**Dualism and Time**

**An Argument for Dualism from the Lived Experience of Time**

I believe that I have discovered a new argument for Substance Dualism arising from reflection of on our lived experience of temporal passage; at any rate, I cannot recall having seen this argument anywhere before, though I have read a good deal about Dualism and may simply have forgotten. Whether original or not, the argument seems to be little known or defended, so I can perhaps be excused for trotting it out again if in fact it has be presented before. At any rate, I have found no trace of it in the recent philosophical literature.

The argument is not new insofar as it adopts some new strategy for establishing that the mind is neither a material thing nor any part of a material thing, whether or not we characterize material things as (nothing but) physical objects. Instead, like many other dualist arguments, it claims that the apprehending subject has certain essential characteristics that are lacked by material things, however construed, hence cannot be or be part of such a thing. In this case, the experience of temporal passage as a feature of our lived experience of time is shown to be incompatible with the notion that the self is a material thing or part of such a thing, regardless of whether we adopt a Four-Dimensionalist, B-Series account or a Three-Dimensionalist, A-series account of (noumenal) space and time.

This argument should be of some interest to anyone who admits the facts of lived experience, which ineluctably presents us with the fact that we experience different mental contents exclusively and successively in time and that temporal passage is a real feature of our lived experience of events in the world. Ultimately, only someone who (like an eliminative materialist) denies that there is any such thing as lived experience – and there are precious few of these, for obvious reasons – can completely evade the force of the considerations to follow. To these considerations, then, we now turn.

**The Lived Experience of Space, Time and Change** Let’s begin by giving a brief characterization of the lived experience of time, a sort of informal phenomenology of our temporal awareness of the world we encounter in everyday experience which, as we shall see, involves our lived experience of space and of change as well. Such an account, restricted as it is to our experience of space, time, and change *as such*, can only be judged by its descriptive adequacy to the facts of lived experience and recommend itself to the reader on that basis. This will serve as the basis for the argument to follow.

Intuitively – here understanding intuition in a phenomenological rather than a theoretical sense – the apprehending subject appears to be at a fixed point in relation to the various contents of which he or she is aware over the course of his or her experience. Considered diachronically, at any arbitrarily selected moment, that world is a perceptual field in which various contents are arrayed and concerning which we can distinguish center from periphery, foreground from background within the perspective of the apprehending subject with regard to those contents. Despite that fact, however, all of those contents are experienced as co-present to the apprehending subject and thus as coexistent at that moment. The singular point of view of the apprehending subject thus constitutes the *here* – the place, at the center of that perceptual field, occupied by that subject and from which that subject’s perspective on those contents takes it origin and from which it radiates. At this arbitrarily chosen moment, the here occupied by the apprehending subject is fixed, and so too are the places occupied by those contents in the perceptual field taken from the perspective of that subject. Everything is as frozen in place and so, as it were, at rest.

Let us suppose, for the nonce, that this perspective on the contents of that perceptual field ceases to be momentary and expands laterally in both directions, becoming wider and more inclusive. Let us further suppose that, no matter how wide and inclusive it becomes, there is never any alteration that occurs in that field concerning any contents that are already apprehended by that subject as belonging to that field – it just gets bigger and contains more contents than it did before. If this were to continue indefinitely, it might ultimately contain all possible perceptual contents, thereby exhausting all possibilities for lived perceptual experience. Neither the apprehending subject nor the contents of the perceptual field would undergo any alteration; the here would be rooted always in the same place and the relation of the subject to its apprehended contents would always be the same. Only the perceptual field itself would expand, perhaps as the consequence of a cognitive “big bang,” to encompass ever more content until nothing further was available to enter that field. In that case, we would have direct perceptual evidence that the world of lived experience was an Idealistic “block universe” devoid of motion and change, a view of the universe still very actively promoted by metaphysical Four-Dimensionalists as the truth about the noumenal world.

This, of course, is nothing like the actual character of lived experience. The here, though fixed at any particular moment (“no matter where you go, there you are” – or should it be “you are there”?) is not fixed for all moments. I can and do experience change of place and the local motion involved in such alteration, which is sometimes voluntary (as when I walk across the room), sometimes involuntary (as when I am shot out of a cannon.) As a consequence, I come to occupy a different place than I did previously. While I always remain at the center of my perceptual field, the location at which that field is centered changes as well as does my relation to the contents that populate my perceptual field. I can travel in any direction, backwards or forwards, and even reoccupy a place that I occupied previously in my peregrinations and these changes in place will result in corresponding changes in my relation to the contents of my perceptual field.

However, even when I am rooted in a single place and not in transition from one place to another, I nevertheless often experience changes in both the contents of my perceptual field and in my relation to the contents already present there against a background of other, stable contents. For example, I am seated at the kitchen table staring out the window when suddenly, a pileated woodpecker lights on a branch outside my window and perches there. Taken aback by the presence of this unusual bird, I watch it intently. Then, just as suddenly as it came, it flies away out of my sight. Since I have remained in the same place, neither my relation to the contents of my perceptual field nor my position with respect to them has altered in virtue of my here having become located in in a different place; the window, the cozy decorations of my kitchen remain as they were throughout. My natural supposition, then, is that these changes have been produced by the motion of something else, some external body or bodies, that has produced these alterations in my perceptual field. In this case, not I but something external to me has changed and accounts both for the presence of new, hitherto unexperienced contents and my changing relation to those contents in my perceptual field. In the same way, when I am seated in my living room and hear an airplane fly over my house, the Doppler effect may inform me that the plane is behind me, then overhead, then speeding away from me through the sky. Again, the natural supposition (to call this an “intuition” seems too reflective and theoretical) is that the change in what I hear is the result of the motion of the airplane making the sound rather than anything I am doing while I stay put in my armchair.

The experience of change and, in particular, change of place produced by local motion inevitably brings time into the picture as a feature of lived experience. Viewed synchronically, change takes the form of a series of ordered, successive, events or states-of-affairs constituted by things and their alterations both intrinsically and in relation to each other as registered in the perceptual field of the apprehending subject. From this perspective, the here becomes the *now*, a fixed point occupied by the subject in relation to the stream of consciousness consisting of ordered, successive events or states-of-affairs that present themselves in that subject’s perceptual field as its contents. The synthesis of these two perspectives presents us with the world of lived experience: a complex system of coexisting material things engaged in various processes of natural development and interaction resulting in change of all kinds, including local motion or change of place as manifested in one’s perceptual field and recorded in one’s memory. Each of these changes results in alteration in both the contents of the perceptual field and our spatial relation to those contents occurring in and through time experienced as the lateral horizon of lived experience expanding out in both directions from the now and limited only by the limits of the perceptual field in which those events and states-of-affairs occur. As we move from place to place, the here remains at the center of the perceptual field but its relation to those contents changes due to the subject’s changing perspective on those contents. In the same way, when one remains in place and nevertheless we detect a change in our relation to those contents, we attribute this to the fact that the there is some change occurring in the world that accounts for this – namely, that the change in my perceptual field is caused by some object in motion that affects the contents of my perceptual field at that moment. Those contents that remain fixed in relation to the apprehending subject while that subject remains in the same place without moving are naturally thought to be at rest as well at that same moment. There here are exceptions, however. For example, if I am engaged in change of place, then another thing engaged in change of place and moving parallel to me at the same rate of travel will also appear to be at rest against a moving background or suspended in space without any apparent means of support.

If two things are really related to one another at any arbitrarily chosen moment, then both have to exist at that moment in order for that to be the case. In any case of real relation between two things, such as causal interaction or ontological dependence, agent and patient must coexist in order for the immediate relation of the former to the latter by means of which potency is moved to act be really possible. Even if the agent, acting at the current moment or some previously current moment produces the effect by means of some remnant that outlives it, the remnant that is the agent producing the effect coexists with production of that effect. The light-waves that left a star that has long since gone nova and dissipated into cosmic dust is such a remnant and produces a false image of that star in the night sky this evening by affecting our eyes this evening in such a way as to produce that false image. Those light-waves thus exist at the moment that the effect of our putatively seeing the star occurs. More generally, so far as lived experience goes, what we call temporal simultaneity, i.e. co-presence to the same moment of time, is thus grounded in the ontological simultaneity or coexistence of things really related to one another or capable of being so related at some arbitrarily selected moment in the “reference frame” of lived experience.

There are many more details to be considered here, including the relation of space and time as encountered in lived experience to noumenal space and time as comprehended in mathematical physics by Relativity Theory. However, as I have argued elsewhere, we have little reason to believe that Relativity Theory provides us with a literal, descriptive account of the nature of (noumenal) space and time and every reason to believe that, if there is greater dimensionality to space and time than what is revealed by lived experience that space and time as revealed in lived experience will be folded into that further reality in the same way that the lower dimensions are folded into three-dimensional space as revealed in lived experience. As such, I will not bother further with these questions here. Instead, adopting a realist interpretation of lived experience, I will now go on to offer an argument for dualism.

**Three-Dimensionalism and the Lived Experience of Time** The view known as Three-Dimensionalism, which has found able defenders in recent times among analytic philosophers, maintains that noumenal space and time are as they are presented in lived experience, so that our experience of temporal passage in relation to events occurring in space and time is objectively true of the real world. In that case, it is fairly easy to motivate Dualism by arguing that the experience of temporal passage, requiring as it does a fixed point outside of time, entails that the apprehending subject that occupies that fixed point, what I have called the *now*, is not itself subject to temporal passage and so is not a material thing nor any part of a material thing.

The argument goes like this. Our experience of change consists in our lived apprehension of a series of ordered, successive events or states-of-affairs consisting of material things undergoing both intrinsic alteration and alteration due to interaction with other material things. Whereas the *here* moves around from place to place within the perceptual field of lived experience and is capable of moving in multiple directions, reversing direction, and returning to and reoccupying previously occupied places largely as I choose, we have no similar experiences in relation to time. Quite the contrary, we experience the passage of events precisely as *passage*, even when we are in transition from place to place – time moves only in one direction, never stops or rests, and can be neither arrested nor reversed by any act of will on my part. Even though time may seem to us to slow down or to speed up in lived experience, time as measured by a conventional metric – clock time, for example – continues at a steady pace regardless of how long or short a given interval of time appears to last from the point-of-view of the apprehending subject. Fifteen minutes is fifteen minutes by the clock, regardless of whether it is spent idling in a traffic jam or in scintillating conversation with a witty and attractive stranger; this holds even if they are the same fifteen minutes spent by different apprehending subjects.

We are phenomenologically immersed in space, contained there at the point specified by the here, in such a manner that, apart from being spatially localized, lived experience of the sort we actually enjoy does not appear to be metaphysically possible for us. The opposite seems to be the case where time is concerned. I am neither in time nor subject to temporal passage. It is a necessary condition for the experience of temporal passage that the apprehending subject be as though at rest in relation to the passing show of ordered, successive events and states-of-affairs consisting of changing material things and their relations to other material things. This holds even when one is moving from place to place, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in which case our awareness of that motion as something happening in time is mediated by our intuitive proto-senses of proprioception and equilibrioception. Even though I can reverse direction and reoccupy someplace I occupied previously, I cannot reverse, or alter in any way, the order of the events involved in my first having left that place and then returning there. This is precisely why my returning to that place counts as *re*occupying it – same place, different time.

Indeed, if the apprehending subject were immersed in time and subject to temporal passage along with the material things we experience as changing through time, the experience of temporal change of the sort we enjoy would be impossible. The apprehending subject’s experience would either be static (if that subject were “moving through time” at the same rate as the things it was aware of) or would vary as either it or they moved through time less or more slowly. Like a driver in the middle of the pack on a race track, we would experience ourselves as bypassing some events and leaving them behind while being lapped in turn by others. However, there is nothing even remotely like this in our lived experience of time, not even when we factor differences in subjective duration into the picture. The apprehending subject is not only not subject to the passage of time – it does not appear to be in time at all. Nor, for that matter, are we aware of any changes occurring in or to the apprehending subject in the course of temporal experience – it is only the contents of that experience that change, not the subject that is aware of them. The apprehending subject stays put and does not change.

One paradoxical aspect of the experience of time that has been noted by many is precisely this apparent anomaly. On the one hand, unless one is immersed in space, the apprehending subject cannot experience the passage of time because material things are necessarily located in space and so cannot be perceived unless the apprehending subject is localized in space. On the other, unless the apprehending subject stands outside of the order of passing, temporal events, there will be no fixed point from which to observe those events as an ordered, successive series of events or states-of-affairs consisting of changing and interacting material things. Lived experience is thus paradoxical in this respect. Yet Substance Dualism provides a straightforward and relatively simple resolution to this paradox. The human organism consists of both an immaterial, sempiternal soul and a material body, for which the former serves as the proximate *per se* cause of the operation of the latter. On the side of the soul, which exercises a simple, uniform activity in relation to the body, its operation in respect to that body constitutes a single, durationless point of origin for that sustaining activity. In its relation to its effect, which is an extended, material thing subject to temporal passage, that activity becomes extended in space and time, encompassing the body and all of its changing states and attributes for as long as it and these exist. The soul, acting as the substantial form of the body *qua* organism (as opposed to *qua* material thing as such) sustains its operation for every moment that it exists and through all the changes that it undergoes.

The here is thus determined and established by the body and becomes the place at which the soul is localized in space and time without being located there and thus subject to temporal passage. The body, being a material thing, changes and is subject to local motion and is thus the source of the soul’s perspective on, orientation in, and unique relation to the world of material things as mediated by the contents of consciousness that, synchronically considered, becomes its stream of consciousness. In so doing, the atemporal soul operating *in propria persona* also occupies the unmoving. unchanging *now* that transcends time and constitutes a perspective outside it from which it is possible for the apprehending subject to be aware of the passage of events in time.

To summarize, then. The soul occupies the *here* in virtue of its relation to the body, a material thing immersed in space and by means of which it is localized in space and time in such a way as to have a perspective within space from which it is able to apprehend other material things and to be aware (in principle) of changes occurring in them. It occupies the *now* in virtue of its own nature, which endows it with a position outside of time that conditions its perspective within space in such a manner that permits it to apprehend material things as changing, both intrinsically in accordance with their natures and due to interaction with other material things – this is precisely the perspective from which temporal passage is apprehended. In lived experience, the here and the now, though contributed by different components of the organism, are synthesized into a single experiential manifold in which an intentional field of perceptual awareness is found to contain an ordered, successive series of events and states-of-affairs into which every material thing and every one of their stages, characteristics, and states, as well as all interactions among material things, are wholly integrated. Only the apprehending subject itself, the self-conscious rational subject or *res cogitans* considered in itself or as such and which does not appear in that intentional field, escapes location in space and time. As it turns out, this is a necessary condition for awareness of temporal passage, and thus very likely for awareness of space and time themselves, since both of these are implicated in our awareness of space and time.

**Four-Dimensionalism and the Lived Experience of Time** The main rival to Three-Dimensionalism is Four-Dimensionalism, which takes its inspiration from Relativity Theory in theoretical physics. According to this view, rooted in the Idealist philosophy dominant at the time that Relativity Theory was first developed, the physical universe is a four-dimensional space-time continuum that takes the form of a block universe in which all events coexist and from which all change and motion are excluded. What we call material things understood as physical objects are actually space-time “worms” corresponding to a path through space-time defined by a series of space-time points, somewhat like a vein in a block of marble. Since all events coexist in the block universe posited by Four-Dimensionalism, temporal passage is excluded along with all other kinds of change.

What would it be like for us to apprehend ourselves in lived experience as 4D space-time worms? Earlier in this essay I suggested that perhaps the best way to conceive of this would be to imagine the perceptual field as expanding from some initial set of given contents, which never alter or cease to be present to the apprehending subject, so that new contents are constantly added to that field for as long as that subject exists. On reflection, however, we can see that this was premature. In lived experience of this sort, there would still be before and after, earlier and later, as a consequence of the continuous introduction of new contents into the perceptual field that were not there previously. An “expansion rate” for that field could perhaps be calculated and a conventional metric applied to it, so that temporal distances between contents could be established. In that case, we would still experience temporal passage, even though we did not perceive those contents as successive in time.

In order to more closely approximate what a descriptively accurate lived experience of a 4D block universe, let us suppose that one’s perceptual field contains every moment and event of one’s life comprehended in a single, durationless, and unchanging experiential episode, one that takes in every moment of my life at a single glance. On this supposition, my view of my own life is like that comprehensive intuitive knowledge of all things attributed to the timelessly eternal God by traditional Anselmian theism, except that in my case I apprehend only a limited quantity of the coexisting events that compose the physical universe. If our lived experience of the world did come in this form, we would have direct confirmatory evidence that Four-Dimensionalism was true.

As it is, however, our lived experience is nothing like this; in fact, it flatly contradicts what we would expect lived experience to be like if Four-Dimensionalism were true. We experience the world as a series of ordered, successive events and states-of-affairs that are introduced into the perceptual field, remain there for a while, then pass out of that field as they are replaced by other, previously unperceived contents. Temporal passage thus seems an evident fact of experience, not to be gainsaid.

The usual Four-Dimensionalist response to this is to dismissively claim that the experience of temporal passage is an illusion. Yet how could the experience of temporal passage be an *illusion*? It seems that it could not be an illusion for the simple reason that, in order for there to be such an illusion, itself requires the passage of time as one of its necessary conditions. It cannot merely *seem* to me that lived experience consists of a series of ordered, successive events and states-of-affairs occurring in the perceptual field of an apprehending subject. The illusion of temporal passage is impossible unless there is temporal passage occurring in that field in the form of previously unperceived contents that enter it, persist in it for a while, and then pass out of it only to be replaced by others, themselves destined to be replaced by others in their turn for as long as that subject exists. That is an irrefragable fact of lived experience, one that can be evaded only by someone, like an eliminative materialist, who baldly denies that there is any such thing as lived experience at all. However, if we admit the facts of lived experience, it is then necessary to come to grips with the undeniable reality of temporal passage, at least as a feature of the way in which we ineluctably view the world and to somehow relate it to the Four-Dimensionalist perspective without inadvertently reintroducing temporal passage into the physical world. This is more difficult than one might think. A look at some proposals along this line will help enforce this idea.

Theodore Sider has suggested that perhaps the illusion of temporal passage is analogous to the old “flip-book” illusion, where a series of static drawings drawn at the bottom of the pages of a tablet or book are rapidly “flipped” with the thumb, thereby producing apparent motion on the bottom of those pages – of, say, a stick-figure man walking across the bottom of the page.[[1]](#footnote-1) What appears to be an instance of motion in fact turns out to be “reducible” to a series of static images, so that the perceived motion is purely subjective. However, this won’t do at all. The flip-book illusion is possible only for a being that possesses a capacity for persistence of vision, something possible only for an endurant apprehending subject with a particular sort of visual system that the illusion can exploit. More than this, for the illusion to occur, the pages need to be flipped, and at a steady rate (minimally, as cinematically measured, 24 frames per second) and as this occurs in time, can only happen if there is temporal passage in the act of flipping the pages, an event occurring in the external world. The analogy thus reinforces, rather than undermines, the experience of temporal passage.

Another, similar suggestion attempts to suggest that, rather than being endurant entities, apprehending subjects are perdurant ones, consisting of a densely ordered series of temporal parts, each of which possesses its own perceptual field and unique set of experiential contents, each corresponding to one of the space-time points composing the space-time worm that all of those temporal parts exhaustively constitute. These apprehending subjects are related so that each supersedes those that precede it in the series by retaining the contents of the subjects associated with previous space-time points in the form of (false) memories of those contents and adding some that were not contained in the perceptual fields of the subjects associated with those previous temporal parts. However, this will not do, either. Precisely what is left out of this picture of things is the lived experience of one’s progressively occupying all of these “positions” in the space-time worm and doing so serially rather than all at once, something that is possible only for an endurant entity subject to temporal passage. On the perdurantist view, there is no endurant apprehending subject, or overarching subject capable of externally viewing the subjects associated with each of the temporal parts of that space-time worm. There are only the parts themselves, each of which is a separate subject hermetically sealed against the others and at best externally causally related to them. Yet the events of my life are given to me in lived experience in a piecemeal fashion, one in a row or several at once, then supplanted and replaced by others. This dynamic aspect of our experience of ourselves cannot be captured by any perdurantist account of the apprehending subject without reintroducing temporal passage and change into the physical world.

Since I experientially occupy the moments of my life one after another rather than all at once, if we are to save reductionist perdurantism then we must be able to account for this feature of lived experience. Imagine, for example, that we represent all of the space-time points that compose the space-time worm that constitutes me as a physical object as a series of lights on a board. We might attempt to capture the dynamic feature of our experience of ourselves by imagining that each of these lights turn on, one after another, until they are all lit, at which point they all turn off together. This analogy would capture and preserve the progressive character of lived experience but at a significant cost – change and thus temporal passage would have been reintroduced into the physical world, a result that undermines the entire Four-Dimensionalist project, which proposes to account for the physical universe without reference to motion, change, or temporal passage. The lighting of each light, one after another, is a new event occurring in the world and adds to its being, as does the extinction of the lights when all have become lit together. Each and all of these lightings and extinguishings occur in and take time, the duration of which is in principle measurable using some conventional metric.

In one of a series of interesting papers that argue strenuously for Four-Dimensionalism, perdurantism, and the B-Theory of time, Akiko Frischhut takes what at first appears to be a novel approach to this issue.[[2]](#footnote-2) Abandoning the defense of the thesis that the experience of temporal passage is an illusion, Frischhut instead denies that we experience temporal passage. Although she does not deny that what I am calling the lived experience of temporal passage occurs, i.e., of a series of ordered, successive contents in the perceptual field of an apprehending subject, she maintains that the occurrence of that experience is compatible with the thesis that there is no temporal passage as a feature of the physical world and that we cannot successfully infer that time passes simply from our experience of succession and duration in experience.

This cannot be right since, as I have already noted, succession and duration in lived experience cannot occur unless actual temporal passage occurs, at least on the side of the apprehending subject. Frischhut tacitly admits this inasmuch as her claim that we do not experience temporal passage amounts to rather less than what it initially appears. In attempting to explain her thesis, Frischhut offers the following analogy. Suppose I enter an art exhibit containing two dark rooms, the first of which contains one small hole in the back wall, the other of which contains ten such holes. In the first room, I am instructed to look through the hole and am shown ten projected images, one after the other. In the second, I am instructed to move from hole to hole and look through each one. When I do as instructed I see the same ten images in the same order as I did in the first room. What I saw in each case was qualitatively the same, but only in the first case did the images succeed each other in time. In the second, the images existed statically and their apparent succession was merely an artifact of my movement through the room.

This is not very persuasive. In both rooms, the images were experientially encountered in such a manner that they constituted a series of ordered, successive contents in the perceptual field of an apprehending subject, something that requires temporal passage as a necessary condition. More than this, in both cases, my experiencing that series of images involved temporal succession, and so temporal passage, in the real world as well. In the first room, I was the fixed point and the images changed. In the second, the succession of images involved local motion from one viewing port to the next, which involves local motion and the temporal passage required for that to occur. Indeed, the analogy cannot even be mounted within a truly static, Idealist or Four-Dimensionalist perspective on reality.

Of course, no analogy is perfect, as Frischhut admits. The point to be rescued from all this is simply the claim that it is possible that what we call temporal passage occurs only on the side of the subject, simply as the manner in which we process experiential contents rather than as an objective feature of external reality. In that case, temporal passage would be only a subjective phenomenon to which nothing corresponds in the external world, the putative object of perceptual experience. In that case, we ultimately have just another way of asserting the claim that temporal passage is an illusion – perhaps the only version of that thesis compatible with the facts of lived experience. On this view, the apprehending subject is put in motion with regard to the events and states-of-affairs constituting the physical universe, being exclusively and successively related to different events and states-of-affairs at different times, with the result that lived experience of the world takes the form of a series of ordered, successive contents in the perceptual field of the apprehending subject.

There is no need for me to comment further on this proposal here. Instead, let me return to my main argument of this essay and draw the obvious dualistic conclusion I promised at the beginning of this essay. Suppose the proposal currently on the table is true. In that case, we reach the same dualistic conclusion we drew in the discussion of Three-Dimensionalism above, though on the opposite basis from the one applicable in that context. Where Three-Dimensionalism was concerned, the possibility of experiencing temporal passage required that the apprehending subject be at a fixed point, “at rest” with respect to the contents of the perceptual field in order for the experience of temporal passage to be possible, even when engaged in local motion – change of place. In that case, the apprehending subject has to be located outside of the temporal order and thus be a simple, sempiternal being transcending space and time, localized in space and present to space and time but not contained in it like a material thing. In the case currently under consideration, in which the physical world is static and excludes change, time, and motion, the experience of temporal passage has to due to the fact that the apprehending subject moves and changes in some fashion that permits it to be exclusively and successively related to different events at different times so that lived experience takes the form of a series of ordered, successive contents occurring in that subject’s perceptual field.

However, if the static, “block universe” promoted by Four-Dimensionalists, perdurantists, and eternalists is actual as the physical universe, then any such change or motion as would be involved in the apprehending subject being exclusively and successively related to different events at different times so that lived experience takes the form of a series of ordered, successive contents occurring in that subject’s perceptual field would be excluded if that subject were a physical object, part of a physical object, or some (statically comprehended) process occurring in a physical object. For nothing moves, changes, or can be exclusively and successively related to different events at different time in a static universe. If the physical universe is such a universe, then, the experience of temporal passage as I have characterized it would be impossible for any physical object, part of such an object, or any (statically comprehended) process occurring in any such object. Given that temporal passage is a fact of lived experience, and impossible apart from actual temporal passage even if this occurs only in the apprehending subject, it follows straightaway that the apprehending subject is not a physical object, part of such an object, or any (statically comprehended) process occurring in such an object. The apprehending subject, then, is non-physical in nature and transcends the physical universe that it somehow apprehends by means of the contents of its perceptual field and manages to comprehend theoretically by means of mathematical physics.

Thus, regardless of whether one endorses Three-Dimensionalism or Four-Dimensionalism, given that temporal passage is a feature of lived experience and impossible unless temporal passage, whether located objectively in the external world or confined solely to the lived experience of the subject, dualism seems unavoidable. The apprehending subject or Cartesian *res* *cogitans* is neither a material thing subject to temporal passage nor is it a physical object, part of a physical object, or some (statically comprehended) process occurring in a physical object. It transcends the physical universe and, whatever its nature happens to be, can only be an immaterial, non-physical thing.

To put this more generally, let me say this by way of final summary. The lived experience of time is of a series of ordered, successive events or states-of-affairs occurring in the perceptual field of the apprehending subject – at a bare minimum, a series of experiential contents that enter the perceptual field, persist there for a while, then pass out of that field and so out of the lived experience of the apprehending subject. While some of these are relatively permanent and stable, others are subject to change. In some cases, we attribute the source of that change to changes on the side of the apprehending subject; in other cases, we attribute those changes to some external source that produces those contents. Regardless of which it is, the very possibility of the experience of change resides in there being something that alters, and something fixed against which that alteration can be apprehended. Whether we suppose that it is the noumenal world that is in motion and the apprehending subject at some fixed point to observe this changing world, or the world that is at rest and the subject in motion relative to it in such a way as to produce the illusion of a changing order of nature, the lived experience of change requires that the apprehending subject and what that subject apprehends belong to different orders, at least unless some form of Idealism is true. If we thus admit the irrefragable facts of lived experience and attempt to retain the view that the external world (the world “outside the mind”) is an order of material things or of physical objects, some form of Dualism seems the unavoidable upshot. This is a conclusion that I gladly draw.

1. Sider gives this example in a YouTube video of a popular lecture on Four-Dimensionalism presented to college students. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Akiko Frischhut, “What Experience Cannot tell us about Time,” *Topoi*, Vol. I, 2013, 1-13. This is one of several interesting articles by this author on the philosophy of time.. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)