

Time, Tense, and Reference, edited by Aleksandar Jokic and Quentin Smith. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Pp. ix + 470. H/b £61.95, P/b £24.95.

‘It is increasingly difficult to do philosophy of language without any metaphysical commitments as to the nature of time, and it is equally difficult to resolve the metaphysical question of whether time is tensed or tenseless independently of the philosophy of language.’ This provocative statement is the premiss behind this collection of previously unpublished papers. This is not ordinary language philosophy; it is rather the claim that buying a particular semantic theory will have implications for which theory of time can be included in the rest of the package deal, and vice versa.

The book is divided into two broad areas, Part I: The Philosophy of Tensed Language, and Part II: The Metaphysics of Time. There is a general introduction to the whole of the book by Smith and Jokic, as well as an introduction to Part I by Richard and to Part II by Faye (with additions from Smith).

Part I is subdivided into two sections, A: The Semantic Content of Tensed Sentences, and B: The Cognitive Significance of Tensed Sentences.

The first essay (in Part IA) by Lepore and Ludwig develops a truth-conditional semantics for tensed sentences, dealing with various temporal linguistic constructions. This is good work, but here I can only focus on the link between the philosophy of language and the philosophy of time. The strategy they adopt is rather Davidsonian: any adequate semantic theory will offer, among its virtues, a transparent account of inference. Furthermore, if we have a theory which can accommodate a whole host of temporal constructions in a systematic way (and does it better than the rest), then this lends support to that being the correct view; and accepting it as the correct view commits us to whatever it tells us there is. This is the way Lepore and Ludwig argue for the existence of times. For given that their theory refers to and quantifies over times, times exist. The implication they draw for the metaphysics of time is that presentism, which, they say, is the view that ‘only the present time is real’, must be false (p. 84).

This is correct. But it need not be how presentism is stated, for presentism is a theory about what actually exists in time; it says nothing about the existence of anything else. Thus we can be presentists and have more in our ontology than just objects located in the present, in precisely the same way that tenseless theorists are allowed more in theirs than just all of the temporal items they believe in. Of course, presentists *might* go on to deny the existence of abstract objects, but they need not. And they should not, if they are to deal adequately with considerations like those of Lepore and Ludwig. For what the existence of abstract objects leaves open is the possibility for presentists of finding abstract representations for what happens in the past and the future, in much the same way that ersatz modal realists find abstract representations of what could have been, which they can then go on to equate with possible worlds. That is to say, just as we can hold that there are many possible worlds but only one concrete world, we can hold that there are many times, of which only the present time is

concrete. This version of presentism (which I have been developing, and which I intend to publish soon) is immune to Lepore and Ludwig's argument. A semantic theory, if we accept it as true, might tell us that there are times; but it does not tell us what times *are*. Yet that is precisely what we need to know in order to determine whether we hold the tensed or tenseless theory and which version of it we hold. Thus philosophy of language does show us the semantic problems to which we need to find a solution, but it is rather limited in what it can show about the metaphysical content of that solution.

Lepore and Ludwig also side with the tenseless theory because 'present' for them is treated as an indexical (p. 85). But this is a mistake (which recurs in other papers throughout the book): I can hold both that 'present' serves purely indexically to indicate its time of use *and* that this is the only (concrete) time which exists (as I point out in my 'When am I? A Tense Time for Some Tensed Theorists?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 2002, 80, pp. 359–71, and as Robert Stalnaker points out in his analogous discussion of possible worlds and the term 'actual', 'Possible Worlds', *Noûs*, 1976, 10, pp. 65–75). Again, this shows that there are many more package deals available to us: we can buy into a semantics which suits us without it constraining substantially our choice of metaphysics.

This conclusion is supported by the second essay in Part IA by Salmon, who presents an alternative Kaplanian semantics to Lepore and Ludwig's Tarskian approach. Salmon shows that his semantics is compatible with the tensed theory, since Smith had criticized a previous presentation of his account for only being compatible with the tenseless view. Again we see the lack of substantial dependence between the philosophies of language and time.

Part IB focuses on two related themes: first, a good discussion by Richard and Higginbotham on the differences between the content of tensed and tenseless propositions, specifically in terms of their differing cognitive functions; and second, on whether it is possible to account for our experience of tense without it being an objective feature of the world. (Brueckner argues against this possibility; Richard successfully dismisses Brueckner's arguments; and Falk develops his own theory in favour.) But what implications does this have for the metaphysics? Despite the fact that tenseless theorists are usually lumbered with this problem because they say we experience tense in a tenseless world, tensed theorists also need to say something—just saying that time is tensed does not in itself give tensed theorists a story about our *perception* of tense. Suppose we follow Falk in saying that we need to change our perceptual information in order to keep track of changes in our environment, and that this continual change of information amounts to our experience of time's passage. Since all this account relies on is the notion of change, a notion that both tense and tenseless theorists employ, both can happily adopt it. The metaphysical issue of what this underlying change in the environment amounts to is entirely independent of such an account. Of course, it might be argued that real tense becomes superfluous in such an account, and so the tenseless pack-

age is better. But this only holds if there are no other reasons for adopting the tensed package. And if there are other reasons, then the choice between the tensed and tenseless package will not rest on the results (interesting though they may be in themselves) from Part IB of this book.

Part II is subdivided into two sections, A: Tenseless Theories of Time, and B: Tensed Theories of Time.

Part IIA opens with some careful work by Oaklander and LePoidevin each defending particular versions of the tenseless theory. Arsenijevi then attacks the tenseless theory by arguing that a branching of the future together with the flow of time is required in order to make sense of the notion of indeterminism. However, although he cites Mellor as the prime target, he does not engage at all with Mellor's views on chances, and thus fails to make a proper case against 'Mellor's world' (p. 347).

Part IIB sees Smith arguing (in the spirit of the book) that because presentism has no account of how reference to non-present people is possible (since they do not exist), it must be rejected in favour of his own tensed position (which I criticize in my 'When am I?'). Craig responds by rejecting the semantic theory underlying Smith's attack. For Craig, following Plantinga (*The Nature of Necessity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), reference does not require an existing referent; and thus he buys into a package which allows for his metaphysics. In doing this, however, he concedes that Smith's adopted semantic theory is incompatible with presentism. But it is not, if we adopt the version of presentism which uses abstract objects to represent past and future times, since these can serve as the *relata* on the other end of the reference relation. But setting this aside, is it possible to choose between two packages with different semantics? Some will find Craig's semantics obscure—and it will not help to be told that we *do* manage all the time to refer using empty names, since that just begs the question as to *how* this is possible, and how to distinguish the empty name 'Socrates' from 'Darth Vader' and in turn from 'Flubdijub'—but even if we let that pass, there is still the issue (which Craig recognizes as a separate issue) of what it is in the world which makes past-tensed (and possibly future-tensed) statements true. I find Craig's story about truthmakers unilluminating, and, for me, it is this metaphysical issue concerning truthmakers rather than the semantic issue over reference which carries more weight in choosing between packages.

Tooley's chapter develops further his own view (which I criticize in my 'When am I?'). But the most novel paper in this section is by Toberlin, who uses a deontic example to argue against presentism. Jones is alone, secluded and comatose from eating highly toxic mushrooms. Consider: (1) For any individual x , if x is a moral agent and x is available and able to come to Jones's assistance, x ought *prima facie* to provide Jones with aid; (2) No presently existing moral agent is available and able to come to Jones's assistance; (3) For any individual x , if x is a moral agent who is available and able to come to Jones's assistance, x ought not *prima facie* to provide Jones with aid. The chal-

lenge for presentists is to find a way of making (1) and (2) true and (3) false, where ‘the [objectual] quantifiers range over presently existing individuals only’ (p. 451). This is a nice problem, but it is not a problem for presentism as such, since it is not as if holding any other theory of time will help in any way. It is rather a problem for anyone (whether they hold a tensed or tenseless position) who believes in *actual* stuff only. But, as already noted above, presentists can believe in more than presently located individuals, whilst remaining presentists, so long as those individuals do not actually exist in time; so this problem, nice as it is, is entirely about *possibilia* and independent of the philosophy of time.

This collection does serve as a useful snapshot of the current state of some of the most important issues concerning the philosophy of time, and many are worth reading. But any supposed implications drawn concerning which metaphysical positions are available from considerations of the philosophy of language should be carefully scrutinized.

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