

THE IDEALITY OF TIME

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Neste artigo procuro mostrar que a tese da idealidade do espaço e do tempo constitui-se na característica distintiva do idealismo transcendental de Kant. Sem essa tese, a filosofia teórica kantiana perde todo o seu fundamento. Assim sendo, eu me oponho ao ponto de vista de Strawson de que a tese da aprioridade não implica — e não pode implicar — a tese da idealidade. Ao mesmo tempo, defendo que a idéia kantiana de que espaço e tempo são formas sub-jetivas da intuição sensível é a posição mais adequada em Filosofia para se caracterizar o espaço e o tempo. Com base nisso, eu analiso o argumento de McTaggart de que o tempo não é real. Eu mostro que, por não dispor da tese da idealidade, McTaggart baseia seu argumento na assunção de uma realidade constituída independentemente de nossos recursos epistêmicos. Eu proponho que a solução ao enigma de McTaggart consiste na inserção da tese kantiana da idealidade em seu argumento.

In this article I show that the thesis of the ideality of space and time is the hallmark of Kant's transcendental idealism. It is a thesis we cannot deny without destroying the whole system of Kant's theoretical philosophy. This being the case, I reject Strawson's view that the thesis of the apriority of space and time does not, and cannot, imply the ideality thesis. At the same time, I defend the view that Kant's claim that space and time are subjective forms of sensible intuition is the most adequate philosophical account of space and time. I analyse McTaggart's argument that time is not real. I show that, since

he lacked the ideality thesis, McTaggart based his account of time on the assumption of a reality constituted independently of our epistemic resources. A solution to McTaggart's puzzle is then proposed by inserting the ideality thesis into his approach.

My aim in this paper is to defend Kant's account of time against Strawson's and McTaggart's conceptions. I shall show that Strawson is mistaken in conceiving space and time as *a priori* but not as ideal. This will be accomplished in two steps. Firstly, I shall show that Strawson is guilty of the same fault as other Kant commentators who interpret transcendental idealism as a doctrine that postulates a reality in itself. I argue that Strawson conflates the empirical and the transcendental senses of the expression "in us". Secondly, I shall follow Kant's account in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where he characterizes space and time as *a priori* intuitive forms of our sensibility. I shall show that the ideality thesis is a consequence of the acceptance of the apriority and the intuitive thesis of space and time. Keeping this in mind, I shall propose a solution to the so called "McTaggart's puzzle" about the atemporality of reality. I shall argue that such a puzzle can only stem from an account that presupposes a reality constituted independently of our epistemic resources. Finally, I shall propose to insert Kant's ideality thesis of time into McTaggart's argument. In this way McTaggart's puzzle will be defused.

1. TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

There are currently two conflicting interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism. On the one hand, there is the "two worlds theory", which Allison labels the "standard picture" of transcendental idealism (cf. Allison 1983, pp.3-5). According to this theory, the distinction between phenomena and noumena is a

distinction between two classes of entities: knowable and mind-dependent appearances, and unknowable and mind-independent things in themselves. A straightforward objection to Kant raised by the proponents of this interpretation is that transcendental idealism cannot determine what the external, mind-independent world is really like, since all that we have access to are (mind-dependent) representations. What we can know is just the world as it seems to us, and not the world as it "really" is. Now, since the world in itself is not accessible to us, there are no means whereby we can possibly match our set of empirical representations with it (Allison 1983, p. 5; Strawson 1966, pp.91-92).

Although Kant sometimes encourages this interpretation, especially in the A-edition of the Paralogisms, I believe that there are two main reasons to reject it. The first is that 'two worlds' theorists, like Erdmann (1878), Vaihinger (1881), Prichard (1909) and, more recently, Strawson (1966), tend to regard transcendental idealism as a very sophisticated kind of phenomenalism combined with the postulation of a non-accessible realm of things in themselves. Now, it is question-begging to equate transcendental idealism with phenomenalism. The external object for a transcendental idealist is not only a collection of sensory items, but a result of the co-operative activity of both sensibility and understanding. What is given to the senses is just the "raw material" that will be synthesized by our powers of conceptualization (cf. Kant (1990) B 33, B 75, *passim*). In addition, Kant more than once tries to distance himself from Berkeley's phenomenalism by pointing out the constitutive character of space and time as *a priori* forms of sensibility¹.

The second reason for dismissing the 'two worlds' view is that it does not defeat transcendental realism, i.e., the doctrine that what is real lies beyond our cognitive resources (cf. A 369). Al-

¹ This given particular attention in the Appendix to the *Prolegomena* (cf. *Prol.*, 371 ff.).

though 'two worlds' theorists correctly read Kant to be acknowledging that what is real is that which appears to us in sensibility, they deal with Kant's notion of reality in itself as though it were a postulation of another world behind the veil of appearances. In so doing, they reintroduce the very heart of the conundrum in which transcendental realists get entangled, namely, they end up establishing a gap between the way we see the world and the way the world really is. Now, since we have no access to a reality already made or constituted apart from our experience, it is not possible to compare our view of the world with its allegedly inaccessible features. Once such a gap opens up, our epistemological efforts seem to succumb to skepticism. For this reason, Kant's overall strategy is to get rid of such a picture of the external world (cf. A 370-1). Hence, the 'two worlds' theory falls short of a proper interpretation of transcendental idealism.

On the other hand, there is the so called "two aspects theory" of transcendental idealism. Proponents of this theory, like Prauss (1974), Melnick (1973) and, more recently, Allison (1983), claim that the phenomena-noumena distinction is not between two ontologically distinct collections of entities but between two different ways in which one and the same world can be considered. We can consider objects either as they appear, that is, in relation to our capacities to perceive and judge them; or as they are in themselves, that is, apart from any connection with these capacities. Transcendental idealism is then construed as the doctrine that our knowledge is inextricably restricted to a consideration of the world as it shows up in our experience and thereby in connection with our capacities of knowledge.

I believe that the 'two aspects' theory is more in keeping with the general thrust of the first *Critique* than the 'two worlds' theory. As Allison correctly observes, 'two worlds' theorists tend to "neglect... certain distinctions that are central to Kant's whole transcendental enterprise" (Allison 1983, p. 6). They ignore the

fact that in Kant there are two different levels of discourse about the external world, namely, the empirical or descriptive, and the transcendental or reflexive. The empirical level is constituted by our "being open" to the everyday experience of the world, e.g., my experience of writing up this paper here in the University of London Library, of seeing some white papers on the table, of being surrounded by books, etc.²

It is only when we start asking questions like "how is experience possible?", or "what kind of justification do we have to count our experience as objective?", that we step beyond a mere (empirical) description of the world and switch to a reflexive level. This is exactly what Kant means by a transcendental enterprise: "I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects" (B 25). 'To be occupied with objects' seems to mean the empirical or descriptive talk of the external world that I have just referred to. In turn, 'to be occupied with the mode of our knowledge of objects' points to a reflection upon how we can know or have experience of such a world.

It might be asked why a reflexive level has to be "transcendental". The answer is that transcendental realists assume the external object to be something already constituted or made at which the subject has to arrive so as to know the external world. The subject is on this view limited to reproducing or copying the order of such a world. The transcendental idealist enterprise is conceived as a way of inverting such an assumption. Objects no longer stipulate the extent and general characteristics of our knowledge, rather, it is the subject who performs the task of dictating the principles of regulation and the standards of knowledge. Hence, we must "make trial whether we may not have success in

² The expression "being open to experience" was borrowed from Valberg (1992, chaps. 1 and 2).

the tasks of metaphysics if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge" (B XVII). Now, if the objects of which we are to have knowledge are objects conforming to the subject's conditions, the transcendental realist point of view that these objects bear no subordination to our mind at all will be proved to be seriously mistaken. This strategy in philosophy is what Kant calls his Copernican Revolution.

The tricky point here is that we can talk about empirical and reflexive senses of mind dependence and mind independence. On the empirical level, mind dependence — or, in Kant's terms, "ideality" — points to all the data of an individual mind, like the memory of the smiling face of my daughter in my mind, or Macbeth's dagger in his mind. In turn, mind independence refers to the items that lie over there outside me, like my Mac, my packet of cigarettes, etc. These items inhabit the publicly shareable world as it is given to us. However, these very objects are nonetheless acknowledged to be within the scope of my experience. In Kant's terms, they are said to be subjected to our cognitive powers. This is tantamount to saying that, on the transcendental level, they are accounted for as ideal. As a result, "real" in the transcendental sense refers to the consideration of objects deprived of or apart from those cognitive powers.

To conclude, the 'two aspect' theory allows us to claim that there are two senses of the term "ideality" in Kant. On the empirical level, this term concerns the mental states of each individual mind. On the transcendental level, "ideality" concerns a consideration of the role played by our cognitive powers in the constitution of our experience. I shall show in what follows that it is in this latter sense that the expression "in us" has to be understood in Kant's account of space and time.

2. SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL ORDERINGS

Transcendental idealism is proved to be sound in the Transcendental Aesthetic. There it is established that, since space and time are *a priori* intuitive forms that lie "in us", our knowledge is restricted to the world of appearances. To begin with, let us account for the apriority thesis of space and time. Consider spatial and temporal orderings in relation to the thought of an empirical object. If I think of the objects in my study room, my hi-fi playing the Third Brandenburg, my brown guitar, and so forth, I have to think of them as bearing spatial relations (e.g., contiguity) to one another. Accordingly, if I think of the score of a musical performance, I have to think of its notes as forming a collection of items coming one after another in a succession. This points to the temporal ordering, i.e., an ordering whereby certain elements are set up in relations of simultaneity, precedence and succession (B 49-50). It seems, then, that our thought of empirical objects already presupposes space and time. It is not possible to abstract from spatial and temporal orderings while retaining the thought of empirical objects. In leaving out extension, figure and succession in different moments, we cannot properly represent such objects. An object is only experienced in space and time, i.e., by its filling space in a certain way, by its yielding a determinate figure, and by its abiding in time. In this sense, the thought of an angel, for example, can hardly be accounted for as bringing to our minds the idea of an object. An angel is thought of as filling no space and as capable of being at several places at the same time. In such a thought the conceptions which make an object *qua* object thinkable are missing (cf. Kant 1900, p. 46).

Concurrently, we can think of spatial and temporal orders without resorting to the thought of empirical objects. I can imagine, for example, a collection of geometrical forms in the case of space, and I can think of the succession of each point which com-

poses a line when I draw it in my imagination (cf. B 50, B 154). Since we cannot think of empirical objects save insofar as spatial and temporal orders are brought onto the scene, and since we can dispense with the thought of empirical objects while thinking of the former, space and time cannot be regarded as derived from the thought of empirical objects. Now, if an item A can be thought of without an item B, but the item B cannot be thought of without A, A has to be viewed as the condition of B. This is nothing more than the *apriority thesis* of space and time. Spatial and temporal orderings are not determinations dependent upon the object. On the contrary, they must "be regarded as the condition of the possibility" of the object (B 39). It is in this sense that Kant also calls space and time *forms*, i.e., conditions of our thought of objects (B 322, *passim*). Consequently, space and time ought to be considered as *a priori*, and not as empirical, conditions for our reflecting upon an object.

Now, objects have to be conceived of as interacting within a common spatial structure. If I think of the objects in my study room as forming a collection of items contiguous to, behind, alongside and beside one another, I have to presuppose all these interactions to take place within one and the same structure. The alternative would be to regard each of these objects as belonging to a different realm of space, in which case they would not share any common ground to establish relations amongst one another. It seems, thus, inconceivable that items belonging to allegedly different systems of spatial configuration can interact. For this reason, we have to think of space as a *unity* that fills out a pattern of relations that objects set up with each other (B 39). The same applies to time. We cannot consistently conceive of objects which obey allegedly different temporal orderings and, at the same time, take them to be in relations of simultaneity, precedence and succession amongst each other. Hence, the temporal ordering must also be conceived of a unitary (B 47). In this way, the system of spatio-

temporal relations has to be thought of as embracing all objects of experience. Any region of space in which we locate objects and any length of time through which objects last has to be part of one all-encompassing structure. Now, if this is so, and if, according to the apriority thesis, our thought of an object presupposes space and time, it seems reasonable to say that the constituent parts of the spatio-temporal structure require the assumption of this very structure, and not vice-versa³. We cannot think of parts of space and parts of time without already presupposing such a unified structure. Hence the system of spatio-temporal relations must be regarded as *preceding* its spatio-temporal parts.

Let us think now of a certain magnitude of space, say, Trafalgar Square. There is no way of imagining it except by thinking of it as surrounded by more of the same space. A similar point can be made about, for example, the perimeter of Greater London. When we think of this, it is implied that such a vast area is bounded by more of the same space. In progressing to larger areas, for example, Great Britain, Europe, etc., we come to realize that the thought of any finite extension of space, no matter how vast it is, necessarily carries with it the thought of such an extension as bounded by more space. This suggests that an end to space is something that cannot be thought of. In order to imagine space as finite we must think of it as having boundaries and, in so doing, we are committed to assuming these boundaries to be surrounded by space. It is in this way "that space is thought; for all the parts of space coexist *ad infinitum*" (B 39-40). Now, if it is not possible to suppose that space is finite, we are obliged to think of it as unbounded or *infinite* (B 39). A similar view is attributed to the temporal ordering. In order to think of an end to any finite temporal succession, no matter how long it is (this month, the last three years, etc.), we have to think of it as a limitation of a single and

³ Cf. B 39 for space and B 46 for time.

all-embracing time (B 47). Our thought of a certain length of time carries us further on, so that we get to the idea of a "limitlessness in the progression of intuition" (A 25).

From these comments we are entitled to conclude that spatial and temporal orderings constitute a single, unitary and unbounded totality, or structure, whose parts are preceded by it. As usual, Kant preferred a more intricate statement to spell out these characteristics. He claims that space and time are "pure forms of intuition"⁴. That space and time are pure is an issue already contemplated by the apriority thesis. We have also said that, in such a context, the term "form" means "condition" of the givenness of objects in sensibility. In turn, the use of "intuition" serves to point out that space and time are not mere concepts, so that spatial and temporal orderings are not obtainable through the application of our powers of conceptualization⁵. A concept, unlike an intuition, is a totality, or a whole whose parts precede it, i.e., an aggregate formed by its parts. The concept red, for example, is formed through the consideration of a common feature that some objects, say, apples, tomatoes, the hardback of this edition of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, etc., may share one another. A concept, in this sense, functions as a connector that gathers a collection of elements together under a certain mark (e.g., red). Moreover, unlike intuition, a concept has a more complex logical form. It is a whole that cannot be infinite in its definition (intension), although it can have an infinite number of instances (extension) (Allison 1983, pp. 91-93). The difference, thus, is that, while the intuitive whole has infinite parts *in* it, the conceptual whole has infinite parts *under* it (Walsh 1975, p. 18).

⁴ Cf. B 40 for space and B 48 for time.

⁵ It is for this reason that Melnick characterizes the spatio-temporal framework as pre-conceptualized (cf. Melnick 1973, p. 11). Kant calls it "pure manifold", or a collection of pre-synthesized items (cf. B 102, *passim*).

3. STRAWSON AND THE IDEALITY THESIS

The apriority and the intuitive unity theses of space and time are not the end of the story for a transcendental idealist. One might well admit that experience is impossible apart from the spatio-temporal ordering but at the same time deny that this ordering is ideal. Strawson is one who argues that space and time are *a priori*. However, he continues, this does not imply, as a transcendental idealist professes, that they are 'in us' (Strawson 1966, p. 49). Instead, Strawson proposes an austere interpretation of '*a priori*', according to which it refers to "an essential structural element in any conception of experience that we could make intelligible to ourselves" (*Ibid.*, p. 68). The notion of experience, he contends, "seems to be truly *inseparable from* that of space and time" (*Ibid.*, p. 50; my italics). The idea of a non-spatio-temporal experience is plainly unintelligible, for experience is always successive and spatially located.

This inseparability talk seems to entail that experience and the spatio-temporal ordering go hand in hand, i.e., that not only is experience linked with the conceptions of space and time, but that the latter cannot be thought of without the former. The question arises, however, as to whether the second assertion holds once it is based upon Strawson's austere interpretation of '*a priori*'. It is unclear whether the notions of space and time, understood as the essential conditions for a consistent account of experience, can or cannot be intelligibly conceived separated from the notion of human experience. Strawson seems not interested in exploring this other side of the coin. If, on the one hand, space and time can be thought of as separated from the notion of human experience, then the moments of time and the parts of space are to be conceived, respectively, as succeeding and being beside, alongside and external to one another apart from the thought of a subject. This would require the assumption of a self-governing, self-contained and real

space and time. If, on the other hand, space and time cannot be thought of without the notion of human experience, then we reach an account quite close to Kant's claim about the transcendental ideality of space and time, i.e., that they are *a priori* conditions of experience that lie 'in us'. I shall argue that this is the most sustainable way to think of space and time.

It might be fruitful, for this purpose, to consider the Newtonian view of space and time. According to Newton, time is an entity that, of its own nature, flows uniformly without relation to anything external to itself, subsuming under itself every occurrence in the universe. It is also independent of everything, so that, whereas things change, time is unchangeable. It is thus indifferent to the changing things and "precedes" not only things but also any temporal quantities. Absolute space is described in a similar way. It is an entity which, by its own nature, remains unchangeable and fixed, without relation to anything external to itself, subsuming under itself every part of space in the universe⁶.

Now, if we bear in mind that nothing would occur outside or apart from either space or time, then experience would have to be thought of as brought into play only under their auspices. Hence, experience could be conceived as inseparable from space and time, but not necessarily the other way round. In this way, the notions of absolute space and time seem to harmonize with Strawson's view that experience is nothing if we remove space and time. We can conceive of absolute space and time as essential items for our thinking intelligibly of experience and, at the same time, we can dispense with the transcendental idealist requirement that space and time are 'in us'. Strawson seems, then, to disregard a very important issue in this discussion. The point is not only whether space and time have to be austere classed as *a priori* notions that enter indispensably into the general structure of the concept of ex-

⁶ Cf. *Principia*, Scholium to the definition VIII.

perience. The point is also whether or not space and time are mind-independent, i.e., whether or not they are ideal.

Strawson's purpose in rehabilitating the notion of *a priori* is to get rid of the ideality thesis. However, in so doing, he inadvertently comes to a view of spatio-temporal structure that is in keeping with the notions of absolute space and time. The main objection against these notions is that positions of objects in absolute space and time are not by definition perceptible (B 245). In other words, there are no means for us to have access to the correct position of objects in absolute space and time, whereby any objects can be determined without further ado. Neither does an object come with its absolute spatial position stamped on it, nor do we have an infallible procedure to measure the passing by of moments in absolute time, like an eternal watch forever ticking away somewhere at the border of our experiences (Guyer 1987, p. 170). It is easy to see that the notions of absolute space and time violate the intuitive unity thesis presented in the preceding section. According to this thesis, spatio-temporal structure is a whole whose parts are preceded by it. Such a structure alone renders possible the awareness of its parts. This tantamount to saying that the structure itself logically antedates "in my mind all the actual impressions" that we are given in sensibility (*Prol.*, pp. 283-284). But the notions of absolute space and time cannot be thought of as logically antedating their parts, for the simple reason that space and time so considered cannot be grasped by our human minds. From this it follows that, if we accept the apriority and the intuitive unity theses of the spatio-temporal ordering, we have to discard the notions of absolute space and time.

The question now arises as to whether we can conceive of space and time as properties of the thing in itself *T*, while holding that they are *a priori* intuitions. This is a point which merits consideration because, if the spatio-temporal ordering *Y* is a property of *T*, then *Y* cannot be counted as a subject's contribution to

knowledge of the external world. The reason is that the notion of *T* is incompatible with the idea of the subject imposing its conditions of knowledge to the world. Better put, *T* is defined as a thing constituted apart from or independent of our subjective conditions. If *Y* cannot be counted as a subjective condition, the Copernican Revolution which attempts to put the subject back to work will not succeed. In turn, if *Y* is not a property of *T*, and if *Y* cannot be obtained empirically (this is the apriority thesis), then *Y* has to be considered as a subjective condition. Now, once we have accepted the intuitive unity thesis, *Y* has to be conceived of as a constitutive condition of our sensibility and *ipso facto* of the givenness of the object. However, *T* by definition is not given in our sensibility. Therefore, *Y* cannot be applicable to *T*. In fact, *Y* ought to be considered as applicable to things as long as they are given in sensibility.

If the spatio-temporal ordering is not dependent upon the data found in sensibility (the apriority thesis), if it is not an absolute entity but is rather a form that pertains to our sensibility (the intuitive unity thesis), and if it is not applicable to the thing in itself, it has to be thought of as a contribution of the subject in the process of knowledge acquisition. In the light of this, it should be noticed that, to abstract from the notion of a subject enduring moments and locating things in space, and concurrently to uphold the idea of space and time, is a task doomed to failure. Thus, it is not at all unreasonable to affirm that we cannot strip the thought of the subject of the notions of space and time (B 56).

This granted, the subject has to be viewed as carrying with it the forms of space and time in the sense of conditions *in* it, and not in the objects *outside* it. We have to be cautious here. The expressions "in it" and "outside it" should *not* be understood on the empirical level. Empirically speaking, the expressions "in it" and "outside it", as stated in the first section, refer to the private data of an individual mind and the publicly shareable external world,

respectively. As I see it, this is Strawson's confusion. Since he accepts the standard picture of transcendental idealism, he is not able to give a proper account of the two ways in which expressions these are to be understood. He is forced to reject the ideality thesis of space and time because he conflates the empirical and the transcendental levels distinguished by 'two aspects' theorists. Kant uses the expression "in us", however, in the transcendental sense. He states that space and time have to be conceived of only in connection with the thought of a subject. Transcendentally speaking, "in us" has to be understood as "in (connection with) us" or in relation to our subjective capacities of knowing the world.

Now, this is nothing more than Kant's thesis of the ideality of space and time. They have to be seen as 'in us' in the sense that they are derived from, or occasioned by, or in reference to the thought of a subject, otherwise they will not make sense at all (B 244-5; cf. A 127). More precisely, "it is... solely from the human standpoint that we can speak of space" (B 42, cf. B 51 for time). The spatio-temporal ordering of objects "we ourselves introduce" (A 126). From this it follows that it is inconsistent to maintain the apriority thesis of space and time without also maintaining the ideality thesis. To hold the former and to reject the latter, as Strawson does, is to throw out the baby with the bath water.

4. A KANTIAN SOLUTION TO McTAGGART'S PUZZLE

Although there is a gulf in philosophical approach between Kant and McTaggart — for example, Kant hardly says anything about pastness, presentness and futurity — I believe that it is possible to relate them by considering at least one main point of contact, namely, the possibility of thinking time and reality with or without reference to our cognitive capacities. In this way, the results reached so far will provide us with important clues to tackle McTaggart's puzzle about time. McTaggart's argument aims at

proving that time is unreal and *a fortiori* that reality is atemporal. Now, is one entitled to reach such a conclusion once one embraces transcendental idealism? Before answering this question, let us sketch McTaggart's argument.

The first step of the argument is to conceive of the temporal ordering in a twofold way. On the one hand, we have a static B series of moments or states of affairs earlier than, simultaneous with and later than one another. We can refer to the Gulf War, for example, as later than the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, or to stepping on the accelerator as earlier than the movement of the car. This series is static because it constitutes an unchanging chain of moments or events. The moment M_1 is always earlier than M_2 , and M_3 is always later than M_2 , etc.

On the other hand, we have a dynamic A series composed of past, present and future moments. Let us call pastness, presentness and futurity as A-properties. I can say that this very moment in which I am seeing English words on my computer screen is in the present, that my trip to Liverpool is in the past, and that my trip back to Brazil is in the future. This series is dynamic because it constitutes a changing chain of moments: what is present was future and will be past.

Now, the determination of what is past, present and future seems to depend upon the previous consideration of what is occurring "now". I can only say that my falling out of a the tree when I was a kid is in the past because I relate this event to my present moment. However, in order to determine what is occurring "now" we have appeal to the thought of a subject having experience. It is only in reference to a subject that the term "now" is given a proper meaning. This suggests that the A series is conceived of as the temporal series to which we attach the thought of a subject. In turn, the conception of a B series seems on the surface to dispense with this requirement. Apart from the consideration of what is "now" or what is present, we can think of events as earlier than,

simultaneous with and later than one another. We can refer to the rising of the sun as simultaneous with dawn, we can speak of the discovery of nuclear energy as earlier than the landing of the first man on the moon, etc., without apparently relating these events to our present moment.

The second step of McTaggart's argument is to acknowledge that the **B** series alone is not sufficient to represent time. Since it is static, the **B** series is similar to any other static series, like the meridian of Greenwich, which passes through a series of degrees of latitude. A static collection of items so considered is not temporal. What makes a series temporal is its fleeting character, i.e., the passing by of moments that flow from future to present and past, in a word, the **A** series. Accordingly, the **B** series alone cannot characterize change, which lies at the very heart of the concept of time. Change is thought of through the consideration of substances and their properties. To say that a certain **X** changed is to acknowledge that such properties that *belonged* to **X** do not belong to **X** any longer, or that new properties *were* added to **X**. This remark points to the **A** series, for **X** can only be regarded as changing if **X** had some properties in the past and is deprived of them in the present. McTaggart thinks of events as substances and pastness, presentness and futurity as **A**-properties of events. Hence, he is led to conclude that events cannot be thought of as changing, and *ipso facto* as being temporal, save insofar as the **A** series, i.e., the properties of pastness, presentness and futurity, is brought onto the scene. If we take any event in the **B** series, for example, the assassination of Kennedy, "[i]n every respect but one, it is equally devoid of change. But in one respect it does change. It was once an event in the far future. It became every moment an event in the nearer future. At last it was present. Then it became past..." (McTaggart 1968, pp. 90-91).

The third step of the argument is this. If we think of pastness, presentness and futurity as **A**-properties of an event without

the A series, we have the impasse of incompatible predicates attributed to the same substance or state of affairs. Nonetheless, in resorting to the A series to overcome this impasse, we either commit ourselves to a vicious circle or an infinite regress. Pastness, presentness and futurity can only be thought of as compatible predicates if we claim that X is fleeting or that it is thought of through the A series. In other words, it is not contradictory to say that X *was* past at t_1 , *is* present at t_0 , and *will be* future at t_{+1} . Now, the sequence $t_{-1}, t_0, t_{+1}, \dots, t_n$ is only conceived of by appealing to the A series of past, present and future moments, which can only be free from the above contradiction by appealing again to the sequence $t_{-1}, t_0, t_{+1}, \dots, t_n$. From these remarks McTaggart concludes that, since nothing contradictory can be real, and since time can ultimately only be defined in terms of the A series, reality is not temporal (*Ibid.*, p. 97).

This conclusion is indeed most striking, and has generated deep controversy. Philosophers like Russell, Smart, Goodman and Fisk, struggled to reject the second step of the argument. According to them, it is not correct to reduce the B series to the A series. In fact, events are not really future, present or past; they merely sustain unchanging relations of simultaneity, precedence and succession to each other. Contrary to them, I propose to undermine McTaggart's puzzle in its hidden presupposition. By means of this, I shall then defuse the infinite regress of the third step.

Our tactic is to apply Kant's point of view about time to McTaggart's account. Apparently, there seems to be no conflict between them. Time is not real for a transcendental idealist. However, a transcendental idealist would reject the conclusion that reality is atemporal. In order to reach this conclusion, one has to assume that what we grasp through the senses, i.e., what shows up in our sensibility, is not real. This assumption leads us back to transcendental realism, because it postulates a reality in itself constituted independent of our experience.

It may be objected that, although McTaggart's conclusion seems to point to a transcendental realist background, nothing in the course of his argument licenses us to charge him as a transcendental realist. McTaggart, in fact, is talking about *perceivable* events or objects and not archetypes in an unreachable domain of objects. If this is so, his puzzle seems to arise independently of a previous commitment to transcendental realism. However, it is clear from our exposition of McTaggart's argument that he conceives of past, presentness and futurity as properties of substances or events. In so doing, he deals with time as though it were just another property that belongs to objects. The losing of a certain property by an object is the key to understanding McTaggart's conception of the flow of time. An event loses the property of being future and acquires the property of being present in the same way that wax, when heated up, loses its property of being solid and acquires the property of being liquid. This conception paves the way for the contradiction and the infinite regress of the third step. Incompatible A-properties cannot be assigned to the same object or event. But then we have to resort to the A series to eliminate the contradiction and the infinite regress is established.

In what sense is McTaggart being a transcendental realist here? The answer is this. In conceiving of time as a property of objects, McTaggart shows a hidden commitment to a conception of objects that is akin to transcendental realism. If time is an attribute of objects, then these objects or events must be viewed as self-subsistent entities capable of existing apart from the sensible subjective conditions (space and time) of experience. Just like a transcendental realist, McTaggart assumes, consciously or not, the misleading idea of a set of objects constituted apart from our epistemic powers. Later in his book *The Nature of Existence*, McTaggart is much clearer about such a commitment. In comparing his view of time with the views of Hegel and Kant, McTaggart states that he is closer to the former than to the latter. This is so because

Hegel regarded time as a distorted ordering "of something in the real nature of the timeless reality". Kant, in turn, did not allow "that anything in the nature of the noumenon should correspond to the time-order which appears in the phenomenon" (McTaggart 1927, p. 31).

I believe that it is plausible to rebut McTaggart's puzzle by challenging this hidden transcendental realist conception. To begin with, if time is a property of objects or events, it is empirical. If it is empirical, it cannot be a condition of our experience. Finally, if it is empirical, it must be thought of as found in the objects, which means it is dependent upon them and not upon the subject. Now, according to the apriority thesis, time is logically prior to objects. According to the intuitive unity thesis, time is not a property that belongs to the objects, but a form of our sensibility, i.e., a condition whereby alone they are given to us in sensibility. Furthermore, according to the ideality thesis, time is dependent upon the subject and not upon the object. Therefore, once we embrace transcendental idealism, McTaggart's argument does not hold water. His account is formulated by means of a misleading conception of time that is flawed from the very beginning (cf. Waxman 1992, p. 183). Better put, the acceptance of transcendental idealism necessarily entails the rejection of the conception of time from which McTaggart's puzzle stems in the first place. By bringing Kant's point of view about time into the discussion, the puzzle is dissolved, since it depends upon our thinking of time as a property of objects, and not as an *a priori* sensible condition of our knowledge of objects.

If we accept this much, it is possible to avoid the infinite regress of the third step as follows. We can account for the A series of past, present and future moments either in an *empirical* or in a reflexive or *transcendental* sense. On the one hand, the A series is referred to as the awareness of the succession of moments coming one after another in our experience. On the other hand,

when we reflect upon the conditions whereby alone we experience this succession, the A series is thought of in connection with our epistemic resources. In so doing, we get to the formal, subjective condition of any succession, namely, the *a priori*, intuitive temporal ordering. Thus, we cannot think consistently of the A series as it is experienced by us without resorting to the *a priori* subjective conditions including the pure intuition of time, because it is only through those conditions that the world can be conceived of as being given to us at all. Transcendentally ideal temporal relations cannot be thought of in terms of real or empirical relations because empirical relations already involve transcendentally ideal temporal relations of coexistence and succession (cf. Melnick 1973, pp.39 ff.). This suggests that, transcendentally speaking, it is ultimately with reference to us and our cognitive powers that past, present, and future moments or states of affairs can be properly understood. That being so, it seems plausible to claim that, once the transcendental idealist picture is brought into McTaggart's puzzle, such a puzzle *dissolves*.

This assertion carries with it the idea that the puzzle of time introduced by McTaggart might hold if it is thought of in reference to a reality independent of the transcendentally ideal conditions, i.e., in Kant's terminology, reality in itself. If we consider pastness, presentness and futurity as properties of objects rather than contributions that the subject imparts to objects, we may be saying that these properties by themselves inhere in objects and nothing can avoid either the contradiction of the vicious circle pointed out by McTaggart. For a transcendental idealist, then, it is possible to turn the puzzle into a useful device. He can reasonably say that if we assume the transcendental realist picture of reality, we get entangled in insoluble puzzles, and McTaggart's is just one of them.

As a conclusion, we may say that the characterization of time as transcendentally ideal leaves us better off *vis-à-vis* Straw-

son's and McTaggart's conceptions. The ideality thesis is essential for a consistent characterization of external objects. It restricts our epistemological pretensions to the doctrine that there is only one world and that such a world is exactly that which appears, i.e., the world we have access to because it is subjected to our epistemic powers. At the same time, the ideality thesis prevents us from embracing the flawed transcendental realist view on which puzzles such as McTaggart's are based. An alternative, then, to escape from McTaggart's puzzle about time consists in the rejection of the transcendental realist view that there is a world in itself constituted independent of our cognitive conditions and, consequently, in the adoption of transcendental idealism⁷.

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⁷I would like to thank two anonymous referees for their useful comments on an earlier version of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge financial support from Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) which made possible my studies in London.

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