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COMBINING TENSE AND TEMPORAL EXTENSION: THE POTENTIAL OF BERGSON'S 'QUALITATIVE MULTIPLICITY' FOR CONQUERING PROBLEMS OF (ANALYTIC) TIME METAPHYSICS

Sonja DEPPE

Introduction

There is an astonishing gap between our natural temporal experience and a theoretic analysing of temporal phenomena.¹ By “theoretic analysing” I mean both the analysis and the conceptual account of temporal experience itself and giving an objective description of time in metaphysical respects. The starting point of this paper is that one crucial difficulty for both fields is to combine — on the theoretical level — two aspects of temporal experience, namely, *tense* and *temporal extension*.

In the following section, I will specify these notions and explain why I take them to be naturally given together in our intuitive temporal experience. The third section shows that in theoretical reflection, however, those aspects often appear to be opposing each other. This is significantly mirrored by contemporary metaphysics and, in particular, by the positions

1. More than one philosopher has come across this gap: Think for instance of Augustine, Zeno of Elea and J. M. E. McTaggart.

of a B-theoretic eternalism that conceives temporal extension without tense and an A-theoretic presentism that is inclined to conceptualise tense without temporal extension. In the light of this, I would like to present Henri Bergson's analysis of temporal experience as an alternative perspective on the matter (section four): here we will find his conception of "Qualitative Multiplicity" to be an extraordinary instrument for coping with the tension between tense and temporal extension by construing *extension* on a *qualitative* level instead of a numerical one. In my opinion, this conceptual account of temporal experience is convincing because it is consistent with the intuitions that I will elaborate in section two.

Section five asks if Bergson's notion of qualitative multiplicity (and hence of *qualitative* temporal extension) can be of any use within a *metaphysical* context. I will propose that at this point two different directions of metaphysical reasoning are open for discussion: to consider qualitative multiplicity either to be purely subjective or else to be a feature of the world as such (in some way that still remains to be clarified). The first option of these two, which I take to be Bergson's metaphysical thesis of *Time and Free Will*, is elaborated in section six.

I will criticise, however, the latter in section seven by revealing a problem it has with regard to continuity. Following this, I will maintain that it is not problem-free to conceive any part of reality as merely tensed and not at all temporally extended. This result strengthens the motivation to combine tense and extension even in the field of objective description of temporal reality and hence pursuing the second strategy of expanding further the idea of qualitative multiplicity. I take this to be a promising perspective for establishing a metaphysical account of time that fits with our natural temporal awareness by bringing together tense and temporal extension.

I. Experiencing Succession: Tense and Extension

How to describe appropriately the most striking feature of our temporal experience, moments *succeeding* each other? The aim of this paragraph is to demonstrate that the phenomena of singularity and multiplicity of moments are intertwined here in a peculiar way. When we experience temporal phenomena — let us assume we wait for the sugar to dissolve in the glass of water, to pick up the famous example from Bergson (Bergson 1944, 12) — we have a concrete experience of succession.

On the one hand, it is crucial that all moments of this process are by no means given to us together: when the sugar is half-dissolved, we can

neither find any longer pure water and sugar in its original constitution, nor can we yet enjoy the prepared drink. A characteristic feature of the successive experience is the respective singularity of a special moment in an island position, i.e., the present, which is incessantly replaced. Referring to the debate between A- and B-theorists (that I will touch upon in the next paragraph) I call this feature “tense” by which I mean *the outstanding singularity of the present moment and its incessant replacement*. Tense in this sense apparently is crucial for experienced succession: moments are given to us “one by one.”

On the other hand, the example is just as much suited to evoke a second intuition. This experience of witnessing the sugar dissolving in the glass includes access to the events directly as a whole process, as a sequence of interconnected moments. This seemingly immediate experience of a *process* also requires to be acknowledged in a characterisation of succession: it brings to the table the intuition of understanding succession as an interplay of *numerous* moments and their mutual relations. From this point of view, we need a concept of *temporal extension* in order to allow for the feature that processes take place. I would like to understand “temporal extension” as a very broad term here. What I mean by it for a start is the plain and simple fact of *more than one moment being given* — in *some* way. How then one gives a more precise meaning to the term “given” will be precisely one crucial feature of a respective conception of temporal phenomena (both within the field of the analysis of temporal experience and of metaphysics of time).

Note that both the expressions “one after the other” and “one by one” are synonyms for “successively.” Succession apparently involves the interplay of many moments as well as the unique position of a respectively special moment. C. D. Broad labels those two characteristics as the “Extensive Aspect of Temporal Facts” (Broad 1976, 267) and the “Transitory Aspect of Temporal Facts” (Broad 1976, 271).

II. Analysis of Succession (in Experience of Time and Metaphysics): Tense vs. Extension

What is the problem? Following the phenomenology of our temporal experience given so far, both tense and extension emerged as crucial aspects of succession. The obvious approach would be to implement both aspects within an appropriate conception of time experience and also to take them at least as a starting point for metaphysical reasoning about time. Well, the tension between the two intuitions lies in the opposition of

“one” and “many.” Every account of temporal succession — both within the context of subjective and of objective time — must face the challenge of clarifying how it is to be understood that on the one hand numerous non-simultaneous moments are “given” (in some way or other) while on the other hand respectively, one present moment is essentially “given” in a singled-out way (and this will be the opportunity, by the way, to come back to defining the meaning of “given”).

Experience of Time

Within the context of analysis of temporal experience, this topic is typically made a subject of discussion in conjunction with the question of how experienced succession relates to objective time (see Dainton 2017, 97.). The fact that the tension between the (present) “one” moment and the “many” moments (involved in the experienced succession) emerges within this context is due to the “common sense doctrine that our immediate experience is [objectively speaking] confined to a momentary (or near-momentary) present” (Dainton 2014, 101). Based on Dainton’s work, three general categories of structuring the issue have become standard: (1) The “cinematographic” or “snapshot” view attributes to every *single moment of experience* solely the *experience of a single moment* and hence the perception of a changeless state.² (2) The “retentional” view of experienced succession holds that the *experience itself* is (objectively speaking) momentary and durationless, while the *content of experience* comprises by contrast many moments at once. (3) Finally, the “extensional” view takes both the experience itself and its content to be extended (Dainton 2017, 98).

Note that every category is able to comprise different subtypes. For the issue discussed in this paper, it is especially noteworthy that by grasping the content of experience as extended (as both retentionalists and extensionalists do) we have not yet given any information about *how* these numerous moments of temporal extension are given together. (Are they to be understood on a par? Are all of them perceptions or some of them memories? etc.) Indeed, there are different suggestions for this: Husserl for instance, after whose conception the “retentional” view has been named, thought of an experience of the near fading past moments as “Retention” being involved in the present experience (Husserl 2002, 382-388, 404-406). Dainton, a contemporary proponent of an extensionalists view,

2. Strictly speaking this view fails to be a real account of “experienced succession” since all that remains to experience is (respectively) simultaneous (Dainton 2014, 101).

suggests an overlapping model in order to specify *how* different moments are experienced together (see Dainton 2000, 162-182). Note that an essential challenge for answering this question is (again) how the fact of more than one moment being given “together” in some way goes together with the aspect of the experience of the singularity of the present, hence what exactly the interplay of tense and extension is.

Metaphysics of time

The question becomes even more pointed in the area of metaphysics and more precisely when it comes to ontological commitments about temporal reality within the scope of analytic time metaphysics. Is the real world temporally extended in the sense that events of different times exist together one way or another? Does this go together with a tensed view of reality that takes the present to be metaphysically relevant? To advocate a certain temporal ontology in this context typically goes hand in hand with two claims: (a) taking a stand concerning the question of whether the present is to be taken as metaphysically relevant and (b) defining the range of temporal locations that existing things/events are allowed to have.

The respective stand concerning (a) concerns what we called *tense* above and separates so-called A-theorists (who ascribe tense to the objective world) and B-theorists (who deny this ascription), this notion going back to McTaggart’s seminal paper “The Unreality of Time” (McTaggart 1908). The respective claim with regard to (b) obviously comes along with a stance concerning temporal extension as we defined it above (understanding “given” in this metaphysical context as “existing”).

Presentists, for instance, claim (b) that present things (or events) are the only ones to exist and hence declare a single moment to be the base of their ontology. By this, they are already committed to answer (a) in the affirmative, since singling out the present as solely existing obviously *is* one way to ascribe metaphysical relevance to it. Hence, presentists advocate an (a) tensed and (b) not extended ontology.

Some A-theorists (such as Moving-Spotlighters) make an effort in order to join tense and temporal extension and, hence, to advocate an (a) tensed and (b) extended ontology. In this case, however, they carry the burden of coping with McTaggart’s problem: McTaggart’s so-called “A-series” consists of past, present, and future events. By undermining its consistency McTaggart precisely casts doubt on the possibility of combining the aspects we focused upon: grasping events as tensed on the one hand, i.e., being

characterised in dependence of an outstanding present, and treating them on an equal footing on the other hand, i.e., locating them in a shared dimension. That is why many A-theorists, namely presentists, forego temporal extension in favour of tense (see for instance Craig 2003, 391-408, 391-392).

On the other hand, B-theorists, denying (a), seem to have no choice concerning (b) but to enlarge the scope of their ontology maximally. If the notion “present” (and dependently the notions “past” and “future”) are not allowed to be relevant objectively, there remains no instrument for sorting out any special moments from the ontology: all moments are treated on a par. So, every B-theorist is a so-called eternalist, advocating an (a) tenseless and (b) (maximally) extended ontology.

So, we find that combining the aspects of tense and extension poses a certain challenge within the field of theoretical analysis of temporal experience and even tends to be an unattainable goal within the field of temporal metaphysics. It is, however, astonishing that two aspects that seem naturally embedded within our experience of time turn out to be incompatible on the theoretical level. Let us re-examine the phenomena carefully and encounter an alternative analysis with Bergson’s philosophy.

III. Qualitative Multiplicity: Extension within the Tensed Present

The focus of this paper is Bergson’s idea of “qualitative multiplicity.” As we will see, this concept, stemming from his analysis of our temporal experience in *Time and Free Will*, succeeds in combining both intuitions, extension and tense. The essential point of *Time and Free Will* is to analyse the temporal structure of our experience, i.e., its duration (*durée*), and to show it to be totally different from spatial structure, even contrary to it.

For Bergson, the experience of music is an excellent example to demonstrate our experience of temporal phenomena in general (Bergson 2001, 105). Here it becomes very clear that successive impressions are at the same time singled out and given together in a peculiar way:

When we listen to a melody, we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have, — an impression as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity, — and yet it is the very continuity of the melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which make that impression upon us (Bergson 2007, 124).

Imagine yourself sitting in the concert hall listening to the last act of Richard Wagner’s opera *Tristan and Isolde*. The hall is full, even after four hours of

listening hundreds of ears are strained, the microphones are switched on transmitting simultaneously to the radio live program. At any moment of time, both ears and microphones “receive” the respective sounds of the orchestra, the voices of the singers, the little coughs from the audience unsuccessfully stifled. Every split second is loaded with a singular, well defined stimulus that emerges in the presence of this very moment and vanishes in the following. In this description again, I chose to focus upon the aspect of tense. With respect to the outstanding present, we might say that we share the way of accessing the sound with the microphones, i.e., every stimulus is given by itself. However, this account would never describe our whole hearing experience in a satisfying way. Rather, hearing the sounds *as a melody* apparently arises only in some way or other from the tone’s synergy.

This synergy, namely, characterises a piece of music. The melodic relations between the successive sounds, the iterations of motives, the building up and resolving of tension are essential to it. All this, we could say, is already given as a whole at any moment of the concert: Fixed and written down it lies in front of every musician in the form of the sheet of music. But still, as it was dissatisfying to compare our listening experience with the occurrence of a microphone receiving sound, it seems equally wrong to say that we hear the tones structured in the way they are written down on the sheet of music, i.e., given together as a whole. Again, it turns out that *successive structure* is more complex than either singling out the present or else summing up the whole lot of successive elements.

Bergson’s solution for grasping this structure is the concept of a “continuous or qualitative multiplicity” (Bergson 2001, 105). According to this idea, the durational experience constitutes an ongoing *manifold* of conscious states without them being a sum of divisible and countable elements. Bergson rather says that they “permeate one another” (Bergson 2001, 106). Hence, what from spatial contexts is well-known to us as a sharp contrast, namely one and many, within the durational consciousness turns out to be mediated as a *qualitative heterogeneity* of the present experience (Spateneder 2007, 40). The idea is that the experienced present only is what it is, against the background of the previous moments. Hence, within the experience of the presently perceived tone lies somehow the experience of the previous tones as well. When the famous “Tristan-chord” (Hartmann 1989, 36-52) is played in the final act of *Tristan and Isolde*, it obviously does not sound the same to the audience as it did at its first occurrence in

the opening phase of the opera, being a leitmotif leading you through the whole work.³ Let alone for the resolution of this dissonant chord: for more than four hours the audience has been following various devolutions of the Tristan-chord to other unresolved dischords, having compassion with Tristan's tensions and longings and waiting for its release. When it finally comes to its resolution to B major, you cannot but hear this *as resolution*, not comparable to perceiving the sound of a harmonic B major motive on another occasion, say in your piano lesson.⁴

What it comes down to is that the previous moments play a role within the present listening experience, namely they constitute a kind of *qualitative imprint*. Therefore, the present moment never stands totally by itself, rather it cannot but form a *qualitative diversity* in which the whole continuous succession — and hence many other moments — play a necessary role. However, this permeating manifold of many moments does by no means form a multiplicity in a *quantitative* sense. The last would mean that they were numerically many, each of them an element separable from the others and describable on its own. Rather, we can admit that in a certain sense (as I will say “numerically”) there is just one moment, namely the present. This moment, however, is essentially characterised by its being intertwined with the successive many. I would like to illustrate the structure of qualitative multiplicity with the help of the following picture:

FIGURE 1. Qualitative Multiplicity of the Present

3. As Wolfram Heicking puts it: “[N]o chord *on its own* has a special effect! It needs a particular constellation in order to render a chord noticeable and even an event. [...] What matters is what has been before, how the chord is placed, and what comes after” (Heicking 2018, 73 *my translation, emphasis in original*).

4. I am thankful to Maja Menzel whose musical knowledge helped me to find and execute this example.

The magnifier is meant to express the *qualitative* perspective. With respect to *how* the present is presented to us within our experience, the continuous whole of successive moments is relevant.⁵ Regarding an object through a magnifier we see something *new*, not visible from the normal perspective, which, however, already belongs to the object: it is not a matter of an extra that comes on top of the object itself. This detail actually is important for Bergson's view. As I read him, he doesn't think our experience of duration is such that there is an actual content of experience *plus* a content of memory representing the former content of experience (Bergson 2007, 125-126). Rather, the actual experience itself is not conceivable without the qualitative imprint of the past.

I claim that in terms of the contemporary approaches to the analysis of temporal experience presented in section 3, we are dealing here with a retentional view. While the experience itself is from the outside instantaneous, it does indeed comprise a certain temporal extension with regard to content.⁶ However, the highlight of the conception is precisely that the manifold of moments given within the experience is not a *sum* — neither of numerous impressions, nor of impressions and memories etc. but rather a qualitative imprint of the single present experience. That is why I find the expression “retentional view” — even if accurate with regard to the definition of section 3 — a bit misleading: Bergson's approach does not include any kind of “retention” in the sense of an entity that is separable and/or independent of the present impression.⁷

5. The design of a spiral relates to the image of a growing snowball that Bergson employs once for duration (Bergson 1944, 5).

6. Dainton agrees that such a retentional reading of *Time and Free Will* is possible. His own rejection of this interpretation is based on the difficulty he sees in reconciling it with Bergson's later work, *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* (Dainton 2017, 98). Since I believe that Bergson's thought undergoes a remarkable change between his earlier and his later work, I suggest interpreting *Time and Free Will* independently in this respect.

7. Husserl, for instance, contrary to Bergson, applies the notion of a strictly actual impression, the so-called “Urimpression,” which refers to nothing but the reception of the very present stimuli, that is (in some way) given together with “retentions” (Husserl 2002, 382-388, 404-406). I am not entirely certain of how the interplay of the Urimpression and the Retentions is to be understood in terms of — to use Bergson's terminology — quantitative or qualitative multiplicity. The fact, however, that Husserl does at least distinguish the two notions on a theoretical level differs from Bergson's view. If this is a difference rather in emphasis or in substance leaves to be clarified on another occasion.

IV. Qualitative Multiplicity and Metaphysics?

Combining tense and temporal extension was seemingly a problem for contemporary time metaphysics. In the previous section we saw that Bergson's notion of qualitative multiplicity — which, according to him, is how we experience succession — succeeds in combining those features by conceptualising temporal extension as a qualitative feature of the tensed present: The way *how* the present moment is given to us includes its past.⁸ Could this structure possibly be useful for a metaphysical conception of time? The obvious challenge for a switch to metaphysics is the following: when exposing temporal extension as a permeating manifold of *qualitative imprint*, we seem to deal with a notion belonging to the sphere of subjectivity while the metaphysical debate concerns objective temporal reality.

Actually, what we saw until now could be the starting point for two different directions of reasoning, resulting in two contrary metaphysical theses. We could firstly use Bergson's analysis as a cornerstone for a conception in which temporal extension is understood as something *purely subjective*. Or secondly, we could think about somehow transferring the structure of qualitative multiplicity into *objective being*. In my opinion, Bergson's philosophy provides inspiration for both ways, spelling out consequences of the first idea in *Time and Free Will* and resourcefully supporting the second in his later work. In this paper, I focus upon the first option. However, not because I find it more convincing, I rather go through the conception of *Time and Free Will* (perhaps even in an intense reading that, from a metaphysical point of view, goes beyond Bergson's own intentions) as a kind of insightful intermediate step: This conception spells out the idea of purely subjective temporal extension on the one hand and objective, extensionless tense on the other hand. My focus will lie on the problems which arise from this position and which I take to be a strong motivation to pursue the second option in the long run.

Note that this point — to ask if temporal extension is rather to be understood as objective or subjective — is quite a remarkable starting point of metaphysical reflection in the face of the debate between A- and B-theorists portrayed above, their core question being the following: “[I]s reality tensed, or does it only appear tensed to us?” (Dolev 2007, 4). Apparently, in the light of Bergson's analysis of our experience of time, we

8. I restrict myself to taking into account past moments, since the role of future moments is certainly more complex and linked to further open questions that I cannot discuss here.

rather find ourselves faced with the reversed question: is reality temporally extended, or does it only appear temporally extended to us?

V. The Tensed, Non-Extended Outside Realm of *Time and Free Will*

In my view, *Time and Free Will* does not focus as much on metaphysical questions as *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* do. The opening question of this first book of Bergson's is — as the original title tells us — what the immediate data of consciousness are. By means of this question, Bergson follows the deeply empiricist conviction that our conscious experience has to be the cornerstone of philosophy. Nevertheless, in the end this can be taken to be a metaphysical approach for good reasons. Namely, in *Time and Free Will* Bergson explicitly considers just this — what is immediately given to our consciousness — as real (Bergson 2001, 110). This criterion leads Bergson to two different spheres: “we have to do with two different kinds of reality, the one heterogeneous, that of sensible qualities, the other homogeneous, namely space” (Bergson 2001, 97).

Hence, if we take this to be a serious metaphysical statement, which I will for the sake of this paper,⁹ the result is a *dualistic* conception of reality which distinguishes strictly between an inner realm given to the conscious Self (structured by qualitative multiplicity) and an outside world (to which we have to ascribe a purely spatial structure) (Bergson 2001, 110).

Continuous succession in the form of qualitative multiplicity — and, hence, the qualitative temporal extension of the present — is indeed restricted to the subjective part of reality. On the contrary, the structure of the outside world is strictly simultaneous, hence there is no temporal extension.

What duration is there existing outside us? The present only, or, if we prefer the expression, simultaneity. No doubt external things change, but their moments do not *succeed* one another [...] except for a consciousness which keeps them in mind. We observe outside us at a given moment a whole system of simultaneous positions; of the simultaneities which have preceded them nothing remains (Bergson 2001, 227 *emphasis in original*).

Note that the reality of the outside world is restricted to the present moment in such a radical way that any reference to other moments (even *as* past ones) is out of the question. Bergson's statement “nothing remains”

9. Since my target is to express a systematical point about the consistency of a certain ontological structure, it is not essential to my argumentation whether Bergson postulates this ontology explicitly or not.

makes it quite clear that the outside realm does by no means comprise any structure that allows for history or memory of the past. At a given moment, the outer world just *is* there as it is, full stop. Nothing can or has to be said about previous states in a description of the spatial realm.

Certainly, this conception of the outside is actually designed in a *tensed* manner. At different moments, we find the external world in different states, respectively. This means that the validity of any given characterisation of the outer world expires from moment to moment. Nevertheless, the momentous characterisation of the external is all that there is *at this moment*. Hence, confronting Bergson's position with the notions of contemporary metaphysics of time, we can describe his conception of the outside reality as a *presentist's* view and — as such — as a tensed and non-extended conception of the temporal reality.

Note, however, that this position, excluding any reference of the present moment to other moments, apparently is a presentism of unparalleled radicalness: Usually, presentists are not averse to acknowledging, in some way or other, the fact that the present state is embedded within the successive overall structure.¹⁰ In particular, relating to the so-called debate of "Grounding Past Truths" (Kierland 2013, 173), they often admit the need for integrating the states of affairs of past moments in any manner into their presentist ontology. This can be achieved, for instance, by the idea of having so-called past-directed properties included within the present reality, as John Bigelow states in the following quote: "The past no longer exists; yet there is a sense in which the past can never be lost: the world will always be one with the property of having once been thus and so" (Bigelow 1996, 47).¹¹

Bergson's view of the outside reality, by contrast, results in a more radical version of presentism, since past times and states of affairs are consequently faded out. Every present is imagined like a flashlight, it stands for itself and will vanish without trace in the very next moment. Since no connection can be established between past moments and the present one, Bergson's conception of the external reality does not leave any room for the fact that the actual state does play a role in a successive framework, even if it is clearly tensed in the sense that it is real just for the actual moment. That

10. An exception is Rögnvaldur Ingthorsson (cf. Ingthorsson 2017, 106).

11. See also Prior 1959, 14.

is why *we cannot even speak of succession* in this part of reality,¹² as Bergson himself emphasises: “Outside ourselves we should find only space, and consequently nothing but simultaneities, of which we could not even say that they are objectively successive” (Bergson 2001, 116).

VI. The Lack of Continuity

What advantages and disadvantages does this extraordinary conception show when faced with contemporary time metaphysics? A strikingly attractive feature of Bergson’s dualistic conception is that it succeeds in bringing together the intuitions of tense and temporal extension without getting entangled into contradictions. The extensionless, radically presentist outside reality, on the one hand, is not vulnerable to inconsistencies à la McTaggart. Temporal extension, on the other hand, is rooted — as subjective — within the realm of the conscious Self and, hence, explains in which sense time is given *to us* as tensed *and* extended. Because of the very special structure of the temporal extension involved here, i.e., the qualitative multiplicity, this temporal manifold of many moments does not, however, conflict with the outstanding role of the tensed present. Temporal extension is a purely qualitative feature of the respective consciously experienced presence.

Note that this ontological structure can be taken to be a mirror-inverted opposite model of an eternalist ontology: eternalism choses temporal extension to be the structure of the objective outside reality. By contrast then, tense is placed within the sphere of subjective perspective. As opposed to Bergson’s view, eternalism does, admittedly, not result in a dualistic picture because eternalists are not normally inclined to take the sphere of subjective perspective to be a separate part of reality. At the same time, Bergson makes obviously a greater effort to account for the extensional subjective perspective than eternalists usually do to account for the tensed subjective perspective. Hence, Bergson’s approach pays more attention to our temporal experience and, just by doing so, probably succeeds better than eternalism in explaining away the intuition that time is — metaphysically — both, tensed *and* extensional.

12. This may be confusing at first sight: Actually, we do speak of succession in the outside world, don’t we? The fact, however, that we can grasp the tensed structure of the outside *as succession*, goes back to the duration of our inner realm (where, on the contrary, it is not the case that “nothing remains” of the simultaneities which have preceded the present one).

I see, however, a crucial problem within this conception of *Time and Free Will*: I believe that conceiving the external realm as merely tensed and not as temporally extended results in an unacceptable deficiency of temporal continuity. More than that, it will turn out that, due to this lack of continuity, it is not convincing after all to separate tense and temporal extension in the manner described, and hence to conceptualise any part of reality without temporal extension.

To see this, let us have a closer look at the notion of the tensed external world. We have identified its tense in the sense that different states are never given together but rather respectively. The addition “respectively,” however, is crucial because tense is not only the fact that we are dealing with a single moment of time, but also the fact that this single moment somehow changes and is replaced by another moment. Here is what Bergson offers on the subject of this aspect of tense within the realm of the external world:

Hence, we must not say that external things *endure*, but rather that there is in them some inexpressible reason in virtue of which we cannot examine them at successive moments of our own duration without observing that they have changed. But this change does not involve succession unless the word is taken in a new meaning (Bergson 2001, 227).

We see here that *Time and Free Will* indeed assumes the tensed change of moments within the external realm and also touches on the issue of it. It does not, however, contribute anything to understand this phenomenon better or even to account for it. More than that, Bergson actually leaves the change of moments explicitly unanalysed by making reference to “some inexpressible reason” for it. Hence, Bergson merely ascertains that the simultaneous space as given to us within one moment of our durational experience is not the same as the simultaneous space given to us within another moment. He remains, however, silent about what may be happening between those two different moments of consideration. Ironically, the *Time and Free Will* conception of the outside is described accurately by a description that Bergson himself employs in *Creative Evolution* as a critique of a metaphysically distorting approach, namely the one of mathematical methods. There he says: “the world the mathematician deals with is a world that dies and is reborn at every instant” (Bergson 2001, 27).

What renders such a view apparently unconvincing is the lack of any possibility of establishing a continuous connection between one

moment and another. Consequently, Bergson in *Time and Free Will* has no instrument to establish continuous movement or change within the external world (Miquel 2007, 58-59). Movement, such as succession, is only real within the realm of the conscious Self (Bergson 2001, 110-115). It becomes clear now in which sense the results of this conception are kind of awkward. On the one hand, the outside world consists of a respective single instant, and we even assume about this realm that any instantaneous state of affairs is somehow replaced by others. On the other hand, our experience has the structure of continuous succession, and we experience movement and change (not least seemingly occurring to external states of affairs if those are involved into our continuous experience). Nevertheless, none of this is taken to be real within the external world.

Here is what I take to be the most interesting insight from this dissatisfying awkwardness. Tense is not easily conceivable without continuity after all. Namely, in order to truly understand the concept of a *respectively* singly existing present moment, we must be able to account for the transition from one such present moment to another. And, therefore, we have to take into account various moments, namely successive ones (as we are able to say based upon the expertise of our durational experience). Hence, continuity in turn requires the reference to the interplay of many moments and, hence, to some kind of temporal extension (such as, for instance, the Bergsonian structure of qualitative multiplicity is able to provide). The result of our consideration of the conception of *Time and Free Will* is that tense and temporal extension are linked in a strikingly tight manner.

Conclusion

In section three we saw that with a view to contemporary philosophy of temporal experience, but even more strikingly to contemporary metaphysics of time, it could seem that the features of tense and temporal extension are hardly combinable. Against this background, the most popular approaches of temporal ontology — namely A-theoretic presentism and B-theoretic eternalism — can be understood as representing the two horns of the dilemma: one conceiving tense without temporal extension and the other giving up tense in favour of temporal extension. I suggested to take Bergson's analysis of temporal experience as an alternative basis for philosophical reflection about time since here, by construing temporal extension on a qualitative level instead of a numerical one, Bergson reflects both features as combinable and even belonging together in his notion of "qualitative multiplicity."

The crucial question is, however, if this conception could and/or should be transferred to the objective description of temporal reality as well. As we saw, Bergson's approach of *Time and Free Will* that decidedly avoids such a transfer remains dissatisfying because the radical attempt of thinking the outside world as tensed but non-extended fails due to an essential lack of continuity and, hence, in the final analysis, an incomprehensibility of tense itself.

This result is highly interesting because it reveals the solidarity of tense and temporal extension on an even profounder level than just the fact that we observe both within our natural experience. It now seems that tense is possibly even metaphysically dependent on temporal extension. If this proves true, it is, to begin with, an interesting challenge that every presentist must deal with.

As for Bergson's own philosophy, the result makes clear why we cannot remain satisfied by the (metaphysical) position provided by *Time and Free Will*. Rather, there is — plainly for structural reasons — a legitimate interest in establishing a metaphysical position that takes succession, being structured by qualitative multiplicity, not only as occurring within the duration of the inner consciousness but to be an objective feature of the world itself. How Bergson fulfils this task in his later works *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* remains to be presented on another occasion.

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Abstract: The article confronts Bergson's *Time and Free Will* with ontological models of temporal reality from analytic time metaphysics, such as presentism, eternalism etc. I maintain that *tense* (and hence a changing "now") and *temporal extension* are crucial features for understanding *successive structure* within our temporal experience. In the context of analytic metaphysics following McTaggart, however, tense and extension fall under the suspicion that they are not consistent with each other. I show Bergson's concept of "Qualitative Multiplicity" to open a new perspective on the issue: being introduced as a qualitative and hence not countable or measurable feature, it enables an understanding of temporal extension that differs radically from spatial extension. Following this, we can understand Bergson's durational realm of the conscious I as temporally extended in *qualitative* but not *numerical* respect — which, in turn, is unproblematically consistent with tense. A second issue of the article is a critical reflection on the conception of the external world established in *Time and Free Will*: I maintain that it is not problem-free to conceive any part of reality as merely tensed and not at all temporally extended. I conclude this to be a strong motivation for expanding further the idea of "Qualitative Multiplicity."

Keywords: metaphysic of time, temporal experience, presentism, eternalism, continuity.

Résumé : L'article confronte *L'Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* de Bergson aux modèles ontologiques de la réalité temporelle issus de la métaphysique analytique du temps, tels que le présentisme, l'éternalisme, etc. Je soutiens que le *temps* compris comme "*tense*" (et donc un 'maintenant' changeant) et *l'extension temporelle* sont des caractéristiques cruciales pour comprendre la *structure successive* dans notre expérience temporelle. Dans le contexte de la métaphysique analytique suivant McTaggart, cependant, le temps (*tense*) et l'extension sont soupçonnés de ne pas être cohérents l'un avec l'autre. Je présente le concept de "multiplicité qualitative" de Bergson pour ouvrir une nouvelle perspective sur la question : Introduit comme une caractéristique qualitative et donc non dénombrable ou mesurable, il permet une compréhension de l'extension temporelle qui diffère radicalement de l'extension spatiale. En suivant cela, nous pouvons comprendre le domaine duratif du Moi conscient de Bergson comme étant étendu temporellement de manière qualitative mais non numérique - ce qui, à son tour, est cohérent avec le temps (*tense*). Le deuxième point de l'article est une réflexion critique sur la conception du monde extérieur donnée par *L'Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* : je maintiens qu'il est problématique de concevoir toute partie de la réalité comme simplement "tensed" et pas du tout étendue temporellement. J'en conclus qu'il faudrait donc développer davantage l'idée de "multiplicité qualitative."

Mots-clés : métaphysique du temps, expériences temporelle, présentisme, éternalisme, continuité.