

A longstanding debate in the philosophy of time concerns the question whether non-present things exist. The main positions in this debate are *presentism* and *eternalism*. Presentists hold that only present things exist. Eternalists hold that dinosaurs and other non-present things exist (in addition to present things). Timothy Williamson (2013: 24–25) and Daniel Deasy (2015) have recently argued that this debate is misguided and should be abandoned. Rather than investigating whether non-present things exist, philosophers of time should turn to the following question: Do things come into existence and go out of existence? Two answers to this question are *permanentism*, according to which everything always exists (and thus nothing ever comes into existence or goes out of existence), and *transientism*, according to which sometimes something begins to exist and sometimes something ceases to exist.

The main complaint Williamson and Deasy lodge against the presentism-eternalism debate is that it is ‘hopelessly muddled’ (Williamson 2013: 25). Because it is unclear what it is for something to be present, they argue, there is no good way of defining presentism. As a result, the distinction between presentism and eternalism is unclear. There are no analogous problems in defining permanentism and transientism, so philosophers of time should focus their efforts on the clearer permanentism-transientism debate.

The aim of this paper is to show that this line of argument should be resisted: I will point to a way of construing the predicate ‘is present’ that permits a clear and helpful definition of presentism and eternalism. There is thus no need to abandon the debate between presentists and eternalists.