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Contents

Abstract

In a paper titled "Tense, Modality, and Semantic Values,"[1] Jeffrey King argues (among other

things[2]) that tenses in English do not function as sentential operators but that they are more akin

to object-language quantifiers over times.[3] Although not an explicit concern of King's in the

paper under consideration here, his analysis poses several *prima facie* difficulties for the

metaphysical position known as "presentism."[4]   Specifically, the commonsense *motivation* for

presentism is threatened because of the discrepancy King proposes between how tense actually

functions in the language and how presentism typically insists that tense functions. Additionally,

if King is right, the typical presentist *paraphrasing project* is seemingly jeopardized because of

the analysis. Herein we will try to raise some worries about King's proposal and then suggest

defenses of both the motivation for presentism and the paraphrasing methods usually employed.

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[1] Jeffrey King, "Tense, Modality, and Semantic Values," Philosophical Perspectives: Language and Philosophical Linguistics, 17 (2003), <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/ philosophy/private/docs/king/tense_modality.pdf>.

[2] King's own discussion of tense is actually embedded within a larger project having to do with competing versions of semantic two-dimensionalism. Something more will be mentioned later about so-called semantic two-dimensionalism (albeit very briefly) merely in order to sketch the ground out of which King's proposals arise.

[3] There is an analogous analysis provided for qualifications regarding location which, King further argues, should be regarded as quantifications over locations. For the most part, however, I will ignore (or, at least, deemphasize) this further aspect of King's paper.

[4] On "a presentist account of time,...only what exists in the present is real; whereas...with an eternalist conception of time, ….time is just another dimension on a par with the three spatial dimensions; and all times and their contents are equally real", Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction,* Paul K. Moser, Series ed., *Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 202.

King's Proposal 1 (An Overview)

We will review King's proposal by dividing it into three parts. First, we will consider some standard notions about propositions, temporal operators, and sentence meaning, as well as a puzzle concerning the same, which function to establish background for King's paper. Second, we will look at King's representation of two two-dimensionalist proposals (Stalnaker's and an opposing view), each proposed to give a satisfying account of sentence semantics (and avoid the puzzle about propositions and operators), which (according to King) Lewis claimed were on an even keel. Third, we will examine how King, *pace* Lewis, tries to adjudicate between the two proposals by arguing that (i), there are no such entities as temporal operators and, (ii), given (i), Lewis's indifference toward the two proposals cannot be sustained (and, in fact, Stalnaker's proposal can be shown to be superior – because it yields propositions as the objects of the attitudes). These last considerations – specifically the discussion about temporal operators – will allow us to segue into a treatment of the difficulties that King's suggestions pose for presentism.[5]

Background

Perhaps we should begin with this observation: "Some strings of marks or noises in the air are just strings of marks or noises in the air, whereas others – particularly whole sentences – are meaningful."[6] The question, then, is *what accounts for the difference*? Now within the philosophy of language, there are many additional questions that can be combined with the aforementioned question but, for our purposes, we need not (and, in fact, cannot feasibly) explore those additional questions here. We need merely note that a theory of meaning, that is a *semantics* of natural language, should provide us with an account of what separates meaningful writings and utterances from gibberish.

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[5] Or, at least, a treatment of the difficulties posed for those versions of presentism that handle singular propositions about no-longer-existing objects by invoking some kind of temporal operator.

[6] William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, *Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy*, Paul K. Moser, Series ed., (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 77.

If one tries to give some account of the semantics of sentences, one might be tempted, as a first pass anyway, to adopt (provisionally) the view that the semantic values of sentences just are *propositions*.[7] On this picture of things (notably championed, at least during certain periods of their thought, by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore[8]), the difference between a meaningful sentence and nonsense is that the meaningful sentence is said to *express a proposition* (relative to a context of use).[9] Moreover, as King writes, "Propositions are the primary bearers of truth and falsity. Propositions are also the objects of our attitudes: they are things we doubt, believe, and think." Furthermore, propositions are said to function as the bearers of modal properties (such as necessity, possibility, and contingency).[10]

Now, when we consider a sentence such as:

(1) The sun is shining

the received (Fregean) view is that such a sentence, in order to express a proposition, must be recognized as expressing an implicit reference to a time. Thus, in a context of use,[11] "The sun is

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[7] For present purposes, I will simply assume that propositions exist. For a sketch of some of the issues that I am ignoring (e.g., are propositions "structured" or not, etc.), see: Matthew McGrath, "Propositions," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2006 Ed.), Edward N. Zalta, ed., 19 Dec. 2005, Accessed Summer 2007: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/ fall2006/entries/propositions/>. Additionally, I assume that time is real. For opposing views on the reality of time, see: J.M.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1927) and Augustine, *Confessions*, esp. Bk. XI.

[8] Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, p. 80.

[9] Russell's view of singular propositions was that propositions contained individuals as constituents. This contrasts sharply with the so-called Fregean notion of propositions, on which propositions contain not objects, but *senses* as constituents. As for providing an ontological analysis of propositions, beyond what has been said concerning singular propositions, there are two main views. First, some hold that propositions are sets of possible worlds, or, alternatively, that propositions are intensions (i.e., functions from possible worlds to extensions). This (once popular) view has come under criticism due to the difficulty the view has discriminating, e.g., token necessary propositions. So, in reaction to the sets-of-possible-worlds-views, some philosophers now hold that propositions are structured entities constituted by the semantic values of the words and phrases that make up the sentences which express them. See, e.g., Jeffrey C. King, "Structured Propositions," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2005 Ed.), Edward N. Zalta, ed., 8 August, 2001, 2 August 2006 <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2005/entries/propositions-structured/> and McGrath, *op. cit.*

[10] McGrath, "Propositions," *op. cit.*

[11] Within a broadly Kaplanian framework, the context of use is merely a series of formal parameters. Commonly, such a series would include a speaker (s), a hearer (h), a time (t), a location (l), and a world (w)

shining" expresses the proposition that *the sun is shining at t**, where t* is the *time of utterance*.[12,13]

Furthermore, according to the received view of the treatment of tense and temporality in language, what is going on in a sentence like:

(2) At noon, the sun was shining

is that "at noon" functions as a temporal *operator*. That is, "at noon" shifts the time feature of the *circumstance of evaluation* "at" which a given proposition is evaluated for truth value.[14] We may say (more intuitively) that a temporal operator serves to "transport" the evaluator *across times* such that, for example, the truth value of a proposition with a time-shifted circumstance should be evaluated with respect to the shifted time rather than the time of utterance. So, whatever the time, t*, is in the formal context of use for (2), the truth value of (2) is evaluated with respect to a shifted time, t, specified by the operator "at noon."

But now a puzzle emerges. For, trouble develops when we combine the received view of propositions (the Fregean view, or semantic eternalism) with the received view of temporal operators (*viz*., the Priorean view[15]). To illustrate, consider, again, sentence (2). "At noon, the sun was shining" is, according to the classical view of propositions, supposed to express an embedded proposition to the effect that *the sun is shining at t**. Given this, one would think that

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and would thus designate a (in this case quinary) arrangement <s,h,t,l,w>. I am ignoring questions related to "semantic relativism" (whereas "standard semantics" relativizes truth values to contexts of use, "semantic relativism" relativizes truth values to contexts both of use and "assessment") as well as details and specific debates concerning "two dimensionalism," for example, without limitation, questions regarding "assertoric" versus "compositional" contents.

[12] Note: "time of utterance" is merely a technical term which designates the time in the formal context.

[13] We are, recall, setting aside the location feature of the context of use. See, e.g., footnote 3.

[14] Again, within a Kaplanian schema, the circumstance of evaluation (or the index) is a series of formal parameters. Precisely which parameters are included in the formal circumstance is a matter of controversy, with some (semantic eternalists) holding that circumstances just are possible worlds <w> and others (semantic temporalists) holding that circumstances are world-time pairs <w,t> (the point of dispute turning upon whether or not times are, in fact, constituents of propositions themselves, Berit Brogaard, *Op. cit.*

[15] Cf. footnote #35.

sentence (2), "at noon, the sun was shining", expresses the proposition that *it was the case at noon that the sun is shining at t**. But, this is puzzling since *the sun is shining at t** expresses an eternal proposition. Whatever the truth-value is for the proposition that *the sun is shining at t**, the operator "at noon" does nothing whatsoever to modify it. In other words, the operator "at noon" performs no *operation* at all. The temporal operator is, thus, redundant. As Kaplan[16] states:

> [I]f *what is said* is thought of as incorporating reference to a specific time…it is otiose to ask whether what is said would have been true at another time… . Temporal operators applied to eternal sentences…are redundant. …
>
> The notion of redundancy involved could be made precise. … Given a sentence *S*: 'I am writing', in the present context *c*, which of the following should we take as the content: (i) the proposition that David Kaplan is writing at 10 A.M. on 3/26/77, or (ii) the 'proposition' that David Kaplan is writing? … Technically, we must note that intensional operators must, if they are not to be vacuous, operate on [propositions] which are neutral with respect to [times].[17]

I will try to unpack Kaplan's point a bit by developing an illustration. Since the relevant difficulties arguably are exacerbated with the introduction of verbs of propositional attitude, let us consider first the following variation on sentence (2), with the word "believes" (a verb of propositional attitude),[18] uttered at noon.[19]

    (3) Jeffery believes that the sun is shining

What proposition is the object of the belief? It is tempting (in a traditional sort of way) to suppose that the proposition would be *the sun is shining at noon*. But, then (on the standard

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[16]Brogaard (*Transient Truths*, p. 182) states Kaplan's Argument concisely: "(1) There are non-redundant tense operators in English. (2) Tense operators operate on propositions. (3) Tense operators that operate on eternal propositions are semantically redundant. (4) Hence, tense operators operate on temporal propositions. (5) Hence, there are temporal propositions."

[17] "Demonstratives," J. Almog, J. Perry, and H. Wettstein, eds., *Themes from Kaplan* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), p. 503-4 incl. footnote 28.

[18] Other such verbs might include: "thinks," "perceives," "remembers," "needs," "wants," "hopes," "regrets," etc.

[19] Here, we might take for our inspiration Socrates' statement in Plato's Republic that because "the city larger than the man", "justice in the larger object [would be] more easy to apprehend" (368e). Hence, a study of the more obvious case (the city) would be able (the hope is) to enlighten us about the more obscure case.

assumption that propositions do not change their truth values over time)[20] it would seem that the

proposition *the sun is shining at noon*, which supposedly Jeffery believes, could not be false at

any time (given that it true at noon).[21] So suppose, instead, that Jeffrey utters (1), and that the

supposed proposition has an implicit time index, say, *the sun is shining [at noon]*.[22] Now, on

such a move, the contents of Jeffery's belief from sentence (3) and sentence (2) are relevantly

similar. But, of course, Jeffery's belief in (3) has no *explicit* temporal operator. Thus, if we hear

Jeffery utter (1) "The sun is shining", and we take him as meaning that *the sun is shining <u>at noon</u>*,

then it seems that we are committed to the "at noon" operator in (2) being vacuous (i.e., without

substantive significance). That is, it might seem that if Jeffery utters (2) "At noon, the sun is

shining", and he believes that *the sun is shining [at noon]*, then the meaning of his utterance of

(2) is *at noon, the sun is shining [at noon]*, which is (viciously) redundant.[23]

Considerations such as these seem to lead King to consider some kind of double-content

strategy[24] for dealing with embedded contents, in order that he can maintain semantic eternalism.

On the sorts of views he considers, there would be one semantic value (content-wise) for a

sentence to express when embedded and another semantic value (also content-wise) for the same

sentence to express when un-embedded (or when embedded in a belief context). Furthermore, the

two values can come apart, so that it is possible that what is expressed when embedded is *not* the

same thing that is expressed when not embedded.   And, more to the point, one value would be

temporal, while the other (the proposition) would be eternal. (The obtrusive obstacle to such an

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[20] Again, the view called "semantic eternalism", or, perhaps, "propositional eternalism." More will be said about this later.

[21] And this is, to be clear, what King wants to say. On King's preferred analysis, the object of the belief is (something like) "the sun is shining *at t**," where t* is the time of utterance (in this case, "at noon" on such-and-such a date at this-or-that location, etc., the latter components which we are still ignoring).

[22] And, presumably, a built-in location operator; but we are ignoring that.

[23] I add the flourish "viciously" parenthetically in order to differentiate this sort of vacuity-redundancy from another type (emphatic-redundancy) that I will mention later.

[24] Cf. Nathan Salmon, "Tense and Singular Propositions," Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, eds., *Themes From Kaplan* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), pp. 331-392 & Chalmers, "Two Dimensional Semantics," *op. cit.*

account is the received view of tense and temporality (i.e., the operator-view), which King sets himself to attacking. We will look at this in a moment.)

Stalnaker and Lewis

After establishing this much as background, King proceeds to explicate two different so-called "two-dimensional" semantic proposals.[25] I will survey (albeit very briefly) some of what King mentions during his foray into two-dimensionalism. My survey will not pretend to provide anything like a substantive analysis of two-dimensionalism or even of King's treatment of the relevant (for his purposes) facets of two-dimensionalism. The following skeletal outline is merely intended to shed some light on King's motivations for attacking operator treatments of tense.

Stalnaker postulates his double content by holding that "we map a sentence and a context to a proposition, which is something that maps a world to a truth-value."[26] On this view, propositions function (as is commonly supposed) as the objects of beliefs, etc. Basically, Stalnaker took the fact that (at least many) philosophers desire to count propositions amongst the "furniture of reality" to be, *per se*, a strong argument in favor of his view. To be specific, Stalnaker held that, since propositions are (often viewed as) extremely helpful to have in one's ontology (because, among other things, they may serve as the objects for belief states), any semantics that makes space for propositions is preferable to one that does not, *ceteris paribus*.[27]

Stalnaker therefore argued for his view over against a sort of hypothetical option in which no "propositional middleman" (to echo King's memorable phrase) is employed. "On [that

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[25] According to Chalmers, semantic two-dimensionalism (broadly construed) "[recognizes] two 'dimensions' of the meaning or content of linguistic items. On these approaches, expressions and their utterances are associated with two different sorts of semantic values, which play different explanatory roles. Typically, one semantic value is associated with reference and ordinary truth-conditions, while the other is associated with the way that reference and truth-conditions depend on the external world", "Two-Dimensional Semantics," Ernest Lepore and Barry Smith, eds. *Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford UP, forthcoming).

[26] King, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[27] To be strictly accurate about it, there arguably *is* a "proposition" on the second view. However, it will simply be a "defined" or (if you like) merely a "formal" entity. But, in any case, such a "proposition" (whatever other merits it may have) will not be needed to get a truth value.

hypothetical] opposing view, we map a sentence from a merged context/index straight to a truth-value."[28] On this alternative view, it turns out that no proposition is required in order to arrive at a truth-value. To reiterate, Stalnaker thinks this streamlining is bad, since loosing propositions is highly undesirable to many philosophers. (For example, propositions are often said to be the primary bearer of truth-values, the objects of attitude states, the things that are held in common in agreement, etc. If there are no propositions, then suitable replacements would have to be found for each of what are usually called the "paradigmatic propositional desiderata.")

As expected, the redoubtable Lewis has several rejoinders. Basically, Lewis replies by affirming that *propositions* are indeed greatly useful, but then quickly denying that the entities Stalnaker in fact has playing the role of his "middlemen" are worthy of the name. Now this issues in a challenge to Stalnaker about lack of motivation for his view and a few other bits that need not detain us, presently. What is *more important for my purposes*,[29] is to note that the *way* Lewis argues against Stalnaker turns crucially on the existence of *temporal operators*. To be more exact, Lewis says, look, if a language has temporal operators, then they have to have something on which to operate. In Stalnaker's schema, the entity on which the temporal operates would operate is Stalnaker's "middleman" entity. But, given what it is that temporal operators do – namely, shift the time-coordinate of the index at which the "middleman" entity is evaluated – it will be the case that Stalnaker's "middlemen" will vary their truth values across times.[30] But, Lewis concludes, the relevant received view is that *bona fide* propositions do not vary in their truth value across time. Genuine propositions are supposed to be "eternal." Therefore, whatever the "middleman" entities *are* that Stalnaker's view uses, they certainly are not (really) *propositions*.

To summarize, then, Stalnaker championed one particular view about how the semantics of sentences should be understood two-dimensionally. He argued for the view based upon the

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[28] *Ibid.*
[29] And taking Lewis' "indices" and "worlds" to be functionally equivalent to Kaplan's "circumstances of evaluation."
[30] There will also truth values variances across locations, worlds, and standards of precisions, etc. But we're setting these complications aside.

consideration that his view yields propositions, which are important independently (of the semantic theory) because having propositions is very helpful (e.g., again they provide objects for attitudinal states, and so on). Lewis' argument against Stalnaker turns, in part in any case, on the sort of puzzle about temporal operators and propositions that I discussed in the background section. However, the *main point* to take from this very quick and dirty breeze through of Lewis versus Stalnaker, is simply that Lewis' arguments *depend crucially on there being* in English actual entities answering to the name "temporal operators." And I mention this in order to paint a rough picture of the actual project that concerns King.[31]

King's Proposal – at a Glance

King believes that, *pace* Lewis, Stalnaker is in fact ultimately vindicated in the relevant exchange. For King suggests that Lewis's counterargument to Stalnaker relies upon a dubious presupposition. To be specific, King emphasizes the point just introduced: Lewis's considerations turn crucially on there actually being things in Standard American English (SAE) that function as *temporal operators*, that is, linguistic entities which serve to shift the time-feature of the circumstance with respect to which a given proposition is evaluated.[32]

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[31] I hasten to add that King's ambitions are more wide-ranging than merely weighing in on a technical dispute between Stalnaker and Lewis. To be more exact, King is interested in rebutting an attack from Jason Stanley (drawing on some of Lewis' arguments) against what Stanley terms the "Rigidity Thesis," namely, the notion that "no rigid term ever has the same content as a non-rigid term", King, *op. cit.*, p. 198. This thesis issues from Saul Kripke's "modal argument" against Russellian Descriptivism (that is, the idea that what people commonly regard as "proper names" are really equivalent to definite descriptions like "the *F*," where "the" can be given a quanitificational analysis). Kripke's modal argument against descriptivism is basically: (1) Names (like "Aristotle") are *rigid designators*, that is, they designate the same individual in every possible world in which that individual exists. (2) Definite descriptions (like "the greatest student of Plato") are *non-rigid* (or "flaccid" in Lycan's evocative idiom) *designators*, that is, they designate different individuals in different possible worlds, cf.: Lycan, op. cit., p. 53*ff*. (3) Therefore, names are not identical to definite descriptions. Moreover, King is trying to rehabilitate propositions and restore them back to a place of primacy in the face of a turn in (some circles in) semantics toward endorsing a sort of "two dimensional," "double-content" analysis that elevates non-propositional, "compositional" semantic content (also termed, "ingredient sense") over non-compositional, propositional content (or "assertoric content"). This is all beyond the scope of the present work. For detailed investigations into this see, e.g.: King, *op. cit., passim.* and Berit Brogaard, *Transient Truths*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), e.g., Section 7.2.

[32] As an aside, denying the existence of temporal operators is not the only way of vindicating Stalnaker or delivering "middlemen" propositions. Recall that Lewis denied that Stalnaker's "middlemen" were propositions because the existence of temporal operators meant that the middlemen would vary truth values across times. Hence, one could (as King does) deny that there are temporal operators to vary the truth

But, according to King, there simply are no such entities in SAE.[33] And to the end of establishing this, King will marshal the testimony of several linguists (on this we will have more to say further on).

Thus, on King's view, Lewis is just mistaken in the relevant objection to Stalnaker. Whereas Lewis had criticized Stalnaker's view as not providing anything upon which temporal operators could operate, it now turns out (according to King) that there are no such things as temporal operators, anyway. Once Lewis's objection has been answered, the way is open (for anyone so inclined) to endorse Stalnaker's two-dimensionalism over the competitor(s). This is King's project.

I want to emphasize, though that it is not my project. For present purposes, what is really of interest to me is the *way* in which King argues against Lewis (which way is King's answer to the way Lewis argued against Stalnaker). One goal here will be to gesture towards an assessment of the damage done to metaphysical presentism by King's theory. Certainly I will not to try to argue for or against one particular form of two-dimensionalism over the other, or even to argue that *some* form of double-content strategy is required (intuitively, even Kaplan's influential framework is a *sort* of two-dimensionalism). Not to put too fine a point on it, but for the purposes of this paper, the entire debate over semantic two-dimensionalism and its forms is not of primary interest. The primary interest is King's *method* of arguing against Lewis and its implications for presentism.

And the way King argues against Lewis is to deny one of Lewis's presuppositions: that is, King denies that there are temporal operators in SAE. Once King has denied that SAE has temporal operators, it is no longer problematic for Stalnaker's view that his two-dimensional schema provides nothing for a temporal operator to operate on (since there is no such thing as a

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values in the first place. Alternatively, one could accept that there are such operators and simply deny that propositions need to be truth value invariant. To put it differently, one could argue that it is possible to have "temporal" (as opposed to "eternal") propositions. This is the route that Brogaard takes in her seminal defense of temporal propositions, *Transient Truths*, *op. cit*.

[33] For my survey of King's specific evidence and arguments, as well as my critique, see below (sections entitled "King's Proposal and Presentism (Tensions)" and "King's Proposal 2 (Some Doubts)").

temporal operator to begin with). But, it is just this denial of the existence of temporal operators

in SAE that seems to pose a danger for metaphysical presentism. So, now having established the

requisite background, and having taken a bird's-eye look at King's overall proposal, let us

postpone a discussion of the particulars of King's attack on the notion of temporal operators until

we have located the trouble for presentism. So what is "presentism," anyway?

Presentism 1 (In Brief)

Metaphysical presentism,[34] roughly, is the view that only present objects exist.[35] "More precisely,

it is the view that, necessarily, it is always true that only present objects exist."[36] This view

stands in opposition to the view known as *metaphysical eternalism*,[37] according to which,

paralleling our formulation of presentism, present objects are *not* the only objects which exist.[38]

Alternatively, we might begin instead by characterizing eternalism, noting that it is "a common

view about the metaphysics of time" according to which "all times and all things in time are

equally real."[39]   According to standard treatments of the doctrine, "there is nothing special about

the present; things at other times are just as real; no time is metaphysically distinguished."[40]

Moreover, "present" and "now" are merely temporal *indexicals* like "here",[41] that is, words that

function *deictically*, fixing their *designata* based upon the contexts in which they are uttered.[42]

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[34] Hereafter, "presentism."

[35] To be clear, for the purposes of this work, I am assuming that time is real. For opposing views, see: J.M.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1927) and Augustine, *Confessions*, esp. Bk. XI.

[36] Ned Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism," *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, Vol. 1, Dean Zimmerman, ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), pp. 47-82, <http://myweb.facstaff.wwu.edu/nmakos/Papers/Defpres.pdf.

[37] Hereafter, "eternalism."

[38] I.e., non-present objects can or do exist.

[39] Mark Hinchliff, "The Puzzle of Change," *Nous* Vol 30, Supplement: *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 *Metaphysics* (1996), <JSTOR: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0029-4624%281996%2930%3C119% 3ATPOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>, p.122.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] In fact, this observation points to much deeper parallels drawn by eternalists between time and space, so much so that many adherents prefer to speak of one unified *spacetime* (see, e.g., Loux, *op. cit.*, p. 209).

[42] That is, slightly restated (and simply put), an "indexical" is lexically defined as a "linguistic expression whose reference shifts from utterance to utterance," David Braun, "Indexicals," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2001), Edward N. Zalta, ed., April 2006 <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2001/entries/ indexicals/>.

On this alternate picture we would then characterize presentism as "the denial of eternalism"
according to which "the only things that exist are things that presently exist…".[43] Time and space
are not believed to be similar in the respects that the eternalist supposes.[44]

In any case, the presentist maintains all existing things are *present* things.[45] So, for
example, I exist and you exist. The Gateway Arch exists. But, Socrates does not exist. Socrates
did exist; but he died and exists no longer.[46]

This position raises some questions, though. For instance, what is one to make of a
sentence like the following?[47]

(4) Socrates was wise

On one influential view, Russell's view of singular propositions, insofar as (4) expresses a
proposition at all, it expresses a proposition that has *Socrates* (the flesh-and-blood person) and the
property of *wisdom* as constituents. However, whereas (for the purposes of this discussion) we
can stipulate that "wise" has a real referent,[48] on the presentist picture "Socrates" does *not* have a
referent.[49] So, what to do?

A common strategy employed by presentists is to paraphrase (4) (and sentences
relevantly similar to it) utilizing tense operators along the lines prescribed by A. N. Prior.[50] So,

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[43] Hinchliff, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[44] I simply framing the relevant debate as being "presentism versus eternalism." Thus, I am ignoring more idiosyncratic (although by no means less interesting) views such as that of John Hawthorne

[45] "Present" refers, of course, to temporal presence, not spatial presence.

[46] Any and all issues relating to the question of the truth of metaphysical dualism and/or the immortality of souls and such are being set aside – as is standard.

[47] There are also issues of "cross-temporal relations" (e.g., "John admires Socrates") which we set aside. Cf.: Dean Zimmerman, "Presentism and the Space-Time Manifold," <http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/zimmerman/Presentism%20and%20Rel.for.Web.2.pdf>.

[48] Let us just stipulate this for present purposes. The referent could be a Platonic Form or a trope or whatever.

[49] Or, at least, "Socrates" does not have the *correct* referent.

[50] King, *op. cit.*, p. 22; cf. "Tense Logic was introduced by Arthur Prior..."; "The logical language of Tense Logic contains, in addition to the usual truth-functional operators, four modal operators with intended meanings as follows: P 'It has at some time been the case that …'[;] F 'It will at some time be the case that …'[;] H 'It has always been the case that …'[; and] G 'It will always be the case that …'," Antony Galton, "Temporal Logic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2003 Ed.), Edward N. Zalta, ed., 11

for example, a presentist might take as a *primitive* (or un-analyzable term) the operator *It was the case that*, abbreviated "WAS" and construct a paraphrase of (4) something like the following.

(5) WAS (Socrates is wise)

which, being translated into something closer to natural language, reads: "It was the case that Socrates is wise."[51]

In (5), on the Priorean account, "WAS" functions to shift the time-feature of the circumstance of evaluation (i.e., the index) such that we no longer evaluate "Socrates is wise" with respect to the *present*, the time of utterance in the formal context of use, but we shift to some past time (viz., ancient Athens) and evaluate the embedded claim with respect to the relevant past time. In other words, the time-feature of the index is shifted from the time of utterance to the relevant past time. Thus, *intuitively*, since "Socrates" did have a real referent in ancient Athens (namely, *Socrates*), and since it was the case *at that time* that *Socrates* possesses (present with respect to his past time) the property of *wisdom*, (5) comes out true.[52]

At least, it is the presentist's *claim* that (5) comes out true. The particulars of the paraphrasing strategy shall not concern us here. What concerns us here is merely the general features of the strategy: the paraphrasing of an offending sentence using tense operators (e.g., *it was the case that*, *it will be the case that*, etc.). What is important, then, is that the presentist paraphrasing strategy seems to depend crucially upon *tense operators*. That is, there must, it seems, in fact be tense operators available in SAE in order for the presentist to avail herself of them in a paraphrase. However, King's proposal entails that there are no such things as tense

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Dec. 2003, April 2006 <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2003/entries/logic-temporal/>.
[51] Of course, in *bona fide* natural language, the sentence would be simply "Socrates was wise."
[52] In fact, things are a bit more complicated than this. For, even given the resources of the time-shifting intensional operators, the value of the proposition must be fixed prior to evaluation. Thus, "Socrates" must either refer to some kind of *description* or, possibly, to some kind of specifiable *causal/historical chain*. For now, I will simply assume that some satisfactory way of fixing a referent like "Socrates" is available (Berit Brogaard, "What Price Presentism" (Work-in-progress presented at UM-St. Louis, Fall, 2005).

operators in SAE – it is the heart of his proposal! Thus, the presentist is compelled to address

King's suggestions.

At this point, it seems opportune to touch upon one more consideration, namely (and

arguably), a case can be made that the commonsense, pre-philosophical metaphysical view about

tense just is the presentist view.[53] Something more will be said about this later on. But, for now,

let us simply note a few points.

First, being the commonsense view, in this case, just means that our everyday experience

of time provides us with *prima facie* evidence regarding the reality of tense. That is, we

experience existing objects only in the present. Thus, it surely appears, that whatever we

experience directly we experience *presently*. And, moreover, what is not (temporally) present is

simply not experienced.

Second, it seems that it is advantageous to be the commonsense view in the way that

presentism is in this case. The reason is no doubt plain: the *burden of proof* seems most readily

placed upon the view that is *not* the intuitive or commonsense view; that is, the burden of proof is

on the opponents of presentism.[54] In other words, since there is *prima facie* evidence for

presentism, opponents of presentism must shoulder the burden of undermining our pre-

philosophical evidence. So, if we are to become convinced that, say, eternalism is correct (or, at

least, that presentism is not correct)[55] we must (at least) be given some kind of compelling

account to the effect that our experience of tense is non-veridical (or, that our experience is

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[53] As the graduate student Chris Ragg remarked during his presentation at the recent student-conference at UM-St. Louis (Summer 2006): "Everybody's phenomenology of time is presentist." Of course, we should probably read the quantifier as relevantly restricted, but, I think, the point is intuitive – and correct

[54] However, this is certainly not to say that the intuitive view *must be correct*. (Take, e.g., the fact that although the earth is round, nevertheless, everyday experience could easily encourage the view that the earth is flat – especially in the Midwestern US.)

[55] Usage note: Eternalism (roughly, the view that all times exist equally) is merely one form of non-presentism. So, some non-presentist view could be true without eternalism itself being true (e.g., the "growing block view," where the past and present exist but the future does not, could be true). However, since eternalism is a very dominant sort of non-presentism, I will usually treat "eternalism" and "non-presentism" as synonymous.

insignificant ontologically, etc.). Additionally, we are owed some kind of alternative account of tense that is satisfying.

King's Proposal and Presentism (Tensions)

So, King proposes that SAE has no tense operators (and, in fact, no temporal operators of any kind).[56] King thus argues "that temporal expressions (including tenses)…are not best understood as sentence operators that shift features of the index of evaluation."[57] How does he arrive at this conclusion? Well, from the beginning King makes clear "that the claim that tenses are operators that shift features of the index of evaluation is an *empirical claim* about natural language."[58] Hence, King's strategy is to "argue that given the available evidence" the idea that tenses are operators "is an implausible claim."[59]

He begins, in earnest, by considering the following sentence.

(6) Yesterday, John turned off the stove

Now, in (6) it may initially appear as though there are two operators: one past tense operator (turned) and a temporal adverb (yesterday) – let us call them WAS and YEST, respectively. On a straightforward (albeit naïve)[60] conception of these two operators, problems arise in the paraphrase. Let us begin by giving YEST the widest scope, such that we can paraphrase (6) as:

(6') YEST (WAS (John turns off the stove))

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[56] Here, a purported "tense operator" would be something to index the *past*, *future*, etc. Other "temporal operators" might be something like "sometimes," "yesterday," etc.
[57] King, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[58] King, *op. cit.*, p. 35; italics added.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] Cf. Berit Brogaard, *Transient Truths: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Propositions* (forthcoming), esp. Ch. 2 "Representing Tense", 26 July 2006 <http://brogaardb.googlepages.com/TOchap2.pdf>.

Letting t = the time of utterance, t' = yesterday; and t'' = any time past with respect to t', the

problem with (6') is that it is satisfied by *any* time which is past with respect to t', and at which

"John turns of the stove" is true.[61] So, on April 4, 2006 I utter (6). Thus, t = April 4, 2006,

making t' = April 3, 2006. Take an arbitrary past time, say August 15, 1994, at which (let us say)

it is true that *John turns off the stove* that day. According to the (6') reading of (6), then, the fact

that John turned off the stove on August 15, 1994 makes my utterance true. But, it seems clear,

this is an unacceptable result. (6) should not be made true by John's turning off the stove in 1994

(unless it were spoken on August 16, 1994).

Let us see what happens if we give WAS the widest scope, then.

(6'') WAS (YEST (John turns off the stove))

Here, (6) is supposed to be made true by any past time, t'', such that during the day before t''

(*viz.*, t') "John turns off the stove" is true. Again, let t = April 4, 2006. Now, since "John turns

off the stove" (we have already stipulated) is true of August 15, 1994, let us let August 16, 1994

be the value for t''. Thus, we see that (6'') is made true by the fact that on August 16, 1994 (t') it

was true that "John turns off the stove" the day before (i.e., August 15, 1994). This won't do

either.

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[61] Again, McGinnis astutely points out that these stipulations are given in tensed (or, if you prefer, A-Series) language. A "detensed" (B-Series) stipulation might be something like "let t' = the day before the utterance". Here, I will simply say that, number one, part of my project is an attempt to defend the tensed (or Priorean "modal") semantics for temporal logic (versus, say, a Quinean "quantificational" one). Number two, I will just gesture to Arthur Prior who, in a witty 1959 article ("Thank Goodness That's Over," reproduced in Prior, Arthur N., *Papers in Logic and Ethics* (Duckworth, 1976), pp. 78-84, and online <http://www.logicmuseum.com/time/thankgoodness.htm>) denied that *salva veritate* "detensed" translations were available for each and every "tensed" expression. Prior wrote: "One says, e.g. 'Thank goodness that's over!', and not only is this, when said, quite clear without any date appended, but it says something which it is impossible that any use of a tenseless copula with a date should convey. It certainly doesn't mean the same as, e.g. 'Thank goodness the date of the conclusion of that thing is Friday, June 15, 1954', even if it be said then. (Nor, for that matter, does it mean 'Thank goodness the conclusion of that thing is contemporaneous with this utterance'. Why should anyone thank goodness for that?)"

(6) is not ambiguous, King insists.[62] A plausible paraphrase of (6), then, should not fail

to predict the correct interaction between the "operators." Thus, King urges us to conclude, our

"operators" are not operators after all. King's "crucial point" is that "Virtually every recent

theory of tense that attempts to treat [sentences such as (6)] fails to view tenses as index shifting

operators."[63] King then proceeds to survey briefly the views of several linguists whose work

uphold (and, likely, motivate) King's own conclusions.

About Enç, King writes: "…tenses are not index shifting operators on her view".[64]

Rather, times are "anchored" to utterances *sans* operators.[65] Concerning Abusch, King notes, "…

tenses are rather like anaphoric pronouns…"; "they are in effect interpreted as definite

descriptions denoting time intervals…"; "…tenses are not operators."[66] Abusch has indeed

consistently advocated a non-operator approach at least since the dissertation wherein she argued

that the operator hypothesis is inconsistent with at least some of the empirical on verb aspect.[67]

But she also takes this general position in her more recent published work.[68] Ogihara[69] treats

tenses using "a formalism for representing natural language tense that uses explicit quantification

over time in the object language, where tenses express relations between times." Finally, King

notes that Higginbotham "…explicitly opposes an index shifting operator treatment of tense"; and

"works in a neo-Davidsonian framework in which natural language sentences quantify over

events…" - for Higginbotham: "Tenses are understood as expressing relations between events."

And Higginbotham does indeed expressly state: "...I will suppose that temporal relations and

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[62] Further on I raise, albeit in passing, the possibility that King is wrong about this.
[63] King, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[64]*Ibid*.
[65] Enç's comments about such "anchoring" can be seen, e.g., in: Mürvet Enç, "Anchoring Conditions for Tense," *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 18 (1987), esp., p. 642.
[66] King, *supra*.
[67] See: Dorit Abusch, "On Verbs and Time," PhD. Dissertation, U of MA, Amherst, 1985, Accessed Fall 2012, <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI8509519/>.
[68] Dorit Abusch, "Sequence of Tense and Temporal de re," *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 20 (Feb., 1997) 1, pp. 1-50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25001652>.
[69] Cf. Toshiyuki Ogihara, *Tense, Attitudes and Scope* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer/Springer, 1996/2010), <http://books.google.com/books/about/Tense_Attitudes_and_Scope.html?id=SkoIkgAACAAJ>.

reference as expressed in the tenses are relations between events, in a sense of that notion derived from Donald Davidson[70]....”[71] King accurately remarks that Higginbotham's fundamental position about tenses is that they “are not operators and so there is no need for temporal coordinates of indices.”[72]

In any case, focusing just on Higginbotham, that theorist's bottom line is King's point of departure. If there are no temporal operators of any sort (and, thus, no tense operators), then, as we commented previously, Lewis's criticism of Stalnaker's view (that it could not provide any semantic value for temporal operators to operate upon) obviously runs aground.[73] But, keeping my distinctive interests in mind, it is more important for our purposes to observe that if there are no such things as temporal operators, there are (at least) two possible consequences for presentism.

In the first place, the commonsense motivation for presentism is threatened. Why? Well, consider: if presentism is the pre-philosophical view – the intuitive, commonsense view – then it would make sense to find that the language practices of ordinary (but competent) speakers support presentism (e.g., if those practices relied upon the use of time-shifting temporal operators). It might seem quite surprising to find that the language practices of ordinary language speakers seem to support the opinion that non-present objects exist (e.g., say, if ordinary language speakers did something like *quantifying over*[74] non-present times and objects, etc.).

In the second place, if, as King directly argues, there are no such things as temporal operators, then the presentist paraphrasing project is jeopardized. After all, if SAE does not

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[70] “Truth and Meaning,” Synthese, 17 (1967).

[71] James Higginbotham, “Why is Sequence of Tense Obligatory?” Maria Liakata, Britta Jensen, & Didier Maillat, Eds., *Oxford University Working Papers,in Linguistics, Philology & Phonetics*, Vol. 6, May 2001, p. 70, accessed online Fall 2012 <http://www.academia.edu/959951/Why_is_sequence_of_tense_obligatory>.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] Note, though, that these considerations – even if they do successfully defeat an operator approach – do nothing to address Lewis' complaint regarding the lack of motivation for Stalnaker's analysis. I am not interested in scoring the dispute between Lewis and Stalnaker, however. I am simply trying to sketch the reason for King's interest in attacking operator analyses.

[74] I.e., if ordinary language speakers routinely speak in such a way as to assume that non-present times and objects, etc., exist.

contain temporal operators, then the present paraphrases of sentences such as "Socrates was wise" might tend to appear less plausible for two reasons. First, if temporal operators are not found in natural language, then, presumably, natural language speakers do not speak in such a way as to shift temporal indices (in the circumstance of evaluation). If this is so, then, one might think, the presentist strategy is simply foreign to the actual practice of language speakers and, thus, is less plausible for that reason.[75] Second, if temporal operators are not to be found in natural language, then, it is somewhat mysterious whence come the raw materials for the presentist's paraphrase project.

King's Proposal 2 (Some Doubts)

Yet, it is worth asking about the strength of King's case and assessing the real danger for presentism. It seems that there is at least some reason to think that King's case is not entirely convincing.

The Sentence that Started It All

In the first place, let us revisit the sentence with which King begins his evaluation of the notion of temporal operators.

(6) Yesterday, John turned off the stove

Recall that King's purpose for presenting this sentence was to highlight the difficulties for a certain way of understanding the function of temporal operators. Recall, further, that paraphrases of (6) seemed to run into trouble producing the correct truth conditions whichever operator ("yesterday", which we abbreviated YEST, or the past tense operator, WAS) was given wide scope, *presuming that there were in fact two operators*.

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[75] Here, much turns on whether the presentist is aiming to provide an account of natural language practices.

Thus, King asked us to evaluate two possible paraphrases along the lines of the following.

(6') YEST (WAS (John turns off the stove))

(6'') WAS (YEST (John turns off the stove))

And, it did seem clear enough that neither (6') nor (6'') were adequate paraphrases of (6) in normal, everyday contexts.

But, at least four things might be said at this point. First, King's initial point in raising these considerations was that noting the behavior of both the past tense operator and "yesterday" is tantamount to admitting that those entities do not work "anything like standard operators."[76] But, on this score are they then not operators *at all* or are they merely not operators *according to the standard account*? King, it seems, may not have sufficiently distinguished the question *Are there temporal operators?* from the question *How should we approach temporal operators?* Thus, King's conclusion might be underdetermined by his data. To put it another way, King urges us to accept the conclusion that there are no such things in English as temporal operators. But, even granted all of King's evidence so far,[77] it is not clear that we should conclude anything more bold than that the "standard account" (to use King's phrase) of operators is insufficient to deal with all available data.

But maybe my first rejoinder is too quick. After all, part of the appeal of the operator approach is that one can get temporal, locational, and modal operators that all sort of obey the same sorts of general rules. If temporal "operators" don't obey rules with enough relevant similarity to the rules obeyed by modal operators, then this datum will, surely, tend to deflate the motivation (or at least the enthusiasm) of endorsing an operator approach.

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[76] King, op. cit., p. 37.
[77] And perhaps provided that one has some independent reason to prefer an operator account.

However, second, there seems to be an entire class of operators that goes entirely unconsidered by King and which can be analyzed functionally along more-or-less standard lines. King ignores the possibility of *composite operators*.[78] Berit Brogaard has developed this line of inquiry quite extensively and boldly.[79] Here my sketch will be less robust and certainly more timid.

Consider these to be our motivations for seeking a composite operator. Number one, as King rightly points out, there is a complex interaction between YEST and WAS. Number two, there is a palpable resilience on the part of sentences like (6) against being adequately paraphrased (as used in most contexts) by sentences such as (6') and (6'').

Given these motivations, let us postulate the existence of a composite operator – WAS-YEST – with the following translation: *It was the case during yesterday that*. Or, if one finds this translation objectionable (perhaps because of the intrusion of the preposition), we could instead employ something like P-YEST: *It had been the case yesterday*.[80] Employing these forms, we would either get:

(6A) WAS-YEST (John turns off the stove)

that is, *It was the case during yesterday that 'John turns off the stove.'* Or:

(6B) P-YEST (John turns off the stove)

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[78] There also seems to be the possibility of treating "yesterday" adverbially: something like i) WAS-Yesterday-ly (John turns off the stove) or ii) WAS (John turns off the stove yesterday-ly); where at least ii) has some parallel to a sentence such as "John turned off the stove completely" (or, less clearly, "Completely, John turned off the stove). But, perhaps this option was properly ignored, for I am not sure that it is tenable. For example, it might be problematic to place the "yesterday-ly" within the scope of the past tense operator. I didn't really trace this line of thought too far.

[79] See her *Transient Truths: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Propositions* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012).

[80] This entire approach was initially suggested to me by Berit Brogaard (in conversation). I did, however, take the liberty of changing the tense of the translation here from her suggested *present perfect* to the *past perfect*. Cf. Brogaard, *Transient Truths*, *op. cit.*

that is, *It had been the case yesterday that 'John turns off the stove.'* Both of which seem perfectly respectable paraphrases and both of which seem to preserve the notion of temporal operators; but, neither of which is entertained by King.

At this juncture, one might object that my suggested "composite operators" run into difficulties (e.g., being made true by multiple past cases) of the same sort that King poses for simple operators. Thus, the worry is that I have fared no better. This may or may not pan out.[81] But I take myself here to be expressing a quite minimal point: Operators could conceivably exist either as "simples" or composites. If there are no such things in English as operators, that means that there are neither simple operators nor composite operators in the language. But King has not considered composite operators. If indeed composite operators fail to deliver a successful analysis of tense, it seems incumbent on King at least to sketch a case against them before he concludes that there are no such things as operators *of any sort*.

Third, King himself seems to me to point to an alternative way to salvage "simple" operators. He indicates that the standard past-operator of tense logic, (P), would have conditions such that *P(φ) is true at t iff for some t' < t, 'φ' is true at t'.* But then he complains that in SAE the actual past tense functions differently; the actual past tense in SAE functions to pick out "some particular contextually determined time t' prior to t" such that "φ" is true at t'. But, then, why not just let SOME* = "some particular contextually determined time" such that P(φ) is true at t iff for SOME* t' < t, 'φ' is true at t'?

Alternatively, we could go a slightly different route. Consider that "yesterday" could be interpreted merely as a temporal indexical – and not as an "operator" *per se*. If one combines this datum with Ned Markosian's distinction between "grabby" and "searchy" truth conditions, one

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[81] On the perhaps non-negligible chance that the worry has arisen due to my muddling presentation, I quote from Brogaard: "When occurring together with a temporal prefix, time adverbials do not function as autonomous operators. Instead, they help to indicate which time to look at when evaluating the intension of the operand sentence. … '[I]t was the case yesterday that John is a firefighter' takes us to a past time that falls within the class of times picked out by 'yesterday'. The intension of 'John is a firefighter' is true just in case it is true sometime yesterday", *Transient Truths*, op. cit., p. 141 (section 4.5).

might be able to construct an interesting substitute account.[82] Let me briefly try to gesture

towards such an account.

Roughly, Markosian introduces his distinction with respect to the following sentence.

(7) Joe Montana was a quarterback

With such a sentence, there seem to be two ways to construe the truth conditions. First, we could

construe them in a "searchy" way, something like:

(7A) "Joe Montana was a quarterback" is true iff WAS($\exists$x)(x is the referent of "Joe

Montana" and x is a quarterback).

which would be made true by *any* guy (however temporally "distant") who happened to be named

"Joe Montana" and had also *at some past time or other* been a quarterback. This is just to say that

there is a way, namely (7A), of construing sentence (7) such that said sentence could be evaluated

as true in virtue of "searching" for constituents – wherever those constituents could be found

expediently – that make the sentence come out true. One simply looks for any referent that has

the correct properties.

Alternatively, (7) could be construed in a "grabby" way, such that:

(7B) "Joe Montana was a quarterback" is true iff ($\exists$x)(x is the referent of "Joe Montana"

and WAS(x is a quarterback))

which, intuitively, requires that the referent of "Joe Montana" be correctly fixed *prior* to

evaluating the predicate "is a quarterback" (which, in this case, would be true just in case the

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[82] This, and what follows, is from: Markosian, *op. cit.*, pp. 26*f.*

correct *Joe Montana* had been a quarterback during some period of his life). I think that

Markosian is suggesting that to understand (7) in the "grabby" way (7B) is to have in mind one,

particular individual, namely the (intuitively) *correct* "Joe Montana," and then to evaluate the

truth of the overall sentence with respect – not simply to any expedient individual – but with

respect to the one, particular individual that is (loosely "designated"[83] as being) correct

antecedently.

Now, perhaps we could avail ourselves of (something inspired by) Markosian's

distinction between "searchy" conditions and "grabby" conditions and apply it in the following

way. Let the operator WAS-S mean *It was the case (at any expedient past time, t)* and WAS-G

mean *It was the case at some particular contextually determined time, t (such that the contextual*

determiner could be an indexical like "yesterday").

Thus, if (6) is paraphrased as (6') then, plausibly, "WAS" really is "WAS-S." And,

WAS-S takes no context-determining argument. Hence, "yesterday," since it clearly has a place

in the original statement, plausibly is a separate operator (still presupposing the operator-

approach). But, then, as we have seen, an ambiguity arises (regardless of whether WAS-S or

YEST is given wide scope). However, if we interpret the past tense in (6) as the grabby WAS-G,

then we might have (something like) the following paraphrase:

(6*) WAS-G(YEST[John turns off the stove])[84]

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[83] Here, presumably, this loose "designation" would cash out to be (something like) intentionality. I say "presumably" because Markosian's presentation seems to me to address this issue only very generally. E.g., when discussing his "Joe Montana" illustration, Markosian flatly states that the difference between "searchy" and "grabby" truth conditions boils down to this: "Grabby" conditions make the truth of the relevant "Joe Montana"-sentences "depend on how things have been with the guy who is currently the referent of 'Joe Montana'," *Ibid.*, p. 26. But, to my mind, what Markosian says about this is pretty close to saying simply that the "grabby" conditions pertain to the particular individual that we intend to be speaking about and not just any expedient individual. To put it slightly differently, as far as I can tell, Markosian is suggesting that the "grabby" conditions pertain to the correct thing straightaway because that's just what "grabby" conditions do.

[84] When under the scope of the "WAS-G," "YEST" should be understand to be emphatically-redundant, see further on. Possibly, the "WAS-S" could "search out" for the time provided by "YEST." This verges on the Brogaardian composite approach, however. Additionally, "WAS-S" might be better suited for applications such as "It was (WAS-S) that people didn't have electricity", where no one *particular* time (instant) is intended. I remind the reader that this is merely a sketch.

where YEST is the context-determiner for WAS-G such that WAS-G is restricted to the particular time of "yesterday." In this case, it appears, there is no ambiguity. (6*) is true just in case John turned off the stove yesterday. Or, "John turned off the stove yesterday" is true iff *It was the case at the particular, contextually determined time, "yesterday"* that "John turns off the stove."[85]

There is an immediate observation. One way of putting it is that, if "yesterday" is a constituent of the operand sentence, that is, if "yesterday" is a part of the sentence that "WAS-G" operates on, then "WAS-G" is redundant. Concordantly, if "WAS-G" determines a specific time, then "yesterday" is redundant.[86]

By way of reply, let me make a few quick points. Number one, I want to emphasize that I am trying to keep the focus on my overall project. My concern, with respect to the material at hand, is to simply raise a few doubts about King's thoroughness. To be sure, my "WAS-G" suggestion is very skeletal. And admittedly, the Markosian distinction upon which my suggestion is based is itself questionable (and perhaps not a little vague). However, I am not presently interested in constructing a bullet-proof account of operators. In the end, I suppose that what I am trying to do with these scattered proposals is simply to gesture towards possibly viable avenues upon which King's treatment arguably has not sufficiently foreclosed.

But, perhaps this is too quick. Maybe one might think (with some justification) that my remarks here amount to little more than hand waving. For, if the issue is viability, one might wonder what clearer testimony of *in*-viability one could have than redundancy.

So, number two, I want to submit that biting the bullet is not so terrible. Let me suggest, that is, that the identified redundancy is, *in this case*, arguably *emphatic*. And there are other similar cases of emphatic redundancy in Standard American English. There are an entire class of

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[85] See further on for considerations about how a presentist might accept some sort of account of quantification over times which, in this case, would allow her to follow Markosian more closely. But, just as with "Joe Montana," the "grabby WAS" (WAS-G) pertains to the correct time – yesterday – because that's just what the "grabby-WAS" does.

[86] Alternatively, even if it is not redundant, then, as Jon McGinnis put it could still be "just a confused or complicated addition to the WAS-G operator."

pronouns designated "pronouns of emphasis."[87] This class includes members with the form *p*-self,

where (to give just a rough and ready explanation) *p* is a possessive or object case personal

pronoun. For example, the pronoun "myself" can be used for emphasis as follows. A sentence

like:

    (7C) I designed the house.

can be augmented with a pronoun of emphasis to obtain:

    (7D) I designed the house myself.

Arguably, there is no propositional difference between (7C) and (7D).[88] The pronoun is

aptly named. It functions for "emphasis" (whatever *that* turns out to be). Think again about (6).

Yesterday, John turned off the stove. If we compare (6) with a similar construction, merely

leaving off the time adverbial "yesterday,"we could be dealing with a comparable case of

emphasis. To be more specific, if "WAS-G" really is "grabby," then an expression like *John*

turned off the stove can, given a suitable "context-determiner," "grab on" to the correct time

(which, we have been supposing, just is *yesterday*) without further assistance.[89] Given this, if the

speaker adds the time adverbial, such an addition seems relevantly similar to the addition of

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[87] These pronouns are also sometimes called "intensive pronouns." Any standard English grammar should list this pronoun class. My own reference work was Frank X. Braun's handy pamphlet titled *English Grammar for Language Students* (Ann Arbor, MI: U of MI, Ann Arbor, 1947), pp. 8 & 10.

[88] I will just lay this down, here. Possibly, someone might suggest that (7D) adds, over and above the content of (7C) propositionally, something like that "and no one else helped design the house." But, number one, this does not seem obvious. For instance, we could seemingly cause a bit of trouble for this suggestion by marking as (7E) something like *I designed the house all by my myself*, where we might think that the supposed addition in (7D) is either indistinguishable from (7E) or else is simply conflated with it. And, number two, even if it can be persuasively argued that there is *some* addition or other, it is not obvious that said addition need be *propositional*. It could be construed pragmatically, as "force" as opposed to *content*.

[89] Because such a discussion likely involves "pragmatics," I will leave it open as to whether the relevant "determination" be made by way of the strict "linguistic context" or via a broader "extralinguistic context", cf.: Kepa Korta & John Perry, "Pragmatics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., Summer 2011, Accessed Fall 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/pragmatics/>.

"myself" in (7D) insofar as the additional pronoun added nothing by way of reference clarification. Thus, on this proposal, the additional time adverbial functions like the additional pronoun – both add only "emphasis."[90]

By my lights, this account (albeit only a preliminary effort) appears to have two additional benefits – that is, beyond my suggestion that the account satisfactorily explains the relevant data. For one thing, the emphatic pronouns are morphologically identical to the *functionally distinct* class of pronouns known as the "reflexive pronouns." This seems to me to be beneficial simply because it suggests that although adverbs such as "yesterday" may (if my speculation is sound) sometimes function emphatically, the possibility is not precluded that they (or their morphological *doppelgängers*) may function otherwise in relevantly different expressions. And, for another thing, "emphatic phenomena" are fairly wide-ranging in SAE. For example, besides emphatic pronouns there are also *emphatic adverbs*.[91] An obvious example of such an adverb is the word "indeed."[92] From the standpoint of propositional content, *The sun is shining* and *The sun is shining indeed* are arguably indistinguishable. Hence, it may be rightly observed that "indeed" is, strictly, redundant. And there are many other words like this, as a cursory search will show,[93] for example (without limitation), *certainly*, *obviously*, *undoubtedly*,

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[90] One worry, here (which I owe to McGinnis), would be that "emphasis" does not seem to add information, whereas temporal operators do add information." I would say, provisionally, that "information" is ambiguous between "propositional content" and "pragmatic force." It is not entirely clear to me that, at least on a force-reading, the addition of "information" (even if such be conceded) is fatal to my suggestion.

[91] Such adverbs are also sometimes called "intensifiers."

[92] For this, cf.: Princeton U's online WordNet Search, <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=indeed>.

[93] To illustrate said search results, cf.: http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/adverbofemphasis.htm.

really, *genuinely*, and even, as is well known in epistemology by way of the deflationary

"redundancy theory of truth,"[94] *truly*.[95]

It therefore seems to me that there are sufficient grounds for establishing the minimal

points that I am presently trying to make, namely, WAS-G (or something like it) is a *viable*

possible operator that, firstly, King has not ruled out and that, secondly, when coupled with

(things like) time adverbials does become redundant but which redundancy has a "flavor" to it

that is arguably not "vicious." For the redundancy is functionally emphatic, similar to that of a

number of other SAE words.[96]

Fourth, it seems clear enough to me that (6') and (6'') are *possible* albeit extremely

unlikely readings of (6). That is, (6) *could be* represented as (6') or (6'') and, with some help,

people could be made to see those readings.[97] And, with some (admittedly non-standard)

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[94] The "redundancy theory of truth," is a sort of "deflationary" account of truth. "According to the deflationary theory of truth, to assert that a statement is true is just to assert the statement itself. For example, to say that *'snow is white' is true ...* is equivalent to saying simply that *snow is white...*", Daniel Stoljar & Nic Damnjanovic, "The Deflationary Theory of Truth," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta, ed., Summer 2012, Accessed Fall 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/truth-deflationary/>. Moreover, the notion of "redundancy" shows up in Arthur N. Prior's so-called "'redundancy theory' of the present tense", see his "Now," *Papers on Time and Tense* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), Ch. XIV, pp. 171*ff,* Accessed online Fall 2012, <http://books.google.com/books?id=gl7vsHqvKMsC&pg=PA171>. According to this theory, "everything that is presently true, is true simpliciter", therefore Prior held that the "N" ("now") operator in his tense logic was redundant "in the same was as 'It is true that' is redundant according to the redundancy theory of truth", Craig Bourne, "A Theory of Presentism, " *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 36 (2006) 1, p. 43 <http://fds.oup.com/www.oup.com/pdf/13/9780199212804.pdf>.

[95] I hasten to add that my inclusion of the word "truly" on my short list of emphatic adverbs is not intended to be taken as an endorsement of the relevant deflationary account of truth. Moreover, these "emphatic adverbs" are also able to function differently in other expressions, for example, "indeed" can serve as an interjection, and so on.

[96] Just for the record, it appears that the redundancy at issue presently is of a relevantly dissimilar sort to that on which Kaplan premised his argument (rehearsed earlier) for temporal propositions. For Kaplan's concern was a sort of *vacuous*-redundancy that would obtain if eternal propositions are conjoined with temporal operators. Presently, the concern appears to be slightly different, namely, a sort of *emphatic*-redundancy that obtains when a so-called "grabby" temporal operator is conjoined with a time adverbial. But, even if I am incorrect about the entire account, please recall that my present project is merely an attempt to throw a question mark behind King's attack on operators. It is beyond the scope of my project to present an air-tight account of "grabby" operators. I only wish to suggest that such an avenue, pursued with fervor, has the hope of being fruitful (for the ardent operator proponent).

[97] McGinnis (for one) worries that this might be tantamount to "giving up on propositions." I think that this perhaps turns on whether one accepts King's appraisal of (6) as unambiguous. On reflection, I think that King's position, here, is plausibly deniable. There appear to be two general "orientations" in logical space: A "philosophers often confuse things" view that holds that the aberrant readings do not reveal a genuine ambiguity; and a "philosophers at least sometimes expose things" view that holds that the aberrant readings, although unlikely, are possible in some contexts (e.g., a philosophy classroom). There is a

purpose, people could actually *intend* those other readings (e.g., for the purpose of being comedic or sarcastic, perhaps within a philosophy classroom). But, if this is so, then it seems that it is a benefit of the operator-analysis that it can account for these other readings. On the composite operator-analysis, it might be that the aberrant readings are produced when a composite operator is broken up into its constituent operators (and where the composite operator's function is not determinable additively). On the Markosian-patterned account, we could suggest that the aberrant readings are produced when a "grabby" past tense operator is mistaken for a "searchy" operator.

The best that King could do here, it seems, is to say that the aberrant readings are produced when a philosopher mistakenly translates a sentence in SAE employing the past tense with a past tense operator borrowed from tense logic. Or, in other words, King seems committed to (6') and (6'') being *out-of-the-question* as "genuine" readings for (6). In most circumstances, admittedly, this might seem correct. But, it seems to me, the operator-theorist has an elegant way to account for all the possible readings in a variety of contexts (however unlikely they might be) without prejudice. Moreover, if it turns out, as seems plausible, that in SAE speakers normally prefer the "grabby" past tense (or that in statements with more than one operator those operators are normally to be construed in a composite sense rather than handled separately), for instance, then the operator-theorist can simply add that empirical datum into her analysis without a

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difference between "patent" (say, obvious) ambiguity and "latent" (or unapparent) ambiguity. I do not wish to claim that the ambiguity is *patent*. However, I submit that for the relevant ambiguity to count as "latent" possibly the only assumption that one need entertain is (something like) that a philosophy classroom constitutes a legitimate context for standard English use. I won't push this. For a King sympathizer, my own suggestion is surely deniable. Regarding "patent" ambiguity, consider the sentences: "Jane hit the man with an umbrella" and "He gave her cat food", from: Mahid Masseluang, "Really Ambiguous Sentences," Accessed Fall 2012, <http://thestar.com.my/english/story.asp?file=/2008/1/3/lifefocus/19802080&sec=life..> I register awareness that the "patent"/"latent" distinction shows up in law. Cf.: S. H. O., "Patent and Latent Ambiguities in Written Instruments Free content," The American Law Register, 14 (1852-1891) 3, New Series, 5 (Jan., 1866), pp. 140-143, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3303004>. However, I may be (and likely am) using the terms differently. One could distinguish between "manifest" and "hidden" ambiguity, or something. The labels do not seem to me to be entirely worth fussing over.

problem and yield a satisfying account of the entire possible range of tense-use in natural language.

The Linguists who Helped Start It All

Additionally, we should ask ourselves about the strength of the linguistic support claimed by King. What is the actual weight of the linguists analyses?[98] Recall that we have already canvassed the conclusions.

First, we must be clear that there is a distinction to be made between *evidence for a semantics of natural language* and *evidence for a metaphysical position*. Saying that, in SAE, tensed language is such-and-so is one thing. Saying that because language is such-and-so *reality* is thus, is another thing altogether. We must keep the two separate.[99] But, with this qualification in mind, let us revisit the linguistic commentary.

As King observed, Abusch holds that tenses are to be "interpreted as definite descriptions denoting time intervals, where the descriptive material in the description [is] determined by context, including elements of the discourse/sentence the tense occurs in."[100] Now, as an account of natural language, the evidence seems to come down to this: we have these constructions, call them "tense constructions," and, in terms of the way that they function, they most closely resemble these *other* constructions that are commonly called "definite descriptions." This is a purely descriptive (or, if you prefer, *hermeneutic*) claim, it seems to me. But, what happens when we try to read metaphysical significance into the conclusion? Let's look at an illustration.

(8) I woke up this morning.

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[98] Qualification: Higginbotham, at least, is not only a linguist – he is also a philosopher.
[99] Once again I must note that, outside of discussing propositions, King is not overly concerned with metaphysics in his paper. At least, he is certainly not concerned with the issues that mainly concern me here.
[100] King, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Abusch is a professor of linguistics at Cornell. As such, she is seemingly not concerned with the peculiarly metaphysical issues that presently occupy us. However, if we employ (what we might call) a sort of "speculative extrapolation technique," we can suppose that a metaphysician endorsing Abusch's linguistic explanatory framework would have us say that the tensed "woke up this morning" definitely describes some time interval such that it would make sense to speak of (something along the lines of) *the time (interval) at which I woke up this morning*. Give the relevant framework, it would seem that the following inference is valid: There is at least one time interval that I woke up this morning and there is at most one time interval at which I woke up this morning; or, *there exists a time (interval), T, such that I woke up at T this morning*. Quasi-symbolically, we could say:

(8P) $\exists T$ (At T & $\forall$T' (If I wake up this morning at T' $\rightarrow$ T' = T))

But, clearly, this sort of existential talk, if it is *realistically construed*, just *presupposes* that eternalism is true. That is, in order for there to *be* a time, t, such that t *is* the time I woke up this morning, presentism must be false. For if presentism is *true*, there is not any such time and, thus, there is nothing for us to quantify over.

In order for one to move from i) tense functions as a definite description in actual language practice, to ii) therefore, eternalism is true (since definite descriptions are first-order existential quantifications and since if eternalism weren't true there wouldn't be actual quantification going on), we need an additional premise. Namely, we need something like iii) language practice is an accurate guide to what exists. But, clearly, we have been given no support for anything like iii). Thus, we need more than what Abusch provides (or, at least, more than what King relays to us about what Abusch provides) to really support any conclusion about the metaphysics of time.

In other words, if the non-presentist argues that:

(a) If our use of tense commits us to the existence of non-present times then non-present times must exist

(b) Our use of tense commits us to the existence of non-present times

Therefore, (c) non-present times exist

then after granting (a), the presentist can simply respond with:

(b*) non-present times do not exist

Therefore, (c*) It is not the case that our use of tense commits us to the existence of non-present times (appearances to the contrary notwithstanding).

Similarly, Ogihara "adopts a formalism for representing natural language tense that uses explicit quantification over time in the object language, where tenses express relations between times."[101] At face value, then, Ogihara's quantifications over times would fall into roughly the same category as Abusch's definite temporal descriptions.[102] As an account of language, we could fairly read Ogihara as saying that our tense constructions are analyzable in terms of something *akin* to the familiar existential quantifier (i.e., "∃") from the first-order predicate calculus. However, going this far with Ogihara, it seems, need not commit one to the actual existence of non-present times. This is because, as was the case with Abusch, we have been given no reason to suppose that quantificational tendencies in language practice should be understood as ontologically committing. Perhaps language practices *are* best understood in this way. It may be the case; yet, as things stand, we have seen no reason to think so.

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[101] King, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

[102] Cf. Cf. Toshiyuki Ogihara, "A Scope Theory of Tense and Adnomial Modifiers," S. Chiba, *Et al.,* Eds., *Empirical and Theoretical Investigations Into Language* (Tokyo, Japan: Kaitakusha, 2003), Accessed online, Fall 2012 <http://faculty.washington.edu/ogihara/papers/Ogihara_modifier.pdf>.

Something else is noteworthy about Ogihara's account, though. Ogihara explicitly

remarks that: "This choice of logical language [i.e., the representation of tense as quantification

over times] should not be taken as an important theoretical decision…".[103] But King comments,

dismissively, that "Ogihara's pragmatic, almost instrumentalist, attitude"[104,105] will not stop him

(King) from thinking that "tenses really work this way" (i.e., again, as quantifications over times).

Yet, bear in mind that King is speaking of Ogihara's formalisms *qua* an account of natural

language. And, with respect to natural language accounts, King might very well be correct: "If

the complex temporal facts present in natural language are most readily and easily represented by

viewing tenses as involving explicit quantification over time and as expressing relations between

times, that is a good reason for thinking that tenses *really* work this way."[106] But, I submit, *as an*

evidence of the nature of time ontologically speaking, Ogihara's pragmatism/ instrumentalism

takes on a new significance. Ogihara's reticence to endorse his own quantification-over-times

view for anything more than reasons of expedience (when we get down to it), should give us

pause as we ponder the metaphysical implications of the view. Or, to put is another way, the

emphasis of Ogihara's pragmatism/instrumentalism could be taken – not so much as being

confined to an intramural discussion about the best way to construe tense in natural language –

but as a warning against precisely what we are considering here: drawing conclusions about the

reality or unreality of tense based upon the adoption of a *mere formalism*.[107]

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[103] Significantly, King is aware of, and reproduces Ogihara's caveat: *Op. cit.,* p. 40.

[104] King, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[105] Instrumentalism (def.) a sort of theory in which it is held that "we should think of scientific theories (for instance) as *devices* (i.e., *instruments*) for helping us deal with experience," Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003), pp. 183-4; italics and parentheses added. According to the instrumentalist: "Rather than saying that describing the real world is impossible, an instrumentalist will urge us *not to worry* about whether a theory is a true description of the world… The idea that we should ignore questions about the 'real reality' of theoretical entities because these questions have no practical relevance is also linked to one strand of the *pragmatist* tradition in philosophy…," ibid., p. 184.

[106] King, *op. cit.*, p. 40; italics added.

[107] William Lane Craig raises (what I take to be) a similar point against Stephen Hawking. Hawking has written that: "To avoid technical difficulties with [Richard] Feynman's sum over histories [proposal for formulating quantum theory], one must use imaginary time. That is to say, for the purposes of the calculation one must measure time using imaginary numbers, rather than real ones. This has an interesting effect on space-time: the distinction between time and space disappears completely", A Brief History of Time (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 134. Craig has maintained that we have no independent reason to

Also, Ogihara approvingly quotes Enç: "Enç (1981, 1986) argued against an operator analysis of tense ... by citing examples like[:] ... 'Every fugitive is now in jail'...[and] 'John will meet every hostage at the president's party.' [The first sentence] does not mean that every current fugitive is now in jail. It means that every former fugitive is now in jail. This interpretation, however, is not predicted by the traditional analysis. [The second sentence] can mean that John will meet all exhostages at the president's party. However, the traditional system only permits two possibilities: the relevant persons are hostages now or are hostages in the future when John meets them. On the basis of such data, Enç concludes that both nouns and verbs are indexicals in that their interpretations are not determined by higher operators...".[108]

Let me set the stage for my reply to this by first noting that the legal scholar William Letwin, writing on "The Evolution of the Sherman Antitrust Law," reminded his readers of the "famous epigram," repeated for example by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., that "...hard cases make bad law".[109] Of course, I am not suggesting that legal aphorisms should simply be presumed equipped for philosophical lifting. But, the illustrations given above might give us pause.

Consider again the sentences "Every fugitive is now in jail" and "John will meet every hostage at the president's party", which are supposed by the linguists Enç and Ogihara (at least) to prove resistant to a temporal operator analysis. What is interesting to me, in light of the present concerns, is that both of these sentences employ nouns that are arguably "present-tinged." To put it another way, it seems intuitive to define (lexically) the words "fugitive" and "hostage" as (something roughly like) "persons that are *presently* on the run from the law" and "persons who are *presently* and unjustly being held as prisoners", respectively. A peculiar concern for the *present* is thus baked into the definitions. If this is so, however, then it is possible that the reason that sentences containing such "present-tinged" words resist operator-analysis, has mainly to do

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think of this mathematical expedient as anything more than a useful instrumental and, thus, there is no warrant for interpreting it realistically, cf.: Craig, "Beyond the Big Bang," *Templeton Foundation Lecture*, U of C, Boulder, 2004.

[108] Ogihara, op. cit.

[109]*Law and Economic Policy in America*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1956), p. 183

with these temporally-significant features of certain nouns themselves. To make this more plausible, I simply refer the reader back to Ogihara's own explanatory text wherein, in his commentary on the two sentences, he glosses the original occurrences of the (present-tinged) words "fugitive" and "hostage" with the (past-tinged) words "ex-fugitive" and "ex-hostage".

To be sure, people often speak loosely. Sometimes we might speak of an "ex-fugitive" or "former fugitive" simply as a "fugitive." (It takes less breath to say, for one thing.) But it strikes me that, if a speaker were to utter something like, "Every fugitive is now in jail," my response would be to ask for clarification. "Wait, you don't mean that every *current*-fugitive is now in jail, do you? Because that, of course, smacks of contradiction." (Notice also the emphatic redundancy of the phrase "current-fugitive" which brings out the - already present - "present-tinging" of the word "fugitive.") Likely, the reply will be, "No, of course I don't mean *that*. I really meant to say 'every *ex*-fugitive'." Such a retraction/correction seems not insignificant analytically.

Finally, with respect to Higginbotham, we recall that tense are, essentially, "relations between events."[110] This, taken as having genuine ontological significance, commits Higginbotham to the existence of *events* as abstract objects. (Which, as King comments, is part and parcel of Higginbotham's "[working] in a neo-Davidsonian framework in which natural language sentences quantify over events…".[111])[112] The present point is that the existence of events is a controversial topic in its own right. Again, the distinction between *accounts of language* and *metaphysical theories* must be kept in focus.

Along these lines, Eklund comments: "Accepting this [i.e., Davidson's quantificational theory of events] as a nice semantics for adverbs, one may still have the sense that considered as

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[110] Higginbotham, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Cf., King, *supra.*, p. 41.
[111] *Id.*
[112] "The [Davidsonian] argument [for the existence of events] is, briefly, that in order to give a compositional and otherwise acceptable treatment of adverbs we are forced to admit quantification over events," Matti Eklund, "Fiction, Indifference, and Ontology," forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, <http://spot.colorado.edu/~eklundm/papers.htm> and <http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/me72/fio.pdf>, p. 11.

an argument for the existence of a particular kind of entity, events, this is like pulling rabbits out of a hat."[113]

It may be worthwhile, here, to insert a brief (but serious) interlude. Jon McGinnis pointed out to me that: "[L]anguages other than English have different conventions for treating... [tense and related] issues." This means that even if the various anti-operator conclusions advanced by King's litany of linguists are fundamentally sound and sustainable, there is a sense in which a focus upon English is simply far too parochial to carry much metaphysical weight.[114]

For example, at least during some developmental stages, "Greek...does not [necessarily]... express temporal relationships...by means of the grammatical/morphological form of the verb. ... [I]t could be said that 'the [Greek] sentence is tenseless...'...In other words, Greek does not express time by the form ('tense') of the verb, so the sentence may be considered tenseless grammatically."[115] This is to say that, unlike English, the Greek – especially in the "aorist" (that is, *a-oristos*, roughly: "not delimited") aspect – is capable of a "tenseless" construction. (In English-speaking philosophy classrooms such constructions as the "tenseless is" are at best unnatural-sounding stipulations.) Such constructions apparently do not necessarily have to tempt philosophically sophisticated Greek language users towards the view that they are covertly quantifying over really-existent past times.

And, if I have read aright the statements of one morphologist, the "aorist" is not a fluke or an "oddball," *sui generis* sort of construction. Rather, in (at least *Koine*) Greek, the tenselessness cuts across many verb sortals and is actually epitomized in the "aorist" aspect. In light of this, it seems noteworthy that the aorist has been called the "core"-verb stem. To put it a

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[113] *Ibid*. Cf. It's one thing to have a nice semantics, but to read ontological significance into it might feel like "trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat. Can so much really be had for so little?" Matti Eklund, "Neo-Fregean Ontology," *Philosophical Perspectives: Metaphysics*, 20 (2006), p. 97, <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/arche/twiki/~ahwiki/pub/Arche/MathematicsSeminar07Mar2007/ EklundNeo-FregeanOntology.pdf>.

[114] Perhaps one could look at the possibility of doing such work with an underlying, Chomskian "universal grammar" or a suitably objective metalanguage.

[115] Rodney J. Decker, "Verbal Aspect in Recent Debate," Presented at Evangelical Theological Society, March 2001, Accessed Fall 2012, <http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/documents/PorterObj.pdf>.

different way, the entire network of Greek verbal conjugation is, in a sense, *grounded on* (at the

formal level, at any rate) a stem that is used in a "tenseless" way. "Contrary to how most

beginning grammars describe it, the aorist is not the 'irregular tense.' The present tense is the real

culprit. The tense stem [formally construed] in the aorist, whether it be first or second aorist, is

most likely the closest stem to the actual verbal root." [116] I emphasize this because it is striking to

me and, as a native speaker of the highly "tensed" SAE who nonetheless knows just a bit about

Greek, it is difficult for me to feel comfortable using (or sometimes even fully understanding)

tenseless constructions.[117] But, then, as McGinnis aptly put it in his comments to me, the moral is

perhaps the one that I have been all along suggesting: "[R]estricting one's ontology to one's own

language is bad philosophical practice."

Thus, to summarize: King presents the conclusions of a handful of language theorists

who all (as King prefaced the discussion) "[fail] to view tenses as index shifting operators".[118]

Yet, these theorists appear to agree on little else. In fact, their proposed accounts are all very

different from one another and, as we have seen, often implicate the theorists in controversial

positions (e.g., Higginbotham's penchant for *events*). At least one linguist arguably takes his own

quantificational analysis *instrumentally* (as opposed to *realistically*). Some of the date upon

which the linguists focus might fairly be termed "hard cases" the analysis of which perhaps ought

not be generalized. Additionally, even if parenthetically, the theorists are all concentrating (in the

relevant works, in any case), on SAE. When considered as *direct evidence* for metaphysical

eternalism (that is, if we speculate on how the linguistics might be made to do heavier

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[116] William D. Mounce, *The Morphology of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 98.
[117] This seems close to, but weaker than, one possible line of objection to the employment of "tenseless" constructions. Michael Tooley's observes that "many advocates of tensed approaches to time claim that it is impossible to make any sense of [tenseless verbs]", "McTaggart's Argument for the Unreality of Time," Phil 5350, Lecture Notes, CU, Boulder, Fall 2012, <http://spot.colorado.edu/~tooley/McTaggart.pdf>. But I won't pursue this. For one thing, Brogaard notes that the "distin[ction] between tensed and tenseless sentences...is common in the philosophical literature...", *Transient Truths*, Section 6.2, p. 210. And she quotes W.V.O. Quine's contention that a tenseless-"is" is used routinely "in mathematics and other highly theoretical branches of science without deliberate convention", Ibid; e.g., *1+1 "is" (tenselessly) 2*.
[118] King, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

philosophical lifting), the accounts arguably just beg the question.[119] And even if they did not,

drawing metaphysical conclusions based solely upon English language is arguably unacceptably

provincial.

No, it seems that any argument for eternalism (or just non-presentism) must proceed via

an additional premise concerning some link between language practice and ontology. And, as of

yet, we have yet to see how any such link would be established. Thus, it seems safe to conclude,

King's entourage of linguists by themselves are not of much direct help to the opponent of

presentism. As far as King's proposal goes, then, there is a *potential* threat to presentism (in the

areas outlined at the end of the previous section). However, as it stands, King's proposal is not

framed in such a way as to lend itself to *immediate use* by a critic of presentism. That is, King's

account could not simply be wielded "as-is" as a weapon against presentism – some modification

of King's proposal (largely in the way of motivating and explicating a link between language and

ontology) would be needed.

Presentism 2 (Some Potential Resolutions of the Tensions)

Yet, this might be of no great consolation to the presentist. For it is perhaps not wholly

implausible that the required language-ontology link could be constructed somehow.[120]

(Although, I think that it is very implausible when the language is restricted to English.)

There are tensions between King's proposal and presentism. But, King's proposal cannot

simply be dismissed. Perhaps the scattered concerns I have raised against King's proposal

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[119] I stress that I am not saying that the linguists beg their respective linguistic questions, but only that the data does so when that data is considered (hypothetically) to be (conclusive) ammunition for eternalists in a war with presentists over metaphysics.

[120] But, see Edouard Machery, who has argued that a link, at least, between theories of *reference* and *metaphysics* is misguided. His rationale is that he takes himself to have "preliminary evidence" that the intuitions which motivate – via the method of cases – an individual's preference for a theory of reference *are culturally variant*. Further, he believes, different theories of reference lead to different –even contradictory – metaphysical conclusions ("Semantics, Cross-Cultural Style: The Use of Semantic Theory as Grounds for Metaphysical Conclusions" (Work-in-progress presentation, UM-St. Louis, 6 April 2006). Additionally, recall that, in the case of King's linguists, we need a link between *English* and ontology.

directly (viz., concerns with certain aspects of his treatment of operators vis-à-vis sentences with embedded tenses and a few complaints about the direct transferability of linguist evidences to metaphysical theories) have been effective at casting doubt upon it. Nevertheless, it might be fruitful to pause to consider avenues open to the presentist should my criticisms fail. Let us begin by reiterating the main tensions between King's proposal (which will, mostly, be stipulated to be true henceforth) and presentism.

In the first place, as I have stated, there is a lingering concern about presentism being out-of-sync, as it were, with language practice. That is, if presentism were so commonsensical, then why is our everyday speech at odds with presentist ontological commitments? Or, to frame it slightly differently, why should it appear to astute linguists that competent speakers of SAE quantify over non-present times (whether directly or via definite descriptions, etc.) or non-present events when, as the presentist would have it, no such times exist? What are language speakers doing, then?

Here, let me begin by suggesting that a distinction be drawn. On the one hand, we have the utilization of tense in natural language. On the other hand, we have the experience of tense (i.e., the phenomenal experience of the present or, even, simply experience *in* the present). Whence comes the motivation for presentism? It seems to me that, in the main (at least), the motivation of which presentists speak proceeds from the phenomenal experience of the present. And this, moreover, seems separate from issues of language use.

At the level of the prephilosophical, in any case, it seems uncontroversial to note that people take themselves to experience (in) the present. It seems correct to say that all presently existing persons (who are capable of experience in the relevant sense), experience (in) the present. One seems to begin here, with this observation.

Thus, when the claim is made that presentism is the commonsense, intuitive view, it seems plausible to connect this claim with our observation about experience of the present. Additionally, it seems clear enough to me, presently existing persons *do* not experience the past

(although it might be that they *did*) and they *do* not experience the future (although, many surely hope, they *will*). Furthermore, it certainly appears, that even less do presently existing people experience *in* the past or *in* the future. Hence, there might be something like the following at work.[121]

(A) Arguably, people experience tense[122] – i.e., people only experience (in) the present[123]

(B) The experience of tense provides *prima facie* evidence to the effect that reality is inherently tensed – i.e., tense is an objective part of reality not simply subjective

(C) "Presentism" just is a name for a metaphysical view about time that holds that reality is inherently tensed[124] – i.e., the present is ontologically privileged such that, necessarily, the only existing objects are present objects

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[121] Basically, I suggest that opponents of presentism bear the proverbial "burden of proof" with respect to their opposition. Admittedly, as Richard Joyce has observed, "anyone can *issue* a burden-of-proof challenge...", "Moral Anti-Realism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., Summer 2009, Accssed Fall 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/moral-anti-realism/>. However, I submit that (at least part of) what makes such a challenge plausible in the case of presentism is that presentism has very strong claims to being the common, "person on the street" view; cf. Ned Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism," p. 2; and: J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig's statement: "[V]irtually all philosophers of time and space...admit that the view of the common man" is presentism, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), p. 380.

[122] E.g., "[W]e...observe our experiences to be present. This is the so-called *presentness of experience*", Moreland & Craig, *supra*., p. 381. Cf.: William Friedman (who studies the psychology of time consciousness) states: "Like [temporal] order and the causal priority principle, the division between past, present, and future so deeply permeates our experience that it is hard to imagine its absence", qtd. in William Lane Craig, "Metaphysics of Special Relativity," William Lane Craig & Quentin Smith, *Einstein, Relativity and Absolute Simultaneity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 26.

[123] All sense data, when they are perceived, are perceived in the subject's present time (her "now"). This is not to say, of course, that the subject cannot recall sense data previously perceived (past) or anticipate sense data yet to be perceived (future). See, again, Ragg's comment: "Everyone's phenomenology is presentist."

[124] I realize that I am ignoring terms in the vicinity such as the *tensed theory of time* (or the *A-theory*) and the *tenseless theory of time* (or the *B-theory*) as well as skating past an explanation that would explicitly relate the A-theory and presentism. Some of this is beyond the present scope (no pun intended) of this work. But, just briefly, the difference between the two theories involves a debate regarding, obviously, *tense* – specifically, regarding the nature of tense; i.e., whether tense is an objective or subjective feature of the world as well as a debate on the way that the ordering (or distinguishing) of times should be understood. A-theorists hold that times should be distinguished according to inherently tensed properties (e.g., primitives such as *being future, being present, being past,* etc.). B-theorists, on the other hand, since they deny the objective reality of tense hold that tensed properties can be *reduced* to relations which make no reference to tense (e.g., *being later than, being simultaneous with, being earlier than*, etc.). (See, e.g., Ned Markosian, "Time," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2002), Edward N. Zalta, ed., April 2006 <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2002/entries/ time/>. For our purposes here, I think, it is sufficient to note that presentism (at least in the versions of it that I am concerned with) is a sort of A-theory (i.e., a tensed theory).

(D) The experience of tense provides *prima facie* evidence for presentism.

(E) Any belief which enjoys *prima facie* evidential support is an intuitive or commonsensical belief.

(F) Presentism is an intuitive or commonsensical belief.[125]

Now, the above is merely a rough sketch. But, I think, the idea is clear enough. If presentism is really motivated by the common and pervasive experience of the present (i.e., if the experience of tense motivates presentism directly) then presentism enjoys much intuitive support. In fact, building from (F), we may even go on:

(G) Any denial of an intuitive or commonsensical belief must bear the burden of proof.

(H) Eternalism (or, simply, non-presentism) must bear the burden of proof.

(I) Bearing a burden of proof against an intuitive or commonsensical belief involves (at least) defeating (i..e., undermining) the *prima facie* evidential support enjoyed by the intuitive or commonsensical belief.

(J) Eternalism (or, simply, non-presentism) must (at least) defeat (i.e., undermine) presentism's *prima facie* evidential support.

(K) Eternalism (or, simply, non-presentism) must (at least) defeat (i.e., undermine) the experience of tense.

My point, at this juncture, is simply this: nowhere in the above account has there been any explicit mention of *natural language* or *temporal operators* or the like. In other words, the

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[125] McGinnis parodied this argument with one that purports, from the experience of "situation" (or "here-ness"), to conclude (something like) that only what is here is real. Maybe I can grant that such a "here"-oriented view is both possible (in logical space) and possibly commonsensical, but simply deny that this poses a problem for me by way of gesturing (in a Plantinga-esque sort of way) to the fact that there seems to be no "community" of people moved by McGinnis' parody argument, whereas my argument (plausibly) captures (something like) the intuition of "regular" people regarding the objectivity of tense.

above account of the motivation for presentism, the motivation which renders presentism the

commonsense or default view, stands on ground wholly other than the *use of tense* in SAE.

On this account, then (if it is correct), there seems to be no real threat to the motivation

for presentism. That is, questions about the function and form of *tensed language* are separable

from the simple and immediate *experience of tense*. Thus, when we distinguish between accounts

which explicate our use of natural language and accounts which explain, and in this case, *ground*

experience ontologically, we see that the motivation for the metaphysical view of presentism is

not directly affected by King's proposal. Even assuming King's proposal to be correct, as we are,

all that is required in principle is for the presentist to distinguish (or, perhaps, sever the

connection) between accounts of language and accounts of ontology.

What of the presentist paraphrases, then? Here, granting King's thesis provisionally, the

presentist need only insist that her paraphrase is *not* an account of natural language but, instead,

an ontological *analysis* of the propositional content of sentences. The resources of the temporal

operators, on this view, could merely be stipulations. But, surely, they are *not arbitrary*. For the

selection and function of the operators is driven (i.e., *motivated*) by the commonsensical

presentist view[126] – a view which should continue to enjoy the status of being the intuitive view

until (at the least) opposing views can undermine its *prima facie* evidential support. But, since

this kind of project was no part of King's proposal, presentism itself remains motivated.

But, suppose, someone complains that we are unduly favoring our experience. That is,

one might think, why should we not *begin* with our analysis of tense in language? For, clearly, if

we begin with our analysis of language, then (at least according to King) the majority of linguistic

accounts will urge us to construe tensed language as (in some sense) quantifying over times. We

could then move to ask, *What sort of metaphysical theory would ground our use of language?*

And, here, it might seem, *eternalism* would be the best theory.

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[126] And, I should remind the reader, the formal semantics for the operators is largely patterned after the formal semantics for the operators of modal logic. Hence, the formal semantics is neither arbitrary nor *sui generis*.

First, although this is conceivable, one possible reply has already been given. As Fred Dretske once remarked, "one person's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*".[127] The presentist and eternalist are, plausibly, locked in a stalement; the eternalist arguing: *If tense commits speakers to the existence of non-present times, then non-present times exist. Tense commits, therefore, non-present times exist*; and the presentist answering: *Non-present times do not exist. Therefore, tense does not commit*. (Granted, the presentist ought rightly tack on a plausible "error-theory.")[128]

Second, I think it plausible that the very idea of beginning with an account of natural language is itself unmotivated (or, if not *unmotivated*, then, certainly, not sufficiently motivated). For, consider again, the presentist position enjoys *prima facie* intuitive support. How, in that case, does an abstruse semantics undermine a commonsense apprehension of our experience of the world? I submit that it does not.

Thus, keeping score, we have no positive argument for non-presentism and no effective way to undermine the intuitive support for presentism.

However, here it may be objected that "...our pre-philosophical, common sense intuitions usually have to give way to our scientific understanding of the world...".[129] And this is what King plausibly is saying. King expressly states that: "...virtually all current researchers trying to give a treatment of the complex temporal data in natural languages eschew an operator approach to tenses in favor of treating tenses as something like quantifying over, referring to and/or expressing relations between times...".[130]

However, here I simply want to raise two points. Firstly, again as I have expressed elsewhere, it seems at least possible that things plausibly falling under the category of " our

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[127] Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1995), p. 129.
[128] Note that my reply, here, need not be construed as a changing of the terms of the project. What I am rather suggesting (as mentioned elsewhere) is that a fair bit of "philosophical baggage" might be built into the "analysis of tense" in the first place. Read this way, what I am suggesting is that "beginning with an analysis of tense" might well mean beginning with a "presentist-friendly analysis", as opposed to the present options, which may well be suspected of being "eternalist friendly" *at the level of presuppositions*.
[129] Jon McGinnis mentioned this response to me.
[130] *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

scientific understanding of the world" could yet be construed *instrumentally*. And the present case seems to be a good candidate for this. For while it might be arrogant of me to suggest that the linguists do not know their business *qua* linguists, it seems (to me) not at all arrogant to suggest that linguists may not be competent to function *qua* metaphysicians. Hence, in a case where a linguistic framework construed realistically would have significant metaphysical implications, it seems to me not at all untoward to take these significant, non-linguistic implications as a (justifying) reason to interpret the relevant linguistic science instrumentally. And unless (local) instrumentalism in science is somehow shown to be incoherent or inconsistent, think that a person who takes the relevant linguistic analeyses instrumentally can count as a person who takes the relevant science *seriously*. So, essentially, it just is not clear to me that this is an obvious case in which a person can only take the science seriously if that person takes the science realistically.

Secondly, there is a question (to my mind, in any case) of the extent to which metaphysical philosophical assumptions (whether *pro* or *contra* the relevant positions) figure in the science itself. And here I simply note that if it could plausibly be suspected that the relevant linguistic science is laden with anti-presentist (or pro-eternalist, what have you) presuppositions, it might be possible for the presentist to deal with this one of two ways. Number one, the presentist could (realistically) endorse a "lite" version of the science that has been divested of the offending presuppositions. Or, number two, the presentist (or, rather, presentist-leaning scientists in the field) could launch a more "presentist-friendly" endeavor.[131] A bit more will be said about this, below. But for now, I submit that if a presentist-friendly non-scientist ("layman") suspects

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[131] Alvin Plantinga has written on the idea of "theistic science", e.g., "Methodological Naturalism?" *Origins and Design*, 18 (1997) 1, <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/methodological_natur alism_part_1.pdf>; and "Methodological Naturalism? Part 2," *loc. cit.*, 18 (1997) 2, <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/methodological_natur alism_part_2.pdf>. Although his particular theistic concern may not be entirely pertinent to the present discussion, one point of his may perhaps be profitably generalized. One of Plantinga's main thoughts might fairly be put this way: When engaged in science, it is reasonable for people to consult all that they believe to be true, even if not "everyone" shares their beliefs.

that the science is philosophically biased, this suspicion (presuming that it is properly grounded) would seemingly justify an agnostic posture towards (at least) the offending conclusions.[132]

Here is a related concern. It might be objected more fundamentally that "our pre-philosophical, common sense intuitions [could be] imbedded within our language. Thus SAE [would be] good a guide as anything to identify common intuitions...".[133] To put it slightly differently, if intuitions can be indentified through language practice, then it is just wrong-headed of me to pit "intuition" against language practice. For plausibly what King is delivering to us is the true content of intuition (so to speak). I submit, here, that language "usage" or language "practice" is one thing – and such may well be as good a guide as anything to common intuition. However, language usage/practice *itself* should, I think, be carefully distinguished from a proposed *analysis* of language usage/practice. And it is a proposed *analysis*, I submit, with which we are here dealing.

There seems to me to possibly be a parallel here to discussions of complex theories in physics, for example (without limitation), relativity and quantum mechanics. One sometimes encounters authors laying claim to "science"[134] when what is being claimed is – at best – a theoretical amalgam of science structured around philosophy. The key point may be made, I think, following again Markosian.

> It is fashionable nowadays to give arguments from scientific theories to philosophical conclusions. I don't have a problem with this approach in general. But I think that it is a seldom-observed fact that when people give arguments from scientific theories to philosophical conclusions, there is usually a good deal of philosophy built into the relevant scientific theories. I don't have a problem with this, either. … Still, I think it is important, when evaluating an argument from some scientific theory to a philosophical conclusion, to be aware of the fact that there is likely to be some philosophy built into the relevant scientific theory.

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[132] I refer the reader back to my suggestion that construing the science instrumentally seems a viable option.

[133] This was mentioned to me by McGinnis.

[134] I was recently asked to read Deepak Chopra's book *The Seven Spiritual Laws*, so that work came immediately to mind. Examples could, I am confident, be multiplied easily. Chopra makes all manner of grandiose claims about the degree to which his Hindu metaphysics is supported by "science". However, in his mouth, "science" is arguably a code word for the conjunction of particular (and scattered) empirical claims along with philosophical assumptions that look suspiciously close to the conclusions he wishes to draw. In other words, to Chopra "science" is arguably defined in such a way as to bake in his preferred metaphysics. But I digress.

Otherwise there is the danger of mistakenly thinking that the argument in
question involves a clear-cut case of science versus philosophy.[135]

I think Markosian's thought fits in here in the following way. I take it that what is being

discussed is the *way* in which many linguists analyze SAE language practices. The data that they

work with, as briefly mentioned above, is sometimes arguably unnatural and contrived or, at

least, fairly described as "hard cases." But then the conclusions that they reach ought at those

times, I submit, be tempered both by the acknowledgment of the difficulty of the material *on*

which they work and of the potentially philosophically-tinged linguistic theories *through which*

they work. This is just to suggest that the analyses produced by the linguists that King surveys

might be fairly thought of as *eternalist-friendly-analyses*, rather than simply "analyses" (period),

which latter label not so subtly implies that their conclusions are unhindered by philosophical

baggage.

So, third, what I propose (as mentioned briefly above) is that it may be possible to

produce a *presentist-friendly-analysis*. To be more exact, it may be that the presentist has a

satisfying way to account for the practices of natural language. If this is the case, then one could

fairly hold that what we simply have is a choice between empirically equivalent, but oppositely-

philosophically-leaning analyses of language usage. I can think of several possible strategies for

the quick production of a few *prototype*, "presentist-friendly-analyses."

Number one (and perhaps the quickest, dirtiest way), the presentist could simply bite the

bullet and claim that sentences which appear to quantify over non-present times really do so;

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[135]*Op. cit.*, p. 30. Markosian's main target is the "Special Theory of Relativity" (STR), which, it is widely
supposed, strongly militates against presentism in virtue of the fact that, as McGinnis pithily put it, echoing
Hilary Putnam (in Putnam's "Time and Physical Geometry," *Journal of Philosophy* 64 [1967]): In STR
"...what is 'present' is relative to a particular inertial frame, and yet no particular inertial frame has a
privileged position." Markosian asks: "Does STR have enough philosophical baggage built in to make it
either literally contain or at least entail that there is no such relation as absolute simultaneity?" He notes
that obviously, the answer is either "yes" or "no" and he suggests that we can consider two permutations of
STR generated by each possible answer. STR+ answers "yes" and STR- answers "no." Markosian basically
argues that (in the argument he considers) we have been given no reason to favor STR+ over STR- and
therefore, if one rejects presentism and absolute simultaneity, one does so at the level of assumptions, as
opposed to the level of conclusions. I am gesturing at that same basic notion here. If a person uses the
linguistic analyses to reject presentism, there are really using a sort of linguistic-analysis+ that has the
rejection of presentism baked in.

thus, they are false. However, they are *close enough* to being true – abstracting from convoluted metaphysical discussions – to count as *quasi-true*.[136] That is, one could say that, the utterances *would be true* were eternalism true. This way keeps the entire quantificational analysis program fundamentally in tact.

Alternately, one could phrase much the same point in more overtly fictionalist terms, claiming that there is an implicit *story prefix* attached to all discourse concerning non-present times.[137] Perhaps, when one employs a tensed construction (which, again, we are granting cashes-out to a quantification over a non-present time) we are really saying: *According to the fiction of eternalism, there exists a non-present time, t, such that at t…*, etc. Again, on such an approach, the core analysis itself is largely unscathed. We simply preface the analysis with a suitable fiction-prefix.[138]

Now, admittedly, these fictionalist-styled proposals have the drawback (besides the possibly objectionable commitment to abstract entities we might term "fictions") that they seem not adequately to account for why it does not appear to the speaker that a fiction is being employed. Nevertheless, if a suitable resolution to this question could be produced, the fictionalist route would be a live option.

But, there is another, and to my mind much *better*, option available: namely, *indifferentism*.[139] Essentially, the indifferentist proposal (as applied to this case), would result in an account in which it is held that ordinary speakers, when they produce utterances in everyday contexts, simply *do not intend* to commit themselves ontologically (one way or the other) with respect to metaphysical theories about time. Eklund postulates that certain features of ordinary

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[136] Ted Sider, "Presentism and Ontological Commitment," *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999): 325-347, <JSTOR> and <http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/sider/papers/presentism.pdf>; cf. Markosian, *op. cit.*, pp. 24*f*.
[137] Cf. Gideon Rosen, "Modal Fictionalism," *Mind* 99 (1990): 327-354, <JSTOR>.
[138] Here is an illustration. "To use [Kendall] Walton's example, by pretending that Italy is a boot, I can easily convey to you the location of the Italian town of Crotone. Here I am, in effect, using a pretense to convey information about the real world. Literally, Italy is not a boot, but my interest is not in speaking the literal truth, but in conveying a rather complicated fact to you as effectively as I can", McGrath, *op. cit.*
[139] Eklund, *op. cit.*

discourse are intended *seriously* and other features are intended *non-seriously*. Eklund's main example is drawn from Donnellan's literature on the distinction between *referential* and *attributive* uses of definite descriptions,[140] although Eklund's emphasis is different than Donnellan's. Consider the following exchange, between two persons (let us suppose) at a cocktail party:

> (9) Person 1: "The man drinking the martini is a friend of mine"
>
> (10) Person 2: "Oh, that's not a martini that man is drinking; it's only water"

Now, Eklund's point is that person 1 is likely to be *impatient* with person 2 because person 1 did not intend, in uttering (9), to commit to a particular substance being in the glass of the man in question. Rather, person 1 simply intended to communicate something to person 2 with respect to person 1's relationship with the man in question. In responding with (10), person 2 misconstrued and/or misdirected the *intended focus* of the initial utterance (9).

In the case of everyday discourse about non-present times, it is simply expedient for a speaker to employ the constructions that are employed. If linguists think that utterances pertaining to, say, non-present times, are best modeled as quantifications over times, well, that is fine for the linguists. But, that analysis does nothing whatsoever to change the fact that the speaker, as she is making her utterance, does not intend to commit herself to the existence of non-present times.

If I utter:

> (11) Annie got drunk at the party

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[140] Cf. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language*, pp. 26*f*.

on this view, I am not committing myself to the existence of non-present times – even if the correct analysis of (11) is that I am (quasi-)quantifying over times. The reason it is non-committing is because, in uttering (11), I did not intend to assert or imply anything about the metaphysics of time or the reality of tense. Instead, intuitively, I intended to communicate something about *Annie*.[141] As such, I am *indifferent*, in uttering (11), as to whether presentism or non-presentism is the correct metaphysical theory about time.[142] To put it another way, any (purported) metaphysical implications of my utterance are to be understood *non-seriously* in light of my main communicative goals.

Consider an adaptation of another brief example, which Eklund had borrowed from Chomsky. Let us suppose that two people are conversing about the location of a bank (financial institution). Person 1 utters something like, "I thought there was a bank on this street." Person 2 *might say* something like, "Oh, yes, there was a bank building on this street. But then it burned down. A new building has been built to replace the old one, however; and it stands across town." But, let us suppose that person 2 is responding to person 1 in a bit less formal a way. Person 2 actually says, "Yeah, but the bank burned down and moved across town."

Now, surely, if person 1 objected that *banks cannot "move"* or that *burned down banks cannot "do" anything*, person 1 would have missed the point. The point of person 2's utterance, plausibly, was to communicate something about the bank in an *intuitive and concise way*.

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[141] The philosopher will readily gloss the intention as one of communicating something about Annie *at some time*. If queried about this (after getting over the initial puzzlement at being asked), the "person on the street" might agree that he intended to communicate something about Annie "at some time." It strikes me as doubtful that the person would, solely in virtue of this minimal addition, appreciate the metaphysical weight of the prepositional phrase. In the absence of deliberate and, from the non-philosopher's perspective, counter-intuitive prefatory remarks, it seems antecedently implausible that the average person would hear "at some time" as anything other than a pedantic and unnecessary addition, let alone admit to anything like a "subconscious" or intuitive intention to quantify over times. A suitable research study could resolve this.

[142] In passing, I note the following. Even if one presses the idea that we are concerned, not just with "Annie" (simpliciter, as it were), but with "Annie [*at some contextually determined (and in this case non-present) time*], this is still not clearly fatal for presentism. E.g., there may be a way for this concern to be rephrased as a concern for the *present-Annie*. Robin Le Poidevin raises the possibility, that: "What makes a certain statement about the past true...is the evidence that at present exists. ...This is possible in virtue of the fact that there are present facts which derive their character from causal connection with past states of affairs..." *Change, cause and contradiction* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 38; qtd. in Bourne, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Features of person 2's utterance, then, that would seem to commit person 2 to bank-locomotion, etc., are to be understand as *non-serious* features of the utterance (i.e., they are merely expedient and are not intended to carry strict ontological commitments).

In most everyday contexts, when ontological precision is not required, we would count person 2's communication as successful – whether or not it is *literally* the case that ∃x(x is a bank & [x burned down and moved across town]) – because the utterance is entirely understandable. In a similar way, I submit that it is highly unfair to object to "Annie got drunk at the party" (uttered in a suitable context) by charging that the speaker is committed to the following (rough) quantification: ∃t(at t there is a party at which Annie is drinking & t < the utterance in question); but that there exists no such t. Moreover, it seems to me that one should not maintain that Annie is committed to the existence of such a t (whether or not it is added that, therefore, there really must be such a t for the utterance to be true). For, it seems plausible, commitment to some t is simply *beside the main point* of the utterance.

Thus, on this analysis, it is simply wrongheaded to try to decide between metaphysical theories about time on the basis of language use. That being the case, it therefore falls upon other considerations to decide which of the metaphysical accounts of time and tense is preferable. On that score, I observe, one theory – metaphysical presentism – preserves our intuitions while the other – non-presentism – not only fails to preserve our intuitions but also fails to provide a compelling account of why those intuitions are not preserved. Thus, in the absence of any clear defeater for the *prima facie* evidence, rejection of presentism is not warranted – even if King is correct about temporal operators. (But even that seems reasonable to doubt.)

Conclusion

We have seen King's proposal and evaluated his evidences for the conclusion that there are no such things as temporal operators in Standard American English. We have also examined some

of the implications of this thesis for presentism. In the first place, there are several reasons to think that King's proposal is not wholly convincing. For example, he seems to have given insufficient attention to a possible species of operator which, antecedently at any rate, seems possibly capable of resolving (or at least attenuating) some of the difficulties he raises. In the second place, even if his analysis is correct, there are several reasons to doubt that this would spell trouble for presentism. For example, the real motivation for presentism remains untouched and indifferentism, should that view be brought on board by the presentist, provides the resources to avoid (or absorb) any (or, more conservatively, at least much of the) negative fallout from an analysis of tense in natural language that would seem to favor non-presentism. Hence, although more thought should be applied to these areas, the presentist need not be overly-alarmed. None of the worries raised by King, even if they do evade my criticisms, are insuperable. Presentism remains motivated and temporal operators may still be regarded as viable.[143]

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