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# Time for Pragmatism

Huw Price<sup>\*†1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cambridge – United Kingdom

## Abstract

The philosophy of time has long been familiar with debates between those who take features such as the past–present–future distinction, the open character of the future, and apparent ‘passage’ of time to be features of the world in itself, and those who take them instead to reflect the human perspective on the world. Views of the latter sort have much in common with pragmatism, though few within these debates are aware of that connection, and few of the leading proponents of such views would think of themselves as pragmatists. For their part, few pragmatists are properly aware of this central and highly congenial application of their methodology. (Some mistakenly associate pragmatism with the other side of the old debate in the philosophy of time.) In this piece I begin with this link between the philosophy of time and pragmatism, but then argue that it only scratches the surface of the deep two-way dependencies between these two topics. The human temporal perspective turns out to be deeply implicated not merely in our temporal notions themselves, but in many other conceptual categories – arguably, in fact, in all of them, and in the nature of language and thought themselves. In this way, reflection on our own temporal character vindicates James’ famous global pragmatism: ”the trail of the human serpent is thus over everything”.

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\*Speaker

†Corresponding author: [hp331@cam.ac.uk](mailto:hp331@cam.ac.uk)