

A wants me to relativize my tenses to dates. It seems to me ...¹

By A.N. Prior

A wants me to relativise my tenses to dates. It seems to me that behind this request there is a metaphysics. Behind this request there is the idea that the whole of time is already there with all these dates, and all events and processes just are, located in various parts of this great fixed frame. I do not believe this -

I think this is to treat all time as if it were already past. I don't believe this. I don't believe that events and processes are; rather events happen (and then come to have happened) and processes go on (and then come to have gone on), and even this is an abstraction - the basic reality is things acting. But even in this flux there is a pattern, and this pattern I try to trace with my tense-logic; and it is because this pattern exists that men have been able to construct their seemingly timeless frame of dates. Dates, like classes, are a wonderful and tremendously useful invention, but they are an invention; the reality is things acting. Perhaps you could call my logic a mixture of Frege and Kolakowski. - I want to join the formal rigorism of the one with the vitalism of the other. Perhaps you regard this as a bastard mixture - a *mésalliance*. - I think it is a higher synthesis. And I think it important that people who care for rigorism and formalism should not leave the basic flux and flow of things in the hands of existentialists and Bergsonians and others who² love darkness rather than light, but we should enter this realm of life and time, not to destroy it, but to master it with our techniques.

That is just a postscript to last night's lecture.

(1) $Pp \rightarrow NMNPp^3$

(2) $\vdash \alpha \rightarrow \beta, \rightarrow \vdash NM\beta \rightarrow NM\alpha$

(3) $p \rightarrow NMNFp$

(4) $KNpNFp \rightarrow PNFp$

$KNpNFp$

$\rightarrow PNFp$

$\rightarrow NMNPNFp$

$\rightarrow NMp$

$\vdash p \rightarrow NPNFp$

$NMNPNFp \rightarrow NMp$

¹ Edited by Peter Øhrstrøm and David Jakobsen. The text is kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Box 6. It consists of a single sheet without a title and is undated. According to Collin Harris at the Bodleian Library, the paper is not likely to be British. It may be American. In that case it could have been written under one of Prior's stays in America in 1962 as a visiting professor at the university of Chicago, or between September 1965 to January 1966 when he was the visiting Flint professor at the University of California.

² Editor's comment: The phrase "love darkness rather than light" is inserted in the text and written in the margin. The following is crossed out: live in darkness.

³ Editors comment: After this text Prior has written the following proof, which seems to be a version of his reconstruction of the Diodorean Master Argument.