Near Final Draft of 'Tense, timely action and self-ascription'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol 80, no. 1, pp. 112-132.

Tense, Timely Action and Self-Ascription

Stephan Torre

Abstract

I consider whether the self-ascription theory can succeed in providing a tenseless (B-theoretic) account of tensed belief and timely action. I evaluate an argument given by William Lane Craig for the conclusion that the self-ascription account of tensed belief entails a tensed theory (A-theory) of time. I claim that how one formulates the self-ascription account of tensed belief depends upon whether one takes the subject of self-ascription to be a momentary person-stage or an enduring person. I provide two different formulations of the self-ascription account of tensed belief, one that is compatible with a perdurantist account of persons and the other that is compatible with an endurantist account of persons. I argue that a self-ascription account of tensed beliefs for enduring subjects most plausibly involves the self-ascription of *relations* rather than properties. I argue that whether one takes the subject of self-ascription to be a momentary person-stage or an enduring person, the self-ascription theory provides a plausible B-theoretic account of how tensed belief and timely action are possible.

1. Introduction

In this paper I examine the self-ascription account of tensed belief and its relation to the debate between the A-theory and the B-theory of time. The A-theorist holds that tense is a fundamental feature of the world. Events in time have the irreducibly monadic properties of either *being-past*, *being-present* or *being-future*. The present, according to the A-theorist, is distinguished in some ontological respect from the past and the future. The B-theorist denies that tense is a fundamental feature of the world. Just as I do not confer any special ontological status on Amherst for being here, the B-theorist claims that

I should not confer any special ontological status on 2007 for being now; the present lacks any irreducibly tensed property of *being-present*.

A separate issue concerns the nature of tensed belief. I knew all week that my apartment building is being fumigated on Wednesday. Wednesday morning I got up, not remembering what day it was, and began to make some breakfast. All of a sudden I caught a whiff of noxious fumes and quickly realized: my apartment building is being fumigated now! I immediately put on my jacket and left my apartment. All week I had the tenseless belief:

(FW for '<u>F</u>umigation <u>W</u>ednesday') My apartment building is being fumigated on Wednesday.

(FW) is a *tenseless* belief because it can be adequately described without the use of temporal indexicals such as 'now', 'today' or 'tomorrow'. It is a belief about a particular event within the B-series.[1] Holding (FW) did not cause me to put on my jacket and leave the building. It was only when I came to believe:

(FN for '<u>F</u>umigation <u>N</u>ow') My apartment building is being fumigated *now*.

that I put on my jacket and left the building. (FN) is a *tensed* belief because a temporal indexical such as 'now' or 'presently' is required in order to adequately describe the belief. A *prima facie* conclusion to draw from this example is that tenseless beliefs such

[1] The B-series refers to the ordering of events by the relations of *is-before*, *is-after*, and *is-simultaneous-with*.

as (FW) are not sufficient for explaining timely action. My quickly leaving the building on Wednesday cannot be explained by my having the tenseless belief (FW) since I had that belief all week and it did not cause me to perform the action. Nor does there seem to be any other tenseless belief that is capable of explaining why I put on my jacket and left the building when I did. A tensed belief such as (FN) seems necessary for providing an explanation of my action.

The previous example demonstrates that tensed beliefs are necessary for timely action. How can we explain the difference between what I believe when I believe (FW) and what I believe when I believe (FN)? Some have held that what is believed in both cases is the same. The difference in action is explained in terms of distinct ways in which the content is believed.[2] Others have held that the content of what I believe when I believe (FW) differs from the content of what I believe when I believe (FN). Two defenders of a version of this latter position are David Lewis and Roderick Chisholm. Lewis (1979) and Chisholm (1980) both claim that what I believe when I believe (FW) can be explained by appealing to an eternal proposition. However, they claim that what I believe when I believe (FN) cannot be explained by appealing to an eternal proposition. They claim that the content of my tensed belief is a property rather than a proposition.[3] To have a property as the content of one's belief is to ascribe the property to oneself.[4]

Although Chisholm and Lewis both agree that to have a tensed belief is to self-ascribe a property, Chisholm defends the A-theory of time and Lewis defends the B-

[2] Kaplan (1989), Perry (1979), Dyke (2003) and Mozersky (2006) advocate such a view. Dyke (2003) and Mozersky (2006) argue that such a view is compatible with the B-theory of time.
[3] Here and throughout the rest of the paper I will use the term 'proposition' to refer to something that is eternally true or eternally false if true or false at all.
[4] The terminology of 'self-ascribing' a property is Lewis's. Chisholm uses the terminology of 'directly attributing' a property. I think the difference is merely terminological and, for the sake of clarity, I will stick with Lewis's terminology throughout.

theory of time. Lewis denies that there are irreducibly tensed properties. His self-ascription account of tensed belief involves self-ascribing tenseless properties: to believe that my building is being fumigated now involves ascribing the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*.[5] The property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation* is a purely B-theoretic property since it is constructed out of the B-theoretic relation *is-simultaneous-with* and an event within the B-series.

Chisholm, on the other hand, does hold that tense is necessary in order to distinguish the present from the past and the future. He claims that:

> if we take tense seriously, we distinguish *now*—the present time—from all other times in one or the other of two different ways. We could say, on the one hand, that the present time is the only time that *does* exist—all other times being such that either they *did* exist or they will *exist*. Or we could say…that times are a certain sub-species of states of affairs and that, like states of affairs, they are such that either they obtain or they do not obtain. In the latter case, the present time would be the time that *is obtaining*, past times would be the times that *did obtain*, and future time would be those that *will obtain* (Chisholm 1981, 51).

Chisholm, in the appendix to *The First Person*, defends the latter option according to which times are states of affairs. The present time is distinguished from past and future times in that the present time is obtaining, where 'is obtaining' is understood in the

[5] See Lewis (1979). There is more to the story for Lewis's account of tensed belief than I am stating here. These details are discussed in greater detail below.

present tense. According to Chisholm, this tensed characterization of the present is necessary for describing the ontological status of the present. There is no way to give an adequate, tenseless characterization of the present. In *The First Person*, he claims that arguments designed to show that "tense is illusory" are "very easy to refute" and "not worthy of our present consideration" (Chisholm 1981, 125).

According to Chisholm, what property do I self-ascribe when I believe (FN)? Chisholm claims, "To say of a state of affairs or event that it occurs *at* the present time is to say, of it, that it is one of the events that are occurring, and we can arrive at *that* conclusion without singling out any identifying property of the present moment" (Chisholm 1981, 51). Elsewhere, in discussing a case in which a weatherman believes that it is presently raining, he states, "he attributed to himself the property of being such that it is raining." According to Chisholm, to believe that an event, e, is presently occurring is to self-ascribe the property of being such that e is occurring where 'is occurring' is understood in the present tense. Believing (FN) involves self-ascribing the property of being such that the fumigation is (present-tense) occurring.

We have seen that, although Chisholm and Lewis agree that tensed beliefs involve the self-ascription of a property, they disagree on whether tense is a fundamental feature of the world and also how tense figures into what property is ascribed. The questions I wish to address are: to what extent must one "take tense seriously" in providing a self-ascription account of tensed belief? Is it possible to provide a tenseless (B-theory) account of tensed belief that is capable of explaining how timely action is possible? Or, in order to provide an explanation for how timely action is possible, must we posit the existence of irreducibly tensed properties?

Many have claimed that examples such as the fumigation example given above provide a reason to favor the A-theory. Many A-theorists have argued that the B-theory lacks the resources to explain how timely action is possible.[6] We can see the fumigation example as posing the following challenge for the B-theorist: The B-theorist denies that tense is a fundamental feature of the world. Yet tense seems essential to explaining why I put on my jacket and leave the building when I do. In order for the B-theory to be plausible, it must be able to explain this fact without appealing to irreducibly tensed features of the world.

Few have considered the self-ascription account of tensed belief and whether this account can provide an adequate B-theory response to the challenge posed. One who has considered this issue is William Lane Craig. He claims that "although he is a B-theorist, Lewis's [self-ascription] theory is quite well-suited to the needs of the A-theorist" (Craig 2000, 128). He then provides an argument for the claim that the self-ascription account of tensed belief entails the conclusion that real tense is ineliminable. He states his argument as follows:

> For if one does not ascribe to oneself tensed properties, one cannot locate oneself so as to act in a timely fashion. In knowing what time it is, one must self-ascribe more than a mere B-series position to oneself, for one occupies tenselessly a multitude of such positions and in order to act reasonably, one must know what time it is now. Alternatively, if I am self-ascribing B-series positions, then the act of self-ascribing must itself be tensed. If I tenselessly self-ascribe a B-series position, then I believe that I tenselessly occupy that position, but I do not know where I am. The act of self-ascribing must be tensed: I am (present tense) at t1. Thus in order to have successful self-ascription of properties, I must either ascribe tensed properties or tensedly ascribe tenseless ones. On either account, real tense is ineliminable. (Craig 2000, 128).[7]

[6] Versions of this argument can be found in Smith (1994), Craig (2000), Prior (1959) and Ludlow (1999).
[7] This passage also appears in Craig (1996).

Craig understands the claim that "real tense is ineliminable" as equivalent to the claim that "reality is tensed" (Craig 1996, 265). According to Craig's usage, claiming that real tense is ineliminable is equivalent to claiming that the A-theory is true. So, we can take Craig's claims as providing an argument for the conclusion that the self-ascription account of tensed belief entails the A-theory. This argument can be stated as follows:

Craig's Argument

(1) If the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true, then either one self-ascribes tensed properties or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless properties.

(2) If one self-ascribes tensed properties, then real tense is ineliminable.

(3) If one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless properties, then real tense is ineliminible.

(4) If real tense is ineliminable, then the A-theory is true.

(5) Therefore, if the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true, then the A-theory is true. (from 1, 2, 3 and 4).

As stated, Craig's Argument is valid. In what follows, I wish to evaluate the premises of the argument. My purposes for evaluating the argument are two-fold. The first reason is obvious: doing so will help establish whether the self-ascription account of tensed belief does indeed have any implications for the debate between the A-theory and the B-theory of time. It will help in answering the following question: Can the self-ascription account of tensed belief provide a tenseless (B-theoretic) account of how timely action is possible?

If it can, then one of the main arguments for the A-theory is undermined. Secondly, in evaluating the argument, we will be forced to answer certain questions central to the formulation of the self-ascription account of tensed belief, such as: to what extent does the self-ascription account depend upon what we take the subject to be? What exactly is a tensed property? What does it mean to "tensedly self-ascribe" a property? The self-ascription account of tensed belief is underdeveloped in the current literature and my hope is that evaluating Craig's Argument will force us to develop the account in greater detail.

Does Craig's Argument succeed in demonstrating that the self-ascription account of tensed belief entails the A-theory? First, I will attempt to make precise the notion of a tensed property, as well as what it means to 'tensedly self-ascribe' a property. With these clarified notions in hand, I will argue that Craig overlooks Lewis's preferred account of tensed belief according to which person-stages self-ascribe tenseless properties. I will claim that this view allows the B-theorist to reject premise (1) of Craig's Argument. On this account, tenseless properties are tenselessly self-ascribed.

Having shown that taking person-stages as the subjects of self-ascription avoids any commitment to the A-theory, I will then consider whether taking enduring persons as the subjects of self-ascription forces one to posit the existence of tensed properties. I will argue that a self-ascription account of tensed belief for enduring subjects most plausibly involves the self-ascription of *relations*, rather than properties. I acknowledge that such a view involves a notion of self-ascription that is irreducibly tensed, however I argue that an irreducibly tensed notion of self-ascription does not commit one to the existence of tensed properties. I conclude that whether we take the self-ascribing subject to be a

person-stage or an enduring person, the self-ascription theory allows for a B-theoretic explanation for how tensed belief and timely action are possible.

2. Tensed Properties and Tensed Ascription

Craig's first premise claims that if the self-ascription account is true, then one must either *tenselessly* self-ascribe *tensed* properties or *tensedly* self-ascribe *tenseless* ones. What is a tensed property? I take a tensed property to be a property that is *irreducibly* tensed: it cannot be analyzed in terms of events in the B-series and B-theoretic relations such as *is-before*, *is-simultaneous-with*, and *is-after*. Note that the debate between the A-theorist and the B-theorist is not over whether tensed properties such as *having-been-to-Paris* exist. Both should acknowledge that such properties exist. However they disagree on whether or not such properties can be analyzed in terms of tenseless properties. According to the B-theorist, the property of *having-been-to-Paris* can be analyzed in tenseless terms such as *being-in-Paris-prior-to-t*, where t is some time within the B-series. However, if the A-theorist is right, then there is a property of *having-been-to-Paris* that cannot be analyzed in terms of B-theoretic relations. Ned Markosian states the distinction between the A-theorist and the B-theorist similarly. He claims that, according to the A-theorist, "talk that appears to be about A-properties is not analyzable in terms of B-relations" and, according to the B-theorist, "talk that appears to be about A-properties is analyzable in terms of B-relations" (Markosian 2001, 616).

What is it to "tensedly self-ascribe" a property? According to Lewis's account, for me to self-ascribe a property F is for me to believe that I, myself, am F. We can make sense of the notion of tenseless versus tensed self-ascription by considering the tense of

the verb ‘to be’ in the statement ‘I, myself, am F’. I suggest that we understand the distinction between tensed and tenseless ascription in a manner analogous to the oft-made distinction between tensed and tenseless predication. Consider the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is a ship’. We can interpret this sentence as expressing either tensed predication or tenseless predication. On the tenseless reading, the ‘is’ in the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is a ship’ is understood as expressing the tenseless fact that there is a two-place instantiation relation obtaining between the *Santa Maria* and the property of *being-a-ship*. On the tensed reading the ‘is’ in the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is a ship’ is understood in the present-tense, predicative form. What is expressed according to this reading is equivalent to what is expressed by the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is presently a ship.’ It is natural to claim that sentences expressing a tenseless predication are true at all times or false at all times, if true or false at all. On the tenseless reading, the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is a ship’ is true regardless of when it is uttered. On the tensed reading, the sentence ‘The *Santa Maria* is a ship’ is false when uttered in the present context, but true when uttered in 1492.

Just as we can distinguish between tensed and tenseless predication, we can also distinguish between tensed and tenseless self-ascription. Let us say that I *tenselessly self-ascribe* F iff I believe that I, myself, am (tenselessly) F. In this case, ‘am’ is taken to be a tenseless, predicative form of the verb ‘to be’. To tenselessly self-ascribe F is to believe that I tenselessly instantiate the property F. If I tenselessly self-ascribe F, then I believe that I am F *simpliciter*, not relative to some time or to the present moment. Let us say that I *tensedly self-ascribe* F iff I believe that I, myself, am (present-tense) F. In this case ‘*am*’ is understood as a present-tense, predicative form of the verb ‘to be’. If I tensedly

self-ascribe F, then I believe that I am (present-tense) F. This treatment of what it is to tensedly self-ascribe a property is clearly what Craig himself has in mind when he claims, "The act of self-ascribing must be tensed: I am (present tense) at t1" (Craig 2000, 128).

3. Momentary Subjects and Self-Ascription

In the passage quoted above, Craig claims, "In knowing what time it is, one must self-ascribe more than a mere B-series position to oneself, for one occupies tenselessly a multitude of such positions and in order to act reasonably, one must know what time it is now." In this passage, Craig assumes that the subject that self-ascribes properties occupies multiple moments in time. This overlooks Lewis's preferred account of tensed belief according to which momentary person-stages, rather than persons, self-ascribe properties. If one adopts this account of self-ascription, then one can reject premise (1) of Craig's Argument: It is possible for the self-ascription account of tensed belief to be true and for one to neither self-ascribe tensed properties nor tensedly self-ascribe tenseless ones. In order to argue for this conclusion, I will demonstrate how Lewis's account is able to distinguish between believing (FW) and believing (FN). Furthermore, I will argue that this account can be formulated without resorting to tensed properties or tensed self-ascription in the sense outlined above.

According to Lewis's account, persons are maximal sums of appropriately inter-related person-stages.[8] Persons have temporary properties in virtue of having person-stages that have those properties *simpliciter*. I am currently bent in virtue of the fact that my present person-stage (or temporal part) is bent *simpliciter*. Lewis claims that when it comes to beliefs about one's location in time, it is these person-stages, not the continuant

[8] Lewis presents the perdurantist account of persons in Lewis (1983).

person, that do the self-ascribing. Lewis considers an insomniac lying awake at 3:49am wondering what time it is. He supposes that the insomniac does not lack propositional knowledge. He further claims that we cannot make sense of the insomniac's wondering by supposing that there is some property that he fails to ascribe to his continuant self; after all, we could suppose that the insomniac, "knows, well enough, what locus through space and time he occupies and what his various segments are like." Lewis goes on to say:

> To understand how he wonders, we must recognize that it is time-slices of him that do the wondering… The slice at 3:49am may self-ascribe the property of being one slice of an insomniac who lies awake on such-and-such date at such and such place at such and such a kind of world, and yet may fail to self-ascribe the property of being at 3:49am…It is the slice, not the continuant, that fails to self-ascribe a property (Lewis 1979, 144).

In Lewis's discussion of the insomniac, he provides an account of tensed belief in terms of the self-ascription of properties. Let us restrict our attention to 'now' beliefs, such as the belief that it is now 3:49am or the belief that my building is being fumigated now. His account may be stated as follows:

(SA-P for '<u>S</u>elf-<u>A</u>scription-<u>P</u>erdurantism') At t, a person, S, believes that e is now iff S has a person-stage that exists at t and it self-ascribes the property of *being-simultaneous-with-e*.

Let us apply (SA-P) to the fumigation example given above. Suppose that I begin making breakfast at 8am and I first smell the fumes at 8:15am. I believe (FW) at 8am, but do not come to believe (FN) until 8:15am. Lewis claims that propositional belief can also be understood in terms of the self-ascription of a property: to believe that p, where p

is a proposition, is to self-ascribe the property of inhabiting a world in which p is true. In believing (FW), my 8am stage self-ascribes the property of being in a world in which the fumigation takes place on Wednesday, but it fails to self-ascribe the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*. My 8:15 stage, however, does self-ascribe the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*. At 8:15, I believe that my apartment is being fumigated now in virtue of having an 8:15-person-stage that self-ascribes the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*. It is only when my person-stage self-ascribes this property that I put on my jacket and leave the building. The timeliness of my action is explained by the fact that my 8:15am person-stage self-ascribes a property that my 8:00am person-stage failed to ascribe.

(SA-P) provides an account of tensed belief that involves neither the self-ascription of tensed properties nor a tensed notion of self-ascription. First, it should be clear that (SA-P) makes no appeal to tensed properties. The property that is ascribed according to (SA-P) is the property of being simultaneous with some event. This property is constructed out of the B-theoretic relation of *being-simultaneous-with* and an event within the B-series. Since the properties that are self-ascribed according to (SA-P) can be properly analyzed in terms of B-theoretic relations and times, they are tenseless properties.

Furthermore, (SA-P) is compatible with the tenseless notion of self-ascription outlined above. Recall that to tenselessly self-ascribe some property is to believe that you are (tenselessly) F. When my 8:15am person-stage self-ascribes the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*, it does so tenselessly, it believes that it is simultaneous with the fumigation once and for all. Since the subject of self-ascription is

momentary, any property that it has, it has *simpliciter*. Although *I* have some properties now and lack them later, my momentary person-stages have properties *simpliciter*. Therefore, when my 8:15 person-stage self-ascribes the property of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation*, it believes that it tenselessly has the property. Recall that Craig states, "If I tenselessly self-ascribe a B-series position, then I believe that I tenselessly occupy that position, but I do not know where I am." If (SA-P) is correct, then *I* don't tenselessly self-ascribe a B-series position; rather my stage does. My stage's tenseless belief at 8:15 about its location in the B-series is sufficient for my tensed belief of where I am within the B-series. If we adopt (SA-P), then it is possible to have tensed beliefs by tenselessly self-ascribing tenseless properties.

4. Self-Ascription and Enduring Subjects

So far I have argued that if we take stages as the subjects of tensed belief, then premise (1) of Craig's Argument is false. Craig's failure to consider (SA-P) as a response to his argument may have been based on his own conviction that the perdurantist account of persons is untenable. In his (2000), Craig claims that "perdurantism flies in the face of the phenomenology of personal consciousness" (208). He states, "for if my self-conscious self is a temporal part of a person, I am still a distinct object from the person-part who thought of himself as "I" a moment ago. He and I are not identical, he did not continue to exist, indeed, the "I" who finishes this sentence is not the same entity which began it" (209). He concludes that "Perdurantism thus fails to make good sense of personal identity over time" (209). Taking momentary person-stages as the subjects of belief is, according to Craig, an implausible view. I think that Craig's

complaints with the perdurantist account of persons can be (and, for the most part, have been) met. Nonetheless, it is interesting to consider whether one *needs* to adopt a perdurantist account of persons in order to provide a self-ascription account of tensed belief that is compatible with the B-theory. It has been successfully argued that the B-theory/A-theory debate is conceptually independent of the perdurantist/endurantist debate.[9] D. H. Mellor, one of the best known defenders of the B-theory, defends an endurantist account of objects and persons.[10] Could someone with this combination of views adopt a self-ascription account of tensed belief? Or does Craig's Argument succeed in showing that such a combination of views is untenable? In the remainder of the paper I wish to consider the following question: Is taking stages as the subject of self-ascription the only way to give a self-ascription account of tensed belief that is amenable to the B-theory?

In order to answer this question, I will consider a view that, like Mellor's, combines the B-theory with an endurantist account of persons, and I will consider whether such a view can adopt a self-ascription account of tensed belief. Mellor claims that, "Things, unlike events, are wholly present at every moment within their B-times. Some B-theorists admittedly deny this… and credit all temporally extended entities with temporal parts; but no one else does. No one else would say that only parts of Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed only a part of Everest in 1953. The rest of us think those two whole men climbed that one whole mountain, and that all three parties were wholly present throughout every temporal part of that historic event" (Mellor 1998,

[9] See Sider (2001), especially section 3.4. For an opposing view see Oaklander (2004).
[10] In addition to Mellor, the combination of a B-theory of time and endurantism has been defended by a number of philosophers including Haslanger (1994), Johnston (1987), van Inwagen (1990) and Wasserman (2003).

86). Can Craig's Argument be used to demonstrate that adopting a self-ascription account of tensed belief and an endurantist account of persons entails the A-theory? Let us replace premise (1) of Craig's Argument with the following premise:

> (1') If the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true and endurantism is true, then either one self-ascribes tensed properties or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless properties.

The conclusion of the resulting argument can be stated as follows:

> (5') Therefore, if the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true and the endurantist account of persons is true, then the A-theory is true. (from 1', 2, 3 and 4).

Before considering how the endurantist[11] might formulate a self-ascription account of tensed belief, let us first consider the well-known problem of temporary intrinsics.[12] The solution that the endurantist provides to this problem will be relevant to how she formulates the self-ascription account of tensed belief. Consider the following problem: Now at 2pm I am sitting and I am bent. Earlier at 1pm I was standing and I was straight. How is it that one thing (me) can instantiate incompatible properties (being

[11] In the discussion that follows I will use the term 'endurantist' to refer to one who holds an endurantist account of persons and a B-theory of time. I realize that there are many endurantists who reject the B-theory, however since my main question in this paper is whether the self-ascription account can provide a B-theory explanation of how timely action is possible, I restrict my attention here to the B-theory endurantist.

[12] The problem of temporary intrinsics is put forth in Lewis (1986, 202-205)

bent, and being straight)? The obvious answer is that I have the incompatible properties *at different times*: I was straight earlier, but now I am bent. But how is *that* possible? How is it that one thing can have incompatible intrinsic properties at different times? This is the problem of temporary intrinsics. Lewis takes this problem to be one of the main motivations for adopting a temporal parts metaphysics. According to the temporal parts theorist, I am bent at 2pm by having a 2pm temporal part that is bent and I am straight at 1pm by having a 1pm temporal part that is straight. The endurantist denies that I am composed of temporal parts and so cannot analyze the instantiation of incompatible properties by appealing to distinct temporal parts. Instead, a common endurantist solution to the problem of temporary intrinsics is to deny that I possess the non-relational properties of *being-bent* and *being-straight*.[13] One who adopts this solution claims that I am bent at 2pm and straight at 1pm by instantiating relational properties such as *being-bent-at-2pm* and *being-straight-at-1pm*, or, alternatively, I stand in the dyadic relation *being-bent-at* to 2pm and *being-straight-at* to 1pm. In either case, contradiction is avoided. There is nothing contradictory about instantiating both the property of *being-bent-at-2pm* and the property of *being-straight-at-1pm*. Nor is there anything contradictory about standing in the *being-bent-at* relation to 2pm and standing in the *being-straight-at* relation to 1pm.[14]

[13] Another is the adverbialist response to the problem of temporary intrinsics. Haslanger (1989) and Johnston (1987) both endorse this response. Although I think it is an interesting question whether the defender of the adverbialist response can provide a tenseless self-ascription account of tensed belief and timely action, my response below focuses on the relationalist response to the problem of temporary intrinsics.

[14] It is worth noting that although Mellor (1981) endorses the relationalist response to the problem of temporary intrinsics, Mellor (1998) rejects such a response. Compare Mellor (1981), chapter 7 and Mellor (1998) especially chapter 8, sections 5 and 6. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point. In (2003), Ryan Wasserman defends the plausibility of the relationalist response to the problem of temporary intrinsics (although he denies endorsing the response in footnote 2).

Given this solution to the problem of temporary intrinsics, how might the endurantist provide a self-ascription account of tensed belief? Suppose that at 2pm I believe that I am now bent. On Lewis' account, I have this belief in virtue of the fact that my 2pm person-stage self-ascribes the property of *being-bent*. Suppose I am an enduring subject. I do not possess the property of *being-bent simpliciter* so this cannot be the property that I self-ascribe. Instead, I possess the property of *being-bent-at-2p*m, or, alternatively, I stand in the relation of *being-bent-at* to 2pm.

I propose that, in providing a self-ascription account of tensed belief, the endurantist should claim that the "properties" that the subject self-ascribes are, strictly speaking, not properties, but relations. When, at 2pm, I formulate the belief that I am now bent, I do not self-ascribe the property of *being-bent-at-2pm*. After all, I might be completely ignorant about what time it is and, therefore, in no position to self-ascribe the property of *being-bent-at-2pm*. More plausibly, what I self-ascribe at 2pm is the relation of *being-bent-at*. At 2pm I self-ascribe standing in the *being-bent-at* relation.

What does it mean to self-ascribe a *relation*, as opposed to a property? For me to self-ascribe the relation of *being-bent-at* is for me to believe that I, myself, stand in the *being-bent-at* relation. However what about the 'time' relata? Does self-ascribing a relation, R, involve a subject, S, believing that he, himself, stands in R to the present time? To the time at which the belief is had? Or perhaps to some time or other? In order to shed light on these questions it will be helpful to first consider how the self-ascription account handles the case of *de se* belief and then formulate the notion of self-ascribing a relation in a similar manner.

An amnesiac named Lingens pushes his shopping cart around the supermarket not realizing that his bag of sugar is leaking onto the floor.[15] After circling around, the amnesiac sees the trail of sugar on the floor and comes to believe that someone is making a mess. An employee of the supermarket who recognizes the amnesiac as Lingens observes the leaking cart and goes on the loudspeaker announcing, "Lingens, you are making a mess". Lingens formulates the belief that Lingens is making a mess, but since he has forgotten that he is Lingens, he continues to push the cart. However, finally, Lingens looks down and sees the sugar spilling out of his cart and exclaims "I am making a mess!" He quickly adjusts the bag of sugar to avoid any further spillage.

According to the self-ascription account, the object of Lingens's belief changes throughout the ordeal. At first, he believes the proposition that someone is making a mess. Later, after hearing the loudspeaker announcement, he comes to believe the proposition that Lingens is making a mess. However, according to the self-ascription theory, what Lingens believes when he finally exclaims "I am making a mess!" and adjusts the bag of sugar cannot be explained by appealing to either of these propositions, or to any proposition at all. Rather, what Lingens believes when he exclaims "I am making a mess" is the property of *being-an-x-such-that-x-is-making-a-mess*.

How the self-ascription theorist treats the *de se* case is instructive to how the endurantist should understand the self-ascription of a relation in the case of tensed belief. Suppose that my doctor gives me antibiotics and tells me to refrain from drinking alcohol before June 10th at which point I will be healthy and able to drink. On June 10th I go to a bar with a friend and, not realizing what day it is, I order a seltzer, instead of a beer. At the time I order the seltzer, I have forgotten the date at which the doctor told me I would

[15] This example borrows a character from Perry (1977) and a scenario from Perry (1979).

be healthy. I believe that I am healthy on some day or other. Since my belief is a *de se* belief (I believe that I, myself, am healthy on some day or other), it is best understood as the self-ascription of a property. I self-ascribe the property of *being-healthy-on-some-day-or-other*. I then ask my friend "What day did my doctor say that I will be able to drink again?" and my friend responds, "June 10th". Not yet realizing that today is June 10th, I formulate the belief that I am healthy on June 10th. Since my belief is a *de se* belief (I believe that I, myself, am healthy on June 10th), it is best understood as the self-ascription of a property. I self-ascribe the property of *being-healthy-on-June-10th*. Finally, I ask my friend, "What day is it today?" and he replies "June 10th". I then come to believe that I, myself, am *now* healthy. This belief causes me to dump out my seltzer, motion for the bartender, and order a beer.

Recall that when Lingens has the belief that someone is making a mess and the belief that Lingens is making a mess, the self-ascription theorist claims that the object of his belief is a proposition. However, when Lingens comes to realize that he, himself, is making a mess, no proposition will adequately characterize the object of his belief. Instead, the self-ascription theorist claims that the object of his belief is a property, the property of *being-an-x-such-that-x-is-making-a-mess*. When on June 10th I believe that I am healthy on some day or other, the object of my belief is a property, the property of *being-healthy-on-some-day-or-other*. Similarly, when I believe on June 10th that I am healthy on June 10th, the object of my belief is a property, the property of *being-healthy-on-June-10th*. But just as no *proposition* will adequately characterize Lingens's belief that he, himself is making a mess, no *property* will adequately characterize my belief that I, myself, am *now* healthy. In order to characterize the object of my belief when I believe

that I, myself, am *now* healthy, the endurantist must resort to relations, rather than properties. I believe that I, myself, am now healthy in virtue of the fact that I self-ascribe the relation of *being-healthy-at*.

If we take the subjects of self-ascription to be person-stages, then self-ascribing properties *is* sufficient for tensed belief. My belief on June 10th that I am now healthy can be explained by the fact that my June 10th person-stage self-ascribes the property of *being-healthy*. But if we take the subject of self-ascription to be enduring, then the self-ascription of properties won't do. No property that I have *simpliciter* will explain my belief that I am *now* healthy[16] (Just as no property that the world has *simpliciter* (i.e. proposition), will explain Lingens's belief that he, himself, is making a mess). So just as *de se* belief moves us towards taking properties as the objects of belief, tensed belief moves the endurantist towards taking relations as the objects of belief.

We are now in a position to answer some of the questions posed above. My belief on June 10th that I, myself, am now healthy is not equivalent to the belief that I stand in the *being-healthy-at* relation to some time or other. That would be tantamount to self-ascribing the property of *being-healthy-at-some-time-or-other*. Nor is it equivalent to the belief that I stand in the *being-healthy-at* relation to June 10th. That would be tantamount to self-ascribing the property of *being-healthy-at-June 10th*. So for S to self-ascribe R at t is not equivalent to S believing that he, himself, stands in R to some time or other, nor is it equivalent to S believing that he, himself, stands in R to t. Rather for S to self-ascribe R at t is for S to believe at t that he, himself, stands in R to now. Or, to state it more naturally, at t, S believes that he, himself, now stands in R. Whereas the belief that

[16] I take this to be Craig's point when he states, "In knowing that time it is, one must self-ascribe more than a mere B-series position to oneself, for one occupies a multitude of such positions and in order to act reasonably, one must know what time it is now" (Craig 2000, 128).

results from self-ascribing a property must be described using a personal indexical (such as 'I' or 'she, herself'), the belief that results from self-ascribing a relation must be described using a personal indexical *and* a temporal indexical (such as 'now').

The endurantist can provide a general account of what a subject believes when she believes that some event e is now in terms of the self-ascription of relations:

(SA-E for '<u>S</u>elf-<u>A</u>scription-<u>E</u>ndurantism') At t, a person, S, believes that e is now iff at t, S self-ascribes the relation of *being-simultaneous-with-e-at*.

We can apply (SA-E) to the example which I used to introduce the notion of tensed belief. At 8am, prior to smelling the fumes, I fail to self-ascribe the relation of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation-at*. My belief (FW) can be understood in terms of a belief in the proposition that the fumigation takes place on Wednesday. When, at 8:15am, I smell the fumes, and come to believe (FN), I do so in virtue of self-ascribing the relation of *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation-at.* My belief (FN) is true at 8:15am if and only if I do in fact stand in the *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation-at* relation to 8:15am.

5. Is (SA-E) Compatible with the B-Theory?

I have claimed that the endurantist can adopt a self-ascription account of tensed belief that involves the self-ascription of relations. I have also attempted to clarify what it means (as well as what it does not mean) to self-ascribe a relation. I will now return to

evaluating Craig's Argument in order to determine whether (SA-E) is compatible with the B-theory of time. I have restated the first premise of Craig's argument as:

> (1') If the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true and endurantism is true, then either one self-ascribes tensed properties or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless properties.

I have argued that the endurantist should claim that enduring subjects have tensed beliefs in virtue of self-ascribing *relations* rather than *properties*. So, (1') is false: it is not that case that if the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true and endurantism is true, then either one self-ascribes tensed properties or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless properties. I think Craig is correct in his insistence that a subject that occupies multiple moments in time cannot have tensed beliefs by self-ascribing tenseless *properties*. However, this fact does not motivate a move towards *tensed* properties. Rather it motivates a move towards taking *relations* rather than properties as the objects of self-ascription.

Might Craig's Argument be restated so as to demonstrate that a theory involving the self-ascription of relations entails the A-theory? Consider the following revised version of premise (1'):

> (1") If the self-ascription account of tensed belief is true and endurantism is true, then either one self-ascribes tensed relations or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless relations.

Is it true that given a self-ascription account of tensed belief and endurantism, either one self-ascribes tensed relations or one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless relations? (SA-E) does not make use of tensed relations. Let us understand tensed relations in a manner similar to our understanding of tensed properties outlined above: a relation is tenseless if and only if it can be analyzed in tenseless terms. The relations that are self-ascribed according to (SA-E) are made up of the B-theoretic relation *is-simultaneous-with* and events within the B-series. So the relations can be analyzed without appealing to A-theoretic terminology and are, therefore, tenseless relations.

Does (SA-E) require *tensedly* self-ascribing tenseless relations? Above I distinguished between tenselessly self-ascribing a property and tensedly self-ascribing a property. For a subject, S, to *tenselessly* self-ascribe a property, F, is for S to believe that he, himself, is (tenselessly) F. For a subject, S, to *tensedly* self-ascribe a property, F, is for S to believe that he is (present-tense) F. Applying this distinction to the self-ascription of relations, we can say that a subject, S, *tenselessly* self-ascribes a relation, R, if and only if S believes that he, himself, stands (tenselessly) in R. We can say that a subject, S, *tensedly* self-ascribes a relation, R, if and only if S believes that he, himself, stands (present-tense) in R. I have argued that to self-ascribe a relation, R, does not involve merely believing that one stands (tenselessly) in R. On June 10th, I might take myself to stand (tenselessly) in the *being-healthy-at* relation without thereby believing on June 10th that I am now healthy. Rather, to self-ascribe a relation, R, involves S believing that he, himself, now stands in R. (SA-E) does involve tensedly self-ascribing tenseless relations, and so (SA-E) is consistent with the truth of (1").

Even though (SA-E) involves tensedly self-ascribing tenseless relations, there is good reason for thinking that (SA-E) is compatible with the B-theory of time. Restating premise (3) of Craig's Argument so as to correspond with (1") results in:

> (3") If one tensedly self-ascribes tenseless relations, then real tense is ineliminable.

I wish to argue that although the endurantist should grant the truth of premise (1") on account of the fact that (SA-E) involves tensedly self-ascribing relations, the endurantist should reject the corresponding premise (3"). It is not the case that tensedly self-ascribing tenseless relations entails the ineliminability of real tense.

In order to motivate the claim that tensedly self-ascribing tenseless relations does not commit one to the existence of tensed properties, consider again the analogous case of *de se* belief. As noted above, the self-ascription theorist claims that when Lingens realizes that he, himself, is making a mess, he self-ascribes the property of *being-an-x-such-that-x-is-making-a-mess*. We might distinguish between two different ways in which one might ascribe properties. Let us say that a subject *impersonally* ascribes a property, F, if and only if the subject believes that someone has F. Let us say that a subject *personally* ascribes a property, F, if and only if the subject believes that she, herself, has F. Clearly the self-ascription account of *de se* belief makes use of a personal notion of ascription since for a subject to self-ascribe a property, F, is for the subject to believe that she, herself, has F. Now consider the following premise:

(3-P) If one personally ascribes properties, then real personal tense is ineliminable.

Let us understand the ineliminability of real personal tense as the view that there exist properties in the world that cannot be analyzed without the use of personal indexicals such as 'I' 'you' or 'us'. On this view there is, for example, a property in the world of *being-two-feet-from-me* that cannot be analyzed in terms of the property of *being-two-feet-from-Stephan* or any other 'impersonal' property.

There do not seem to be any good reasons why the self-ascription theorist should be committed to (3-P). The fact that the self-ascription relation is personal as opposed to impersonal follows from what it means to have a property as the object of one's belief. To stand in the self-ascription relation to a property just is to believe that you, yourself, have the property. Neither Lewis nor Chisholm claims that there exist personal properties in the world, nor do there seem to be any good arguments for the conclusion that their account entails the existence of such properties.

If the *de se* theorist has no reason to be committed to (3-P), then it is difficult to see why the endurantist should be committed to (3"). It does not follow from the fact that the self-ascription account of *de se* belief involves personally ascribing properties that there exist personal properties. Nor does it follow from the fact that the self-ascription account of tensed belief involves tensedly self-ascribing relations that there exist tensed properties or relations.

When I self-ascribe the relation *being-simultaneous-with-the-fumigation-at*, the resulting attitude is tensed: I believe that my apartment building is being fumigated *now*.

Many A-theorists have taken the existence of irreducibly tensed attitudes to provide evidence for the A-theory of time. However, it is mistaken to assume that the existence of irreducibly tensed attitudes entails the existence of tensed properties or relations. The irreducibly perspectival nature of the attitude is the result of believing something that is non-propositional. Having a property as the object of one's belief results in an attitude that is irreducibly personal; it cannot be properly described without the use of a personal indexical. Having a relation to a time as the object of one's belief results in an attitude that is irreducibly tensed; it cannot be properly described without the use of a temporal indexical. So, although adopting (SA-E) involves acknowledging that the attitude that results from self-ascribing a relation is irreducibly tensed, this fact can be explained by appealing to objects of belief that are entirely consistent with a tenseless theory of time.

6. Conclusion

I conclude that Craig's Argument fails to establish that the self-ascription account of tensed belief entails the A-theory. I have provided two different formulations of the self-ascription account of tensed belief, one that is compatible with the perdurantist account of persons and the other that is compatible with an endurantist account of persons. I have argued that both formulations are capable of providing a tenseless account of tensed belief. One of the interesting conclusions from this examination is that in formulating a self-ascription account of tensed belief, the endurantist must "take tense seriously" in a way that is not required of the perdurantist. Craig's Argument for the claim that the self-ascription theory of tensed belief entails the A-theory fails, however which premise the self-ascription theorist rejects will depend upon what she takes the

subject of self-ascription to be. Taking the subjects of self-ascription to be momentary person-stages allows for an account of tensed belief that is doubly tenseless: it allows for the tenseless self-ascription of tenseless properties. Taking the subject of self-ascription to be wholly present at multiple moments within the B-series requires taking the objects of belief to be relations, rather than properties. Although taking relations as the objects of belief commits one to the conclusion that relations are *tensedly* self-ascribed, I have claimed that adopting such a notion does not commit one to the existence of irreducibly tensed properties. I conclude that the self-ascription account of tensed belief provides a plausible B-theoretic response to the problem of timely action and is worthy of further consideration.

Works Cited

Chisholm, R. 1981. *The First Person*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Craig, W. L. 1996. 'The New B-Theory's *Tu Quoque* Argument', *Synthese* 107, 249-269.

Craig, W. L. 2000. *The Tensed Theory of Time: A Critical Examination*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Dyke, H. 2003. 'Tensed Meaning: A Tenseless Account', *Journal of Philosophical Research* 27, 67-83.

Haslanger, S. 1989. 'Endurance and Temporary Intrinsics', *Analysis* 49, 119-125.

Haslanger, S. 1994. 'Humean Supervenience and Enduring Things', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 72:3, 339-359.

Johnston, M. 1987. 'Is There a Problem About Persistence?', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 61, 107-135.

Kaplan, D. 1989. 'Demonstratives', in Almog, Perry, and Wettstein (eds.) *Themes From Kaplan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 481-563.

Lewis, D. 1979. 'Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*', *The Philosophical Review* 88, 513-543.

Lewis, D. 1983. 'Survival and Identity', plus postscripts, in his *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 55-77.

Lewis, D. 1986. *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Ludlow, P. 1999. *Semantics, Tense and Time: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Natural Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Mellor, D. H. 1981. *Real Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mellor, D. H. 1998. *Real Time II*. London: Routledge.

Markosian, N. 2001. ‘Critical Study of Le Poidevin (ed.) Questions of Time and Tense’, *Nous* 35, 616-629.

Mozersky, J. 2006. ‘A Tenseless Account of the Presence of Experience’, *Philosophical Studies* 129, 441-476.

Oaklander, L. N. 2004. ‘Personal Identity, Responsibility and Time,’ in *The Ontology of Time*, Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 309-329.

Perry, J. 1977. ‘The Frege on Demonstratives’, *Philosophical Review* 86, 474-497.

Perry, J. 1979. ‘The Problem of the Essential Indexical’, *Noûs* 13, 3-21.

Prior, A. N. 1959. ‘Thank Goodness That’s Over’, *Philosophy* 34, 12-17.

Smith, Q. 1994. ‘Problems with the New Tenseless Theory of Time’, in L. Nathan Oaklander and Quentin Smith, eds *The New Theory of Time*,, New Haven: Yale University Press, 38-56..

Wasserman, R. 2003. ‘The Argument from Temporary Intrinsics’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81, 413-419.