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Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology Of Persistence And Time



Synopsis

Lucid, absorbing, and original, this book defends the theory that the material world is composed of temporal as well as spatial parts. Along the way, it addresses many topics on the metaphysics of time and identity. These include the status of past and future objects, the nature of motion and change, the existence of composite objects, and examples involving two things in the same place at the same time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Theodore Sider's excellent book provides an extremely lucid, persuasive, and detailed defense of the four-dimensionalist position, one that poses formidable challenges to the three-dimensionalist...Sider adds powerful new considerations of his own creation to the existing stockpile, which no doubt will engender a flurry of serious philosophical scrutiny in the literature to come...As a result, Sider arrives at an extraordinarily thoughtful, informative, and balanced assessment of the debate over persistence from which misleading rhetoric is largely absent...For many years to come, this book is sure to be the locus classicus with respect to which all those engaged with the literature on persistence must position themselves." --The Philosophical Review

Theodore Sider is in the Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University, New Jersey.

'Four-Dimensionalism' is a great book. Sider defends Four-Dimensionalism with great clarity and force. Four-Dimensionalism holds (roughly) that, just as you have spatial parts--e.g. hands, cells, simples, etc.--you have "temporal" parts. A temporal part is a part of you that exists at a certain time in your existence. A consequence of this view is that, at a particular moment, you don't "wholly" exist, because your existence is spread out in time. (Four-Dimensionalism contrasts with Three-Dimensionalism, which holds that you "wholly exist" at every moment you exist.) What's nice about this book is that it takes a difficult, possibly obscure, view and makes it a joy to read about. The book begins with an "Introduction." Unlike most Introductions, Sider's is important to read because it begins by setting forth the philosophical method and picture Sider is utilizing. (In fact, at several points in the book, Sider falls back on the points he makes in the Introduction.) The book is divided into six chapters. The first presents the "Four-Dimensionalism" picture, and motivates it by showing its ability to handle certain conceptual problems. The second could stand alone, and is a defense of the "B-theory" of time, which Sider assumes for the remainder of the book. The third attempts to state exactly what the Three/Four-Dimensionalism fuss is about. The final three chapters, which take up the bulk of the book, constitute a defense of Four-Dimensionalism--the first two provide arguments for the view, the last defends it against objections. (The book also contains a sizable list of references.) Sider's writing is clear and easy to follow. At points, things get difficult, and some knowledge of physics is helpful for several sections; but on a whole, a limited amount of specialized knowledge is sufficient to appreciate this book. One thing I liked about it was Sider's approach. He argues that--when all the votes are in--Four-Dimensionalism is the best view, which allows him to be frank about the various strengths of arguments for and against his view. Many of his arguments are persuasive, and he's fairly systematic, considering many different objections. In the end, I learned much from it and would recommend it to anyone interested in metaphysics, ontology, or philosophy of time.

Not an easy read for the common man, but a fascinating exploration of an important philosophical idea, made more so by the revelations of modern physics. I enjoyed Ted Sider's writing, and hope to enjoy it even more the second time I read this book. First I must read "Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics," which I understand is directed to a more general audience.

A very solid modern work on ontology. Very useful results in all areas of philosophy, including my interests in the philosophy of identity and the theology of resurrection.

Excellent

Ted Sider's **Four-Dimensionalism** is a very good book about the philosophy of time, more precisely about the metaphysics of objects as they travel through time. We readily enough admit that objects have physical parts: I have my feet and hands, each occupying a separate region of space and capable of having a (rather truncated) existence if they were severed from the rest of my body. We also grant readily enough that objects exist at different times: I was alive in 1997 and exist today, even if I am somewhat different in physical composition and (slightly) different in character. The question Sider asks is this: do objects have **temporal** parts, a "1997 part" for teenage me and a "2017 part" for the supposed adult? His answer is a resounding "Yes": "four-dimensionalism" is the name he adopts for this view. The technical distinction in metaphysics at the center of this question concerns whether objects "endure", happen to be around more or less intact at any particular time, or whether they "perdure" -- consist of a collection of temporal "stages" that have a certain integrity when considered together which we recognize as objectual. Four-dimensionalists believe in the perdurance of objects, and thusly that the temporal axis is a genuine "dimension

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