

**Presentism:
The Problem of Truth, Meaning, and Reference**

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy with Distinction

Spring 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, to my advisor Professor Richard Hanley for guiding me through the years. Your constant support and unflinching honesty have helped me more than you might even know. Second, to Professor Seth Shabo, Professor Mark Greene and Professor Noel Swanson. All of the hours you all spent during office hours putting up with me discussing my research helped me hone my thoughts, and for that I am grateful. More importantly, to Professor Fred Adams and my wife Colleen for introducing to me to philosophy in the first place. Without you two, I certainly would not be here today. Finally, to the rest of my friends and family who have stuck with me through this entire process, thank you. I know you all were getting tired of hearing that I had class every day, but I honestly would not be where I am today if it were not for all of your support and advice.

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ABSTRACT

Presentism is the view that all of reality is exhausted by the present. That is, the only objects and individuals that exist are those that exist in the present; anything else literally does not exist. How then is a presentist able to ground the truths of propositions uttered in the present which seem to be about wholly past individuals? I examine three possible solutions proposed by the presentist, concluding all three suffer from the shifting truth-maker objection. I then look at how a presentist might employ a descriptive theory for the meaning of names to avoid apparently committing themselves to the existence of non-present individuals. This is then contrasted by the direct reference theory of names as argued for by Kripke, before concluding the descriptive view is unacceptable as a theory of meaning. After considering the proposed solutions presented by the presentist, I argue that Presentism should be avoided due to its counterintuitive consequences in favor of Eternalism.

Chapter 1

The Problem

When considering the philosophy of time, there are two popular views¹: Presentism and Eternalism. According to the latter, all times are equally existent; that is, all times, and therefore all objects located at these times, exist in the same way you or I do. Under Eternalism, time is similar to space. When one considers an object located hundreds of miles away, it is no less existent for its being located some distance *spatially* from us. As I sit here in the United States, I do not deny the existence of Australia simply because it is not located in the same spatial region as I currently am. Likewise, an object located hundreds of years before us is no less existent for its not being located in the same *temporal* region as us. An eternalist will accept that ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle are just as existent as I am, even though these two are located thousands of *years* away from us. On the other hand, according to Presentism the only time which exists is the present, and this includes all presently located objects. On this view, any and all objects which are wholly past or future literally do not exist.

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There is a third view which falls under non-presentism which is called “The Growing Block View.” Under this view, the past is exists in the same sense as the present while the future does not. Adherents of this view would be able to account for past directed propositions, however they run into trouble when talking about the future. In this paper I will only consider Presentism and Eternalism as many of the same arguments against Presentism can be applied to “The Growing Block View” in regards to the non-existent future.

Now, Ned Markosian has called Presentism the “common sense” view in that he believes it is the view the average person would be most likely to endorse.² Ted Sider has acknowledged the view also has some compelling intuitions motivating it: many would be quick to agree the past is no more, while the future is yet to be.³ Some may even go so far as to consider Presentism to be something of a Moorean Fact, which David Lewis defines as “one of those things that we know better than we know the premises of any philosophical argument to the contrary.”⁴ Scott Soames references Moore’s “A Defence of Common Sense” in equating these Moorean facts to propositions of “common sense”, which are propositions all of us not only believe, but also feel certain that we know to be true.⁵ If Presentism is in fact the “common sense” view, one might claim the statement *the past is no more and the future is yet to be* is a proposition of common sense, which Moore might argue is a truism, and is therefore a proposition he believes we know with certainty to be true.⁶

If this is in fact the case, and Presentism is to be considered a Moorean fact, then we might have a problem. Consider the proposition expressed by the presentist:

1. *The past is no more and the future is yet to be.*

2

Markosian, Ned. “A Defence of Presentism.” *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 1.3 (2004): 47–82. Print. P.2.

3

Sider, Theodore. *Four-dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001. Print. P. 11.

4

Lewis, David. “Elusive Knowledge.” *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*. Vol. 2. Cambridge, UK: New York, 1999. N. pag. Print. P. 418.

5

Soames, Scott. *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*. Vol. 1. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003. Print. P. 3.

6

Moore, George Edward. “A Defence of Common Sense.” *Contemporary British Philosophy, Second Series*. Ed. J. H. Muirhead. George Allen and Unwin, 1925. Print

If we take (1) to be a “common sense” proposition, then following Lewis, this would be a proposition which we know better than the premises of any argument posed against it. Thomas Kelly explains that, according to this conception advanced by Lewis, Moorean facts, and therefore “common sense” propositions, are particularly resistant to being rationally undermined.⁷ In fact, according to Kelly, a more common understanding of this conception is that belief in a Moorean fact is invulnerable to being undermined *by means of philosophical argument*.⁸ So where does this get us? If Presentism is in fact the “common sense” view, and is therefore a Moorean fact, then it seems as though Presentism itself is incapable of being proved wrong via argument alone. Proponents of these Moorean facts believe that to deny any of these “common sense” propositions, which Moore believed were equivalent to truisms, would be absurd. Therefore, to deny Presentism would be absurd, leading to the conclusion that the world only consists of the present and the objects located in it, and that this is both true and we know it to be true.

Sadly for the presentist, things are not so easy. Just because something may be considered “common sense” among the average person on the street, it does not mean the view is therefore true. There is an inherent tension between Presentism and some of the commonly accepted views in the philosophy of language. Specifically, Presentism does not mesh well with the direct reference theory of names or the correspondence theory of truth. If the presentist is only willing to admit presently located objects into their ontology, then any object which would be located wholly in the past or future would not exist. For example, the presentist would gladly admit the

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Kelly, Thomas. “Moorean Facts and Belief Revision, or Can the Skeptic Win?” *Philosophical Perspectives* 19.1 (2005): 179–209. Print. P. 2.

8

Ibid., P. 2

existence of computers, but would deny dinosaurs or future outposts on Mars exist.⁹ From this, it follows the presentist will also deny the existence of wholly past people such as Socrates, Abraham Lincoln and Richard Nixon. The tension arises when we consider propositions which appear to be about these individuals and attempt to assign them truth values.

Every day, we talk about the past. We talk about what we did yesterday, reminisce about our childhood, and even remember relatives who have passed away. In school, our children are taught about past presidents, kings and even philosophers. When we engage in talk like this, we want to be sure what we are saying is true. Consider the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher*. This proposition looks to be about the man Socrates, and it states this man was a philosopher. But what is it in the world in 2015 that would allow us to evaluate this statement as true? For the presentist, Socrates is not listed among the presently existing objects, and therefore is not part of the way the world is. Due to her strict ontology, the Presentist seems unable to account for the generally accepted truth values of many of propositions concerning wholly past entities. Should one accept the correspondence theory of truth, the question becomes how one can account for apparently true propositions about Socrates, considering he no longer exists? It appears that much of our talk about the past looks to be *ungrounded* and *not* true. Sider, among others, has highlighted this issue and proposed what is known as “The Truth Maker Objection” (TMO) to Presentism.¹⁰

9
Sider, Theodore, op. cit., P. 11.

10
Ibid., P. 35

What exactly is TMO though? It is thought that, in general, for a proposition to be true there must exist an entity in which the truth of that proposition is grounded.¹¹ Sider calls this “The Truth Maker Principle” (TMP) and explains that “for every truth, *T*, there exists an entity – a truth maker – whose existence suffices for the truth of *T*.”¹² However, many have argued that TMP fails to adequately account for negative existential sentences. For example, *Pegasus does not exist* is true; after all, we cannot go out into the world and hop on Pegasus’s back and go for a ride. But under TMP, what is it that makes this a true proposition? There is no ‘Pegasus’ to ground the truth in; so, under TMP this proposition should come out false. But this is clearly wrong considering Pegasus does not actually exist. So, a weaker form of TMP has been put forth in order to account for the truths of such sentences. This weaker version merely holds that ‘*truth supervenes on being*’. Sider understands this version as saying: “what is true supervenes on what objects exist, what properties those objects have, and what relations they stand in.”¹³ Baron refers to this weaker principle as “The Supervenience Principle” (SP) and defines it as such:

For any proposition P and any worlds W and V, if P is true in W but not in V, then either something exists in one of the worlds but not the other,

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When it comes to the term ‘exists’ as it is used in debates in the philosophy of time, there are actually three ways in which one might understand it. Sider considers the propositions “There exist dinosaurs.” He says we might understand exist as meaning ‘once existed’, in which everyone agrees dinosaurs once existed. It might mean ‘exists now’ to which everyone agrees this is false since dinosaurs do not exist now. He concludes that, in order to maintain the dispute between Presentism and Eternalism is a genuine dispute, and not a merely verbal one, we must understand exist to mean ‘exists simpliciter’. For the eternalist, this means that our most unrestricted quantifiers range over dinosaurs since those past times are equally existent. For the presentist, their most unrestricted quantifier only includes the immediate present, so therefore dinosaurs cannot be quantified over. Hence, we arrive at a genuine dispute.

12

Ibid., P. 36

13

Ibid., P. 36

*or else some n-tuple of things stands in some fundamental relation in one of the worlds but not the other.*¹⁴

Any way one looks at it, according to this principle, truth is reliant on what exists.

Consider the proposition *the dog is chasing the cat*. What would it take for this proposition to be true? John Bigelow has claimed it is an a priori truth that a two-place relation can only be manifested when it holds between two things, and in order for this to be so there must be two things which stand in the relation.¹⁵ He goes on to explain that by “there must be” one really means to say “there must exist” two objects which stand in this relation.¹⁶ I agree with Bigelow here, and would respond that for *the dog is chasing the cat* to be true, a specific dog and a specific cat must exist and they must stand in the ‘chasing’ relation. More specifically, there must exist such a current state of affairs in the world in which the proposition’s truth is grounded. In this instance, the truth of the proposition *the dog is chasing the cat* supervenes on the world and the objects that exist in it. If both that dog and that cat exist, and the dog is in fact chasing the cat, then that state of affairs would be considered the truth maker for the proposition. When we consider these existing objects and the relation in which they stand, we can say that the truth of the proposition is grounded in their existence.

Where SP conflicts with Presentism is when we consider propositions containing merely past entities as subjects; for, as we have seen, the Presentist denies the existence of merely past entities. Looking at *Socrates was a philosopher* one may assume *prima facie* the truth of this sentence is grounded in the individual ‘Socrates’

14

Baron, Sam. “Tensed Supervenience: A No-Go for Presentism.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 51.3 (2013): 383–401. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 2 May 2014. P. 385.

15

Bigelow, John. "Presentism and Properties." *Noûs* 30 (1996): 35-52. Web. 17 Nov. 2014. P. 39.

16

Ibid., P. 39

who has the property of *being a philosopher*. However, if Socrates does not exist to stand in as the required truth maker, it would appear this proposition lacks a truth maker, therefore making it not true. This is the essence of “The Truth Maker Objection”; propositions containing merely past entities, which the Presentist claims do not exist, appear to lack a proper truth maker in which to ground their truth, therefore causing much of our accepted talk about past entities to be ungrounded and untrue.

In “Tensed Supervenience: a No-Go for Presentism”, Samuel Baron lays out TMO as follows:¹⁷

(P1) All and only present things exist [from Presentism]

(P2) Some propositions concerning the past are true [assumption]

(P3) If propositions concerning the past are true, then the truth of those propositions supervenes on what exists, the properties they instantiate, and the relations in which they stand [from SP]

(P4) If Presentism is true, then the truth of propositions concerning the past does not supervene on what exists, the properties that existing thing instantiate or the relations in which they stand [assumption]

(C) Therefore, Presentism is false [from 1, 2, 3 and 4]

We have here a simple *modus tollens* argument: “*If Presentism is true, then truth does not supervene on being. But truth does supervene on being. Therefore, Presentism is false.*” Essentially, if one accepts SP as true, then they will be hard pressed to accept Presentism. As we have seen previously, it seems that SP can be assumed as an *a priori* truth.

17

Baron, Sam, op. cit., P. 385.

When we were to narrow our focus to the use of ‘Socrates’ in *Socrates was a philosopher*, we can begin to see the tension between Presentism and the direct reference theory. After Saul Kripkes’ 1980 lectures, it has been widely accepted that a direct reference theory for the meaning of names is preferable to other theories, such as descriptivism. Simply put, the direct reference theory states the meaning of a proper name simply is the individual named. In *Socrates was a philosopher*, the meaning of the name ‘Socrates’, if it has a meaning at all, would just be the man Socrates under the direct reference theory. On the other hand, we have a competing view known as descriptivism. There are actually a few versions of descriptivism, but they mostly agree that a proper name receives its meaning through some uniquely identifying description or cluster of descriptions. In countering such views, Kripke presents an example of a proposition which makes use of the name ‘Aristotle’. He believes that when one considers the name ‘Aristotle’ under descriptivism, one may conclude ‘Aristotle’ means ‘*the greatest man who studied with Plato*’. So if this description in fact picks out one man uniquely, that man would be Aristotle.

However, Kripke points out there are issues with descriptivism. He utilizes his modal argument against descriptivism in considering descriptions one may use to pick out Aristotle uniquely. The idea is that any of the selected associated descriptions are merely contingent facts about Aristotle, not necessary ones. While it is true Aristotle studied with Plato, he might not have, and this makes it a contingent truth about Aristotle. That is, it is possible Aristotle never pursued philosophy at all. So, when considering all possible worlds in which Aristotle exists, and narrowing our focus to only those worlds in which he did not pursue philosophy, we run into a problem. If ‘Aristotle’ means ‘*the greatest man who studied with Plato*’, then those worlds in

which he did not pursue philosophy and study with Plato appear to be worlds in which the name ‘Aristotle’ does not pick out the man Aristotle. In fact, an even more bizarre result of this would be that, if in such a possible world some other man happened to be ‘*the greatest man who studied with Plato*’, and we determine the name ‘Aristotle’ means this description, then in this possible world ‘Aristotle’ would actually refer to this other individual.

If, as many have come to believe, Kripke is correct and a direct reference theory of names is to be preferred, then Presentism is in trouble. If the meaning of the name ‘Socrates’ is simply the man Socrates, and if Socrates does not exist, then it would appear we have what is called an empty name, and the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher* would be what is called an incomplete proposition. According to Frederick Adams and Gary Fuller¹⁸, who adhere to what is called referentialism, gappy propositions are neither true nor false, and this certainly goes against common sense when we consider propositions such as *Socrates was a philosopher*.

The presentist looks to be in trouble now. Markosian claimed Presentism is the “common sense” view held by the average person on the street. Sider even agrees there are compelling intuitions motivating this claim. But, when considered alongside other widely held philosophical views concerning the meaning of names and truth values, we seem to reach a very non-commonsensical conclusion. If Presentism is true, it looks as though much of our talk about past individuals results in these gappy propositions which are neither true nor false. I doubt it is the “common sense” view that *Socrates was a philosopher* is neither true nor false. I would bet the average

18

Adams, Fred, Gary Fuller. “Empty Names and Pragmatic Implicatures.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 37.3 (2007): 449–461. Print. P. 450.

person would agree this is in fact true. What is the presentist to do? How can one be a presentist, yet also maintain both a direct reference theory and a correspondence theory of truth? It seems clear that these three views do not blend well, as when considered together they seem incompatible.

I will first address the question of how a presentist might maintain Presentism while also adhering to a correspondence theory of truth. Generally speaking, the correspondence theory of truth is applied to any view explicitly embracing the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality.¹⁹ I take the idea to be that, in analyzing a proposition to find its truth value, one looks to reality, or the way the world is, and determines if the proposition corresponds to the world in the right way. The version of correspondence I will be referencing is the previously mentioned SP. This theory of truth has been widely accepted among philosophers; as such, giving it up in hopes of saving Presentism will not be easy. But what is the presentist to do? According to Presentism, reality is exhausted by only those currently existing objects. So if a correspondence theory of truth requires a relation to reality, and reality consists of only the immediate present, then how can one account for the truths of statements which are about wholly past objects or people? Clearly, Socrates does not exist now, to that even the eternalist will agree.

However, for the eternalist, Socrates still exists in the same way as you or I, and thus is capable of relating to propositions in the right way so as to attribute truth values. The presentist cannot do the same, and looks to be in trouble when asked to account for the truth of propositions like *Socrates was a philosopher*. It looks as though the presentist must make a choice: give up on the correspondence theory,

19

David, Marian. "The Correspondence Theory of Truth." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2013. N.p., 2013. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

accept that propositions like these are not true, or give up on Presentism. Obviously the third option is not going to be appealing to the presentist, and the second option would not look very good for Presentism in general. Fortunately, the presentist has a few tricks left up her sleeve, and has offered a few solutions which might allow her to maintain both a correspondence theory and Presentism.

Chapter 2

Lucretianism

The project presented to the presentist who is determined to maintain both Presentism and a correspondence theory is to find a way to satisfy SP. Again, SP roughly states that what is true supervenes on what objects exist, what properties those objects have, and what relations they stand in²⁰. Seeing as the presentist admits only presently existing objects into her ontology, satisfying SP will be difficult. The presentist must find some currently existing object in which the truths of many of our past-directed propositions supervene and successfully come out as true. John Bigelow believes he has found just what the presentist needs, and he has found it in a modified version of Lucretianism.

This view originally gets its name from the Epicurean philosopher Lucretius, who was known for believing nothing existed but atoms and the void. Regarding both atoms and the void, Lucretius claims one can name either a property or an accident. Of the former, he says it is something that cannot be detached or separated from a thing without destroying it.²¹ Of the latter, he says it is our practice to call those things whose advent or departure leaves the essence of things intact, accidents.²² Later on,

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The idea here is that for something to supervene on something, it means there cannot be a difference in one thing without there being a difference in the other. So for truth to supervene on being, it means there cannot be a difference in what is true without there being a difference in what exists, what properties those existing objects have, or what relations those objects stand in.

21

Bigelow, John, *op. cit.*, P. 44.

22

Ibid., P. 44.

Lucretius claims that whatever event has taken place is an accident of a particular tract of earth or of the space it occupied.²³ I take Lucretius to be claiming that whenever an event occurs in a particular region of space, that region of space somehow maintains the essence of that event, and the essence of the individuals and objects involved in the event, even after the time in which the event occurred is no longer present.

Bigelow presents a slightly modified version of Lucretianism which the presentist might make use of. According to this modified version, among the existent objects in the world, one will find *the world* itself, the totality of things that exist.²⁴ Bigelow believes that just as individual objects, or as he calls them ‘parts’, in the world can have both properties and accidents, so too can the world as a whole. If one were to consider the proposition *that dinosaurs roamed the earth*, and then wonder how the truth of such a proposition could be grounded in the present, Bigelow claims the world currently instantiates the property of *being a place where dinosaurs roamed*. As Thomas Crisp puts it, the world (currently) has many past- and future-tensed properties: properties like *being a place where dinosaurs roamed*, and *having been inhabited by woolly mammoths*.²⁵ It is due to the existence of these currently instantiated, past-directed properties that the presentist can maintain *that dinosaurs roamed the earth* is true, even though there do not currently exist any dinosaurs to ground the proposition's truth in.

How can the presentist make use of Bigelows’ modified version of Lucretianism in an attempt to ground the truth of *Socrates was a philosopher*?

23
Ibid., P. 45.

24
Ibid., P. 46.

25
Crisp, Thomas M. “Presentism and The Grounding Objection.” *Noûs* 41.1 (2007): 90–109. Print. P. 93.

Consider the time when the year 399 B.C. was the present. It was in this year that Socrates was found guilty of corrupting the minds of youths. As punishment for his crimes, it was decided he would be put to death by drinking a dose of hemlock. Presumably at the time before his death, one might have claimed *Socrates is a philosopher* (as it might seem odd to use the past tense in referring to a man that still exists). Both the presentist and non-presentist could agree the truth of this proposition is grounded in the presently²⁶ existing Socrates and his currently instantiated property *being a philosopher*. Now, consider the evening after which Socrates had succumbed to the effects of the hemlock; on this evening one might presumably claim *Socrates was a philosopher* (now using the past tense since Socrates had died). The non-presentist who believes that Socrates still exists, just not temporally located with them, could still claim the truth of this proposition is grounded in Socrates who still has the property of *being a philosopher*. The presentist who is committed to only presently existing objects can still make use of the presently existing past tensed property instantiated by the world. According to Bigelow, the world is currently such that it has the property of *being a world in which Socrates was a philosopher*. By making use of Bigelows' form of Lucretianism, the presentist is able to form a currently existing supervenience base in which they can ground the truths of propositions which are about wholly past objects.

The sort of properties just introduced on behalf of the presentist in attempt to form a currently existing supervenience base in which to ground past-directed propositions appear sufficient to handle what Alan Rhoda calls *simple* truths.²⁷ These

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Here we are considering the world when the year 399 B.C. was the present time.

27

Rhoda, Alan R. "Presentism, Truthmakers, And God." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 90.1 (2009): 41-62. Web. P. 50.

simple truths are about one person or event, and make no sorts of comparative claims. In order to account for more complex truths involving these sorts of comparative claims, Rhoda proposes a sort of ‘date stamp’ be added to the past-tensed properties. Following Rhoda, the universe cannot merely be such that Socrates was executed, it has to be such that Socrates was executed in 399 B.C. in Athens, Greece. By positing these more specific past-tensed facts, the presentist would then be in a better position to make complex comparative claims such as *Socrates died before Plato*, and still be able to account for the truth of these claims. Here, the presentist would argue that upon execution, the world acquired the past-tensed property of *being such that Socrates was executed in 399 B.C. in Athens, Greece*. Then, they would say that upon Plato’s death, the world acquired the property of *being such that Plato died in 348 B.C in Athens, Greece*. Now, the presentist can compare these two past-tensed properties and determine, successfully, that the comparative claim is in fact true, even though neither Plato nor Socrates currently exists.

At first glance, Lucretianism may look to be an appealing solution, as it appears to adequately answer SP. The presentist has provided a supervenience base which is rich in past-tensed, currently existing properties which are able to account for both *simple* and *complex* truths about wholly-past events and objects. However, there is a worry about just how successful these properties are when it comes to establishing a proposition’s truth-maker. Let us return to the example of Socrates execution. Consider the individual who spoke of Socrates prior to the execution and imagine, during a conversation, he utters the proposition *Socrates is a great philosopher*. If pressed for an explanation as to what (or whom) he is talking about, this individual will surely respond he is talking about the man Socrates. That is, the truth of the

proposition *Socrates is a great philosopher* supervenes on the way the world is (or was at the time of utterance), and the truth-maker for this proposition is the man ‘Socrates.’ This individual is talking about *a man*.

Now, imagine this same individual as he sits among friends as they mourn the loss of a dear friend. During a conversation, this individual utters *Socrates was a great philosopher*, to which the entire room agrees. Again, when pressed for an explanation, surely this man will respond that he is talking about *the man* Socrates. It is here that the Lucretian presentists’ past-tensed properties begin to suffer. Let us grant for the moment that these properties successfully provide a supervenience base in which propositions about wholly past events and objects can be grounded. Since Socrates is not counted among the currently existing entities, he cannot straight-forwardly stand in as the truth-maker for propositions uttered about him now.²⁸ By positing these past-tensed properties, the Lucretian presentist must maintain the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher* is not literally *about* Socrates; instead, the Lucretian presentist must maintain this proposition, when uttered at a time in which Socrates does not exist, is *about* the presently existing world, and a past-tensed property it instantiates. If in his moment of mourning, one attempted to correct the friend of the recently deceased Socrates by explaining he is no longer talking about Socrates, but is instead talking about the world and a property it recently acquired, I am confident the would-be teacher would be met with an incredulous stare at the least.

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Or even after his death. Assuming dualism about the mind-body problem is false for the sake of Lucretianism, upon his death, Socrates would actually go out of existence. If dualism were correct, it might be possible that even after his physical body ceased to function, the spirit or soul of Socrates continued to exist.

Matthew Davidson recognizes this in discussing the *shifting truth-makers objection*, and says it's not merely that the Lucretianists' truth-makers shift, but it is what they shift to.²⁹ Davidson is considering simple propositions akin to those considered earlier by Rhoda. Modifying Davidsons' examples in order to maintain consistency. Consider the Socrates example again:

2. *Socrates is a philosopher.*

Recall the friend of Socrates who was conversing about Socrates prior to the execution. Following Davidson, let us call the time of utterance prior to Socrates death t_1 . At t_1 , one might say (2) is made true by Socrates exemplifying the property *being a philosopher*. This intuition stems from the belief that when one utters a proposition like (2), they claim they are talking about a certain object or event, and ascribing a certain property to that object or event. One may even go so far as to argue it is something of a Moorean fact that when we utter propositions like (2), we are talking about the object or event which fills the subject slot. Now, consider a time after Socrates death, call this t_2 , and imagine the friend utters the past-tensed version of (2):

3. *Socrates was a philosopher.*

Both the Lucretian presentist and non-presentist alike will agree that (3) expresses a true proposition. For the non-presentist, when the friend utters (3), its truth can be accounted for in the fact that Socrates still exists, albeit not in the same temporal location as the friend. For the non-presentist, (3) is still about the man Socrates and him exemplifying the property *being a philosopher*.³⁰ The Lucretian presentist on the

29

Davidson, Matthew. "Presentism and Grounding Past Truths." *New Papers on the Present: Focus on Presentism*. Ed. Roberto Ciuni, Giuliano Torrenco, and Kristie Miller. Verlag, forthcoming. Print. P. 9

30

In sentences such as *Socrates was a philosopher*, the non-presentist is not going to interpret this in any sort of past-tensed sense. They are reductionists about tense and therefore will reduce the use of 'was'

other hand, is committed to “troubling” shift in truth-makers.³¹ At t_2 , after Socrates goes out of existence, (3) is no longer about *the man* Socrates; instead, (3) becomes a proposition about the way *the world* is at t_2 . More specifically, (3) becomes about the world and its recently acquired past-tensed property *being such that Socrates was a philosopher during a range of years in Athens, Greece*.

When considering the sort of shift in truth-maker the Lucretian is committed to, Ben Caplan and David Sanson argue it misses what one truly wants in a theory of truth-makers. To paraphrase these two:

*We might want a theory that does more than provide a supervenience base for the truth of the proposition that Socrates was a philosopher; we might want a theory that also explains why that proposition is true.*³²

Caplan and Sanson refer to one of Rhodas’ five constraints which he says a presentist theory of truth-makers for truths about the past needs to meet.³³ Specifically, Caplan and Sanson are referring to Rhoda’s fifth constraint, the explanatory constraint:

Explanatory Constraint: *An account of the truth-makers for truths about the past must provide an informative characterization of how reality is different from what it would have been if what is true about the past had not been true.*³⁴

into a tensless understanding, creating a tensless propositions. So for the proposed propositions, the non-presentist might reduce it to read something like: *Socrates exists in a time located temporally earlier than now, and in that time Socrates is a philosopher*. The non-presentist reduces talk of *past*, *present*, and *future* to talk of *earlier than* and *later than*, and then creates tensless, timelessly true propositions.

31

Ibid., P. 8.

32

Caplan, Ben, and David Sanson. “Presentism and Truthmaking.” *Philosophy Compass* 6.3 (2011): 196–208. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 2 May 2014. P. 202.

33

Rhoda, Alan R, op. cit., P. 2.

34

Ibid., P. 9.

Caplan and Sanson partly agree with Rhoda in that a theory of truth-makers should adhere to some form of explanatory constraint. However, Caplan and Sanson believe the ground in which Rhoda makes use fails to meet all of the requirements set by the norms of explanation. That is, they believe that any theory of truth-makers must do more than provide a supervenience base; it must also point to the right things.

As this pertains to the Lucretian presentist, Caplan and Sanson would say the shift in truth-makers as time passes results in propositions whose truth requires us to “point to” the wrong thing, namely the present world.³⁵ Looking back at (2) when uttered at t_1 , it successfully points to the *right* sort of thing in that it points to the man Socrates as its truth-maker. According to the Lucretian presentist, at t_2 , after Socrates ceases to exist, the truth-maker for (3) is the world, and not a man. So (3) now points to the *wrong* sort of thing in providing a truth-maker. To paraphrase Caplan and Sanson’s explanation:

That [the world] in the present says ‘Socrates was a philosopher’ doesn’t explain why the proposition that Socrates was a philosopher is true. The proposition that Socrates was a philosopher is true for the same reason that [the world] in the present [has the property being such that Socrates was a philosopher during some range of years in Athens, Greece]: because Socrates was a philosopher. But it is not because [the world] in the present says ‘Socrates was a philosopher that the proposition Socrates was a philosopher is true.’³⁶

The take away here is that (3) is not true because of a past-tensed property the world currently has. Instead, (3) is true because a man, Socrates, was a philosopher.

Davidson looks to be correct in claiming that (2) is intuitively about *a man*, namely Socrates, exemplifying a certain property, namely *being a philosopher*. Caplan

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Caplan, Ben, and David Sanson, op. cit., P. 202.

36

Ibid., P. 202.

and Sanson also appear to be correct in requiring that our theories of truth-makers do more than simply provide a supervenience base for past-directed propositions involving wholly past events and objects. Following Davidson, Caplan, and Sanson, I believe the Lucretian presentist's commitment to the truth-maker for (3), and other similar past-directed propositions, shifting to the world and its exemplifying a past-tensed property is entirely *counter-intuitive*. To have such a shift in truth-makers regarding wholly past events and objects is a mark against a theory that has been called the "common sense" view of the world. It seems far more commonsensical to insist that propositions like (3) are still about what they appear *prima facie* to be about, even if the subjects are not located among us now. As such, I believe the presentist should not endorse Lucretianism in an attempt at providing a currently existing supervenience base in which to ground propositions involving wholly past events and objects.

Chapter 3

Haecceities

Undeterred, the presentist continues her struggle to provide a sufficient supervenience base in which to ground her past directed propositions. Her first attempt at grounding the truths of such propositions in Bigelow's Lucretian properties failed. As Caplan and Sanson stated, it is not enough to merely provide a base in which to ground a proposition, that base must also point to the right thing. Clearly, grounding a proposition in a currently existing property instantiated by the world itself did not point to the right sort of thing, considering the proposition in question appears to be about the man Socrates. "Fair enough," says the presentist, "perhaps Lucretian properties will not do the job, but I have something better! I refer you to the *haecceity* of Socrates, and propose it can stand in as the truth-maker for propositions about Socrates!" The presentist believes this haecceity is in some way identical to Socrates, and that it still exists in the world today. It is in virtue of this existent haecceity that *Socrates was a philosopher* is true. Content in her proposal, the presentist believes she has thwarted the objections raised by SP, but things are not quite that easy.

Before moving forward, we must make sense of what a haecceity is. Robert Adams defines a haecceity as the property of being identical with a particular individual.³⁷ More specifically, my haecceity would be the property of being identical with *me*, whereas another individual's haecceity would be the property of being

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Adams, Robert Merrihew. "Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity." *Journal of Philosophy* 76.1 (1979): 5–26. Print. P. 6.

identical with *them*. Adams does not use the term haecceity in his work; instead, he uses the term thisness, and explains he uses this term as a synonym for the term haecceity, which he states was invented by Duns Scotus. Adams defends the idea that an individual's thisness is a *non*-qualitative property distinct from their purely qualitative properties. In reaching this conclusion, we must first consider an argument against the identity of indiscernibles, which Adams attributes to Max Black. The argument goes like this:

*"We are to imagine a universe consisting solely of two large, solid globes of iron. They always have been, are, and always will be exactly similar in shape (perfectly spherical), size, chemical composition, color – in short, in every qualitative respect. They even share all their relational suchnesses; for example, each of them has the property of being two diameters from another globe similar to itself. Such a universe seems to be logically possible; hence it is concluded that there could be two qualitatively indiscernible things and that the Identity of Indiscernibles is false."*³⁸

The idea behind the Identity of Indiscernibles is if two objects, *x* and *y*, share all of the same qualitative properties, then *x* is identical with *y*. In the above argument, what Black has presented is a logical universe where in there exist two objects which share all of their qualitative properties. It would follow these two objects should be identical, and yet we understand this universe as being one which is populated by two distinct objects.

Adams calls this, and other arguments like it, dispersal arguments. According to such arguments, what makes the proposed indiscernibles non-identical is the fact that they are dispersed spatially; that is, the same object cannot be in two different locations at the same time. So, since these two objects are exactly alike in respect to

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Ibid., P. 13.

all of their qualitative properties, and yet appear to be distinct, then there must be something non-qualitative which sets them apart. Adams proposes that if it is possible that there can be two distinct but qualitatively indiscernible individuals, then it is possible for there to be individuals whose thisnesses are both distinct from all suchnesses and necessarily equivalent to no suchness.³⁹

Assuming the above arguments, we have reached the conclusion that an individual exemplifies a non-qualitative property of being identical with that individual. This non-qualitative property helps to distinguish that individual from other potential qualitatively identical individuals. The idea thus far is, upon coming into existence, an individual begins to exemplify their unique, non-qualitative thisness. This unique thisness then continues to exist so long as the individual that exemplifies it continues to exist. As Markosian says, this much is relatively uncontroversial.⁴⁰ It is much more controversial when someone argues these unique thisnesses continue to exist even after the individuals which exemplified them no longer do.

Robert Adams is one such individual who believes these unique thisnesses continue to exist after the individual ceases to. In *Time and Thisness*, Adams claims there is one compelling reason in which one would deny the continued existence of a past individual's thisness: if one believed that a thisness had the individual which exemplifies it as an essential constituent.⁴¹ As the objector might put it, "No

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Ibid., P. 13.

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Markosian, Ned. "A Defence of Presentism." *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 1.3 (2004): 47–82. Print. P. 9.

41

French, Peter A., Theodore Edward. Uehling, and Howard K. Wettstein. "Time and Thisness." *Studies in Essentialism*. Vol. 11. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1986. 315-29. Print.

individual, no thisness!” Markosian is a bit more detailed in his explanation of such an objection. He reasons that if we are to understand these unique thisnesses as being the property of being identical with some such individual, for example Socrates, “then it seems that Socrates must be a constituent of his unique thisness.”⁴² It is hard to understand just how it is possible that a property could continue to exist *unexemplified*. Adams concedes that if it turned out that individuals are in fact constituents of their unique thisness, then there would not exist thisnesses for either past or future individuals. If so, then there would also not exist any propositions about any past or future individuals either. However, Adams maintains he has not encountered any convincing argument for denying that thisnesses of past individuals still exist, which is fortunate for the presentist who wishes to adopt this haecceity view.

By accepting the continued existence of an individual’s haecceity, the presentist is able to provide a currently existing entity which can stand in as the truth-maker for propositions involving wholly past individuals. Let’s look at the Socrates example again:

4. *Socrates was a philosopher.*

The haecceitist presentist believes there to be a currently existing property, that of being identical with Socrates, which Markosian calls ‘Socaticity’.⁴³ In virtue of this currently existing haecceity, Adams believes propositions about the individual also continue to exist despite the current *non*-existence of the concrete individual. For Adams, and the haecceitist presentist, not only does (4) still exist, but it expresses a

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Markosian, Ned, op. cit., P. 10.

43
Ibid., P. 9.

complete proposition. So in accepting the continued existence of individual haecceities, the presentist looks to be able to answer objections raised by SP. After all, there are numerous, currently existing haecceities, all of which were once exemplified by past individuals. There are also numerous propositions about these past individuals which also exist. But, all of this rests on the assumption that haecceities not only continue to exist after the individuals which exemplify them cease to, but that they even exist in the first place.

I am in agreement with Markosian concerning a rather serious problem associated with this haecceity view. Namely, the view requires a rather hefty ontological commitment to the present existence of numerous, unexemplified haecceities of nonexistent individuals. If Adams is correct in that an individual's unique haecceity does not have the individual themselves as a constituent, and if these haecceities continue to exist after the individual ceases to, then what we have is a world populated by an exceedingly large number of haecceities. For every individual that has ever come into existence, there is a unique haecceity that came into existence with them. I assume Adams proposal implies that, once these haecceities come into existence, the fact they can survive the loss of their associated individuals means these haecceities become eternal entities. If that is the case, then to adopt this view is to adopt an ontology populated by an ever growing number of eternal haecceities, one for each individual that has ever existed and that currently exists. Admittedly this may only be a problem for those who wish to commit themselves to as sparse an ontology as possible.

Another increasingly serious problem to this view has to do with the shifting truth-maker objection. For those who accept the haecceity view, current tokens of (4)

exist in virtue of the continued existence of Socrates haecceity. That is, what makes utterances of (4) true in the present is the existence of that haecceity, not the man Socrates. Prior to his execution, propositions involving Socrates were made true by the man himself. Consider followers of Socrates some time before the night he is to drink the hemlock. We can imagine these individuals making statements such as “*Socrates is a great philosopher.*” Again, it seems safe enough to accept that what makes statements like these true is the existence of the man himself and the properties he instantiates or relations he stands in. According to Adams, after Socrates is executed and ceases to exist, his unique haecceity continues on. At that point, when one of Socrates grieving followers utters “*Socrates was a great philosopher,*” a complete proposition is still expressed, but it is in virtue of the continued existence of Socrates haecceity. It seems as though the truth-maker regarding talk involving Socrates shifts from the man when he exists, to an unexemplified haecceity. As Caplan and Sanson stated, it is not enough to provide a supervenience base for such propositions, they also have to point to the right thing. I don’t believe that utterances of (4) are to be understood as talk of a haecceity.

However, as I said, this whole view rests on the assumption that there is a continued existence of an individual’s haecceity after the individual ceases to be. This assumption rests on a further assumption that haecceities do not have their individuals as constituents, which is what allows them to continue to exist despite the lack of an individual. Again, I am in agreement with Markosian in his suspicion that a haecceity does not have its individual as a constituent. In a footnote, Markosian introduces a principle which seems quite plausible.⁴⁴ The principle states:

44
Ibid., P. 10.

- *The property of being identical with x exists only if x itself exists.*

Markosian continues by arguing that for any relation and for any object, the property of standing in that relation to that object will exist only if the object exists. The relation of being identical with Socrates can only exist if Socrates exists. Going back to the discussion of the Identity of Indiscernibles, that if two objects, x and y , share all of the same qualitative properties, then x is identical with y ; if either x or y did not exist, then the identity relation would likewise not exist. If Socraticity is meant to be the property of being identical with Socrates, then it seems that Socrates must exist in order for that relation to hold.

If the above is true, then it looks as though Socraticity requires the existence of Socrates in order for it to also exist. Once the individual Socrates ceases to exist, the identity relation also ceases to exist, and Socraticity would also cease to exist. When one questions the assumption on which the entire haecceitist project rests, it seems to be built on a rather shaky foundation. Adams himself concedes that if it turns out individuals are constituents of thisnesses, there would not exist any thisness for any past individual. Without the continued existence of these haecceities, there do not exist any current propositions involving past individuals.

It appears the haecceitist presentist is fighting a losing battle by relying on currently existing haecceities. First, they must accept a much larger ontology than many philosophers, both presentist and non-presentist alike, are unwilling to commit themselves to. Second, like the Lucretianist, the view suffers from the shifting truth-maker objection. It seems that while the individual exists, talk about them is made true and grounded by the existence of the individual. After the individual ceases to exist, talk involving the now *non-existent* individual is made true in virtue of an *un-*exemplified haecceity. These surrogate truth-makers do not look to point to the sorts of

things we generally take our talk to be about. Finally, even if we overlook the previous two objections, the haecceitist project tumbles when we question the foundation upon which it is built. The primary assumption was that haecceities do not have their individuals as constituents, which allowed them to continue to exist once the individual ceased to. But it seems the identity relation requires the existence of an object to be identical to. If the haecceity of Socrates is supposed to be identical to Socrates, then once Socrates the individual ceases to exist, it seems the haecceity of Socrates would also cease to exist. The presentist would not be wise in relying on a haecceitist view to account for SP.

Chapter 4

Ersatz B-Series

The options available to the presentist seem to be dwindling. The type of Lucretianism proposed by Bigelow made use of properties the world currently instantiated. This attempt at answering SP did not succeed though. The haecceities employed by Adams also failed to adequately answer SP. However, Thomas Crisp is determined to find an acceptable solution the presentist can make use of. His proposal attempts to combine the favorable aspects of both Presentism and Non-Presentism in hopes of formulating a view that can successfully meet the challenges of SP. Crisp argues the presentist can maintain that only the present time exists, yet they can also make use of non-present, abstract times. It is in these abstract times that the presentist is able to ground the truths of past-directed propositions involving wholly past entities.

We must first make sense of what exactly Crisp's abstract times are. Crisp argues that times are to be understood as being an abstract set, or class, of maximal and consistent propositions. He offers a definition:

- *x is a time = For some class C of propositions such that C is maximal and consistent, $x = [\forall y (y \in C \supset y \text{ is true})]$*

He goes on to explain a class *C* of propositions is maximal if and only if, for every proposition *p*, either *p* or its denial is a member of *C*.⁴⁵ Crisp says that a class *C* of propositions is consistent if and only if, possibly, every member of *C* is true. Using

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Crisp, Thomas M. "Presentism and The Grounding Objection." *Noûs* 41.1 (2007): 90–109. Print. P. 99.

this definition, Crisp concludes that these maximal, consistent sets of propositions represent an entire, instantaneous state of the world for a given time. Given Crisp's theory is in terms of propositions, Mozersky can be paraphrased as saying, since only the present moment is ever concrete, then only the abstract representation of the concrete present is ever true; all other times are false.⁴⁶ So, we can take Crisp to be saying that an abstract time is only *true* of an instantaneous moment in time when it accurately represents the concrete present; seeing as this concrete present is constantly changing, what abstract time is true is also constantly changing. Below I will introduce a definition from Davidson for what it is for a proposition to be true at a time, but for now it will suffice to say that for propositions regarding other non-present times to be true, that abstract time would have to be the present time, and then that proposition would be true.

If one or more of the propositions were to somehow fail to accurately represent the world, then that would not be an accurate representation of how the world was. For example, if we were to consider a time as defined by Crisp, say April 11th, 2015, then we would expect the set of propositions associated with that time to include the true proposition *Obama is the President of the United States of America*. Now, consider the proposition *Romney is the President of the United States of America*. Clearly this proposition does not accurately represent the world as it is on April 11th, 2015. As such, this proposition would not be among the other members of the set of maximal and consistent propositions which are supposed to accurately represent the world at that time. This is very important for Crisp as it plays a pivotal role in his formulation

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Mozersky, M. Joshua. *Time, Language, and Ontology: The World from the B-Theoretic Perspective*. 2015. Print. P. 43.

of the ersatz b-series. He does not wish to allow every proposition to be among the sets' members, or else we run into some unacceptable conclusions. He provides an example:

[I]t's plausible that there is a maximal, consistent set of propositions that includes among its members the proposition, say, that pigs fly. But then given my definition of times, it follows that there is an abstract time $tpig$ that entails the proposition that pigs fly. If all propositions are organized into one, big ersatz B-series, then $tpig$ is either earlier or later than the present time. Suppose it is earlier. Then given my suggestion that a proposition p has the property being past iff⁴⁷ p is entailed by an abstract time t such that t is earlier than the present time, we get the unfortunate result that $[pigs\ fly]$ has the property being past – i.e., that $WAS[pigs\ fly]$.⁴⁸

If Crisp allowed all propositions to be members of the maximal set, we would not get what he is after in setting up his ersatz b-series. What he ultimately wishes to achieve is a series of abstract times which accurately represent the complete history of the world, similar to the view of time accepted by eternalists. Just as Eternalism proposes that all times in all of history are equally existent, Crisp proposes that all of history can be equally represented and accepted by the presentist via his presently existing abstract times.

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Iff means if and only if

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Crisp, Thomas M, op. cit., P. 103.

For Crisp to succeed in his goal of presenting such a series, surely he cannot accept an abstract time which did not accurately represent the world at a particular moment. He suggests that:

*[A] proposition p has the property being past (being future) iff p is entailed by an abstract time t such that t is earlier⁴⁹ (later) than the present (i.e. the true) abstract time.*⁵⁰

Beginning with the present time, April 11th, 2015, we refer to the abstract time which represents the way the world is. As Crisp says, this time is the true time, and as such, the corresponding set of maximal, consistent propositions is also true. Now, consider April 10th, 2015 as it is represented in Crisp's abstract series. Since this is not the abstract representation of the concrete present, Crisp says that it is not true. If the abstract representation of this non-present time is not true, then all of the associated propositions are also not true.

While this might seem odd to claim that the propositions are not themselves true, Davidson gives a rough definition which helps. He says:

- *For a proposition p (or class of propositions C) to be true at a time T simply is for T to be such that were it true (or present), p (or C) would be true.*⁵¹

So, since Socrates was a philosopher is not a proposition which accurately represents the concrete present, it is literally not a true proposition. However, under Davidson's interpretation, we might say that, were the year 390 BC the true time, then the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher* would be true. Likewise, for all similar

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It is important to notice here that Crisp makes use of the same *earlier than/later than* relation as the eternalist.

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Ibid., P. 103.

51

Davidson, Matthew, op. cit., P. 12

propositions which are not part of the abstract, maximal representation of the concrete present, they are not literally true; but, they would be true if it were the case that that set of propositions represented the concrete present time.

Crisp must now explain how these abstract times are ordered so that they accurately represent the entire history of the world. Typically, the presentist would make use of the tensed operators *being past*, *being present*, and *being future*. For *being past*, the presentist would use a temporal quantifier such as WAS and attach it to a past-directed proposition. For *being future*, they would use the temporal quantifier WILL. So, for example they would say WAS(*Socrates was a philosopher*) and WILL(*Man will colonize Mars*). While neither of these propositions by themselves are literally true, by analyzing them within the scope of the past-tensed and future-tensed quantifiers, the presentist can say both of these propositions are presently true. But much of the tension between presentists and non-presentists arises as a result of the use of these tensed quantifiers. Specifically, Sider focuses on these quantifiers and says their use is a cheat; these quantifiers result in properties which are irreducibly hypothetical and ‘point beyond’ their instances.⁵² “[A] *Proper ontology*,” says Sider, “*should invoke only categorical, or occurrent, properties and relations.*”⁵³ Or as Crisp puts it, those properties which characterize how a thing actually is.⁵⁴

Sider makes use of the *earlier than* and *later than* as a means to talk about the history of the world. According to Eternalism, to say of a proposition that it is past is really a case in which one says this specific proposition describes a state of the world

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Sider, Theodore, op. cit., P. 41.

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Ibid., P. 41

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Crisp, Thomas M, op. cit., P. 105.

which is *earlier than* the time at which the proposition was uttered. *Socrates was a philosopher* describes the past because the period of time which it refers to exists *earlier than* the present time at which it is uttered. It would follow then that Sider accepts *earlier than* and *later than* as being fundamental and categorical. However, the presentist does not seem to be able to make use of this explanation since there are no other existing times aside from the immediate present. This is exactly what Crisp sets out to prove wrong. According to Crisp, it is a prosaic truth that some things are earlier than the present time, others are later.⁵⁵ As such, he believes the work done by the tensed properties of *being past*, *being present*, and *being future* can be sufficiently handled by utilizing the same relational properties of *earlier than* and *later than* as the non-presentist. Thus, a presentist who adheres to his ersatz b-series can utilize the acceptable *earlier than* and *later than* relations, as this is exactly how he orders his series of abstract times.

Crisp utilizes the entailment relation to extend his series of abstract times into both the past and the future indefinitely, until the entire history of the world is accurately captured. According to the entailment relation⁵⁶, if the abstract representation of April 11th, 2015 consists of a maximal set of true propositions, and the entailment relation holds between it and April 10th, 2015, then it follows the abstract representation of April 10th, 2015 would consist of a maximal set of propositions which, if it were a representation of the concrete present, then it would be true. So, if the representation of a time, say t_2 , is a set of maximal and consistent

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Ibid., P. 102.

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Under the entailment relation, a sentence A entails another sentence B if, whenever A is true, B must also be true. Likewise, it is not possible that the entailment relation hold if sentence B be true and sentence A were false.

propositions, and the entailment relation holds between t_2 and t_1 , then, if t_1 were the concrete present, then that representation and its propositions would also be true. Since t_1 here is a time under Crisp's definition, then t_1 is a maximally consistent set of propositions which accurately represents the way the world was at that time.

What Crisp ends up with looks very similar to the view of the world held by the non-presentist, except that instead of timelessly existing concrete times, Crisp has a maximal and consistent series of timelessly true abstract propositions. Like Sider and other non-presentists who accept *earlier than* and *later than* as being fundamental, Crisp says that his ersatz b-series is ordered by these fundamental *earlier than* and *later than* relations. As Davidson puts it:

[T]he 'earlier than' relation is an orthodox B-theoretic relation and it's one that even the eternalist claims her concrete times stand in to one another. What makes it the case that one concrete time stands in the 'earlier than' relation to another? Even for the eternalist, that (or some-such relation) seems to be primitive. So Crisp seems to have left the presentist with a primitive (the likes of which) even the eternalist is left with. If Crisp's primitive is a cheat, so too, it would seem, is the eternalists.⁵⁷

So, under ersatz presentism, *Socrates was a philosopher* is true because this proposition is located at an abstract time located earlier than the abstract present time. If the abstract present time accurately represents the concrete present, then under entailment, the abstract time in which the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher* is located⁵⁸ would also be true.

So Crisp has provided a presently existing supervenience base in which to ground the truths of past-directed propositions involving wholly past entities. In

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Davidson, Matthew, op. cit., P. 13.

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If that time were to represent the concrete present.

accordance with Presentism, Crisp maintains the only existing concrete time is the immediate present. The past and the future do not exist as concrete times. Instead, they exist as abstract times located at no temporal distance from the concrete present. As such, Crisp claims these abstract times can successfully be quantified over and serve as presently existing truth-makers for past-directed propositions. In ordering these abstract times, he abandons the usual tensed properties employed by the presentist in favor of the non-presentist's primitive relational properties of *earlier than* and *later than*. He states that a time is *past* if it is earlier than the present time, that a time is *future* if it is later than the present time, and that the present time is whatever time happens to be true.⁵⁹ By incorporating these primitive properties into his theory and admitting of an abstract, maximal set of propositions which represent the complete history of the world, Crisp looks to have given the presentist a near mirror image of the eternalist picture.

Of the potential solutions proposed by the presentist considered so far, Crisp's ersatz b-series fares the best. It clearly has the advantage over Adams' Haecceitist Presentism when we consider the ontology its adherents would be committed to. Haecceitist Presentism posit the existence of an ever increasing number of haecceities. The view states that when an individual comes into existence, a unique haecceity exemplified by that individual also comes into existence. This haecceity is thought to be identical to the individual which exemplifies it; something like the property of being identical with *x*, where *x* is the individual that exemplifies it. When the time comes where the individual ceases to exist, Adams believes the haecceity of that

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Crisp, Thomas M, op. cit., P. 105.

individual continues to exist so that it can be a surrogate truth-maker for talk about the now *non-existent* individual. By granting the continued existence of unexemplified haecceities, Adams view would have its adherents committed to the existence of one unique unexemplified haecceity for every individual that has ever existed, as well as a haecceity for each individual that currently exists. For those who wish to maintain as sparse an ontology as possible, such large numbers of haecceities is unacceptable.

Crisp presents a view which posits the existence of only one potentially questionable entity, and it's of the type many already accept. Adherents to Crisp's view are committed to the existence of one, albeit one very large, abstract object. It might seem that with Crisp's talk of plural times that there would be an infinite number of abstract objects that must be accommodated in ones ontology. However, I see no reason why one cannot take the totality of all the times, combined with the primitive *earlier than* and *later than* relations, and order the times into a single object. Many philosophers, both presentist and non-presentist alike, are already perfectly happy with admitting abstract objects into their ontologies. Given the general acceptance of these objects, what issue might one justifiably raise against the acceptance of an abstract series of propositions? If one is content with admitting the existence of abstract numbers such as the number five, abstract colors such as the color red, or even abstract concepts such as the concept of goodness, then what would be the issue with accepting an abstract set of propositions? I do not see an issue here, and for that I believe Crisp's view trumps Adams' Haecceitist Presentism.

The most favorable factor Crisp has going for himself is he found a way to eliminate the presentist's offensive primitive properties of *being past*, *being present*, and *being future*. This accomplishment looks to defuse the argument against it raised

by Sider in that these properties are irreducibly hypothetical. It is believed that any serious ontology should only make use of categorical properties that characterize the way a thing actually is.⁶⁰ In eliminating the hypothetical properties in favor of the b-theoretic relational properties of *earlier than* and *later than*, Crisp succeeded in providing the presentist with a primitive property that even the non-presentist relied on. As Davidson noted, if these relational properties are considered to be cheats for Crisp, then they must also be considered cheats for the non-presentist. It seems doubtful the non-presentist would be willing to accuse Crisp of cheating if they would suffer similar accusations. So, it seems that in providing the presentist with an abstract object of the type many already accept, and replacing the offensive primitive properties of *being past*, *being present*, and *being future* with the same relational properties as the non-presentist, Crisp has presented the best candidate for dealing with the objections raised by SP. But is that truly the case?

Unfortunately, Crisp's Ersatz B-Series falls victim to the same shifting truth-maker objection as both Bigelow and Adams. As was the case for both views previously considered, it is not enough to merely provide a supervenience base in which to ground a proposition, the truth-makers must also point to the right sort of thing. In the case of the ersatz b-series, the truth-makers for past-directed propositions involving wholly past individuals are abstract times, which are sets of maximal and consistent propositions. Let us consider the proposition *Socrates was a philosopher* once again. This proposition reads as if the speaker is talking about a certain man who instantiates a certain property. The truth-maker for this proposition then seems to be the man Socrates. Imagining again the night before Socrates was executed, an

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Ibid., P. 105.

individual who uttered this proposition would surely say they were talking about the man, Socrates, and ascribing the property of *being a philosopher* to him. The next morning, should someone utter this proposition again, it seems likely they would give the same explanation as to who, or what, they were talking about.

This explanation would not be available to the presentist, even to one who adopted the Ersatz B-Series view. According to this view, it is true that when the night prior to Socrates' execution was the concrete present, the proposed proposition is true in virtue of Socrates existing to stand in for the truth-maker. That is, there existed an abstract set of propositions which represented the concrete present, which, being that they represented the concrete present, would have been true. The next day, the concrete present would have changed, and as such there would be a whole new set of true abstract propositions which represented the new time. As a result, the propositions which accurately represented the time prior to Socrates' execution would no longer be true, but they still exist. What makes the proposed proposition true is no longer the man 'Socrates,' but an abstract proposition that exists at a time *earlier than* the present time, and which, under entailment, would be true if that abstract time were the present time.

There is a shift in truth-makers from a concrete individual to abstract propositions, and according to Caplan, Sanson and Davidson, the shift points to the wrong sort of thing. As Davidson puts it:

*The proper ground of the truth of [Socrates was a philosopher] doesn't seem to be a time. It ought to have something to do with [Socrates] having a property [being a philosopher].*⁶¹

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Davidson, Matthew, op. cit., P. 14.

So what we end up with is another version of Presentism which provides a presently existing supervenience base which looks to meet the objection raised by SP and maintains the truth values of past-directed propositions. However, Ersatz B-Series Presentism suffers from the same shifting truth-maker objection raised by Caplan, Sanson, and Davidson. The take away once again is that there seems to be more to grounding truths than satisfying SP.

Chapter 5

Presentism, Reference, and Meaning

In ‘Presentism and Truth Making’, Caplan and Sanson argue the proposed presentist solutions to SP fail because they point to the wrong sorts of things. In ‘Presentism and Grounding Past Truths’, Davidson similarly argues these solutions fail because the proposed truth-makers which ground past-directed propositions shift to the wrong sorts of things. In both cases, these philosopher argue that there is more to grounding and supervenience than merely accounting for truth values; they argue that what we utilize as the supervenience base, or explanations for said truth values must be about the right thing.

In the case of Bigelow’s Lucretian Presentism, the issue was past-directed propositions shifted from being about the particular individual or object instantiating a certain property, to being about the present world instantiating a certain property. The resulting propositions may in fact be true according to the version of Presentism proposed by Bigelow, but the required explanation refers to the world, not to the particular object or individual the proposition was originally about. Likewise, Haecceitist Presentism had a shift in truth makers from the particular individual or object to an unexemplified haecceity. Most people would contend that these past-directed propositions are about the particular objects or individuals, not an unexemplified haecceity. So, like Lucretianism, Haecceitist Presentism provides an explanation which might account for truth values, but the explanation refers to a haecceity, not to the individual or object which was the original truth-maker. As with

both of these presentist views, Crisp's Ersatz B-Series falls victim to the shifting truth-maker objection as well. Crisp's use of abstract sets of maximal and consistent propositions is truth-value preserving, but the truth-maker for past-directed proposition changes from the individual or object to an abstract time. Again, all of these presentist explanations may indeed preserve the accepted truth values for past-directed propositions, but the explanations make use of the wrong sort of thing for truth-makers.

But what is it to "point to the right things" when we want to provide explanations for the truth values of past-directed propositions? Davidson's complaint is the shift in truth-makers goes from involving "a substance and a property" to an abstract time.⁶² Caplan and Sanson maintain that propositions about the past are true not because of an historical record or because of a presently existing object instantiating a certain property; they argue that what makes propositions like *Socrates was a philosopher* or *Plato had a beard* true is that Socrates was in fact a philosopher and that Plato really had a beard.⁶³ I interpret these objections as requiring any explanation which accounts for a proposition's truth-value to "point to" the object or individual the proposition looks to be about. So, *Socrates was a philosopher* should "point to" the man Socrates. However, this requirement cannot possibly be met by the presentist seeing as she denies the existence of any past or future objects. The presentist cannot "point to" any object which is wholly past, they can only "point to"

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Ibid., P. 13.

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Caplan, Ben, and David Sanson, op. cit., P. 202.

objects which exist in the present; and it is here that the presentist runs into another problem.

In requiring any explanation for a proposition's truth-value to "point to" the object or individual the proposition looks to be about, I understand the objection as saying the explanation must *refer* to the object or individual. By substituting 'refer' for 'point', the objection states any explanation should *refer* to the right sort of thing, where the right sort of thing would be what the subject of the propositions appears to be. Now the project shifts from accounting for a proposition's truth value to accounting for the correct object of reference. In regards to theories of reference, there are two possibilities, of which only one seems to be a viable option for the presentist.

The two theories of reference I have in mind are direct reference theories and description theories. According to the former, the meaning of an ordinary proper names like 'Barack Obama', 'Mitt Romney', and 'Socrates' just is the individual picked out by that name. The meaning of the name 'Socrates' just is the man Socrates, and when we use this name, we refer directly to the individual. According to the latter, the meaning of ordinary proper names is a unique definite description or a cluster of descriptions. The referent of an ordinary proper name then would be whatever object is picked out by that unique description or cluster of descriptions. So for this view, 'Socrates' might mean 'the ancient philosopher who was executed by drinking hemlock.' By these oversimplified explanations of direct reference theories and description theories, one can see that the presentist is unable to make use of a direct reference theory.

If the meaning of a name is just the individual picked out by that name, then without the individual, the name would have no meaning. 'Socrates' would be meaningless without the man Socrates; and propositions making use of the name 'Socrates' would lack a truth value. Consider once more the Socrates example:

- *Socrates was a philosopher.*

Without the man to stand in for the meaning of the name 'Socrates', what we end up with is something like this:

- _____ *was a philosopher.*

The property of being a philosopher by itself is neither true nor false, and thus this incomplete, or "gappy" proposition is neither true nor false. This conclusion is not very appealing to many people, yet it looks as though propositions involving talk of wholly past objects or individuals end up being "gappy" and neither true nor false.

For a presentist who admits existence to only those objects or individuals that are located in the present, this results in talk of wholly past individuals being neither true nor false, which is highly counterintuitive. Surely, if asked, the average person on the street would agree *Socrates was a philosopher* is true.⁶⁴ This is where the motivation for the versions of Presentism considered thus far originates. It would be a major mark against a view which concluded much of our talk about the past was neither true nor false. So, the presentist had to find a way to preserve the truths of propositions like *Socrates was a philosopher* or else their view would lead to unacceptable consequences. How then can the presentist claim to refer to the right sort of object or individual without relying on a direct reference theory? The solution seems to be to adopt a descriptive theory of names.

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At least pre-theoretically.

Bertrand Russell developed his theory of descriptions⁶⁵ in order to deal with problems raised by meaningful, negative existential sentences and apparent counterexamples to the Law of Excluded Middle. The issue with such sentences was that, while on the surface they appear to represent typical subject-predicate sentences, they contain referring terms which fail to denote any actual objects. While Russell probably did not have Presentism in mind while developing his theory, there are many parallels which might be appealing for a presentist. In considering his theory, I will focus solely on the problem raised by meaningful, negative existential sentences. These types of sentences represent the closest parallel to the past-directed propositions. Consider an example:

5. *Pegasus does not exist.*

As many would agree, when we look at this sentence, the subject term 'Pegasus' fails to denote an object, yet (5) does appear to be a meaningful statement. Russell utilizes his theory of descriptions to help resolve the problem raised by this sentence and others like it.

By recognizing the difference between a sentence's *grammatical* form and *logical* form, Russell reduces the surface structure of these sentences to logically equivalent sentences using first order logic (FOL). The key point in his theory is his claim that proper names are actually disguised definite descriptions. Proceeding under this assumption, Russell reduces these proper names to said descriptions. Once the use of a proper name is reduced to definite descriptions, the sentence is then translated into a logical formula using FOL. With negative existential sentences like (5), he is then

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Russell, Bertrand. "On Denoting." *Mind* 14.56 (1905): 479-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

able to avoid the conclusion that supposedly proper names which lack a denotation must have some kind of being in order to produce a meaningful proposition.

Before being able to resolve the issues raised by negative existential sentences like (5), Russell has to first explain the difference between a sentence's grammatical form and its logical form. When one is presented with a sentence, she is first presented with its grammatical form. That is, they look at the sentence and can determine the subject and predicate of the sentence based on its surface structure. If everyone relied solely on a sentence's grammatical form, we can see how sentences like (5) can start to cause problems. After all, (5) *looks* to fit the subject-predicate mold, so most might be tempted to analyze it as they would all other subject-predicate sentences. But Russell believed that sentences express propositions, and that the propositions expressed have a logical form. His goal in distinguishing a sentence's *grammatical* form from the expressed proposition's *logical* form was to produce an equivalent sentence that, when translated into ordinary English, was not of the subject-predicate form and made no use of referring expressions.

Let's look at how this solution applies to negative existential sentences such as (5). One might be inclined to believe that to say "A is not" implies that there is a term, A, whose being is denied, and hence A is. When we consider "*Pegasus does not exist*" we find a supposed referring term in the subject slot of which its existence is being denied. Yet to say that "*Pegasus is not*" seems to make reference to an object, at least grammatically, which would grant existence to that object. That is, (5) seems to ontologically commit the speaker to the existence of an actual 'Pegasus,' which many would not be willing to accept. So, on the surface, it seems (5) has a grammatical form which denies the existence of an existing object, which would be a contradiction. In

order to avoid going Meinongian, Russell wants to find a way to remove the apparent commitment to the existence of 'Pegasus', and to do so he employs FOL and reduces (5) to its logical form.

Again, Russell believed 'Pegasus' was in fact a disguised definite description, not a directly referring term. So, before producing the logical form of (5), Russell would analyze 'Pegasus' as something along the lines of '*the winged horse of Greek mythology*.' Afterwards, Russell would be able to produce the logical form of (5), which might look something like this:

$$6. \quad \neg(\text{Ex})(\text{Vy})(\text{Wy} \leftrightarrow y = x)$$

In ordinary English, (6) would read something like "*There does not exist a unique object which is the winged horse of Greek mythology.*" Russell started by claiming ordinary proper names were really disguised definite descriptions. Then, he translated the grammatical form of the negative existential sentence into its logical form, and then produced an equivalent sentence in English. By doing this, Russell was able to remove the ontological commitment to 'Pegasus', and therefore remove the contradiction of denying the existence of what (5) seemed to commit the speaker to.

How might this theory look when applied to Presentism? Let's consider the sentence *Socrates was a philosopher*. The grammatical form of this sentence looks to be of the subject-predicate type, which would imply that there exists a subject that instantiates the property in the predicate slot. Things get a bit tricky here when we take into consideration temporal quantifiers such as [WAS] and [WILL], but the gist remains the same. In order to reduce this sentence to its logical equivalent, the presentist must first replace 'Socrates' with a definite description. Let's use '*the teacher of Plato*' as the definite description which will replace 'Socrates' so the

sentence would read “*The teacher of Plato was a philosopher.*” Now, Russell might reduce the proposed sentence to its logical form as such:

$$7. \quad (\text{Ex})(\text{Tx} \wedge \text{Vy} (\text{Ty} \rightarrow x = y) \wedge \text{WAS}(\text{Px}))]$$

In English, (7) would read as “*There exists a unique x that is both the teacher of Plato and it was the case that it is a philosopher.*” This interpretation would be unacceptable for the presentist though. If the meaning of the name ‘Socrates’ is the definite description ‘*the teacher of Plato*’, and the referent of the name is the individual picked out by the description, then this interpretation looks to commit the presentist to the current existence of Socrates. This result is the opposite of what the presentist wants; they want to deny the existence of Socrates. Russell provides a solution, and it has to do with scope ambiguity.

While this approach was originally meant to deal with apparent counterexamples to the Law of Excluded Middle, I think it can be equally applied to the proposed sentence. Again, the grammatical form of *Socrates was a philosopher* seems to commit one to the existence of Socrates, and then attribute the property of being a philosopher to him. However, Socrates does not currently exist, and thus we run into a problem. So, instead of the proposed logically equivalent sentence, the presentist would say the solution is to move the temporal quantifier [WAS] to the front of the formula. The result would look something like this:

$$8. \quad \text{WAS}(\text{Ex})(\text{Tx} \wedge \text{Vy} (\text{Ty} \rightarrow x = y) \wedge (\text{Px}))]$$

In English, (8) says “*It was the case that there exists a unique x that is both the teacher of Plato and is a philosopher.*” This new reading seems more acceptable, since understood under a narrow scope where the description falls within the scope of the temporal quantifier [WAS], it is not ontologically committing.

Sider explains:

*The truth of the sentence is consistent with Presentism because the existential quantification occurs within the scope of the tense operator, and thus does not carry a commitment to the existence of [Socrates].*⁶⁶

This solution looks to have preserved the generally accepted truth value of the sentence *Socrates was a philosopher*, while at the same time allowing the presentist to deny the existence of the individual Socrates.

While I do not agree with the conclusion that ordinary proper names are really disguised definite descriptions, I do believe Russell was on to something with his distinction between grammatical and logical form. I agree that one of the issues posed by negative existential sentences is the apparent commitment to non-existent entities. In Russell's terms, if we take the grammatical form of (5) to be all there is, it looks like we are admitting the existence of Pegasus and then denying him existence. This conclusion leads to a contradiction. Likewise, when we consider the sentence *Socrates was a philosopher*, this looks to be admitting the existence of the man Socrates, and attributing to him the property of *having been a philosopher*. But that is not what the presentist means when they say this sentence is true. What they mean to say is what is expressed by (8), and in accepting (8), the presentist looks to have avoided commitment to the current existence of the man Socrates.

In distinguishing between a sentence's grammatical form and its logical form, Russell seems to have provided the presentist a solution to the problem of reference posed by Caplan, Sanson, and Davidson. By replacing the name 'Socrates' with a

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Sider. "Presentism and Ontological Commitment." *The Journal of Philosophy* 96.7 (1999): 325–347. JSTOR. Web. 2 May 2014. P. 2.

definite description and then reducing the sentence to its logical form, existential commitment to the man Socrates has been removed. The presentist can then maintain that only the present exists. As Russell said, the problem is that ordinary proper names are not actually referring expressions at all. The definite description '*the teacher of Plato*' is not itself a referring expression, and so when the logically equivalent sentence is produced, there is not directly referring term being utilized.

Ignoring the hypothetical/categorical divide presented by Sider, it seems that the description theory has provided the presentist with a way of accounting for the accepted truth values of past-directed propositions, while at the same time avoiding existential commitment to non-present objects and individuals. However, the descriptive theory of names is not without its own problems. Where Russell's theory begins to fall apart is with the insistence that ordinary proper names are really just disguised definite descriptions. Years later, Kripke provided two very compelling arguments which show the meaning of a name cannot simply be an associated description or even cluster of descriptions. I will focus on his modal argument, in which Kripke shows definite descriptions cannot pick out the same individual across all possible worlds.

Where Russell saw a potential solution to meaningful negative existential sentences, Kripke saw a further problem. Russell maintained our ordinary proper names were not referring terms in and of themselves. But by recognizing the disguised definite descriptions associated with the use of the name, he eliminated the non-referring expression and all seemed fine. Russell developed his descriptive theory to say the meaning of an ordinary proper name is just those associated descriptions. Kripke disagreed with this conclusion on the grounds that these definite descriptions

were not what he called ‘*rigid designators*.’ He provides a rough definition for this term saying, “*call something a rigid designator if in every possible world,⁶⁷ it designates the same object.*”⁶⁸ Kripke has in mind counterfactual situations in which we make claims about how so-and-so might have been different. He maintains that in making these counterfactual claims, we want our talk to still be about that so-and-so, and not about someone or something else. A slightly modified example from Kripke might help illustrate this point:

*I have an object in my hands, I can point to it, and when I ask whether it might have been somewhere else, I am talking, by definition, about it.*⁶⁹

In order to avoid slipping into some sort of view wherein we hold an object has all of its properties essentially, we need to account for such talk. For, it certainly seems like *this very same object* could have been located somewhere else, and yet it still be *this very same object*. This is the basic idea behind how the modal argument will work.

Applying the argument to proper names, Kripke says “*If a name means the same as that description or cluster of descriptions, it will not be a rigid designator. It will not necessarily designate the same object in all possible worlds since other objects might have had the given properties in other possible worlds.*”⁷⁰ Kripke

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A possible world can be thought of as a way in which the actual world could have been. David Lewis was a proponent of the view called Modal Realism, which says that the term ‘actual’ is an indexical term like ‘I’ and ‘Here’, and that there exists a non-actual, concrete world for every way our concrete, actual world could be. A world is not to be thought of as a planet, but it is more along the lines of an entire universe, consisting of all its stars and planets. This non-actual, concrete world is spatiotemporally distinct from our world.

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Kripke, Saul A. *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press, 1980. Print. P. 48

69

Ibid., P. 53.

70

provides an example using the name 'Aristotle' to illustrate the point here. He begins by assuming the descriptive account of the meaning of names and uses the description '*the greatest man who studied with Plato*'. If we accept this as the disguised definite description which is the meaning of the name 'Aristotle', Kripke says we will be unable to pick out the same man in all possible worlds. Consider the fact that Aristotle studied with Plato is merely a contingent fact about Aristotle. Aristotle did not necessarily have to study with Plato; he could have found another teacher. In fact, Aristotle did not necessarily have to study philosophy; he could have become a farmer or a carpenter. If this were the case, then it is possible that some other man might have studied under Plato and become the greatest to have ever studied with him. Since this is a way in which the world might have been, there is a possible world in which this scenario is true. In that possible world, '*the greatest man who studied with Plato*' would pick out someone who is not Aristotle.

Kripke does distinguish between using a description to assign meaning to a name and fixing reference to an individual. In the former, we just saw how attributing the meaning of a name to its associated descriptions leads to trouble with counterfactual talk. In the latter though, one merely fixes the referent of the name by saying something like "*I shall use 'Aristotle' as the name for the man who is the greatest student of Plato.*" The difference between these two interpretations is that on the reference fixing view, we can still pick out the same individual across possible worlds, even if they do not instantiate the same properties. The idea is someone says *this man* is the man that so-and-so, where so-and-so is the description. Then, he can say that it might have been that *this man* was so-and-so, where he uses a different

Ibid., P. 55.

description for so-and-so. In either case, you are talking about *the same man*, not a different man.

However, Kripke does not believe that it is part of the meaning of a name that the referent has such and such descriptions at the time of naming. He refers to the time in which the mythical agent first saw Hesperus and fixed its reference by saying something like “*I shall use ‘Hesperus’ as a name of the heavenly body appearing in yonder position in the sky.*”⁷¹ But it is not part of the meaning of the name ‘Hesperus’ that it is ‘*the heavenly body appearing in yonder position in the sky*’ because that description is merely contingent of the heavenly body. He imagines a situation in which a comet had previously hit the heavenly body, and shifted its position in the sky so it appeared somewhere else. Then, it is possible that some other heavenly body occupied that space in the sky. But, Kripke says, “*In such a counterfactual situation we would say that Hesperus would not have occupied that position...not that Hesperus would not have been Hesperus.*”⁷² This would be a contradiction.

Going back to Aristotle, we might fix reference to the man via a description such as ‘*the greatest man to have studied with Plato*’, but it is not part of the meaning of the name ‘Aristotle’. The only use of the description will have been to pick out to which man we mean to refer.⁷³ Just as we might have said Hesperus was not located in the same place in the sky, yet was still Hesperus, we can also say that Aristotle might not have studied with Plato and yet still have been Aristotle. For every contingent description associated with an individual, there is a possible world in which that

71
Ibid., P. 57.

72
Ibid., P. 58.

73
Ibid., P. 57.

individual is not associated with that description. There are even possible worlds in which no individual is associated with a certain description. Suppose there is a world in which Plato did not exist. Then it would follow that no man satisfied the description of *'the greatest man to have studied with Plato'*. If the meaning of the name 'Aristotle' was this description, one might conclude that in the possible world just imagined, Aristotle was not Aristotle. Ultimately, Kripke seems to suggest one should give up on the interpretation which says the description theory is one of assigning meaning. Under this interpretation problems arise for trans-world identification. Instead, it should be understood as merely a means of assigning reference, but under this interpretation, the view loses many of its supposed advantages.⁷⁴

This was a very rough explanation of Kripke's modal argument against the descriptive theory of names. However, it has shown that if one wishes to maintain consistency in reference, even in counterfactual situations and trans-world identification, it cannot be that the meaning of a name is the set of associated descriptions. Instead, we need to rely on the notion of rigid designators, which I take to be saying the meaning of the name just is the individual picked out by the name. If this is the preferred account of meaning and reference, then the presentist is in trouble. If the meaning of the name 'Socrates' in *Socrates was a philosopher* is supposed to be *the man* picked out by 'Socrates', then there does not exist in the present such a man, and therefore the name has no meaning. This is where we get the conclusion that such sentences, for the presentist at least, are "gappy" and are therefore neither true nor false. Surely, any view with such a counterintuitive conclusion should be avoided.

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Ibid., P. 59.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, I made the claim the presentist must make a choice: give up on the SP, accept that past-directed propositions are not true, or give up on Presentism. Being a presentist, the third option is not going to be very appealing. As far as the second option goes, the presentist is going to want to preserve the belief that past-directed propositions are still true. So the project was to find a way to account for SP given that, for the presentist, reality is exhausted by what exists in the present. I looked at three such options, and found all three wanting in regards to the shifting truth-maker objection raised by Caplan, Sanson, and Davidson. While the presentist may succeed in providing a presently existing supervenience base in which to ground the truth of past-directed propositions, the issue is that the truth-makers the presentist makes use of ‘point to’, or ‘refer to’, the wrong sort of things.

What’s worse, in attempting to avoid existential commitment to non-present objects and individuals, the presentist seems committed to a descriptive theory of names. If they choose to follow Russell in reducing a sentences grammatical form to its logical form, the presentist must also replace ordinary proper names with an associated definite description. According to Russell, these descriptions provide the meaning of the ordinary proper name, so the presentist who follows him looks to be saying the same thing. Kripke effectively argued this cannot be the case, as names are rigid designators and must be able to pick out the same individual across all possible

worlds. Kripke is endorsing a direct reference theory of names, a view which is preferable to the descriptive theory, and also a view not available to the presentist.

In the end, it seems the presentist has not gotten very far in attempting to refute the issues raised by SP. While it may be true they can preserve the truth-value for past-directed propositions involving wholly past individuals, they rely on the wrong sorts of things as truth-makers. However, even if we were to allow this shift from an individual and their instantiated properties to some presently existing truth-maker, the presentist is unable to make use of a direct reference theory of names. If Kripke is correct and the direct reference theory is the right view for meaning and reference, the presentist ends up back where they started. Talk involving wholly past individuals, who for the presentist clearly cannot stand in as the referent for the use of a name, ends up being neither true nor false. For a view which was originally said to be the common sense view, I find such a conclusion to go against common sense. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency in truth and truth-makers, and to be able to make use of the preferable view of meaning and reference, I believe that Presentism should be discarded in favor of Eternalism.

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