

Temporal ontology and formal ontology

Francesco Orilia

University of Macerata

Temporal ontology is more and more recognized as a crucial part of metaphysics. Nowadays metaphysics textbooks often include a chapter on this topic. These works take for granted that there is substantial disagreement between the different traditional views in temporal ontology such as A-eternalism, B-eternalism, growing block theory, presentism. This seems to be right and yet many philosophers have argued that the disagreement is only verbal or not substantial. Then, in an attempt to clarify the nature of the dispute in temporal ontology new views, such as permanentism and transientism have entered the arena. This however appears to have added additional perplexities, up to the point that the very authors of the entry on presentism of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Tallant and Ingram, have recently argued that “presentism” is a merely idiomatic term for a collection of views that “share no salient core.” To go out of these quandaries, it may seem apt to invoke the logical tools of formal ontology, whose goal is “to bring together the clarity, precision, and methodology of logical analyses on the one hand with the philosophical significance of ontological analyses on the other” (Cocchiarella, *Formal Ontology and Conceptual Realism*, 2007). The relevant logical tools here are those of temporal, or tense, logic, and yet this logic, as typically understood, appears to be unfit to provide a formal representation of the competing theses of temporal ontology. This is due to its strange combination of tensedness in the object language and tenselessness in the metalanguage, without an interplay of these two aspects of language. However, this interplay is somehow needed in order to capture the theses in question. I plan to examine this situation and propose some remedies, and then plea for the importance of formal tools in metaphysics and for a more widespread and accurate use of them in the future.