

Existence Is No Thing: Existence, Fixity and Transience

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Considering whether existence, i.e., being, is a thing might seem like the height of aimless metaphysical chin stroking. However, the issue—specifically, whether existence is a quality—is significant, bearing on how reality, this all-encompassing totality, is. On one view, reality at large is ontologically fixed, the sum total of things does not (and cannot) vary; on another view, reality is ontologically transient, the sum total of things varies. I first show that if existence is a thing, that reality is ontologically fixed follows. So I consider whether existence is indeed a thing. I demonstrate that “it” could not be: existence is no existent. I then discuss what it is to exist, given existence is nothing at all. I maintain there are no grounds for the view that reality is ontologically fixed. I argue, from the irrefragable basis of temporal differentiation—the world going from *thus...* to *as so*—that reality is ontologically transient. I consider some objections to ontological transience and conclude by considering the key to understanding the overall structure in reality and what it reveals about how very inconstant all this is.

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1. Introduction

Some thing exists. If by ‘thing’ here, one means simply *existent* or *being* or *entity* (I use these terms interchangeably) this claim is not only patent but incontrovertible. One’s merely considering the claim demonstrates its truth; any attempt to deny it would be incoherent.

If some thing exists, one might inquire *how* it does, wondering not how it *came to be*, but how it *exists at all*, that is, *what it is to exist*. Perhaps a thing exists by engaging in some activity—*being*, i.e., *existing*—or by bearing some quality—*existence*; perhaps a thing exists by some other means entirely or by no means at all. Reflecting on these first suggestions raises the question of whether existence (or existing) is itself a being, a thing of some category or other, that makes things exist in virtue of their relation to it.

Considering whether existence is a thing might seem like the height of aimless metaphysical chin stroking. Seemingly very little could hang on such an abstruse matter. However, the issue—specifically, whether existence is a quality—arises in connection to so-called *ontological arguments* for the existence of God, arguments that purport to show that God in fact exists merely by reflecting on what God is supposed to be (such as, a being than which no greater can be conceived or a supremely perfect entity). The issue also arises in the context of trying to determine what is expressed by existential claims, such as *the Susquehanna River exists* and negative existentials, such as *Harry Potter does not exist* or *Elizabeth Fry no longer exists*. The latter are perplexing, insofar as they seem to refer to something in order to affirm that that thing lacks existence and so is nothing at all (and, a fortiori, is no referent). Yet whether existence is a thing is actually far more significant than these niche considerations indicate.

Whether existence is a thing bears on how *reality*—the *world*, this all-encompassing totality—is. More specifically, the ontological status of ex-

istence per se bears on the general structure in reality, not only on how extensive this structure is, but on how it can vary. On one view, reality at large is *ontologically fixed*: the sum total of things does not (and cannot) vary. No thing ever comes to be or ceases to be simpliciter; thus, if a thing is ever part of reality, every relation it bears is borne ceaselessly. On this view, all that is, at any point, is, collectively, an invariable ontological monolith. On another view, reality is *ontologically transient*: the sum total of things varies. A thing might come to be in reality that was in no sense there or something might entirely cease to be, standing in no relation to anything whatsoever. On this latter view, all that is might be distinct from one point to another.

Many philosophers hold that reality is ontologically fixed. In this paper, I first show that if existence is a thing—a quality that makes something be by bearing it—that reality is ontologically fixed follows. So I consider whether existence is indeed a thing. I demonstrate that “it” could not be; existence is no existent. I then discuss what it is to exist, that is, what a thing is, given that existence is nothing at all and, hence, to be in reality is not to bear some special quality. Although to hold that reality is ontologically fixed on grounds that require existence to be a thing is misguided, one might believe there are nevertheless other grounds for this view. I maintain there could not be. I argue, from the irrefragable basis of *temporal differentiation*—the world going from *thus...* to *as so*—that reality is ontologically transient. After considering some objections to ontological transience, I conclude by considering the key to understanding the overall structure in reality and what it reveals about how very inconstant all this is.

2. Existence and Ontological Fixity

The issue of what it is to be bears on literally every single thing. Its generality makes discerning a strategy for illuminating the issue difficult. Likewise, the abstractness of the views of ontological fixity and ontological transience makes elusive grounds for deciding between the two. I believe that insight into the overall structure in reality—and into each thing and these incompatible views of being, as well—can be acquired in light of some of the constraints on inquiry itself, certain conditions that make any inquiry possible.

2.1 What is given in confronting reality

As observed at the outset, something existing is incontrovertible. Reality, the world, is not empty. In fact, in confronting reality, one engages a *diverse*

array: a green bit here, a brown bit there, something or other spherical, rectangularity, a pleasant aroma, a dull roar, a clank, an itch, smoothness, some anxiety, resolve, etc. What exactly makes up this diversity is not important here. What is, though, is the diversity. It indicates that there is, in reality, *more than one thing*; for although a thing can be complex, involving different beings as parts, no single thing is diverse per se. That there is in reality distinct things is as indisputable as the existence of something or other. Try to dispute the diversity in the world. The very effort to do so, to hold some whatnot at critical distance to question it, demonstrates some of the diversity at issue. This diversity in reality reveals that the world comprises things standing in relations. These things in relations (the relations themselves things)²¹ is the *structure* in reality.

That reality is now, at this moment, diverse is manifest. If one confronts reality again... now, at this distinct moment, one finds it diverse—but in a different way. The former phenomenon is diversity at a moment, the latter is diversity through moments. Call this latter phenomenon, the world going from *thus*, at one moment, to *as so*, at a distinct one, *temporal differentiation*. This phenomenon, like diversity at a moment, is indisputable. Merely considering it to dispute it requires the phenomenon, even if the only difference from now... to now is an intensified scrutiny of reality; moreover, any marshalling of putative grounds against the phenomenon requires and demonstrates it. Experiencing temporal differentiation illustrates a distinct, more restrictive phenomenon that depends on temporal differentiation, to wit, *change*. Change occurs when a certain thing is one way at one moment and an incompatible way at another moment. This phenomenon, too, is beyond dispute. One witnesses the world now... and now, experiencing some mental difference between the two moments. To disabuse one that they themselves underwent no change requires that they consider grounds, accept them, revise their understanding of the world or their experiences of it; but all this, of course, requires change. This phenomenon, with temporal differentiation, show that reality is, by some means, *inconstant*: things differ between moments or, more generally, what is so differs from one moment to another.

These phenomena—diversity, temporal differentiation, change (and, with the last two, inconstancy)—are *given* in that they are present merely in confronting reality. They are prior to any conceptualization and, hence, theorizing about the world. They are pre-conceptual (and pre-theoretical)

²¹ Or simply *related things*, if one wishes to remain neutral on the issue of whether relations themselves exist.

in that they are verifiable prior to any discriminating of and classifying of things in order to provide theories of those specific things and their relations. As such, the phenomena are preconditions of one theorizing—or engaging in *any* activity—with respect to any thing at all. They are, then, among the formal constraints on inquiry, conditions that must be in place for inquiry to take place at all, and so must be compatible with any true theory.

I introduce these phenomena because they are pivotal not only to understanding what it is to be (as discussed in §3), but also to determining which view of reality, ontological fixity or ontological transience, is correct (as discussed in §4). However, here, in order to clarify the view, I want to show that ontological fixity is not obviously incompatible with any of the phenomena. The (ontological) fixity of reality is consistent with the diverse world being significantly inconstant.

Proponents of the ontological fixity of reality accept that there are many moments, indeed, infinitely many. All these and everything that exists at them are equally real. This diverse structure is supposed to be able to provide an account of temporal differentiation. If this phenomenon demands merely distinct moments—reality now... and reality now—the supposition is not farfetched. (Though whether a satisfactory account of temporal differentiation can be given simply in terms of distinct moments is a matter examined in §4 below.) Change requires that a thing exist at (or through) distinct moments bearing incompatible properties. The view of reality on which it is ontologically fixed certainly has the means to accommodate this phenomenon.²² So this view seems compatible with the unquestionable data that reality is inconstant. Note, furthermore, the view seems compatible with another seeming datum, to wit, that things do not *always exist* in the sense of existing *at every moment*. If reality is ontologically fixed, things never come into being or cease to be *simpliciter*; nevertheless, a thing might come to be relative to a given moment, m_1 , in that m_1 is the first (or earliest) ceaselessly-existing moment at which that thing is permanently in reality and cease to be relative to a moment, m_2 , in that m_2 is the last (or latest) ceaselessly-existing moment at which that thing is permanently in reality.

Thus, the view that reality is ontologically fixed is not obviously incompatible with some of the formal constraints on inquiry—though, again, whether it is actually compatible remains to be seen. At this point, I want to consider the view in more detail, for it is not only plausible, but ineluc-

²² I set aside here any concerns regarding the so-called *problem of temporary intrinsics*. The modern locus classicus of this putative problem can be found at Lewis 1986: 202-204.

table, on a certain account of what it is to exist that many philosophers take for granted.

2.2 A Parmenidean route to ontological fixity

The issues here regarding existence and the ontological fixity or transience of reality are profound, arising at the roots of Western thought. They are of such significance that they follow the course of Western philosophy down all its main branches, playing prominent roles in discussions within the Scholastic, Continental and Anglo-American traditions. The written source of these perennial issues is a fragment of a poem by Parmenides in which he contends that there are considerations that show that “being, it is ungenerated and indestructible,/whole, of one kind and unwavering, and complete.”²³ When one understands being aright, difficult questions have clear answers: “How might what is then perish? How might it come into being?/For if it came into being it is not, nor is it if it is ever going to be./ Thus generation is quenched and perishing unheard of.”²⁴

These enigmatic lines and the view of reality they outline become comprehensible, even compelling, with a single assumption about being, namely, that *being is itself a thing*. Being is not assumed to be a substance, a non-qualitative entity like a tree or watering can, one that bears qualities but does not qualify others; rather, it is assumed to be a quality, an entity that qualifies another, in that it contributes to how the latter is by standing in some relation to it. This assumption and another, closely related, to wit, that *one thing can make another thing be* are the key to understanding the allure of ontological fixity. Here I critically examine a few illustrative discussions of Parmenidean themes that purport to show reality is ontologically fixed. The discussions come from different traditions and are chosen for their explicitness. Their congruence indicates the elemental significance of Parmenidean considerations.

Emanuele Severino, the eminent 20th-century Italian philosopher, regards all of Western philosophy as vitiated for failing to appreciate the insight of Parmenides. Although he disagrees with Parmenides that being is uniform (“of one kind”)—Severino accepts that reality comprises many things, regarding this as the only correct modification of Parmenides’ views—²⁵ he

²³ Barnes 1987: 134.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See Severino 1972/2016: 45. Thus, Severino accepts the “Platonic ‘parricide’” from *The Sophist*. See, as well, Severino 1972/2016: 87, 152-153.

accepts as the guiding insight into reality and, hence, to all metaphysical inquiry that there can be no generation (i.e., coming to be simpliciter) or annihilation (i.e., ceasing to be simpliciter). His argument for this momentous conclusion is not elaborate. Indeed, Severino maintains the conclusion turns on merely appreciating *what existence is*. This appreciation, with a principle of non-contradiction, suffices, according to Severino, to show that reality is ontologically fixed.

Severino believes the key to understanding existence is contained within Parmenides' statement that "Being is, while Nothing is-not." This statement indicates "not simply a property of Being... but rather its very *meaning*: Being *is* that which is opposed to Nothing, it is this very opposing."²⁶ If being has a property, it must be some thing (likewise, if being "*is*", it must be some thing). By 'meaning' here, I believe Severino is characterizing the *purpose* or *function* of this thing, being (i.e., existence): it opposes nothingness. It is the thing by which anything is at all. The being of a thing is, therefore, an existent that plays some explanatory role in accounting for how that thing is. As such, being is a quality, the quality whereby a thing is something rather than nothing. In virtue of this quality, a given thing is ontologically positive, in opposition to the negativity of nothingness.

If this is what being is and how a thing exists, Severino thinks that things cannot cease to be simpliciter (or come to be simpliciter). To maintain otherwise is inconsistent. Thus:

Any determination [i.e., a thing, a distinct contribution to reality] is a determinate positivity, a determinate imposing on Nothing: determinate Being... This pen, for example, is not a Nothing, and therefore we say it is a Being; but it is a Being determined in such-and-such a way: this shape, this length, this weight, this color. When we say 'this pen', this is what we mean. But—and here is the crux of the matter—if we say that this pen is-not, when it is-not, we are saying that this positive is negative.²⁷

This is contradictory. Similarly: "‘Is’ (exists) means ‘is not nothing’; and therefore ‘is not’ means ‘is nothing’... But what occurs when a pen is nothing? What does ‘when a pen is nothing’ mean? It means by *no* means ‘when Nothing is nothing,’ but rather ‘when *a pen*—i.e., that positive, that Being that is determined in that specific way—is nothing’; it means, that is, ‘when Being (this Being) is nothing.’"²⁸ This, too, is contradictory.

²⁶ Severino 1972/2016: 36. Italics in original.

²⁷ Severino 1972/2016: 44. Italics in original.

²⁸ *Ibid.* Italics in original.

Elsewhere, Severino makes essentially the same argument:

“When this lamp is no more”! Will people never wake up to the *meaning* of this phrase, and of the countless analogous phrases that they think can be constructed?... [T]he phrase “when this lamp is nothing” includes the affirmation “this lamp is nothing” (albeit referring to a different situation from the present one, a situation in which one recognizes that this lamp is not a Nothing). And yet, this affirmation is the unfathomable absurd—it is the identification of the positive (i.e., of that positive which is the lamp) and the negative, of Being and Nothing. Since this lamp is this lamp, and as such is meaningful, not only is Nothing, *in fact*, not predicated of it, but such a predication is *impossible*—given that the supreme law of Being is the opposition of the positive and the negative.²⁹

Severino speaks of the meaning of existence (i.e., being), yet also of the meaning of phrases using ‘is’, linguistic items that express something about existence. His talk of linguistic meaning and of what one says and of predication suggests that the issues here are semantic. This is misleading. The issues do not concern primarily how one *speaks* of being, that is, how one aptly represents the world—what is *true*—but how things in the world are in themselves—what is *so*. Considerations in the same spirit as Severino’s, but strictly ontological, explicitly about things, provide even more compelling argument for ontological fixity, simply on the basis of what being is supposed here to be.

Thus, consider any thing. In order for that thing to be what it is, regardless of what exactly it is, it must oppose nothingness; it must be a “determinate positivity”. It must exist and so bear the quality of existence. Crucial, then, not just to the existence of that thing, but to that thing being *what* it is and, hence, to being *the very thing* it is, is that it bear the quality of existence. That very thing could not fail to bear this quality (and so be). Existing, that is, being—opposing nothingness—is as important to that thing being what it is and to being the very thing it is as any more distinctive quality. Take, for example, this sample of water. Plausibly, this water must be composed of H₂O molecules. It could not be water and, a fortiori, *this* water without such composition. But no less important to it being water (or this water) is its being something, some determinate positivity opposing nothingness. What enables this water to oppose nothing is existing and it exists (one is assuming here) in virtue of bearing the quality of existence. This very sample of water failing to exist is, therefore, impossible; no more possible than it failing to be composed of H₂O molecules.

²⁹ Severino 1972/2016: 86. Italics in original.

There is, of course, nothing special about this water. To suppose, then, that a thing, any thing at all, might fail to exist is not to recognize fully what it is qua (existing) thing. As a “determinate positivity” it must bear the quality of existence. Any thing that might fail to exist is not properly opposed to being in the first place and so is nothing at all. Consequently, every thing must exist and any “thing” that fails to could not be. Reality is ontologically fixed.

Everything, simply given what it is, must exist, so each thing is essentially existent. In other words, every thing is a necessary existent. That Severino regards things in this way is clear from the exasperation he conveys when considering the attempts in the history of Western philosophy to prove the existence of a necessary being:

Here [when one considers whether there is a necessary being] metaphysics (throughout the course of its history) has never been outraged—though it has good reason to be!...Seeking necessary Being means seeking the Being of which it cannot be said—in any circumstance, at any moment—“it is-not” (“it has gone away from—it might leave—it has not yet entered—existence”). But *here* is the great barbarity of thought—here, in asking, “Does a Being that cannot be said to not-be exist?” “Does a Being-that-is exist?” For with this one is asking, “Does a positive that is not the negative exist?”—one is *asking whether* the positive is negative and, in the asking, one admits the possibility that such is the case. Asking whether necessary Being exists means affirming Being’s contradictoriness, its identity with Nothing.³⁰

To affirm the contradictoriness of any thing, including being itself, is clearly mistaken. So if one takes existence to be a thing, to wit, the quality whereby a thing is something rather than nothing, that every thing is necessary—and, consequently, no thing could cease to be simpliciter or come to be simpliciter (for it could not fail to exist prior to its existing)—follows. The ontological fixity of reality follows merely from what existence is supposed to be.

This conclusion is corroborated by other, closely related, considerations. If existence were a quality, what coming to be (simpliciter) or ceasing to be (simpliciter) would be is the gain or loss of a quality. In other words, generation or annihilation would be a *change* in the very thing that comes to be or ceases to be. Such change, however, is impossible.

If what it is to exist is to bear the quality of existence, then in order for some “thing” to come to be simpliciter, that is, come to be when “it” was in no sense part of reality, that “thing” must come to bear the quality of existence. However, if that “thing” did not (yet) bear this quality, “it” would

³⁰ Severino 1972/2016: 50. Italics in original.

not be anything at all and so could not bear the quality—nor could “it”, nothing at all, ever bear it. So “it” could not come to be. Moreover, if ceasing to be (simpliciter) is change and, hence, requires the loss of the quality of existence, no thing could ever change in this way. Change requires that one and the same thing have incompatible properties at distinct moments. If a thing exists, that is, bears the quality of existence, at moment m_1 , in order for it to change its ontological status, it must bear an incompatible quality (or lose existence) at a distinct moment, m_2 . Yet regardless of how it is at m_2 , it nevertheless bears existence at m_1 . Even if it—per impossibile, given the above argument for the necessary existence of each thing from simply the quality of existence per se—lost the quality of existence at m_2 , it would nonetheless bear it at m_1 , and so not cease to be simpliciter. Therefore, nothing can ever come to be (simpliciter) or cease to be (simpliciter) via change.

These considerations underlie the sort of argument that Aristotle attributes to “the first of those who studied philosophy”,³¹ who held that “none of the things that are either comes to be or passes out of existence, because what comes to be must do so either from what is or from what is not, both of which are impossible. For what is cannot come to be (because it *is* already), and from what is not nothing could have come to be (because something must be underlying).”³² Despite its claim that no thing could pass out of existence, this argument addresses only the (im)possibility of things coming to be simpliciter. But, as just argued, if ceasing to be simpliciter requires changing by losing the quality of existence, such change is, in fact, impossible.

Aristotle does not embrace the conclusion(s) of this argument. A.N. Prior, however, does. In considering a version of the argument (one that strikes the claim about passing out of existence), Prior states: “The argument seems to me conclusive...”³³ Prior accepts that in order for something to come to be, that very thing must go from not existing, not bearing the quality of existence, to existing, bearing this quality. He accepts, then, that a difference in ontological status must come via change—and yet it cannot.

As Prior notes, these considerations show not only that something cannot come into or go out of existence simpliciter, they also show that a thing

³¹ Presumably, Aristotle is referring to Parmenides and his followers, for he goes on to say that those who used this argument so “exaggerated” its consequences that they “went so far as to deny even the existence of the plurality of things maintaining that only what is itself is”. (*Physics* 191a32-33).

³² *Physics* 191a27-31. Emphasis in original.

³³ Prior 1967: 139. Prior goes on to observe what I noted above: that although, on this view, nothing can come to be simpliciter, this is consistent with a thing *starting* to be, i.e., coming to be relative to a given moment (namely, the first or earliest at which it permanently exists).

cannot be wholly *generated*, brought into existence simpliciter, nor *annihilated*, made to cease to be simpliciter, by means of the agency of some other thing. Prior discusses this in connection to an argument considered (but not endorsed) by Aquinas that objects to the possibility of God creating a thing from nothing.³⁴ The argument, however, generalizes to apply to mundane creators: a parent begetting a child, a carpenter building a house, etc. If being brought into existence (simpliciter) requires one to confer the quality of existence on what is generated, that thing must already exist in order to come to bear this quality. Thus, the thing must bear existence prior to bearing existence. This is incoherent and so impossible. Yet if a thing in no sense exists, it is not and cannot be there to receive the quality of existence. Similarly, a thing cannot be annihilated by another—if annihilation requires the removal of the quality of existence. For if a thing exists at moment, *m*, there is nothing an agent can do in any subsequent moment to remove the quality of existence that thing bears at *m*. Hence, one cannot make it cease to be simpliciter.

If existence is itself a thing, namely, the quality whereby a thing is something rather than nothing, then, arguably, nothing can come to be or cease to be simpliciter *simply given what existence is*. This is corroborated when one recognizes that nothing per se could come to be or cease to be simpliciter via change—if existence is a quality—and, furthermore, nothing could be (absolutely) generated or annihilated by the act of any agent. Therefore, on this account of what existence is, ontological fixity is not only plausible, but ineluctable.

3. Existence Is No Thing, but Things Exist Nonetheless

If being, i.e., existence, is a thing, a quality the bearing of which makes something be, the ontological fixity of reality follows. Whether existence is indeed a thing, however, is not obvious. Philosophers have taken different views of the matter. Thus, insofar as one is interested in existence, how things in the world are in general and how exactly the world is inconstant, one should examine whether existence is itself a thing.

So consider now whether existence is a thing. This is a difficult question, for its abstruseness makes seeing how it might be answered unclear. Some philosophers try to answer it by examining language. Thus, just like one may say *Campbell wonders* or *Basil is wondering*, one may say *Campbell exists* or

³⁴ Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei*, Q. 3, Art. 1, Obj. 17. See Prior 1967: 139-140 for discussion.

Basil is existing. The grammatical similarities and assumptions about what is being said in the first two sentences might lead one to accept that the verb ‘to exist’ expresses a condition that a thing can have by doing in a particular way or by bearing some quality. Then again, considering negative existentials, such as *Harry Potter does not exist* or *Elizabeth Fry no longer exists*, leads some to deny that existence is a quality. Were it one, the grammatical form of these claims seems to indicate that the quality is denied of “things” (such as Harry Potter and Elizabeth Fry) that, consequently, are nothing at all and so, paradoxically, are not there to be referred to or characterized. Reflecting on such negative existentials leads some philosophers, most famously Frege and Russell, to maintain that the logical form of such claims (and most simple existential ones, as well) is not as it appears. Typical existential claims, positive or negative, are not about non-qualitative, individual things, but about the qualities or concepts of such and whether these qualities have instances (or the concepts are empty).³⁵ An existential claim is true if the relevant quality is instantiated; a negative existential claim is true if the relevant quality is not instantiated. Existence is, then, a “second-order” quality, a quality of qualities. Yet others, notably Moore, considering existential claims, concludes that there appear to be no good grounds for maintaining that existence is not a quality of familiar, non-qualitative things, such as tigers.³⁶

Even this very brief discussion shows that linguistic considerations are not conclusive regarding the question of what existence is. In fact, I think such considerations are wholly idle in this connection. Any claim used to represent the world, as is an existential or negative existential one, can be interpreted in ever so many ways. How to interpret the claim in a given context is either stipulated, in which case it can provide no insight into how the world is independently of the claim, or it is interpreted in light of the subject matter the claim is supposed to have. In this latter case, apt suppositions concerning what thing(s) the claim is about and how the claim characterizes that thing depend on what things are in the world and how they are. In short, reality constrains language—rather than vice versa—and so, in order to best interpret one’s claims about reality, one must have some prior understanding of the things herein that is not primarily linguistic. Therefore, insight into what existence is or, for that matter, what any (non-linguistic) thing is must come by engaging the world directly and not by reflecting on language and how it is used.

To determine whether existence is itself a thing, one must direct one’s

³⁵ See Russell 1905, 1918/1985 and Frege 1893/1903/2013.

³⁶ See Moore 1936.

attention to the world, to the things in this all-encompassing totality. Some eminent philosophers have done just this. Hume concludes that existence is not a quality of anything, for there is no impression nor idea one might have of it (and, hence, “it” is nothing at all): “The idea of existence... is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent. To reflect on any thing simply, and to reflect on it as existent, are nothing different from each other.”³⁷ Likewise, Kant concludes: “*Being* is obviously not a real predicate, [i.e., quality].”³⁸ The basis of this conclusion is the observation that “[W]hen I think a thing, through whichever and however many predicates [i.e., qualities] I like (even in its thoroughgoing determination), not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing *is*.”³⁹

Both Hume and Kant seem to assume that were existence a quality it would be discernible merely by reflecting on things or, at least, that some evidence of its being would necessarily be found by regarding things in different ways, that is, by considering the qualities they actually have or might. However, this strategy for determining whether some quality is in fact present is mistaken. One cannot think of a thing without regarding it as self-identical or as an object of thought, and so thinking of something as self-identical or as an object of thought might seem to be no different than simply reflecting on that thing *per se*. Yet it does not follow that being self-identical or being an object of thought are not qualities. Moreover, when one thinks of a crimson thing as red or of water as H₂O, nothing obvious “gets added to” that crimson thing or to that water. Being red and being composed of H₂O molecules are, nevertheless, uncontroversially qualities. Failing to “add to” something in thought is, then, no indication that a putative quality is not actually a quality. This undermines the more general point that Kant attempts to make with respect to existence and its seeming insignificance in thought. If existence is in fact a quality, then, plausibly (in light of the discussion in the preceding section), it is had essentially by each thing. This would account for why its addition is superfluous in thought.

Linguistic considerations, as well as those concerning how things present in thought are, then, at best, inconclusive with respect to the question of whether existence is a thing. If this question is to be answered conclusively, one must use other means.

³⁷ Hume 1739-1740/2007: 1.2.6.

³⁸ Kant 1781/1998: A598/B626. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ *Ibid*: A600/B628. Emphasis in original.

3.1 Why existence is nothing at all

I believe that demonstrating existence is nothing at all is straightforward—merely by considering what existence is supposed to be were it a thing. Existence is supposed to be a quality the bearing of which makes something be. The category of existence, i.e., quality, is actually irrelevant here. What is crucial is that existence, *e*, is supposed to be *the (or a) thing whereby any thing is something rather than nothing*, whereby a thing is in reality at all.

But no thing could be like this. If *e* were not itself a thing, if it were nothing at all, it could play no explanatory role in accounting for the existence of other things. So *e* must be a thing (given what it is supposed to do). However, if *e* is a thing, it must stand in some relation to the thing whereby any thing is something rather than nothing, namely, *e*. *e* must, then, stand in some relation to itself to make itself be. In order to stand in this (or any) relation, though, *e* must (first) exist. Therefore, for *e* to exist at all requires, as a prerequisite of its own existence, *e*; *e* must be *prior* to itself. Yet no thing could be prior to itself.

Note that the priority here is not (merely) *temporal*; the relevant sense of priority is *ontological*, in that one thing is supposed to be ontologically prior to another when the existence of the former is a condition of the existence of the latter, that is, when the former is necessary to make (concurrently) the latter exist. If the operative sense of priority were simply temporal, then one might maintain that *e* is a necessary existent, one that has always been and, hence, has always been there to make things—including itself—be. But *e* is supposed to be the thing whereby any thing is in the world at all, and so the priority here is taken to be explanatory and, hence, ontological. Given what *e* is supposed to be, *e* must be ontologically prior to *everything*, including itself. As just observed, however, nothing can be prior to itself. Therefore, *e* is impossible.

If one is unconvinced by the foregoing argument or supposes that *e*, the putative quality of existence, is somehow special and does not itself require being made to exist, even as it makes every other thing be, there are more general considerations that show the *e* cannot exist. These considerations also demonstrate the impossibility of ontological priority—and so show that there are no “levels of reality”, no hierarchy with respect to being. The argument for this profound and significant conclusion is surprisingly simple: if one thing were to make another thing be, the latter must stand in some relation to the former. However, in order for anything to stand in any relation or to bear any quality whatsoever, that thing must (first) be.

Therefore, it cannot be by standing in some relation—*making be, realization, actualization, supervenience, grounding* or any other so-called *building relation*—that a thing exists in the first place. Since a thing cannot exist and, a fortiori, stand in a relation without being what it is, being how it is essentially, being the very thing it is and being the same thing as itself, no thing can account for how another is what it is or how it is essentially or for its individuation or identity. On this basis, I argue elsewhere that *each thing is fundamental*.⁴⁰ There can be no entity that makes another be simpliciter. Hence, if existence is supposed to be such a thing, there is no such thing as existence.

If existence is no thing—if there is no quality in virtue of which a thing is at all—then there is no thing that makes something positive in opposition to the negativity of nothingness. There is, furthermore, no quality that each thing has essentially that makes that thing exist necessarily. If existence is no thing, no quality, then coming to be does not require some change in what comes to exist, to wit, coming to bear existence, and ceasing to be does not require the loss of the quality of existence. Similarly, bringing something into existence does not require an agent to confer this quality on some thing; nor does destroying a thing require one to remove this quality. Therefore, all Parmenidean grounds for taking reality to be ontologically fixed are refuted. Bearing the quality of existence or standing in some relation to a thing that makes it be is not how a thing exists. Insofar as one is interested in what it is to exist, some other account is needed.⁴¹

3.2 What it is to exist

Any account of *thing* in general—an account of what any thing whatsoever is—is bound to be circular for every account must be given in terms of some thing or other. Nevertheless, an account of *thing* can be insightful if it is presented in the appropriate context. One must find a context that makes no presupposition about things, lest it beg some question about what it is to exist and thereby undermine the wholly general account being sought, and yet is nonetheless able to illuminate everything whatsoever. Such a context is available, I submit, by confronting reality, this encompassing

⁴⁰ See Fiocco 2019. In this connection, see Fiocco 2021, as well.

⁴¹ There is some irony here. Severino critiques Western philosophy—indeed, all of Western civilization—on the grounds that its practitioners have erroneously reified *nothingness* and so accept ceasing to be simpliciter as possible. This is, according to Severino, the essence of an injurious *nihilism*. However, if I am correct, Severino's critique and, hence, philosophy is based entirely on the error of reifying *being*.

totality, merely as the *impetus to inquiry*, that is, by engaging whatever it is that encompasses one—be it inner or outer, mental or material, subjective or objective, etc.—without taking any thing for granted regarding the whatnot one is engaging. One simply confronts whatever, without trying to conceptualize or otherwise classify it.

This unconceptualized and, hence, unconditional, unqualified confrontation with reality presents a diverse array (of whatnot). Such diversity, a lack of uniformity, is a *sine qua non* of inquiry, for all inquiry must involve at least some difference between inquirer and object of inquiry. This given diversity is, as noted above, indisputably there; “it” can serve as the basis of understanding what it is to exist and, furthermore, what a thing is. Thus, to exist is to be amidst this all-encompassing diverse array: to be alike or unlike (for one’s engagement is to be without qualification) any bit of this. What a thing is is something that contributes to this diversity, a constraint that is the ontological basis of an at least partial explanation for how reality—*all this*—is diverse in the precise way it is.

In order for something, viz., some thing, to contribute to reality, it must be some way(s) or other. In other words, a thing is a *natured entity* that provides some constraint on this incontrovertible diversity. A *thing* is a *natured entity*. This is circular, but not vacuous, for the world at large provides a context in which it is not only meaningful, but discriminating. Things, each of which is fundamental, contribute in virtue of how each is to making this all-encompassing totality just as it is. Existing, then, does not involve something that makes a thing be, that puts or holds a thing in reality. Rather, to exist is simply to be amidst *all this*. The object of any inquiry is herein and so then are the means of accounting for every phenomenon.

4. Temporal Differentiation and Ontological Transience

If existence were a thing, the world would be fixed with respect to being, an ontological monolith. Existence, however, is no thing—despite things existing. Still, this leaves open the question of whether reality is ontologically fixed or transient. A Parmenidean route to ontological fixity is closed, but that does not mean there is no other. I maintain there are conclusive grounds, from an irrefragable basis, for the ontological transience of reality. These grounds are given merely in confronting reality... *twice*.

4.1 Temporal differentiation is incompatible with ontological fixity

Consider again temporal differentiation. This is the phenomenon of the world going from *thus...* to *as so* (here I demonstrate, at two moments, the distinct precise ways the totality encompassing one is). One encounters temporal differentiation when one confronts the world...and confronts it again experiencing any difference. A feature of the experience of this phenomenon is the vivid salience of one moment (and the things thereat) to the exclusion of all others: one experiences vividly only *this* moment... then one experiences vividly only *this* one. As discussed above, temporal differentiation, like the diversity in the world, is indisputable. Any attempt to dispute the phenomenon not only requires it, but demonstrates it. There is no account of temporal differentiation and one's experience of it compatible with the ontological fixity of reality. On this basis, I conclude that the world is ontologically transient.

Temporal differentiation is central to modern discussions of the metaphysics of time. The phenomenon cannot be credibly denied and, indeed, no one denies it. The primary bone of contention regarding the world in time is what structure it has, that is, what things it must include, to account for temporal differentiation. There are two general views of this structure. On the first, adopted by so-called B-theorists, tenseless theorists, eternalists, et al., there is no distinctively temporal difference (in terms of, say, monadic temporal qualities) between one moment and another when the world goes from being *thus* to *as so*. In other words, the world in time is *ontologically homogeneous* with respect to temporal differentiation. On the second general view of the structure in temporal reality, adopted by so-called A-theorists, tensed theorists, passage theorists, moving spotlight theorists, growing block theorists, presentists et al., there is some distinctively temporal difference—either qualitative or more significantly ontological—between one moment and another when the world goes from being *thus* to *as so*. Thus, with respect to temporal differentiation, the world in time is *ontologically heterogeneous*.

I argue elsewhere that the first general class of views, on which temporal reality is ontologically homogeneous, cannot provide a satisfactory account of one's experience of the world in time and, hence, of temporal differentiation.⁴² On this general view, there are (infinitely) many moments of time, all of which are equally real—as is anything that exists at any moment—and none of which bears any peculiarly temporal distinction. Consequently, on

⁴² See Fiocco, forthcoming.

this view, one is equally real at any moment one ever exists.⁴³ One should expect, then, to experience the world as strikingly as one now does at any moment one exists (and is conscious). Of course, though, one never experiences more than a single moment as vividly salient. The view of temporal reality on which it is ontologically homogeneous, however, simply does not have the means to account for why one only ever experiences a unique moment—one that excludes any other—despite one being no less real at ever so many equally-real moments. Were this the correct account of the world in time, seemingly one's experience at any moment would be some sort of bewildering hodgepodge of many moments (all those at which one is no less real and conscious!). But, obviously, this is not one's experience. Moreover, this general view cannot account for the crucial transition that one experiences repeatedly via temporal differentiation: reality going from *this* moment... to *this* one. Temporal differentiation requires other than just distinct, equally-real moments; it requires some means of accounting for the transition from one moment to the next. Accounting for this transition requires a temporally relevant distinction between moments, some quality (or difference) that explains why first one moment is salient, then another one is. Yet any such distinction is baldly inconsistent with the view that the world in time is ontologically homogeneous.

Temporal reality is, therefore, not ontologically homogeneous. This conclusion shows something important about the world and its structure. It does not itself, however, shed light on the key ontological question of concern here, namely, whether reality is ontologically fixed or transient. Although one can infer, from the world in time not being ontologically homogeneous, that it is heterogeneous, and so there is some (distinctly temporal) difference between the moment when the world is *thus*... and the one when it is *as so*, this difference might be merely qualitative, i.e., some difference between equally-real moments with respect to a temporal quality such as pastness, presentness or futurity. Such differences might be compatible with no thing ever coming to be or ceasing to be simpliciter and, hence, with the world being ontologically fixed.

The general view that the world in time is ontologically heterogeneous subsumes specific theories according to which the difference between the moment when the world is *thus* and the moment when it is *as so* is merely qualitative, pertaining to some temporal quality (or qualities). This general

⁴³ One has, at least, a real temporal part or stage at any number of moments. This suffices for the present argument.

view also subsumes specific theories according to which the difference between the relevant moments is more significantly ontological, such as one existing as the other does not. Consider the former theories. On some of these, what is supposed to account for the vivid salience of a unique moment or the crucial transition of one moment to the next with respect to temporal differentiation is a difference in the distinctively temporal qualities borne by (equally real) moments: one moment is present as the next is future, then the latter is present as the former is past, etc. Such views, involving the so-called *passage of time*, are incoherent. Equally real moments bearing incompatible properties yield irremediably contradiction. The bases of this incoherence was first noticed and discussed, albeit not perspicuously, by McTaggart.⁴⁴

In light of these problems, other philosophers have proposed theories on which manifest temporal phenomena are accounted for not in terms of qualitative differences among moments per se, but in terms of qualitative differences among all the things that exist at a given moment. On so-called *moving spotlight* theories, the vivid salience of a unique moment is accounted for by all the things at that moment being a certain way; the crucial transition between moments is accounted for by means of systematic changes in the qualities of all the things at those distinct moments.⁴⁵ Such theories are also incoherent. If the permanently existing things at a moment, m_1 , are made vividly salient by some unique quality they all share and then the permanently existing things at a distinct moment, m_2 , are made vividly salient by this unique quality, then the things at m_1 must come to lack the quality. Thus, such theories require things to undergo change at a single moment: A thing is one way at m_1 , and (then?) an incompatible way at m_1 ! Such synchronous change is impossible.

If temporal differentiation cannot be coherently accounted for in terms of qualitative differences among permanently existing moments per se, nor in terms of qualitative differences among all the (permanently existing) things at such moments, this incontrovertible phenomenon of the world going from *thus...* to *as so* cannot be accounted for by merely qualitative differences in temporal reality. The ontological heterogeneity in the world in time involves more significant ontological differences, to wit, differences with respect to *what exists* when the world goes from *thus...* to *as so*. Reality is, therefore, ontologically transient. The foregoing considerations provide insight into the extent of this transience and so reveal the exact structure of temporal reality.

⁴⁴ See McTaggart 1908.

⁴⁵ For two examples of such theories, see Sullivan 2012 and Cameron 2015.

There are theories of the structure of the world in time that involve both distinctively temporal qualitative difference and ontological transience. Thus, on so-called *growing block* theories, moments (and things that exist at them) can come into existence simpliciter, but once they do, they permanently remain part of the world.⁴⁶ On such theories, this moment, now, bears the unique quality of being the (absolute) latest moment. There are also so-called *shrinking tree* theories, according to which moments (and things that exist at them) can cease to be simpliciter.⁴⁷ This moment, now, bears the quality of being the (absolute) earliest moment. Every state of affairs that could eventuate from the things that exist at this moment exists (just as real) at some moment subsequent to it. Yet as this moment, now, ceases to be simpliciter and a distinct moment comes to be the unique earliest moment, many possible future states of affairs (and the moments at which they exist) cease to be simpliciter. The foregoing considerations, however, refute both sorts of theory. If some moment, m_i , (permanently) exists as the current final moment (i.e., the latest one), then when a distinct moment comes to bear this unique quality, then m_i must exist yet without being the final moment. This is a contradiction. If no moment per se bears any distinctive temporal quality, but all the things that exist at it do, such as existing at the final moment, then all these things must undergo synchronous change when a new moment comes to be simpliciter as the final moment—but such change is impossible. Similar considerations show, *mutatis mutandis*, that shrinking tree theories are incoherent, as well.

What this shows is that the ontological differences required by temporal differentiation are more significant—they involve no distinctively temporal qualitative differences at all. There is this moment, now. When the world goes from *thus...* to *as so*, the moment demonstrated by 'thus' ceases to be simpliciter and a novel moment—with the world *as so*—comes to be simpliciter. In an instant, this moment ceases entirely to be and a novel moment becomes absolutely. Through this continuous ontological transience of moments, temporal things, i.e., entities that exist at moments, can either change (or simply persist), come to be simpliciter or cease to be simpliciter. This ontological transience of moments is, therefore, the basis of all inconstancy in the temporal world.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For a classic example of such a theory, see Broad 1923.

⁴⁷ For an example of such a theory, see McCall 1994.

⁴⁸ I argue elsewhere that things can come to be simpliciter *atemporally*, that is, absolutely come to be *outside of time*. See Fiocco 2014.

4.2 Objections to ontological transience

An incontrovertible phenomenon, temporal differentiation—the world going from *thus* to *as so*—is the basis for cogent argument that reality is ontologically transient. Timothy Williamson, however, argues, on completely different grounds, that everything (in space and time, at least) exists necessarily and, hence, reality is ontologically fixed. Williamson's argument is a challenge to my conclusion, so I consider it here.

Williamson's argument that every thing exists necessarily is straightforward. Consider any thing, *x*. Williamson maintains: (1) Necessarily, if *x* does not exist, then the proposition that *x* does not exist is true; (2) Necessarily, if the proposition that *x* does not exist is true, then the proposition that *x* does not exist exists; (3) Necessarily, if the proposition that *x* does not exist exists then *x* exists. These claims together entail (4) Necessarily, if *x* does not exist, then *x* exists. (4), of course, is a contradiction. The nonexistence of *x* leads necessarily to a contradiction, so *x* necessarily existing follows.⁴⁹ This argument is wholly general, so any existent exists necessarily: nothing could come to be simpliciter—were it possible it would (already) have to exist—nor could any thing cease to be simpliciter, for that thing could not fail to be. Reality, therefore, is ontologically fixed.

This ontological fixity is more extreme than the phenomenon I characterize above. The latter is consistent with a thing starting to be, that is, with there being an earliest moment at which it exists (permanently); the former is not. Williamson's argument for such fixity is indeed straightforward. I take (1) and (2) above to be undeniable and the argument to be clearly valid. Nevertheless, it is not sound. (3), viz., Necessarily, if the proposition that *x* does not exist exists, then *x* exists, is false.

On so-called Russellian views of propositions, a singular referring expression contributes its referent to the proposition expressed by any sentence in which it occurs. On such a view, any sentence including 'x' (which one may assume is a singular referring expression) expresses a proposition that literally has *x*, the referent of 'x', as a constituent. Plausibly, that proposition could not be the very proposition it is without that crucial constituent; having *x* as a part is, again plausibly, essential to the proposition. Therefore, that proposition could not exist in the absence of *x*. On such a Russellian view, then, (3) is compelling. There are, though, other views of propositions. On these, a proposition represents its subject matter not by having that thing as a (literal) constituent of

⁴⁹ See Williamson 2002: §1. I have generalized the argument.

it, but by some other means, such as by including a Fregean sense that determines that thing.

In considering this latter sort of proposition, Williamson maintains “[H]ow could something be [for example,] the proposition that that dog is barking in circumstances in which that dog does not exist? For to be the proposition that that dog is barking is to have a certain relation to that dog, which requires there to be such an item as that dog to which to have the relation.”⁵⁰ Thus, Williamson is presuming that in order for a proposition to be the very proposition it is, it must stand in some relation to a distinct thing (viz., its ostensible subject matter). But this is incorrect. As argued above, no thing is made to be the very thing it is in virtue of standing in some relation. Each thing just is the very thing it is. In this case, each proposition just is the abstract, non-linguistic representational entity it is and so represents as it does. If there are, as there certainly seem to be, propositions that represent things that do not exist, these propositions are the ones they are without the aid of those non-existent things. Therefore, (3) above is false and Williamson’s argument is undermined, presenting no grounds for the necessary existence of each thing nor, consequently, for the ontological fixity of reality.

I maintain that there is a great deal of ontological transience in the world. In fact, there is, with respect to moments, continuous absolute becoming, i.e., coming to be simpliciter, and absolute annihilation, i.e., ceasing to be simpliciter. This transience in the world in time accounts for temporal differentiation and, thus, for change and for the coming to be and ceasing to be simpliciter of mundane things (such as persons, desks, trees, etc.). The structure in temporal reality includes but a single, instantaneous moment, with all the things that exist at it; then this moment, now, is replaced, momentarily, by a novel one. This view—call it *momentary transientism* or *transient presentism*—on which there is literally nothing in temporal reality to the past, nor to the future, is open to a number of objections (for example, truth-making concerns regarding the lack of structure in what is supposed to precede this moment, now). I address these adequately, I believe, elsewhere.⁵¹ Here, I consider just one objection that is particularly relevant, for it turns on the absolute becoming of what comes to be.

Lisa Leininger argues that anyone who, like I, holds that there is nothing subsequent to this moment, now, must contend with what she calls the

⁵⁰ Williamson 2002: 241.

⁵¹ See Fiocco, forthcoming.

coordination problem: “in the absence of a connection between what exists and the unreal future, [one] must, but cannot, explain how each new slice of reality that comes into existence preserves the regular nature of the world.”⁵² Since one cannot, according to Leininger, account for the manifest regularity in the world if what is subsequent to any moment comes to be simpliciter, one must accept that there is no such absolute becoming and, hence, reality is ontologically fixed (at least with respect to what succeeds this moment, now).

There is an adequate response to this putative problem consistent with the coming to be simpliciter of moments and more familiar things. Each thing is fundamental; each is what it is and is essentially as it is simply given that it exists. How a thing interacts with others is determined by what it is and the capacities things of that kind have. Many things have essentially the capacity to persist, that is, to exist at distinct moments. When this moment, now, ceases to be simpliciter, replaced by a novel moment that becomes absolutely, many of the things that existed at the former now exist at the latter. How they interact now is determined, as always, by what they are and the capacities they have. These persisting things and their capacities, therefore, account for the continued regularity in reality.

One who takes the coordination problem seriously, however, might demand some explanation for how a thing persists, that is, some account of how a thing is identical from one moment to another that is not (yet) in the world. Such a demand is misguided. There is nothing that accounts for how a thing is itself, either at a moment or across moments. The identity of a thing, like its existence, is not susceptible to explanation.⁵³ Another concern one might have about my proposed response to the coordination problem is that the capacities of things cannot suffice to account for the continued regularity in the world—indeed, Leininger explicitly argues that they cannot.⁵⁴ But Leininger’s argument turns on the possibility of *interference*, of something intervening between when an entity with a certain capacity is stimulated in the relevant way and when that capacity manifests as is supposedly required, so that it does not actually manifest in that (supposedly) required way. There are, though, accounts of capacities that foreclose such interference, on which the presence of the relevant stimulating conditions *necessitates* the relevant manifestations. Such an account is, admittedly, controversial, yet I believe it is correct.⁵⁵ Given such capacities,

⁵² Leininger 2021: 216.

⁵³ See Fiocco 2021.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 225

⁵⁵ For an example of this sort of account, one in terms of *powers* that necessitate their

and the persistence of things, regularity in a world in which things come to be simpliciter follows.

5. Conclusion

Recently, there has been discussion regarding how to characterize debates concerning the way things exist and the structure of the world in time. Some contend that debate about whether everything is present or whether there are also non-present things should be rejected in favor of debate concerning whether the world is ontologically transient or fixed;⁵⁶ others hold that maintaining a distinction between these debates is desirable, for conflating them forfeits valuable insight.⁵⁷ These debates can seem purely academic, with little of substance to resolve them. There is, however, a familiar, incontrovertible phenomenon that not only makes clear the worldly impetus for the debates, but provides the means of resolving them all at once. (With such resolution, how the debates ought to be characterized becomes less of an issue.)

The key to understanding both the structure in temporal reality and the way things exist, that is, how the structure in reality more generally can vary, is the phenomenon of temporal differentiation: the world going from *thus...* to *as so*. By examining this phenomenon, one can ascertain there is no more to the world in time than this moment, now (and the things that exist at it) and that things can cease to be and come to be simpliciter, in other words, that the world is ontologically transient. To appreciate these conclusions, indeed, even to acquire them, one must confront the diversity in reality and so consider the things herein. Doing so reveals what a thing is, namely, a natured entity that contributes to the totality encompassing one being precisely as it is, viz., *thus*. Each such thing is fundamental, it just is. Consequently, existence, a putative quality in virtue of which a thing is at all, is no thing. But neither is the world. This all-encompassing totality does

manifestations, see Williams 2019: §6.4. Williams regards powers as fundamental capacities had by basic entities and distinguishes such powers from *dispositions*, the apparent capacities had by non-fundamental “midsized objects”. Dispositions, which can be interfered with, are not real powers—though they are the means of “rough and ready accounts of how things tend to occur in the world” [*Ibid.*: 143.] I, of course, reject the sort of hierarchical ontology Williams accepts, and so take all capacities to be fundamental and, consequently, to necessitate their manifestations.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Deasy 2019.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Cameron 2016.

not contribute to reality; rather, reality is simply all the things there are. As such, the world is not a unity, but a plurality, the plurality of every thing.

If the world is no thing per se, “it” bears no qualities and, a fortiori, does not change. Nevertheless, reality is continuously different. The inconstancy one experiences, via temporal differentiation, demonstrates the world, this comprehensive plurality, is distinct at each moment. One is always part of—literally—a new world. No new world is fashioned wholly anew, from nothing, for many things persist. Even when a thing comes to be simpliciter, it has a source in what is. No thing comes from nothing. Each thing in time comes from something in time and can do so because of the advent of a new moment. Each new moment, in turn, comes from time, a thing which itself exists necessarily.^{58, 59}

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⁵⁸ Or so I argue elsewhere. See Fiocco, forthcoming.

⁵⁹ I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Jeff Helmreich, for helpful discussion of this paper and for the written comments on it he provided.

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