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**It's a Jungle Out There: Presentism, Surrogate Entities,
and Meinongian Ontology**

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Abstract

Suppose that presentism accepts: (1) that only present objects exist; (2) that truth supervenes on being; and (3) that there are true propositions about the past. If past objects do not exist and truth supervenes on being, then no truth-maker exists to make a past-tense proposition true. There seems to be no way for the presentist to accept all three claims. Call this the ‘central problem’. In response to the central problem, some presentists have recommended that presently existing surrogate entities, such as Lucretian properties or thisnesses, stand in place for the missing truth-makers. Thus, a past-tense proposition has as its truth-maker a presently existing surrogate. This resolves the central problem for the presentist because surrogates will act as the truth-maker of past-tense propositions and will exclude any reference to past non-existent entities. Whilst I do not want to challenge the introduction of surrogate entities into the presentist’s universe, I would like to consider a consequence such an introduction has on the presentist’s ontology. If the presentist admits surrogate entities into their ontology, then they are ontologically committed to something that stands in place for non-existent wholly past objects; something that populates an alternative mode of being. Moreover, I show how problematic it is for the presentist to conflate once-actual objects, such as Julius Caesar, with never-actual objects, such as unicorns, and, thereby, force the presentist to admit non-existent objects into their ontology by distinguishing between the modes of nonbeing that these different kinds of objects occupy. To maintain a commitment to (1)-(3), the presentist must be prepared to accept a bloated Meinongian ontology, a consequence that they may find very unpalatable.

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Chapter 1. Motivation

Introduction

There are two main theories of time, *presentism* and *eternalism*, as well as a lesser known third rival, *the growing block view*. Presentism, roughly stated, is the view that ‘only present things exist’. One prominent defender of presentism, Dean Zimmerman (1996) says that:

Presentists hold that the only things that really exist are those that exist now, at the present moment....¹

In contrast, eternalism is the view that ‘past, present and future things exist’ and the growing block view states that ‘past and present things exist but future things do not’.² In this thesis, I analyse presentism and show that presentism entails a commitment to a Meinongian ontology. The presentist’s denial of the existence of non-present things generates the ‘central problem’ of presentism, an apparent lack of truth-makers for past-tense propositions. In chapters two and three I outline the theory of presentism and explain how some presentists respond to the central problem by introducing abstract ‘surrogate entities’. In chapter four I argue that the solutions to the central problem discussed in chapter three, surrogate entities, do not resolve the concerns outlined and that even deeper ontological consequences follow. In chapter five I provide an introduction to Meinongian theory and draw comparisons between this theory and surrogate entities presentism.³ Finally, in chapter six I argue that presentism is not as parsimonious as it has been made out

¹ Dean Zimmerman, “Persistence and Presentism.” *Philosophical Papers*, 25, no. 2 (1996): 115.

² I will briefly mention eternalism and the growing block view throughout this thesis, but only insofar as it serves the purpose of clarifying certain aspects of presentism. For discussions of Eternalism see: D. H. Mellor, *Real Time Ii*. (Routledge, 1998) and Theodore Sider, *Four Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. (Oxford University Press, 2001). For discussions of the Growing Block view see: C. D. Broad, *Scientific Thought*. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1923) and Michael Tooley, *Time, Tense, and Causation*. (Oxford University Press, 1997).

³ In this thesis I will distinguish between ‘presentism’, ‘surrogate entities presentism’ and ‘Meinongian presentism’. Detailed explanation of these theories follows in chapters two, three and five.

to be and that presentists need to be more honest about their ontological commitments. In chapter one, I now turn to a discussion that will motivate the central problem and introduce the important ontological considerations at the heart of the debate.

No truth-makers

A family of well-known problems has been a plague to presentism. These problems arise from a demand for truth-makers in the face of the presentist's denial of the existence of *wholly past objects*, objects which once existed but which do not exist at the present time. I call the problem that is generated by the presentist's denial of the existence of wholly past objects the *central problem* of presentism.

The central problem arises due to the presentist's inability to appeal to truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects. For example, when the presentist asserts that Julius Caesar does not exist, it is not clear what the truth-making referent for a proposition about 'Julius Caesar' could be because the presentist says that Julius Caesar does not exist so he cannot be the truth-maker of the proposition. And, it's not clear what other presently existing objects could perform the role.

As such, one might wonder what makes a past tense proposition, such as <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>, true given that the presentist claims that wholly past objects such as 'Caesar' and 'the Rubicon', or the fact that 'Caesar's crossing the Rubicon', do not exist. A consequence of presentism is that it appears as though there exist no truth-makers for truth-bearers which include as one of their constituents wholly past objects.

The *truth-maker objection* is motivated by the intuition that the truth of a proposition depends upon the content of the world; specifically, objects or states of affairs in the world should play a determining role in the truth-value of a proposition

(a truth-bearer). So it is that the truth-maker maximalist says ‘for every truth-bearer there is (exists) a truth-maker’.⁴ David Lewis states the truth-maker principle thus:

For any proposition P and any world W , if P is true in W , there exists something T in world W such that T 's existence strictly implies P .⁵ (TM)

Overall, this is a restrictive principle. For any proposition to be true, there must *exist* something that necessarily makes it so. Take the proposition, P : <Grass is green>. If P is true in some world W , there must exist something T (a truth-maker) that makes P true. Alternatively, if there is no T in W , then P is not true.⁶ But this claim may face objections.⁷

One objection to the strong formulation of the truth-maker principle is that it fails to account for negative existential sentences, such as “unicorns do not exist”.⁸ If one takes this sentence to express a true proposition, the principle has failed because nothing *exists* in the world to ‘make’ the sentence true, namely unicorns. Yet, giving away the principle altogether may not be desirable either. The truth-maker principle is at the base of our understanding of the relation between language, truth and the correct perception and reporting of an objective reality. If the truth of a proposition is not dependent on *being*, i.e. the way the world is, then one’s perception of that ‘truth’ might be independent from the way the world is. Put another way, if truth does not supervene on being then the things one takes to be ‘true’ might not accurately match with an objective reality at all. As such, the cost of rejecting this principle seems too high a price to pay. Despite the problems that arise from the strong truth-maker principle, presentists generally aim to adhere to some version of it given their desire to retain a connection between ‘truth’ and the way the world is.

⁴ For a discussion of various renditions of the truth-maker principle see: David Lewis, “Truthmaking and difference-making.” *Noûs*, 35, no. 4, (2001): 602–615.

⁵ Lewis, “Truthmaking and difference-making,” 605.

⁶ For a discussion of the strong truth-maker principle see: D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*. (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷ A discussion of this is beyond the scope of my thesis but it is worth noting that there are objections, for example, the truth-maker monists’ objection that any object would be a truth-maker for any necessary truth.

⁸ For a further discussion of this complaint see: Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, 36.

Another defender of presentism, John Bigelow (1988), offers an alternative version of the principle. It is called the *supervenience*⁹ or *grounding principle*.¹⁰ Bigelow states the principle thus:

There is a deep assumption behind much of our thought, that every truth (or at least, every simple truth about how one thing is related to another) requires a truthmaker: whenever something is true (or at least, every simple truth about how one thing is related to another), there must exist some thing or things in the world in virtue of which this is true. As I prefer to put it in general: truth supervenes on being-there could not be a difference in what is true unless there were a difference in what exists.¹¹

And Sider (2001) summarises it:

[T]ruth is supervenient on being: what is true supervenes on what objects exist, what properties those objects have, and what relations they stand in. [TSB] [...] The supervenience principle does not require the existence of a fact that there are no unicorns; it merely requires that since ‘there are no unicorns’ is true in the actual world, it must also be true in any world in which the same objects exist, those objects instantiate the same properties, and those objects stand in the same relations as they do in the actual world.’¹²

David Lewis calls the supervenience principle “a weakened version of the Truthmaker Principle.”¹³ The supervenience principle is claimed to avoid the contradiction that arises out of the apparent requirement for there to be unicorns for the sentence ‘unicorns do not exist’ to be true - which of course it would not be if

⁹ Theodore Sider explains ‘supervenience’ in the following manner: “On the most common supervenience terminology, supervenience applies to sets of properties (or predicates) not sentences (or propositions).” See Theodore Sider, “Presentism and Ontological Commitments.” *Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 7 (1999): 332.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the grounding principle see: John Bigelow, *The Reality of Numbers: A Physicalist's Philosophy of Mathematics*. (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1988), 130 - 133.

¹¹ John Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties.” *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 (Metaphysics) (1996): 38

¹² Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*. 36.

¹³ Lewis, “Truthmaking and difference-making.” 610.

there were unicorns. This weakened version of the truth-maker principle does not require that there exists a truth-maker for every truth. The supervenience principle only requires that what is true is supervenient on the things in the world and the properties and relations expressed by those things. On this account the absence of unicorns in the world is sufficient to 'make' true the proposition that 'unicorns do not exist'.

When one says that x supervenes on y , one is making a claim about the relation between x and y . Any change in y will amount to a change in x , or any change in x will be resultant from a change in y . As such, to say that 'truth supervenes on being' is just to say that the truth x of a matter is related to something (*being*) y in the world in a way such that a change in y will result in a change in the truth value. In other words, x depends upon y . On this account the truth that there are no unicorns (x) supervenes on the world, y , because y contains no instantiations of unicorns. Nevertheless, even if the supervenience principle does not require there to be unicorns for 'unicorns do not exist' to be true, it is not immediately apparent what the truth-makers for propositions about wholly past objects could be. For example the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> still appears to lack truth-makers and the solution to the problem of negative existential sentences is of no use in this case. So, whether one adopts the strong truth-maker principle, truth-maker maximalism, or the weakened version of the principle, the supervenience principle, the problem that arises for the presentist is the same.

A common way to view truth is that it is directly related to objects in the world. This is not the same as merely saying that truth accurately reflects the way the world is. According to the latter approach a truthful proposition might match with the way the world is but still lack a rigid relation to the objects in the world that a given truth is about. The *supervenience principle* stipulates that truth doesn't *just* reflect the way the world is; truth is directly related to the things in the world via a rigid ontological relation between a truth-bearer and a truth-maker. This should be distinguished from something like a causal relation, which is not what truth-maker theorists have in mind.

According to Bigelow, it is not some fact of grass being green that makes it true. Rather, it is true that grass is green because it could not be another way in this world, due to the way the world is. For example, the present tense proposition <Grass is green> is true because this world is the kind of world that has grass and the grass is green. The truth of the proposition supervenes on there *being* green grass. If one were to investigate the world and there was no *grass* to be found, or the grass turned out to be blue, then the present tense reading of the proposition ‘grass is green’ would be false; or on the de-tensed reading it would be true because something about the present state of the world, other than grass, grounds the truth. However for the presentist to satisfy the requirement set out by the supervenience principle it must be shown that there is some kind of presently existing object - or *being* - available in the world upon which to ground the truth.

TSB might seem like an intuitive position. But, as soon as one couples TSB with the presentist’s intuition that ‘the only things that really exist are the things that exist now’, many of the truth-makers one thought they could rely on to make their propositions true appear to be unavailable. When one considers a past tense proposition that includes as one of its constituents a wholly past object, it is not so obvious how TSB functions in the truth-making analysis. For example, when one quantifies over ‘Caesar’, it is natural to assume that ‘Caesar’ refers to the actual *Caesar*. Yet presentists claim that *Caesar* does not exist. A consequence of this is that *Caesar* cannot be the truth-maker for the constituent ‘Caesar’. Furthermore, there are no *obvious* presently existing objects to fulfil this role. As a result it seems as though there exists no truth-makers for propositions containing as one of their constituents wholly past objects.

Truth-bearers are considered an essential component in any truth-making analysis. If truth-makers ‘make’ something true, then truth-bearers are the ‘something’ that is made true. For example, if the ‘grass is green’, then the truth-bearer to be ‘made’ true is the proposition <grass is green>. I take *propositions* as the paradigmatic example of truth-bearers and these are the only truth-bearers I shall discuss in this thesis.

Throughout this thesis, when I refer to ‘truth-making’, I have TSB in mind, not the strict formulation of TM, unless stated otherwise. The supervenience principle establishes the ontological ground that presentism must identify. The challenge it generates for presentism is the *grounding objection*: some propositions, for example those propositions about wholly past objects, lack the ontological ground required to make them true. One might wonder for example, what existent object or state of affairs could ground truths about ‘Caesar’. This is not quite the same problem as the truth-maker objection generated by the strict truth-maker principle. The objection generated by strict TM requires that there exists an object (i.e. a positive state of affairs) to make a truth-bearer true. So the proposition <Unicorns do not exist> cannot be true, because there exists no positive state of affairs consisting of a unicorn and therefore there is no truth-maker for the constituent ‘unicorns’, just as there is no truth-maker for a proposition about a wholly past object. The grounding objection makes a similar complaint but in light of the supervenience principle the truth-makers that are required as the ontological ‘ground’ can consist of a negative state of affairs. For example, the proposition <Unicorns do not exist> is made true in virtue of the negative state of affairs that there are no unicorns. This solution might work for negative existential statements but the grounding objection states that there is still a lack of ontological ground to make true propositions about wholly past objects, which like unicorns do not exist. However, unlike unicorns, wholly past objects did exist. So, it would seem there must be some kind of positive state of affairs to make propositions about them true. But, there appears to be nothing in the present that acts as the ontological ground for propositions about wholly past objects.

Presently existing truth-makers

The main problem that the presentist faces results from an inconsistent triad: the presentist thesis, the truth-maker thesis, and the view that we may speak truly of events that occurred in the past.¹⁴ The presentist’s denial of the existence of wholly past objects means that whatever truth-makers the presentist appeals to must

¹⁴ For another presentation of this inconsistent triad see: Simon Keller, “Presentism and truthmaking.” In *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Vol. 1*, edited by Dean Zimmerman, 83-104. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 85-89.

be located in the present. Therefore, presentists face a challenge when they speak of wholly past objects. If the presentist is to uphold the supervenience principle, the presentist must identify some other present object upon which the truth of a past-tensed proposition, such as <dinosaurs roamed the plains>, supervenes since there are no longer any dinosaurs left in the world. If an object-surrogate cannot be located, then there are only three possibilities: It is either the case that ‘dinosaurs roamed the plains’ is false, that the sentence is not truth-evaluative, or it is the case that truth does not supervene on being. In the last case, the presentist must reject TSB. So, in order to retain TSB and still account for statements about wholly past objects the presentist must postulate some other surrogate object that stands in as the truth-maker for the proposition ‘dinosaurs roamed the plains’. And so, the question that arises for the presentist is what kinds of presently existing objects are the referents of true proposition’s constituents for propositions about wholly past objects? Or put another way, which present objects are the ground upon which truth supervenes? An adequate answer to this question would resolve the problems of reference that the presentist faces.

The solutions to the central problem that have been submitted generally appeal to some kind of presently existing *abstracta*, also called *surrogate entities*, to act as the truth-makers. In chapter three, I will introduce two versions of presentism which adopt this approach, *Lucretianism* and *Thisness presentism*, as espoused by John Bigelow and David Ingram, respectively. At face value, these formulations of presentism appear to resolve the central problem of presentism. However, I argue that a logical consequence of these two approaches that adopt surrogate entities to contravene the central problem of presentism imply a far more diverse and complex ontological landscape than to which presentists should be willingly ontologically committed.

Thus far I have introduced the central problem of presentism, no truth-makers, and introduced the surrogate entities style of solution that presentists have put forward. I now turn my attention to an overview of how the presentist conceives of existent and non-existent objects. I commence this overview via a discussion of *actuality* and *possibility*. Following from this I will explain what the presentist has in mind when they say an object ‘exists’. Once these parameters are set out I briefly

present two alternative conceptions of ‘reality’. One conception is that taken by the presentist and the alternative draws out the problem the presentist faces with the conception that they submit. With the presentist’s view of reality established I will turn to an analysis of the objects that the presentist denies are part of reality, non-existent objects. As will be shown, the presentist’s exclusion of wholly past objects from her picture of reality generates deep ontological problems.

Actual worlds

The presentist’s claim that ‘only present things exist’ is often explained in terms of only present things being *real* or *actual*, so it is worth mentioning that *actuality* presents a problem for the presentist. The claim is straightforward: something that is actual is a part of this world.¹⁵ Therefore, non-present things, even wholly past objects, cannot be said to be actual. This means that many of the once-actual things, e.g., dinosaurs, which were a part of this world are excluded by the presentist’s claim that only present things exist. Once-actual things are not a part of some other world and they are not *impossibilia*, yet the presentist has to say that they are not actual.

By ‘actual’, I mean to follow the Lewisian sense. That is, Lewis’ ‘*indexical analysis*’ of *actuality* which states that something we call ‘actual’ is actual if it is a part of the world.¹⁶ It is a referent term, in the sense of ‘here’ and ‘now’. Therefore, we can say that when the term ‘actual’ is uttered in another world, it refers to that world. For the presentist only present objects are *actual*. He says that all the past and future objects do not exist, therefore they are not part of this world (i.e., presently) and so we cannot call them ‘actual’.

The eternalist, on the other hand, considers all past and future objects to be ‘actual’ just as all the present objects are actual. He thinks that if dinosaurs existed at some past time, then their status as existent is fixed; dinosaurs always exist at that past time. Therefore, he concludes that dinosaurs are actually a part of the

¹⁵ Lewis himself favours temporal part theory and the perdurance of objects. As such, presentism would seem incompatible with his thesis of *actuality*. Nevertheless, his definition can still be applied within the theory of presentism, so long as only present things are taken as actual.

¹⁶ David Lewis, “Anselm and Actuality.” *Nous* 4, no. 2. (1970): 184-5.

world. As a consequence, the eternalist should be inclined to say that dinosaurs are actual and the presentist should be inclined to say that dinosaurs are not *actual*; they are not a part of this world, even if they *were* a part of this world. So, the presentist thinks that dinosaurs and all the wholly past objects are not a part of this world. This seems like an unusual assertion to make, since, even if dinosaurs are not presently existing now, the average person on the street thinks that dinosaurs are a part of this world.

Possible worlds

Now, take *possible worlds* and consider what *possibility* is. ‘Possibility’ includes the way things are (actuality) as well as the way things *might be* if they were not the way they are (merely possible).¹⁷ Setting aside actuality for the time being consider mere possibility. It might have been the case that Napoleon won the Battle of Waterloo had the Prussian army not supported the British. As it was, the Prussians did support the British and Napoleon was defeated. When one recalls this outcome, one recalls what was actual; the way the world was, or the way the world *is* if you are an eternalist. When we consider merely possible worlds, we think counterfactually: what might have been the case had things been otherwise. A statement is true if it accurately reports what is the case in this world and false if it does not. So, if we are going to grant counterfactual statements a truth value, we must intend there to be a fact of the matter about the possibilities discussed. When I consider the Prussians not supporting the British, and the subsequent defeat the British might have suffered, I am thinking of *something*. Such thinking is a positive endeavour. It is something, and more specifically, a possible world, in which this something takes place that I am thinking of. I cannot suppose that Napoleon won the battle, without supposing some other world in which such a scenario took place. It is a mistake to say that I am thinking of this world, just with a different set of events having taken place. Such a mistake only serves to highlight my point. What else is talk of some alternative set of events than talk of some other merely possible world, or perhaps an impossible world? Whether one takes such worlds to be

¹⁷ This is a somewhat controversial claim due to the various interpretations of ‘possible worlds’ that are taken. There are different ways of looking at possible worlds. I provide only this basic explanation for the purposes of my thesis. For further discussion of different views see: John Divers, *Possible Worlds*. (London: Routledge, 2002).

modally real or otherwise, when one refers to a merely possible or impossible world he is not referring to the way the actual world is. Given that the presentist says that wholly past objects are not part of the actual world, he must mean that they are part of some other merely possible world.

In the above sub-section, I have not attempted to provide a definitive explication of possible worlds. It should be enough, for the purposes of my thesis, that there is a distinction between the *actual* world and merely possible worlds. The basic distinction being that the *actual* world is our world and the other worlds are not. The presentist's thesis does not allow for the existence of things that are not present. Therefore, via his assertion that wholly past objects are not actual, he overtly implies that they are either merely possible or impossible. But, wholly past objects are distinct from the objects that we ordinarily think of as merely possible and impossible. Here's another way to frame up the problem. If one considers that the *actual* world is a *possible* world, then the presentist thinks that there are possible worlds which have been actual, one that is actual (i.e., the present) and others that will be actual. So, it is the case that a wholly past world was once the actual world. On the other hand, there are possible worlds that have never been and never will be actual. One consequence of presentism is that once-actual worlds (i.e. wholly past worlds) are non-existent, just as merely possible worlds are. They are assigned to the same ontological and modal categories. And, this conflation is cause for concern because it suggests that the objects that we ordinarily assume to be truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects are just like merely non-existent things. This conflation informs the analysis of the central problem because it shows what kinds of objects the presentist might be committed to. If it turns out that the truth-makers are in fact the wholly past objects that we ordinarily assume they are then the central problem is resolved but further concerns about the nature of these non-existent objects arise.

In formulating a discussion about the kinds of objects to which the presentist refers, a critical consideration that comes up regards the term 'exist'. It seems that there is some confusion around the meaning of the term. To clarify what the presentist means when they say of an object that it 'exists' it is instructive to consider an objection that has been commonly discussed, the so-called *triviality*

objection. This objection claims that presentists and eternalists mean different things when they use the term and so there is no genuine dispute. I introduce the objection and argue that despite the conclusion it reaches it is simple to show that there is a genuine dispute. By showing that there is a genuine dispute one can see that the objects that are available for the presentist to appeal to are distinct from the objects that are available for the eternalist to appeal to. Importantly, I show that wholly past objects really are non-existent on the presentist's account and so the problem is not merely a semantic dispute.

The term 'exists' and the triviality objection

Given that presentism is an ontological thesis which makes a claim about 'what exists', much attention has been given in the literature to the term 'exists'. Presentists claim that only present things exist and eternalists claim that past, present and future things exist. On one account, there is no genuine dispute between presentists and eternalists. This argument is premised on the belief that the term 'exists' can be read in two ways. It can be read as tensed, in the sense of 'exists now', or as tenseless, in the sense of 'has existed, exists now or will exist'. This issue is often framed up as *the triviality objection*.¹⁸ The objection concludes that if presentism is the thesis that 'only present things exist', on the tensed reading of 'exists', presentism is trivially true. Of course, only present things exist *now*. On the tenseless reading, presentism is obviously false. It is not the case that everything that *has existed* or *will exist* is present. Obviously, there have been past things that do not presently exist, just as there will be future things that do not presently exist. Ulrich Meyer (2005) says of this dilemma:

On one reading it is trivial and on the other obviously false, but there is no reading on which it expresses a substantial metaphysical truth.¹⁹

¹⁸ For a thorough presentation of this problem see: Ulrich Meyer, "The Presentist's Dilemma," *Philosophical Studies*, 122, no. 3 (2005): 213-225, and, Dean Zimmerman, "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism", in P. van Inwagen and D. Zimmerman (eds.), *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, Oxford: Blackwell. (1998): 209; and Daniel Deasy, "What is Presentism?" *Noûs*, 51, (2017): 380-381.

¹⁹ Ulrich Meyer. "The Presentist's Dilemma." 213.

The presentist cannot adopt the tenseless reading of the term ‘exists’ because this leads to a false conclusion. So, the presentist must adopt the tensed reading. On the tensed reading, everyone agrees that only present things exist *now*. And, this is not a particularly interesting or controversial claim. And so, the triviality objection purportedly shows that there is no genuine dispute between the presentist and eternalist.

Even transliteration of propositions into formal logic does not seem to resolve the issue. Ned Markosian has said that all the objects that exist are all the objects ‘that our most unrestricted quantifiers range over’.²⁰ When one constructs a logical formulation his (existential) quantifier establishes the range for the total set of things that should be included. Anything captured within the range exists and anything outside of the range does not. However, it’s not clear there is agreement on how to read ‘unrestricted’. On one account the most unrestricted quantificational range includes past, present and future objects. However, the presentists intends another reading and says that the range only includes present objects. The consequence is that on the presentist’s reading of ‘unrestricted’ the quantificational range includes only present objects. Yet, on another reading it includes non-present objects. As such, the two sides risk talking past each other about the range of the unrestricted quantifier.

Another issue that arises in formal logical constructions of a presentist world concerns the problem of statements using tense operators. These operators allow for quantification over non-present objects. For example, take a specific dinosaur. Consider ‘Nelly, the biggest elasmotherium that ever lived’ (*E*). Quantifying unrestrictedly²¹ the eternalist says of that elasmotherium:

$\exists x (Ex)$

There is an *x* such that *x* is Nelly, the biggest elasmotherium that ever lived.

(There is an *E*.)

²⁰ Ned Markosian. “A Defense of Presentism.” In *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Vol. 1*, edited by. Dean Zimmerman, 47-82. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 47.

²¹ I take unrestricted quantification to be limited to this world.

The presentists doesn't accept that elasmotherium exist, because there are none that presently exist. She does accept that it was previously the case that they existed. Thus, the presentist thinks that the following is true:

$P\exists x (Ex)$.

It was the case that... there is an x such that x is Nelly, the biggest elasmotherium that ever lived. (P... There is an E.)

The ontological implications of this rendering are vague. The presentist who accepts unrestricted quantification appears to allow for quantification over wholly past objects. But this raises the ontological concern that presentists would then have to accept the existence of past objects. The presentist gets around the ontological commitment to wholly past objects. For the presentist, there exists something in the present (the referent of x) which expresses the truth that it was the case that ($P\exists x$) Nelly, the biggest elasmotherium (E) exists. So, adopting this approach is to adopt the abstract expression of primitive past tense into one's ontology. On the one hand, it is not clear what the referent of the variable x should be. On the other hand, it is not clear how primitive past tense would be expressed by x . As such, although tense operators may appear to resolve some logical concerns within presentism, they do not satisfy the ontological concerns.

Those who have argued for the triviality objection against presentism seem to have missed the point that the presentist and eternalist appreciate that the other has a different quantificational range in mind when they apply the term 'exists'. This appreciation is what generates the dispute in the first place. When the presentist says that 'only present things exist now', the implication is that now is the only time at all. The eternalist disagrees with the implication that now is the only time. As such, I say that there is a genuine disagreement. Rehearsing this objection and outlining the disagreement between the presentist and eternalist explains what the presentist has in mind when they use the term 'exists'.

Instantiation

The disagreement over what exists is about what is instantiated in the world. Consider the question ‘do dinosaurs exist?’ If one respondent adopts the tensed reading of ‘exists’, dinosaurs do not exist. If another respondent adopts the tenseless reading of ‘exists’, dinosaurs do exist. The eternalist has the tenseless reading in mind. The eternalist proposes that existent objects includes past, present and future objects. The presentist has the tensed reading in mind. When the presentist posits existent objects, this only includes present objects because they presume that past and future objects do not exist. So both sides take the term ‘exist’ to involve a different temporal range and this will influence the answer they submit to the question ‘do dinosaurs exist?’ It will be more useful to frame the question in a way that does not involve an imprecise term. I propose that they should ask the parallel question ‘are dinosaurs instantiated in the world?’. This question seeks to establish the scope of one’s ontological commitments. The eternalist’s ontological landscape includes past, present, and future things, so dinosaurs ought to be included among those things that are instantiated. The presentist’s ontological landscape, however, only includes present things, so, since there are no presently instantiated dinosaurs, they should not be included in any ontological inventory.

At this point, I must raise a concern about the term ‘instantiation’. Some will think that an object need not be instantiated in order for it to exist. These are the *abstracta* that exist in addition to *concreta*; and these two modes of being consist of all the objects that the presentist admits exist. For example, if a mathematical object is thought of as an *ideal object*, something non-physical that exists, it could be taken that this object is not instantiated, i.e., because there is no physical presentation of the object. I reject this account. I take it that every object that is part of this world must in some sense be instantiated, even though this instantiation may not be physical. I say that an object that is a part of the world is instantiated. Even though a non-physical object lacks the properties of *concreta*, it is still instantiated as *abstracta*. If an abstract object is not instantiated, then there is no point when it can come into the world. If one takes the view that merely abstract objects are not instantiated (i.e., as *abstracta*) then there is nothing to set them apart from the never-existent objects that we refer to, which never instantiate.

It is plain to see that there is a genuine disagreement about ontological commitment between the presentist and the eternalist. The disagreement is generated via this question: What objects are instantiated in the world? This question is more straightforward, because there are no temporal presuppositions built into it. There will certainly be temporal presuppositions built into any answer. And, such presuppositions are what motivate the genuine dispute.

For the purposes of this thesis, the answer sought in response to the question ‘does x exist?’ should be read as equivalent to the answer sought in response to the question ‘is x instantiated?’ Despite the puzzle the triviality objection generates, the presentist and eternalist can avoid the issue by considering the question in terms of instantiation. The presentist believes that there are only present objects, so only present objects can possibly be instantiated. The eternalist, however, believes that there are past, present and future objects. Thus, for the eternalist, objects are instantiated at past, present and future times. The presentist and eternalist both understand the question, ‘what is instantiated?’. They both appreciate that each theorist will assume a different range for their existential quantifier when answering the question. They both appreciate that the other will only take objects within the range of the quantifier to be instantiated.

The preceding discussion has provided an explanation of what it is for an object to exist or not exist on the presentist’s account. With this explanation in mind I now turn to a discussion that outlines the view of reality that the presentist conceives of. The presentist takes reality to consist of only present objects. I contrast the presentist’s view of reality with an alternative view that may be taken according to which objects that have been present or will be present are considered to be part of reality just as present objects are. This discussion will inform the reader about possible problems the presentist faces when conceiving of reality the way they do. If presentism is the intuitive view then one should suppose that the presentist’s view of reality is also the intuitive one. Furthermore, if presentists are correct in the view of reality that they submit then their view must adequately account for all of the things that one takes to be ‘real’.

Reality

‘Reality’ is that term attached to things that are included in the actual world. As such, on the presentist’s account reality includes only existent things and on the eternalist’s account it includes past and future things also. In short, they view reality differently. To resolve this disparity, I propose a different interpretation of the term ‘real’. If ‘actual’ tells us which world we are referring to, namely the possible world that we inhabit, then ‘real’ tells us whether the thing being referred to is or has been, an object that exists. That is, things which at some time are *actual*. One reading of the term ‘real’ is that it is synonymous with the term ‘exists’. On this reading, something that is real exists, and vice versa. But this definition provides us with no more tools for our analysis than the term ‘exists’ does. Hence, my interpretation of ‘reality’ is useful to distinguish between objects that have been, are or will be a part of this world at some time and those that never will be a part of this world.

When there is an instantiation of some object at some time, *t*, in the actual world, we call such an object ‘real’. In common everyday speech, we do not restrict the meaning of the term to temporal presence. It seems that our everyday speech is temporally unrestricted with regard to reality. Instead, we usually intend the term to distinguish once-existent objects (objects that did, do or will exist) from never-existent objects. Nevertheless, on a formal interpretation the presentist rejects such unrestricted quantification. The presentist’s interpretation of the term ‘real’, as with his present-tense interpretation of ‘exists’, only picks out present objects, those objects temporally restricted to the present. The presentist need not be offended by the definition of ‘real’ that I have proposed. It is not intended to force the presentist to admit anything about the ontological status of non-present objects that is not already acceptable. The presentist need only accept that the existence of such objects *was, is, or, will be* the case for my interpretation to be acceptable. Call the term depicting my interpretation ‘real²’.

Considering the various interpretations of ‘real’ that may be taken it is instructive to provide an overview of how the presentist and eternalist have conceived of ‘real’. If there is no instantiation of some object in the world at any time, we say it is not real. On my proposed interpretation, the presentist would say

that elasmotherium are real², but that they do not exist. Something may be real² but not actual, but it cannot be actual and not real². The presentist would say of this thing that it does not exist. For the eternalist, whatever is real is obviously real². The terms ‘exist’, ‘actual’ and ‘real’ are synonymous on the presentist’s usage, but the term ‘real²’ is distinct. Whereas for the eternalist, the ontological implication of all four terms is equivalent. Therefore, my wide definition of ‘real’ differs from the narrower definition commonly employed by presentists. On the narrow reading, it is common for presentists to use ‘real’ synonymously with ‘exists’. I differentiate ‘real’ and ‘real²’ in order to more clearly distinguish between once-existent objects and never-existent objects. My definition serves the purpose of allowing the presentist and eternalist to identify (and agree) whether some object has been, is, or will be part of this world without falling into the debate about whether past objects exist. The presentist commonly refers to wholly past objects as ‘real’ when on his own assessment such objects do not exist and therefore should not be called ‘real’. He may say that ‘all the observable stars in the sky are real’, when in fact many of them no longer exist. On the narrow definition of ‘real’, this proposition is false. On the narrow definition the presentist must say that such objects are not real, i.e., even if they *were* real they are not presently real. My intention in providing this broader definition is simply to make discussion of these opposing worldviews easier and clearer.

Presentists have claimed that presentism delivers a parsimonious view of reality because they say that only present objects exist. Nevertheless, the presentist appears to refer to non-existent objects all the time. Many of these non-existent objects were once a part of reality. As such, presentists must provide an explanation about the non-existent objects that they refer to. Usually presentists will say that there are no non-existent objects to provide an explanation about. In what follows I will outline distinctions that can be drawn between different kinds of objects that the presentist refers to that she says are non-existent. This discussion will set the scene to motivate the deeper problems that I argue presentists face in virtue of their treatment of non-existent objects.

Non-existent objects

When we consider a range of non-existent objects, we find that they're not all on a par. Consider the dinosaur, elasmotherium, again. Elasmotherium were *actual* millions of years ago. They are real² objects that the presentist deems non-existent. So, at some past time, *t*, the proposition 'elasmotherium exist' was true. Indeed, we have a science devoted to investigating such creatures: palaeontology. Now consider the unicorn. Unicorns are not, and were never, *actual*, and we say 'unicorns do not exist' and 'unicorns never did exist'. These propositions are true. It is the case that unicorns do not and never have existed. Let us say that they do not exist, *simpliciter*.

Now we have an unusual quandary. Should we speak of unicorns and dinosaurs in the same way? It is true that neither one of their species *currently* exist, and this opens the door to thinking we might want to treat them equally. By the lights of his own thesis the presentist does ontologically conflate these kinds of objects. Yet curiously, we don't have a special science, crypto-palaeontology, tasked with investigating the mythical non-existent species of unicorn. Though, we do have palaeontologists speculating on the function of the elasmotherium horn. If we choose to place elasmotherium and unicorns in the same ontological category, what good reason do we have for investigating the one and not the other? They are said to be the same kind of thing after all, ontological equals. They are both non-existent. It would seem that by investigating dinosaurs we are doing the same thing we would be doing if we were investigating unicorns; asking questions about things which do not exist. Why is it sensible to discuss the function of an elasmotherium horn but not a unicorn's?

"Fossils!" the presentist might counter: "Fossils exist and this provides reason enough to research the one and not the other." And I agree. Fossils do exist and this provides strong justification for researching dinosaurs but not unicorns. But, what are fossils other than the remnants of dinosaurs and other real² things. Of course there are no unicorn remnants to be found; unicorns are not real². So, we can all agree that dinosaurs are real² and unicorns are not. Therefore, why would the presentist want to classify these two distinct kinds of things in the same ontological

category? I say he should not. It would seem that the presentist's own declaration, "Fossils!" has made the point for me.

Elasmotherium were around a long time ago, and this may incline the sceptic to feel that temporal distance somehow washes away existence. To avoid such misconceptions, consider another unicorn-esque creature, the rhinoceros. At the time of writing, there are still rhinoceroses alive in the world today. We can confidently assert that they exist, they are real, and they are actual. If all the rhinoceroses drop dead tomorrow, what should we say of their ontological status? Should we say that rhinoceroses are non-existent? This would seem wrong. Surely we would say of them that they are *extinct*. It is a curious thing that under such circumstances we would not ordinarily be inclined to say of them that they are non-existent, even though there would be nothing that instantiates a rhinoceros. Palaeontologists do not say of elasmotherium that they are non-existent. If they said this, we would take it to mean this species never walked the earth. Rather they say they are extinct and we understand this to mean that while elasmotherium are no longer walking around on this earth alongside us, they once did. Or, put another way, elasmotherium are real² creatures; as opposed to fictional ones.

As a further example, consider my five year-old self (*FS*). Is *FS* extinct or non-existent? It is wrong to say that *FS* is extinct because, while *FS* may no longer be instantiated by my current self, I have not died. One might want to say that *FS* is non-existent, but to do so seems no less problematic than claiming that *FS* is extinct. It is the case that my current self is not physically identical with *FS*, but that alone does not entail the non-existence of *FS*. For one to claim that *FS* is non-existent would amount to the identity of *FS* and unicorns. There is a deep psychological connection between my current self and *FS*. My current self can vividly recall many things from *FS*'s experience. There is no doubt that when I think of *FS*, the referent of my thoughts is something real². There are no deep psychological bonds between the various temporal stages of the unicorn's non-existence. There are not even psychological bonds between humans and the temporal stages of the unicorn's non-existence. This is just one way in which the view that unicorns and *FS* are ontologically identical, that they are both non-existent

objects, seems seriously problematic. Such a view should motivate us to question the ontological categorisation behind this claim.

It should be clear by now that there is an ontological distinction between wholly past objects and merely non-existent objects. Consider another example: fictional objects. Take Sherlock Holmes (SH). When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the story of SH, did he discover an already existing object and merely tell us about it, or did he manufacture the object? The common sense view is that Conan Doyle manufactured SH and this is the view I shall discuss. If SH was manufactured, there was a time, *t*, at which the fictional object that is SH ‘came to be’. Although we may speak of SH, most of us do not want to grant him the status of existence beyond his existence as a fictional object.²² We commonly say that SH is non-existent. It is therefore the case that SH was non-existent prior to *t*, but was SH non-existent after *t*? If SH was non-existent before Conan Doyle wrote *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, SH was non-existent in a different way after having been created for the stories. Such is the case with all ‘manufactured’ fictional objects. We can point to a time before and after fictional objects are conceived, but regardless of the time period the fictional object remains non-existent all the while. We say of these objects that they are not real². If it was the case that Conan Doyle discovered SH, the argument can be developed accordingly and will follow a similar line. On this line of thinking SH is always non-existent but at one time he is non-existent and unknown and at another time he is non-existent and known. One may then wonder whether the unknown SH is the same kind of non-existent thing as the known SH, or whether they are distinct kinds of non-existent things.

On one reading, the fictional realist might disagree. He might wish to say that unicorns and SH are real², otherwise we would not be able to speak of them. SH and unicorns are not real² and therefore are never *actual*. A thought of SH, or a unicorn, whatever its referent may be, is both *real*² and *actual*, on all accounts, but the thought is as real² as it gets for fictional objects. On the contrary, the creature

²² I should distinguish between the Sherlock Holmes idea and Sherlock Holmes. It is uncontroversial to say that the Sherlock Holmes idea exists. But, this is quite distinct from saying Sherlock Holmes exists. For example see Quine’s discussion of the Parthenon idea vs the Parthenon in: Quine W.V. “On What There Is.” *From a Logical Point of View*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1961). 22-23.

that was elasmotherium is real². There is at least one time (indeed two and a half millions years of time) when that wholly past object was instantiated in the world, of which our thoughts about this dinosaur can be said to relate. The actualised referent of ‘elasmotherium’ is now extinct, but its being extinct makes the fact that it was once a part of this world no less true. In contrast, it was not, is not, and will never be the case that SH or unicorns are a part of this world. As such, it seems as though our thoughts of elasmotherium and of unicorns or Sherlock Holmes relate to distinct kinds of things.

The deeper problem

There is a lingering suspicion that presentists have never been able to escape that they must in some sense conceive of non-present but once-actual objects as being something more than merely non-existent objects. Reflecting on Saint Augustine's explanation of the past and future Simon Keller has observed:

I think that Augustine never quite gets rid of the idea that the past and future are, in some sense, real, and I think that this problem can also be found among some of his philosophical descendants.²³

If Keller's suspicions are correct and presentists do think that the past and future are, in some sense, real, then it follows that past and future objects are not merely non-existent. Nevertheless it is worth explaining just why this suspicion is substantive.

The examples I have outlined above should motivate the question: are wholly past objects like merely non-existent things, i.e., mere *possibilia*, *impossibilia* and fictional things? On a shallow reading, despite the apparent differences, the presentist may claim that they are exactly alike. The presentist claims that they are both non-existent and are ontologically the same kinds of things. This claim generates a problem I call the ‘problem of trans-temporal (non)existence’. Consider SH, again. Conan Doyle first manufactured him in 1887 to the present day. Prior to 1887, SH was non-existent and unknown. From 1887,

²³ Keller, “Presentism and truthmaking.” 84.

SH, despite the fictional character's non-existence, has become wildly popular and very widely known.²⁴ Now consider elasmotherium, again. Prior to 2.6Ma, they were non-existent. From 2.6Ma to 29,000 years ago there were elasmotherium that roamed the earth. From 29,000 years ago, they have been non-existent. Elasmotherium are real², but fictional objects are not. The presentist would have us bundle such objects into the same ontological category. Not only must the presentist explain why two different kinds of things should be alike, but the presentist must also explain how it is that something existent can become non-existent and how something non-existent can become existent. This concern is a question of how something like a dinosaur, which is supposed to be ontologically the same as a fictional character, becomes a real thing and then returns to a state of non-existence.

Conclusion

Presentism is the view that the only things that really exist are those that exist now. This theory is presented by its supporters as the intuitive view of time. I argue that upon reflection the intuitiveness of presentism wanes. If truth supervenes on being then there must exist objects in the world that are the truth-makers for truth-bearers which include as their constituents wholly past objects. Yet, the presentist denies the existence of such objects. As such, presentists face a problem accounting for the wholly past objects that they refer to. To attempt to resolve this problem presentists have postulated presently existing surrogate entities to stand in place for the wholly past objects that truth-bearers refer to. However, postulating these kinds of objects leads to deeper consequences that may not be acceptable to the presentist. For example, the presentist conflates wholly past objects with merely non-existent objects and calls them the same kinds of things. I have presented the case that wholly past objects and merely non-existent objects are distinct. If these non-existent objects are distinct then the presentist must provide further explanation about these kinds of objects. Furthermore, if they are distinct, then there is good reason to question whether the ontology that presentism entails fits with the ontology that the presentist wishes to be committed to.

²⁴ I only add '...and unknown/known' here to draw some distinction in the status of SH. I.e. in the absence of differing ontological categories to point to.

Chapter 2. Presentism

Introduction

In this chapter, I will consider the argument that presentism is the ‘intuitive’ and ‘common-sense’ view of time. After rejecting this analysis I will introduce five common versions of the presentist’s thesis statement and provide analysis as I go to draw out the ontological commitments implied by presentism. Once the presentist’s thesis statement is established I will explore arguments for presentism. By the end of the chapter a clear description of presentism along with an outline of the presentist’s ontological commitments will be established.

The intuitive view

In Chapter 1, presentism was defined as the view that only the present exists. But what premise or premises lead us to that conclusion? It is quite often argued that the primary reason for accepting presentism is because it is the intuitive or common sense view of time. For example, John Bigelow (1996) says:

I say that this [presentism] was believed by everyone, both the philosophers and the folk, until at least the nineteenth century; it is written into the grammar of every natural language; and it is still assumed in everyday life even by philosophers who officially deny it.²⁵

To test if presentism is “believed by everyone,” of course, we could engage in doing some experimental philosophy and ask non-philosophers for their views of the nature of time. Bigelow seems to admit that if we were to survey non-philosophers and if we were to provide them with a comprehensive summary of what the commitments of presentism are, we would find that most, if not all, people surveyed would agree *in principle* with presentism.²⁶ Ned Markosian (2004) seems to agree with Bigelow’s assessment:

²⁵ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties.” 35.

²⁶ It is notable that Bigelow’s comments seem to call for a questionnaire or survey to be done by those interested in experimental philosophy. At the time of writing, no experimental philosophy work on the philosophy of time or presentism has been done.

I endorse Presentism, which, it seems to me, is the “common sense” view, i.e. the one the people on the street would accept.²⁷

Markosian’s sentiment seems to be the kind of intuition that motivates Bigelow’s line of thinking. So, if a survey of non-philosophers was conducted, and if it turned out that presentism was “believed by everyone” and that it is “assumed in everyday life”, it must be because it is the view that seems to be the most sensible to everyone. It has often been claimed that it is simply intuition that leads people to think this. Mark Hinchcliff claims something along these lines also:

Presentism seems to be our intuitive or commonsense conception of the nature of time.²⁸

The claim that presentism is the ‘intuitive’ or ‘common sense’ view is speculation over the psychological source of the presentist intuition, rather than a well-reasoned argument.

One may suppose that this common sense intuition is born of the idea that the present seems distinct from the past and the future. That is, we experience the world in the present and any influence we may have on the future temporal stages of this world is only by way of actions we perform in the present. Our present actions, of course, cannot influence the past. Furthermore, the present appears to be substantive, whereas the past and future seem less so. Even though we have good reason to believe that there are times that have come before the present and that there will be times that will come after the present, the present seems privileged and distinct from the past and the future. This seems like an argument for presentism that appeals to a common sense view.

Whilst I grant that presentism may appeal to folk intuition, it is not so clear that there is any justifiable reason to subscribe to presentism. A folk intuition, by definition, lacks formal and rigorous analysis of its subject matter. Surely, this says

²⁷ Markosian. “A Defense of Presentism.” 48.

²⁸ Mark Hinchcliff, “The puzzle of change.” *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 (1996): 131.

that such views are not a sufficient condition for accepting presentism. We should not let our intuitions be the first and last word on any theory.

It may be the case that the presentist theory of time is not subject to public opinion, just as many theories in physics are not, for example. After all, presentism is related to the actual nature of the universe, unlike fields like ethics or art, which could be entirely contingent upon people's opinions. If presentism is the intuitive view, it need not be that the view itself relies on its intuitiveness to be a philosophically robust thesis.

Then again, it is not so clear that presentism is deserving of the title of the 'common sense' view. If common sense is good sense and sound judgement in practical matters, then a theory of time must be a 'practical' matter to take this title. But it is not at all clear that our understanding of the nature of time is a practical matter. The curious nature of time and the impracticality of explaining it are cornerstones of any discussion about 'time'. If presentism is the common sense view, then it must be the correct view. But it is not clear that it is the correct view.

If what Bigelow says about presentism is correct, that it 'is still assumed in everyday life even by philosophers who officially deny it', then people would not use language in such a way as to refer ostensibly to *merely* non-existent and *wholly* past objects. Philosophers and non-philosophers often distinguish between merely non-existent objects and wholly past objects. Even if they officially endorse presentism, the language they use seems to imply an ontological distinction between such non-present objects. By upholding this distinction, the philosopher or non-philosopher opposes the presentist ontology that only present things exist. It seems that what Bigelow says does not account for the language people use to describe different kinds of objects.

One might accept that presentism is the intuitive view and appeal to common sense. Nevertheless, this does not seem like a sufficient reason upon which to base one's argument regarding time. If the presentist wants to articulate a respectable theory and convince others that the view is correct, then the presentist needs to stop appealing to intuition and common sense, at least until the theory has

been supported by other means. The remainder of this chapter considers an array of more formidable arguments to which the presentist appeals.

There is clearly more behind the presentist's theory than mere intuition. Intuition might get the theory off the ground but there is much more to say about the presentist's reasons for adopting the theory. Having set out the primary motivation for presentism, which one might say is an appeal to common-sense-ism (so to speak), I now turn to the theory itself.

A dynamical thesis

Presentism is primarily an ontological thesis, but presentists also assert a dynamical aspect to time. David Ingram, a staunch defender of presentism says:

I say that there are two elements to presentism as a theory of time, an ontological thesis and a dynamical thesis [...].²⁹

He goes on to say:

The ontic thesis is one distinctive aspect of presentism [...]. But this claim is standardly and sensibly combined with a thesis about the dynamic or transitory nature of present existence, and the way things are presently, to fully characterise presentism. That is: the present (or its contents) changes. Put another way, what is present really changes.³⁰

Drawing on J.M.E. McTaggart's (1908) argument for the unreality of time, the dynamical thesis has been expressed as the 'A theory' whereby what is present really changes.³¹ The 'A series' possesses the 'A qualities' of *past*, *present* and *future*. This is contrasted with the 'B series' which possesses the 'B relations' of *earlier than*, *simultaneous with* and *later than*. As the different terminologies

²⁹ David Ingram. *Thisness Presentism: An Essay on Time, Truth, and Ontology*. (London: Routledge. 2019). 11.

³⁰ Ingram. *Thisness Presentism*, 20.

³¹ J. Ellis McTaggart, "The unreality of time." *Mind* 17, no. 68 (1908): 457-474.

indicate, A qualities change and B relations do not. For example, according to the A theory an event x is future, then x is present, and finally x is past. B relations, on the other hand, are fixed. An event x that is earlier than an event y will always remain in this ‘earlier than’ relation. There is no way in which y could occur before x because the ‘earlier than’ relation is asymmetric. On the A series account the qualities that x possesses change, i.e., they are dynamical qualities. And, on the B series account, the relations that x stands in do not change, i.e., they are fundamental and unchanging. Therefore, the A series represents the presentist’s conception of time and the B series represents the eternalist’s conception of time.

Whether one takes presentism to be a version of the A theory is contested but generally presentists adhere to some version of the A theory.³² I will not explore McTaggart’s argument further here because there is far too much to say on the matter. The important takeaway point is that presentists hold that what is present really changes; not that everything is fixed in an eternal temporal series or that everything is instantaneous (in the present).

An ontological thesis

The presentist’s view that ‘only the present exists’ assumes a response to the central ontological question: ‘what is there?’ The ontologist is primarily concerned with what exists, or in Quine’s words: ‘what there is’. Any theory, like presentism, that answers this question is an ontological theory and commitment to that theory is commitment to the ontology entailed and implied by its main thesis.³³ If a theory states that ‘ x is y ’, the ontologist is firstly concerned with the object that ‘ x ’ denotes; that is, whether or not there is such an object. Secondly he is interested in what x is like. For example, the proposition ‘cats are four-legged’ implies that there are some objects, ‘cats’, of which we can predicate ‘four-leggedness’. An ontological theory tells one whether or not there is something in the world that the constituent ‘cats’ refers to.

³² For a presentation of views that consider presentism without the A theory see: Joshua Rasmussen, “Presentists May Say Goodbye to A-Properties”, *Analysis*, 72, no. 2, (2012): 270–276, and, Jonathan Tallant “(Existence) Presentism and the A-theory”, *Analysis*, 72, no. 4 (2012): 673–681.

³³ Other ontological theories include actualism, atheism, idealism, materialism, nominalism, Platonism and possibilism.

If one takes presentism to be the theory that ‘only the present exists’, then the presentist is asserting an ontological thesis. Namely, that something exists and that the something that exists is present. Therefore, to assess the merits of presentism, one must analyse the theory in terms of its ontological implications. If the consequences that arise are acceptable, then presentism might be acceptable also. But, before turning to an analysis of the ontological consequences of presentism, the theory must first be framed up appropriately. The ontological implications of their thesis can be derived from considering possible ways that they frame their thesis.

Defining Presentism

If presentism is the theory of time that the ‘folk’ believe, then I submit the following as the thesis statement that those people would commonly use:

(S): Only the present exists

This is not an uncommon formulation, but it is very loose and untidy. For one, the presentist’s thesis worded in this way leaves it an open question whether all times exist, from distant past to distant future. There would exist a time called ‘the present’ relative to each point in time from the distant past to the distant future. This is clearly not what the presentist intends by (S); instead, the presentist’s primary ontological claim seems to be: that there is only one time that is uniquely the present and no other times than the present exist, even if those other present times have existed or will exist.

Secondly, if (S) is true, then one could construe that this thesis implies that all present objects, like The Eiffel Tower and Donald Trump, do not exist because they are not ‘the present’. But the presentist does not want to say that there are no objects at all, bar ‘the present’.

Given the two problems of (S), an alternative and more palatable definition of the presentist view seems appropriate. In his doctoral dissertation, ‘A Defense of

Presentism' (1988), Mark Hinchcliff goes a ways toward clearing up this issue when he submits the following definition:

(S1): Only presently existing things exist.³⁴

(S1) is better than (S), but it is still not precise enough to avoid error. On one reading of (S1), the meanings of the terms, 'presently', 'existing', and 'exist' are not distinguishable. Consider the present tense of each of the terms. On the tensed reading of the terms, for example, 'existing', is read as exists *now*, so it is not distinct from 'presently'. As Ulrich Meyer (2005) notes, "To exist now and to be present are the very same thing."³⁵ And Jonathan Tallant (2014) furthers this line of thinking, "For the presentist, 'existing at the present time' is simply to be understood as 'existing'."³⁶ For the presentist, the terms 'presently' and 'existing' are synonymous. If 'presently' and 'existing' are synonymous, then (S1) is vacuous. Of course only *presently existing* things exist because that which exists presently exists.

(S1) gives way to another possible definition of presentism, which respects that 'only', 'presently existing', 'things', and 'exist' may need to be properly distinguished

(S2): Only present things exist

Simon Keller (2004) defines presentism as (S2). He says, "Presentism is the belief that only present things exist. If something doesn't exist now, says the presentist, then it doesn't exist at all."³⁷ If 'present' and 'exist' are synonymous, then (S2) becomes:

(S2*): Only existent things exist

³⁴ Mark Hinchcliff, "A Defense of Presentism." (PhD diss., Princeton University 1988), 3.

³⁵ Meyer, "The Presentist's Dilemma," 214

³⁶ Jonathan Tallant, "Defining Existence Presentism," *Erkenntnis* 79, S3 (2014):493. A critical consideration for Tallant is how the term 'present' is read. E.g. 'the present' is a noun whereas 'to be present' is a verb.

³⁷ Keller. "Presentism and truthmaking," 84.

Clearly, this is not a controversial statement. That only existent things exist is a truism no one could possibly deny, but it would be a misrepresentation to assert that the presentist means to make this mere claim. The presentist's claim is about *temporal* ontology. So, the presentist must mean more than the mere meaning expressed by (S2*).

Before turning to the presentist's argument, let's briefly consider a terminological issue that arises out of the presentist's thesis statements. Notice how the term 'things' appears in (S1): Only presently existing things exist and (S2): Only present things exist. If 'things' are taken to include each and every thing, then there is a list of things to which the presentist must be ontologically committed that may not be palatable. For example, one might suppose that the round-square is a 'thing' (albeit odd and seriously awkward), but presentists may not be comfortable with admitting that *impossibilia* exist. Likewise, the fictional character 'Sherlock Holmes' is a 'thing', but the presentist may not want to admit the existence of Sherlock Holmes. Furthermore, one might think that abstract things in general are distinct from concrete things but that only the latter are existent. Given the various interpretations of the term, 'things', a move has been made in the literature to provide a better thesis statement that is more specific about the kinds of things that are being quantified over. The move has been toward 'object' terminology. 'Objects' might be thought of as a subcategory of 'things'. The set of 'objects' are the things one includes in their ontology. For most of this thesis, wherever I use the term 'object', this is what I mean.³⁸

As a consequence of the move to object talk, the presentist's thesis is clarified further because the kinds of things that are to be included in the ontology are defined, namely objects. The presentist does not mean that everything exists if it is present. For example, Sherlock Holmes might be thought of as a present thing but he does not exist.

³⁸ I deviate from object talk in chapter three, in keeping with Ingram's 'entity' talk. Explanation is provided for this in chapter three.

Moving to ‘object’ terminology Ned Markosian (2004) provides the following thesis statement:

Presentism is the view that only present objects exist. According to Presentism, if we were to make an accurate list of all the things that exist – i.e., a list of all the things that our most unrestricted quantifiers range over – there would be not a single non-present object on the list. Thus, you and I and the Taj Mahal would be on the list, but neither Socrates nor any future grandchildren of mine would be included. And it’s not just Socrates and my future grandchildren, either – the same goes for any other putative object that lacks the property of being present. All such objects are unreal, according to Presentism.³⁹

Thus, the next rendition:

(S3): Only present objects exist.

Substituting the term ‘things’ with ‘objects’ is more precise. The category of ‘objects’ includes only some things and not others. On Markosian’s account, the presentist must explain what is a proper object and what is not, but there is room to exclude the things that one does not wish to include in an ontology, such as Sherlock Holmes or the elf on the shelf.

At this point, there is another theory of time that it is instructive to mention because it motivates the next rendition of the thesis statement, S4. Mentioning this other theory of time is also worthwhile to clear up a few possible misconceptions that may arise about the nature of a presentist world. Earlier I said that according to the A series time appears to be asymmetric. The apparent asymmetry of time that presentists have argued for has motivated another view. A further intuition that one may have is this. If the past and future are distinct from the present, it also seems to be the case that the past is distinct from the future. The past is fixed. It cannot be

³⁹ Markosian, “A Defense of Presentism,” 47-48. Markosian’s more specific thesis statement is “More precisely, it [presentism] is the view that, necessarily, it is always true that only present objects exist.”

changed or influenced. The future on the other hand is yet to be. It appears as though we can influence the future, i.e., it is not fixed. For example, failing a test last semester through lack of study cannot be changed but the outcome of a test next semester can be influenced by actions now. This experience of unidirectional time with a fixed past and open future has led some to suppose that if the past is fixed and the future not, then perhaps the future is non-existent and the past, once instantiated, exists thereafter. This is the *growing block* view. For growing block theorists, as with presentists, the present is the point of instantiation, but this is where the similarities end. Proponents of the growing block theorise that once objects are instantiated they then *perdure* thereafter, in the eternalist's sense of existence.

Even though presentism is distinct from the growing block view, concerns have been raised that some renderings of presentism could be mistaken for the growing block. Take the definition arrived at thus far, S3, 'only present objects exist'. Consider whether it is the case that any world where S3 is true is a presentist world. Now, take a world, w1. At the first moment of time, t1, in w1, S3 is true. It appears that w1 is a presentist world, because it is true that only present objects exist. Then, the second moment, t2, comes into existence. But, suppose that t1 doesn't become non-existent but instead remains existent. Now, t1 and t2 exist. It would seem that w1 is not a presentist world, because not only present objects exist. To reconcile this paradox with presentism and avoid confusing presentism with the growing block view, we need to add a proviso: S3 is *always* true if true at all.⁴⁰ This brings me to the next incarnation of the thesis statement:

(S4): It is always the case that only present objects exist

If S3 is ever true in w1, then it will always be true. Hence, we have (S4), or necessarily (S4). If one accepts that presentism implies more than the trivial meaning expressed by S2*, (S4) goes a way towards expressing what the presentist is ontologically committed to.

⁴⁰ For further discussion on the motivation for this definition see: Deasy, "What is Presentism". 378-397.

Introducing a formal argument for presentism

Thus far, I have argued that the presentist claims his view is the intuitive one but that this is not sufficient for accepting presentism. I have presented various versions of the presentist's thesis statement to show that ontological implications follow from it. Given that presentism is not so intuitive after all and given the difficulty in establishing a robust thesis statement, one might wonder if there is a good reason to accept presentism in the first place. Setting aside intuition, one must ask what other justification there is for the view. For example, if there is a sound argument which concludes that only present objects exist, we might have good reason to accept presentism, and that the definitional concerns I have just attended to are worthy of our attention.

The presentism literature tends to defend the theory against objections. For example, Mark Hinchcliff (1988) says, "I only defend presentism by responding to objections that have been raised against it."⁴¹ John Bigelow (1996) says that presentism is 'hard, if not impossible to prove' so he abandons the task.⁴² He does nevertheless set out to defend presentism against a certain kind of critique. The task Bigelow sets to accomplish is not to formulate a positive argument for presentism but rather to show how taking up presentism resolves a number of problems other views face. This form of reasoning is practically universal within the literature. Advocates of presentism are primarily defenders of presentism against other views that encroach upon them. It would be instructive for presentists to present such an argument and for all future defenses of presentism to commence with an explicit statement of this argument. For example, the argument may run something like this:

A1. An argument for presentism

- P1 It is always the case that past and future objects do not exist. (*premise*)
- C Therefore, it is always the case that only present objects exist. (*PI*)

This is an example of the type of argument that a presentist might offer in defence of the claim that 'only present objects exist'. It seems to me that the above

⁴¹ Hinchcliff, *A Defense of Presentism*. 4.

⁴² Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 36.

argument can be critiqued. ‘Always’ is ambiguous for similar reasons that the term ‘exists’ is ambiguous (see Chapter 1: ‘the term ‘exists’ and the triviality objection.)). If ‘always’ means ‘at all times’, then P1 might be false. “Always” might imply more than one time. And it seems wrong to think that past objects would not exist at past times. If ‘always’ means ‘only the present’ then of course past and future objects are not present. The term ‘always’ is ambiguous. A consequence of these concerns is that it seems that S4 is not a fully satisfactory definition either. These problems speak to the challenges the presentist faces in formulating a robust definition and sound argument for his thesis.

A negative definition

One final view ought to be considered. Presentism is the ontological claim that whatever objects exist are present and, by implication, the converse is equally true - whatever objects that are not present do not exist. In arguing that only present objects exist, the presentist means that it is necessarily the case that past and future objects do not. To use the terminology I have introduced, the presentist holds that the only *real*² objects that exist are present objects, and furthermore, all the other things we conceive of (including the non-present but *real* objects) do not exist. Bigelow (1996) sums up this sentiment, i.e., the need to rule out the existence of non-present objects, when he asserts the following thesis statement:

(S5): Nothing exists which is not present.⁴³

On the one hand, Bigelow’s (S5) faces many of the same terminological disputes aimed at (S1)-(S4). But what I find striking about Bigelow’s rendering is the attention it draws to that which does not exist. (S1)-(S4) draw one’s attention to existent things, the presently existing objects. (S5) draws one’s attention to the array of things that the presentist says do not exist. Perhaps the most significant ontological consequence of presentism is that all of the past objects which existed at one time but no longer do, have gone out of existence. Yet, a sound theory of presentism must be able to account for these *wholly past objects*

⁴³ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties,” 35.

This brings me to the end of my initial introduction of the presentist's thesis statement. As I have shown no fully satisfactory statement has been submitted. Throughout the rest of this thesis, presentism should be understood as S4: '(necessarily) it is always the case that only present objects exist'. However, I also take Bigelow's version, S5: Nothing exists which is not present, to be equivalent.

The different thesis statements for presentism show how inextricably linked it is with ontological commitment. The thesis statements are motivated by the need to adequately state what exists. The main problem each definition faces is how to adequately capture the kinds of objects that exist. It seems that if this can be explained, along with the dynamical thesis, the presentist's theory can be conveyed. Stating adequately exactly what exists is problematic though. Nevertheless, the emphasis on explaining what exists demonstrates that presentism implies a specific ontological commitment. As such, the consequences of the presentist's ontological commitments must be thoroughly analysed so that the full implications of the theory can be seen.

Ontological commitment

When the presentist says the present *exists*, it is not clear that he means the same thing as the eternalist. Take the eternalist's position. He considers existent objects to be located at each temporal point in time. From this we can infer that he believes that other times than the present, located at these far-off temporal points, exist. Accordingly, the eternalist thinks that all the past things like dinosaurs and Caesar exist; as well as all the future things like android workers and human outposts on Mars. What's more he asserts that they exist in just the same manner as present things do. They are just located at varying temporal distances from the present. It follows that the eternalist thinks that there is an existent present for every temporal stage that we call a 'moment in time'.

To the eternalist, the term denoting the present, 'now', is an indexical. It locates a speaker temporally at *the time* in which he utters the adverb; just as the term 'here' spatially locates another speaker at the place in which she utters this adverb. Therefore, a state of affairs that occurred yesterday in which I uttered 'now'

exists and it is true to say of that time that ‘the present’ exists then just as *the present* exists *now*, i.e. right now. The presentist disagrees. On the presentist’s account there is only one existent time called ‘now’, *the present*. Accordingly, there are no ‘other times’ which exist. Therefore, it is asserted that any talk of ‘other times’ or of ‘the present’ or of ‘now’ existing elsewhere other than *the present* is nonsense. To the presentist there are no other times and no objects that exist outside of *the present*; so, no dinosaurs; no martian outposts. Everything beyond the temporal borders of the present is non-existent.

This explanation roughly outlines the presentist’s ontological commitments. The presentist is committed to the existence of all the objects that are (temporally⁴⁴) present. Furthermore he is committed to the non-existence of all the objects that are not present. Given the presentist’s ontological landscape, questions arise about the kinds of entities that do exist and what they are like. The intuitiveness of presentism becomes less obvious at this point due to his ruling out of existence wholly past objects.

For example, if wholly past objects do not exist then there would appear to be no obvious truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects. That is, the wholly past objects that we speak of could not be the referents of terms denoting those objects. Therefore, a *problem of reference* arises for the presentist. For example, take the proposition, <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>. The eternalist takes the referent to be *Caesar* and so he is ontologically committed to the existence of *Caesar*. But, the presentist cannot take the referent to be *Caesar* for he is committed to *Caesar*’s non-existence. Yet, the presentist is committed to the past existence of *Caesar*, so he must identify a presently existing referent to act as the truth-maker for his proposition. In other words, the presentist is ontologically committed to some presently existing object that acts as the referent of ‘Caesar’ but which is not *Caesar*. So, the presentist must provide another explanation.

⁴⁴ It would be a mistake to think that the presentist is only committed to objects that are spatially present.

I have thus far outlined the theory of presentism and broadly introduced the presentist's ontological commitments. I now turn to a discussion of the finer details that one must consider in order to analyse those commitments.

Being and existence

On the account outlined thus far, it should have become apparent that the presentist takes *being* and *existence* as equivalent. He will say that only existent objects have *being*. And, that there are no non-existent objects to ascribe a mode of being to, positive or negative. But, on another account, *being* and *existence* are distinct. Before considering the presentist's conflation of being and existence it is worth briefly mentioning the view that distinguishes them. Here is one formulation of such a view as presented by Bertrand Russell (1903) in his earlier work. He described *being* thus:

Being is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought - in short, to everything that can possibly occur in any propositions true or false, and to all such propositions themselves. . . . 'A is not' implies that there is a term 'A' whose being is denied, and hence that A is. . . . Numbers, the Homeric gods, relations, chimeras and four-dimensional spaces all have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could make no propositions about them. Thus being is a general attribute of everything, and to mention anything is to show that it is. Existence, on the contrary, is the prerogative of some only among beings.⁴⁵

According to this explanation an object's lacking existence is no reason to deny that it occupies a mode of being. Therefore, being and existence are distinct. Yet, on the presentist's account it seems perfectly reasonable to assert that any object that does not exist also does not have being. As such the presentist may, in his less thoughtful moments, say of Homeric gods and chimeras that they occupy a mode of *nonbeing*. And indeed, this puzzling formulation of entities that do not

⁴⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge University Press, 1903), 449. It is worth noting that the view presented by Russell here relates to his earlier work which is distinct from his later work.

exist but which *are* in virtue of their nonbeing has often been discussed. Yet, many presentists assert that all Russell's explanation is drawing out via this contradiction is what Quine calls *Plato's beard*. Quine says of this 'tangled doctrine':

I cannot admit that there are some things which McX countenances and I do not, for in admitting that there are such things I should be contradicting my own rejection of them. [...] [H]istorically it has proved tough, frequently dulling the edge of Occam's razor.⁴⁶

The problem that Quine is concerned with is that it seems illogical to assert the proposition 'x is y' and then to deny that there is an 'x'. For example, if one says that <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> it seems sensible to think there must be some object that the constituent 'Caesar' refers to - otherwise what is it that is being spoken of? Yet the presentist says that Caesar does not exist.

On the one hand the presentist asserts a truth about a wholly past object but on the other hand he denies that this object exists. One must wonder what he is speaking of when he says of the object that he is speaking of that it does not exist. The same riddle arises out of talk of merely possible and impossible objects (e.g. the proposition <the chimera is wild> implies that there is an object that 'the chimera' refers to) but I set aside discussion of these objects until later. For now, I will just discuss wholly past objects. Under the auspices of presentism there are no non-existent objects to ascribe a mode to, yet the need to identify the kinds of objects that are the truth-makers, or if you prefer referents of true propositions' constituents, remains. One approach that the presentist has taken is to postulate *abstracta* as the referents. Such abstract objects can be thought of as kinds of *surrogate entities*; abstract objects that 'stand in place' of the wholly past objects being spoken about. Of course, the obvious cost is that one must admit *abstracta* into their ontology. A consequence of this is the need to admit multiple modes of being into one's ontology. Before presenting a thorough analysis of these abstract objects in chapter three further preliminary ontological explanation is worthwhile.

⁴⁶ Willard V. Quine, "On what there is." *From a Logical Point of View*. 21.

Modes of being

In the previous chapter I defined the term *exists*: something *exists* if it is instantiated in the world. But, one might then ask what it means to be ‘instantiated’. One might be inclined to appeal to the obvious choice; concrete objects, such as the lemon tree in my garden, Mount Cook or David Chalmers. When one says that these objects are instantiated one means that they are physically realised; they appear in the world as physical objects, with a spatio-temporal locus. Yet, if existence is limited to *concreta*, there remains an array of objects that we refer to which are excluded. Some of the objects that are excluded are more agreeably non-existent. There is consensus that *mere possibilia* and *impossibilia* do not exist. For example, it is not controversial to say that chimeras and round-squares do not exist. It is not so agreeable to many to accept that other kinds of objects that we refer to do not exist. Take *abstracta*. Some think that the existence of abstract objects is necessary to a robust description of the world. Indeed, this seems to be the worldview that the presentist requires.

In chapter one I introduced a distinction between *abstracta* and *concreta*. The presentist claims that these kinds of objects exist. If these are the modes of being that the presentist postulates it is worthwhile to further consider the consequences of postulating these modes. Consider *abstracta* and take the example of properties. Many take the property of *greenness* to exist independently from any individual object that is green so with this example one gets a sense of what an abstract object is like. Now, take the example of mathematical entities and propositions.⁴⁷ Many hold the view that such things exist independently of any mind that conceives of them. For example, one may take the mathematical fact that ‘the square root of sixteen is four’ to possess existence independent of any particular mind that conceives of it. Furthermore, one may take a proposition such as <Trump is a narcissist> to exist independently from Trump’s narcissistic expressions. Many defenders of presentism think that *abstracta* do exist (but, by definition, not in any

⁴⁷ For an argument for the existence of abstract mathematical objects (i.e. ‘mathematical platonism’) see: Max Black, Frege Gottlob, *The foundations of arithmetic. A logico-mathematical enquiry into the concept of number*. German with English translation by J. L. Austin. Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1950; Philosophical Library, New York 1950; pages i–xii, I–XI, 1–119, and parallel pages vie–xiie, Ie–XIe, 1 e–119 e. *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 16, no. 1 (1951):67.

concrete *mode of being*). For example, here is a quote from Bigelow appealing to the existence of propositions by presenting a view expressed by Arthur Prior as well as the Stoics:

As a first step in grasping Prior's version of presentism, think of propositions as existing eternally, but as changing in truth value as time passes. Prior would agree with the Stoic that the proposition 'This man will die' is present. But not that it is present "because it is true even now." Even after the man dies, the proposition 'This man will die' is present. But before the man died this proposition was true - after the man died it ceased to be true. For Prior, true propositions do not go out of existence - but sometimes they do cease to be true. Prior's theory is a little different from the Stoic theory reported by Sextus. Yet the difference should not be exaggerated. Both preserve presentism, and both do so by appeal to the present existence of propositions.⁴⁸

If propositions are *abstracta* they are existent just like any other objects. They just lack whatever essential properties there are to lack, in order that they be distinguished from *concreta*. Propositions are controversial objects to include in one's ontology.⁴⁹ I cannot give this matter the attention a fully satisfactory

⁴⁸ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 43

⁴⁹ A lengthy footnote is worthwhile to raise attention to the reasons for doubting the existence of propositions as truth-makers. The existence of propositions has been questioned because it seems problematic to assert that the truth-value of a proposition may change. Using tensed language necessitates changing truth values. For example, the proposition <the apple is green> is true at one time but false at a later time when the apple is red. To resolve this issue the *propositional maximalist* will tie a primary proposition (e.g. the apple was green) to a world-set of related propositions, linking via a B-theoretical ordering, all the way back to the primary object (the apple). The strategy will look something like this:

At t, the apple is red
Earlier than t, at t-1, the apple is mostly red and lessly green
Earlier than t-1, at t-2, the apple is partly red and partly green
Earlier than t-2, at t-3, the apple is mostly green and lessly red
Earlier than t-3, at t-4, the apple is green

We may also include some additional general truth positive propositions:

Earlier than a red apple is red it is green
Apples change colour over time
Later than a red apple is green it is red
Etc.

explanation requires within my thesis so I set deep analysis of the existential status of propositions aside. I now turn to properties. Consider properties as objects. Bigelow outlines a view posited by Lucretius which frames *abstracta* up as objects whose existence is conditional on other presently instantiated objects, but which are distinct objects nonetheless. He says:

What exists in the present is a tract of land which has the accident, of being the earth on which a spark of love kindled a dazzling blaze of pitiless war. Or, what exists in the present is a region of space which has the accident, of being the space within which a Wooden Horse set the towers of Ilium aflame through the midnight issue of Greeks from its womb. All that is present are matter, vacuity, and properties and accidents of these; and among these properties and accidents are some which are expressed in language by using the past or the future tense. We do not need to suppose the existence of any past or future things, however, only the possession by present things of properties and accidents expressed using the past or future tenses.⁵⁰

The distinction between the kinds of *abstracta* postulated is important because it determines the presentist's ontological commitments. According to the view expressed by the Stoics propositions exist in their own right, in addition to other objects. According to the view expressed by Lucretius properties exist conditionally in virtue of their being expressed by some other spatio-temporally

Under such a construction it would seem that the primary proposition is not about the way the apple was because that is how it was. The primary proposition appears to be about the way the apple is *now* with an extrapolation to a reversely determinate state. If this is the case, one unintended consequence would be some sort of reverse determinism. Accordingly, if we take the maximal set of propositions about the way the world is *now* we would be able to determine all past world states. Correspondingly, one would assume, we would also be able to determine future world states. But this is not a desirable implication for the presentist who generally resists determinism. This argument is certainly a mark against the propositional maximalist's approach.

A further problem remains. 'Referring to' can be differentiated from 'being about', quite obviously. Consider an apple that is green at a time, t_1 , and red at t_2 . When one says at t_2 that 'the apple is red' he is referring to the presently existing red apple. And, this is what the proposition is about. When one says at t_2 that 'the apple was green' things become unclear. In this case one seems to be referring to the red apple at t_2 but the proposition is not about the red apple. It is about the green apple at t_1 . As such, when the presentist asserts that 'the apple was green' he appears to be referring to something distinct from the object that the proposition is about. Therefore, it is not so clear that the B-theoretic approach supports the presentist's view that propositions about past states of affairs can be true unless some form of determinism is accepted.

⁵⁰ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties" 46.

located object. It is clear that these two kinds of *abstracta* are ontologically distinct. And, given this distinction one must consider the multiple modes of abstract being implied.

Sometimes a question is raised regarding the temporal locus we should think of abstracta as occupying. On one rendering abstract objects are *atemporal*, that is, they exist ‘outside’ of time. But, I take them to be temporal objects in virtue of the presentist’s assertion that only present objects exist. If *abstracta* were atemporal objects, we could not say of them that they are present. As such, if abstract objects exist, given presentism it must be the case that they are temporal objects.

Getting back to the question of instantiation. On one reading, an abstract object is instantiated in virtue of being exemplified by a spatio-temporally extended object. On another reading, an abstract object does not require exemplification by a spatio-temporally extended object to exist. On the second reading a question arises about whether or not such *abstracta* are instantiated. For example, on the Stoic’s account one might pose the question: Is a proposition about a wholly past object instantiated or not? If the proposition is instantiated then abstract objects are instantiated independently from any spatio-temporally extended objects. If the proposition is said to exist but not be instantiated then it would seem that there is a category of *uninstantiated* abstract objects. And, if there is such a category it is reason to think that the presentist not only implies that there are multiple modes of being but that he further implies multiple modes of abstract being.

Conclusion

Presentists have claimed that their view is the intuitive one. I have argued that this does not provide reliable grounds from which to defend the theory of presentism. An analysis of various renditions of the presentist’s thesis statements reveals that the intuitiveness of presentism is quickly eroded due to the myriad of questions that arise as a consequence of this world view. Presentists must provide a more robust argument for the conclusion they arrive at. Nevertheless, the formulation of the thesis statement that I have adopted, that only present objects exist, and the developments along the way that have led to it provide ample

opportunity to consider the implications that must follow from the theory. The most significant consequence is that wholly past objects do not exist and so a range of presently existing abstract objects must be postulated. Before moving on, let me recapitulate the kinds of objects that the presentist seems to be ontologically committed to. That there are *abstracta* as well as *concreta* seems critical to the presentist's ontology but this is not where the story ends. Given the explanations the presentist provides I say that the presentist is committed to something like the following ontological distinctions. Existence and nonexistence distinguish ontological categories at the most coarse-grained level. Following from this distinction emanates modes of being within the ontological category of existent objects. Existent objects can be further distinguished according to whether they are *concreta* or *abstracta*. *Abstracta* can be further distinguished still, according to their mode of instantiation, as well as whether they are instantiated or uninstantiated. I argue that it is clear that the presentist is committed to multiple modes of being. As this thesis progresses the discussion will examine the consequences of postulating different kinds of abstract objects.

Chapter 3. Lucretian Properties and Thisnesses

Introduction

In the preceding chapter I provided an overview of presentism and outlined the presentist's ontological commitments. I have introduced a group of problems that the theory faces, namely problems that are generated by a lack of obvious truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects. In this chapter, I introduce two variants of presentism, Lucretianism and thisness presentism that respond to these problems. These theories are similar because they both appeal to 'surrogate' entities to act as truth-makers for past tense propositions.⁵¹ Postulating presently existing abstract entities allows the presentist to resolve the central problem and still remain within the bounds of their ontological commitments.

Before explaining what a surrogate entity is and providing an analysis of the two different conceptions of surrogate entities, Lucretian properties and thisnesses, I first briefly rehearse the motivation for postulating these entities.

Why surrogate entities?

The presentist says that since wholly past objects are not present, they do not exist. As such, one cannot appeal to wholly past objects to act as truth-makers for propositions about those wholly past objects. For example, when assessing the truth value satisfaction conditions for the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>, the presentist cannot appeal to *Caesar*. As such, presentists face a dilemma. They can either reject the supervenience principle and assert that truth does not supervene on being, or they can employ a presently existing surrogate entity to stand in place for the referent of the constituent, 'Caesar'. That is, if *Caesar* does not exist but some other presently existing object, *T*, satisfies the same set of

⁵¹ I must point out a distinction between 'objects' and 'entities' that has been drawn. In chapter two I outlined that 'objects' are the things one includes in their ontology. I include *concreta* and *abstracta* in this set. Ingram distinguishes 'objects' from 'entities'. Ingram is concerned that because *abstracta* have no spatio-temporal location they may be rejected as existent. He says: "we can adopt the following characterisation of abstract entities: for any x, x is an abstract entity iff x has no spatial location and x is not causally efficacious." I disregard Ingram's analysis. Throughout this thesis wherever I use the term 'entity' I take such a thing to be part of the object set. I may also refer to an entity (in Ingram's sense) as an 'object'. See: Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 17-19.

truth value satisfaction conditions that *Caesar* would, then *T* is a sufficient entity upon which to ground truths about ‘Caesar’. The presentist does not want to abandon the supervenience principle so a suitable surrogate entity must be identified. If the presentist can identify such a surrogate entity it appears as though the problems of reference can be resolved and the supervenience principle retained.

What is a surrogate entity?

Explaining what a ‘surrogate entity’ is, is relatively straightforward. A ‘surrogate’ is a thing that can act as a proxy for another thing by performing the same function as the thing that it stands in place of. One might think of sending a proxy to act on their behalf at a meeting that they cannot attend. Imagine a person named Jane who cannot attend an important meeting. Jane might send her assistant John as her proxy. If John is sent in the capacity of a true proxy he will be authorised to perform all the same functions that Jane would had she been able to attend. Now, consider the entity that the constituent ‘Caesar’ is about, *Caesar*. Given that *Caesar* died in 44BC he is not presently available to perform the functions required of him. As such, we may say that *Caesar* is like Jane. In order to perform all of the functions that are required of *Caesar*, a ‘Caesar’ must be found to act on *Caesar*’s behalf. That is, a surrogate must be found to perform all of the same functions required of *Caesar*.

An important aspect of the explanation of a ‘surrogate’ given above is that John is not Jane. John is merely able to perform all of the same functions as Jane. If John *is* Jane, then John is not a surrogate. So there must be some distinguishing factor between the two in order that John be assigned the status of a surrogate. And, this is the case for the solutions I will discuss. On the one hand there is the entity that a true proposition’s constituent is apparently about. For example, a proposition including as one of its constituents ‘Caesar’ seems to be about the concrete object *Caesar*. On the other hand there is the surrogate *T* that stands in place for *Caesar*. The presentist says that *T* is the referent of the constituent ‘Caesar’ and that *T* is an abstract property or relation. So, the referent of ‘Caesar’, *T*, stands in for the concrete *Caesar*. Clearly there is a distinction between the wholly past object *Caesar* and his surrogate, *T*. One is a concrete object and the other is an abstract

object. Although the concrete/abstract distinction is not necessary because presumably a surrogate may stand in for an abstract object also. However this example serves to highlight that a surrogate is distinct from the object that it stands in for. This distinction is necessary to the presentist's explanation of truth-makers because it allows them to avoid appealing to the wholly past object *Caesar*, which they say does not exist.

One formulation of surrogate entities is to say that they are instantiated by some existent concrete object. For example, if *T* is a surrogate entity, *T* must be instantiated by some concrete object, *y*. Therefore, an object *y* must be identified and some relation must hold between *T* and *y*. This is the Lucretian path. For this path to be accepted it must be shown that *y* really does instantiate *T*. It must be shown that *y* is the right sort of candidate to choose for this job. But even before this is decided *T* must be shown to be the kind of object one should accept into one's ontology. A complaint that has been laid against Lucretian properties is that they are not the sort of entities that one should choose to accept into one's ontology, because they are 'hypothetical' or 'dubious'. I will outline this complaint in detail in chapter four but for now the following explanation from Sider (2001) will suffice:

[...] a proper ontology should invoke only *categorical*, or occurrent, properties and relations. Categorical properties involve what objects are actually like, whereas hypothetical properties 'point beyond' their instances.⁵²

The complaint that Lucretian properties are dubious that I have just mentioned has at least partly motivated another formulation of surrogate entities, that of the thisness presentist. According to the thisness presentist, a surrogate entity is said to exist *uninstantiated*. That is, a surrogate entity *T* does not require a concrete object *y* in order for *T* to exist, because *y* need not be presently instantiated in order for *T* to exist. For this path to be accepted one must accept that there are such things as uninstantiated thisnesses (and thisnesses generally) and one must be prepared to accept the consequences that follow from positing thisnesses.

⁵² Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, 41.

To briefly recapitulate before carrying on, presentists face a problem of reference when they assert truths about wholly past objects. Due to a lack of obvious (presently existing) truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects they posit presently existing surrogate entities as the truth-makers. These surrogate entities stand in place of the wholly past objects that propositions appear to be about. Thus fulfilling the requirement for there to be a referent for every true proposition's constituent. The presentist then says that the truth-maker for a (true) proposition is a surrogate entity. I now turn to a more thorough analysis and critique of two kinds of surrogate entities.

The two kinds of surrogate entities that I have introduced are *Lucretian properties* and *thisnesses*. Broadly speaking, a Lucretian property is a 'property of the whole world'. A thisness is 'a property of an individual entity which exists now or has existed'. So, on Bigelow's account, one may say that there are Lucretian properties associated with every wholly past object and the world presently instantiates these properties. On Ingram's account, there is an instantiated thisness associated with every present entity as well as an uninstantiated thisness associated with every wholly past object. For example, on Bigelow's account, it is true that dinosaurs existed because the world instantiates the property *being a place where dinosaurs roamed* or some equivalent expression. On Ingram's account, it is true in virtue of the presently existing thisness of some dinosaur, call this dinosaur 'Nelly'. So, Ingram says that the world now contains the thisness *being-(identical-with)-Nelly*, as well as properties associated with Nelly's thisness, namely *being a dinosaur*.

This explanation distinguishes between these two kinds of surrogate entities. A Lucretian property and a thisness seem like similar kinds of *abstracta* and they are both instantiated by some other existent entity. If a Lucretian property exists it is instantiated. A thisness is only instantiated momentarily at its conception before it carries on existing uninstantiated. Furthermore, both kinds of surrogate entities appear to provide resolutions to the central problem I have introduced, namely the problem of no truth-makers. For now, I turn to a more thorough

explanation of Lucretian properties. Following on from this I will provide an analysis of thisnesses.

Lucretian properties

Bigelow's formulation of Lucretian properties is motivated by the *argument from relations* which states 'for every relation there must exist two relata'. Relations, therefore, are existence entailing. Given that some relations may be between present things and non-present things, non-present things must exist. Admitting that non-present things exist contradicts the main thesis of presentism, i.e., that no non-present things exist. *Ergo* presentism is false.

Bigelow rehearses the argument from relations in the following way:

Take as a first supposition that, in order for a relation to hold between two things, both of those two things will have to exist. Call this the principle that all relations are existence entailing. Add as a further premise the supposition that relations sometimes hold between a present thing and something else which is not present. The conclusion follows ineluctably, that some things exist which are not present.⁵³

Bigelow thinks this argument is 'too good to be true'. Consider the example relation that Bigelow submits, 'Othello loves Desdemona'. If relations are taken as existence entailing on both the right and left or just the one side but not the other, then both Othello and Desdemona must exist. So presentism is false - because neither do exist. Even though Bigelow accepts that Othello and Desdemona do not exist he thinks it is an *a priori* truth that a relation entails the existence of each relata. And so he believes that there must exist two objects that the relation of 'love' stands between even if it is not Othello and Desdemona after all.

Even if the view that relations are existence entailing is too strong a claim for some relations, such as love, there are many relations that we cannot deny do entail existence. For example, take the case of *causal* relations. In a causal relation,

⁵³ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 37.

both the cause and its effect must exist. The relation is symmetric with respect to existence, but the cause occurs prior to its effect. The cause and its effect cannot exist simultaneously. So, the *argument from causation* appears to be another strike against presentism.

The consequences of the arguments from relations and causation are unacceptable to presentists. Yet, they do not want to reject the principle that relations are existence entailing. The presentist must devise a solution that allows for the existence entailment of the relata, without implying that the (non-existent) objects that a relation seemingly stands between exist.

Here is another look at the same problem. Take the propositions

(S1) <Trump is shorter than Lincoln>

(S2) <The flame (at t_1) caused the smoke (at t_2)>

The relata of S1 includes Trump and Lincoln. Trump exists but Lincoln does not. In S2, the smoke exists but the flame that caused the smoke does not (i.e. the flame that caused the smoke in question does not exist even if a fire still remains). If one takes the wholly past objects, *Lincoln* and *the flame*, as the relata on one side of the relations, then it seems that presentism must be false because non-present things cannot be referred to without presuming that they exist. That relations are existence entailing refutes presentism because existence entailment implies that the wholly past objects exist.

Consider S1 again and take the referent of 'Lincoln' as 'L'. If one takes L to be the actual *Lincoln* (i.e. the wholly past object that was Abraham Lincoln) then it is true that presentism is false. Likewise presentism appears false if for S2 one takes the referent of 'the flame' to be the actual fire at t_1 . On reflection, the presentist must conclude (for there is no other path to take) that the referent of these constituents cannot be the wholly past objects that one thinks they are. The presentist thinks that the explanation required for these wholly past objects to be deemed existent is too high a price to pay. The price would be admitting that *Lincoln* and *the flame* exist, and this is exactly what is being argued against.

If the wholly past object *Lincoln* does not exist, then it would seem that *Lincoln* cannot be the relata in the relation expressed in S1. If some other existent entity could perform the same function that *Lincoln* otherwise would, the existence entailment could be maintained and presentism saved.

The remainder of this sub-section will outline the solution that Bigelow devises so that he can retain the principle of relations yet still avoid appealing to non-present objects. Given that the above arguments are sound and presentists generally want to adhere to them, Bigelow turns his attention to the entities on either side of the relation. If Bigelow can show that two relata exist for any given relation, even for relata that we believe to be non-present, and even if we take the relata to be something other than what we presume it is, he thinks he can resolve the puzzle.

Taking his lead from the Stoics, Bigelow directs us to consider the causal relation that holds between a ‘sign’, and its cause or effect.⁵⁴ For example, a (present) wound might be a sign of a (future) death. But, we are told it is not the wound and the death that must be existence entailing. Here is the quote from the Stoics that Bigelow explains:

... [T]he sign and its object, even in these cases, is a present thing of a present thing.... For in the earlier example ... the wound has already happened and is past, but ‘This man has had a wound’, which is a proposition, is present, though it is said about something which has happened. And in the case of, ‘If this man has been wounded in the heart, this man will die’, the death is in the future, but the proposition, ‘This man will die’, is present, though it is said about what is future, because it is true even now.⁵⁵

The Stoics thought that the relation is not between the sign and its cause or effect but between two other kinds of objects, namely *propositions*. Bigelow goes on to explain this:

⁵⁴ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties,” 41-42.

⁵⁵ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties,” 42. For an original translation of this quote from Sextus Empiricus giving an exposition of the doctrines of the Stoics see: R.G. Bury, (1960), Transl. of Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, Vol 3, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

[...] the causal relation holds between true propositions, and a proposition exists provided that it is true. [...] Thus, causation is construed, not as a relation between a present thing, a wound, and a future thing, a death, but as a relation between two presently true propositions.⁵⁶

On this reading, the *relata* need not be wholly past objects themselves. In other words, there is no need for truth-bearers to be ‘made true’ by entities at other times. Rather, they are ‘made true’ by presently existing abstract entities, propositions. Thus, the proposition <The flame caused the smoke> does not require the existence of the wholly past object *the flame* (or even the present concrete object *the smoke* for that matter), to act as *relatee*. All that is required are two true propositions about this state of affairs, namely <There is a flame (at t_1)> and <There is smoke (at t_2)>, held together by the causal relation. The required *relata* are identified. And, a further consequence is that ‘[C]ause is not [...] prior to effect: both cause and effect are present propositions’.⁵⁷ Thus the argument from causation is said to be overcome. The result is as the presentist demands, a present relation between two present things. Apparently, the only cost is that one must accept that true propositions exist.

For those that do not accept the existence of propositions Bigelow offers another path. It is the path of the Epicurean philosopher Lucretius, whose ontology Bigelow cites as ‘very sparse indeed’. Recall from an earlier chapter that Bigelow subscribes to the supervenience principle: ‘what is true supervenes on what objects exist, what properties those objects have, and what relations they stand in’. This principle is in the spirit of Lucretius’ philosophy, which holds that ‘all that exist are just atoms in the void, and properties of these’.⁵⁸

One should think of both ‘atoms’ (matter) and ‘the void’ (space) as composing the material world. *Concreta* instantiate properties, but Lucretius thought that empty space does too. So Lucretius can hang his properties on the

⁵⁶ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties.” 42.

⁵⁷ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties.” 43.

⁵⁸ Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties.” 44.

object, 'empty space'. For example, consider the referent of the constituent 'the flame'. One might take this referent to be the physical instantiation of *the flame*, or one might take it to be a property of empty space that remains after the flame has ceased to be. This is an unusual view but one can suppose that properties might be associated with an empty part of space just as properties are associated with physical matter. In either case, we are told, we should see this place as possessing the property of *being the place where the flame burned*, pF , and *being the place where the smoke billowed*, pS .

Bigelow thinks there is a more efficient way of framing up our ontological commitment to non-present entities. One need only consider that matter and space compose 'the whole world' and that 'the world' is an object. Ultimately, he thinks the truth-making relata must be properties associated with 'the world'. And so relations are existence entailing because a relation can be said to stand between two distinct present properties, pF and pS . These kinds of 'properties of the whole world' that act as truth-makers are Lucretian properties.

If we set aside the problematic argument from relations, there remains another way of reconciling presentism using the Lucretian view. Take the past tense proposition <the Trojans were conquered>. If it is true that the Trojans were conquered, then this is an event that occurred in the world and all the worlds just like the actual one. And, if this is what happened in the actual world and all of the worlds like it, then it must be true to say of this world that it is a place where the Trojans were conquered. Given that this is the case, one may associate the actual world and nearby possible worlds where the Trojans were conquered with the property *being the place where the Trojans were conquered*. So, any past tense truth can be 'made true' in virtue of a Lucretian property.

Bigelow thinks there is nothing in the distinction between the view of the Stoics, that propositions are the relata, and that of Lucretius, that properties of the world are the relata. He thinks that the Stoic's true proposition can be compared to the Lucretian's property and so one need not postulate the existence of propositions in addition to properties. Bigelow calls upon work in semantics running back to Frege to show that it is reasonable to ascribe truth to our propositions in virtue of

the properties that express those truths. He thinks that we should view the relation between propositions and properties in the same way that the set theorist views the relation between numbers and sets. Bigelow explains this:

Since Frege, we have been accustomed to let sets play as surrogates for properties (or accidents). In place of a property of things, we talk of the set of things which have that property, the extension of the property. [...] The formal semantical stand-in for a property of a whole world, therefore, will be a set of worlds. And in formal semantics, a set of possible worlds is called a proposition.⁵⁹

On this account it seems that the existence of propositions is not necessary to truth-making. One may call upon propositions as truth-makers but really the truth-makers are properties. So, even if one takes propositions to be no more than abstract ideas, they can still be said to express truth in virtue of their relation to properties.

Bigelow's theory of Lucretian properties as truth-makers in presentism faces serious challenges due to the hypothetical nature of Lucretian properties. I turn to a deep analysis of these kinds complaints in chapter four. I save mention of these complaints until then because the complaints I discuss can be directed at both Lucretian properties and thisnesses so it is beneficial to provide an outline of thisnesses first. Having outlined Lucretianism I now turn to an analysis of *haecceitist* or thisness presentism.⁶⁰ I raise concerns as I go which are most useful to discuss in regard to thisness presentism specifically.

⁵⁹ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 46.

⁶⁰ For an earlier introduction to thisness presentism see: R.M. Adams. "Primitive thisness and primitive identity" *The Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979): 5-26. For discussion of *thisnesses* in recent literature see: Keller, "Presentism and truthmaking," 83-104, esp. 96-99, where it is presented as 'haecceitist presentism'.

Thisness presentism

Presentism, as it is standardly construed, is the view that only present entities exist or nothing exists which is not present.⁶¹ If one accepts presentism, then one must reconcile it with two other claims: (i) that true propositions may be about the past and (ii) that every true proposition is made true by some existent.⁶² Call the problem that is generated by this triad the *truth-maker objection*.

David Ingram has attempted to resolve this inconsistent triad by postulating presently existing thisnesses as the truth-makers for propositions that purport to be about the past. For example, take the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>. According to the truth-maker objection, presentists cannot say that *Caesar* and *the Rubicon (in 49 BC)* make the proposition true because Caesar is long dead and the Rubicon River is likely different now than it was in 49 BC. The thisness presentist, such as Ingram, responds by saying that Caesar's thisness, *being-(identical-with)-Caesar*, and the Rubicon's thisness, *being-(identical-with)-the-Rubicon*, make the proposition, <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>, true. The proposition is 'made true' by the higher-level properties instantiated by these thisnesses, *being-the-thisness-of-a-man-who-crossed-the-Rubicon* and *being-the-thisness-of-a-river-crossed-by-Caesar*. For any wholly past object, *x*, there exists a presently existing thisness of *x*, *T*. Subsequently, it is said that any proposition about *x* is made true (in part) by *T*. Thus, the inconsistency may be said to have been resolved.

David Ingram (2019) has argued that *thisnesses* are non-qualitative, *individual essences*⁶³ of the non-common property kind that resolve "a variety of metaphysical problems facing presentism."⁶⁴ I argue that if we accept thisnesses as truth-makers, then what makes a past-tense proposition true will differ from what makes a present-tense proposition true, despite that they may be about the same state of affairs. On the one hand, instantiated thisnesses make present-tense propositions true, and, on the other

⁶¹ See Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 35, for a detailed discussion on the second formulation of Presentism.

⁶² Kierland and Monton have shown how a similar inconsistency arises when we replace (ii) with the 'being-supervenience' thesis: 'truth supervenes on being'. This paper does not attempt to address Kierland and Monton's modification. See: Kierland, B. and Monton, B. "Presentism and the Objection from Being Supervenience," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 85, no. 3 (2007).

⁶³ Diekemper J. 'The ontology of thisness' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90 (2015), 50.

⁶⁴ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 4.

hand, uninstantiated thisnesses make past-tense propositions (about wholly past objects) true. Furthermore, I argue that thisnesses as *uninstantiated abstract entities* occupy a distinct ontological mode to their instantiated counterparts. One aim of this thesis is to argue that a consequence of accepting thisness presentism is the adoption of a bloated Meinongian ontology. The remainder of this chapter will provide a brief overview of thisness presentism and go on to consider possible implications that might make this approach undesirable to standard presentists.

The motivation behind Ingram's project is the need to solve a number of what may be generally termed *problems of reference* facing presentism. One of the most pressing is the need to identify upstanding presently existing entities to act as truth-makers for propositions about wholly past entities.⁶⁵ Ingram has argued that thisnesses fulfill this logical requirement. His account rests upon three central principles: the *nature, life* and *character* of a thisness.

A thisness, "*T*," is a unique property that an entity, "*x*," instantiates. *T* exemplifies what it is *to be x*.⁶⁶ For example, Jacinda Ardern exemplifies the thisness of *being-(identical-with)-Jacinda-Ardern* and no other entity than Jacinda Ardern can exemplify this property. David Ingram defines a *thisness* as:

the property of being a certain entity. That is, for some entity *x*, *x*'s thisness is the property *being x* (or, if you prefer, *being identical with x*). A thisness is a property of a novel sort: a particular, primitive, purely non-qualitative property. And, on my view every entity has a thisness.⁶⁷

On Ingram's analysis *T* must be a particular because there is a distinct *T* corresponding to every distinct *x*. If *T* is not a particular, then *T* will not uniquely correspond with *x* and there might be multiple *x*'s that exemplify *T*. This would be undesirable because a fundamental aspect of thisnesses is that they are unique to a

⁶⁵ This project is partly inspired by criticism of John Bigelow's Lucretian properties. See Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, 36-37, for such a criticism.

⁶⁶ For discussion of *thisnesses* in recent literature see: Adams R.M. "Primitive thisness and primitive identity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979): 5-26 & Keller S. "Presentism and truthmaking," 96-99.

⁶⁷ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 58.

distinct object (or entity). *T* must be primitive because *T* is not reducible to constituents or relations to other entities. Ingram says:

A thisness cannot be reduced to (or analysed in terms of) purely qualitative properties or relations to other entities. So, qua primitive property, a thisness is understood as a simple and unstructured entity. It is not a complex entity. [...] A simple unstructured (non-qualitative) thisness is not constituted by or made up of anything at all.⁶⁸

We must accept *T* as similar in kind to something like a brute fact; *T* is a primitive property and not reducible to other properties, just as a brute fact is not explained by other facts.⁶⁹ Finally, *T* is a non-qualitative property; it *involves* an entity. This is distinct from a qualitative property, which need not involve an entity. For example, Ingram says that *being the daughter of Barack Obama* is non-qualitative whereas *being a daughter* is qualitative.⁷⁰ The former property involves an entity - Barack Obama. The latter property need not involve a particular entity. A thisness becomes involved with an entity at the beginning of its *life*, which I now discuss.

Ingram defines the life of a thisness thus:

On my view, for any entity *x*, *x*'s thisness *T* comes into being with *x*, *T* is uniquely instantiated by *x* throughout *x*'s existence, and *T* continues to exist uninstantiated when *x* has ceased to exist.⁷¹

For example, when *Caesar* was born in 102 BC *Caesar's thisness* 'came into being'⁷², that is, the property *being-(identical-with)-Caesar* was first instantiated. A curious thing about thisnesses is that they are said to outlive what it is they instantiate. For example, *Caesar's thisness* still exists today, even if *Caesar* does not exist.

⁶⁸ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 59.

⁶⁹ Brute facts are those kinds of facts that have no explanation. For more information about brute facts, see the fine new collection of articles by: Vintiadis, Elly and Mekios, Constantinos (eds). *Brute Facts*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁷⁰ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 58.

⁷¹ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 61.

⁷² Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 61.

Consider what happens to T when x ceases to exist. On a standard reading, it might seem that T rigidly ontologically depends upon x and so x 's ceasing to exist will cause T to cease to exist. That is, for T to exist there must be an x .⁷³ Take the example of Caesar's thisness, *being-(identical-with)-Caesar*. For Caesar's thisness to exist it might seem that Caesar must exist. One might suppose that the existence of Caesar's thisness is rigidly ontologically dependent upon the existence of Caesar. After all, if Caesar does not exist, then it seems plausible that there would not exist an entity that exemplifies the property *being-(identical-with)-Caesar*. If ontological dependence between Caesar and his thisness is rigid, then as soon as *Caesar* ceases to exist, so too does his thisness. This explanation will not do for thisness presentism. Ingram argues that T 's ontological dependence upon x is *non-rigid*. He says:

a non-qualitative property N involves some entity x insofar as N depends upon x in a specific way, that is, N non-rigidly ontologically depends upon x .⁷⁴

He goes on to say:

a non-qualitative property that involves x can exist without x existing at the same time. Specifically, for any x , x 's *thisness* can exist in the absence of x . More precisely, I say that x 's thisness continues to exist uninstantiated after x has ceased to exist.⁷⁵

If x 's thisness (i.e., a non-qualitative property, N) continues to exist when x has ceased to exist then it must be the case that there is no rigid ontological dependence between T (N) and x . Even though T is uniquely instantiated by x , T does not depend upon x 's ongoing existence for its own. T was related to x but the present nature of T is to exist independently from x . To be clear, on Ingram's account a thisness is a non-qualitative property that does not entail the existence of any other entity.

⁷³ See Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties" for a discussion of this argument, and, of course, one may call upon the obvious discussion from Kripke for the original version of rigid designation. See: Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1980): 48-9.

⁷⁴ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 58-59.

⁷⁵ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 59.

Actualism and The Nature of Thisnesses

A concern that may arise when considering the life of a thisness is a consequence of the modal doctrine *actualism*, i.e. the view that only actual entities exist. Ingram rehearses an argument from Adams (1981, 1986) that concludes there are no thisnesses of non-actual entities. For a thisness, *T*, to stand in relation to an object, *x*, the modal doctrine of actualism requires that *x* is *actual* for it to relate to *T*. Ingram rejects this conclusion. He says:

On my view, a thisness (e.g., *x*'s thisness, the property *being x*) can exist without the relevant object (*x*). But, *x*'s thisness cannot exist *before* *x* exists; it can only continue to exist *after* *x* has existed.⁷⁶

Ingram thinks that *T* can exist if *x* has existed, not just if *x* exists. Therefore, *x* need not be actual for *T* to be actual. *T*'s ontological dependence upon *x* is non-rigid. The relation between *x* and *T* is momentary at best. Ingram explains:

[...] the relation obtains for an instant; *x* and *x*'s thisness come into being at the same moment. To be clear [non-rigid ontological dependence] is a variety of ontological dependence, not merely something like causal dependence. That is, the way that *x*'s thisness depends upon *x* is ontological and not causal. Thisnesses are abstract properties and abstracta do not enter into causal relations. Hence, the relation that initially connects a thisness to an object is not a causal relation.⁷⁷

A possible challenge that might be revealed here results from the apparent *relation* between an object and its thisness. This concern about ontological dependence is the same concern raised by Bigelow (1996).⁷⁸ That is, if the principle of relations (that 'for any relation, there must exist two relata') is true and there is a relation between *T* and *x*, then *T*'s existence would rigidly ontological depend upon *x*'s existence. Ingram accepts that relations are existence entailing but he thinks that a relation need only obtain for an instant to satisfy the principle. On Ingram's account, the principle of

⁷⁶ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 65.

⁷⁷ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 67.

⁷⁸ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties."

relations is satisfied because x and T did both exist at the same time, even if they do not now exist at the same time. Such a view dismisses the belief that there is presently a relation between x and T . This avoids the possible concern that a relation between x and T continues to obtain when x no longer exists.

The final consideration is the *character* of a thisness. Ingram has said:

On my view, x 's thisness T instantiates higher-level properties that indirectly characterise x , and such properties initially correspond to some lower-level properties of x . Put differently, there is a class of properties, instantiated by a thisness, which characterise the entity that initially instantiates the thisness; such properties of x 's thisness T indirectly characterise x in virtue of directly characterising T .⁷⁹

According to this view, a thisness, T , instantiates properties that correspond to an object, x . By way of example, Ingram says consider Taylor Swift's thisness. It instantiates the higher-level property *being the thisness of a singer*. This property corresponds with Taylor Swift, i.e., someone who instantiates the property *being a singer*. Ingram clarifies this dependency thus:

X 's thisness T gains higher-level properties that indirectly characterise x as a natural part of the relationship between an entity and its thisness; T instantiates properties that correspond to x 's properties. The relevant properties of T also depend (in a sense) on x 's properties.⁸⁰

Therefore, Swift's thisness will only instantiate a higher-level property if Swift herself instantiates the corresponding first-level property. Put plainly, if Swift did not instantiate the property *being a singer*, then her thisness would not instantiate the property *being the thisness of a singer*. Given the explanation thus far, it is clear that there is some form of dependence in play. Ingram subscribes to a non-causal, non-rigid ontological dependence between an object and its thisness. A thisness instantiates the properties it does as a consequence of the properties that are instantiated by the object

⁷⁹ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 69.

⁸⁰ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 69.

that it characterises. In other words, the properties that a thisness instantiates are *dependent* on the properties its object instantiates or has instantiated.

Truth-making and Thisness

Before moving forward, it is worthwhile to explain how thisnesses perform the truth-making function for propositions that appear to have identical constituents. Take the propositions <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> and <Caesar's thisness crossed the Rubicon>. Recall that 'Caesar', in the first proposition, refers to Caesar's thisness. Both propositions might appear to include Caesar's thisness as identical constituents. If this were the case, then it would not be possible to distinguish between the truth-makers for the two propositions. The constituents for distinct propositions cannot be identical so another explanation is needed to distinguish which entity any given proposition includes as its constituent. While the two propositions appear to have identical constituents, they are about different entities. The solution is to postulate thisnesses of thisnesses. Therefore, the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> includes Caesar's thisness as a constituent, and the proposition <Caesar's thisness crossed the Rubicon> includes the thisness of Caesar's thisness as a constituent. Thus, the problem is avoided because there are distinct truth-makers for each proposition.

Consider the lifecycle of thisnesses once more. Take the familiar proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>. When Caesar was alive the obvious truth-maker was at least in part *Caesar*. If 'Caesar' referred to the constituent *Caesar* when he was alive, and 'Caesar' refers to the constituent *Caesar's thisness* after Caesar's death, then the proposition appears to have different constituents and, consequently, have different truth-makers. The truth-maker for a proposition will change depending on whether an object is present or past. This is unacceptable because if the propositional constituents change and, consequently, the truth-makers change, then it looks like the truth of the present-tense proposition will be distinct from the truth of a past-tense proposition, even though nothing about the state of affairs has changed. Ingram recognises the problem and his solution is to say that the proposition is *always* (partly) constituted by Caesar's thisness. He says:

I propose thisnesses constitute all singular propositions. Hence, singular propositions about the present are also partly constituted by thisnesses (not present objects).⁸¹

Thus, even when Caesar was alive, the truth-maker for any given true proposition about him included Caesar's thisness (as well as *Caesar*). So, the truth-maker in a present tense proposition includes Caesar's thisness, just as the past-tense proposition does.⁸² On the face of it, this approach appears to deliver the advertised results. The present-tense proposition is (partly) constituted by the thisness, which is the same entity that (partly) constitutes the past-tense proposition. Therefore, a past-tense proposition can be said to share the same constituent as its present-tense counterpart. The obvious cost is that truth-makers are not just the particular objects we ordinarily think they are, even when those objects are present. Propositions are made true (at least partly) by abstract entities, thisnesses.

The Challenge of Reference to Wholly Past Objects

Ingram's formulation of a theory of thisnesses provides an apparent solution to the deep problems of reference facing standard presentism. The problem for presentists is the need to identify presently existing truth-makers for propositions about the past. Presentists cannot take the wholly past objects as the truth-makers because, according to presentism, these objects do not exist. In response, Ingram has postulated presently existing thisnesses as the truth-makers for past-tense propositions and outlined a tripartite of principles that define these entities: a thisness *T* is the property of *being-(identical-with)-x*; *T* comes into being when *x* does and *T* continues to exist even when *x* has ceased to; and *T* instantiates higher level properties that indirectly characterise *x*. This ontology allows Ingram to substitute the wholly past objects for their thisnesses in the truth-making analysis, and it appears to be a viable solution. Yet, a question that remains open is whether a thisness ontology delivers consistent results when analysing

⁸¹ Ingram, "Thisnesses, Propositions, and Truth," 10.

⁸² Intuitively, this solution seems peculiar. If *Caesar* is available as a truth-making object why wouldn't this object alone be sufficient for performing the truth-making function for a proposition about him? It seems as though the only reason for not enlisting *Caesar* alone as the truth-making entity for a present-tense proposition about Caesar is to achieve consistency between past and present-tense propositions. But this doesn't explain why we shouldn't just enlist *Caesar* alone as a truth-maker for a present-tense proposition that includes 'Caesar' as a constituent.

the truth-makers for propositions. I argue that it does not. My argument rests on the premise that an *instantiated* thisness is distinct from an *uninstantiated* thisness. Furthermore, I suggest that the thisness solution entails alternative modes of being to the modes ordinarily accepted by presentists. I say the resultant ontology is covertly Meinongian and this should be cause for concern.

Here's the crux of the challenge. Ingram says that 'one important upshot' of his approach is that 'the truth-values of (true) propositions about the past do not change in an objectionable way'.⁸³ This might be the case, but I say the truth-makers change and so that which is reported as true is not consistent. For example, consider the following propositions: at t_1 <Caesar is crossing the Rubicon> P and at t_2 <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> P1. Take the actual *Caesar* as x and the constituent 'Caesar' as T . Recall that Ingram says T is Caesar's thisness. At t_1 , T is an instantiated thisness. At t_2 , T is an uninstantiated thisness. Therefore, T changes from occupying one mode of thisness at t_1 to a different mode of thisness at t_2 . As a result, the truth-maker for P is distinct from the truth-maker for P1.

This challenge is two-pronged. On the one hand is the obvious change in modes of thisness that T goes through over its lifetime. This change, and in particular the nature of an *uninstantiated* thisness, raises many questions. The pressing problem is what mode of being we should consider an *uninstantiated* thisness to occupy. It seems that the uninstantiated thisness of a non-existent particular is an unusual entity, to say the least. It's not clear why such an entity occupying such a mode should be taken as an *existent* at all. Put somewhat bluntly, an uninstantiated thisness of some wholly past object appears to share the same qualities that would be associated with a Meinongian non-existent object.

A corresponding ontology that Ingram would resist but is nevertheless highly instructive can be drawn from Meinong's theory. According to Meinong, at t_1 *Caesar* occupies the realm of *existent* objects (entities). As such, so too does his thisness. This is because T is instantiated and T , therefore, occupies an existent mode of being; the mode of being instantiated by a spatio-temporally located concrete object. At t_2 , Meinong would say that T occupies the realm of *subsistent* objects (entities). T is not

⁸³ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 126.

instantiated by a spatio-temporally located object but nevertheless has being. Meinong has said that it is the *sosein* of x (e.g. the *so-being* of *Caesar*) that allows us to meaningfully refer to x when x does not exist.⁸⁴ What strikes me about this analysis is that the concept of *sosein* that Meinong describes is parallel to the *character* of thisness that Ingram describes. T instantiates the same characteristics that make up x ; T is *identical* to x . Some say that T is x . The point of difference between Meinong's theory and Ingram's is plain to see. Where Meinong postulates non-existent objects characterised by their *sosein* Ingram postulates uninstantiated thisnesses characterised by their higher-level properties. But these higher-level properties are equivalent to the properties that characterise x . If we consider T at t_2 in Ingram's theory to be equivalent to a non-existent x in Meinong's ontology there is little to distinguish the two views.

On the other hand, a consequence of the thisness solution appears to be that the truth-maker for a past-tense proposition is distinct from the truth-maker for a present-tense proposition about the same state of affairs. This outcome results from T 's changing modes. The truth-maker that is enlisted depends on whether or not x exists. When x exists, the truth-maker is an instantiated thisness, and when x does not exist, the truth-maker is an uninstantiated thisness. In light of this change in modes, one question to ask is why should x 's status at t_2 change the truth-maker for a proposition whose truth was determined at t_1 ? It seems to me that once any truth-maker for a given state of affairs is established that truth-maker must remain the same. To frame this up as a challenge, if the truth-maker has changed, who is to say that the past state of affairs has not changed?

I assume it to be the case that the truth of any past state of affairs is fixed. Therefore, the truth-makers that determine the truth of such states of affairs must also be fixed. Any change in the truth-makers would suggest that the past has somehow changed, and this would be a bad result for presentists. For example, when Caesar crossed the Rubicon at t_1 the truth-makers for this fact were established. These truth-makers should be the same at t_2 if consistency is to be maintained. Truth is the value we assign to a proposition when it accurately reports the way the world is. If truth-

⁸⁴ Alexius Meinong, "On the theory of objects." (translation of 'Über Gegenstandstheorie', 1904). In Roderick Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*. (Free Press. 1960) pp. 76-117.

makers for the same states of affairs change over time we might have reason to doubt that the past is fixed.

To press the point, consider *P* at a time later than t_1 but when Caesar still exists t_{1*} . At t_{1*} the truth-maker is the same as at t_1 , even though *P* is present-tense and *P1* is past-tense. I.e. The truth-maker for the fact of Caesar's crossing the Rubicon in *P* is an *instantiated* thisness. And at t_{1*} the truth-maker for the past-tense proposition about the same fact is also an *instantiated* thisness. Yet at t_2 , the truth-maker is distinct. It is an *uninstantiated* thisness. It seems peculiar that the truth-maker should change given that nothing has changed about the state of affairs at t_1 , at least so we assume. This inconsistency is generated by the fact that *T* ceases to be instantiated when *x* leaves the domain of existent entities. *T* becomes the *uninstantiated* ghost of a once-existent object, and, such an entity sounds a lot like a non-existent object.

The crux of the second challenge is revealed via an analysis of truth-makers. The thisness presentist's explanation of propositions shows that the truth-makers for past tense propositions (about wholly past objects) differ from those that do the same job for present tense propositions regarding the same states of affairs. The most troubling result occurs when we consider that the mode of thisness changes between past-tense propositions about *merely* past (i.e. not *wholly* past) objects versus past-tense propositions about *wholly* past objects. Even though the state of affairs has not changed the constituent is distinct, and this is cause for concern.

To reiterate the problem in plain language, at a time when *Caesar* exists t_1 , *T* occupies the mode of an instantiated existent. At a later time when *Caesar* no longer exists t_2 , *T* occupies the mode of an uninstantiated existent. We may wish to say that at t_2 *T* is like an uninstantiated colour property, except uninstantiated colour properties are more like universals. Thisnesses by their very nature are not universals. They are particulars. It is possible, perhaps necessary, that an uninstantiated universal can be instantiated. An uninstantiated thisness on the other hand is wholly, forevermore uninstantiated. For example, unless one adheres to the view that there are no universal properties, the common view is that the uninstantiated *redness* of a particular apple that no longer exists is the same *redness* that many other objects instantiate, probably red apples. Caesar's thisness is not instantiated by any other objects (or entities). Only *Caesar* can instantiate *T* and so it is not clear what the difference is between a non-

existent T (or x) and an uninstantiated T . At t_2 the uninstantiated entity T is not only abstract, but wholly and forevermore *uninstantiated*. Such a mode of thisness is clearly distinct from the mode T occupied at t_1 , and this distinguishes two unique modes of thisness and consequently two distinct truth-makers.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I first highlight the great progress Ingram has made in explicating a theory of thisnesses. His work has set the scene for much debate regarding the entities that must be included in a robust theory of Presentism. In particular, Ingram's work exposes the need that presentists have for accepting unusual entities into their ontology. These entities have been reported to solve the truth-maker problem, but further work is required to demonstrate that the truth-makers for past-tense propositions are consistent with the truth-makers for their present-tense counterparts. As it stands, the current picture outlined might lead some to question whether the past is fixed. If a solution to this problem is not provided there is good reason to doubt the overall veracity of the theory. A simpler approach, perhaps, is to do away with talk of *uninstantiated* thisnesses altogether and accept Meinongian non-existent objects into the presentist's ontology.

Chapter 4. Deeper Consequences of Postulating Surrogate Entities

Introduction

In chapter one I outlined the central problem of presentism, namely the problem of no truth-makers that arises from the presentist's denial of the existence of wholly past objects. The surrogate entities postulated by Bigelow and Ingram are motivated largely by the need to respond to this problem and their versions of presentism attempt to overcome the problem of no truth-makers by postulating presently existing *abstracta* to act as truth-makers for truth-bearers about wholly past objects. If one is inclined to accept into their ontology either Lucretian properties or thisnesses, then the previously thought missing truth-makers will appear to have been located. However, I argue that more problems arise as a consequence of the existence of the kinds of objects (or entities) postulated. In this chapter, I will introduce two novel problems that have not been addressed. These problems are obvious upon reflection, yet analysis of them is lacking. It would seem that the enthusiasm to solve the central problem has diverted attention from the broad implications entailed by the solutions put forward. I distinguish two challenges to the presentist and call them *The Conflation Problem* and *The Problem of Trans-temporal (Non)existence*, but they are really part of the same problem. The first problem I present as the complaint that the presentist bundles together into the same ontological category wholly past objects with merely non-existent objects. The second problem arises from the presentist's assertion that *some* objects traverse the ontological divide from non-existent to existent and back again whilst others do not. This generates a subsequent concern about why it is the case that only some non-existent objects become existent but others do not; and, even more troubling whether we should suppose merely non-existent objects (such as the unicorn) might come into being just as other objects have (such as Caesar).

Before discussing the main two arguments outlined above I briefly introduce two common complaints about surrogate entities, (i) that they are

‘dubious’ and (ii) that they ‘point beyond’ their instances. Introducing these criticisms sets up the subsequent discussion of the two deeper problems.

‘Dubious’ entities that ‘point beyond’

Many criticisms of surrogate entities arise from the complaint that they are ‘dubious’ or ‘merely hypothetical’.⁸⁵ By this it is meant that they ought not be considered an item in the ontological inventory. Even if they were, there is a further charge that they ‘point beyond’ their instances. These criticisms have been raised in one form or another by Crisp (2007), Cameron (2011), and Sider (2001). In what follows, I will briefly touch upon the complaint that these entities are ‘dubious’ before arguing that, whether or not they are dubious, one must admit that they do ‘point beyond’ their instances. If my analysis is correct, then one consequence is that Ockham’s razor is dulled by the multiplication of kinds of objects the introduction of surrogate entities entails.

Thomas Crisp (2007), a staunch defender of presentism, has distinguished ‘dubious’ hypothetical properties (e.g., Lucretian properties) from ‘upstanding’ categorical properties.⁸⁶ He has said that we are sceptical of Lucretian properties because they are merely hypothetical. For example, it is not clear how the property *being formerly short* is exemplified. An analysis of a tall person who is said to possess this property will not turn up any obvious expression of the property. Hence, such properties are merely hypothetical. They are non-occurrent. A categorical property is one that is self-evident or apparent. For example, a tall person obviously exemplifies the property *being tall*. *Being tall* is an occurrent property. The nature of hypothetical properties may lead one to doubt that such things exist. They do not seem to carve nature at its joints.

Crisp does offer a possible solution for the Lucretian so that he might avoid having his surrogate entities labelled dubious. If one can deduce categorical

⁸⁵ For example, see Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, 39-41, and Crisp, “Presentism and the Grounding Objection,” 93-97.

⁸⁶ For the complaint that these properties are ‘hypothetical’ see: Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, 39-41, and, Crisp, “Presentism and the grounding objection,” 93. For use of the term ‘upstanding’ see: Jonathan Tallant & David Ingram. “Nefarious Presentism.” *Philosophical Quarterly* 65, no. 260 (2015):355-371.

properties from hypothetical ones, Crisp has said that the resultant ontology might escape the charge of dubiousness. For example, the property *being formerly short* can be restated as the conjoiner of the properties *being short* and *being past*. *Being short* is a categorical property but *being past* is itself hypothetical. So, if this solution is to be accepted one still has to grant that there are unanalysable primitive tensed properties. And, primitive past tense properties do not appear to be any less dubious than Lucretian properties, because they too are hypothetical. So it is that Lucretian properties are labelled dubious.

If the presentist says that hypothetical properties exist and his detractor says that they do not, then the debate risks breaking down into a match of talking past each other. To be charitable to the presentist it is worthwhile to accept at face value the objects that he posits and to analyse the consequent ontology. If Lucretian properties - taken at face value - can be shown to lead to undesirable consequences, a different reason to reject them might arise.

Besides the complaint that Lucretian properties are dubious because they are hypothetical, another common complaint about these properties is that they 'point beyond'. Consider the property of *being formerly short*, call it *Fs*, and apply it to Barack Obama. On one reading it is true that Obama was formerly short.⁸⁷ One might say that a tall person was at some time short. But, a question remains about what makes the proposition <Obama was short> true at present. The surrogate-entity presentist says that some abstract property is the truth-maker for the proposition. Yet, even if one says that Obama presently instantiates this property, or perhaps that the world does, or perhaps it floats free, the truth that such a truth-maker expresses can only be found by looking beyond the property. The only thing that could make it true that Obama was formerly short is a short Obama. So even if a surrogate entity expresses the facts of a matter, that surrogate entity only does so in virtue of its reference to, or involvement with some other object.

⁸⁷ It is worth noting that a property such as *being formerly short* is contextual. For example, the child Obama is short compared to the adult Obama, but the child Obama might not have been short compared to other children in the same age group. If the context is of the second kind then one might think that Obama can never instantiate this property. In providing this example I intend the context implied in the first instance. That is, that the child Obama has the property of *being formerly short* - compared to the adult Obama - if there is such a property to possess at all.

If Lucretian properties are accepted into one's ontology and it is the case that these properties *point beyond* one might wonder what could lie *beyond* to point to. In the absence of an existent object *beyond* the Lucretian property to point to, it would seem that there only remains one obvious, if highly undesirable choice; a *non-existent object*. How so, the Lucretian asks. Consider the dubiousness of Lucretian properties. If the charge that they point beyond is accepted, it seems that Lucretian properties are merely truth bearers themselves. If the Lucretian takes up this challenge, he might want to posit further *abstracta*. But, it is not clear what kind of abstracta could sit beyond Lucretian properties. Recall, even if all that is left is empty space, there will still exist the property of *being the place where Troy was conquered*. In such a case we can deduce that the world will be made up of empty space and properties. One might say that empty space possesses the property of *being the place where Troy was conquered*, so one might think that the world instantiates this property. But, there is nothing about empty space, or the world now, that exemplifies this fact in isolation from the state of affairs itself. A property of the world cannot act as a fundamental truth-maker without involving the objects that it points to. As a consequence, it seems that Lucretian properties point beyond themselves to something else which performs the role of truth-maker.

Bigelow would disagree with my analysis. He would say that Lucretian properties 'point beyond' to nothing; that they are fundamental. At the risk of talking past one another, I say this cannot be the case. I say that Lucretian properties do not provide a sufficient ontological base to be taken as truth-makers. A Lucretian property must involve other objects in order to act as truth-makers. If this response is denied, then one must accept that it is true that the past was the way it was in virtue of the way the world is today. In other words, perhaps the world came into being today and instantiated all the properties it has and this is what makes it true that Troy was conquered - even though there was never a past time when Troy was conquered. There must be something more within the presentist's ontological landscape that makes past tense propositions true.

To press my point, consider the following example: When one speaks of an object, one refers to something. When I say that *my five year old self was one meter*

tall, the sense of the sentence points beyond the mere words that comprise the sentence. The words that make up the sentence point to something beyond them and in the world because the sentence itself is supposed to be about something in the world. The Lucretian will argue that my words point to the property of the world *having been a place where my five year old self was one meter tall* (P1). Such a property must be about something since the property refers to something beyond itself. A Lucretian property is about something else, the object to which it supposedly refers. It refers to something beyond itself, otherwise it wouldn't have any substantive metaphysical commitments attached to it. We must establish what Lucretian properties are referring to in order to get to the most fundamental truth-makers.

Consider two propositions: (P1) <my five year old self was 100 centimetres tall>, and: (P2) <my five year old self was 110 centimetres tall>. There is a Lucretian property that makes one of these propositions true. But, nothing obvious about the world today reveals the truth about the way the world was at the time at which one of these propositions was true, and the other false. I would contend that the Lucretian solution just takes propositions and dresses them up as properties - but still fails to arrive at the truth-makers that are required to 'make' a proposition true. It would seem that one can take any proposition about the past and insert the proviso 'having been a place where...' in front of it and assert that a truth has been established. But this is not the case. Perhaps my five year old self was 100 centimetres tall. Then, one might argue that it is correct to say that the world instantiates the property of *having been a place where my five year old self was 100 centimeters tall*. But perhaps my five year old self was 110 centimetres tall and the world really instantiates the property of *having been a place where my five year old self was 110 centimetres tall*. How are we to establish which world property is genuine? One must look beyond a Lucretian property to establish the truth of a proposition.

Lucretian properties are much like the shadows cast by shadow puppets. Without an actual puppet, there is no shadow to be cast. One could take any shaded ground and say that there is a puppet, but this is to misunderstand the relationship between the puppet and its shadow. The same seems true of Lucretian properties

when one takes a place in the world and ascribes to it some property about some past object. If there is such a property of the world as *having been a place where my five year old self is 100 centimetres tall*, I say such a property is merely the shadow cast by my five year old self and his being a certain height. Furthermore, it is necessary that there be an object beyond a shadow or else the shadow could not be cast. One would be mistaken to think that a shadow exemplifies being the object that casts it. A shadow merely exemplifies being a shadow. And, perhaps one is also mistaken to take a Lucretian property, as exemplifying the object (or state of affairs) that it ‘stands in’ for. Put another way, perhaps the Lucretian property is not the ontological base.

One might object that Lucretian properties are not like shadows because they are about the world *now*. As such, the shadow cast by the property need not be the same shadow cast by my five year old self, which does not exist now. Lucretian properties exist in virtue of the way the world is *now*. But this argument mistakes the proper object under dispute. If Lucretian properties reveal anything about the past, they must be about the past objects to which they refer. No truth value is apparently obtainable from a Lucretian property about the past taken in isolation from the past objects to which it refers. It would seem that such properties must *refer* to something other than ‘the world’ now or else they cannot relate to truth about the way the world was. If they merely refer to ‘the world’ now, then they are about the world now, not the world then.

I have thus far outlined the common complaints that have been laid against surrogate entities. These complaints have most commonly been directed at Lucretian properties but they can equally be served up against thisnesses. These complaints are put forward as reasons to reject surrogate entities outright. Perhaps they are but to give presentism the most charitable reading I will not rule out surrogate entities outright. It seems to me that even if they are accepted into one’s ontology further problems arise. Even if surrogate entities are granted the ontology implied by these deeper problems should lead presentists to rethink the ontology that they are committed to.

Introducing the deeper problems

The presentist says that Socrates and Sherlock Holmes are both non-existent. As such, it is implied that they are the same kinds of things. It feels somewhat odd to need to present this argument, but I say that Socrates and Sherlock Holmes are not the same kinds of things. Consider the presentist's response to the following question: Are Socrates and Sherlock Holmes ontological equals? Socrates is non-existent and Sherlock Holmes is non-existent, so the response must be in the affirmative. Yet, Socrates was once an existent object but Sherlock Holmes never was. As such, we can assert that there was a time, t_1 when they were distinct. If we cast our minds back to a time before Socrates was born, t_2 , both objects were at that time non-existent once before. A representation of this timeline can be constructed thus:

	t_2 -----	t_1 -----	t
Socrates	nonexistent	existent	nonexistent
Sherlock Holmes	nonexistent	nonexistent	nonexistent

The ontological status of these objects at t_1 should raise suspicions that Socrates and Sherlock Holmes are ontologically distinct. Indeed, the presentist agrees that they were, at t_1 . But, prior to that time and after that time Socrates and Sherlock Holmes are said to both be non-existent. That they are ontological equals (now) seems problematic. One might say that Socrates has come into being and then gone out of existence, ontologically speaking. The problem is that non-existence is the same mode for Socrates after his death as it is for Sherlock Holmes.

The picture gets more puzzling for the presentist. Before t_1 both Socrates and Sherlock Holmes were non-existent and unknown. At t_1 Socrates was instantiated; he became an existent entity. Sherlock Holmes was non-existent and remains so. He did not come into being in the same way as Socrates. Sherlock Holmes was not and has never been instantiated. Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character. So, *he* is always non-existent, if non-existent at all. Yet the presentist conflates these two distinct kinds of objects and categorises them in the same ontological category.

The presentist will oppose the conflation of Socrates and Sherlock Holmes by arguing that the two are distinct at t_1 but not at t_2 or t . So, there is no conflation of ontologically distinct kinds of objects. Nevertheless, I introduce the following argument to try and persuade the presentist that they are distinct. Consider the following propositions:

- a. Sherlock Holmes lives with Dr. Watson.
- b. Sherlock Holmes lived with Dr. Watson.
- c. Socrates drinks hemlock.
- d. Socrates drank hemlock.

A t_1 both the past- and present-tense proposition where the referent is *Sherlock Holmes* (a and b) and the past-tense proposition where the referent is *Socrates* (d) has as its subject the non-existent object Socrates. This is not the case for the present-tense proposition about Socrates (c). This proposition has as its subject an existent object, namely the living Socrates. The mode of being of the subject's referent in c appears to be distinct from that of the referents in a, b and d. Whatever the referents of the constituents in a, b and d may be, these propositions have as their subjects objects that do not exist. The present tense proposition has the living Socrates as its subject, an object that does exist. Therefore, the modes of being for the subjects of each proposition must be distinct.

The truth value satisfaction conditions for 'Sherlock Holmes' in a and b are the same because each proposition involves a non-existent object in its subject. And, even if the referent of the constituent is a surrogate entity, that surrogate entity 'stands in' for a non-existent object in both propositions. The truth value satisfaction conditions for 'Socrates' in c and d are distinct. In d, as with a and b, the referent of the subject is non-existent. However, in c the referent of 'Socrates' either is *Socrates*, an existent object, or it is some kind of surrogate entity that 'stands in' for an existent object. The result is that the truth value satisfaction conditions are the same between a and b, as would be expected, yet distinct for the same state of affairs in c and d.

Here are two ways of interpreting the truth value satisfaction conditions of the propositions about Socrates. Take the subject's constituent 'Socrates' and assume that the living man *Socrates* is its referent. On this reading of c, 'Socrates' refers to an existent object. In d, it refers to a non-existent object. Now assume that 'Socrates' refers to a surrogate entity. In c, the referent is an entity entailing the existence of its object, yet in d the referent fails to entail existence. The distinction between c and d is unacceptable because it is problematic to consider that the truth value satisfaction conditions for the same states of affairs should change over time. Furthermore, the verb only reports whether the state of affairs is present or not, but it does not speak of existence.

The propositions about Sherlock Holmes are even less clear. Assume that the referent of 'Sherlock Holmes' is a surrogate entity. In a the referent entails a non-existent object even though the verb is present tense. In b the referent also entails a non-existent object but the verb is past-tense. So, the mode that the referent entails in a is the same as in b (as would be expected to achieve consistent truth value satisfaction conditions) but it is distinct from the mode that the referent entails in c (which is an existent object when the verb is present tense). In other words, the presentist employs a different approach to evaluating the truth value satisfaction conditions between a and b on the one hand and c and d on the other. And so, he employs different criteria to assess similarly structured propositions with the same tense, i.e. between a and c.

There should be no change in the truth value satisfaction conditions for the propositions c and d because they describe the same state of affairs. If the truth value satisfaction conditions are not consistent across c and d, then the surrogate entities referred to in the proposition do not fulfil the role that the object would fulfil if the proposition contained a reference to a presently existing object. Surrogate entities are required to do the same job that the object they stand in for would do were it the referent. Furthermore, the truth value satisfaction conditions are not consistently applied when considering the analysis of a and b compared to c and d. This shows that there must be a distinction in kind between the referent of 'Sherlock Holmes' and the referent of 'Socrates'. The presentist conflates these kinds of objects when he calls them both non-existent. But this analysis of the truth value

satisfaction conditions shows that they are not the same kinds of objects. If they were the same kinds of objects, then the truth value satisfaction conditions that entail the mode of being would be consistent between b and d. However the satisfaction conditions are distinct. The mode of being entailed by the referent of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in b is distinct from the mode of being entailed by the referent of ‘Socrates’.

When the presentist conflates these different kinds of non-existent objects he faces a problem that the eternalist does not. For the eternalist, objects either exist or they do not. For example, the eternalist takes the referent of ‘Socrates’ to always be the existent *Socrates*. Whatever he takes the referent of the non-existent object ‘Sherlock Holmes’ to be it is always the same thing also. As such, for the eternalist there is no change in the truth value satisfaction conditions of the propositions. And, there is no conflation of wholly past objects into the same category as non-existent objects. For the presentist, objects come into and go out of existence. This leads to inconsistencies in the truth value satisfaction conditions. The presentist’s analysis of propositions reveals a distinction between objects that are always non-existent and objects that are sometimes non-existent and sometimes existent. This distinction motivates the subsequent problem of trans-temporal (non)existence, which I now turn to.

The problem of trans-temporal (non)existence

Above, I provided some reasons for thinking that the referents of ‘Socrates’ and ‘Sherlock Holmes’ should be considered ontologically distinct. If these referents are taken to be surrogate entities I say that the modes of these entities must be distinct, or, they must entail different modes of non-existence in their objects without appealing to some property of existence. However, there is a deeper problem regarding presentism concerning the most fundamental questions in metaphysics. The most fundamental question, of course, is ‘what exists?’ A further question is ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’. I consider four related questions that are directly relevant to the philosophy of time. These questions are:

1. Why/How does nothing (i.e. a non-existent thing) become something (i.e. an existent thing)?
2. Why/How does something (i.e. an existent thing) become nothing (i.e. a non-existent thing)?
3. Why/How do some things that do not exist become existent when other things do not?
4. If some non-existent things become existent what good reason do we have for thinking that all non-existent things might not become existent also?

I do not intend to address and answer these questions one by one. I introduce them to draw out the common feature that concerns an object's coming into and going out of existence. The presentist's thesis requires the view that objects come into and go out of *being*. But it does not explain why we should believe that objects do this or why only some objects perform this ontological feat whilst others do not.

Let's return to the contrast between the once living but now dead Socrates and the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes. Are the referents of the proposition's constituents 'Socrates' and 'Sherlock Holmes', ontologically the same kinds of things? If the answer is affirmative, there seems little reason to think that only one of them could become existent whilst the other could not. If it is the nature of non-existent objects to become existent, then one should assume that this is what will happen. If it is the nature of non-existent objects to never become existent then this is what one should suppose they will do. If one thinks that there is a distinction between the ontological modes that non-existent objects can enter into then it seems that we should assert that there is a distinction in kind between non-existent things. In other words, it seems that not all non-existent objects are ontologically alike. If this is not admitted then there seems no good reason to think that other non-existent objects, for example Sherlock Holmes, might not enter into existence. Here is an argument for this:

A2. The argument for all non-existent kinds coming into existence

P1 Socrates is existent (*premise*)

P2 Before Socrates became existent he was non-existent (*premise*)

- P3 Non-existent things *become* existent (P1-P2)
P4 Sherlock Holmes is non-existent (*premise*)
C Therefore, Sherlock Holmes will *become* existent (P3-P4)

Obviously, the premise to critique is P3. That is, not *all* non-existent things become existent. But, isn't this just to say that there is a distinction between different kinds of non-existent things? Some non-existent objects occupy a mode that allows them to cross into existence and some of them do not. It would seem that the presentist is committed to distinguishing between different kinds of non-existent things. If the presentist is committed to this distinction, there is reason to think that the presentist is also committed to some form of Meinongianism. Furthermore, if there was not a distinction in the modes of being that objects occupy *prior to* existing, then we would have no good reason to think that Sherlock Holmes might not come into existence.

The problem of temporal *becoming*

Even before some non-existent objects become existent there is a time when they might become known. For example, before Socrates was conceived his parents might have planned to have a boy child called 'Socrates'. The 'Socrates idea' was instantiated, although Socrates still did not exist. Yet other non-existent objects never become more than an idea. (Other non-existent objects still, do not even achieve this status.) So the question to ponder is at what point does the ontological mode of the object change, if it changes at all? Consider something Socrates' father might have said, even before Socrates was conceived: "I am going to create a great philosopher and call him 'Socrates'." And, consider something Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might have said before he even put pen to paper to write about Sherlock Holmes: "I am going to create a great Detective and call him 'Sherlock Holmes'." Most would think it was the case that Socrates still remained a non-existent object at this time, and it would equally be thought that Sherlock Holmes remained so. Yet, something changed regarding the status of Sherlock Holmes. This was the point of his conception, whatever *he* is conceived to be. Socrates on the other hand still might not have *become*. Socrates might have remained nothing more than an

idea in his father's mind, or possibly a fictional character himself (and all the worse off philosophy would be). Yet, Socrates did become and he was an existent object.

One might say that Sherlock Holmes was instantiated at the point that Arthur Conan Doyle thought of him, as a fictional character - mere *abstracta* - even though Sherlock Holmes is non-existent. But if this was the case, we should also say that Socrates instantiated, and that he was a fictional character - mere *abstracta* - even though the person Socrates did not yet exist. But surely this is wrong. Socrates' father did not intend to create a fictional character whereas Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did. Furthermore, to think of Socrates' father's utterance as creating a fictional character is to misunderstand fictional characters. Even if one took Socrates' father's utterance as creating a fictional character this would be proven wrong when Socrates was born. So it was, that two non-existent objects became known, in the same way, yet only one of them became existent. There must be something about the referents of 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Socrates' that distinguishes them, and, the distinction must be seen to be ontological.

One might think the puzzle can be solved by supposing that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle could have conceived a boy child and called him 'Sherlock Holmes'. So, the distinction would come about via the act of conception, in virtue of the physical instantiation of the object. But, then Sherlock Holmes and Socrates would be the same kinds of things. No puzzle of temporal becoming would arise. The problem only arises due to the conflation of distinct non-existent kinds of objects. Furthermore, the problem of changing truth value satisfaction conditions and trans-temporal (non)existence would remain.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have raised two common complaints against the surrogate entities approach; that surrogate entities are dubious and that they point beyond their instances. Even if surrogate entities are taken as 'upstanding' it seems that it is part of their nature to point beyond their own instantiations to a deeper ground of truth. As a consequence of pointing beyond themselves, modes of (non)being of the objects that they point to are implied. But even on a charitable reading of the

ontology that is implied, inconsistencies arise in the logical analysis of pairs of propositions.

Furthermore, if wholly past objects and merely non-existent objects are ontologically categorised together, questions arise regarding the likeness of these kinds of things, or the likenesses entailed by the objects that refer to them at least. The approach the presentist has adopted ontologically conflates distinct kinds of non-existent objects but the explanation provided around this conflation is lacking. As a consequence, a great many puzzling metaphysical questions arise, namely the problems of trans-temporal (non)existence and the problem of temporal becoming. In light of these problems, one should be led to question the ontological commitments of the presentist. It seems that presentists are ontologically committed to more than they overtly say they are and given my analysis it seems that presentists need to be more honest about what these commitments are.

Chapter 5. Meinongian Presentism

Introduction

For the presentist, wholly past (and wholly future) objects are non-*actual* and do not exist. The affinity for *actualist* ontology restricts the standard presentist to resolve the central problem. A non-standard version of presentism which is not biased towards the actual is that of the Meinongian Presentist.⁸⁸ The Meinongian presentist adheres to the same thesis as the surrogate entities presentist that nothing exists which is not present. However, the Meinongian presentist is not restricted by *actuality* because they accept the thesis that *there are* non-existent objects. Take the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon>. Whilst the surrogate entities presentist says ‘Caesar’ refers to an abstract ‘surrogate’ entity, the Meinongian presentist says that ‘Caesar’ refers to the wholly past non-existent object, *Caesar*. Because of this, the Meinongian presentist claims to have resolved the central problem facing presentism. In what follows, I will broadly outline the theory of Meinongian presentism. I will then draw comparisons between the surrogate entities presentist’s approach and the Meinongian presentist’s approach in order to show that the two theories lead to the same consequence.

Meinongian thesis

Meinongian ontology subscribes to the following central theses as stated by Richard (Routley) Sylvan (1980):

- M1) Everything whatsoever is an “object”.
- M2) Many objects do not “exist”.
- M3) Non-existent objects are constituted in one way or another and have determinate natures, and thus they have properties.
- * Properties may be divided into characterising and non-characterising properties, allowing the formulation of further theses. Namely:
- M4) Existence is not a characterising property of any object.

⁸⁸ For a full introduction to a version of Meinongian Presentism see: Michele Paolini Paoletti, “A Sketch of (an actually serious) Meinongian Presentism,” *Metaphysica*, 17, no. 1 (2016):1-18.

- M5) Essence precedes existence. That is, every object possesses the characteristics it does irrespective of whether it exists.
- M6) If an object can be characterised, that object has those characteristics used to describe it.⁸⁹

According to M1, *everything* is an object. Recall in chapter two I said that the term ‘objects’ denotes all of the *actual* things, that is all of the things that fall within the range of the presentist’s existential quantifiers. On the Meinongian’s account non-actual things are also objects and so the Meinongian quantifies over non-actual objects as well as actual objects. For example, the Meinongian takes the round-square to be an object just as they take the Eiffel Tower to be an object. According to M2 some objects do not exist. Therefore, the Meinongian holds that *there are*⁹⁰ objects that do not exist. Call these objects ‘non-existent’. The Meinongian presentist thinks that there are wholly past objects, but such objects do not exist. For example, the referent of ‘Caesar’ in the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> is the wholly past object *Caesar*, and he does not exist.

According to M3, non-existent objects have properties. So, it is perfectly acceptable to quantify over *Caesar* even though *Caesar* does not exist. I will discuss Meinong’s conception of ‘properties’ (loosely, ‘*sosein*’) in more detail shortly. Roughly speaking properties may be either ‘characterising’ or ‘non-characterising’. A characterising property, also called a *nuclear* property, denotes the nature of an object whilst a non-characterising property, also called an *extranuclear* property, does not denote the nature of an object. Extranuclear properties do not constitute an object but they may supervene on an object’s nuclear properties.⁹¹

By way of explanation, consider the round-square. It possesses both *roundness* and *squareness*. These are its nuclear properties; they characterise the

⁸⁹ Richard Sylvan. *Exploring Meinong's jungle and beyond: an investigation of noneism and the theory of items*. Canberra: ANU, Research School of Social Sciences. (1980). 2-3.

⁹⁰ Note the distinction between the terms ‘there are’ and ‘exists’. On the Meinongian’s account one may say that ‘there are’ objects which exist but also that ‘there are’ objects which do not exist. Therefore, ‘there are’ is a catch-all phrase encompassing everything in totality, whereas ‘exist’ is specific to only a subset of what there is in totality.

⁹¹ For a discussion of this distinction see: Terence Parsons. *Nonexistent Objects* (Yale University Press, 1980), 23.

object and so are part of the object's 'nature'. An object's extranuclear properties are things like *being determined by (the nuclear property) 'roundness'*, or *being possible*. Extranuclear properties do not constitute an object's nature.⁹² Thus, it is clear to see how such extranuclear properties supervene on nuclear properties but do not characterise the object as such.

In virtue of M4, there is no question about whether or not 'existence' is a nuclear or extranuclear property. Existence is an extranuclear property. One can say that an object exists if it has complete nuclear properties; that is, if the object is *completely* determined by its nuclear properties. If it is completely determined by its nuclear properties it will possess the extranuclear property of *being completely determined*, that is, of existing.

M5 can be derived from M1 - M4 but the take-away from this distinct thesis is that an object need not have existed (i.e., in the sense of a wholly past object) to possess the properties that it does. An object possesses the nuclear properties that it does and whether that object exists follows from these other properties.

Finally, M6 states that the characterisation of an object entails that there is such an object. Therefore, there is no question about whether it is sensible, or even possible, to quantify over non-existent objects. An object that can be characterised, such as the round-square, really does possess the properties of *roundness* and *squareness*.⁹³

A main consequence of the Meinongian theses is that non-existent objects are included in one's ontology. The six theses outlined, M1-M6, provide an alternative view of what wholly past objects might be if they do not exist as the

⁹² Terence Parsons lists four categories of 'extranuclear predicates' that stand in for properties. They are: modal, ontological, intentional and technical. For further discussion see: Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects*, 23.

⁹³ Edward Zalta distinguishes between concrete existence which he expresses using the '∃' quantifier and 'logical or metaphysical existence' which he expresses using the 'E!' predicate. This approach allows for quantification over non-existent objects. On Zalta's account the '∃' quantifier captures existent and non-existent objects in its domain. This is contrary to more common usage where the '∃' quantifier is just taken as 'exists'. "This deviates from the common usage of the '∃' quantifier." See Edward Zalta, *Intensional Logic and the Metaphysics of Intentionality*. (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988).

presentist claims. As such the theses provide an ontological framework for considering the deeper consequences that are implied by presentism. One consequence is that the Meinongian presentist considers wholly past objects to be non-existent, just as the surrogate entities presentist does. However they each conceive of these things differently, and so they appear to approach the referents of terms denoting wholly past objects differently. Before considering the way in which the Meinongian presentist deals with such objects and whether it is distinct from the surrogate entities presentist's approach some further background explanation is required. In the following section, I approach this task by introducing some of the terms that are critical to a clear understanding of the Meinongian thesis. I deviate somewhat from a direct discussion on the philosophy of time in this section, but my reasons for doing so will become clear in the following section where I contrast Meinongian presentism with surrogate entities presentism.

Meinongian terminology

Alexius Meinong's work on 'the theory of objects', as well as the work of others surrounding it (e.g., Russell, Brentano etc.) is significant because it attempts to provide an ontological account of every conceivable and inconceivable object.⁹⁴ Part of Meinong's task was to formulate clear and precise explanations for objects (in the broadest sense) that are not apparent in common modes of thinking, often not even apparent in contemplative modes. Meinong and his peers adopted and developed precise language to explain these objects. Any analysis of the theory of objects requires an introduction to the terminology used in that work. However, the background explanation required to fully explain the ideas that the terms express is substantial. I do not intend to provide a comprehensive overview of all of the terms the theory utilises. What follows is just a minimal introduction to the terms that are central to my analysis of Meinongian presentism.

⁹⁴ Alexius Meinong, "On the theory of objects" (translation of 'Über Gegenstandstheorie', 1904). In Roderick Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*. (Free Press, 1960).

An object is often thought of as a bundle of properties. If we strip away from the object all the properties it might seem that nothing would remain. On Meinong's account, when one considers an object with all the properties stripped away, there must still remain something at the core of that bundle. He describes the object at the core of the bundle thus:

Blue, or any other Object whatsoever, is somehow given prior to our determination of its being or non-being, in a way that does not carry any prejudice to its non-being. We could also describe the situation from its psychological side in this way: if I should be able to judge that a certain Object is not, then I appear to have had to grasp the Object in some way beforehand, in order to say anything about its non-being, or more precisely, in order to affirm or to deny the ascription of non-being to the Object.⁹⁵

Meinong thought there must be something that must be given prior to our determinations. If nothing were given prior one might wonder what the properties one ascribes would be associated with, or attached to. Meinong calls the 'something' that the bundle of properties is associated with the *pure object*. Every object of every kind - existent and non-existent - has the pure object at its base, and so the *pure object* is said to 'stand beyond being and non-being'. Meinong says of such a pure object that it possesses *aussersein*. J. N. Findlay (1963) says:

... [T]he pure object stands beyond being and non-being; both alike are external to it. Whether an object is or not, makes no difference to *what* the object is. The pure object is said to be *ausserseiend* or to have *aussersein*: it lies 'outside'.⁹⁶

One should understand the mode of *ausserseiend* as being the broadest possible category. If everything is an object then this category includes every object imaginable, and also every object unimaginable. There is nothing at all that does not have *aussersein*.

⁹⁵ Meinong, *On the theory of objects*. 84.

⁹⁶ Findlay, J. N. *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. (1963). 49.

Within the catch-all category of objects that have *ausersein*, objects can be further divided according to whether they possess *sein* or *nichtsein*. Objects that possess *sein* occupy the positive mode of being that the actualist would associate with *concreta*. These are the empirically verifiable objects, the physical things, for example, trees, mountains or the mobile phone on my desk. Call these ‘existent objects’ in the strictest sense of ‘existence’.

Nichtsein is the negation of *sein*. Objects possessing *nichtsein* are the things that lack physicality. One might think of this category as being comprised of non-existent objects. However, *nichtsein* objects, i.e., non-physical objects, must be distinguished from all the objects that lack physicality, which may be existent or non-existent. For example, *abstracta* are *nichtsein* but they are not non-existent in the same sense as an impossible object. If *concreta* have *sein* and *sein* objects exist, and *nichtsein* is the negation of *sein*, then *nichtsein* objects are non-*concreta*. It should be clear that Meinong considered the objects that we refer to which do not have concrete being to be non-existent but such objects might include *abstracta* that the surrogate entities presentist takes to be existent. For example, when one thinks of an abstract object, such as a mathematical entity, one may think of it as non-existent - because it is not concrete. If we compare a mathematical entity such as ‘the sum of two plus two’, with a fictional entity, such as Pinocchio, there is a sense in which the two are distinct. Pinocchio may be thought of as more strictly non-existent. ‘The sum of two plus two’ on the other hand is non-existent in the sense of lacking concrete form but it is not non-existent in the same sense that Pinocchio is. And so, a distinction between the Meinongian’s understanding of an object possessing *nichtsein* and the surrogate entities presentist’s understanding of a non-existent object should be drawn.

The surrogate entities presentist appeals to properties as surrogate entities to resolve the central problems of reference. Meinong called such property-like objects, *sosein*. *Sosein* are the nuclear and extranuclear properties I introduced earlier. An object’s *sosein* is the way that object is. Its *sosein* is the character or the properties we associate with it. Both *sein* objects and *nichtsein* objects have *sosein*

(M3).⁹⁷ For example, we can say of my five year old self (F) that F possessed a set of properties. F was short, blonde-haired, blue-eyed and mischievous. These are the *sosein* aspects of F. When F occupied *the present*, F had *sein*. Now, F does not presently exist, F is *nichtsein*. Nevertheless, one can still speak about F as being different from my current self (CS), which possesses *sein*. Although F is *nichtsein*, F still has *sosein* of which we can compare to the *sosein* of CS.

As a brief aside, the fact that we can ascribe properties to both *sein* and *nichtsein* objects generates *the principle of the independence of sosein from sein*.⁹⁸ Accordingly, we ascribe characteristics to objects whether those objects exist or not. For example, we say that ‘Socrates is a man’, even if Socrates does not exist. Therefore there is no requirement for an object to exist in order that we may ascribe characteristics to it. In other words, the *sosein* of an object is independent from its having *sein*.

A special concern arises when different kinds of non-existent objects are considered. Consider three kinds of non-existent objects: ‘the golden mountain’, ‘the round square’, and ‘the relation between three and three’, namely *equality*. These objects are non-existent in the sense of being non-*sein*, but all three do not negate *sein* in the same manner. J. N. Findlay (1963) sums this up:

Of these non-existent objects he [Meinong] distinguishes three types; we have such objects as golden mountains, whose non-existence is merely a matter of brute empirical fact; then we have such objects as round squares, which cannot exist because they involve a contradiction; finally we have such entities as the equality between three and three, or the diversity between red and green - even in ordinary language we recognize that such things may subsist (*bestehen*), but not exist ‘like a house or a tree’.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Which generates ‘The principle of the independence of sosein from sein’. Roughly stated, an object’s characteristics are independent from its being. Socrates is bald whether he exists or not. See: Karel Lambert, *Meinong and the Principle of Independence: Its Place in Meinong’s Theory of Objects and its Significance in Contemporary Philosophical Logic*. (Cambridge University Press 1983): 13-38.

⁹⁸ Lambert, *Meinong and the Principle of Independence*, 9-11.

⁹⁹ Findlay, *Meinong’s Theory of Objects and Values*, 18

This explanation draws out the mode of *subsistence* that certain kinds of non-existent objects occupy. *Subsistent* objects include things like relations, complexes and characteristics. For example, the relations of equality and diversity, or similarity and difference are distinct from the objects they relate, but such ideal objects (relations) are not *sein*. And as Meinong rightfully points out:

[...] number does not exist [in the sense of *sein*] in addition to what is numbered, supposing the latter does exist; this we clearly know from the fact that we can also count what does not exist.¹⁰⁰

Meinong means that numbers are non-existent in terms of negating *sein*, but they are not *nichtsein*. For example, if one considers seven actual sheep, there is no concrete instantiation of some object called ‘the number seven’, in addition to the sheep. But there is still a number ‘seven’. It is certain that there exists no number ‘seven’ because one can count imaginary sheep, and still arrive at the number ‘seven’. Yet, the ‘seven’ arrived at in the counting of imaginary sheep conveys the same truth as the ‘seven’ arrived at in the counting of the actual sheep. Namely, that there are seven sheep. So, numbers cannot be said to exist (*sein*) but even though there exist no such things we still call upon them.

Thus, subsistent objects occupy a mode that is distinct from other kinds of non-existent objects. This mode of being is consistent with many kinds of objects that I have referred to throughout this essay as occupying the mode of *abstracta*, e.g., mathematical objects and true propositions. Subsistent objects are obviously not *concreta*. Yet, they are not like the objects possessing *nichtsein* (i.e., the two other kinds of non-existent objects) that we refer to either, i.e., *merely* possible objects and *impossibilia*. Subsistent objects are non-existent on Meinong’s account because they lack *sein*. But, they do not really possess *nichtsein* either, at least not in the strict sense of non-existence that might be associated with *impossibilia* for example.

¹⁰⁰ Meinong, *On the theory of objects*, 79

The distinction between *sein* (existent objects) and *subsistent objects* has overlapping similarities with the distinction I made very early on in this thesis between *real* and *ideal* (see chapter one of this thesis). Findlay explains what the distinction is for Meinong thus:

An ideal object is in no sense of the word a mental object - like any other object it has a nature which is independent of our knowing - but it is the sort of object which can subsist but is incapable of existence. 'Real' objects, on the other hand, are objects whose nature does not preclude them from existing; in this sense the golden mountain which never existed, and the Colossus of Rhodes which exists no longer, are as much 'real' objects as Mount Everest or the *Arc de Triomphe*.¹⁰¹

The definition employed here differs from my definition of 'real²' introduced in chapter one. Call Meinong's version 'real³'. In one regard, Meinong extends the definition even further than mine to include mere *possibilia* which might be thought to have as a property *being concrete*. In another regard he restricts the meaning of the term to exclude non-*concreta*, most notably *abstracta*. This inclusion of some mere *possibilia* is striking. On my account real² objects are all the objects that have been, are, or will be, actual. Meinong strips away all of the *abstracta* one might include in their list of real² things and includes in his list of real³ things only those objects which are, or could possibly be, *concreta*. So, a distinction is drawn between the differing conceptions of reality that one may conceive of. A take-away point is that Meinong considers wholly past (concrete) objects to be just as real as present objects. Let us not now confuse the terms 'real³' and 'exist' (*sein*) though. For the purposes of this thesis they should be read as expressing distinct meanings. *Sein* objects do not include wholly past objects or mere *possibilia*; only actual objects are *sein*.

Sein objects have a special relation to physicality. One might say that the pure object that is related to concrete presentations possesses *sein*. On the other hand, a subsistent object is not like this. A subsistent object does not possess *sein*

¹⁰¹ Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*, 115-116.

but it can be connected to objects possessing *sein*, in a way that the other kinds of non-existent objects (i.e., *nichtsein* objects) cannot. Nevertheless, a subsistent object can also be connected with *nichtsein* objects. As such, subsistent objects seem to occupy a special mode.

One set of subsistent objects worth mentioning is the set of objects referred to as ‘times’. On the Meinongian’s account, *times* are subsistent objects. One way to think about it is this. A ‘time’ does not exist in addition to the objects related to that ‘time’, just as a number does not exist in addition to what is numbered. Nevertheless, there is such a thing that we call a ‘time’. So, *times* are part of the special set of non-*sein*, yet subsistent objects. Meinong classified times in the same category as other *relations*. Findlay (1963) says:

Temporal relations, such as ‘before’ and ‘after’, are similarly based on absolute temporal determinations. If I saw the Ring Theatre in 1881 I was also aware of its temporal determination; then I called it ‘present’ because it was exactly similar to the temporal determination of my experience in 1881, now I call it ‘past’ because my experience now and the event in question have widely dissimilar temporal determinations. But in either case I am approaching an imperishable moment of a real object; the route by which I approach it is irrelevant.¹⁰²

As a result of this conception of ‘times’ a number of key implications arise. If *times* are non-existent, then it does not contravene the presentist’s thesis (only present objects exist) to assert that *there are* other *times*, so long as such other *times* are non-existent. The *times* that are referred to are relations between objects and as such they subsist.

If there are other *times*, it follows that there must be other *presents*. This is not the claim that other presents, or times, exist. Only that the (non-existent) objects at those (non-existent) times are present relative to the (non-existent) time that they relate to. So, it is meaningful to say ‘*x* is present at *t*₁’ without committing to the

¹⁰² Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*, 131-132.

existence of x or $t1$. To avoid confusion one should understand the difference between *the present* and *being present*. The difference can be stated thus. *The present* is the only time that relates two objects which have *sein*, but there are objects lacking *sein* that are present relative to other times. The Meinongian thinks there is a preeminent *present*; the present relating to objects possessing *sein*. The objects that do not exist in *the present*, i.e., the wholly past objects, can be said to ‘be present’ only in virtue of their relativity to other non-existent objects.

A special category of subsistent objects arises when truth or falsity is considered. Some subsistent objects stand between their *relata* and entail *truth*; whilst other subsistent objects stand between their *relata* and entail *falsity*. Meinong distinguishes these two kinds of objects and calls the objects connecting true relations *objektivs*.¹⁰³ He says of *objektivs*:

In knowing such a connection we are already dealing with that special kind of Object, which as I hope I have shown, is related to judgement and assumptions in the way in which the Object, in a strict sense, is related to presentations.¹⁰⁴

And Findlay (1963) says:

Meinong proposes to use the word ‘objective’ for these objects which can be judged and assumed, and which are in some cases facts. He sets them over against objects in the narrower sense, which can be given to us by mere ideas (*Vorstellungen*), and which are never the case.¹⁰⁵

This description frames *objektivs* up as something like facts. We may also take such objects to be akin to (true) proposition-like objects. As such, a comparison

¹⁰³ An *objektiv* is comparable to a singular proposition. A true *objektiv*, or proposition-like entity, has being; a false *objektiv* does not. A true *objektiv* is a ‘fact’. However unlike propositions *objektivs* are not ‘made true’ by anything. For further discussion of this see: Meinong, A. *On Assumptions* (English translation of *Über Annahmen* by James Hearne; University of California Press 1983), and Lambert, *Meinong and the principle of independence*, 2, 7-8, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Meinong, *On the theory of objects*, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*, 67

can be drawn between these kinds of non-existent objects and the kinds of *abstracta* which I have referred to throughout this thesis as '(true) propositions'.

The above discussion shows that the distinction Meinong draws between existent and subsistent objects is akin to the now more common distinction drawn between *concreta* and *abstracta*.¹⁰⁶ These are clearer terms to use for the purposes of this essay than 'real' and 'ideal', because Meinong's usage of 'real', i.e., 'real³', also captures merely possible objects, whereas '*concreta*' - strictly speaking - does not. To Meinong it is not strictly true to say that subsistent objects exist, because they are not exemplified by concrete instantiations. However it is also not strictly true to define them as *nichtsein* because they may express a true relation in a way that (strictly) non-existent objects do not.

Contrasting the ontology of surrogate entities presentism with a Meinongian ontology

According to the Meinongian presentist's ontology *there are* merely past and merely future objects even though they do not exist (M2). This is an opposing view to the standard presentist's. His *actualist* ontology leads him to take the terms 'there are' and 'exists' as equivalent, or as Quine does, to give away the term 'exists' altogether.¹⁰⁷ Quine (1948) explains the distinction as he sees it in the following way:

We have all been prone to say, in our common-sense usage of 'exist', that Pegasus does not exist, meaning simply that there is no such entity at all. If Pegasus existed he would indeed be in space and time, but only because the word 'Pegasus' has spatio-temporal connotations, and not because 'exists' has spatio-temporal connotations. If spatiotemporal reference is lacking when we affirm the existence of the cube root of 27, this is simply because

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of the more common distinction I refer to see: Quine, W. *Methods of logic* (3d ed.). (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1972).

¹⁰⁷ For a full discussion of this issue from the *actualist's* point of view see: Quine, Willard V. "On What There Is," *Review of Metaphysics* 2, no.1 (1948).

a cube root is not a spatio-temporal kind of thing, and not because we are being ambiguous in our use of ‘exist’.¹⁰⁸

As such we may say that the actualist means that ‘there are’ only existent (in the broad sense, i.e., *concreta* and *abstracta*) objects, and for the presentist, all of these objects are found in *the present*. Not so for the Meinongian presentist. Take the example of Socrates. The presentist will assert that Socrates does not exist; that *there is* no actual Socrates to be found in *the present* nor any non-actual Socrates related to some other non-actual time. The surrogate entities presentist will say that the referent of ‘Socrates’ is some abstract surrogate entity (object) that is locatable in *the present*, i.e., that *there is* a referent of the term ‘Socrates’ which expresses a past tense property, even though there is no Socrates. Now consider the Meinongian presentist’s position. He will agree that Socrates does not possess *sein* (i.e. concrete existence) but he will say that the referent of the term ‘Socrates’ is a non-existent (*nichtsein*) object, related to some existent (*sein*) object via the (subsistent) relation of *being past*. So, the question must be asked: Is there a genuine difference between the surrogate entities presentist’s account and the Meinongian presentist’s account? Both seem to be asserting that there is some object of which the term ‘Socrates’ refers and that object is not concrete. It just happens that the one takes this object to be existent *abstracta* and the other takes it to be a non-existent object. I must add that the Meinongian presentist’s non-existent Socrates possesses *sosein* which subsists, i.e. is not strictly non-existent or strictly existent. And, as I have argued this mode captures many of the objects that we now commonly call *abstracta*; objects which lack spatio-temporal connotations.

The ontological distinction drawn out in the preceding paragraph is often stated in logical terms as being a disagreement about the range of the existential quantifier. The actualist, i.e., standard presentist, takes the range to include only those objects that are actual. The non-actualist, i.e., Meinongian, takes it to range over non-actual objects also. As such, any conclusion deduced from a logical analysis alone will be determined by one’s reading of the existential quantifier and so a stalemate arises. This approach is unproductive.

¹⁰⁸ Quine, “On What There Is,” 23.

Let me analyse the similarities further. Bigelow says that Lucretian properties are properties that are associated with the world. For example, the truth-making referent for the proposition <Socrates is a man> is something like (the property of the world), *being a place where Socrates was a man*, from which further properties can be derived. The thisness presentist says that the truth-making referent is the uninstantiated thisness of Socrates, *being-Socrates*. The thisness presentist then associates other instantiated properties with Socrates' thisness. Both kinds of surrogate entities are abstract. They lack *sein*, but in one way or another they both express all of the characteristics (*sosein*) that are associated with Socrates. Neither can associate the property *having-sein* with Socrates, because there is no concrete instantiation of Socrates presently, so there is no existent object to associate *having-sein* with. They must say that Socrates is *nichtsein*. And furthermore, the surrogate entities presentist says that all the properties that are associated with the surrogate are neither *sein* nor *nichtsein*. They exist (in the broad sense), as *abstracta*.

What about the Meinongian presentist's story? They also say that *Socrates* presently lacks *sein*. They also arrive at the conclusion that *Socrates* is *nichtsein*. And finally, they also say that the properties that we associate with *Socrates* occupy a mode of being that is neither *sein* (i.e., a concrete existent) nor *nichtsein* (i.e., non-existent in the non-concrete sense). In effect, they both postulate some non-concrete entity which performs the function of expressing all there is to express about the once-existent (once-*sein*), now non-existent (*nichtsein*) man that was Socrates. Furthermore, they both say that the properties associated with Socrates occupy some mode of being that is neither concrete nor strictly non-existent. On analysis, there seems very little to distinguish the surrogate entities presentist's referent of the term 'Socrates' from the Meinongian presentist's referent, or for that matter the mode of being that the referent occupies.

In sum, the standard presentist thinks the Meinongian presentist assigns some weird mode of (non)being to Socrates. The Meinongian presentist thinks the surrogate entities presentist misjudges the mode of being that Socrates occupies, i.e., by saying that he occupies no mode at all. Yet, despite their purported confusion

at the explanations provided by the other, their descriptions surrounding the referent of the term ‘Socrates’ and the properties that it expresses are aligned.

Arguing away the distinction between the ontology of surrogate entities presentism and Meinongian ontology

One question to consider when undertaking an analysis of the presentist’s thesis is the formal argument that is adopted in order to arrive at the surrogate entities presentist’s ontology. It is revealing to compare the surrogate entities presentist’s line of argumentation with the Meinongian presentist’s argument for a bloated ontology including non-existent objects. The argument that leads the surrogate entities presentist to posit surrogate entities as truth-makers goes like this:

A3. The argument for surrogate entities (objects) as truth-makers

- P1 Supervenience principle (truth supervenes on being). (*premise*)
- P2 Presentism (nothing exists which is not present). (*premise*)
- P3 The wholly past object *Caesar* does not exist. (*P2*)
- P4 Therefore, the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’ in the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> is not the wholly past object *Caesar* (*P1-P3*)
- P5 There are no other concrete objects to act as the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’. (*premise*)
- P6 Actualism (only actual objects exist). (*premise*)
- P7 Abstracta exist. (*premise*)
- C Therefore, the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’ is a presently existing abstract object. (*P4-P7*)

The argument from the Meinongian presentist who posits non-existent objects as truth-makers goes like this:

A4. The argument for non-existent objects as truth-makers

- P1* Supervenience principle (truth supervenes on being). (*premise*)
- P2* Presentism (nothing exists which is not present). (*premise*)
- P3* The wholly past object *Caesar* does not exist. (*P2**)

- P4* Therefore, the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’ in the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> is not the (existent) wholly past object *Caesar* (P1*-P3*)
- P5* There are no other concrete objects to act as the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’.
(*premise*)
- P6* Meinongian thesis (there are non-existent objects). (*premise*)
- C* Therefore, the truth-maker for ‘Caesar’ is a non-existent object. (P4*-P6*)

The difference to be drawn here simply comes down to the difference between *actualism* and *non-actualist* Meinongian theory, i.e., the difference between P6 and P6*. But, earlier I have argued that surrogate entities occupy a mode of being that is indistinguishable from the Meinongian’s non-existent and subsistent objects. So, this distinction would appear to be little more than a semantic dispute. The surrogate entities presentist calls the referent ‘abstract’ and the Meinongian calls the referent ‘non-existent’ but there appears to be little more to distinguish the objects that the referents denote.

Despite its addition to A3, P7 should be seen as a similarity, not a difference. The similarity can be drawn because the mode of being that *abstracta* occupy is not so distinguishable from that of subsistent objects, i.e., an object’s *sosein*. So, one might add a P7* to A4 and say that *there are* subsistent objects. I contend that the kinds of *abstracta* that the surrogate entities presentist appeals to should be seen to occupy the same modes of being as the objects the Meinongian presentist appeals to.

Furthermore, I say the Meinongian agrees with the presentist’s assessment of *actuality* with regard to *concreta*. At this point, the question to ask is whether the surrogate entities presentist’s ontology is really any different to the Meinongian presentist’s. If we reframe the terminology used by the surrogate entities presentist in Meinongian terms the two views do not seem so distinct after all.

Lucretian properties and Meinongian non-existent objects

Recall the ontology of world-properties that Bigelow postulates to act as the referents of true propositions’ constituents. Bigelow’s concern is to ‘preserve

presentism in the face of the argument from relations'. I quote Bigelow (1996) to paint a clear picture of the solution he has in mind:

One of the things that exists is the whole world, the totality of things that exist. The world can have properties and accidents, just as its parts may have. [...] A Stoic's true proposition can be identified with a property of the world as a whole.¹⁰⁹

If one considers the mode of being that Lucretian properties occupy, it can be seen to run parallel to the mode of being that subsistent objects occupy. Lucretian properties are said to be presently existing *abstracta*. The *sosein* of an object is said to be *subsistent*. Neither modes entail *concreta*, and neither entail strict non-existence (i.e., as in the mode that *impossibilia* would be associated with) either. So, both sides agree that, for example, the truth-maker for 'the Trojans' in the proposition <the Trojans were conquered> is a set of properties - that are neither *sein* nor *nichtsein* - attached to some object. It's just that one calls the mode that this set occupies 'abstracta' and the other calls it 'subsistent'.

The similarity I have drawn in the above paragraph addresses properties (*sosein*). So, what of the object that they are associated with? Bigelow says this object is 'the whole world' - a *sein* object. The Meinongian presentist says it is 'the Trojans' which possess *nichtsein*. There appears to be a difference. But, recall the criticism laid against Bigelow's view. I have argued that it cannot be the case that propositions like the one above refer to 'the world', because 'the world' is not what these kinds of propositions are *about*. The proposition above is about 'the Trojans' and their being conquered. Bigelow himself goes on to say: "I think it is a mistake to conflate a property with its extension [...]."¹¹⁰ So even Bigelow sees the problem in conflating the concrete object, 'the world', which he hangs his Lucretian properties onto, with the properties that express the truth of a proposition. His concern is warranted and he is right to avoid conflating the referent of 'the Trojans' with 'the world'. His referent is (as in *there is*) the property (or set of properties). Yet, I have argued that a Lucretian property points beyond and that in the absence

¹⁰⁹ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 46.

¹¹⁰ Bigelow, "Presentism and Properties," 47.

of there *being* anything to point beyond to, only one possibility remains, a non-existent object. There is no argument from the Meinongian presentist about the referent for ‘the Trojans’ that they associate *sosein* with. It too is a non-existent object. Given this understanding, the distinction between the two views seems difficult to maintain.

Thisnesses and Meinongian non-existent objects

A thisness is a peculiar kind of entity, even more so when one considers an *uninstantiated* thisness. Below, I present a novel argument to draw out the similarities between an uninstantiated thisness and a non-existent object. Before doing so, it will steer the discussion to first articulate the thisness presentist’s argument against conflating their view with the Meinongian’s. David Ingram sums this position up:

This view [Meinongian presentism] is not presentism, as I have it, since Meinongianism is in direct tension with the neo-Quinean aspect of the mainstream conception, i.e., *being* and *existence* are the very same notion, and the single (univocal) sense of existence is captured by the unrestricted quantifier. As such, the fact that there are non-present entities is incompatible with the ontological thesis of presentism.¹¹¹

Ingram is right in what he says. Indeed, on the mainstream reading the unrestricted quantifier is restricted - to actuality. But, I say there is a strong sense in which this is not a satisfactory response. Ingram presents a logical argument as a solution to an ontological problem. Whilst this may be the right strategy with many (we hope) questions about the nature of the world, there is a sense in which it is not satisfying with regard to the ontological problem of time. For one, the question is about what exists, i.e., what the existential quantifier ranges over, so presupposing the range is begging the question.

Secondly, one kind of Meinongian is not a neo-Quinean. This kind of Meinongian will not agree with the neo-Quinean’s assessment of the range of the

¹¹¹ Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 25.

existential quantifier in the first place. Then there is another kind of Meinongian who agrees with the neo-Quinean's position anyway - that *being* and *existence* are equivalent. Paoletti (2016) explains this position:

My version of Meinongian Presentism [...] does *not* accept [...] that there is a distinction between being and existing. In my perspective, it is neither necessary to claim that things which do *not* exist now do not now have being, nor that things which do not exist nevertheless have being, provided that nothing forces us to attribute some mysterious being - different from existence - to things that do not exist (and/or that do not exist now).¹¹²

So, despite Ingram's analysis that Meinongian theory is not compatible with presentism the matter is far from settled. What this stalemate reveals is just the distinction between the logical problem and the ontological problem. The one is not the other and so we should be cautious about treating them as if they are.

Let me set the existential quantifier aside and get back to the ontological question about the referents of true propositions' constituents. Consider the proposition, <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> again. The thisness presentist takes the referent of 'Caesar' to be the uninstantiated thisness, *being-Caesar*. The Meinongian presentist takes the referent to be the non-existent *Caesar*. Both say that other properties supervene on these primary objects (entities in the thisness presentist's case). There are two points to raise. On the one hand the nature of an *uninstantiated* thisness is practically indistinguishable from the nature of a non-existent object. On the other hand, the properties that supervene occupy a distinct mode of being to the primary object. It is worth recalling the comparison between *real*³ / *ideal* and *sein* / *subsistence*. The Meinongian presentist obviously takes Caesar to be *real*³, in the sense that he could have been (and indeed was) *sein* (possessing concrete existence). The thisness presentist has implied that Caesar's thisness, *being-Caesar*, in a sense, is Caesar. So one should see that the thisness can also be said to be '*real*³'. Likewise, the properties associated with the referent

¹¹² Paoletti, "A Sketch of an Actually Serious Meinongian Presentism," 5.

of ‘Socrates’, on both accounts, are more like *ideal* objects. They therefore occupy something like a subsistent mode of being.

On one reading of the existential quantifier, there is a good reason to dispute that Meinongian theory is compatible with presentism. However, the argument against compatibility is merely a logical analysis that suits the neo-Quinean. Even if the dispute is focused on logic alone, there is the Meinongian who disputes the neo-Quinean’s use of the existential quantifier so the two will never agree. Then there is the Meinongian who agrees with the neo-Quinean’s conflation of *being* and *existence* so the logical analysis is agreeable, yet they still disagree about what the world consists of. Either way, mere logic does not resolve the ontological problem.

Truth supervenes on (non)being

The truth of the proposition <Socrates is a philosopher> is supervenient on the way the world is, i.e. there must be something about the way the world is - a truth-maker, somewhat generally called an object - that ‘makes’ the proposition true.¹¹³ If we ask someone unfamiliar with temporal concerns what object this could be, they will respond that it is *Socrates*. To them it seems counter-intuitive to suppose that the truth of Socrates being a philosopher, or a man, or bald, or with hair, or any other way, could be grounded in anything other than Socrates himself and the properties associated with him. Even after confirming that they subscribe to a presentist metaphysic the lay-person will continue to assert that ‘Socrates is a philosopher’ is true because *Socrates* is a philosopher. And, even if Socrates is not now a philosopher, the lay-presentist will say it is because *Socrates* was a philosopher (but even if Socrates just *was*, in the primitive sense, a philosopher, there must still now exist an object associated with the referent of the term ‘Socrates’ of which the past tense property can be applied to). The lay-presentist will not see the error in their ways. The philosophically familiar presentist is aware of the deep problem they face. In light of the ontological commitments admitted by the presentist he wants to avoid appealing to *Socrates* as the truth-maker for propositions that have as one of their constituents ‘Socrates’. To avoid appealing to

¹¹³ Or, according to the supervenience principle, a negative existential statement can be true in virtue of the absence of an object. E.g. ‘Unicorns do not exist’ is true because there are no unicorns.

the non-existent Socrates he must identify a presently existing object to act as the truth-maker. In the absence of *Socrates* the presentist postulates a surrogate entity to stand in his place.

Surrogate entities presentists posit a set of objects and assert that they are presently existing *abstracta*. They call them ‘entities’. At surface level this appears to resolve the problems of reference that presentism is charged with. But, a proper conclusion must be based on an ontology that ‘carves nature at its joints’. This is to say a joint carving ontology should be based on ‘objective similarities’.¹¹⁴ Thus far the surrogate entities presentist’s story does not do this. If Sider’s phraseology is analogous to a butcher carving up a carcass we might say the surrogate entities presentist is just drawing outlines of the joints on the skin of the beast and then calling the drawings the joints. But, the shaded outlines of nature’s joints are distinct from the joints themselves. The surrogate entities presentist should be forced to admit the objects beyond the abstract outlines that she draws. Her proposition that <Socrates is a man> is true only provided that the object that was *Socrates* that existed simultaneously with the year 450BCE was a man. This manner of representation gets to the terminal truth-maker that the ontological semantics refers. It is not because the surrogate entity expresses the property *being a man* that Socrates is a man. The surrogate entity expresses this property because it is true that Socrates is a man.

At this point the surrogate entities presentist’s theory reveals itself as Meinongian presentism in disguise. Either the surrogate entity is the same thing as a Meinongian non-existent object or the surrogate entity itself supervenes on such an object. Following on from the conclusion arrived at in the argument for surrogate entities the argument that surrogate entities presentism implies Meinongian non-existent objects might be presented thus:

¹¹⁴ For an introduction to the use of this phrase see: Theodore Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*. (Oxford University Press. 2011): i, 4-6.

A5. The argument from surrogate entities to non-existent objects

- P1 In the proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> the referent of the constituent 'Caesar' is a surrogate entity, x . (*premise*)
- P2 The surrogate entity x incorporates the wholly past object *Caesar*. I.e., the proposition is ultimately about *Caesar*, or the proposition is meaningless (if x does not incorporate *Caesar*). (*premise*)
- P3 The proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> is not meaningless. (*premise*)
- P4 Thus, a proposition that refers to x incorporates (via a three place relation) the wholly past object *Caesar*. (*P1-P3*)
- P5 The wholly past object *Caesar* does not exist. (*premise*)
- C Therefore, the terminal referent of which the constituent 'Caesar' refers is a non-existent object. (*P4-P5*)

If a surrogate entity, x , reveals meaning in a proposition that refers to x , that surrogate entity must incorporate the wholly past object, y , that it stands in for. If x does not incorporate y then a proposition that refers to x does not reveal meaning about y . The proposition <Caesar crossed the Rubicon> is meaningful. So, given that the proposition is meaningful and that it refers to x it must be the case that the proposition incorporates y . The implication being that there is a y , even if y is non-existent.

Recall that the *aboutness* constraint states that a proposition about some object must really be about that object, and, that we must be able to distinguish a proposition about a surrogate, x , from a proposition about the object the surrogate stands in for, y . In order that the propositions can be distinguished there must be a difference between the two propositions that corresponds to a difference between x and y . That is, a surrogate entity must incorporate the wholly past object that it refers to, whereas the object being referred to need not incorporate any other objects. The deflationist might say that a proposition does not refer to anything in the world. And, the pseudo-Lucretian deflationist might say that a Lucretian property does not refer to anything beyond itself. But, the true Lucretian cannot take the deflationary path. Their truths must find their truth-makers in *being* to satisfy the supervenience

principle. If one just takes the Lucretian property as the ontological ground one overlooks the underlying ontology that such properties entail. Without postulating a determinate (non-existent) object that sits beyond a surrogate entity (so that it can convey meaning) the surrogate entity cannot be the terminal ontological ground for truths about wholly past objects.

It seems presentists can take one of two paths. They must either take a deflationary account of truth, in which case they might as well do away with surrogates altogether and let the ontological ground stop at the mere proposition; or they are a Meinongian in disguise and their surrogate entities point beyond their instantiations to non-existent wholly past objects. In which case one might think that the presentist might as well do away with surrogates altogether and just appeal to non-existent objects directly.

Conclusion

Presentism and Meinongian presentism are usually presented as disparate theories and many presentists, such as Ingram have argued that Meinongian presentism is not presentism. Yet, the Meinongian adheres to the thesis statement of presentism, that nothing exists that is not present. The expulsion of Meinongian presentism from presentism proper is premised on the Meinongian's supposed distinction between being and existence. Yet, the line of critique that leads to this concern begs the question because the critic presupposes the range of the existential quantifier. Commonly, the presentist presumes that the ontological landscape only includes existent objects. And, it's not clear that this is the correct view. Alternatively, the concern may not even be genuine because there is a neo-Quinean Meinongian who takes being and existence as the same things. This Meinongian presentist agrees that wholly past objects lack existence (or being) but the Meinongian presentist sees no need to ascribe any further separate kind of being to them. In this case Ingram's concern doesn't get off the ground.

Close parallels can be drawn between descriptions of the modes that *nichtsein* and subsistent objects occupy and those that surrogate entities and their higher level properties occupy. The Meinongian presentist says that the referent of

'Caesar' is a non-existent object. The surrogate entities presentist says that the referent is a surrogate entity. In Ingram's case he says the referent is an uninstantiated thisness which instantiates other properties. The mode that an uninstantiated thisness occupies shares a close resemblance to the mode that a non-existent object occupies, whilst the properties that an uninstantiated thisness expresses share a close resemblance to the *sosein* of Meinongian non-existent objects. Overall, the surrogate approach appears to add a layer of ontological complexity to the explanation when a direct appeal to non-existent objects appears to do the same job.

Chapter 6. An Unparsimonious View

Introduction

I have argued that the presentist's conflation of non-existent kinds should be cause for concern. Presentism infers certain ontological commitments upon its adherents. When the presentist says that wholly past objects and merely possible objects are both non-existent, she implies that they are ontologically the same kinds of things. Yet, it is true that wholly past objects once existed whilst merely possible objects never did and never will. Therefore, at some time these objects occupied different modes of being entailing an ontological distinction. The former was *actual* and the latter never was and never will be. I have argued that it is problematic to categorise these kinds of non-existent objects together and I call the problem that this argument generates *the conflation problem*. The onus is on the presentist to explain why we should refer to objects with such ontologically divergent histories as the same kinds of things. As it stands I say that the presentist is disingenuous when she asserts that all non-existent kinds are the same. I have argued that the presentist needs to be more honest about the different kinds of non-existent objects that she is ontologically committed to. In this chapter I will outline a picture of the ontology that is implied by the presentist. If my analysis is correct and presentism does imply that there are a variety of non-existent kinds of objects the consequence is a bloated ontology. Such a bloated ontology shows that presentism is not the parsimonious view that presentist's claim that it is.

Non-existent objects and ontological commitment

In chapter two I said that a consequence of taking up a position in the debate about the nature of time is that one must subscribe to a specific ontological view. At the heart of the presentism debate lies the question of ontological commitment: to which entities is the presentist ontologically committed? And subsequently, what are they like? A person is ontologically committed to the entities that their best theories of the world say or imply *there are*. If my best theory of the world says or implies that there are unicorns, then I am ontologically committed to there being unicorns in the world.

Neo-Quineans use the term ‘existence’ to identify an entity that one is ontologically committed to, and they say that *there are* only existent objects.¹¹⁵ Put another way, the terms ‘being’ and ‘existence’ are synonymous and only existent objects possess being. On one account the Meinongian agrees that the terms ‘being’ and ‘existence’ are synonymous (as discussed in chapter five) but I will set aside this account. It is useful to distinguish the terms for the purposes of explanation (even if no distinction is admitted). Let us distinguish between what the neo-Quinean says *exists* and what the Meinongian says *there is*. For example, the neo-Quinean says that the wholly past object *Caesar* does not exist and that *there is* no *Caesar*. The Meinongian says that *Caesar* does not exist but that *there is* a non-existent object, *Caesar*. (Even though it is in opposition to Quine’s terminology) I will give the actualist ‘exists’ and the non-actualist ‘there are’.¹¹⁶ When quantifying unrestrictedly all the things captured by the quantifier expressing *exists* (\exists) will be a subset of the things captured by the quantifier expressing *there are* ($\exists!$) Therefore on a surface-level reading we can say that the Meinongian is ontologically committed to all the things that *there are* (e.g. Mount Everest, Buckingham palace and Prince William, as well as the non-existent Pink and White Terraces, the Crystal Palace and Caesar) and the standard presentist is ontologically committed to a subset of this maximal set made up of only the things that exist (e.g. Mount Everest, Buckingham palace and Prince William but not the Pink and White Terraces, the Crystal Palace and Caesar).

Presentists attempt to paint a coarse-grained picture of reality. They set out their existential delineation and place existents on one side and everything that is not included in this set on the other side. The entities in this ‘other’ set they call ‘non-existent’. This includes wholly past objects; wholly future objects; merely possible objects, and; impossible objects. But some of these objects are not like the others. In fact, each kind of object listed is quite distinct from the others and so the picture seems more fine-grained than it has been represented as being. Consider the

¹¹⁵ I follow Ingram in his use of the term “neo-Quinean”. See: Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Quine himself adopted the term ‘there are’ as expressing the widest range for the existential quantifier. He has argued that if an object does not exist then it is outside of the range of the existential quantifier, and one cannot say of that object that it *is*. So, he thinks the Meinongian is mistaken to say that *there are* non-existent objects. See: Quine, “On What There Is.”

ontological distinctions that can be drawn. Wholly past objects have been actual whereas none of the other objects have. Wholly future objects will be actual whereas none of the other objects will be. Merely possible objects could be actual even though they are not, whereas impossible objects never could be actual. On a modal assessment of the lifetime ontology of these types of entities we see a distinction in kinds. As such, lumping them all together into the same ontological category, non-existent, seems problematic.

Perhaps the presentist should take 'non-existent' to be an umbrella term and the non-existent objects within this set fall into subcategories. For example, the presentist might consider further dividing the non-existent objects that they refer to according to the obvious subcategories mentioned: wholly past, wholly future, merely possible and impossible. For clarity one might think of these categories in the following way: once-actual-non-existent-objects, will-be-actual-non-existent-objects, non-existent-possible-never-actual-objects, and, non-existent-impossible-never-actual-objects. But, if this is what the standard presentist intends surely they would say so. Yet, no distinction is forthcoming. It seems that the presentist omits to mention much of the ontological detail that is implied by her thesis. If my analysis is correct and presentism does imply various modes of (non)being that non-existent objects occupy the consequent ontology will look very different to the ontology that she admits to. In order to shed light on the depth of the ontological implications entailed by presentism it is worthwhile to set out the ontology for her. Before setting out the case for a possible ontological sub-categorisation of non-existent objects that the standard presentists might adopt I now recapitulate the argument against them.

The dissimilarity of non-existent object kinds

Consider two objects: the racehorse Phar Lap, and; the winged horse of Greek mythology Pegasus. At some time, t_1 , we can say of Phar Lap, that he is instantiated in the world. At no time can we say of Pegasus that he is instantiated in the world. Setting aside all the other differences we may identify between the two, this difference of being instantiated in the world at a time versus never being instantiated draws out a genuine ontological distinction between the two objects.

To the basic question, ‘what is the difference between Phar Lap and Pegasus?’, the most informative answer must surely be that Phar Lap existed at one time but Pegasus never did. From this, one can then go into further analysis. Many other distinctions can be drawn between the objects, but, without identifying *this* difference, great confusion will remain about the natures of these two objects. Without identifying that Phar Lap was actual and Pegasus never was, the most important distinction between them has been omitted. And, one could be forgiven for thinking that there is some winged horse going by the name of Pegasus flying around in our skies.

This failure to distinguish between the instantiated object and the never-instantiated object is precisely the move the presentist makes. One of the primary implications of her theory is that these two ontologically dissimilar objects are reduced to being identified as being ontologically the same sorts of things. They are both non-existent objects (full stop). To motivate the subsequent discussion I now present a *reductio* argument to further the case that it is wrong to take non-existent object kinds as being the same kinds of things. This argument will motivate the subsequent discussion by showing that there is a genuine distinction between non-existent kinds.

A6. The argument for the dissimilarity of non-existent object kinds

- P1. Wholly past objects and merely possible objects are both non-existent objects.
(*premise*)
- P2. Non-existent objects all occupy the same mode of (non)being (‘non-existence’).
(*premise*)
- P3. Thus, wholly past objects and merely possible objects are ontologically alike. (*P1-P2*)
- P4. At some past time, t_1 , it was true to say of some wholly past object that it is actual.
(*premise*)
- P5. But, at no time was it true to say of any merely possible object that it is actual.
(*premise*)
- C. Therefore, merely possible objects and wholly past objects are not ontologically alike. (*P3-P5*)

The presentist will resist this argument. She needs to defend the conclusion that non-existent objects are the same kinds of things. If they are not then she must admit multiple modes of nonbeing. Nevertheless, the presentist will argue from a weak position to defend the view that a non-existent object such as Phar Lap is ontologically like the non-existent object Pegasus. The only counter-argument that the presentist can submit is to say that there is no mode of nonbeing. Subsequently she says there simply is no Phar Lap or Pegasus to ascribe a mode of nonbeing to.

I have argued that we have good reasons to think that wholly past objects and merely non-existent objects are distinct kinds. In chapter four I have presented an analysis of the truth value satisfaction conditions to argue that the modes of non-existence that these two kinds of objects occupy must be distinct. My analysis of the truth value satisfaction conditions for propositions about wholly past objects and merely non-existent objects shows that distinct modes of nonbeing are implied. The *reductio* argument I have presented above further supports this conclusion so the presentist's brute denial of modes of nonbeing is disingenuous.

If the presentist admits that non-existent kinds can be distinguished as her theory implies, then there are multiple modes of nonbeing. It is uncontroversial that existent objects occupy multiple modes of being. The standard presentist readily accepts both concrete and abstract objects into her ontology. Where the implications of her theory differ from her stated thesis is with regard to non-existent objects. The implication is, for example, that within the ontological category of non-existence, there are objects that occupy different modes of nonbeing. Some occupy the mode of non-temporal, or mere non-existents (i.e. fictional objects, merely possible objects and impossible objects) and some occupy the mode of temporal non-existents (i.e. merely past and merely future objects).

Thus far, I have explained that the presentist is ontologically committed to the objects that her theory implies there are. I have shown that the presentist's ontological landscape is more fine grained than she admits. The argument for the dissimilarity of non-existent object kinds further supports the argument that presentism implies distinct non-existent kinds. The counter-argument that the presentist can offer, a brute denial, is weak. The presentist can either stand by her

weak brute denial of modes of nonbeing or accept the strong arguments against her and admit the ontology that is implied.

Temporal objects and non-temporal objects

I will now outline a picture of the ontological commitments of the presentist, taking into account the non-existent objects that are implied by presentism. It is useful to distinguish between actual and non-actual objects as well as temporal and non-temporal objects. Temporal objects are objects that are actual at a time. Non-temporal objects are objects that are never actual. The outline I present below will set the stage for introducing a taxonomy of the modes of being that non-existent objects appear to occupy which the presentist needs to account for.

Consider the following entities distinguished according to their present ontological status:

Group A

- a) Caesar
- b) The future US flag pitched on Mars
- c) The possible fat man standing in the doorway
- d) The round square cupola

All four of the objects listed above fall into the presentist's set of non-existent objects. Now consider four more objects:

Group B

- e) President Trump
- f) The US flag pitched on the moon
- g) The actual fat man standing in the doorway
- h) The square cupola

All four of the objects listed in this second group fall into the presentist's set of existent objects.

Now consider which objects should be ontologically grouped together in order to carve nature at its joints. I propose that a) and b) are clearly ontologically distinct from c) and d). At some time t_1 , it is true to say that a) and b) are actual but it is never true to say that c) and d) are. It seems that a) and b) are a better fit with group B. They are all objects that are actual at some time. c) and d) are never actual. Yet, clearly the presentist sees things differently. Her ontological categorisation is based on *actuality* - subject to temporal presence. She will say that a) and b) are not actual *now* and this is why they are categorised into group A and not group B. This move by the presentist is revealing. It seems the presentist single-mindedly carves nature along temporal joints. Indeed, she identifies everything that is not present as being ontologically the same and she denies that all of these non-existent objects occupy different modes of nonbeing. But, this move appears ontologically disingenuous. The presentist is ignoring the implications of *actuality*, the guiding principle that she has asserted. If *actuality* has the modal importance that she claims it does, then lumping once-actual entities in with never-actual entities, purely on the basis of their temporal non-presence, seems unjustified. The presentist picks out *actuality* to distinguish *being* on the one hand but then she ignores it on the other. She says that actuality distinguishes objects that possess being from those that do not. Then she overlooks the need to recognise the ontological difference that must follow to distinguish objects that have been actual from objects that are never actual. If we ask the presentist what the ontological distinction between a) and e) is she will say that e) is present and a) is not, which translates to e) is *actual* and a) is not. If we ask her the difference between a) and c) she will say that a) was *actual* at some time, t , and c) never was, is or will be. It appears she is not using the same criteria to make her ontological distinctions. If she was using the same criteria she should say that an object that has been or is actual is distinct from an object that never is.

If we distinguish the objects listed in group A and B according to whether they are temporal objects that are actual at some time, t , versus those that are non-temporal objects, that are never actual, we get the following result:

Group C, temporal objects:

- i) Caesar
- ii) The future US flag pitched on Mars
- iii) President Trump
- iv) The US flag pitched on the moon
- v) The actual fat man standing in the doorway
- vi) The square cupola

Group D, non-temporal objects:

- vii) The possible fat man standing in the doorway
- viii) The round square cupola

It seems that there are two readings regarding the ontological status of the objects a)/i) and b)/ii). On a strictly temporal assessment, and within the presentist's ontological landscape, they can be unproblematically categorised alongside the *merely* non-existent objects. After all, they simply need to be non-present to meet this criteria. On another reading, [not restricted to a merely temporal assessment] it seems they are not a good fit with the other non-existent objects listed. If we consider Caesar and 'the future US flag pitched on Mars' to be actual-at-a-time, then it is the case that these objects are not merely non-existent. They did, do or will instantiate at some time, *t*. So they are temporal objects. Whereas 'the possible fat man standing in the doorway' is merely possible and 'the round square cupola' is impossible so they never instantiate and they are never actual. They are non-temporal objects. These distinctions should serve to illustrate that it is important to distinguish between the strictly temporal ontological reading and a broader ontological reading that accounts for modality.

A Bloated Ontology

Let me draw a picture of an ontology that might be admitted by the presentist when she considers the deeper consequences that her theory implies. I will start with the modes of being that the presentist overtly states and expand on this to include the further modes that are implied. The discussion presented on Meinongian presentism in chapter five provides an overview of the type of ontology the

Meinongian posits. Chapter five drew out similarities between surrogate entities presentism and Meinongian presentism and presented one possible way of conceiving of non-existent objects. Nevertheless it is instructive to consider the various modes of nonbeing that presentism should lead one to consider. I will not present an exhaustive taxonomy of the ontological consequences that can be derived from the theory. There are too many possibilities to cover in this thesis. The picture I present below serves as an example of the bloat the presentist's ontology ultimately implies. In fact, the scale of the bloat is far greater than I make out.

The presentist's ontology affirms the existence of all temporally present objects and denies the existence of everything that is not present. As such, on a basic reading we can clearly divide the objects of which we refer into two sets. Consider the following objects set out according to the mode of being that they occupy on the presentist's account:

Objects and modes of being:

Existent objects

Donald Trump
John F Kennedy

Non-existent objects

The sum of a triangle's interior angles¹¹⁷
The sum of a triangle's interior angles yesterday
My future grandchild
The sum of a triangle's interior angles tomorrow
Sherlock Holmes
Sherlock Holmes yesterday
Sherlock Holmes tomorrow
The round square copula

The first thing to note is the stark contrast between the number of kinds of non-existent objects and the number of kinds of existent objects. On the left, are the two kinds of objects which occupy the 'existent' modes of being; *concreta* and

¹¹⁷ I include a mathematical entity to serve as an example of an abstract object. There are other kinds of abstract objects that the presentist, particularly the surrogate entities presentist, is ontologically committed to but these modes of being are already admitted by the presentist. Hence, I do not elaborate on them here.

abstracta. We might sub-categorise and label ‘Donald Trump’ a *concrete-existent* and ‘the sum of a triangle’s interior angles’ an *abstract-existent*.

Now, consider the non-existent objects listed on the right. For arguments sake we might presume that they occupy the following modes of nonbeing:

John F Kennedy (JFK) (past concrete non-existent)

The sum of a triangle’s interior angles yesterday (past abstract non-existent)

My future grandchild (future concrete non-existent)

The sum of a triangle’s interior angles tomorrow (future abstract non-existent)

Sherlock Holmes (non-existent fictional)

Sherlock Holmes yesterday (past fictional non-existent)

Sherlock Holmes tomorrow (future fictional non-existent)

The round square copula (non-existent impossibilia)

It seems uncontroversial that there are existent objects which are ontologically distinct, that is, which occupy different (positive) modes of being. So, perhaps one shouldn’t find it unreasonable to think that there are also multiple modes of (non)being. As can be seen in the list I have presented each kind of non-existent object can be determined according to whether or not it is temporal and whether or not it is ever actual. The first four items are temporal because at some time they are actual, they are once-actual, even though they are now non-existent. The second four items are non-temporal because they are never actual, and they are also non-existent. A joint-carving ontology should account for this distinction. At a minimum it should recognise that there is a distinction between these once-actual and never-actual objects. And it seems the only way to recognise this distinction is to admit that the objects being referred to occupy distinct modes of being.

A full taxonomy, including all of the non-existent modes of being that the presentist implies might look something like the following:

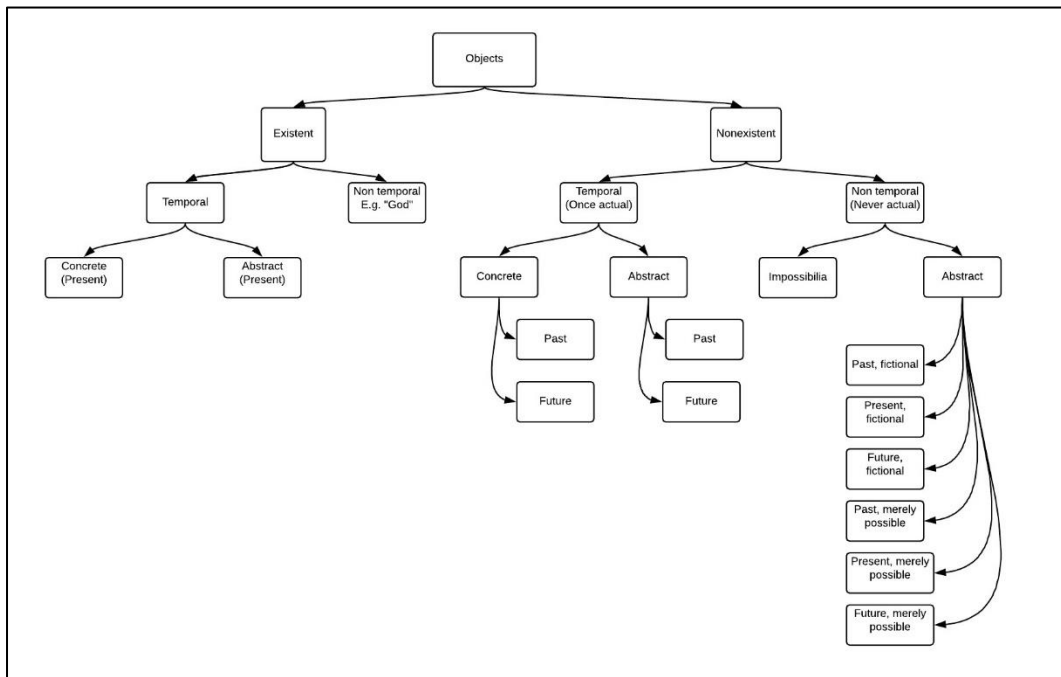


Figure 1: A taxonomy of modes of being

This diagram serves to illustrate the bloated ontology that presentism implies. Just as present objects are accounted for as occupying existent modes of being so too must non-present objects be accounted for as occupying non-existent modes of being. It seems that the most important non-existent objects that the presentist must account for are the temporal non-existents. Even if there is a way to account for the merely non-existent objects these merely non-existent objects are distinct from temporal objects and so they must be treated differently. Given my analysis of presentism as an ontological thesis and given that the central problem that is generated for the presentist is an ontological problem the solution must be ontological. The solution to the problem of no truth-makers in presentism is to admit the modes of nonbeing that these temporal non-existent objects occupy.

The standard presentist will not appreciate this taxonomy. She will deny that there are varying modes of nonbeing which non-existent objects occupy. She will say that non-existent objects are just that, non-existent, and I should not mistakenly represent them as being something that they are not. But, I am not representing these objects in any way that the presentist has not. I have been careful to describe them

in terms agreeable with the way the presentist commonly refers to such objects. For example, the presentist says that JFK is non-existent, because he is not present. Although he was present at a past time and when he was present, he was *concrete*. ‘The sum of a triangle’s interior angles tomorrow’ is non-existent because it is not present. Although it will be present at a future time and when it is present, it will be *abstract*. Sherlock Holmes, being a merely fictional character, is merely non-existent and the round square cupola is both non-existent and impossible. To deny that there is any distinction between non-existent kinds ignores the importance of actuality to ontology. An object that occupies a concrete or abstract mode of being expresses the quality of being actual and this distinguishes it from merely non-existent kinds of objects. Even though a concrete or abstract object may no longer be present it is always associated with objects that are real², actual at a time. The presentist’s ontology must pick out this distinction. Take JFK and Sherlock Holmes for example. JFK was *actual*. Sherlock Holmes never was. Although neither are actual now it seems disingenuous to conflate them into the same univocal mode of nonbeing.

Conclusion

I have outlined the ultimate ontological implications that can be derived from the presentist’s thesis. As I have shown the ontology that is implied consists of multiple positive modes of being as well as multiple negative modes of being, or nonbeing. Presentists have claimed that their theory is the most parsimonious.¹¹⁸ They have tried to account for the central problem of presentism, no truth-makers, by postulating surrogate entities that stand in for non-present temporal objects, particularly wholly past objects. In doing so they have added a layer of complexity to an already dense ontology. This ontology is already dense because in order to account for non-present temporal objects, whether directly or via surrogate entities, non-existent objects must be admitted. Without admitting that there are non-existent objects behind their surrogate entities presentists fail to adequately account for the non-present temporal objects that they refer to. At best presentism entails an ontology that includes non-existent objects. An even less parsimonious view is to add surrogate entities to the picture as intermediaries that point to the non-existent

¹¹⁸ Craig Bourne, *A Future for Presentism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006): 68-69.

objects. Furthermore, I have earlier argued that to distinguish temporal non-existents from non-temporal non-existents the presentist must conclude that there are multiple modes of nonbeing. Overall the ontology that is revealed is multi-layered and diverse. By implication, presentists are committed to a Meinongian ontology.

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