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TEMPORAL PASSAGE AND BEING IN TIME

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1 Introduction

This is an essay on temporal passage, but it is also an essay on how we should conceive of the metaphysics of time. I want to get away from a view of the metaphysics of time as a quasi-scientific enterprise, something prosecuted as from no one and nowhen by means of generalizations over times, substances, properties, events, etc. And I want to move instead to an idea of the metaphysics of time as an elaboration of the subject in time. Or again, I'd like to see the metaphysics of time as seeking an understanding of time which might also be called an understanding of *being in time*.

Anscombe didn't write on temporal passage, and nor did she write on the nature of metaphysics. As a result, this essay will not be grounded in any particular episode of her work. Rather, it will connect with something on more general display, namely a conception of philosophy as first personal. I shall agree in passing with various positions Anscombe takes in the philosophy of time, for example, that 'now' does not refer,¹ and that quantification over times cannot give a 'fundamental explanation' of temporal concepts.² But what of her writings I want to thematize – and motivate, and take up – will be a conception of philosophy as self-elaboration. To see this conception in play, let's begin by briefly visiting a couple of familiar moments in her work. The first of these – Anscombe's claim that 'I' does not refer – is of interest not only because it exemplifies the philosophical project of self-elaboration, but also because it sustains that project's general possibility. The second – Anscombe's rejection of the unobservability of causality – introduces ideas of tense and process which will play a central role as the essay progresses.

In 'The First Person', Anscombe maintains that "I' is neither a name nor another kind of expression whose logical role is to make a reference'.³ An argument for this conclusion might be expected to take the form of an examination of first personal speakings. Reality includes people, and these people do various things. One of the things they do is speak first personally. And when we examine this phenomenon carefully enough, we see – perhaps surprisingly – that when a person *X* speaks first personally their words do not refer to *X*. Reading Anscombe's paper, however, it is apparent that whatever is going on, it is definitely not this. So much is visible in a number of ways, but consider the following broad argument Anscombe mounts for her conclusion. For the subject to refer, Anscombe suggests, she needs,

independently of that act, a conception of the referent's kind. But this condition is not met for 'I': the subject has no conception of the kind of thing to which her 'I' would refer – no appropriate conception of a person – separate from her use of first personal language. Now it will be a large task to explain and motivate this argument. But however that task is approached, it should be clear that Anscombe is not reasoning in the manner she would have to be if her framework were that of an examination of first personal speakings. Cast within that frame, Anscombe's condition on reference appears as the expression of a psychological conception of linguistic meaning: for a word to refer is for its speaker to perform a certain mental act, one which presupposes their possession of relevant conceptual apparatus. And Anscombe's assertion that this condition is not met for 'I' appears as a dubitable claim of empirical science. It is a matter of empirical psychology, surely, whether humans enjoy an idea of *person* separately from their use of first personal language. Obviously, though, Anscombe is not deploying a psychological conception of linguistic meaning of the kind suggested, and nor is she deploying as premises contestable matters of empirical science.

How then is Anscombe arguing, if not through an examination of first personal speakings? By an examination here we mean something conducted from a third personal perspective: the examiner 'looks down on' a phenomenon of first personal language use, seeking to give a third personal description of the first personal phenomenon. To reject that frame is therefore to reject that perspective. And where this is done, the alternative proposal will be that offered by Adrian Haddock, namely that Anscombe's argument is in a certain manner *first personal*.⁴ Anscombe does not invite her reader to consider what it is for a *person X* to speak first personally. No examination is conducted of a worldly phenomenon of first personal speakings. Rather, her work is an invitation to her reader to engage in a process of *self-examination*, to consider the use of 'I' *from within*.⁵ The reader is invited to consider from within what it is *she* expresses by *her* use of 'I'. And with the invitation extended, Anscombe seeks to lead the reader to the realization that she cannot understand herself, in using 'I', as thinking of an object. She cannot understand her 'I' as making a reference.⁶

The process and result of Anscombe's paper, the suggestion is, are both first personal: one's 'I' does not refer. Her paper is not, we may however note, merely an example amongst others of philosophy as self-elaboration. Rather, its result sustains the species of philosophizing which it presumes. If one's 'I' were a name, and so if first-personal thought were – from within – thought of a certain object, then the would-be philosophical self-examination would be the examination, again, of a *person* – just of a particular person, now, rather than of people in general. Indeed, the result of Anscombe's paper would be not that one's 'I' does not refer, but that a certain person (oneself) is unable in a certain way to understand certain 'I's (one's own) as referring. The philosophical project would collapse into a strange kind of psychological autobiography. On the other hand, if Anscombe's result of non-reference is recognized then there is the prospect here of philosophy. Take for example the argument from above. Anscombe holds that for the subject's words to refer she needs an independent conception of the referent's kind. This is no more a piece of autobiography than it is the stipulation of a psychological notion of reference. Rather, it is an avowal, to be taken up by the reader, of what it is to express one's thinking about an object. That the subject does not have such a conception for 'I': this is no more a relation by Anscombe of how things are with a certain person, namely Anscombe, than it is an unsupported general claim of psychological science. Rather, it is the philosophical thought that the manifold of people is not given separately from the subject's self-understanding as belonging to that manifold.⁷ As it might be put, the idea of a person is the idea of *oneself or another*.

The miscasting of philosophical matters as psychological through the adoption of a distanced perspective will be a recurrent theme of this essay. Let's move on now, however, towards a second point in Anscombe, one which sits more obviously in the metaphysics of time, namely her blunt rejection of 'the influential Humeian argument ... that we can't ... observe causality'.⁸ Michael Thompson contrasts Davidson's and Anscombe's discussions of action with reference to the rather different kinds of examples they use. Where Davidson's examples are typically given in the past perfect – Jack turned on the light, or buttered the toast – Anscombe imagines first and second personal interactions in the present imperfective – 'I am crossing the road/writing a letter/pumping the water'.⁹ As Thompson argues, this difference in examples reflects a difference in topic: where Davidson is concerned with 'completed events', Anscombe's concern is with what *is going on*, and so with what may or may not come to completion.¹⁰ This difference in topic, I further think, is not incidental but indicative of something more fundamental still, namely a difference in theoretical standpoint. Davidson's past perfective is a rhetorical surrogate for tenselessness: he is theorizing from a perspective outside time. From that perspective, he considers persons, events, and causal relations between events, and he sets his eyes on the question of what it is for a person *X* to be the agent of an event *E*. 'What events in the life of a person', he asks, 'are his deeds?'.¹¹ No such question ever arises for Anscombe, however, for its perspective is not hers. Her basic question is not what it is for a person *X* to be the agent of an event *E*, but what it is *to be doing something*. And as the imperfective or progressive aspect of this question is the aspect of a tensed verb, Anscombe's inquiry is essentially *tensed*. In contrast to Davidson, Anscombe conducts her inquiry from within time.

Anscombe's discussion is not only tensed, I further want to say, but also first personal. Her question is not what it is for a person *X* to be doing something, but what it is for *one* (*the subject*) to be doing something. Her book 'Intention' is an extended *avowal* of the nature of action. Indeed, the discussion is tensed *because* it is first personal. Anscombe's elaboration is tensed because it is an elaboration of a central aspect of being *in time*, and this means a central aspect of *the subject's* being in time. More will become apparent later on in this essay of what I take the connection in philosophy to be between the first person and tense. And much more will be said about 'the subject' ('one') and about the contrast between theorizing as from nowhen and tensed theorizing. But let's get on here to causality. The Humean idea that causality is unobservable might seem very strange: surely one sees causation just about every time one opens one's eyes. One sees, e.g., Jack pushing Jill over, or the cat drinking its milk: how is this not precisely the observation of causation? Well, the Humean argument in Anscombe's sights goes, I take it, as follows. When Jack pushes Jill over there is a succession of causally related events: a push, a step, a stumble, a fall. And in witnessing this succession, an observer does not actually witness any causation. The observer sees a push, and then a fall, but he does not observe a relation of causation holding between the push and the fall. What he sees is a mere sequence of events, and insofar as the events are recognized as causally related, this will involve the observer's bringing something to bear on the succession beyond what is given to his senses.

This argument's trick is turned at the start, with the assumption that the ontological category to consider here is that of *event*. And as in Davidson, this assumption issues from something more basic still, namely the adoption of the perspective as from nowhen. As from nowhen, causality appears as a relation between events: this is what of causality may be thought as from nowhen, that an event *A* is a cause of an event *B*. And so for the philosopher as from nowhen, this will be what causality is: a relation between events. To witness

causality, it follows, will be to witness such a relation. But as the argument then goes, there is surely no such witnessing. Anscombe's reaction indicates that she is thinking about causality in a quite different manner. She cites various everyday causal verbs – *scrape, push, wet, carry, eat*, etc. – which are used in observation reports.¹² And what one observes when one is prepared, then or later, to make a report with such a verb, is that something *is going on*. What one sees, as one watches, is that Jack is scraping jam off his shirt, that Jill is pushing the wheelbarrow, or that the dog is eating a biscuit. And for Anscombe, this is precisely (and trivially) the observation of causality. Indeed, once the perspective as from nowhen has been eschewed and the theorist has allowed herself progressive thought, there is no barrier to witnessing exactly what the Humean thinks can't be witnessed, namely event causation. To witness an event is to witness a process: it is to witness something *going on*.¹³ And to witness the causation of one event by another is to witness a process in which one event 'comes of' another, as Anscombe puts it.¹⁴ One witnesses, for example, Jack pushing Jill over: nothing easier!

As a result of its conduct as from nowhen, and so of its rejection of process in favour of event, much of contemporary philosophical discussion of causation is, I think, alienated and sterile. (Do we give a regularity account of causation, a counterfactual account, a probabilistic account?) But such charges are unlikely to convince. What is needed to convert rather than merely preach is a charge not of sterility but of inadequacy, an argument that philosophical theorizing as from no one and nowhen is incapable of capturing that which we want to understand. And here we will do better I think to consider not causation but temporal passage. There is something, at least, to be considered of causality as from nowhen, namely relations of event causation. As I shall argue, however, temporal passage has *no* manifestation as from nowhen, so that a theory of temporal passage offered from that perspective is without any prospect of connecting, even, to its target. This argument will be the first main task of the essay, occupying us in Sections 2–5. Subsequently, in Sections 6 and 7, I shall introduce an alternative species of theorizing in the philosophy of time, one which is exemplified, as I take it, by Anscombe. Here I shall draw amongst other things on a line of thought regarding time travel and the settledness of the past. In the essay's final two Sections 8 and 9, I shall then sketch some preliminary suggestions for how we might begin in the alternative manner to gain an understanding of temporal passage: suggestions, that is, for how we might understand passage as an aspect of being in time.

2 The failure of the standard account of passage

Following terminology introduced by McTaggart,¹⁵ philosophers of time are commonly divided into A-theorists and B-theorists. This division is not concerned in the first instance with passage but is held nonetheless to bear directly upon it. So Simon Prosser writes:

The A-theory or 'tensed' theory of time says that the A-series of McTaggart's famous argument is real. This means that the properties picked out by terms like past, present and future ... are mind-independent properties of times. Consequently on this view the 'flow' or 'passage' of time is a feature of mind-independent reality. The B-theory or 'tenseless' theory says the opposite – that tenses have no mind-independent reality and that the apparent flow of time is merely psychological.¹⁶

(Prosser 2000, p. 494)

But what is the too-evident-to-need-stating connection between real properties of past, present and future and the reality of passage? Well, Robin Le Poidevin makes the link as follows:

The A-theory takes the A-series facts to be fundamental. Time in reality is divided into past, present, and future. Events are constantly changing their position in relation to these, and this is the passage of time. ... The B-theory takes the B-series facts to be fundamental. There is no objective passage of time and the division between past, present, and future is purely perspectival.¹⁷

Where the B-theorist takes talk of past, present and future to be expressive merely of a perspective on reality, the A-theorist holds reality itself to involve properties of past, present and future, a real A-series on which events are located. And where the B-theorist rejects that passage is something objective, thinking it instead merely psychological, the A-theorist identifies passage with the constant change in events' real A-properties.

Prosser and Le Poidevin are B-theorists, but to be clear, the A-theoretic proposal indicated here for passage is no caricature. So Ned Markosian, having maintained that 'there really are A properties'¹⁸ writes that:

there is a ... process by which times and events successively possess different A-properties. January 1st, 2000 is currently future, but it is becoming less and less remotely future all the time. ... I will refer to the process by which times and events successively possess different A-properties as the pure passage of time.¹⁹

And here is Arthur Prior:

Suppose we speak about something 'becoming more past' not only when it moves from the comparatively near past to the comparatively distant past, but also when it moves from the present to the past, from the future to the present, and from the comparatively distant future to the comparatively near future. Then whatever is happening, has happened or will happen is all the time 'becoming more past' in this extended sense; and just this is what we mean by the flow or passage of time.²⁰

Last night's party was once in the distant future, then it was in the near future, then it was present, now it is in the near past, and in due course, it will be in the middle and then distant past. And this is the passage of time.

Surely, though, this isn't the passage of time. Certainly, if you're going to have a real A series of the kind in view then events will become more past as one moves towards the future, as time goes from early to late. By that same token, however, events will become future as one moves towards the past, as time goes from late to early. So, where is the passage?

Let's repeat this thought. We can suppose if we like that there are real A-properties of past, present, future, etc. attaching to events. And making this supposition we shall hold that an event has different such properties at different times. Where today the lecture is two days future, tomorrow it is one day future. Indeed, there will be a certain regularity in the variation over time of an event's A-properties. As one might put it, events become steadily more past. But how is this to provide an account of temporal passage? The claim in view that events become more past is the claim that events become more past *as time goes from earlier to later*, as one moves from past to future. This claim is the exact same claim, however, as the

claim that events become more future as time goes from later to earlier, as one moves from future to past. And no one would want to think of *that* as an account of temporal passage.

3 Directedness and variation

Though it wasn't explicit in what I've just said, this objection deploys ideas of *directedness* and *variation*. Let's set it out more slowly as follows:

- (1) The passage of time is somehow *directed*. In some sense, time passes *from* earlier *to* later. So,
- (2) Any proposal for passage, any attempt at its articulation, will need to be the proposal or articulation of something directed. So,
- (3) Passage is not explained by adverting to a *variation*, which is undirected.
- (4) In saying that events become more past, the A-theorist adverts to a variation. So,
- (5) The A-theorist's proposal for passage is a non-starter.

One can propose if one likes that there are real properties of past, present and future with extensions varying across time. But no account will be forthcoming of passage, for such variation is undirected.

For now, let's take (1) and (2) as clear enough, and as clearly enough true. Passage is directed, so whatever might be meant by 'consists in' or 'is a matter of' or 'is' in a claim that passage is a matter of *X*, such a claim can succeed only if *X* is directed. Let's kick off, rather, with (3) and (4), and first of all with the claim of (3) that a variation is something undirected.

What do I mean by a variation? Well, a variation consists in *difference*. For something to vary along a certain dimension is for it to be different at different points on that dimension. That's all. And in consisting only in difference a variation is essentially undirected. This obvious thought may on occasion be obscured by the use of progressive language in speaking of a variation. Atmospheric pressure varies with height above sea level, and we might talk of this variation as a development in atmospheric pressure with height above sea level. Or more specifically we may say that atmospheric pressure decays exponentially with height. Such talk does nothing, however, to imply that something directed is in view here, some phenomenon of 'directed decaying'. This point, which is in any case obvious enough, is manifest in the fact that the variation can be indifferently specified 'in either direction'. To say that that atmospheric pressure decreases in a certain manner with height above sea level is to say that it decreases in that manner *as height above sea level increases*. And this is the exact same claim as the claim that atmospheric pressure increases in the converse manner as height above sea level decreases. We have no more a phenomenon of decreasing pressure than we have one of increasing pressure.

The point that what consists in difference is not directed should be recognizable enough. Still, let's consider two objections to what I've said which want in different ways to deploy an idea of 'directed variation'. First, an A-theorist might think that my willingness to use a spatial example illustrates a certain oversight. In reaching for a spatial example, they might suggest, I'm ignoring a key difference between time and space, namely the distinguishability of time's two directions. Unlike two opposite spatial directions, the later to earlier direction can be significantly distinguished from the earlier to later direction. And having made such a distinction, we can then identify passage with a development in *that* direction, and reject its identification with the converse development in the other, thereby correctly seeing time as passing from early to late. Temporal passage, so the idea might then be, is a matter of

events becoming more past *as one moves in the direction of cause to effect, say, or in the direction of increasing entropy.*

This reaction misunderstands the argument. The complaint to the A-theorist has not been that the two temporal directions are indistinguishable, so that there can be no reason to prefer an identification of passage with development in one direction to its identification with a development in the other. Rather, the point has been that no matter whether the two directions can be distinguished philosophically or scientifically, the two developments can *not*. To say that events become more past as one moves in the direction of cause to effect is precisely to say that events become more future as one moves in the direction of effect to cause. There is here a single variation. (Indeed, there is an essential difference between the two spatial directions in our atmospheric pressure example: where in one direction, the dimension goes down to zero, in the other it is unbounded. The objection really has nothing to do with distinguishability of directions.)

Alternatively, the A-theorist may have a thought that, quite radically unlike space, time isn't merely a dimension with two distinguishable directions, but a *directed* dimension. Time is not merely a line but a line *with arrows on it*, as it were. And with this, we can recognize the A-theorist's variation to be directed, and so a candidate for passage. Again, though, there is nothing to be seen here. Time is indeed directed (or at least, it would be question-begging to suppose otherwise), but this does nothing to render directed a variation over time. To say both that there exists a certain variation over time – e.g. a variation in extensions of real A-properties – and also that time is directed is not to identify a 'directed variation' which might then be a candidate for passage. Rather, it is simply to provide for another way of stating the proposed pattern of difference. Instead of saying that events become more past as one moves from early to late, or in the direction of increasing entropy, we can say that events become more past as one moves in the direction in which time is directed. (Or equally, of course, we can say that events become more future as one moves in the direction opposite to that in which time is directed.)

A variation is something which can be plotted on a graph. Indeed, in consisting as it does in difference, a variation is something which can be *given* by a graph – given, that is, without remainder. Now, graphs do very often have arrows on their axes. So if a graph has a time axis, we might put an arrow on it and write not 'future' or 'later' next to the arrow but 'increasing entropy'. Or again, we might write 'passage' or 'direction of passage' or simply 'direction of time'. Writing one of these last does not, however, somehow transform the graph from something which displays an 'undirected variation' consisting in 'undirected difference' into something which displays something quite different in kind, a 'directed variation' consisting in 'directed difference'. Rather, the idea of a 'directed difference' is a straightforward confusion. What consists in difference is indifferently specified in either direction.

4 Variation and theorizing as from nowhen

The A-theorist may at this point shift their defence and challenge line (4) of the argument, the claim that in saying that events become more past, they advert to a variation. Yes, a variation is as such undirected, but this is not what they are proposing. More specifically, the A-theorist may claim that I mischaracterised their proposal when I cast it as the claim that events become more past *as time goes from early to late*. With this characterization, the trick is turned against them, for we do indeed now have a variation which might be equally well specified in terms of events becoming more future. We do indeed have a mere pattern of difference. But their proposal is not that events become more past *as time goes from early to late*:

it is simply that events become more past (full stop). Their proposal is not of a variation but of a 'process', as Markosian puts it.²¹

This counter is I think exactly the right one to make. Or rather, I think both that one can in talking of events becoming more past signal something other than a variation, and also that such talk can be the beginning of a successful account of passage with a notion of process at its centre. Indeed, I shall myself at this essay's end gesture towards just such an account. In saying this, however, I am not undercutting my argument against the A-theorist. For whilst talk of events becoming more past *can* signal something other than a variation, it *cannot* do so in the mouth of the A-theorist. The theoretical context within which the A-theorist makes their proposal means that proposal cannot be of anything other than a variation. There was no mischaracterization of A-theorist as holding that events become more past *as time goes from early to late*. No trick was turned against them. Claim (4) is perfectly true.

To see this, I want to introduce a notion of 'theorizing as from nowhen and no one', a notion which will be of central importance through the rest of the essay. Someone theorizes as from nowhen and no one, let's stipulate, just in case their theorizing is comprehensible as from nowhen and no one. And a theory is comprehensible as from nowhen and no one just in case it is comprehensible without the deployment of indexical thought – in particular, without the deployment of tensed or first-personal thought. With this notion in hand, the support for (4) will consist in two moves. In proposing real A-properties, I shall first suggest, our A-theorist theorizes as from nowhen. And in theorizing as from nowhen, their proposal of events becoming more past is necessarily the proposal of a variation.

The idea I'm offering of theorizing as from nowhen and no one identifies tensed and first personal thinking with indexical thinking, and some care is needed here. By tensed or first personal thinking I shall mean thinking expressible by means of a tensed or first personal sentence. And by a tensed or first-personal sentence, I shall mean an indexical sentence of a certain kind, a sentence liable to express different propositions depending upon the time of utterance or identity of the utterer. Famously, however, certain A-theorists deny that the tense in play in such sentences as 'The poker is hot' is a species of indexicality. Utterances of 'The poker is hot' do not express different propositions depending on their time of utterance; rather, they express always the same 'present tense proposition' that the poker is hot. This noted, it might seem that in identifying tense as a species of indexicality, I'm stepping on the toes of certain A-theorists, and perhaps even begging a question against them. Well, I am certainly making a terminological stipulation they would not make. And it is true that I take utterances of the English sentence 'The poker is hot' to vary in proposition expressed depending upon the time of utterance: I take the present tense 'is' here to be an indexical. (I do think one has to suspend one's understanding of English when reading papers by certain A-theorists.²²) But no question is being begged. The point, rather, is only that such an A-theorist theorizes as from nowhen in my sense just as much as the B-theorist.

And importantly for our purposes, the same goes for the A-theorist we have been considering, the one who proposes real A-properties in terms of which they want to explain passage. 'The party happened yesterday' is for our A-theorist, not an indexical sentence expressing different propositions on different occasions of use, but a sentence which expresses on all occasions the same proposition, the proposition that the party has the real A-property of being one day past. So much is essential to their idea of a real A-property. The real A-property of being a day past is that single, non-relational property ascribed to an event *E* by all tokens, no matter their time, of the sentence '*E* happened yesterday'. The real A-property of being present is that single, non-relational property ascribed to an event *E* by all utterances, no matter their time, of the sentence '*E* is present' or '*E* is happening

now'. The proposal we have had in view of a real A-series, this is to say, is precisely *not* to be understood by means of indexical thought. Or again, just as much as the B-theorist, our A-theorist of passage theorizes as from nowhen.

And in so theorizing, I want next to maintain, their proposal of events becoming more past will necessarily be the proposal of a variation. The rough thought here should I hope be obvious enough. The metaphysician as from nowhen pictures time as a line, or dimension, and takes temporal reality to consist in things holding of, or at, certain points on that dimension. This is, however, a picture of variation only, and so it is not a picture in which there is any place for directedness. To make this rough thought a little clearer for the case of our A-theorist, let's make a comparison with modality.

Theorists of modality standardly deploy the idea of a proposition's being true at a world: at w_1 Jack is tall, but at w_2 he is short. And somewhat similarly, our A-theorist will deploy an idea of truth at a time: at t_1 the party is present, but at t_2 it is a day past. So much is implied by their theorizing as from nowhen. Utterances of 'The party happened yesterday' vary in truth value depending upon their time of utterance. If today's utterance is true, tomorrow's will be false. Where 'The party happened yesterday' is treated as an indexical sentence, this variation is explained as a variation in the proposition expressed. With a single proposition expressed, by contrast, the variation in utterance truth value is explained instead as a variation over time in the truth value of that single proposition. It is true on Monday but false on Tuesday that the party is a day past. Today the party is a day past, but tomorrow it is not.

Temporal reality for our A-theorist involves in this way different things holding at different times. More than this, however, our A-theorist's temporal reality will be exhausted by such variation in fact or truth value. The material of modality for our modal theorist is precisely that of the truth values of non-modal propositions at the various possible worlds. Modal reality is specified by a specification of which non-modal facts obtain at which worlds (with one world, perhaps, specified as actuality). There is nothing more to the metaphysics than this. Similarly, temporal reality will be specified for our A-theorist by a specification of which propositions are true at which times (and it doesn't matter in the least for our purposes whether the specification of times here is in A- or B-terms). What our A-theorist as from nowhen sees, this is to say, is precisely propositions true at times – different ones true at different times, different facts obtaining at different points in history. Where on Thursday (yesterday) the lecture is a day past, on Friday (today) it is two days past: this is temporal reality. Of course, there are important dissimilarities between the modal and temporal cases. In particular, the A-theorist's times form an intrinsic linear order, something which possible worlds do not. And given such a linear order we can think of time as a dimension, and with that of temporal reality as developing over that dimension. Indeed, the A-theorist may maintain that there is a significant regularity within reality's development over time. They may maintain, for example, that over time events become steadily more past. None of these dissimilarities, however, contradicts the fact that what the A-theorist as from nowhen sees, what constitutes temporal reality for them, is at base different things obtaining at different times. Any proposal they may make of a development in reality will thus necessarily be the proposal of a variation. In particular, their suggestion that events become more past will necessarily be a claim that at increasingly future times, events have increasingly past A-properties.

5 Pause

I've argued now for claims (3) and (4). A variation is something undirected, and as a reflection of their theorizing as from nowhen, the A-theorist's proposal of events becoming

more past is the proposal of a variation. Provisionally accepting these claims, or at least their plausibility, certain matters now stand out as in need of address. First, nothing substantial has been said about what is meant by ‘directed’ other than the fairly minimal comment that matters of difference are undirected. Something indifferently specified ‘in either direction’ is not something directed. So, what more positive can be said here? What more positive can we make of the assertion of (1) that passage is directed, and so of the requirement in (2) that a proposal for passage must be the proposal of something directed? Second, no substantial indication has been given of what manner of theorizing there might be other than theorizing as from nowhen. What might it be for indexical thought to be essential to the comprehension of a piece of philosophy? Insofar as these two issues remain unexamined, the merit of the argument against the A-theorist may remain hard to assess. What is actually being required here of an account of passage? And how, if at all, might that requirement be met?

The remainder of this essay will constitute a response to these questions. My strategy will be to start by leaving questions of passage to one side. First, I shall take on the general issue of modes of theorizing, reflecting on and expanding some of the material introduced in Section 1 in connection with Anscombe. And only with some thought offered on that shall we return towards the essay’s end to the more specific issue of time’s passage.

6 Generality and generalization

Theorizing as from nowhen and no one is very much the norm, at least officially, within analytic philosophy. Let’s ask what motivation this norm might have. Why theorize as from nowhen? One possible motivation, something I mention mainly to set it aside, regards an idea of objectivity. Indexicals, someone might think, express ‘subjective perspectives’ on reality, perspectives adopted by contingent subjects located within it. But the reality on which such perspectives are adopted is something objective: something constitutively independent, that is to say, of those perspectives. So in connection with McTaggart and tense, Dummett offers the following metaphor:

I can make drawings of a rock from various angles, but if I am asked to say what the real shape of the rock is, I can give a description of it as in three-dimensional space which is independent of the angle from which it is looked at. The description of what is really there, as it really is, must be independent of any particular point of view.²³

In order to respect and capture reality’s independence from the various angles a contingent subject might take on it, angles expressed by means of indexicals, metaphysical theorizing must describe reality from no such angle. And so metaphysical theorizing, it follows, must be comprehensible without the deployment of indexical thought. Some version of this thought is, I would hazard, in the background to the move, made unblinkingly by a majority of both A- and B-theorists, from the supposition that tense is metaphysically significant to the claim that tense is not a device of indexicality. Indeed, this is I suspect the principal justification contemporary philosophers would give if asked for theorizing as from nowhen. Still, I have little patience with the thought, which in any case can’t be tackled head-on in this essay. The questions it brings into play are too broad and too immediately abstract. So whilst acknowledging their background presence, I want instead to move on to what for us is a more interesting motivation for theorizing as from no one and nowhen, a motivation concerned with generality.

However we are to understand the metaphysics of time, its content must in some manner be time- and person-general. An account of passage, say, or of change or openness, must have

significance equally for all times. I have no special interest, as a philosopher, in the current time – 10am on Friday 6th, say – or in any particular person – for example, Colin Johnston. And given this, it may seem that my theorizing must take the form of generalizations over times and subjects. And if that's right, then we shall have another route, besides considerations of objectivity, to the idea of a theory as from no one and nowhen, for generalizations over people and times are precisely comprehensible without the deployment of tensed or first personal thought. It is essential to the understanding of a universal generalization that it be recognized as instantiable. One understands the proposition that everything is *F* only insofar as one recognizes that it implies, given an object *a*, that *a* is *F*. But there is no requirement on understanding a universal generalization that it be recognized as instantiable by means of tense or the first person. (Indeed, insofar as Anscombe is right, it isn't instantiable in such ways, for neither tensed nor first personal thought will be explained as a species of naming.²⁴) Generalizations, that is to say, are given and understood as from nowhen and no one. So the idea of a theory as from nowhen and no one follows, it can seem, merely from the idea that the theory is general in its concern, that it regards equally all times and subjects.

This inference is however mistaken. The generality of philosophical theorizing does not imply that its outputs must be comprehensible as from nowhen and no one. Rather, as I want to suggest, philosophical theorizing may proceed by means of generalities of a different kind, generalities which, unlike generalizations, are comprehensible only by means of indexical thought. Such generalities are I think perfectly commonplace in our lives. But they are not often the subject of philosophical comment. Let's introduce their idea by means of some examples.

First, take a simple act of address, an utterance of the sentence 'You are here', made whilst pointing at a map. This utterance may be taken up by the addressee by means of a first-person present tense thought 'I am here'. Indeed, the addressee understands the utterance *only* by means of such a thought. 'According to the addresser', the addressee must think, 'I am here'. If Anne is the addressee and the time of address is 2pm, then Anne will not have recognized the addresser's act if she responds either with a thought 'According to the addresser, Anne is here' or with a thought 'According to the addresser, I am here at 2pm'. It is not being given to Anne that Anne is here, for the addresser may not know that the person being addressed is Anne. Nor may the addresser know the time. What is being given to her, rather, is that *she is* here. This may be underlined by remarking that the address is an act of action orientation: the addresser is in orienting Anne a certain manner for action. Acknowledging the truth of the thought 'Anne is here' or 'I am here at 2pm' will not, however, orient Anne in the relevant manner. The address will not be successfully taken up. For that, she needs to respond with a first-person present tense thought 'I am here'.

Now there is of course no generality in this example. But consider next a sign 'You are here' found with an arrow on a fixed public map. Unlike the previous case, this sentence is both time- and person- general: its significance is not restricted to a single time or single person. The sentence claims, as one might put it, that its reader is here. Importantly for our interests, however, the sentence's claim is quite different in kind from the generalization that a person reading the sentence is here at the time of reading. Where that generalization may be understood separately from the possibility of its use by means of instantiation, additional premises and inference to arrive at a first personal present tense thought 'I am here', understanding the sign, understanding what it says, means recognizing it as something to be taken up in the first person present tense. 'According to this sign', its reader must think in understanding it, 'I am here'.

The sign, this is to say, expresses a time- and person- generality which is not a generalization over times and people but something of a quite different kind, something essentially to be taken up by means of a first person and tensed thought. Now there is of course considerable debate to be had on the matter of address, and in particular on the matter of general address. But given the example's limited purpose, this is not something I want to enter. Rather, let's move directly on to a second example, this time of a generality present within a familiar piece of philosophical theorizing, namely Descartes' *cogito*.

When Descartes says 'I think, therefore I am' he is not saying something of significance only for himself, and only for a particular time. We do not understand the *cogito* by means of the trivial thought 'Descartes thought so Descartes existed' or 'Descartes thinks at such-and-such a time so Descartes exists at that time'. Rather, there is an implicit generality to his argument, a generality of both time and person. On the other hand, the first person present tense of his presentation is not mere rhetoric. The intended lesson for the reader is not the equally trivial quantified conditional that if a person thinks at a certain time then they exist at that time. Rather – and I take this to be obvious – understanding Descartes' argument means recognizing it as involving generalities which, quite unlike generalizations, are to be taken up rather than instantiated, where this taking up essentially involves thinking in the first person present tense. 'Descartes' argument', the reader must think in understanding him, 'is this: I think, therefore I am'. Or as Anscombe puts it, 'the first-person character of Descartes's argument means that each person must administer it to himself in the first person'.²⁵

As with the sign, then, Descartes's reasoning is general in both time and person but is no generalization over times and people. It is not something to be instantiated, but something to be taken up in the first person present tense, and so something whose comprehension requires first-person present tense thought. Now, these two examples should be enough I think to rebut any quick inference from the generality of philosophical theorizing to the claim that it is offered as from nowhen and no one. (Here is another everyday example: one should not steal. It is not a strange thing that moral laws have been represented as matters of divine general address ('Thou shalt not steal'). Understanding the moral law requires its uptake in the first person: 'According to the moral law', someone must think in understanding it, 'I should not steal'.) We don't yet, however, have much insight into what kind of theorizing it might be that proceeds by these rather different generalities. For this, let's move on to a final example, one which will hold us rather longer than the previous two. Here we shall be concerned with the philosophical question of the settledness of the past. And our investigation will proceed by means of a thought about time travel.

7 Settledness and self-understanding

Consider Jill. Jill steps into what is presented to her as a time machine, sets the destination date for a day into the past, and presses go. On stepping out of the machine she finds that the date on the clocks is indeed a day earlier than that of her stepping in. What is more, events in front of her appear to be 'replays' of events from what had been yesterday. She concludes that the machine is indeed a time machine, and that it has transported her a day backwards in time. Sitting down, however, she has the following thought:

If I have travelled a day back in time, then there are things which, whilst they are ahead of me in time, and so in some sense haven't happened yet, are nonetheless already settled.

To take an obvious example, it's already settled that tomorrow a slightly younger me steps into a time machine. That is a way things already are; the matter is already out there.

And this connects, she continues, with a question of agency:

If it is already settled that tomorrow I get into a time machine, then there is no point my seeking now either to ensure that this happens, or to prevent it from happening. No matter what I now do, or now aim to do, it is fixed that tomorrow a slightly younger me steps into a time machine.

Let's consider Jill's thought here of settledness. What thought is it, Jill's thought that if she is a backwards time traveller, then certain matters ahead of her in time are already settled?

The obvious way to approach this question is by consideration of a challenge to Jill. Jill is deploying a notion of settledness. And however this notion might be elaborated, it will surely be bound to that of the past. Indeed, Jill's distinction between settled and unsettled, or settled and open, must surely be a distinction between past and future. If not, then we have no idea what she is talking about. Jill must hold, that is:

- (a) The past is settled
- (b) The future is open

And in connection with these she deploys also:

- (c) The power of action is that of settling what is open

(c) is what bridges the move from something's being settled to its being fixed, from its being settled to the pointlessness or unintelligibility of seeking to ensure or prevent it. Considering (a) and (b) however, it may seem that Jill is in trouble, for they clarify to:

- (a') At t , matters earlier than t are settled.
- (b') At t , matters later than t are open.

And with this clarification made, Jill's reasoning is visibly mistaken. Jill holds that if she is a backwards time traveller then certain matters ahead of her in time are already settled. But in view of (b'), this thought is clearly false. Whether or not she is a backwards time traveller, matters later than the time of her reasoning are not then settled.

Now we should sense, I hope, that this objection misfires. Indeed, its very simplicity should arouse suspicion, for endorsing the objection means taking Jill's thinking to be not merely incoherent but trivially incoherent. Assuming herself to be a backwards time traveller, Jill maintains that certain matters ahead of her in time are already settled. In deploying her notion of settledness, the objection however arrives, she is immediately committed to the claim that what is ahead of her in time is not settled. So Jill, it seems, is an idiot. Such a *reductio* is not however palatable. Whilst it may not be obvious that Jill's thought is sustainable, nor does one sense it to be blatantly and trivially misguided. We are tempted, at least, to allow her a thought that, as she put it, 'It's already settled that tomorrow a slightly younger me steps into a time machine'. So the objection is too quick. But how?

We cannot I think understand Jill other than endorsing (a) and (b): without these, we do indeed lose all grip on her notion of settledness. Seeing Jill as something other than an idiot, on the other hand, means understanding her as rejecting (b'). She explicitly thinks of certain matters both as settled and as ahead of her in time, something immediately ruled out by (b'). So the only route for beginning, even, to take Jill seriously is to reject that the (a) and (b) implicit within her thinking are properly represented as (a') and (b'). In order to deflect the challenge to Jill, and indeed to make any sense of her reasoning, we must hold that (a') and (b') are not clarifications of (a) and (b) but misconstruals.

How could this be so? Well, my suggestion will unsurprisingly be that (a') and (b') misunderstand the generality of (a) and (b). If (a) and (b) were generalizations over time, then they would indeed be clarified as (a') and (b'). But they are not generalizations over time. Rather, they are generalities to be taken up only by means of tense – and in the case of (c) by means of the first person. (a) is taken up with a thought 'What has happened is now settled', or more determinately with 'It is settled whether yesterday Simon had cornflakes for breakfast'. And (c) is not the generalization that an agent *N*'s power at time *t* is that of settling what is not settled at *t*, but the tensed, first personal generality that in acting one may settle what is open. This suggestion will allow us, I think, to recognize Jill's reasoning as non-idiotic. To explore it a little, let's consider how Jill would elaborate her thought.

Someone asks Jill, as she sits down, why if she is a backwards time traveller this means that certain matters ahead of her are already settled. She replies:

Well, because they have already happened! Or if that sounds blunt, try this: if I am to make sense of myself, of my life and its agency, then I must use a past tense for certain events that, if I am a backwards time traveller, are now ahead of me in time. In making sense of myself – not, that is, in making sense from outside of a person who happens to be me, but in making sense of myself *from within* as an agent in the world – I *must* use tense. I must think in terms of what has been so, of what is now so, and of what may be so in the future. And it is not optional which tense I use. In particular, I cannot think of my pressing the 'go' button on the would-be time machine other than in the past tense. This is something that *has already happened*, indeed something *I have already done*, and this is so even if the machine really was a time machine and the event is now ahead of me in time.

Here a number of things should hopefully become a little clearer. First, we can see that in maintaining certain matters ahead of her in time to be already settled, Jill is not playing loose with the openness of the future. Her thought is rather that those matters have already happened. Indeed, those matters are settled precisely because they have already happened: Jill's thought that if she is a backwards time traveller then certain matters ahead of her are already settled is an application of (a), the claim that the past is settled. The button pressing is settled because it has already happened.

Second, we can note that the (a) operative in Jill's reasoning at this point is no generalization. In particular, the (a) by which we may understand her move from past 'go' pressing to settled 'go' pressing – 'The button pressing has already happened', she thinks, 'and so is already out there' – is not (a'). (a') would give Jill the thought that matters earlier than her present time are now settled, and this will do nothing to take her to the settledness of her pressing 'go', an event which she is supposing to be later than her present time. Rather, our alternative will be, Jill is taking up a tensed generality, a generality that cannot be instanced other than with notions of being past and of being presently settled.

Third, and crucially for this essay going forwards, we learn that Jill's reasoning is bound up in a project of self-understanding. Jill may be able to think of her pressing the 'go' button as in some sense a future event: she can think of it as an event that happens later than the current time. What she cannot do is think of it as future in the context of a project of understanding herself from within as an agent in the world. In that context, in the context of understanding the world from, as we might put it, her agential perspective, she must think of it as past, as having already happened, and so as settled.

So where are we with Jill? Well, Jill alludes to an understanding of herself as an agent in time, an understanding of herself as a perceiving, knowing, remembering, acting subject. And crucially this understanding is 'from within' – it is a first personal understanding to be contrasted with any impersonal, quasi-scientific understanding of temporal reality and her (Jill's) place and powers within it. It is the understanding of oneself from within as an agent in the world – that is, it is an understanding the world from the perspective of one's agency, of one's ongoing life. This project is, I think, the locus of genuine tense. And it provides the proper context for understanding (a) to (c). These three 'principles' are properly understood, I would suggest, as first-pass articulations of structural features of the subject's self-understanding as a perceiving, knowing, etc. agent in time. They are articulations at first pass of central aspects of being in time.

8 Avoiding a misunderstanding

What has been the point of this discussion of Jill? Well, in Section 6 we considered a thought that questions of objectivity to one side, the fact that the philosopher of time deals in generalities means that their theories are comprehensible without the deployment of indexicals of tense and the first person. And the initial ambition of what followed was to demonstrate that this move is too quick. There are time- and person- generalities which are not generalizations over times and persons but which are understood only by means of tense and the first person. With Jill, however, further important points were added. First, it was suggested that claims as to the asymmetry of openness, when properly understood, will be recognized as of this same kind. And second, I linked these claims of openness and agential power back to the material of my introductory discussion of Anscombe. The generalities of the open future and the power of agency, I suggested by means of Jill, are to be understood and articulated as aspects of what it is to be in time, as features of the subject in time.

Now there will I'm sure be a temptation to hear this suggestion in quite the wrong way. There will be a temptation, that is, to understand a claim that the openness of the future is an aspect of being in time, a feature of the perspective of the subject in time, as a claim that it is a feature of perspectives of subjects in time. People wander around, the idea will be assumed, each reasoning about temporal matters from within their first personal and tensed perspective. And openness is to be understood as characterizing such episodes of perspectival thought. But this is not at all the picture. The temptation to read what has been said in this way arises, I take it, from a temptation always to try to understand anything with a hint of generality by means of generalizations – or what amounts to the same thing, to understand everything theoretical in an 'objective', quasi-scientific mode. As from no one and nowhen, talk of the agential perspective, or of the perspective of the subject in time, is deformed into talk of agential perspectives, of perspectives of subjects in time – and so becomes a matter of psychology. My story of openness then looks similar to the B theorist's view of passage: this is located not in reality but in the psychologies of perceiving and acting subjects. But it is essential to what I want to say that no understanding of being in time is either sought or

available from an impersonal distance. What we want to articulate is not some impersonally appreciable phenomenon of agential perspectives, of agents understanding themselves as in time, but the matter of *the* agential perspective, the nature of being in time. The moment one distances oneself from this project, thinks of it third personally, and so other than as essentially a project of *self*-elaboration, the project simply disappears. (The use of the definite article – *the* agential perspective, *the* subject in time – and of grammatically subjectless forms – *being* in time – is intended to hold this point.) So again, Jill’s essentially tensed and first personal reasoning has not been understood at an impersonal distance as a way someone might perhaps reason with indexicals. (Isn’t it interesting that a person might reason like that!) Her thinking has been considered, rather, as an example of reasoning from within *the* agential perspective, as an example of how *one* might, or would, reason in understanding oneself as an agent in time.

9 Process and activity

Let’s head back now towards temporal passage. And let’s do that by bringing into view the notion considered briefly above of a *process*. It is notable that attempts to explain passage, no matter how formal, always deploy progressive verbs. Time’s passage is events *becoming* more past. Or it is the block *growing*, or the spotlight *moving*, or whatever. The use of such verbs is intended, I take it, to give the idea of something directed. Indeed, it is intended to give the idea of a directed *process*. There is a directed process of the spotlight’s moving to the future, or of events steadily becoming more past. It follows from what I have argued, however, that insofar as the account is offered as from nowhen, any such suggestion will be misleading. The theorist as from nowhen cannot describe anything directed; they can see only variation.

It is no surprise that the category of process is largely absent from analytic metaphysics of time. As from nowhen, one sees times, substances, states and events. And these are the categories in which debates in the philosophy of time (and indeed action) are typically conducted. But what one does not see from that perspective is anything *progressive*, anything *going on*. It takes undergraduates a while to realize this, and to lose their discomfort with the fact that processes are simply not in the picture. We discuss change until we’re sick of it, but we completely ignore processes of change. We consider the facts that the poker is hot at 2pm, that it is warm at 2.30pm, and that it is cold at 3pm. But we never bring into view a poker’s *cooling*. And any voicing of discomfort here, discomfort at the fact that *changing* is being left out, is typically replied to by saying that the change is in principle continuous, that there is no reason to think of space and time as anything other than continuums. As if the problem were that we’re discussing a series of discretely related states, not a series of continuously related ones. But the discomfort was not at that. It was not at the idea of discretely separated snapshots, but at the presentation of *self-contained* snapshots, snapshots, that is, understood independently of their being stages of, instances within, a process. So again, we’ve simply left out the *cooling*.

Cooling is a process essentially defined by its end: the poker’s having cooled. Such a process, that is to say, is understood in a connection and contrast between the progressive and perfective aspects, between ‘The poker is cooling down’ and ‘The poker has cooled down’. And here is the basic reason why it is not seen as from nowhen. Progressive and perfective verbs are tensed, and as such are deployed and understood only from within time. Another category of process, what we might call ‘activity’, shows a rather different progressive-perfective connection: walking, or growing, or flowing, don’t tend internally towards an end but have only a ‘going on’. (If Jack is walking then Jack has walked, but if Jack is opening

the window, he may not have opened the window.) Still, the 'going on' verb, the verb in progressive aspect, is again tensed. Processes are in general described only from within time. As from nowhen, we can of course see something of process: we can, like Davidson or the Humean, see chains of causally related events or states. And these are frequently misidentified by philosophers as processes.²⁶ A (continuous) series of (causally connected) states of the poker is substituted for the process of cooling. But if you want to see something else, if you want to bring into view that something *is going on*, then your theorising must take a different form.²⁷

There is a great deal for the philosopher to say in regard to process and activity. Following Anscombe, Thompson has for example argued that practical rationality is essentially involved with the first-person present tense progressive, that the subject's practical reason is centrally concerned with what she *is doing*.²⁸ More generally, the fundamental concepts of *life* and *life form*, will be bound to that of process. The only point I want to make, however, is the one I have already made, namely that a process is something *directed*. A process is something which *progresses*. The poker is getting colder, or was getting hotter. It is not clear, perhaps, how much can be said of such directedness, or how best to go about elucidating it. Obviously, the matter is not something for reductive account. In the context of this essay, however, a short remark may be helpful on the on the 'single-dimensionality', as it were, of process. Someone might think to articulate more fully the nature of the poker's cooling by saying that it is cooling *with increasing time*, or *as time is passing*. But this would-be articulation is in fact mere repetition, a mere tautology. The poker's cooling does not divide into dimensions of temperature and time; there is nothing to be made explicit by saying that the poker is cooling *with or in time*. There is no graph to be drawn with time as one of its axes (as opposed, say, to space). We can of course extract from the process a variation in temperature over time, something two-dimensional and presentable on a graph (just as a variation in temperature over space). But what is extracted is formally different from that of which it is an extraction: where what is extracted is a phenomenon of two dimensions, that from which it is extracted is not.²⁹ Digesting this is, I think, central to recognizing the directedness of process. Indeed, we might make the identification: the directedness of process *is* its 'single-dimensionality'.

10 Being in time, passage, and becoming more past

What though is the connection between the directedness of process and that of time's passage? And what have either process or passage to do with the gestures above about the subject in time? Answering these questions in anything like a full manner would be a major project. It would be a book project at least to give a satisfying articulation of being in time. All I can do here is make some suggestive indications.

I asserted above that tense belongs essentially to a project of self-understanding, that it belongs essentially to the subject's understanding of herself as thinking and acting in time. Given this, it follows that the notions of process and activity are, like openness, features of being in time. It is a central aspect of the subject in time that things are going on, that she is in the midst of process and activity. The poker is cooling down, Adrian is baking a cake, the leaves are falling, Jill is walking: this is a part of what it is to be in time. And an obvious thought from here will be that this aspect of being in time is precisely the matter of time's passage. It is a central and basic aspect of the subject in time, of the perspective from within time, of temporal reality for the subject, that processes and activities go on, that activities continue, that processes tend towards their end. And this is the passing of time.

Perhaps though we can also say something else, something which connects passage not only to process but to events, and indeed to an idea of events becoming more past. Again, the proposal will be sketchy. But again the point – indeed the main point of the essay – is not to provide a substantial original account of passage, but to advise a radical relocation, a radical recasting, of our theoretical ambitions.

In ‘Understanding Demonstratives’, Gareth Evans makes a case that temporal thought is in a certain sense dynamic. He writes:

Being in the same epistemic state may require different things of us at different times; the changing circumstances require us to change in order to keep hold of a constant time and a constant thought – we must run to keep still.³⁰

And again:

No one can be ascribed a belief at t with the content ‘It is now ψ ’, for example, who does not have the propensity as time goes on to form beliefs with the content ‘It was ψ just a moment ago’, ‘It was ψ earlier this morning’, ‘It was ψ this morning’, ‘It was ψ yesterday morning’ etc.³¹

To be clear, Evans’s claim is emphatically not that having a belief implies being disposed to hold over time a variety of different and differently tensed beliefs, that if at a certain time a subject believes a certain Fregean thought, then necessarily they will be disposed at different times to believe certain related but distinct Fregean thoughts. His point is rather that maintaining a single belief in a single Fregean thought that, say, Jack broke his bowl just now, will mean thinking of that event, or being disposed to think of that event, by means of an increasingly past tense. The thought, or belief, I express now by means of the sentence ‘Jack broke his bowl this morning’ I will express tomorrow by means of the sentence ‘Jack broke his bowl yesterday morning’.

Now, I can’t argue here for such a view of temporal belief. I can only register that I find it attractive – and then suggest that if we accept it we have a way to understand the impulse, unworkable though it was in the theoretical context in which it was expressed, to understand the passage of time in terms of events becoming more past. Maintaining the belief that Jack broke his bowl a moment ago – believing that Jack broke his bowl a moment ago – will mean thinking of that event in an increasingly past tense. It will, that is, mean recognizing that event as increasingly past.

It is crucial, of course, to see that this idea does not understand Evans’s suggestion as from nowhen and no one. As from nowhen, there could be no connection to passage. We would have only a claim that the belief someone expresses by means of the sentence ‘Jack broke his bowl this morning’ they express at different times, or would express at different times, by means of differently tensed sentences. And this would fail twice over to have anything to do with passage. First, we would have mere variation and no directedness. And second, the point would be a matter only of psychology rather than of metaphysics. To recognize the point as metaphysical, we need to underline that the understanding on offer here of belief is essentially first personal, that it is offered as an elaboration of being in time. The claim is that in believing that Jack broke his bowl this morning *one* thinks of that event in an increasingly past tense. In general, the subject thinks of events as increasingly past. Or again, in thinking

one recognizes events as increasingly past. Or again, it is a central feature of being in time that events become increasingly past. And this feature may be identified with time's passage.

As a quick final comment, note that the flipside to events becoming increasingly past is the advance of the subject. In thinking of an event as past, one distinguishes the time of that event from the time of one's thinking, the present.³² So, to understand events both as fixed in time and as receding into the past is to understand oneself, one's consciousness, as advancing in time. Here, then, is another aspect of, or perspective on, temporal passage: the advancing in time of consciousness, of thought, of the thinking subject.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'On Russell's Theory of Descriptions', in *From Plato to Wittgenstein*, Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011, p. 154.
- 2 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Before and After', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 186.
- 3 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'The First Person', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 32.
- 4 A. Haddock, "'I am NN": A Reconstruction of Anscombe's "The First Person"', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 27(4), 2019, pp. 957–970.
- 5 *Ibid.*, §7.
- 6 *Ibid.*, §17.
- 7 Similarly, the manifold of times is not given separately from the subject's understanding of herself as in time – that is, as thinking, acting etc. (living) in time. For a rather more extended discussion in the context of Anscombe's 'The First Person' of both the requirement for reference of a prior manifold, and subject's essential participation in the manifold of people, see Rödl 2017.
- 8 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Causality and Determination', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 136.
- 9 M. Thompson, 'Anscombe's Intention and Practical Knowledge', in A. Ford, J. Hornsby and F. Stoutland eds. *Essays on Anscombe's Intention*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011, pp. 203–204.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 204–205.
- 11 D. Davidson, 'Agency', in *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: OUP, p. 43.
- 12 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Causality and Determination', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 137.
- 13 C.f. Hornsby's claim that 'events ... are comprised of activity' (2012, p. 238).
- 14 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Causality and Determination', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 136.
- 15 J.M.E. McTaggart, 'The Unreality of Time', *Mind* 17, 1908: 457–474.
- 16 S. Prosser, 'A New Problem for the A-Theory of Time', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 50, 2000, p. 494.
- 17 R. Le Poidevin, 'Time and Freedom', in H. Dyke and A. Bardon eds. *A Companion to the Philosophy of Time*, Wiley: Oxford, 2013, p. 538.
- 18 N. Markosian, 'How Fast Does Time Pass', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, p. 832.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 835.
- 20 A. Prior, 'Changes in Events and Changes in Things' in *Papers on Time and Tense*, Oxford: OUP, 2003, p. 7.
- 21 Markosian, *op. cit.*, p. 855.
- 22 Compare 'An hour ago, the poker is hot' or 'It is true an hour ago that the poker is hot' with the obvious garble of 'For Jack, I am tall' or 'Over there, it's cold here'. Lowe 1987 is a classic discussion of the point.

- 23 M. Dummett, 'A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time', *Philosophical Review* 69, p. 503.
- 24 For tense as indexical but not indexical naming, see Rödl 2012.
- 25 G.E.M. Anscombe, 'The First Person', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind, Collected Papers Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, p. 21.
- 26 Kim for example writes that 'a process can be thought of as a (causally) connected series of events and states' (1996, p. 6).
- 27 Unsurprisingly, perhaps, philosophers can be found who want quite properly to theorize with a category of process distinct from event and state, but who are unable to escape the paradigm of theorizing as from nowhen (see, e.g., Stewart 2013 or Stout 2016). (As Stout puts it, such philosophers seek to develop an 'ontology of processes' (2018: 11).) In this context, we find such would-be sentences as 'At 2pm, Jill is walking' or 'From 6pm to 7pm, Jack and Jill are eating dinner', in which the would-be verbs 'is walking' or 'are eating' are supposed somehow to be tenseless. (Crowther 2018, for example, is riddled with such talk.) But this is empty nonsense issuing from incompatible ambitions. There is no including processes alongside events in one's ontology as from nowhen.
- 28 M. Thompson, *Life and Action*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- 29 Note that the time-reversibility of physical laws, their indifference to direction, illustrates the fact that whilst those laws describe processes and activities in time (of course!), they do not describe them *as such*: what physics sees *as such* is undirected variation across the temporal dimension.
- 30 G. Evans, 'Understanding Demonstratives' in *Collected Papers*, Oxford: OUP, 1985, p. 308.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 309.
- 32 See Rödl 2012, Chapter 2 for discussion of this point.

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