

Craig Callender, ed.
The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Time.
Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011.
600 pages
US\$150.00 (cloth ISBN 978-0-19-929820-4)

Let me cut to the chase: this is a very good book. If you already have an interest in the philosophy of time, then you will find plenty of papers here that will extend and further that interest. If you're looking for an introduction to topics in the philosophy of time, then I think that there's material here that will prove useful to you as well.

I'm going to raise a niggles, right at the start—if only to then set it to one side. This book costs a lot of money, and at over 600 pages I'm not going to argue about value for money. There's a lot of book here, with many good papers inside. You're getting what you pay for. But at this price, without a departmental book budget to lavish upon myself, I wouldn't buy it. I'd make sure my library bought at least one copy—probably two. Make of that what you will. Let's now turn to the meat of things.

The *Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Time* is a thematically organized collection of papers on issues connected to the philosophy of time. As the collection consists of 23 papers and an introductory article, I cannot hope, and shall not try, to engage with the arguments of each paper. Instead, I aim to provide an impression of the structure of the work, a discussion of the propriety of the themes and of the extent to which important themes are omitted, and an overview of the quality and level of the papers. I shall also consider whether, in light of the forgoing, the book *really* needed to be put together. Let's start with the structure.

The *Handbook* has five parts. Part 1 is about the metaphysics of time. Part 2 is about the direction of time. Part 3 focuses on the experience of time. Part 4 is about time in classical physics and relativistic physics. Part 5 is about time and quantum mechanics. There is also a short introduction, written by the editor, Craig Callender. The introduction is well written and gives the reader a nice sense of the content of the various parts and also of the themes that run through them.

For the most part, the papers fit the themes, though I admit to certain reservations. Let me give an example. The papers in Part 1 are described as concerning the metaphysics of time. Although that's true *to an extent*, it sometimes feels like a little bit of a stretch. To give a sense of what I mean, consider Yuri Balashov's paper on the topic of persistence. There has been, historically, a close tie between the philosophy of time and issues in persistence. But, as Balashov points out (17), it is certainly arguable that the competing views of time and the competing views of persistence are independent of one another. Indeed, Balashov (17, n13) cites this as the majority view. Were Balashov's paper then looking to explicitly challenge this orthodoxy, and argue that our metaphysics of persistence ought to (or in fact *does*) influence our metaphysics of time, then that would make this paper a natural choice for this section. But Balashov doesn't do that.

Instead, he assumes a particular metaphysics of time and goes on to discuss competing accounts of persistence.

To be clear: I don't take this to show that either the book or Balashov's paper is bad. I like both. But one of the principal problems I find with compilations *in general* is that they can sometimes feel as if they lack unity and purpose, and are somewhat fractured by a lack of a common theme. This collection is a useful resource, but it can be hard to make sense of the papers as a cohesive whole, i.e., there were a couple of occasions where the theme felt stretched. For the most part, though, the themes are clear and there's an obvious sense in which matters are connected. In the very same section we find discussions from Mozerky, Meyer and Zimmerman concerning how presentism will fare in its attempts to deal with various problems—most pressingly, the truth-maker problem. (If only present objects exist, and all propositions require existing entities in order to make them true, then what makes our past-tensed propositions true?) There are other examples of the papers of this collection hovering closely around the themes.

As for the *Handbook's* themes, are they well chosen? I think so. There's a lively literature on the metaphysics of time, so it would have been remiss not to include that. Likewise, the direction of time is an area that has received—and is continuing to receive—a good deal of attention. The experience of time is (so far as I can tell) a growth area and so needs inclusion, and the two sections on the physics of time are good to see. For what little it's worth: in my view philosophers working on time need to be cognizant of what our best physical theories tell us about time. Two sections on the topic (broadly construed) are a welcome addition to the literature. Certainly, I learned things from reading these papers. In particular, the last two (concerned with time in Quantum mechanics and quantum gravity) were very interesting.

The obvious theme that one might be a little surprised not to find in this compilation is what we might call 'the language of time'. I'm thinking, here, about papers concerning the relationship between the tense of our language and thoughts, and our metaphysics of time. But my impression of the debates in the literature on the philosophy of time at the moment is that—all things considered—the other areas are more obviously growth areas, or areas of substantial discussion, than the debate about tense. In that case, it rather makes sense to not see a section dedicated to the study of tense in language and thought. To be clear: I'm not meaning to imply that there isn't good work going on that deals with tense in thought and language, or that that area is unimportant. That's not to say that a section on this area would have been a waste—far from it; but I don't think the absence of a section on what has sometimes been called 'the language of time' hurts the volume.

Discussing the quality and level of the papers is obviously a rather delicate matter. As is probable, some of the papers are better than others. Indeed, some are excellent. One or two of the papers are not quite so good as one might hope—to my mind. These were quite clearly in a very small minority. The level is easier to describe. In general, I'd say that this volume will probably be of most use to professional philosophers and graduate students. There might be one or two undergraduates who find it a good compilation for

their courses and there might be a few undergraduate courses for which this could provide key readings, but I think that for the most part that's not the audience that will make most advantage of this book.

One or two of the papers seem to take on some of the features of an opinionated survey article. The advantage of including papers that do have these features is that it enables the anthology to reach out to a wider audience. A pure, out-and-out cutting edge research paper might not be something that, for instance, an interested upper-level undergraduate student could dip in and out of. But the more survey-like papers provide that resource. Of course, the downside of the anthology including papers that seem to be of slightly different levels is that it lends a *very* slight unevenness to the anthology.

In light of which, should the anthology exist? Yes. The themes are well chosen, the papers are of a good standard—some, to repeat, are excellent—and with so much debate going on in the philosophy of time at the moment, on the topics covered here, it's really nice to have a volume of interesting papers to add to that discussion. To close as I began: this is a very good book.

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