

Synthese Library 442

Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology,
and Philosophy of Science

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Jeremiah Joven Joaquin *Editor*

Time, Identity and the Self: Essays on Metaphysics



Springer

Synthese Library

Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology,
and Philosophy of Science

Volume 442

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Time, Identity and the Self: Essays on Metaphysics

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ISSN 0166-6991

ISSN 2542-8292 (electronic)

Synthese Library

ISBN 978-3-030-85516-1

ISBN 978-3-030-85517-8 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85517-8>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

Long before I got to know Brian Garrett, I knew about him. Or more to the point, I knew about Garrett's Fork which was named in his honour: *any philosophical view is either false or trivial*. I heard that he was especially adept at deploying this fork at philosophy talks. I also heard that he applied equally exacting standards to his own work. I was told the story of a talk that he gave, at which someone in Q&A raised what Brian recognised as a serious objection. We have all seen philosophers at such a moment prevaricating, blustering, or obfuscating. Instead, the story goes, with admirable forthrightness Brian picked up his paper and threw it in a rubbish bin.

We became colleagues in 2005, and since then he has generously invited me to send him regularly my work in progress. I do my best to dodge the tines of his fork, but Brian invariably gives me trenchant comments that require my serious attention.

To understand how he became the acute philosopher that he is, it helps to know something of the *Life of Brian*. He was an undergraduate at St Andrews (paving the way for Prince William and Kate Middleton). He studied with Crispin Wright and Stephen Read, who inculcated in him the value of clear thinking. He wrote a prize-winning essay for the *Analysis* competition, which appears in this volume (Chap. 14). He went on to do a BPhil at Oxford, winning the John Locke Prize in Mental Philosophy. (It's worth noting that there are many years in which this prize is not awarded at all.) He continued at Oxford for his DPhil, supervised by Sir Peter Strawson, Derek Parfit, Paul Snowdon, and Lord Quinton. After visiting positions at the University of Cincinnati and Indiana University, Bloomington, Brian joined the Australian National University, where he has been ever since. Yet more awards were soon bestowed upon him: he won the 1992 Philosophical Quarterly Essay Prize (see Chap. 23), and an Australian Research Council Queen Elizabeth II Research Fellowship.

Isaiah Berlin distinguished two types of intellectuals: a 'fox' who knows many things, and a 'hedgehog' who knows one big thing. Brian is a fox. While he works squarely in the analytic tradition, he does not cleave to any particular doctrine or school of thought, nor is he a disciple of any particular philosopher. He follows arguments wherever they lead. In his articles, he generally scrutinises classic works

by well-known philosophers – respectfully but not reverentially. His critiques are always insightful, and they are often fatal.

Reading the papers in this volume, I think there should be a new entry in the *Philosophical Lexicon*.¹

garrett, v.: to strangle the life out of an unsound argument. 'He garretted Max Black's arguments that backwards causation is impossible'.

Brian has also written three books: *What is this thing called Metaphysics?* (now in its third edition, and translated into Spanish and Portuguese), *Personal Identity and Self-Consciousness*, and *Elementary Logic*. He always runs his work through many drafts, and it shows – there is not a wasted word, and it is invariably crystal clear.

I have also enjoyed attending some of his lectures. He is an *Old School* philosopher, in a good sense. Unencumbered by technology, he is serious about his subject matter without taking himself too seriously.

I am especially pleased that my friend J. J. Joaquin has undertaken the task of editing this collection. Brian and JJ have built a bridge between the ANU and De La Salle University, and indeed a bridge between philosophy in Australia and the Philippines. I have benefited personally from that bridge, giving a series of talks in the Philippines a few years ago, and thoroughly enjoying my time there with JJ as my exemplary host. As well as showcasing Brian's fine philosophical work, this volume attests to the strength of this bridge.

Australian National University
ACT, Australia
7 May 2021

Alan Hájek

¹ Edited by Daniel Dennett, available at <https://dl.tufts.edu/concern/pdfs/jw827p68f>.

Preface

On the occasion of his 60th birthday (16 May 2021), I have put together a volume of essays by my dear mentor and good friend, Brian Garrett. These essays cover topics in Brian's area of philosophical expertise, viz., *Metaphysics*, the beating heart of philosophy. In particular, they delve into topics on the metaphysics of time, the nature of identity, and the importance of the self, persons, and human beings. The essays in this volume represent almost four decades of hard and honest philosophical toil. The volume includes his two award-winning essays published in *Analysis* in 1983 and *The Philosophical Quarterly* in 1992, respectively, and his latest musings about fatalism and the Grandfather Paradox.

'Brian Garrett' might not be a famous name in twentieth or twenty-first century analytic philosophy. But as this volume will show, Brian is one of its best practitioners. His manner of presenting and arguing for (or against) a particular philosophical claim evidence his clarity of thought, sharp and tenacious wit, and ability to follow the argument wherever it leads. Such qualities are deemed by most academic philosophers and philosophy *aficionados* alike as qualities of a truly great philosopher. His dialectical writing style highlights Brian's dialogue with the works of other philosophers. His ripostes of the ideas of these philosophers generate in turn new and original insights, which may be considered as lasting contributions to the discipline of philosophy. In this regard, one might say that Brian is a philosopher's philosopher as his works exhibit the dialogical nature of philosophy.

Brian came into philosophy *via* St. Andrews and Oxford, where he learned to do philosophy from some of the best philosophers of the era. He had Sir Peter Strawson, Derek Parfit, Paul Snowdon, Michael Dummett, and Lord Quinton as supervisors at Oxford. His philosophical training led to academic posts in different parts of the globe, and this includes his long-time post at the Australian National University – which has been his home since 1990. ANU, of course, is one the philosophical centres in the world, with David Chalmers, Alan Hájek, Frank Jackson, Daniel Nolan, Philip Pettit, Jonathan Schaffer, Daniel Stoljar, and a host of other prominent contemporary philosophers being members of its School of Philosophy at one time or other.

Like most of today's practising philosophers, Brian is a well-travelled academic. Not only has he visited the top universities in 'developed' countries, he also visited universities in the 'developing' ones. And this is how we met. During one of his trips in 2009, Brian visited my home university – De La Salle University (Manila, Philippines). I was a starting faculty then, finishing my PhD, and still learning the academic ropes. Being the youngest in the department, I was assigned to be Brian's tour-guide, chauffeur, and overall executive assistant for the duration of his visit. In one of our driving-tours around Manila, Brian and I discussed my dissertation topic on the nature of personal identity. Unbeknownst to me then, Brian was one of the top philosophers on the subject, having published many articles and a book on personal identity and self-consciousness. Despite my ignorance of his prominence within this area of philosophy, I must have impressed him since he offered to supervise my dissertation and invited me to be a visiting PhD fellow at the ANU in 2010. Looking back now, I could say that the discussions we had in 2009 started not only my philosophy education under Brian but also a friendship that has been brewing for more than a decade now.

This volume contains 28 of Brian's essays. I have divided them into four parts. The first part includes eight chapters on time; the second are seven chapters on identity; the third part contains nine chapters on the self; and the fourth and final part contains four discussion chapters of Brian's latest thoughts on time, backwards causation, identity, and personal identity. Most of these essays were originally published from 1983 to 2020. I have edited these essays for uniformity of presentation, and have checked for misprints and other stylistic nuances. In some cases, I have appended an abstract and section headings; in others, I have changed the 'formal' component. I have left out Brian's other published essays which overlap too much with the essays already included in this volume.

What follows will be a short overview of the essays contained in this volume. The first two chapters are rejoinders to Arthur Prior's 'Thank Goodness that's Over' puzzle. Chapters 3 and 4 are discussion notes on the coherence of backward causation as argued by Max Black and Michael Dummett, respectively. Chapter 5 evaluates Michael Dummett's treatment of McTaggart's proof for the unreality of time. Chapters 6 and 7 are evaluations of David Lewis's solution to the Grandfather Paradox. Chapter 8 closes the first part with a dilemma raised against eternalists – philosophers who believe in the existence of the past, present, and the future.

The second part opens with two chapters on best-candidate theories of identity – the view that identity is extrinsically determined. Chapter 9 argues against Penelope Mackie's 'No Extrinsic Determination' principle and Chapter 10 criticises Andrew Brennan's defence of best-candidate theories of identity. The next four chapters are critical rejoinders. Chapter 11 is a critique of Graeme Forbes's views about the metaphysics of identity. Chapter 12 is a critical appraisal of Gareth Evans's view about vague identity and vague objects. Chapter 13 is a riposte to M. J. More's thesis about rigidity and scope. And, Chapter 14 counters Stephen Baker and Phil Dowe's arguments against endurantism – the view that artefacts are three-dimensional entities. The second part closes with Chapter 15, which is Brian's award-winning

solution to *Analysis* Problem no. 19, written while he was an undergraduate at St. Andrews.

The third part opens with three chapters concerning three dominant views about the nature of persons. Chapters 16 and 17 evaluate two versions of animalism (the view that we are human animals) – viz., Eric Olson’s view and David Wiggins’s view, respectively – and contrast them to the Lockean view that we are self-conscious beings. Chapter 18 is a critique of Lynne Rudder Baker’s view that each of us is constituted by, but not identical with, a human animal. Chapters 19 and 20 explore the nature of personal identity. The former argues for the extrinsic nature of personal identity; the latter questions Derek Parfit’s reductionist view that reference to persons and personal identity is, in principle, eliminable. The next three chapters explore the topic of ‘I’-judgements. Chapter 21 argues against José Bermúdez’s deflationist theory of self-consciousness. Chapter 22 presents a response to Elizabeth Anscombe’s arguments against the referential status of ‘I’. Chapter 23 explores Wittgenstein’s distinction between the ‘as subject’ and ‘as object’ uses of ‘I’. The third part closes with Chapter 24, which presents Brian’s thoughts on the relationship between the metaphysics of persons and theories of ethics and rationality.

The fourth part contains four chapters where Brian and I discuss his afterthoughts on the topics covered in this volume. Chapter 25 focuses on McTaggart’s arguments for the unreality of time. Chapter 26 raises an epistemic puzzle for those who believe in the possibility of backwards causation. Chapter 27 centres on the two puzzles for endurantism and perdurantism – i.e., the two leading theories of identity over time. The chapter that closes the volume, Chapter 28, focuses on four leading personal identity theories: dualism, animalism, constitutionalism, and the Hume/Parfit view, and the problems that befall each theory.

I learned a lot under Brian’s tutelage. I learned what is expected of a ‘professional academic philosopher’ in this day and age. I learned how to write and teach philosophy well. But most of all, I learned that doing philosophy never stops, that it’s a life-long process that only true lovers of the discipline will understand. These are the things that I now share with my students and peers through my lectures and published works in metaphysics and logic. May this volume be instructive to you, dear reader, as it not only contains essays at the forefront of research in analytic metaphysics, it also contains the lessons I have learned from my friend, Brian Garrett without whom this whole volume is nought.

This volume is made possible by the constant support and encouragement of colleagues and friends. I want to thank the administrators of De La Salle University, especially Brother Bernard Oca (FSC), Robert Roleda, Rhoderick Nuncio, and Robert James Boyles, for giving me some time off teaching to work on this project. I am also grateful to Ben Blumson, Fides del Castillo, Peter Eldridge-Smith, Soraj Hongladarom, Fernando Santiago, Jr., Daniel Stoljar, and Raymond Tan for their useful comments and suggestions. My thanks also to Otávio Bueno, Alexandra Campbell, Lucy Fleet, Svetlana Kleiner, Palani Murugesan, and the rest of the staff

of Springer Nature – Synthese Library Series, for their trust in this volume. Special thanks to Hazel T. Biana, Peter Grundy, Alan Hájek, Thomas Mautner, and Stephen Read for reading through the chapters of this volume and having this journey with Brian and myself.

De La Salle University
Manila, Philippines
5 July 2021

Jeremiah Joven Joaquin

Acknowledgements

The following chapters in this volume appeared in the places listed below. My thanks to the editors and publishers for their permission to reprint them.

- 1988. 'Thank Goodness that's Over' Revisited. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 38(151): 201–205.
- 2018. Experience and Time. *Acta Analytica* 33(4): 427–430.
- 2020. Max Black and Backwards Causation. *Argumenta* (online first): 1–5.
- 2020. Michael Dummett, Reasons to Act, and Bringing About the Past. *Philosophia* 48: 547–556.
- 2018. Dummett on McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time. *Argumenta* 3(2): 347–351.
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- 2017. A Dilemma for Eternalists. *Philosophia* 45(4): 1735–1739.
- 1988. Identity and Extrinsicness. *Mind* 97(385): 105–109.
- 1988. Best-candidate Theories and Identity: Reply to Brennan. *Inquiry* 31(1): 79–85.
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- 1997. Anscombe on 'I'. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47(189): 507–511.
- 1995. Wittgenstein and the First Person. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73(3): 347–355.
- 1992. Persons and Values. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 42(168): 337–44. (Winner of the 1992 *Philosophical Quarterly* Essay Prize.)

I would like to express my gratitude to J.J. Joaquin for putting in the hard work required to bring this project to completion. JJ is one of the most productive philosophers in the Philippines, and he is doing more than anyone to kick-start analytic philosophy in Southeast Asia. I also have long-standing debts to my teachers, at St Andrews and Oxford, and to colleagues here at the Australian National University, most especially Daniel Stoljar and Alan Hájek.

The Universities, the Humanities, and Philosophy itself are going through hard times at the moment (and not just because of COVID). The Universities have become corporate machines; the Humanities have become infected with identity politics; Philosophy has become, *inter alia*, overly specialised, overly formal, and overly empirical. We can only hope that Philosophy will once again be the leading humane discipline, a paradigm for the culture, as it was last century.

Australian National University
ACT, Australia
1 July 2021

Brian Garrett

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Part I

Time

Chapter 1

“Thank Goodness That’s Over” Revisited



Abstract Arthur N. Prior’s “Thank Goodness that’s Over” puzzle is often used as an argument against the tenseless view of the nature of time. In this discussion, I argue that a defender of the tenseless view can resolve Prior’s puzzle.

1.1 Prior’s Puzzle and the Two Views About the Nature of Time

There are two fundamentally opposed views of the nature of time, two accounts of the truth-conditions of tensed sentences. According to one view – the tensed view – the truth of a tensed sentence-token such as “*e* is past” consists in a particular event, *e*, having a particular property, pastness. According to the opposing view – the tenseless view – this account of the truth-conditions of tensed sentences is illusory. There is no property of pastness (or of presentness or futurity). Tensed sentence-tokens possess tenseless token-reflexive truth-conditions: on this view “*e* is past” is true if and only if *e* is earlier than the utterance “*e* is past”. The account is token-reflexive since the sentence itself appears in the statement of its own truth-conditions, and it is tenseless since it is true at all times that a particular event is earlier than some other event. (Of course, defenders of the tensed view of time do not deny that the above biconditional is true; what they deny is that it gives the correct analysis of tensed sentences.)

Arthur Prior has presented the following objection to the tenseless view of time:

One says, e.g. “Thank goodness that’s over”, and not only is this, when said, quite clear without any date appended, but it says something which is impossible that any use of a tenseless copula with a date should convey. It certainly doesn’t mean the same as “Thank goodness the date of the conclusion of that thing is Friday, June 15, 1954”, even if it be said then. (Nor, for that matter, does it mean “Thank goodness the conclusion of that thing is contemporaneous with this utterance”. Why should anyone thank goodness for that?) (Prior, 1959, 17).

Thus it appears that the tenseless view of time cannot give utterance of “Thank goodness that’s over” their intended content; such utterances can have that content only if the tensed view of time is correct.

1.2 Responses to Prior’s Puzzle

As stated, however, Prior’s puzzle appears to admit of an easy solution. For it is no essential part of the tenseless view of time to claim that any sentence is synonymous with (means the same as) the corresponding sentence which states its truth-condition. The tenseless view of time is simply a view about tensed properties and the nature of the truth-conditions of tensed sentences. Hence the fact that an utterance of “Thank goodness that’s over” conveys something which it is impossible that any use of a tenseless copula with a date should convey is quite consistent with the tenseless view of time.

However, Hugh Mellor has pointed out that Prior’s puzzle can be restated in order to avoid this reply:

Suppose you have just had a painful experience, e.g. a headache. Now it is over, you say with relief “Thank goodness that’s over”. What are you thanking goodness for? On the face it, the fact that the headache is no longer a present experience, i.e. is now past. That is presumably why you make your remark after the pain, and not during or before it. Can this fact still be explained when tensed facts have been traded in ... for tensed tokens with tenseless truth-conditions? (Mellor, 1981, 48)

That is, in order to bestow upon utterances of “Thank goodness that’s over” their intended content we must presuppose the reality of tensed facts. But to acknowledge the existence of tensed facts is inconsistent with the tenseless view of time. Hence the tenseless view of time cannot give utterances of “Thank goodness that’s over” their intended interpretation.

Mellor’s own response to this version of Prior’s puzzle is to claim that when I say “Thank goodness that’s over” after the ending of a painful headache, I am not thanking goodness for any fact, *a fortiori* I am not thanking goodness for the fact that my headache is past, but merely expressing my relief (not necessarily relief from or about anything, just relief) (Mellor, 1981, 51). However, this account of the matter is unconvincing. Contrary to one of Mellor’s assumptions, it is plausible to suppose that relief is a mental state which always has an intentional object – if I am relieved, it is surely always appropriate to ask what I am relieved about. And no other description of this case appears tenable than that I am relieved about the fact that my headache is past. Furthermore, Murray MacBeath has pointed out that not all utterances whose correct interpretation apparently presupposes the existence of tensed facts can plausibly be regarded as expressions of relief (e.g., ..., a father who, looking at his daughter on 1 June 1982 as she studies her finals, says, “Thank goodness I’m never going to sit another examination” (MacBeath, 1983, 85)).

MacBeath himself attempts to solve Mellor’s version of Prior’s puzzle by claiming that only tensed beliefs, not tensed facts, are required in order to bestow upon utterances of “Thank goodness that’s over” their intended content, and both the truth and content of tensed beliefs can be fixed by purely tenseless facts. Thus: I thank goodness that my headache is past, not because it is past, but because I believe

it to be past, and this belief is true in virtue of the tenseless fact that the belief occurs after the headache.

However, I am not convinced by this solution. Certainly, when I thank goodness, after the ending of a painful headache, I thank goodness because I believe that the headache is past (if I didn't have this belief, I wouldn't have thanked goodness). But I do not thank goodness for my belief that the headache is past – I thank goodness for the fact that my headache is past. That I thank goodness because I believe my headache to be past does not serve to undermine the thesis that what I thank goodness for is the fact that my headache is past, and hence the correct account of the content of utterances of “Thank goodness that's over” does require tensed facts. The problem for the tenseless view of time remains – or so it appears.

1.3 A Riposte

I think it is an illusion to suppose that there is any genuine puzzle for the tenseless view of time in the first place. Contrary to the assumption of Mellor, there is a perfectly good sense in which, on the tenseless view of time, there are tensed facts. Mellor claims that “tensed facts are a myth” (Mellor, 1981, 34). But this, I believe, is no essential part of the tenseless view of time. Since the tenseless view of time acknowledges the existence of tensed truths (e.g. a 1988 utterance of ‘Hitler's death is past’), there is a harmless sense in which it acknowledges the existence of tensed facts (the fact, expressed by that utterance, that Hitler's death is past). If we allow that an utterance ‘*P*’ expresses a truth, there ought to be no objection to the locution ‘it is a fact that *P*’. The tenseless view of time only denies the existence of tensed properties, not of tensed truths or facts, and it is quite consistent to hold that it is a fact that Hitler's death is past and that this fact does not consist in a particular event having a particular tensed property.

Examples from other areas may help to illustrate this point. It appears quite consistent for someone to believe that there are no negative, disjunctive or intensional properties, and yet to hold that there are negative, disjunctive or intensional facts. For example, one could hold that it is a fact that Socrates is believed by Jones to have been a famous Roman philosopher without holding that the predicate “is believed by Jones to have been a famous Roman philosopher” denotes a genuine property of Socrates. In general, then, it seems that we can acknowledge the fact that *a* is *F* without thereby incurring any commitment to the existence of a property of *F*-ness. A defender of the tenseless view of time ought, I suggest, to exploit this result. Consequently, there is no good reason why a defender of the tenseless view of time cannot agree with Prior: when I say “Thank goodness that's over” after the ending of a painful headache, I am thanking goodness for the fact that my headache is past.

At this point, it may be objected that if, on the tenseless view of time, tensed sentences are analysed in terms of tenseless sentences, then when I say “Thank goodness that's over” after the ending of a painful headache, what I am thanking goodness for must, ultimately, be a tenseless fact. But this, as Prior and Mellor

rightly stress, is absurd. If I was thanking goodness for the tenseless fact that the utterance “My headache is over” is later than my headache, then, since this tenseless fact was a fact before and during my headache, as well as after it, I could just as well have thanked goodness for it before or during the headache – which is absurd.

This objection is, I think, fallacious. The operator “Thank goodness [...]” appears to generate a non-extensional context: I can thank goodness for the fact that *P*, where the fact that *P* is identical with, or logically equivalent to, the fact that *Q*, yet not thank goodness for the fact *Q*. For example, suppose that, after an accident and suffering from temporary amnesia, I thank goodness for the fact that I am still alive. Then, it might be supposed, I do not thank goodness for the fact that Garrett is still alive, even though – on one plausible view – the former fact just is the latter fact, under a different mode of presentation. Similarly, on the tenseless view of time, I can thank goodness for the fact that my headache is past without thanking goodness for the tenseless fact that my headache is earlier than my utterance “My headache is over”.

Hence, once we (i) acknowledge the distinction between tensed facts and tensed properties, (ii) appreciate that the tenseless view of time is quite consistent with the existence of tensed facts, and (iii) recognise the non-extensionality of the operator “Thank goodness for the fact that [...]”, Prior’s puzzle for the tenseless view of time disappears. The tenseless view of time can, after all, bestow upon utterances of “Thank goodness that’s over” their intended content.¹

However, even if this is so, it might be objected that the defenders of the tenseless view of time must regard utterances of “Thank goodness that’s over” (which are expressions of what Parfit has called “the bias towards the future”) as symptoms of an irrational preference structure (Parfit, 1984, ch. 8). It seems irrational, on the tenseless view of time, to thank goodness for the fact that a pain is past. Why should the fact that a pain is past justify caring less about it? On the tenseless view, the fact that a particular pain, *e*, is past simply consists in the fact that *e* is earlier than the judgement that *e* is past. But there appears to be no relevant, intrinsic asymmetry between the relations *earlier than* and *later than* which justifies caring less about pains which are earlier than the time of judgement. On the tenseless view of time, it appears that the bias towards the future cannot be justified.

It might be thought that it is justifiable to care more about future experiences since we can control or bring about future states of affairs, whereas we cannot control or bring about past states of affairs, and it is perfectly rational to care more about states of affairs which we can now affect. However, as Parfit points out, if the explanation of why we care more about future pains was simply that we care only about those states of affairs which we can now affect, then inevitable future pains ought to have the same value for us as past pains (Parfit, 1984, 168). Yet, clearly, our attitude to inevitable future pains (states of affairs which, *ex hypothesi*, we cannot

¹ This solution is not the same as MacBeath’s. Despite its involvement with intensional notions, MacBeath’s solution is one which (like Mellor’s) attempts to resolve Prior’s puzzle for the tenseless view of time without invoking tensed facts.