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Speak Up

UNIVERSALITY OF TIME

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Daniel Deasy, Associate Professor of Philosophy at University College Dublin, gave a talk on The Necessity of Time on April 19, 2024. The talk was organised by Lugano Philosophy Colloquia.

In his talk, he used Logic to explain reality and Time. He argued that reality is real and that Time is required for reality to exist due to which Time is also real. At the end of the talk, I got a chance to discuss with him his ideas and whether he could relate them to Jainism. I told him that Jains believe in Time that assists change, and asked whether he believes in the same. His answer dropped my jaw.

He said that Time certainly assists change but we must also imagine a moment when there is only a Moment – the smallest unit of time. A single moment does not move itself and remains as it is – intact. His answer connects with the Jain idea of metaphysics which affirms that a substance is both transient (anitya) and constant (nitya). He also, unknowingly, gave the answer from syādvāda where both these characteristics are present in Time at the same time.

Metaphysics according to Jainism includes TIME and gives it the equal status of a substance where soul, matter, facilitators of motion and rest, and space are equally vital as Time for the universe to sustain and evolve. It brings out some noticeable points about TIME:

- Time is a substance.
- Conventional Time is our everyday time that is measured through change while Absolute Time is just Time itself. Past, present, and future are the three types of conventional time.
- Soul and matter undergo change and Time facilitates that change because they move in the temporal dimension from one moment to another.



- Time is a dimension present in every substance, and therefore, Time itself is present in its own time.
- Existence is absolute and Time facilitates it.
- Each unit or ‘molecule’ of Time – samaya – is individual but closely situated with each other like a bowl full of jewels, and thus, Time utilizes only one space point.
- E.g., Four people are living in a room for three days. If they want to live for three more days, how many rooms are required? The extension of time does not change the dimension of space. Let us understand this in mathematical and logical terms:

Let’s assume that the room’s capacity and the people’s requirements remain constant over time. Here’s a simple breakdown:

- Capacity: The room is capable of accommodating four people.
- Duration: Initially, the duration is three days, which the room supports.
- Extension: The request is to extend the stay for another three days.

Since the room’s capacity to accommodate four people does not change with time, and there’s no indication that the people’s needs have increased, the same room can continue to be used for the additional days. It’s similar to how a car with a seating capacity for four doesn’t require another car if the journey is extended, as long as it can still run and the passengers are comfortable.

In mathematical terms, if (C) is the capacity of the room for (P) people for (D) days, then:

$$C(P, D) = 1 \text{ room}$$

Extending the days to (D + 3) doesn’t change the capacity requirement:

$$C(P, D + 3) = C(P, D) = 1 \text{ room}$$

Hence, only one room is required for the additional three days.

Now in logical terms, the situation can be expressed using a propositional logic framework.

Let’s define some propositions:

- Let (P) represent the proposition “The room is suitable for four people.”
- Let (D₃) represent the proposition “The room is suitable for a duration of three days.”
- Let (D₆) represent the proposition “The room is suitable for a duration of six days.”

Given that (P) and (D₃) are true (since the four people have already stayed comfortably for three days), we want to determine if



(P) and (D₆) can also be true without changing the number of rooms.

In logical terms, we have:

$P \wedge D_3 \rightarrow$ One room is sufficient

Now, if the room's suitability does not change over time, then:

$P \wedge D_3 \equiv P \wedge D_6$

This means that if the room is sufficient for the first three days, it will remain sufficient for the next three days, assuming no change in the room's capacity or the people's requirements. Therefore:

$P \wedge D_6 \rightarrow$ One room is sufficient

So, in logical terms, the initial conditions that made one room sufficient for four people for three days will continue to make one room sufficient for the same four people for an additional three days. Hence, no additional rooms are required.

With this simple example, Time can be understood to be categorical, absolute, and non-relative. Independent of its fellow substances, Time is one of them and on its own.

