

The University of Adelaide: School of Humanities, Discipline of Philosophy

Constructing Time:

Temporal Experience and its Future Directed Aspects

Diane Rose Stringer

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ABSTRACT

This thesis engages with the philosophical problem of accounting for the future directed aspects of our lived experience of time, where modern physics calls the status of these experiences into question. These include: our experience of an extended 'present'; of a distinctly future-oriented temporal direction; of temporal 'becoming'; and the intuition that our future is open to our influence as agents.

It also furthers the project of showing that, despite perceptions to the contrary; work from within the continental tradition can usefully inform analytic philosophy. The contemporary relevance of the theories of continental philosopher Edmund Husserl is demonstrated throughout; however it is emphasised that this thesis is not a work of Husserlian scholarship. The thesis shows that, while analytic views can offer very good accounts of our temporal phenomenology, in combination with aspects of Husserl's view they can offer a richer, more penetrating analysis.

It takes as a background assumption the view that science offers us the best theory of physical time. However, it defends the view that many of what we take to be objective properties of time can be understood to be subjectively constructed and projected onto the world by our perceptual, cognitive, and conceptual systems. The thesis offers a levels-based — but non-reductivist — account of theories and studies that give support to this view, in a discussion organised into personal and sub-personal levels of explanation.

Overall, this thesis offers a modest contribution to the project of understanding the nature of the future-directed aspects of our temporal experience. It remains compatible with modern physics, while offering an account that shows that many of these aspects of our experience need not be understood to be a response to any physical feature of time per se.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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