will treat all worlds on an ontological par (but still hold to the reality of worldly facts). Similarly, in the first-personal case, the assumption of realism takes the form:

¹⁶These are not, of course, the only cases; and I might note that it was questions of ontological relativity, and not of indexicality as it is usually conceived, that prompted the present line of investigation.

First-personal Realism Reality is composed of first-personal facts, while the principle of neutrality takes the form:

First-personal Neutrality No person is privileged, i.e. the facts that compose or constitute reality are not oriented towards one person as opposed to another.

The standard realist will claim that there is a privileged person, viz. himself, while the non-standard realist will treat all people on a par (but still hold to the reality of first-personal facts).

If we ask in the modal case whether we should be a non-standard realist (and adopt the principle of neutrality), then the answer has seemed to most philosophers to be a clear 'no'. It has seemed evident that, of all the possible worlds, the actual world is privileged; it is the standpoint of reality, as it were, and the facts that constitute reality are those that obtain in this world. On the other hand, if we ask, in the first-personal case whether we should be a non-standard realist (given that we are going to be first-personal realists in the first place), then the answer to most philosophers has seemed to be a clear 'yes'. It has seemed metaphysically preposterous that, of all the people there are, I am somehow privileged - that my standpoint is *the* standpoint of reality and that no one else can properly be regarded as a source of first-personal facts.

The case of time is perplexing in a way that these other cases are not. On the one hand, there is not the same wide metaphysical gulf between the present and other times as there is between the actual world and other possible worlds. What goes on in the present and at other times is somehow part of the same all-encompassing reality in a way in which what goes on in the actual world and in other possible worlds is not. On the other hand, there is not the same metaphysical equality between the present and the past or future as there is between different

minds. What goes on in the future, or in the past, does not seem real to the same extent or in the same way as what goes on in the present. Thus the past and future appear to have some kind of intermediate status - neither clearly existing outside of reality, like other possible worlds, nor clearly being part of reality, like other minds.

The dialectical situation in the case of time and in the other two cases is therefore quite different. There has been a tendency to treat the cases of time and modality in an analogous manner, taking what is plausible in the one case to be equally plausible in the other. One extreme consequence of this tendency has been the willingness, on the part of some, to embrace an antirealist view about the worldly (as in Lewis' form of modal realism) given the plausibility of the corresponding antirealist view on tense. But there may have been some unfortunate consequences in the other direction as well. For neutral realism about the worldly is as implausible as the antirealist view; and the implausibility of the position in the modal case may have led philosophers, sympathetic to a realist view, to overlook its plausibility in the tense-logical case. If philosophers had only taken the case of first-personal case realism more seriously as a model, they might have been spared this particular form of metaphysical myopia.

Despite the lack of any clear intuitive evidence in the tense-theoretic case, I believe that there are at least three sets of considerations that tell against the standard view and in favor of some sort of neutral realism; and so let me, discuss each of these in the following three sections.

§7 The Argument from Passage

The first set of considerations arises from the original motivation for the realist view. There has been thought to be a significant metaphysical difference between space and time.

Time flows; there is something that one might call the passage of time, the movement of time from one moment to the next, which has no counterpart in the case of space.

Now it is very difficult to say more clearly what this distinctive feature of time is. But a thought commonly had by realists is that it essentially consists in the successive possession of the property of being PRESENT or NOW; for time to pass from one moment to the next is for a property of presentness to pass from one moment to the next. Of course, this property of being present cannot be the relativized property of being present at the very time in question if the proposed explanation is to do any work; and so it is only by supposing that there is an absolute property of presentness, genuinely had by things, that realists can adequately account in this way for the passage of time.

But although the standard realist can grant that there is such a property, his metaphysics makes it entirely unsuited to accounting for the passage of time. For what can he say about the present that might bear upon the question? He can maintain that something is present, not merely in the sense in which the antirealist might concede, but also in the sense in which this fact, or facts from which it follows, are themselves constitutive of reality. Thus presentness for him is a genuinely absolute and objective feature of things. He can also maintain that the present time t (and any other present thing) is present.

However, this will not serve his purpose; for the passage of time requires that the moments of time be *successively* present and this appears to require more than the presentness of a single moment of time.¹⁷ The realist at this point might appeal to the fact that any particular

¹⁷As Goedel [49] puts it, ‘the existence of an objective lapse of time, however, means (or, at least, is equivalent to the fact) that reality consists of an infinity of layers of the ‘now’ which

future time t^+ *will be* present and that any particular past time t^- *was* present. However, the future presentness of t^+ amounts to no more than t being present and t^+ being later than t and, similarly, the past presentness of t^- amounts to no more than t being present and t^- being earlier than t . But then how can the passage of time be seen to rest on the fact that a given time is present and that various other times are either earlier or later than that time?

The point can be strengthened. For the fact that time flows is a tenseless fact about time; it is not one that holds at one time rather than another. But the proposed explanation is tensed; it states of each of a number of times that it is *present* or *was past* or *will be future*. But if we try to convert it into a tenseless explanation, we end up with a triviality. We must say something like: it is always the case that some time is present, that all earlier were present and all later times will be present. And this is something that even the antirealist can accept.

The standard realist faces a general difficulty. For suppose we ask: given a complete tenseless description of reality, then what does he need to add to the description to render it complete by his own lights? The answer is that he need add nothing beyond the fact that a given time t is present, since everything else of tense-theoretic interest will follow from this fact and the tenseless facts. But then how could this solitary 'dynamic' fact, in addition to the static facts that the antirealist is willing to accept, be sufficient to account for the passage of time? We naturally read more into the realist's tense-logical pronouncements than they actually convey. But his conception of temporal reality, once it is seen for what it is, is as static or block-like as the antirealist's, the only difference lying in the fact that his block has a privileged center. Even if presentness is allowed to shed its light upon the world, there is nothing in his metaphysics to

come into existence successively'.

prevent that light being ‘frozen’ on a particular moment of time.

The two forms of non-standard realism are not subject to these difficulties since they do not single out any one time as *the* present. For the external relativist, each time is objectively present at that time: at each time *t*, reality is constituted by the absolute fact that *t* is present (or it is constituted by facts from which this follows). And for the fragmentalist, each time *t* is objectively present simpliciter - i.e., reality is constituted by the absolute fact that *t* is present (or by facts from which this follows). Here there is no significant relativity, even of an external sort, to the time in question. But in either case, presentness, in so far as it is a genuine feature of reality, applies equally to all times. Presentness is not frozen on a particular moment of time and the light it sheds is spread equitably throughout all time.

Of course, this feature, by itself, does not account for the passage of time. Consider the analogous first-personal case. Here the nonstandard, or neutral, realist will suppose that no person is privileged - me-ness applies across the board to everyone. But that is hardly enough to secure a moving me! So clearly, something more than the equitable distribution of presentness is required to account for the passage of time. But at least, on the current view, there is no obvious impediment to accounting for the passage of time in terms of a successive now. We have assembled all of the relevant NOW's, so to speak, even if there remains some question as to why the relationship between them should be taken to constitute a genuine form of succession.

§8. The Argument from Truth

The second argument against the realist position arises from the need to account for the

connection between language and reality or, more generally, between thought and reality.¹⁸

Anyone who has a view as to what is real is under an obligation to explain how what is real accounts for what is true. The facts must be adequate to account for the truths and also largely essential - there should not, in general, be facts whose presence in reality is irrelevant to accounting for what is true. The present argument is to the effect that the realist is unable to provide a reasonable account of the connection between the truth of tensed utterances and the tensed character of reality. If, as I attempt to show in the next section, it is only effective against the standard realist, then it provides another indirect argument in favor of the non-standard view.

The argument make use of three critical notions - the notions of truth, content (or *stating*) and verification. We take *truth* to be a property of utterances, *stating* to be a relation between an utterance and a proposition, and *verification* to be a relation between a fact, or some facts, and a proposition. Talk of propositions and facts as objects in their own right is not strictly necessary and we might always adopt a sentential mode of expression in its place. Thus instead of saying that an utterance states the proposition that P, we might say that it states-that P, treating ‘states-

¹⁸Considerations of this sort go back to Evans [85], chapter 12. The arguments I present bear a close resemblance to those stated in Mellor ([86], [98]), though I have been much more explicit about the assumptions upon which the arguments depends and how, in particular they are meant to relate to a realist view. I am mystified as to why Mellor should regard them as versions of McTaggart’s argument, which has nothing to do with the connection between language and reality. The reader will have noticed that I have been careful to eschew all reference to language in my own presentation of McTaggart’s argument.

that' as a sentential operator; and similarly for verification.¹⁹

There are somewhat different ways in which these various notions might be understood. But it will be critical for what follows that they be understood in such a way as to be relevant to the connection between truth and reality. The truth of an utterance depends upon two factors: one, lying on the side of the language, is a matter of what the utterance states; the other, lying on the side of the world, is a matter of the facts. The various notions should therefore submit to the following constraint:

Link An utterance is true if and only if what it states is verified by the facts (in reality). Since the facts of interest to us are those that belong to reality, we may take it to be built into the notion of verification that only such facts are capable of verifying what an utterance states. The qualification 'in reality' in the formulation of Link is then redundant.

For the purposes of the argument, we should imagine that I make two utterances U1 and U2 of the sentence 'I am sitting' - one now while I am sitting and the other earlier while I was standing. We make two innocuous assumptions concerning their truth-value:

Truth-value1 U1 is true;

Truth-value2 U2 was false (i.e. not true).

We also make two assumptions concerning their content:

Content1 U1 states that I am sitting;

Content2 U2 stated that I am sitting.

It is important that these last two assumptions be taken to relate to what one might call a

¹⁹The framework I adopt is close to that in Percival ([1989] & [2002]), although my treatment of 'facts' is somewhat different.

‘disengaged’ use of the expression ‘I am sitting’. Thus what U1 should be taken to state is the *tensed* proposition that I am sitting, one that does not itself encode any temporal information concerning the time of utterance; and similarly for U2. However, it is not important to the argument that each utterance be taken to state the particular tensed proposition that I am sitting. This is certainly the most natural choice, but the argument would work equally well with another tensed proposition in its place as long as it was the same for both utterances.

Finally, we make two general assumptions concerning the stability of truth-value and content:

Truth-value Stability If an utterance is true (false), then it is always true (false).

Content Stability If an utterance states that P, then it always states that P,

These two assumptions should be taken to hold not merely at their time of utterance but at any time whatever.

We now show how these various assumptions lead to contradiction. By Truth1, U1 is true. By Content1, U1 states that I am sitting. So by the left-to-right direction of Link, there are facts - say f_1, f_2, \dots - that verify that I am sitting. By Content2, U2 stated that I am sitting. So by Content Stability, U2 states that I am sitting. Since the facts f_1, f_2, \dots verify that I am sitting, it follows by the right-to-left direction of Link that U2 is true. But by Truth-value2, U2 was false and so, by Truth-value Stability, U2 *is* false, i.e. not true. A contradiction.²⁰

²⁰The argument can also be stated without appeal to temporal locutions, such as ‘always states’ or ‘always true’, the intelligibility of whose application in the given context might be doubted. Instead of saying that U1 is always true, for example, we may make a meta-linguistic ascent and say that an utterance of ‘U1 is true’ will be true whenever it is made.

It is perhaps a weakness of the argument that it relies on the assumption that the content of the two utterances of the given type is the same. One might have the view, for example, that an utterance of ‘I am sitting’ at t states the conjunctive proposition that I am sitting at t and t is the present time. In this case, the content would be tensed yet different for different utterances of the same sentence-type.; and so the assumption would be false.²¹ It would be odd if this were the only way in which the argument could be resisted but, all the same, it is worth noting that there is an alternative, somewhat more complicated, version of the argument for which the assumption is not required.

We now imagine that I only make a single current utterance U_1 of the sentence ‘I am sitting’. We assume Truth-value1, Content1, Truth Stability and Content Stability, as before, and the left-to-right direction of Link. We make, in addition, the following three assumptions:

Fact It is not always the case that I am sitting;

Factuality If some facts verify P then those facts obtain;

Conditionality If some facts verify P and those facts obtain then P .

(A more natural reading of Factuality and Conditionality may be obtained by substituting ‘putative fact’ for ‘fact’, since this then leaves it open whether what verifies a proposition is something that obtains.) From these last two assumptions, we may infer: if some facts verify P

²¹This is what Percival [89] calls a ‘mixed’ indexical view; both the content of the utterance and the truth-value of the content are allowed to vary over time (see also Percival [91], p. 96). But he is thinking of a view, like the one described in Dummett ([73], 382-400), in which the content is taken to be tenseless, whereas I have in mind a relatively innocuous case in which the content is taken to be tensed.

then P. This is somewhat different from the right-to-left direction of Link, since we have P as the consequent, not the truth of an utterance which states that P.

The modified version of the argument now goes as follows. By Content1, U1 states that I am sitting; and so by Content Stability, U1 always states that I am sitting. By Truth1, U1 is true; and so by Truth Stability, U1 is always true. By the left-to-right direction of Link, it is always the case that some facts verify that I am sitting. But then by Factuality and Conditionality, it is always the case that I am sitting - contrary to Fact.²²

How might the realist respond to these arguments? Consideration of this question is complicated by the possibility that there are different uses of the key notions and that some of the assumptions might hold for some of these notions and fail for others. There are two significant considerations that serve to fix how these notions might be understood. One, which has already been mentioned, is that the use of these notions should conform with Link. Indeed, it is hard to see how else the realist might provide an account of the connection between truth and reality. The other consideration derives from the realist's particular views about the nature of temporal reality. For presumably he does not simply hold that reality is tensed. He also believes that the truth of tensed utterances *requires* that reality be tensed, since otherwise the tensed character of reality will be divorced in a completely inexplicable manner from our ability to

²²Percival ([2002], 103-4) discerns the two forms of argument in Mellor's version of McTaggart. His own solution to the difficulties is to deny Truth-value Stability on the grounds that present utterances will not exist in the past or the future and hence will not then be capable of being true or false. This strikes me as extreme and it would be preferable if we could find a solution that was compatible with more plausible ontological views.

make tensed assertions. Thus we may also demand that the realist's use of the various notions also be in conformity with:

Relevance A tensed utterance is only verified with the help of tensed facts,²³

where the facts may be taken to verify an utterance if they verify what it states.

We may say that the use of the notions of truth, content and verification is *(metaphysically) relevant* if it is in conformity with Relevance and Link. I have argued that the realist should be willing to abide by a metaphysically relevant use of these notions and the question we therefore face is whether there is a metaphysically relevant use of these notions that satisfies the other assumptions of the argument.

About some of these other assumptions, there can be no doubt. Anyone, realist or not, should accept the assumptions concerning Truth-value and Fact. It is also hard to see how Conditionality or Content Stability might reasonably be doubted. Whatever our understanding of 'verify', surely it must be at least as strong as the material conditional; if some facts F_1, F_2, \dots verify P , then it is not the case that F_1, F_2, \dots obtain but P does not. Of course, Content Stability might be disputed on the grounds that even if, at the current time t , a current utterance of 'I am sitting' states the proposition that I am sitting, understood as the proposition that I am sitting at t , still, at a later time t^+ it will not state the proposition that I am sitting, now understood as the proposition that I am sitting at t^+ . However, for the realist, the content of a tensed utterance is a *tensed* proposition and the use of the clause 'I am sitting' is consequently 'disengaged' from the time of utterance or the time of evaluation; and given that this is so, there then appears to be no

²³An exception should perhaps be made for trivial tensed utterances such as 'if I am sitting then I am sitting'.

good reason to dispute the assumption.

Factuality is very plausible as it stands, but we may also argue for it on the basis of two further assumptions:

Reality1 If some facts verify a proposition then they belong to reality.

Reality2 Whatever facts belongs to reality obtain.

The first follows from the realist's conception of verification, which is meant to serve as a link between truth and reality. The second follows from his conception of reality; the (putative) facts which belong to reality are among the facts that obtain.²⁴

One might argue for Content1 - or for the claim that the tensed utterance U1 states a tensed proposition, even if not the proposition that I am sitting - as follows. Suppose that U1 does not state a tensed proposition. Then it states a tenseless proposition (granted that it states a proposition at all!). Since U1 is true, it follows by the left-to-right direction of Link that some fact or facts verify the proposition. But since the proposition is tenseless, presumably the fact or facts will also be tenseless - contrary to Relevance. Given Content1, Content2 is then also plausible in the case in which the very same content is in play. But even without Content2, we can rely on the second, more complicated, version of the argument. It is perhaps worth emphasizing that it is the metaphysical requirement of Relevance (in conjunction with Link) that forces upon us the relevant notion of content. There are no purely semantical considerations which might tell us what the relevant notion of content should be.

Only one assumption remains: the Stability of Truth-Value. Now it might be thought that rejection of this assumption provides us with an easy way of dealing with the argument. For

²⁴It is the counterpart for the reality-operator of the T-axiom, $\Box A \supset A$, in modal logic

suppose we so understand truth that the truth of an utterance is taken to be equivalent to the truth of the corresponding type. The truth of an utterance will then vary with how things are at the time it is being considered for truth; and so Stability will no longer hold. Moreover, this notion of truth will be metaphysically relevant in the sense explained above as long as we understand the notion of verification in a correspondingly tensed way. A tensed utterance is currently true, for example, if the tensed proposition that it states is currently verified by the facts.

However, the mere existence of a metaphysically relevant notion of truth for which Stability fails does not exclude there being a metaphysically relevant notion for which it holds. And it seems to me that there is such a notion. We might put the issue in the following way. The realist wishes to maintain that the truth of a tensed utterance requires in general that reality be tensed, for a suitable notion of truth. We may take it that the way the truth of a tensed utterance requires reality to be tensed is through the mechanism of Link: the tensed utterance states a proposition that is only verified by the tensed facts. The question is therefore whether there is a stable notion of truth for which it is reasonable for the realist to maintain that this requirement should be met. Is there a stable sense of 'truth' for which the truth of a tensed utterance requires that reality be tensed?

There are two related considerations which strongly suggest that there is. The first involves appeal to our ordinary notion of truth. Our ordinary notion of truth, as applied to utterances, appears to be stable. Suppose I utter the words 'I am sitting' while sitting; and suppose that a few minutes later I stand up. Someone may then ask 'is that utterance KF made five minutes ago true?'. The correct answer is surely 'yes', despite the fact that I am now standing.

We should not here be misled by the fact that it is also correct and also more idiomatic to say that the utterance *was* true. For the use of the past tense here is plausibly taken to relate to the past existence of the subject rather than to the past application of the predicate. It is similar with a sentence such as 'his heart attack was sudden'. What makes the use of the past tense appropriate, indeed mandatory, is that the heart attack occurred in the past, but the property that is attributed to the heart attack, that of being sudden, is not sensibly taken to vary over time; the property of being sudden is one that applies to an event either tenselessly or whatever the time.

Contrast this with a sentence, such as 'KF was sitting', in which the past tense relates to the application of the predicate. It is not just (or not even) KF that is taken to be in the past but also his sitting. In cases of the latter sort, we can sensibly qualify with 'once' or 'no longer'. Thus we can say that 'KF was once sitting' or that 'KF is no longer sitting'. But not with cases of the former sort. We cannot say 'the heart attack was once sudden' or 'it is no longer sudden'. And similarly with 'KF's utterance was true'. We cannot sensibly say that it was once true or that it is no longer true.

Now it seems to me that in so far as we have any inclination to claim that the truth of a tensed utterance requires that reality be tensed, it is in the ordinary sense of 'true'. I utter the words 'I am sitting' while sitting and that utterance is in the ordinary sense true. And surely it is in that very sense of 'true' that the realist wishes to claim that the truth of the utterance requires that reality be tensed. Indeed, it would be odd if the ordinary notion of truth did not provide a link between tensed language and the realist's conception of temporal reality and if it was only in some artificial custom-made sense of the term that he could explain what the connection was.

However, the issue need not be made to turn in this way upon what we take our ordinary

notion of truth to be. It will be agreed that the truth of a *current* tensed utterance requires that reality be tensed. Now there is a sense of ‘true’ (whether the ordinary sense or no) in which it will still be correct to say a moment later time that the utterance is true. But surely we are unable to discern any metaphysical difference between the truth of the utterance at the one time and at the other time. In so far as we are inclined to say now that the truth of a current utterance requires that reality be tensed, then surely we are equally inclined to say a moment later that its truth requires that reality be tensed. We have no sense of the metaphysical ground for the truth of the utterance shifting under our feet, as it were, as we go from the one time to the other.

What these considerations bring out is the way in which we are willing to adopt an eternal perspective of what the truth of a tensed utterance might require of reality. The requirement is the same whether we consider the truth of the utterance at one time or at another; and to the extent that this is so, it is impossible for the realist to evade the argument by appeal to the instability of truth.

It is worth noting that the corresponding arguments do not work in the modal case (as has often been pointed out). We are under no inclination to take the utterances of contingent truths to be necessarily true and nor does there appear to be a metaphysically relevant notion of truth, one relating the truth of an utterance to the worldly facts, that is stable across worlds. Thus the corresponding arguments in the modal case can simply be met by rejecting the Stability of Truth-value. However, the corresponding arguments *do* work in the first-personal case. Take a true utterance of ‘I am hungry’ (or, ignoring tense, ‘I am hungry at time t’). Then it would be correct for *you* to say that the utterance was true, regardless of whether you were hungry; and this notion of truth is surely relevant to how the truth of the utterance relates to the facts. In this respect, the

better analogy is again with the metaphysics of the first-person rather than with the metaphysics of modality.

§9. The Non-standard Response to the Argument from Truth

The above arguments are naturally taken to favor the antirealist position. For the antirealist does not believe in tensed facts and so does not believe that they are required for the verification of tensed utterances. There is therefore no principle such as Relevance that might force him to accept a sense of the key terms of the argument under which all of its assumptions will hold.

However, it seems to me that the nonstandard realist is also able to resist the argument. Unlike the antirealist, he will accept that the content of a tensed utterance (in a metaphysically relevant sense) is a tensed proposition. But he will reject the Link principle by which the connection between truth and reality is to be mediated. This is because he does not believe that there is single coherent reality to which the truth of an utterance is to be referred. Rather there are many such realities; and in accounting for the truth of an utterance one must specify the reality upon which it is taken to bear. This, naturally enough, is taken to be the reality at the time of the utterance made. Thus in place of Link, we have:

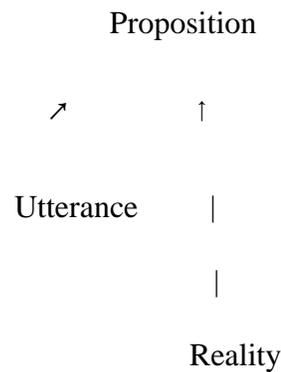
Relative Link An utterance is true if and only if what it states is verified by the facts that obtain at the time of utterance.

Given Relative Link in place of Link, the contradiction can no longer be derived.

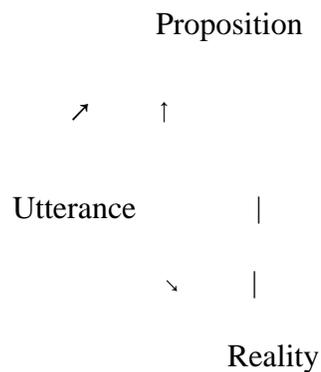
Although the modified version of Link might appear innocuous, it represents a radical departure from the way language is usually taken to be connected with reality. For what is taken

to verify what the utterance states is not a tenseless fact but a tensed fact whose provenance varies with the time of utterance. Thus it is no longer supposed that there is a single reality and a single set of facts in virtue of which an utterance is true. Rather, the reality and the appropriate set of facts will vary with the utterance.

The usual model might be depicted as follows:



The utterance determines a proposition; and reality determines whether the proposition is true, thereby determining whether the utterance is true. The alternative model, by contrast, might be depicted by:



Here the utterance has a dual role: it not only determines a proposition but also the relevant

reality; and whether the proposition or utterance is true is then determined by the reality.

If a tensed utterance is made at time t then there is a sense in which it is about that time just as there is a sense in which any utterance is about the actual world. But it is about the time or the world as a *target* rather than a *topic*. The utterance is not stating something about the time or the world; it is not stating - or, at least, not simply stating - that this is how things are at the given time t or the given world w , since that would give us a tenseless or a necessary proposition. Rather it is about the given time or world in the sense that it is facts that constitute how things are at the time or in the world that are relevant to determining whether the utterance is true. Normally there is no need to be explicit about the target of an utterance, since there is only one reality to which it can be directed. But once we adopt a non-standard form of realism, the target is no longer exogenously determined and must be regarded as a function of the utterance itself.

This view therefore gives a new meaning to the term 'indexical'. A sentence is usually taken to be indexical if its truth-value or if its content can vary with context (similar remarks apply, of course, to other categories of expression). But here it is the target - the tensed state of the world with respect to which the sentence is to be evaluated - that may vary with context. We may say, if you like, that an utterance of a tensed sentence has a *compendious* content, consisting of a tensed proposition and a specification of the time. But the two components of the content play completely different roles: the first is *factual* and serves to indicate the tensed conditions or facts under which the utterance is true, while the second is *focal* and serves to indicate where those facts are to be found.

The present realist's distinction between factual and compendious content corresponds to

the antirealist's distinction between character and propositional content and, indeed, the formal representation of the two may be the same. However, the realist's conception of compendious content is quite different from the antirealist's conception of propositional content. For what makes a propositional content true, for the antirealist, is a tenseless fact while what makes a compendious content true, for our realist, is a tensed fact. Thus the content is still tensed even though it incorporates the specification of a time.

The cardinal mistake of the antirealist, according to the realist, is to assimilate focal content to factual content. He thinks that different utterances of the same tensed sentence will differ in their truth-value on account of a difference in their factual content. But what accounts for the difference in truth-value, according to the realist, is a difference in the focal content; for when the focal content targets a different state of the world, the utterance may change its truth-value even though the very same facts are relevant to its being true.

The realist can agree that a tensed utterance is in some sense about the time of utterance. He might even agree that the time of utterance is part of the factual content of the utterance - either directly, qua particular time, or indirectly, qua time of utterance - though this might be an odd view for him to have. But the antirealist's mistake, he wants to say, lies in the refusal to recognize another, metaphysically more basic, way in which the utterance can be about the time of utterance. For it can be directed towards a time, or towards how things are at the time, in much the same way in which an ordinary utterance is directed towards how things are in the actual world. By attempting to incorporate the target of the utterance into its content, the antirealist loses both what is semantically distinctive about its indexicality and what is metaphysically distinctive about its content.

We therefore see that the nonstandard realist can effectively respond to the first version of the argument. But a little more needs to be said about the second version. This depended upon only the left-to-right direction of Link and, for the nonstandard realist, this direction is unproblematic. For if an utterance is true, there will indeed be some fact (obtaining at the time of the utterance) which verifies what it states. How, then, is he to deal with the second version of the argument?

This employed three additional assumptions in place of the right-to-left direction of Link - Fact, Factuality and Conditionality; and the third of these was derived from two further assumptions - Reality1 and Reality2. Fact and Factuality cannot sensibly be denied; and so that leaves the two Reality assumptions. We might naturally take a fact to belong to reality if it belongs to *a* reality. It is then the second Reality assumption, that any fact belonging to reality obtains, which should be given up; for the fact may relate to one reality and the obtaining to another. In stating that a fact belongs to reality, we adopt a general perspective but, in stating that a fact obtains, we adopt the current perspective; and it is because of this shift in perspective that we cannot generally assert that the facts belonging to reality will obtain. Thus once again, it is the absence of a single coherent reality that allows us to reject one of the assumptions upon which the argument depends.

§10. The Argument from Special Relativity

The final argument against tense-theoretic realism arises from the need to square it with Einstein's special theory of relativity (I ignore the complications arising from general relativity and quantum physics). Special relativity (SR) has weak readings in which it is compatible with

there being an absolute notion of simultaneity and a strong reading in which it states, or implies, that there is no such notion. I am inclined to think that there are good scientific reasons for favoring the strong reading but, whether or not this is so, my concern here is with the compatibility of tense-theoretic realism with the strong reading.

This issue of ‘compatibilism’ has been much discussed in the literature.²⁵ But the focus of my own discussion will be somewhat different (though there will be some obvious points of contact). In the first place, my interest is in the compatibility of SR with tense-theoretic realism and not, as is more common, with presentism. Tense-theoretic realism is the weaker position and, consequently, incompatibility with realism is the stronger result. In the second place, I shall be careful to distinguish between the standard and nonstandard forms of realism. The arguments for incompatibility are, I believe, effective against the standard forms of realism but not against the nonstandard forms. Thus in one respect the negative conclusions of this section are more far-reaching in their intent than those to be found in the literature, since they are also meant to apply to non-presentist versions of tense-theoretic realism, and, in another respect, they are less far-reaching, since they are not meant to apply to the nonstandard forms of realism.

Let us begin with the distinction between presentism and tense-theoretic realism.

Presentism - or what, in the present context, might be called *ontic* presentism - is the view that

²⁵See, for example, Christensen F. [74], Clifton & Hogarth [95], Craig W. L., [2001], Crisp T. M. [2003], Godfrey-Smith W., [79], Crisp T. M. [2003], Hinchliff M., [2000], Markosian N. [2002], Mellor D. H. [74], Putnam H., [1967], Rakic N. [97], Savitt S., [2000], Sider [2001], Sklar L, [81], Stein H., [68], [70] & [91], Tooley ([97], chapter 11).

only presently existing things are ‘real’ in some or another sense of term.²⁶ There are familiar variants on this view. One could hold that only past or present things are real or that only past or present or determinately future things are real. These differences will not be important in what follows. There are also differences in what one might mean by ‘real’. My own preferred reading is that for a thing to be real is for it to belong to reality, i.e. for it to figure in the facts that are constitutive of reality. But most philosophers take a thing to be real, in this context, if there is something that it is, in the broadest sense of the phrase. They are therefore of the view that what there is, in this broadest sense, is what there presently is. Thus whereas they would take there to be no such thing as Lincoln, we may allow that there is such a thing; it is just that it will not figure in the preferred account of how things are.

Tense-theoretic realism, by contrast, is the view that reality is tensed; reality comprises tensed facts (and perhaps tenseless facts as well). Tense-theoretic realism is, in its own way, a form of presentism; for, in so far reality comprises tensed facts, it must be oriented towards the present. We might therefore call it *factive* as opposed to *ontic* presentism. It is concerned with the nature of *reality*, with how things are, rather than with the nature of the *real*, or with what things are.²⁷

It should be evident that the two views are different. Ontic presentism is an ontological position; it is a view about what there is. Factive presentism, on the other hand, is a metaphysical rather than an ontological position; it is view about how things are, quite apart

²⁶Sider [99] contains a recent discussion.

²⁷The distinction should be a familiar one (it is made on the first page of Fine [77], for example). But it tends to be overlooked and especially in the context of the present discussion.

from what there is. In this respect, our formulation of the view in terms of facts may be misleading, since it suggests that the factive presentist will subscribe to a distinctive ontology of facts. But in endorsing tensed facts, he is merely endorsing a certain way things are. Moreover, ontic presentism is a negative view; it excludes certain things from what there is. Factive presentism, on the other hand, is a positive view; it includes certain ways of being in how things are. Consequently, an ontic presentist will have a more restrictive view than his opponent of what there is while the factive presentist may have a more inclusive view than his opponent of how things are.²⁸

It is readily possible for a factive presentist not to be an ontic presentist. Indeed, he may endorse a full ontology of things past, present and future: all such things may figure in his preferred account of reality; and he may think that there is a perfectly intelligible sense in which there are such things. He merely insists that some of the facts (if not all) should concern how things presently are. I am inclined to think that this version of factive presentism is much more plausible than the usual version, in which only present things are taken to exist; and it is a shame that a one-sided conception of the presentist issue has prevented philosophers from taking it more seriously.²⁹

²⁸This explains why presentism is usually taken to be an antirealist position whereas I take it to be a realist position. The one is antirealist in regard to what there is while the other is realism in regard to how things are. Presentists in my sense have sometimes been called ‘A-theorists’ or ‘tensors’, though there is no established terminology.

²⁹Smith ([93], chapter 5) is an exception. Sider ([01], p. 18) argues against the combination of the views on the grounds that it is ‘unmotivated’; for why not give an analysis of

Ontic presentism, by contrast, does not really make sense except in the context of factive presentism. There is no strict implication from one to the other but, given that all of the facts are tenseless, it makes no sense to restrict the ontology to presently existing things. Thus any argument against factive presentism is, ipso facto, an argument against ontic presentism.

Most philosophers who have worried about the compatibility of SR with presentism have worried about its implications for the ontology of presentism (or of some variant thereof). What, in the light of SR, should the presentist take to be real? If SR excludes *being present* as a criterion for being real, then what should be used in its place? But there is a more basic worry. For the presentist believes in tensed facts. But what, in the light of SR, should he take a tensed fact to be? Without an answer to this question, he is not even in a position to state an alternative criterion for being real, since any alternative criterion must presumably be tensed and hence must presuppose some alternative conception of tense.

The difficulty that SR poses for the conception of tense is this. Under the pre-relativistic conception of tense, a tensed proposition is one whose truth is simply relative to a time. Consider now any two events e and f and the tensed propositions that e obtains and that f obtains. If it makes sense to say that these proposition are true at any given time, then it makes sense to _____
tense if the materials for it are available? But the required materials may not be available if tense is taken as primitive in preference to the earlier-later relation; and even if the required materials are available, any proposed analysis might be rejected on the grounds that it fails to respect the distinctive metaphysical character of the tenses. I have given a similar argument against the combination of views in the modal case (chapter 6, p. ***, of the present volume). The argument in this case is perhaps somewhat more plausible but might still be resisted.

say that they are true at the same time. But for the propositions to be true at the same time is for the events to be simultaneous. Thus the classical pre-relativistic conception of tense presupposes an absolute notion of simultaneity.

What then, in the light of SR, should take its place? What should replace times as the standpoint from which the truth of tensed propositions are to be evaluated? There are two main options. Under the first, the truth of a tensed proposition is taken to be relative to a location in space-time. Thus the proposition that a given event is *here-now* may legitimately be regarded as tensed even though the proposition that the event is *now* or that it is *here* cannot be. Under the second option, a tensed proposition is taken to be relative to an (inertial) frame of reference and a time. Each frame gives rise to its own framework of times³⁰; and a proposition may then be taken to be relative to the frame and one of its times. Thus the proposition that a given event is *now* may legitimately be regarded as tensed, as may the proposition that a given thing is *now at rest*.

It seems to me that both of these proposals are open to formidable objection. There is nothing wrong as such with the post-relativistic counterparts to the pre-relativistic notion of tense. The difficulty arises from taking tensed facts in this post-relativistic sense to be constitutive of reality. For if I take reality to be constituted in part by tensed facts, then I should be able to say what those tensed facts are. So here I am; and let me raise this very question.

Now which tensed facts I take to obtain will depend upon the standpoint from which I

³⁰Which is subject to the condition that two events occur at the same time just in case they are simultaneous within the frame. We may suppose that simultaneity within a frame is characterized in the usual way.

ask the question. Different tensed facts will obtain at different standpoints and so, when I ask this question, which is the standpoint from which I take the facts to obtain? Which of the various possible standpoints is the standpoint of reality?

There appears to be only one possible answer. The standpoint of reality is the standpoint that I occupy. Under the first proposal, this will be the space-time location from which I ask the question; and under the second, it will be the frame at which I am at rest when I ask the question and the time within that frame at which I ask the question. Indeed, if the standpoint from which the question is to be answered were not the standpoint that I occupy, then it is hard to see what else it might be. If a different space-time location or a different frame-time pair, then which?

But even if these are the only possible answers, can they be sustained? Consider the second proposal first; and imagine that you and I are in relative motion and that we coincide at the location at which I ask the question. Then what reason do I have to favor my own standpoint over yours? After all, the only possible relevant difference between us lies in our relative motion. But why should I think that reality is somehow attuned to my motion as opposed to yours?

A similar point holds in regard to the first proposal, though it is perhaps not quite as compelling. Suppose that you are standing next to me and that you also ask the question. Then why should I favor my standpoint over yours? Now if your question is asked in the absolute past or future of my question, then I do have a good presentist reason to favor my own standpoint. But what if the events of our asking the questions are space-like separated from one another (as they would be if I took you to be asking the question at the same time as myself)? What then? After all, space-like separation is as close as one can get to a purely spatial difference within the

context of SR and so, if anything, it would appear to constitute a reason for admitting your standpoint rather than excluding it. But failing spatial separation, there is nothing about the difference between the two standpoints to which we can appeal in explaining why reality might be attuned to the reone as opposed to the other.

The force of the argument can be brought home by means of an analogy with the case of first-personal realism. Suppose I believe that reality is, in part, constituted by first-personal facts; and I now ask what those facts are. Then surely I have no good reason to suppose that reality is somehow oriented towards my own standpoint as opposed to yours, that the only first-personal facts are those that concern me as opposed to you. This would appear to be metaphysical chauvinism of the worst sort. But similarly, it may be argued, for the presentist. Some sort of chauvinism about his own standpoint will be unavoidable once his conception of a standpoint is reconceived in the light of SR.

The general form of the argument in these cases is as follows. We wish to privilege our own standpoint as being the standpoint of reality. This requires that we *explain* why we should take our standpoint to be *the* standpoint of reality and not also some other standpoint. Thus given that s is a standpoint of reality and that t is not, we want to find a relation R which is such that t 's standing in the relation R to s explains (or helps explain) why t is not also a standpoint of reality. It is then argued that in the cases at hand this cannot be done. In the first case, for example, the only possibly relevant relationship between the coincident observers is that they are in relative motion; in the second case, the only possibly relevant relationship between the neighboring observers is that they are space-like separated; and in the third case (of first-personal realism), the only possibly relevant relationship between you and me is that we are

different. But in none of these cases are the relationships adequate to the task. We are at loss to understand why a difference in relative motion or spatial separation or mere identity might prevent another standpoint from also being a standpoint of reality.

It might be countered that there *is* a relevant difference in all of these cases. Our mistake has been to look to tenseless or non-indexical features to account for the difference in status. But once we take account of tensed or indexical features, the problem is readily solved. The standpoint of the coincident observer is not the standpoint of reality since he is not now at rest; the standpoint of my neighbor is not that of reality since he is not here-now; and you do not occupy the standpoint of reality since you are not *me*.

It must be conceded that features of this sort may be relevant to solving the problem in certain cases - and even essential. If the pre-relativistic presentist is asked why past and future observers do not occupy the standpoint of reality, then he can legitimately appeal to the fact that they are not present. And if an actualist is asked why a merely possible world does not constitute the standpoint of reality, then there is nothing he can do but appeal to the fact that the world is not actual. However, the responses in these cases are intuitively satisfying. Being present or being actual can sensibly be seen to bear upon the question of whether a given standpoint is the standpoint of reality. But not so in the cases in question. How can being at rest, or being here-now, or being me sensibly be seen to bear upon the question? From this point of view, then, the problem with the post-relativistic conception of tense is that it no longer yields an intuitively satisfying *tensed* criterion for being the standpoint of reality.

This naked appeal to intuition may perhaps be reinforced by two other considerations. We may note first that, no matter how crazy an indexicalist view we might have, it is always

possible to provide a corresponding indexical criterion for being the standpoint of reality. The spatiocentric realist, for example, might appeal to the fact that he was *here* to distinguish his standpoint from those who were elsewhere. This means that an indexical response has no probative value in itself and that it is therefore especially important to see if the response is intrinsically plausible or to see if some other form of response might be available. Second, a non-indexical form of response *is* available to the pre-relativistic presentist. If he is asked why the standpoint of a past or future observer is not the standpoint of reality, he can appeal to the fact that it is *earlier* or *later* than the present standpoint. But then it is hard to see why a response of this sort should not also be available to the post-relativistic presentist

We have so far only dealt with the two most obvious ways of modifying our conception of tense in the light of SR. But might there not be others? There are two key respects in which the previous accounts might be extended. First, we might take cognizance of further information about the observer. Within the context of SR, perhaps all that might be considered relevant is his world-line and his location (when he asks his question). Thus a standpoint will at least be determined once we specify a world-line and a location on that world-line.³¹ Second, we may wish to treat certain standpoints as giving rise to the same reality. This is especially true if we pack a great deal of information into the standpoint, since some of that information may then be irrelevant. If reality is taken to reside in a location, for example, then any two world-line/location pairs should be treated as the same when their locations are the same; and if reality is taken to reside in a frame-time pair, then any line/location pairs should be treated as the same when their world-lines correspond to the same frame and their locations to

³¹This is essentially the framework of Clifton & Hogarth [95].

the same time. But even under a relatively meager conception of what belongs to a standpoint, we may still wish to identify certain standpoints since this provides a possible solution to our previous difficulties; for if your standpoint and mine give rise to the same reality, then there is no longer any need to find a criterion by which they might be distinguished. However, it may be shown, once the problem is set up in this way, that there is no reasonable basis upon which a suitable equivalence between world-line/location pairs might be determined.³²

To make matters worse, there are some further, independent arguments against the proposals we have considered. Consider again the frame-theoretic proposal. The presentist takes there to be an absolute and objective sense in which a given frame-time is the standpoint of

³²I omit the details, which are somewhat messy. The result is an extension of proposition 3 of Malament [77].

It is important to stress that our relation of equivalence is different from the relation R that was introduced by Putnam [67] and subsequently discussed by other philosophers. Their relation is one that holds between x and y when y is real for x (thus x should be regarded as a standpoint and y a thing within the ontology of the standpoint). Our relation is one that holds between x and y when they are identifiable standpoints, i.e. ones that give rise to the same reality. It may reasonably be questioned whether the former relation is symmetric and perhaps even whether it is transitive. But this is not sensibly open to question in the case of our own relation. It should also be stressed that our negative result is meant to hold regardless of what the ontology of the presentist might be. He could even accept the full ontology of things past, present and future; the difficulty of coming up with a reasonable conception of tense would still remain.

reality. He is therefore in a position to distinguish a particular frame as the frame of this standpoint; and this then enables him to characterize an absolute notion of simultaneity as simultaneity within this frame. Thus this proposal is not in keeping with the spirit of SR (under the strong reading in which it is denied that there is an absolute notion of simultaneity). The peculiarly and purely metaphysical way in which the absolute notion is derived might also be regarded as especially objectionable.

This leaves the locational proposal; and given that the argument from arbitrariness is less compelling in this case, one might well think that this relation constitutes the least undesirable of the various options. However, there is a telling objection to this proposal as well. One of the primary motivations for the presentist view is that it enables one to distinguish between space and time. Temporal indexicality is metaphysically significant, while spatial indexicality is not; there is an objective 'now', even though there is no objective 'here'. However, once we adopt the locational view, this asymmetry between space and time disappears. The two forms of indexicality collapse one into the another and reality can no more be said to be oriented towards a temporal standpoint than towards a spatial standpoint; the 'here' is as objective as the 'now'.

I suppose that if one were forced to treat space and time alike, then there might be something to be said for treating the indexicality of both in a realist manner, though it is far from clear why the presentist's post-relativistic views about the metaphysical status of the *here-now* should be taken to derive from his previous realist views about the *now* as opposed to his previous anti-realist views about the *here*. After all, anti-realism about tense is a straightforward view that has been held by many, while realism about spatial indexicality is a bizarre view that has been held by few, if any; and so it would seem more reasonable to move in the direction of a

general form of antirealism.

However, one is not forced to treat space and time alike. SR embodies enough of an asymmetry between space and time that the difference between the spatial and temporal forms of indexicality can be retained. Indeed, one can simply take spatial indexicality to be relativity to a frame-place pair and temporal indexicality to be relativity to a frame-time pair. One thereby obtains straightforward counterparts to the original forms of indexicality (with the frame of reference playing the role of a missing parameter). But given that the distinction between the two kinds of standpoint *can* be retained, it seems bizarre to adopt a view in which the distinction is abandoned and one of the principal motivations for the presentist position is lost.

In the light of these considerations, it is hard not to agree with those philosophers who have thought the situation is quite hopeless (though their focus has been on the ontology of presentism rather than the metaphysics).³³ There is an unwarranted arbitrariness in taking any given standpoint to be a standpoint of reality; and, depending upon which proposal is adopted, one is obliged either to accept an absolute notion of simultaneity or to relinquish the metaphysical distinction between space and time.

However, it seems to me that all of above arguments, with the exception of the last, depend upon taking for granted that standard realism is the only realist option. When it is asked ‘how is reality?’, it is presupposed that there is a single reality and hence a single standpoint (or class of equivalent standpoints) from which the question is to be answered. This then leads to the difficulty of saying what the standpoint is and of being committed, under certain responses, to an absolute notion of simultaneity.

³³See Savitt [2000], for example.

But suppose that we give up this assumption. Each (representative) standpoint will give rise to its own reality and no one can be singled out as being *the* standpoint of reality. If it is asked ‘why is your standpoint not also a standpoint of reality?’, then the answer is that it *is*, regardless of your world-line or location and regardless of what might be true at your standpoint. Thus the problem of distinguishing my standpoint from yours does not arise and nor will it be possible to define an absolute notion of simultaneity in terms of a privileged standpoint.

In principle, one could adopt the nonstandard realist view with respect to either the locational or the frame/time conception of tense. But the argument from the asymmetry of space and time still applies against the locational conception; and so this leaves the frame-theoretic conception as the only viable option. We may conclude that frame-theoretic form of nonstandard realism constitutes the only reasonable way of reconciling presentism with SR; and so this provides yet another reason for favoring a nonstandard form of realism.

The resulting metaphysical view is quite remarkable. The usual view is that SR shows space-time to be Minkowskian rather than Newtonian; physical processes are to be seen as taking place within a physical space-time with the structure of Minkowskian rather than Newtonian space-time. But the present view is that what SR shows to be mistaken is not that space-time is Newtonian but that there is a single space-time. Thus we should picture physical processes as taking place within a plurality of physical space-times, each of them enjoying a common ontology of space-time locations and each of them Newtonian in structure, and yet differing in the spatial and temporal relationships that hold among the space-time locations.³⁴

³⁴It is perhaps this view - or, at least, a consequence of it - that Stein excoriates in several of his papers ([68], [70] and [91]) but, nonstandard as it may be, I do not see how it can so easily

Of course, Minkowski space-time and the corresponding family of Newtonian space-times can be regarded as providing equivalent descriptions of the same underlying reality. But our interest is in the underlying reality itself; we want to know what *au fond* we should take the spatiotemporal facts to be. Are the different Newtonian space-times merely mathematical abstractions from Minkowski space-time? Or the other way round? Normally, a question of this sort would be taken to involve an awkward choice as to which entities and which properties or relations should be taken as basic. But in the present case, the issue turns on what *kinds* of fact should be taken to compose reality. Do we take the simultaneity of two events to be a fact of the right kind or only the simultaneity of two events relative to a frame of reference? In the former case, we must posit many different realities, or space-times, to accommodate the different spatiotemporal relationships that may hold between the same events whereas, in the latter case, we can make do with a single all-encompassing reality.

We can be either relativist or fragmentalist about the resulting realities. Under the relativist view, the different realities will be indexed to different frame-times. This appears to require, if the indexing is to have any real significance, that we have an independent conception of the frame-times, one that gives them an identity that is separate from the space-times to which they give rise. Under the fragmentalist view, by contrast, there will be a single though incoherent *ueber-reality*. Given a suitable notion of coherence, the content of the different frame-times can then be recovered as maximally coherent sets of facts.³⁵

be dismissed as ‘illegitimate’.

³⁵It goes without saying that the fragmentalist viewpoint may have application to other areas of physics!

The present position may be understood by analogy with the usual pre-relativistic forms of tense-theoretic realism. Before, the fact that a given event was present was taken to be tensed, since its obtaining was relative to a time. Now, under the extended conception of tense, the fact that two events are simultaneous is also regarded as tensed, since its obtaining is relative to a frame (the time in the frame-time pair here drops out of view). Before, the fact that a given event was present was taken to be absolute and capable of belonging to reality, notwithstanding its relativity to a time. Similarly, the fact that two events are simultaneous is now taken to be absolute and capable of belonging to reality, notwithstanding its relativity to a frame. Finally, in order to avoid privileging one time over another, we took the facts that a given event was present, past and future to be equally capable of belonging to reality (whether to a fragmented reality or to one that is indexed to a time). Now, in order to avoid privileging one frame over another, we take the facts that two events are simultaneous or that either one is earlier than the other to be equally capable of belonging to reality (which, again, is either fragmented or indexed to a frame-time).

The big difference in the views is not only in the conception of tense but in what is taken to be tensed. Before the simultaneity or precedence of two events was taken to be a tenseless fact, but now it is taken to be tensed. Thus far from eliminating the metaphysical significance of tense under SR, the present view results in a broadening of its scope.

Of course, it is also possible for someone who is antirealist about tense, as it is normally conceived, to adopt the present metaphysical gloss on SR. He may accept the many space-times and yet reject their orientation towards the present; and there may even be something to be said for such a view. But what is interesting about the realist is that he appears to have no choice in

the matter; in accepting the absolute reality of the present, he is thereby forced to accept the absolute reality of ordinary temporal relations and the multitude of space-times to which they give rise.

§11 Fragmentalism

This concludes our discussion of the arguments in favor of a nonstandard form of realism. My concern, in the fourth and final part of the paper, is to discuss the bearing of this position on a number of different topics: the question of relativism versus fragmentalism; the metaphysics of first-personal realism; and the interplay between our concept of reality and our conception of what is real.

I begin with the question of whether the nonstandard realist should be a relativist or a fragmentalist. The previous arguments in favor of nonstandard realism were largely neutral on this question. However, it seems to me that there are reasons for preferring the fragmentalist view, even though it is far more radical than the relativist view and might even be regarded as metaphysically repugnant. In the present section I would like to outline these reasons, though I am under no illusion that they can be regarded as anything more than suggestive.

One reason is specific to Special Relativity. I have suggested that the nonstandard realist might think of reality as dividing up into different Newtonian space-times, each with its own version of what is present. In pre-relativistic physics, these centered space-times will be subject to the condition that the relative temporal status of events (as past, present or future) must be preserved. Thus if two events are both present in one centered space-time they must both be past or both be future in any other centered space-time. This way of thinking is forced

upon us if we think in a relativist way of presence as presence at a time. But suppose one just thinks of presence as the general manner in which an event becomes temporally manifest. There would then appear to be nothing to prevent us from envisaging a different the rule of coherence, one that allows events which were both present in one manifestation of temporal reality to be past and present, say, or past and present in another manifestation of temporal reality. One can divide the tensed facts diagonally, as it were, and not just across the vertical (this would be analogous to allowing different minds to share the same experience). Thus fragmentalism has the advantage of more readily lending itself to the kinds of changes in our conception of space-time that SR seems to require.

There is, however, a more significant, and more general, reason for favoring the fragmentalist position. This concerns the ontological status of times (or whatever other kind of standpoint might be in question). Many philosophers have been tempted by the view that times are not among the fundamental constituents of reality. But this view is especially attractive for the tense-theoretic realist and, since it will be an important premiss in the argument to follow and in our subsequent consideration of first-personalism, it will be worth investigating further. (Similar reasons will also apply in the cases of modal and first-personal realism).

If times are to be among the constituents of reality, then of which basic facts will they be constituents? They are two possibilities: (a) they appear in tensed facts; and (b) they appear in tenseless facts. If they appear in tensed facts, then which? Suppose, simply for the sake of illustration, that *raining* is a primitive feature of reality. Then could a particular time appear as a constituent in a tensed fact to the effect that it was raining? Clearly, it will not do to say that the fact is to the effect that it is raining at the particular time *t*, since this fact is tenseless, not tensed.

One might, at this point, be tempted to suppose that in addition to times, as normally conceived, there is what one might call a tensed time, *the present*, and that this time can appear as a constituent in the tensed fact to the effect that it is raining at the present. But not only is it hard to know what the present is, if it is not just the time, as normally conceived, that is present, it is hard to see how the presence of a mere particular in a fact could make it tensed. A particular, one wants to say, is not the kind of thing that can be responsible for the tensed character of a fact; what is responsible for that character, if anything, is the way the particular is picked out, not the particular itself.

But if times do not appear in ordinary tensed facts, then in which other basic facts might they appear? Only one plausible answer suggests itself. There is a primitive property of *presentness* and the way in which a time t appears in a tensed fact is through its possession of this property (and similarly, one might think, for other tensed determinations).

Now I take it that the only plausible view of this sort is one in which times also occurs as constituent in ordinary facts such as the fact that it is raining at t . One could in principle have a view which admits the tensed fact that t is present and also the tensed fact that it is raining. But the ontology of times would then be strangely divorced from what was happening in time.

Once we have the fact that the given time t is present, there is no need for any other facts concerning what is going on at the present time. For suppose, by way of illustration, that it is presently raining. Then it will be a fact, under the proposed view, that it is raining at t ; and from this fact and the fact that it is present, it will then follow that it is presently raining. In this way, the present disposition of reality may be determined from the tenseless facts and the fact that the given time t is present.

However, this is highly counter-intuitive. For consider tensed truths concerning what is presently happening, say 'it is raining' and 'it is cold'. These will be made true, in part, by tensed facts. Now we have a strong intuition that it is separate tensed facts that will help verify the two statements. But this is not an intuition that can be respected. For once we have the tensed facts that help verify the first statement, there can be no further tensed facts that might help verify the second. Thus the composite character of present reality must be denied.

It therefore appears that, if times are to be constituents of any facts whatever, they must be constituents of tenseless facts. But again, which will they be? One option is that they are constituents of ordinary facts. Thus we might take it to be a fact that it is raining at t . But we have seen that if there are to be any tensed facts whatever, we must also take it to be a fact that it is raining. We will therefore have the situation of two facts covering the very same metaphysical ground. And this seems this bizarre. For why have two facts, when we can get by with one? The other option is for times to be constituents of distinctively time-theoretic facts, such as the fact that one time is earlier than another, but not of ordinary facts. But the ontology of times will then again be strangely divorced from what is happening in time; for we will have some tenseless facts that specify the abstract structure of time and some tensed facts that indicate what is happening over time, but without any apparent connection between them. Thus we see that, in either case, there seems to be no room for an ontology of times within a realist tense-theoretic metaphysics.

We may now return to the main line of our argument. Given that times are not among the fundamental constituents of reality, it is plausible, once reality claims are expressed in their most basic terms, that they will involve no reference to time; for surely any reasons for thinking

that times are not basic should apply across the board, not only to their role in the specification of the facts that are real but also in the formulation of the reality claims themselves. Thus if we wish to say that reality is relative to a time, then we must be able to find some more basic way of expressing the kind of relativity that might be in question. But what might this be? We cannot sensibly take such claims to be relative to an event or momentary object, even if our ontology allowed for such things.³⁶ We might take the facts to be relative to a centered world. But what is this centered world if not the facts that compose it? And so to say that the facts are relative to a world is simply to say that they divide up into different worlds. Thus it is not clear how there might be a significant and sensible form of relativism once all reference to times is dropped; and so we seem to be forced into favoring the fragmentalist position once we opt for a nonstandard form of realism.

We might mention, in conclusion, another reason for favoring fragmentalism that may, at least, be persuasive to some. For the coherence of the relativism depends upon distinguishing between the internal and external forms of relativity - between reality's being a-certain-way-at-a-time and its being a-certain-way, at the time (or whatever the standpoint might be). But it is hard not to feel the temptation to collapse the one form of relativity into the other. Fragmentalism, by

³⁶Though I was interested to discover that Sprigge [92] appears to hold such a view. He writes (p. 12), 'every event must be *present from its own point of view, and as it really is*' and, within our framework, we might take this to mean that each event is present relative to its own reality. But the notion of each event having its own 'perspective' on reality is decidedly odd; and I assume that there must be some more plausible way in which one might accommodate the universal presentness of events within our overall conception of what is real.

contrast, avoids this difficulty. Reality is simply a certain way and, even if one allows that certain facts might enjoy an internal relativity to a time, there exists no external form of relativity from which it needs to be distinguished. In this respect, then, the conceptual foundations of fragmentalism are more secure, even if the position itself is more bizarre.

§12 First-Personalism

Our second topic, first-personal realism, has received very little attention in the literature, even by those sympathetic to other forms of aspectual realism. But the position is of great interest in itself, since it provides us with one of the most plausible ways of drawing the distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of reality. And it is also of general metaphysical interest. For of all the different kinds of aspectual realism, it is the one in which the nonstandard position might most plausibly be adopted. Thus consideration of this case provides us with an especially helpful context in which to understand how a nonstandard realist position might be developed. Debate on the reality of tense has been very much shaped by the comparison with modality; and this has tended to push the discussion in the direction of the standard position. But a far better comparison, if only philosophers had been willing to make it, would have been with the first-person case.

I am not here concerned to defend first-personal realism (I do not know what to think on the question) but to see how it might plausibly be developed. I shall argue that the most plausible version of the view is one in which the self disappears, either as a subject or as the locus of subjectivity. An interesting aspect of the discussion is that it appears to make sense of positions that might otherwise seem puzzling or obscure. One can very well understand on this

view why ‘I’ might fail to be referential or how one might distinguish between an empirical self, which lies within a world, and a metaphysical self, which lies beyond the world. Indeed, even if one rejects the underlying metaphysics, it is hard not to see the first-personal realist as providing us with an especially helpful way in which to understand the phenomenon of subjectivity.

The first-personal realist believes that there are distinctively first-personal facts. Reality is not exhausted by the ‘objective’ or impersonal facts but also includes facts that reflect a first-person point of view. But what are the basic first-personal facts? If we let ordinary language be our guide, then they will naturally be taken to be facts that are most directly specified by means of the first-person pronoun. Thus whereas impersonal reality might have been taken to contain the fact that KF is in pain, first-personal reality will be taken to contain the fact that *I* am in pain.

But it is a familiar point that the most basic forms of experience are ones in which there is no representation of the self. The world presents itself, to me, as being a certain way; it does not present itself as being that way to me. This suggests that a better account of the first-personal facts would be one in which they would be specified in an egocentric language of the sort considered by Prior ([68] and [69]).³⁷ We should not say ‘I am in pain’ but ‘it is paining’, where such a statement is taken to hold ‘egocentrically’ or relative to a subject in much the same way in which a tensed statement holds tense-logically or relative to a time. The self will be an implicit rather than an explicit subject of the first-personal facts.

This phenomenological consideration is supported by the metaphysical considerations from the previous section (which might even be regarded as providing an underlying explanation

³⁷Though, given how we develop the position, we shall have no need for his strange egocentric counterparts to the modal operators.

of the phenomenology). We there argued that the tense-theoretic realist should not accept the reality of times and similar considerations suggest that the first-personal realist should not accept the reality of selves. For we may ask of selves, just as we asked of times, how they might be capable of figuring in the fundamental facts; and there are difficulties either in the supposition that they occur in first-personal facts or in the supposition that they occur in impersonal facts. In the one case, there will be the embarrassment of having to accept a primitive property of me-ness³⁸; and, in the other case, there will be the embarrassment of having to admit both the fact that it is paining and the fact that the subject is in pain. Indeed, in two respects the difficulties are even worse in the first-personal case. For, firstly, it is somewhat mysterious what this primitive property of me-ness might be (the corresponding difficulty concerning the property of being present is somehow not as acute). And, secondly, once the self is excluded from first-personal facts, it would only appear to be possible for it to occur in straightforward impersonal facts (such as the fact that KF is in pain). There is no counterpart to the ‘structural’ fact of one time being earlier than another.

However, there is one key respect in which the first-personal realist may wish to qualify his denial of the self. For he may wish to distinguish, in this connection, between two kinds of subject or self. On the one hand, there is the *metaphysical* self. This is the implicit subject of the egocentric facts (such as *it is paining*); and it might be regarded as the locus of subjectivity, since it is relative to such a self that the egocentric facts will obtain. On the other hand, there is the *empirical* self. This is the explicit subject of non-egocentric facts; and it might be regarded

³⁸This is a primitive *subjective* property of me-ness - its application is relative to a subject. Most philosophers, in considering such a property, have taken it to be objective.

as the locus of subjecthood, since it functions as the subject of experience.

I might previously have appeared to argue that if one accepted the metaphysical self then one must reject the empirical self. For the self relative to which the egocentric facts obtain will not explicitly appear as a subject in the basic experiential facts. And so what room might there then be for a self as a subject of experience? But this is to assume that, if the empirical self were to exist, then it would be the same as the metaphysical self; and this is an assumption that may be doubted.

For one may have a conception of the empirical self in which it is a real object in the world, standing in a real relationship to its experiences. This might be true, for example, if one took it to be a Cartesian ego or a living organism or some kind of psychological unity. Thus the empirical self is in the nature of a substance; and the 'life' of an empirical self is given by the relationship between it and the various experiences which it has. The metaphysical self, by contrast, is in the nature of an outlook; and the 'life' of the metaphysical self is simply given by the egocentric facts of which it is the locus.

We might say that the metaphysical self is 'embodied' in a particular empirical self (without meaning to imply that the empirical self is or has a body). There would appear to be nothing intrinsic to the metaphysical self (i.e. to the egocentric facts of which it the locus) which would require it to be embodied in one particular empirical self or even in one particular kind of empirical self. But once we have the empirical link between the two, we can slide between talking about the one in the same manner in which we talk about the other. Thus we might say that the metaphysical self is the subject of certain experiences simply because it embodies an empirical self that has those experiences; and we might say that the empirical self is an outlook

on the egocentric facts simply because it embodies a metaphysical self that is an outlook on those facts. This makes it seem hard to distinguish between the two but, in each of these cases, the properties had by one are mediated through its link with the other; it is only because the one is an outlook or a subject that we may correctly say the same of the other.

We therefore see, given the distinction between the metaphysical and the empirical self, that the first-personal realist might acknowledge the reality of the empirical self while denying the reality of the metaphysical self. The empirical self is, as it were, the real world manifestation of the metaphysical self. In this respect, there appears to be a striking difference between the first-personal case of realism and the tense-theoretic and modal cases. If one believed in tensed or in worldly facts, then one could take there to be a time or a world which was the locus of such facts. But once one had done this, it would be decidedly odd to suppose that there might be any counterpart to the empirical self - a time or a world that was a genuine part of reality and yet was somehow distinct from the time or world at which the tensed or worldly facts were taken to obtain. A major part of what gives the issue of first-personal realism its distinctive character is the possibility of drawing a distinction between the metaphysical and the empirical self (just as a major part of what gives the issue of tense-theoretic realism its distinctive character is the passage of time).

Our discussion so far has been neutral between the standard and nonstandard forms of realism. But, as I have already remarked, nonstandard realism seems especially compelling in the first-person case. It seems quite bizarre to suppose that, from among all the individuals that there are, the subjective world-order is somehow oriented towards me as opposed to anyone else. However, this still leaves open the question of whether we should opt for a relativist or

fragmentalist version of the nonstandard position

At this point, our previous considerations in favor of fragmentalism become especially relevant. If we opt for the relativist position, then we must take each subjective reality to be given relative to a metaphysical subject or self. But reality itself contains no metaphysical self. We therefore arrive at the conception of the *pure* metaphysical self - one which stands outside the world and yet is that by which the world (or the subjective world) is given. One can see why philosophers might have been attracted to such a position, given that they wished to give proper recognition to the multiplicity of different subjective view-points that, in themselves, were without a point of view.

But the position is barely intelligible; and the mystery of the pure metaphysical self no longer arises once we opt for the fragmentalist position. Ueber reality will comprehend all of the different subjective facts, both yours and mine, and there will be no more to the metaphysical self than the fragment of subjective reality to which it corresponds. The metaphysical self will dissolve, as it were, into the sea of facts of which it was previously regarded as the source. The sense in which the metaphysical self is an outlook is now especially clear since it will amount to no more than the facts by which the outlook is constituted.

Although this is a kind of 'bundle' theory, it differs from the usual Humean view in three important ways. First, it is a view about the metaphysical self, not the empirical self. Whatever we say about the empirical self - whether we adopt a Humean position, say, or a diametrically opposed Cartesian position - we are still left with the problem of explaining how the metaphysical self relates to the world. Second, there is no special problem of personal identity for the metaphysical self. For once that problem has been solved at the level of the empirical

self, its solution may be used to explain how the different fragments of subjective reality cohere. Finally, the usual Humean view does not give any special recognition to the subjective or first-personal character of experience; experiences, for it, are just objects within the objective world-order. But for us, subjectivity lies not merely in the existence of experiences but in the fact that they are *experienced*, where this is an egocentric feature of experience, one whose possession is relative to the self; and the self which is the locus of all subjectivity is to be constructed from these experiential facts rather than from the experiences themselves. This is not so much a radical view about the self as a radical view about the nature of subjectivity.

Our discussion has so far focused on the metaphysics of the first-person. But it has some interesting connections with the semantics of the first-person, which we should now briefly consider. If there are first-personal facts, then presumably they can be stated, i.e. we can state true propositions that can only be verified with their help. And if first-personal facts can be stated, then presumably they can be stated by means of the first personal pronoun. For how else might they be stated? The first-personal realist therefore owes us an account of the semantic mechanism by which this possible. What is the semantics of 'I' that enables it to be used in the statement of first-personal facts?

The usual referential accounts are of no help, since what is stated on such an account is an impersonal fact. The sentence 'I am in pain', for example, will be used by the subject P to state that P is in pain (or something of that sort); and this is a proposition that, if true, is verified by the impersonal facts.

A radical response to this difficulty is to deny that 'I' plays a referential role in such sentences as 'I am in pain'. Or, rather, we might allow 'I' to have a referential role in such

sentences but deny that it is relevant when the sentence is used, in a distinctively first-personal way, to state a first-personal fact. On this view, to say that ‘I am in pain’ is essentially to say that it is paining; and ‘I’ is used to indicate the egocentric character of the resulting proposition rather than to secure a reference to the self.³⁹ (One might think of ‘now’ functioning similarly in the sentence ‘now it is raining’).

But such a view is completely at odds with our syntactic and semantic intuitions. Surely, ‘I’ is used as a subject-term in utterances of ‘I am in pain’ just as ‘KF’ is used as a subject-term in utterances of ‘KF is in pain’; and surely the sentence ‘I am in pain’ is used to say something about the self just as the sentence ‘KF is in pain’ is used to say something about KF. In both cases, the proposition expressed is subject-predicate in form, with one component corresponding to the use of the subject-term ‘I’ or ‘KF’ and the other corresponding to the use of the predicate-term ‘is in pain’. It would therefore be preferable, if at all possible, to come up with a view which was in accord with these basic intuitions.⁴⁰

If the referential role of ‘I’ is to be relevant in determining the first-personal content of a first-person sentence and if it is not the referent itself that is relevant to determining that content, then it must be the way the referent is referred to. There must presumably be some ‘description’ by which the referent is given and which is then partly responsible for the content of the sentence. The description itself must be given in first-personal terms if the content of the

³⁹Anscombe [75] has advocated a view of this sort for somewhat related reasons.

⁴⁰We might note that Lewis’ account of de se belief is subject to a similar difficulty. Lewis [1979] takes the content of a de se belief to be the property which it attributes to the self. But the self as an explicit object of the belief is then lost.

sentence is to be first-personal. Thus the usual token-reflexive accounts of 'I' (as with 'the speaker of this utterance') will not do, since they only provide for an impersonal content. Moreover, the description had better be expressible without the use of the first-person pronoun if we are to avoid any question of circularity; and it had better be expressible without appeal to a primitive property of me-ness if we are to avoid any hint of mystery.

The problem of finding a descriptive equivalent for 'I' has usually been regarded as insoluble, since any way of identifying its referent would seem to require appeal to either irrelevant or ineffable content. But the problem is readily solved once one adopts the egocentric approach. For we may define 'I' as 'the subject at which the egocentric facts obtain'. It is intrinsic to the egocentric approach that we have an absolute understanding of what it is for an egocentric fact to obtain and a relative understanding of what it is for such a fact to obtain at a subject. The self may then taken to be the link between the two; it is the subject for which the egocentric facts that obtain at it are the same as the egocentric facts that obtain simpliciter. (It is in an analogous way that the tense-theoretic realist might take 'the present' to be 'the time at which the tensed facts obtain' and the actualist might take 'the actual world' to be 'the world at which the worldly facts obtain'.)

It is evident on this view why 'I am in pain' has first-personal content (and hence must be verified with the help of the first-personal facts). For we understand 'P is in pain' to mean that it is paining at P; and so to say that I am in pain is to say that it is paining at the subject at which the egocentric facts obtain. But this then implies that it is paining; and so the fact that it is paining is required to make the sentence true.

It should be noted that the present view involves a difference in the structure of

representation at the level of content and at the level of reality. For at the level of reality, there is - or plausibly may be taken to be - no metaphysical self, while at the level of representation there will be. Thus even though propositional contents may involve reference to the self, no appeal to the self need be invoked in explaining how such contents can be true. The self is, in a certain sense, a metaphysical illusion; and this may go some way to explaining why 'I' has been thought to lack any reference.

First-person identities (such as 'I am KF') give rise to special difficulties.⁴¹ For it is clear that such identities have some non-trivial first-personal content. Indeed, in a sense they have maximal first-personal content since, in combination with all of the impersonal facts concerning the subject, they will yield all of the first-personal facts that hold relative to the subject. The question is to account for this distinctive first-personal content.

There is a way in which this question can be readily answered on our view. For plugging in the analysis of 'I', we see that the content of 'I am KF' is that the subject at which the egocentric facts obtain is KF. We might think of this sentence as attributing the property me-ness to the KF. But this property is no longer some mysterious primitive. It is a defined property, the property of being the subject at which the egocentric facts obtain, and can be understood in terms of the basic conceptual resources of the egocentric approach.

⁴¹These are also discussed in Nagel ([83] and [86], chapter 4) and in Stalnaker ([2003], chapter 14). Although there are several points of contact between Nagel's views and my own, it is not altogether clear to me what exactly he takes the first-personal content of the identity statements to be or how we wishes to deal with the problem raised by Neutrality, a problem that he himself raises.

However, this is to answer the question at an intermediate level of representation, one at which the metaphysical self is still taken to exist. But we want an answer at the level of the reality; we want to know what *facts* might bear upon the sentence's being true. And since, at this level, there is no self, we want an account of the content in which all reference to the self has been made to disappear.

The corresponding problem in the modal case is readily solved. What we must do, in this case, is to specify a world-less content for 'w is actual', where 'w' is a term for a particular world. But each world is necessarily the way it is, and so the content of 'w is actual' can be taken to be that this is how things are. Thus to say the world w is actual is to say P, Q, R, ..., where P, Q, R, ... is how things are according to w.

But this answer is not appropriate in the first-personal case (or in the case of tense either). For each individual is not necessarily the way she is (and nor is each time necessarily the way it is). Thus in saying that I am KF, I am not in effect giving a complete account of how things are for KF. Indeed, it would appear that there is no special way things must go for me as opposed to you (or at one time as opposed to another). And so it would appear that there is no special egocentric content that might attach to the claim that I am KF (or to the claim that a particular time is present).

The usual formulation of the semantics for the first person in terms of centered worlds (with each world 'centered' on a given self) obscures this difficulty. For it leads one into thinking of the content of the identity sentence 'I am KF' as the set of worlds centered on KF. But we want to specify the content in terms of how things must go, at the most basic level, for the sentence to be true; and so we must provide some independent account what it is for a world

to be centered on a given self.

One might be tempted at this point to suppose that what gives the apparent identity ‘I am KF’ its distinctive first-personal content is the fact that the referents of ‘I’ and ‘KF’ are not the same: ‘I’ refers to the metaphysical self, ‘KF’ to the empirical self; and the sentence as a whole says that the one self is embodied in the other. Since the empirical self is in the real world, its embodiment of the metaphysical self can somehow be an egocentric fact about it. I do not want to dispute the legitimacy of such a reading. However, the problem we face remains even when the reference of ‘I’ and ‘KF’ is taken to be the same. This is very clear from the tense-logical case. For we there have the analogous problem of accounting for the tense-logical content of ‘t is the present’, even though we have no inclination to suppose that the reference of the two terms is not the same.

I can think of only one plausible way in which the present difficulty might be solved. I previously claimed that there was ‘no special way things must go for me as opposed to you (or for one time as opposed to another)’. Now this might be accepted at the qualitative level (there is no special *kind* of way things must go for me) though not at the level of particular goings-on. It might be supposed, for example, that there are token experiences that only I can have or token events that can only occur at a given time. Each of my token experience would then give rise to an egocentric fact, the fact of the experience being *experienced*, that could only obtain for me and each current token momentary event would give rise to a tensed fact, the event’s *occurring*, which could only obtain at the current time. The identity ‘I am KF’ could then be seen as restricting egocentric reality to the experience of experiences that only KF can have; it would require, in effect, that any token-experience which is experienced must be one which is either e_1 ,

e_2, \dots , where e_1, e_2, \dots are all of my actual and possible token-experiences. And, similarly, the identity of 't is present' could be seen as restricting tensed reality to the obtaining of token-events that can only obtain at t (or within arbitrarily close neighborhoods of t). In this way, we could provide each identity with a distinctive aspectual content, one that had the effect of orienting reality towards a particular individual or time though without any special commitment to how things were at that individual or time.⁴²

This solution to the problem requires accepting an ontology of token experiences or token events. If we are to do without the self or without the present, then the particularity of the self must be reflected through the particularity of experience and the particularity of the present through the particularity of what goes on in time. Some tense-theoretic realists (for example, Prior [2003], chapter 1) have been suspicious of a particularistic ontology of token events or the like. But if I am right, they must accept such an ontology if they are to do justice to what we convey in saying that a particular person is me or that a particular time is present.

§13. The Form of Reality

I conclude with some general comments on the nature of the debate between the realists and antirealists on the question of tense and other kinds of aspect. The debate exhibits an interesting duality, which helps explain why it has been so difficult to state or to settle.

We may distinguish in a general way between the form and content of reality (I do not make this distinction in the usual manner). A reality claim is a claim to the effect that reality is

⁴²I might add that this kind of solution seems especially inappropriate in the modal case. For we are strongly disinclined to accept a world-bound particularistic ontology.

a certain way. The *form* of such claims - or, if you like, of reality itself - is constituted by their logical form, broadly conceived, and the general logical principles by which they are governed. Thus we might take a reality claim to consist of the sentential operator 'it is constitutive of reality that' followed by a sentence '...'; and we might take it to be part of the logic of such claims that if it is constitutive of reality that ... then ... is indeed the case. The *content* of such claims - or, of reality itself - comprises the particular things that are said to belong to reality. The naturalist, for example, will take the content of reality to be entirely constituted by natural facts.

The debate between the realists and antirealists over tense (or other kinds of aspect) is ostensibly about content. For the realist will claim that reality is tensed, i.e. that it is partly composed of tensed facts, while the antirealist will deny that this is so. The debate between the standard and nonstandard realists is also ostensibly about content. For the standard realist will only take current tensed facts to belong to reality, whereas the nonstandard realist will also include tensed facts from the past and the future. Seen from this perspective, then, the issue is about how comprehensive a view we should have of the tensed facts that belong to reality.

But this question of content turns on - or, at least, is closely connected to - a question of form. Take first the debate between the antirealist and the realist. The realist wishes to claim that certain tensed facts belong to reality. But if he is a standard realist, he will be unable to see how a tensed fact, such as that I am sitting, could sensibly be said to be constitutive of reality unless the relation of constitution was itself taken to be tensed; the fact that I am sitting will be one that *currently* belongs to the constitution of reality. Consider now the debate between the standard and nonstandard proponents of realism. The nonstandard realist takes reality to be

composed not just of tensed facts that currently obtain but also of tensed facts that obtain in the past or the future. Thus reality may contain the fact that I am sitting and also the fact that I am standing. But how can that be unless belonging to reality is a relative matter or unless reality is fragmented? We see in all these cases, then, that the only way to accommodate the new facts is to make successive adjustments in the form of reality; the concept of reality should be taken to be tensed, or relative, or receptive to fragmentation.

In each of these cases, the concept of reality is put under considerable strain. I have already pointed out that the formulation of the primary dispute between the realists and antirealist requires that we make use of a substantive, metaphysical conception of reality; and the intelligibility of such a conception might - and has been - doubted. But the secondary disputes between the different types of realist puts the concept of reality under even greater strain. Not only do we require a distinction between how things are and how things are in reality; we must also allow that how things are in reality is a tensed matter, or relative to a time, or not even 'of a piece'.

Indeed, we can think of the debate as progressing through more and more problematic conceptions of reality as we move from one position to the next (and it is curious that the more plausible the view of content, the less plausible is the conception of reality which it appears to require). The antirealist's conception of reality has three desirable features - it is tenseless, absolute, and cohesive, i.e. resistant to fragmentation. Each of the alternative realist positions requires that we reject one of these features (and yet retain the others). Thus the standard realist abandons the tenseless conception of reality and yet still takes it to be absolute and cohesive; the external relativist abandons the absolute conception of reality and yet still takes it to be tenseless

and cohesive; while the fragmentalist abandons the cohesive conception of reality and yet still takes it to be tenseless and absolute. We can think of each of these features as being less and less open to question as we move through the list; and this means that the corresponding conceptions of reality, in which the features are successively dislodged, become progressively more problematic.

We might call a dispute *doctrinal* if both sides to the dispute share a common understanding of the concepts in terms of which their respective positions are to be stated; and we might call a dispute *ideological* if there is no such common understanding. The statement of an opponent's position will be met with incomprehension rather than dissent. We have seen that the dispute between the realists and the antirealist over tense is, in part, ideological. For the realist may well accept a conception of reality which his opponent will find unintelligible; and similarly for the non-standard realist vis a vis the standard realist or for the fragmentalist vis a vis the relativist. I believe that this aspect of the debate helps to explain why it has been so elusive. For an attempt has been made to formulate it as a straightforward doctrinal issue and, depending upon one's position, the formulation has then appeared to be either inadequate or unintelligible.

There are some philosophers for whom this conclusion will be disappointing. They recognize the need to clarify the debate over the reality of tense, but they seek clarification by way of an explanation in terms of concepts antecedently recognized to be unproblematic. But there are different ways in which clarification of a philosophical issue may be achieved. Most straightforwardly, it is achieved by way of a conceptually unproblematic explanation. But sometimes it cannot be achieved in this way; and then it is to be achieved through the

recognition that this is so. It must be acknowledged that the issue presents us with a conceptual boundary, which is either to be transgressed or to be accepted as a genuine limit to our thought.⁴³

References

Anscombe E. [75] 'The First Person' in 'Mind and Language' (ed. S. Guttenplan), Oxford:

Clarendon Press, 45-65.

Baldwin T. [99] 'Back to the Present', *Philosophy* 74, 177-97.

Bigelow J., [91] ***

Broad C. D. [38] 'Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy

Broad C. D. [59] 'Scientific Thought', New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co.

Christensen F. [74] 'McTaggart's Paradox and the Nature of Time', *Philosophical Quarterly* 24,
289-98.

Clifton & Hogarth [95] 'The Definability of Objective Becoming in Minkowski Space-Time',
Synthese 203, 355-87.

Craig W. L., [2001] 'Time and the Metaphysics of Relativity', Dordrecht: Kluwer.

⁴³I should like to thank the participants of the 2003 North Western Conference at Reed, of the 2003 Prior Conference at Roskilde, Denmark, and of a metaphysics seminar in Harvard during Fall of 2003 for valuable discussion. I am especially grateful to an anonymous referee for the Press and to Gordon Belot, David Chalmers, Ruth Chang, Michael Hinchliff, Paul Hovda, Peter Koeller, Adrian Moore, David Nelson, Charles Parsons, Stephen Savitt, Tim Scanlon, Scott Soames and Brian Weatherston.

- Crisp T. M. [2003] 'Presentism', chapter 8 of Loux & Zimmerman [2003], 211-45.
- Dummett M., [60] 'A Defence of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time', *Philosophical Review*, LXIX, 497-504, reprinted in Dummett [78] and in Levenson & Westphal [93].
- Dummett M., [73] 'Frege: Philosophy of Language', London: Duckworth.
- Dummett M. [78] 'Truth and Enigmas', Harvard University Press.
- Dyke H., [2002] 'McTaggart and the Truth about Time', *Philosophy* 50 (suppl.), 137-52.
- Evans G., [85] 'Does Tense Logic Rest Upon a Mistake?' in 'Collected Papers', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fine K., [77] 'Postscript to 'Worlds, Times and Selves'', pp. 116-168, in 'Worlds, Times and Selves' (A. N. Prior & K. Fine), London: Duckworth.
- Fine K., [00] 'The Question of Reality', *Philosophers Imprint*, vol 1, no. 1.
- Godfrey-Smith W., [79] 'Special Relativity and the Present', *Philosophical Studies* 36,233-44.
- Goodman N., [1978] 'Ways of Worldmaking', Cambridge: Hackett.
- Goedel K., [49] 'A Remark About the Relationship between Relativity Theory and Idealistic Philosophy', in 'Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist' (ed. P. A. Schilpp), La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, republished in 'Collected Works' [90]
- Hinchliff M., [2000] 'A Defense of Relativism in a Relativistic Setting', *Philosophy of Science* 67 (Proceedings), S575-86.
- Horwich P., [89] 'The Moving Now' in 'Asymmetries in Time', Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, reprinted in Levenson & Westphal [93].
- Kaplan D., [89] 'Demonstratives', in 'Themes from Kaplan' (ed. J. Almog et al), Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 481-564.

- Keller S. [2004] 'Presentism and Truth-making', in 'Oxford Studies in Metaphysics' (ed. D. Zimmerman), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Levenson C. & Westphal J., (ed) [93] 'Time', Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- Lewis D., [1979] 'Attitudes De Se and De Dicto', *Philosophical Review* 88, 513-43.
- Lewis D., [1986] 'On the Plurality of Worlds', Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lowe E. J. [92] 'McTaggart's Paradox Revisited', *Mind* 101, 323-6.
- Loux M. J. & Zimmerman D. W. [2003] 'The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Malament D., [77] 'Causal Theories of Time and the Conventionality of Simultaneity', *Nous* 11, 293-300.
- Markosian N. [2002] 'A Defense of Presentism' in Zimmerman[03].
- McTaggart J. M. E. [1908] 'The Unreality of Time', *Mind* 17, 457-74.
- McTaggart J. M. E. [1927] 'The Nature of Existence', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mellor D. H., [74] 'Special Relativity and the Present Truth', *Analysis* 34, 74-8.
- Mellor D. H., [86] 'Time's Tenseless Truth-conditions', *Analysis* 46, 167-72.
- Mellor D. H. [98] 'Real Time II', London: Routledge
- Moore A. W. [1997] 'Points of View', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nagel T., [83] 'The Objective Self', in 'Mind and Knowledge' (eds. C. Ginet and S. Shoemaker), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nagel T., [86] 'The View from Nowhere', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Percival P., [89] 'Indices of Truth and Temporal Propositions', *Philosophical Quarterly* 39, 190-97.

- Percival P., [91] 'Knowability, Actuality, and the Metaphysics of Context-Dependence',
 Australian Journal of Philosophy 69, 82-97.
- Percival P., [2002] 'A Presentist's Refutation of Mellor's McTaggart', Philosophy 50 (suppl).,
 91-118.
- Prior A. N. [1968] 'Egocentric Logic', Nous, vol. 2, 101-19, reprinted in Prior & Fine [77] and
 Prior [2003].
- Prior A. N. [1969] 'Worlds, Times and Selves', L'Age de la Science', vol. 3, 179-91, reprinted
 in
 Prior & Fine [1977].
- Prior A. N. & Fine K., [1977] 'Worlds, Times and Selves', London: Duckworth.
- Prior A. N. [2003] 'Papers on Time and Tense' (new edition), ed. P. Hasle et al, Oxford:
 Clarendon Press.
- Putnam H., [1967] 'Time and Physical Geometry', Journal of Philosophy 64, 240-7.
- Rakic N. [97] 'Past, Present, Future and Special Relativity', British Journal for the Philosophy of
 Science 48, 257-80.
- Savitt S., [2000] 'There's No Time Like the Present (in Minkowski Spacetime)', Philosophy of
 Science 67 (Proceedings), S563-74.
- Schlesinger G. N., [91] 'E Pur Si Muove', Philosophical Quarterly m41, 427-41.
- Schlesinger G. N., [93] 'A Short Defense of Temporal Transience', Philosophical Quarterly 43,
 359-61.
- Schlesinger G. N., [95] 'Timely Topics', London: Macmillan.
- Shorter J. M., [1984] 'The Reality of Time', Philosophia 14, 321-39.

- Sider T., [1999] 'Presentism and Ontological Commitment', *Journal of Philosophy* 96, 325-47.
- Sider T., [2001] 'Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time', Oxford: Clarendon Press (42-52 for SR)
- Sklar L., [81] 'Time, Reality and Relativity' in 'Reduction, Time and Reality' (ed. R. Healy), New York: Cambridge University Press, 129-42.
- Smith Q. [93] 'Language and Time', New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sprigge T. L. S. [92] 'The Unreality of Time', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 92, 1-19.
- Stalnaker R., [2003] 'On Thomas Nagel's Objective Self', in 'Ways a World Might Be', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stein H., [68] 'On Einstein-Minkowski Space-Time', *Journal of Philosophy* 65, 5-23.
- Stein H., [1970] 'A Note on Time and Relativity Theory', *Journal of Philosophy* 67, 289-94.
- Stein H., [1991] 'On Relativity Theory and the Openness of the Future', *Philosophy of Science* 58, 147-67.
- Taylor B., [1997] 'Dummett's McTaggart' in 'Language, Thought and Logic' (ed. R. Heck), Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 183-199.
- Thomson J. J. [2001] 'McTaggart on Time', *Nous* (supplement) 15, 229-52.
- Tooley M. [97] 'Time, Tense and Causation', Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zimmerman D. (ed.) [2003] 'Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, vol. I', Oxford: Clarendon Press.