



E XPERIENCING THE PRESENT¹

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I had excruciating back pain last night. The next day I went to a spa and the pain disappeared. Psychologically speaking, my pain is gone. Where is it, speaking ontologically? A-theorists have an easy time here (more or less). But B-theorists who think that persons persist by enduring are in trouble. Why am I finding myself at this particular time, with this particular set of experiences, rather than at numerous other times, with different experiences, despite the fact that all times are on the same ontological footing and I am wholly present at all of them? I argue that the Puzzle of the Experience of the Present is a real challenge for B-theorists, and the best way to deal with it is to adopt the stage view of persistence.

Key words: temporal experience, time, endurance, exduration, present.

1. Past Pains and Present Pleasures

I had excruciating back pain early last night. The next day (which was, fortunately, a Saturday) I went to a spa, and the pain was gone. I started feeling warm pleasure spreading through my body as I stretched during the massage. I am still there, enjoying the experience.

Psychologically speaking, my pain is gone. Where is it, speaking ontologically? Perhaps it is in the past. If it's there why is it not painful? Perhaps because *I* do not *find* myself *there* (i.e. at night), but *here* (i.e. at a day session in the spa). But if I endure (roughly: if I persist by being wholly present at multiple time-places) then I should find myself both here and there (and in a lot of other time-places). Why am I *finding* myself during the day, in the spa, and feeling pleasure and not at night, in the bed, and in pain?²

The presentist (someone who thinks only the present is real) has an easy time (no pun) explaining these facts: the last-night pain is simply no more, and non-exi-

¹ This paper revisits an older project (Balashov, 2005), where the Puzzle of the Experience of the Present was put in a rather unfocused form, entangled with irrelevant matters. Recent flood of work on temporal experience has helped me focus my ideas. I have especially benefited from Skow (2011; 2015) and am very grateful for his comments on the previous versions of this paper at the PTS@APA session in San Francisco, California (March 2013) and thereafter. My thanks to the audience for pressing me on many points. Special thanks are due to Igor Gasparov, Mark Moyer and Jordan Lavender for their detailed comments on earlier drafts, and to Laurie Paul for her feedback on a recent draft. The result may or may not be up to their expectations; and I alone am fully responsible for any remaining defects.

² A skeptic may jump in at this point and say that the whole problem boils down to a simple confusion of the tensed and tenseless uses of 'find'. I *tenselessly* find myself at all times at which I exist; but I *find* myself (*present tense*) only on Saturday. I beg the skeptic to read on.



sting pains cannot be painful. Moreover, the night isn't there either, so I cannot find myself then. I find myself in the present because there is no past (or future). Of course, my pain *existed*,³ and the night *was* present. But the fact that my pain existed does not put it in the past (or anywhere else for that matter), just as the fact that pigs possibly fly does not put flying pigs anywhere, for the modal actualist.

The moving spotlight theorist (roughly: someone who thinks that all times exist, but one of them is objectively privileged) needs to do more work to show that past pains are not painful. She needs to say that pains become painful only when the spotlight of the moving present shines on them. Maybe she can stop here. Or maybe she can say more about the shining mechanism.⁴ But the idea is clear.

The real trouble awaits the eternalist (someone who thinks that all times exist and no time is objectively privileged) who also wants to be an endurantist. Or so I shall argue. In a nutshell, the argument is very simple. I am wholly present at night, and am also wholly present during the day. This immediately *connects* me with my pain as well as my pleasure. My relations to both are equally robust. No metaphysically significant feature of my relation to my current pleasure is missing from my relation to my last night's pain. In that respect, my pain is ontologically on a par with my pleasure. But they are not on a par as far as my experience goes. I am enjoying the pleasure, but I am not having the pain. Why? This raises a problem for the combination of eternalism with endurantism (EE). But this is a combination many philosophers want to have.⁵

2. The Puzzle and a Solution

Put this way the argument could be easily challenged; and rightly so. The perspective sketched in the previous paragraph presents an atemporal "view from nowhere." See Fig. 1. But our phenomenal perspective is inherently temporal; we can only experience things from a certain vantage point in time. See Figs. 2a and 2b, which represent such perspectives. To fix ideas, let us call the first, atemporal perspective *external*, and the second, inherently temporal one, *internal*. When the external and internal perspectives are properly distinguished it becomes clear that I can have my experiences only one at a time, not holus-bolus.

³ Some presentists would analyze it as follows: it was the case that (my pain exists).

⁴ For illuminating recent discussions (again, no pun intended) see [Zimmerman, 2005; Skow, 2015] and references therein.

⁵ Here is a partial list of eternalist endurantists: [Johnston, 1987; van Inwagen, 1990, 2000; Mellor, 1998; Rea, 1998; Haslanger, 2003]. As stated here, the problem has much in common with Arthur Prior's famous "Thank Goodness that's over" puzzle, but is more general in scope pertaining to a whole variety of present temporal experiences, including but by no means restricted to differential attitudes towards the past and the future, such as relief, anticipation, or regret.

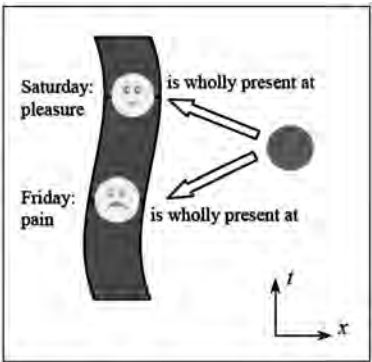
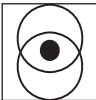
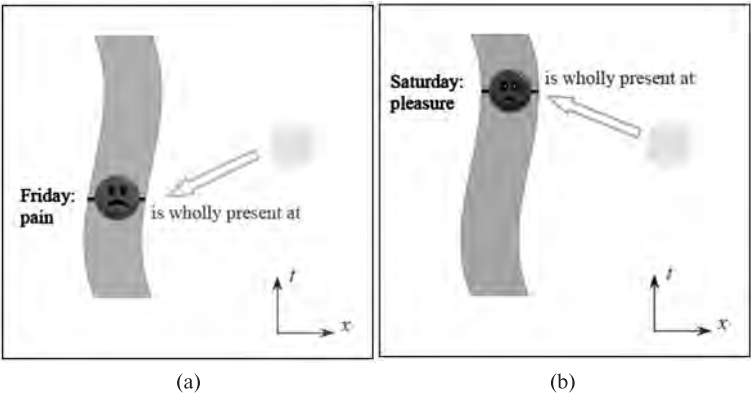


Fig. 1. The external perspective. The shaded area on the left represents my path in spacetime



Figs. 2a and 2b. The internal perspectives

This point should certainly be granted, but the argument can be refined [Balashov, 2005: 299ff]. Since temporal experiences can only be had one at a time the EEist should not fear being saddled with an impossible combination of pain and pleasure.⁶ There is simply no internal perspective, in which this occurs. The real task is to explain why I am finding myself during the day, in the spa, and having pleasure, to the *exclusion* of pain, *rather than* at night, in the bed, and having pain, to the *exclusion* of pleasure. In short, why am I having the internal perspective of Fig. 2b *rather than* that of Fig. 2a? More carefully: why do I have an *illusory belief* that I am having the *exclusive* internal perspective of Fig. 2b, *rather than* an *illusory belief* that I am having the *exclusive* internal perspective of Fig. 2a? More gene-

⁶ One should be careful here. For one thing, some experiences are known to combine pain and pleasure. More important, even for strictly incompatible types of pain and pleasure, there may be a difference between *having pain at t* and *having pleasure at t* and *having pain and pleasure at t*. I will not discuss these issues.



rally, why am I finding myself at this particular time, with this particular set of experiences, to the exclusion of others, *rather than* at any of the numerous other times, with different experiences, to the exclusion of others, despite the fact that all these times are on the same ontological footing and I am wholly present at all of them?

Here is another, slightly different take on it. The relation between external and internal perspectives is supposed to be *explanatory*. The external perspective of Fig. 1 is a true ontological picture of the block universe with endurance. This picture is required, among other things, to explain the appearances represented by Figs. 2a and 2b. There are two closely related but different explanatory questions to be addressed: (i) Why do I never experience an impossible combination of pain and pleasure, despite being connected to both (by the arrows depicted in Fig. 1)? (ii) Why do I experience pleasure rather than pain? Answering (i) is easy and a pre-requisite for (ii). I never experience pleasure and pain together because no arrow in Fig. 1 connects me to both; instead each connects me to a different experience, and also to a different time. These connections are invoked to explain (ground, stand behind) my having pain on Friday and pleasure on Saturday. They can only be invoked one at a time. But why *this* time rather than *that*? There are many times at which I am wholly present and have experiences; but there is *only one* “me” – on the EE view, that is. Invoking the arrows immediately helps with (i). But it also brings with it the need to break the ontological parity between my pleasure and my pain, and between Friday and Saturday, in order to explain my illusory belief in their disparity. And there is nothing in the eternalist block universe capable of doing this job.

The real question, then, is the “rather than” question, not the “why not all at once” question.⁷ Why pleasure *rather than* pain? And why Saturday *rather than* Friday? Call questions of this sort *external questions*. The Puzzle of the Experience of the Present (PEP) for EE arises when external questions are taken seriously. But should they be taken seriously?

Framing the issue this way suggests two different courses of action. One is to take external questions seriously, acknowledge that PEP is a real puzzle, read ‘finding’ and ‘having’ in ‘finding myself at this particular time’ (*rather than* at some other time) and ‘having this particular set of experiences’ (*rather than* other experiences) in a way that makes the problem real; but deny, contrary to the appearances, that I am finding myself, in the relevant sense, *only* at this particular time, without, however, slipping back

⁷ As far as I know, the difference between these two types of questions was first pointed out by Frederick Ferré [Ferré, 1972] and Ronald Hoy [Hoy, 1978] in the context of debating Grünbaum’s thesis of the mind-dependence of becoming. In a very balanced response to Ferré’s critique of Grünbaum’s position, Hoy sketched a view that is very close to my own [Balashov, 2005 and the present paper] and to the view favorably discussed by Skow in [Skow, 2011; 2015]. Thanks to Brad Skow for drawing my attention to these earlier sources.



into the “holus-bolus” pseudo-problem – without saying that I am finding myself at many times “at once.”⁸

The other course of action is to deny that PEP is a puzzle in the first place. Instead, it is a pseudo-problem based on a confusion. The confusion does not consist in mistakenly attributing to me a mix of pain and pleasure (see above). Rather it lies in using a misleading and tendentious language to create a false impression that the whole story about my temporal experiences involves more than is represented in Fig. 1, in which a single subject is connected to multiple times and multiple experiences. Pinpointing the confusion should make it clear that there is nothing more to the story.

I consider this skeptical response to PEP in §3 below. In the remainder of the present section, I want to sketch a rather radical *dissolution* of the puzzle about my pain and pleasure – assuming it to be a real puzzle, pending more considerations pro and con.

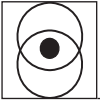
The best way to dissolve PEP⁹ is to assign temporal experiences from different times to numerically different temporal *stages* of me. Each stage finds itself at a particular time and no others, and has the experiences it does at that time and no others, in exactly the same direct and non-relational manner as any other experience-bearing stage of me. In particular, my night stage finds itself exclusively at night, in bed, and in pain, and my day stage finds itself exclusively during the day session in the spa and enjoying pleasure. This is what allows me to say that I find myself, in the same simple way, at both times, with both experiences; but not “at once.”

Of course, this is not *so* simple. To save the phenomenal appearances which uniquely privilege my daytime experiences, we need to add that, in having the pleasant experience, I am *not aware* of having the painful one, and vice versa. This move to resolve the obvious tension involved in saying that I find myself at night, having pain, and *also* find myself in the middle of the day, having pleasure, and that in having one, I am not aware of having the other, is parallel to that made by Parfit and others to resolve the tension involved in fission scenarios¹⁰. In both cases the solution comes at

⁸ Note that ‘finding’ has a distinctly subjective flavor here; we have already assumed that I am objectively and wholly present at multiple times.

⁹ Explored in [Balashov, 2005; Skow, 2011: §6; 2015]. Skow’s discussion also draws useful parallels with Prior’s “Thank Goodness that’s over” problem (see note 5 above), while also noting some important differences (see, in particular, [Skow, 2011: 383–384, note 1]. For systematic presentations of stage theory (see [Sider, 2001: §5.8; Hawley, 2001]).

¹⁰ In such scenarios, one of my physical and/or psychological descendants, Lefty, has an illusory belief that he is uniquely me and is not aware of the existence of Righty who has the same mistaken belief. The lack of the relevant awareness, which is crucial to explaining away the false beliefs, can be illustrated even in more down-to-earth split-consciousness scenarios. See, e.g., a vivid description in [Parfit, 2008: 361–362]. Although a parallel between the temporal case and Parfit-style cases is of great help in pursuing this approach, Skow does not mention it. The parallel is fully exploited in [Balashov, 2005]. See also [Bayne, 2010], which debates various forms of “static disunity” (i.e. disunity *at a time*) manifested in unusual experiences, including the “split-brain syndrome,” such as *representational disunity*, *access disunity*, and *phenomenal disunity*. It should be noted that Bayne’s analysis is firmly grounded in real-life clinical cases, does not extend to thought experiments or personal identity *across* time, and is intended to support the phenomenal unity thesis.



the price of downgrading the relation between experience-bearing items from strict numerical identity to “continuity with the right sort of cause.” This commitment to what we now call the *stage theory* of persistence is, at best, rather implicit in the earlier work on personal identity and fission, but it figures prominently in contemporary discussions.¹¹

The Puzzle is thereby eliminated – essentially by undercutting one of its presuppositions, the idea that the Friday as well as Saturday experiences belong to a single subject. The external question loses its force, because each external perspective now generates a single internal perspective (see Fig. 3).

But there is a cost: we are left with the picture of the “fragmented self” familiar from the earlier literature on fission and related matters. More needs be said about it. The main stumbling block to overcome is to spell out the exact relationship between *me* and *my stages*. A popular but wrong way of doing it is to say that I exist only on Saturday (more precisely, at some moment on Saturday) and *someone else* exists on Friday, and then let the chips fall where they may.¹² I am aware of the ideological pressures pushing one in this direction. They come from drawing close analogies with the modal case, but the outcome strikes me as deeply dissatisfying, for “someone else” has an equal claim to be *me*. This claim is much stronger in the temporal case than in the paradigm modal cases. I think we should begin by saying that there is a sense in which I am *all* my stages, but not “holus bolus”; perhaps I am all of them “severally but not jointly”; and *then* let the chips fall where they may¹³.

¹¹ See, in particular [Sider, 2001: 201–205].

¹² Cf. [Skow, 2011: 380ff].

¹³ “Not holus bolus” and “severally but not jointly” are of course metaphors that may or may not be useful in formulating a better version of the stage theory of the self. But at the very least, they are useful in pushing one away from another version of four-dimensionalism, *perdurantism*, on which there is a sense in which I *am* all my stages “holus bolus” or “jointly.” If that is the case then only a *part* of me viz. my Friday *temporal part* is in pain, and another part – my Saturday *temporal part* is enjoying pleasure. What then explains my belief that I (not a part of me) am enjoying the pleasure, rather than suffering from pain? This belief may be illusory, but the perdurantist is at a further disadvantage in dealing with it than the stage theorist. In one respect, the perdurantist’s predicament here is similar to the EEist’s predicament. The latter boils down to the need to explain why I (a single temporally *unextended* subject) am viewing the universe from the Saturday, rather than the Friday perspective, despite the fact that I (the self-same subject) am *wholly* present on both days. The perdurantist predicament boils down to the need to explain why I (a single temporally *extended* subject) am viewing the universe from the Saturday, rather than the Friday perspective, despite the fact that I (the same-self subject) am *partly* present on Friday, as well as Saturday. On both views, and in difference from the stage view, temporally-restricted experiences are had relationally or derivatively, not directly. One might say that the perdurantist still has an upper hand over the endurantist, because only the former can say that temporally-restricted experiences are had directly by *something*. Cf. Lewis’s response to Lowe [Lewis, 1988: 66]. But I agree with Skow [2011: 383] that I can be confident that pains and pleasures are had directly (and not relationally or derivatively) by something only in virtue of being confident that they are had directly by *me*. Although there is more to be said about the perdurantist option, I put it aside in the sequel and focus on the pros and cons of EE and the stage view.

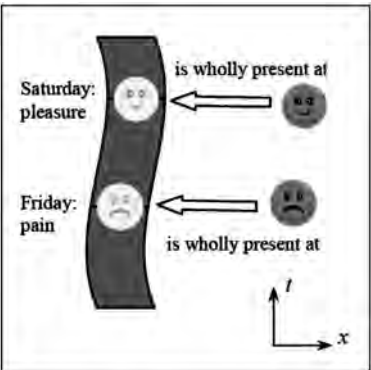
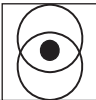


Fig. 3. Temporal experiences in stage theory

This cuts out more work. But it is good work; for it is needed to alleviate the above-noted tension inherent in saying that I find myself at night, having pain, and *also* find myself during the day, having pleasure. Ignoring this tension would give the emerging solution a flavor of triviality, while there is something strikingly non-trivial about the experience of time. At the end of the day, it seems trifling to be told that my Saturday stages have my Saturday experiences, and my Friday stages have my Friday experiences. But it is not trifling to be told that it is Saturday rather than Friday. I think this feeling is right. There is something non-trivial about the present experiences, and their non-triviality cannot be purchased at the price of something trifling. But there is something refreshingly non-trivial in the solution too: the insistence that I am *all* my stages – severally but not jointly, along with the claim that, in having my Saturday experiences, I am not aware of having my Friday experiences. I am not aware of them, and even of the very existence of my Friday stages, in the same sense in which Lefty (one of my fission descendants) may not be aware of the contemporaneous experiences, and even of the very existence, of Righty.

To sum up, the non-trivial part of the solution lies in rethinking the “I” part of the Puzzle, not the time part. And there seems to be no way around the Parfit road.¹⁴

3. External and Internal Questions

But the eternalist who is not enthusiastic about the stage view of persistence, or even about the need to take a stance on the issue of persistence

¹⁴ Developing a more satisfying stage-theoretic account of persons consistent with this line of thought will have to wait for another occasion. For some very preliminary stabs at it (see [Balashov, 2005: 304–306]).



when dealing with temporal experience, may have a totally different reaction to the Puzzle of the Experience of the Present (PEP). She may simply refuse to see any puzzle here. Recall that PEP boils down to the following:

The Puzzle of the Experience of the Present (PEP):

Why do I find myself at this particular time, with this particular set of experiences, *rather than* at numerous other times, with different experiences, despite the fact that all these times are on the same ontological footing and I am wholly present at all of them?

Specifically:

Q1: Why am I having pleasure rather than pain?

Q2: Why is it Saturday rather than Friday?

Here are some alternative answers to these questions:

A1.1: Because the massage had its effect.

A1.2: Because the neurons in my brain were caused to fire in a pleasure-instantiating way.

A2.1: Because the sun has already crossed the date line.

A2.2: Because my calendar shows Saturday (and my calendar is never in error).

These answers look sensible. But they suggest that the questions are entirely non-puzzling for EE. What is going on here?

As stated above, Q1 and Q2¹⁵ are ambiguous. They can be read as *external* questions, or as *internal* ones. External and internal questions are not different in their formulation; this is why they are so easily confused. They are different in terms of the background that stands behind them. The background for asking Q1 and Q2 in the external mode is the perspective of Fig. 1, while the background for asking the corresponding internal questions is the perspective of Fig. 2a or 2b. Perhaps one could say that an internal question is a question asked *from* a particular internal perspective (e.g. the Friday or the Saturday perspective), while a corresponding external question is about the *obtaining* of a certain internal perspective, as opposed to another such perspective.

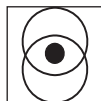
PEP turns on taking external questions seriously. The Objection, on behalf of EE, is that such questions should not be taken seriously.

Objection:

External questions should not be taken seriously because (i) they make no sense at all, or (ii) if they do make sense, it is only because they are confused with the corresponding internal questions.

The Objection formally presents a dilemma. But it is best viewed as a two-pronged strategy. The main plan is (ii), while (i) is a back-up plan that can be activated if (ii) is in danger. Responding to (ii) is, I believe, a necessary prerequisite to dealing with (i). But I also think that an adequate response to (ii) goes a long way towards disarming (i).

¹⁵And a host of other questions: Why am I hearing the bell strike six times? Why am I seeing strange looking clouds pass by? Why is it so hot? Why is the summer almost over?



I have seen and heard the Objection in many forms, in and out of print. They all seek to locate the confusion between the external and internal questions in some more obvious and familiar confusion or oversight; for example, in forgetting that the B-theory of time is committed to the semantical reduction of tense; in a confusion between the first- and third-person perspectives; in the inability to appreciate the full significance of indexicals; in a failure to cope with self-locating beliefs and attitudes *de se*; in overlooking the presence of unarticulated constituents in Q1 and Q2, and/or a failure to see the analogy between the PEP and the problem of temporary intrinsics. I will return to the latter in the next section. But instead of rehearsing the responses already given to some of the former,¹⁶ I want to illustrate a uniform strategy underlying such responses by applying it to a recent and particularly clear statement of the Objection due to Bradford Skow.

4. Discharging Explanatory Tasks

To recap, the Puzzle of the Experience of the Present (PEP) for EE arises from reading

Q1: Why am I having pleasure rather than pain?

Q2: Why is it Saturday rather than Friday?

as external questions. The response at this point is to refuse to do so and read them as internal questions instead. Here is a good way to put the refusal [Skow, 2011: 376]¹⁷:

I am having pleasure rather than pain because my pleasure occurs on Saturday and it is on Saturday that I lie on the massage table wondering about my current experiences. There is no more to my pleasure than its occurrence at the time I do the wondering.

But this provides only a temporary relief. For the same could be said about my pain:

I am having pain rather than pleasure because my pain occurs on Friday night, and it is on Friday night that I lie in my bed wondering about my pain.

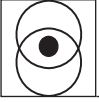
If this is the full story about my pain and pleasure then I am inclined to put my foot down and say that I want to know why I am having pleasure *and* wondering about it, rather than having pain *and* wondering about it. There are two episodes of wondering on Friday and Saturday, one of them painful the other pleasant. We still want to know what appears to break the parity between them in the EE perspective (Fig. 4):

Skow has suggested¹⁸ that something so far unaccounted for does break the parity: *this* episode of wondering occurs only on Saturday. But I submit

¹⁶ See [Balashov, 2005: §4].

¹⁷ I took the liberty to adapt Skow's statement to my case.

¹⁸ In personal communication.



that, rather than breaking the parity, a move to demonstratives or other devices of direct reference only enriches its content. *This* episode of wondering occurs only on Saturday. And *that* episode of wondering occurs only on Friday (Fig. 5).

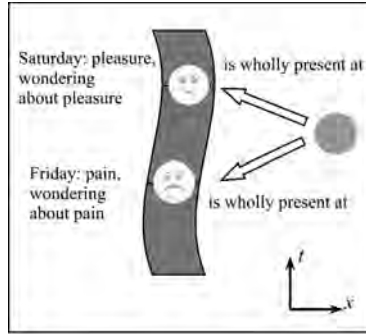


Fig. 4. Wondering about pain and pleasure in the EE universe

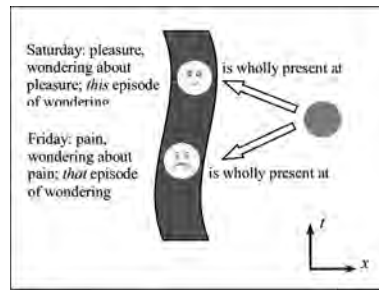
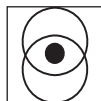


Fig. 5. Two episodes of wondering in the EE universe: *this* and *that*

What we want to know, however, is why *this*, and not *that* episode is *occurring*.

Recall that the Objection's plan A is to argue that putative external questions are in fact internal questions in disguise. That this is not so – that external questions are interestingly and importantly different from the corresponding internal questions – is already suggested by the drastic difference in the perspectives that stand behind them, those of Fig. 1 versus Figs. 2a and 2b. The above discussion shows that external questions tend to reemerge from scrutiny, sometimes becoming "thicker" as a result, and always distinct from the corresponding internal questions.

But perhaps this is just an appearance. Maybe what emerges and reemerges this way makes no sense at all. The Objection's plan B is to condemn external questions as by-products of misleading theoretical schemas that fail to represent anything real. Let us take another look at Figs. 1, 4 and 5. What do they represent? Not anyone's phenomenal perspective; those are represented by Figs. 2a and 2b. Then what? Specifically, what does the



empty face on the right represent? And what are the arrows connecting it to the smiling and sorrowful faces on the left?

All I can say in response is that Figs. 1, 4 and 5 are my best way to illustrate the metaphysical picture of endurance in the block-universe setting inspired, among other sources, by a famous description due to David Lewis [Lewis, 1988: 66–67]:

Imagine trying to draw a picture of two different times, t_1 when I sit and t_2 when I stand. You draw two circles, overlapping because I exist at both times so you want to draw me in the intersection ... as a mere dot or shapeless blob, draw a line labelled ‘bent-at’ from me to the t_1 circle and a line labelled ‘straight-at’ from me to the t_2 circle.

It should be clear that temporary experiences could be assimilated to temporary properties. To say that I have pain on Friday is just to say that I have a certain mental property on Friday.¹⁹ But instead of drawing times as overlapping and myself inside their common area (I cannot imagine how this could be done in my figures) I drew myself on the side and followed the custom of associating times with slices of four-dimensional volumes representing the paths of persisting objects in spacetime. And instead of labeling my arrows ‘pain-at’ and ‘pleasure-at’ I chose to assign them a more modest role of representing only the *multilocation* relation characteristic of EE, while placing the metaphysical burden of grounding pain and pleasure squarely on the relata. Nothing turns on this particular choice, and other semantical and metaphysical options are readily available.²⁰

This leaves the empty face on the right. Apparently, it cannot represent the phenomenal self in a way the filled faces on the left do. What does it represent then? Well, perhaps it represents a *metaphysical self*.²¹ After all, Fig. 1 is a metaphysical picture, and it is normal for metaphysical pictures to contain some metaphysical items.

Although I reject endurance, this picture makes *prima facie* sense to me. But this is a picture that stands behind external questions. They are sensible because they are explanatory. An external perspective is supposed to explain the origin of the internal perspectives from which I view the world. (In Figs. 2a and 2b this is illustrated by pushing the external perspective to the background and bringing the internal ones to the front.) Recall that there are two parts to this task: (i) explain why the internal perspective from which I view the world is a perspective of a single time, and not of many times at once; (ii) explain why the perspective from which I am viewing the

¹⁹ What else could it be? This entails no broader commitments. A mental property may be a physical property; or it may not.

²⁰ Time may be involved in modifying a *property* or an *experience* itself, or the *having* of them; and the latter may be understood as the modification of the *instantiation* relation, or of the *obtaining* of a certain general *state of affairs*. See [Haslanger, 2003] for a nearly complete review of the available options.

²¹ The term due to Kit Fine [Fine, 2005: 312ff] who uses it for a different, if not totally unrelated, purpose. The connection between what he does and what I do, however, is remote.



world is the internal perspective of a *particular* single time, *rather than* some other single time.

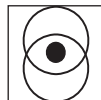
EE provides the resources to deal with (i): it is *because* I am wholly present on Saturday (in the external perspective) that I have my Saturday experiences (in an internal perspective); the same can be said about my Friday experiences. But EE has no resources to explain why I am viewing the world from *this* internal perspective *rather than* that one. All attempts to deflate questions of this sort fail because, given EE, my mode of existence in spacetime does not privilege any particular internal perspective. To wit, a single “I” gets associated with many “nows.” PEP results from a specific manner in which the personal perspective interacts with the temporal perspectives in the block universe with endurance: a single personal perspective appropriates many temporal perspectives indiscriminately.

I do not think the same sort of problem arises for objects that lack temporal experiences – pokers, candles, and so forth. For this reason, I do not think the “problem of temporary intrinsics” is a real problem for EE. Relations to times are special and do not deprive temporary intrinsics of their intrinsicality.²² And there is nothing odd in drawing a poker outside of time, connecting it with different times and treating all such connections on a par. But when it comes to me and my experiences I want to resist this way of drawing them – not because experiences could not, in principle, be at bottom relational,²³ but because standing in a one-many relation to all my experiences from different times cannot explain why I *believe* that I am having *this one*, to the exclusion of the rest, *rather than that one*, to the exclusion of the rest; and relatedly: why I am having the *illusory belief* that I am present exclusively on Saturday, *rather than the illusory belief* that I am present exclusively on Friday.

The origin and tenacity of this belief must be adequately and convincingly explained, but its claim to veracity needs, of course, to be undermined. This can be accomplished by eliminating the recurrence of a single term (i.e. *me*) from the experience-generating relations, thereby preserving full parity among what goes on, metaphysically, at different times. There is an unfortunate mismatch between the personal and temporal perspectives in EE: one’s perspective on the world is naturally associated with a particular self, but not with any particular time. There is, accordingly, a pressing need to make the temporal perspective as compartmentalized as the personal perspective already is. The stage view is uniquely fit to address such explanatory concerns.

²² Here I side with Hawley [Hawley, 2001: §1.4], Haslender [Haslanger, 2003], and others.

²³ To say that *S*’s temporal experience *E* is “at bottom relational” is to say *E*’s metaphysical status is adequately characterized by the description ‘*S* has *E* at *t*’ requiring a place holder for time, in order to be “saturated.” This could be embellished in various ways; but the crucial idea is that the description involves a three place predicate, perhaps a complicated one.



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