

What Am I Doing? Shining a Spotlight on the Metaphysics of Time



Metaphysics

- What is metaphysics?
- Metaphysics is about how the world is in the most general/basic terms
- Isn't that just physics?
- Metaphysical questions:
 - Are there are objects? Properties?
 - Could something be extended in space but not have proper parts?

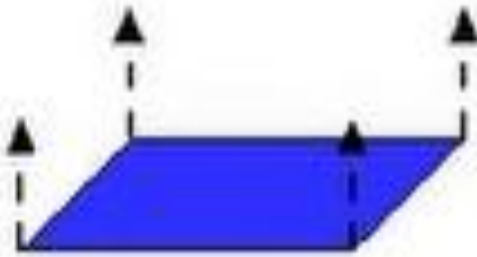
Metaphysics of time

- What are *times*?
- Are there *past* and *future* times?
- Are there past and future *objects/events*?
- Is some time *absolutely* present?
- What is change?

Theories of time

Presentism

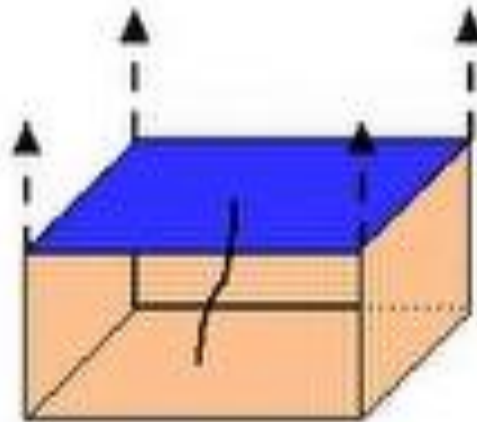
"Nowism"



The Present

Possibilism

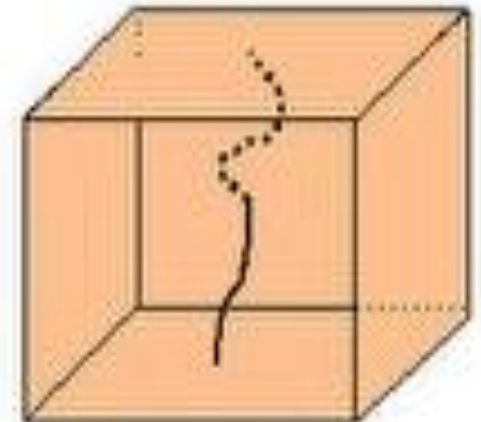
"The Tree Model"



Past & Present

Eternalism

"The Block Universe"



Past, Present, & Future

The moving spotlight theory

C. D. Broad, Metaphysician (1887-1971)



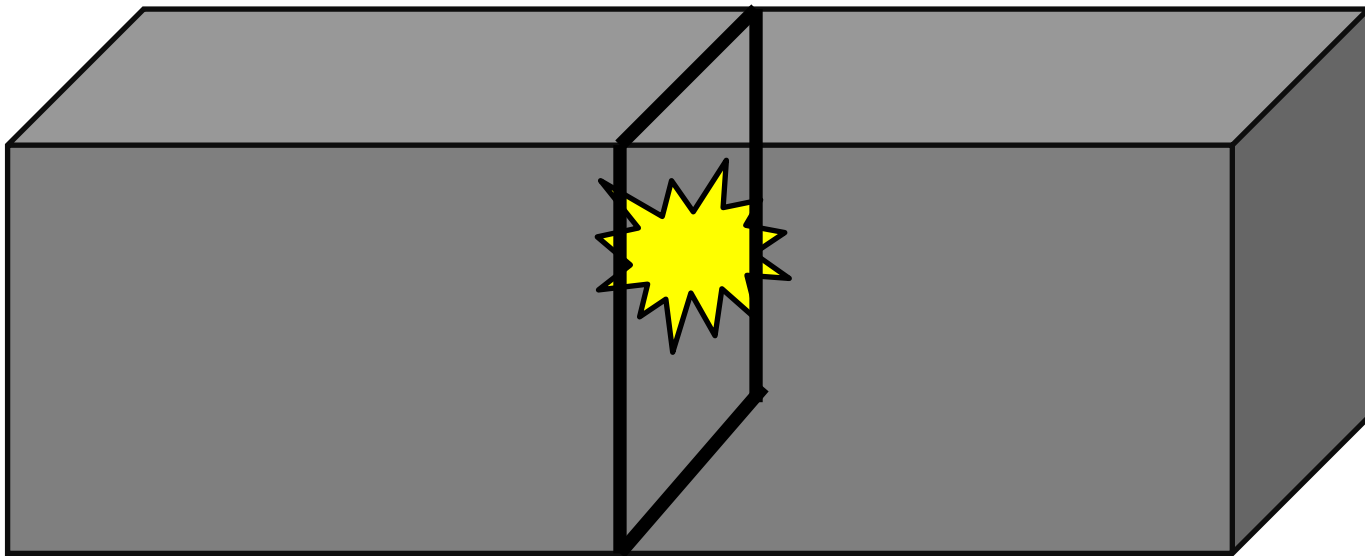
“We are naturally tempted to regard the history of the world as existing eternally in a certain order of events. Along this, and in a fixed direction, we imagine the characteristic of presentness as moving, somewhat like the spot of light from a policeman’s bulls-eye traversing the fronts of the houses in a street. What is illuminated is the present, what has been illuminated is the past, and what is not yet illuminated is the future.”

C. D. Broad, *Scientific Thought* (1927)

MST: Key theses

- Times = regions of spacetime
- There are past and future times
- Eternal existence
- Absolute, irreducible presentness
- Real change (no dinosaurs, but *merely former* dinosaurs)

MST: The picture



Why I love MST (and why you should too)

- Consistent with physics (mostly...)
- Consistent with ordinary thought and talk
- Real change; not stasis

Thank you!