
Presentism and the Non-Present

Author(s): Matthew Davidson

Source: *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (Mar., 2003), pp. 77-92

Published by: Springer

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4321349>

Accessed: 13-07-2018 18:23 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Springer is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*

MATTHEW DAVIDSON

PRESENTISM AND THE NON-PRESENT

(Received in revised version 15 October 2002)

ABSTRACT. In this paper I argue that presentism has a problem accounting for the truth of statements whose truth conditions seem to require there be relations that hold between present and non-present objects. I motivate the problem and then examine several strategies for dealing with the problem. I argue that no solution is forthcoming, and this presents a *prima facie* problem for presentism.

INTRODUCTION

Presentism is the view that only the present is real.¹ Contrast this doctrine with *eternalism*, the view that past and future times are just as real as the present time. Or, past or future individuals are just as real as present individuals. They just happen to exist prior to the present, or after the present. One might compare presentism with actualism in the metaphysics of modality. Actualism is the view that the actual world enjoys a special ontological status over other worlds, if other worlds there be. Only the actual world is instantiated, or in some sense real. The presentist wants to say the same thing about times: Only the present time is real, and the present time enjoys a special ontological status over other times, if other times there be. On the other hand, one might compare eternalism with a Lewisian concretist understanding of possible worlds. On Lewis' view, each world is ontologically on a par. The actual world is no more real than any other possible world. Similarly, the eternalist wants to claim that no time enjoys any special ontological status with respect to other times. The present time is no more or less real than any other time.

It is important to note what the presentist isn't (or isn't necessarily) saying. First, the presentist need not say that there are no past or future times, if she takes times to be abstract objects.² But if she does say that there are abstract past and future times, these times



Philosophical Studies 113: 77–92, 2003.

© 2003 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands.

will have a different status than does the present time. Present, past, and future times all would *exist* on this view, yet only the present time would be *exemplified* or *instantiated*. Second, she can in some sense accept that there are past or future entities in that there *now* are individuals who did or will exist. What she cannot accept is that these entities have any reality beyond the reality they have now.

There appears to be a *prima facie* problem with presentism. If only the present is real, how can present entities stand in relations to past and future things which don't exist? It certainly seems to be the case that present objects do stand in relations to past and future things. Suppose that I'm a Democrat. I stand in the *being of the same political party* relation to FDR. The event consisting of my drinking coffee 20 minutes ago stands in a causal relation with my currently being alert. Suppose I have a crystal ball and I am able to view the life of an individual who is alive 100 years in the future. He and I might stand in the *being taller than* relation, or we might stand in the *being of the same ethnic background* relation. But how can any of this be if at least one relatum of the relation in question doesn't exist?

One consequence of these relations not holding is that sentences that appear to be true would seem to come out false. Consider "I am of the same political party as FDR." It appears to have roughly the logical form aRb , and its truth conditions appear to be that it is true iff a stands in R to b ; that is, if I stand in the *being of the same political party* relation to FDR. But if FDR doesn't exist, and this entails that I don't stand in this relation to FDR, then "I am of the same political party as FDR" would seem to be false. Note that this problem isn't solved by claiming that what is true here is that I am of the same political party FDR *was*. For the truth of this sentence too appears to depend on the *being of the same political party* relation holding between FDR and me. So we have many instances of propositions that certainly *prima facie* seem to be true, like *I am of the same political party as FDR*. Yet the truth of these propositions appears to require relations holding between presently existing and non-present entities, and therefore these propositions would seem to have to be false. Call this *the problem of relations*.

This problem rests on an assumption about relations. Call this proposition (P). We may state it thus

(P) Necessarily, if an individual a stands in a relation R to an individual b , then a and b exist.

Prima facie (P) appears to be true. If a relation holds between two individuals, then surely both individuals must exist.

There are several solutions one might try to give to the problem of relations. In this paper I wish to examine in detail what I take to be the four most plausible solutions. I conclude that none of these strategies work, and given this fact we have a *prima facie* case against the truth of presentism.

I. THE OVERLAP STRATEGY

This solution to the problem of relations is suggested by Chisholm (1990). To solve the problem, Chisholm will attempt to show how present individuals can stand in relations to non-present individuals even though the latter don't exist. In his 1990 paper he is concerned about present individuals standing in relations to past individuals on a presentist picture, so I will present this solution to the problem of relations in these terms. Chisholm claims (I rephrase his proposal, but the general idea still is the same) that a present entity E may stand in a relation R to a past entity E' iff there is something O which bore some relation R' to E' , and E stands in some relation R'' to O . There always will be such an O if one believes in necessarily existing abstracta (or even abstracta that always exist). For instance, O might be the property *being blue*. So I am able to stand in a relation R to FDR in virtue of the fact that I stand in a relation R' to an object (say *being blue*) now that, was such that it stood in some relation R'' to FDR. There is an overlap in relations on this picture; two present objects overlap relationally, and one of these present objects is such that it did stand in a relation with the past entity in question.

I can't see how this works as a direct answer to the problem of relations. First of all, if this picture is to work there must be some specificity of the relations involved. Surely it's not sufficient for me to stand in the *being of the same political party* relation to FDR that I stand in any relation or other with an object that did stand in any relation or other to FDR. Can it really be that the fact that some relation or other holds between me and an object and some relation

or other held between that object and another suffices for the fact that a *particular* relation – *being of the same political party* – holds between me and the other object?

Perhaps the account can be modified to avoid this objection. What if we required that the relation that is supposed to hold between the present entity and the past entity be such that it also is the relation that holds between the two present entities? For example, suppose that Frank is a Democrat, and he was alive when FDR was alive. So I now stand in the *being of the same political party* relation to Frank, and he did stand in this relation to FDR.

This makes the proposal seem more plausible, but it won't always work because it won't always be the case that the same relation holds between the two present objects and did hold between a present object and the past object. Suppose there was some obscure figure F in the 15th century in Rome who invented his own religion. He had a few followers, but the religion died out a long time ago. Suppose I discover this person's writings and convert to his religion, and I am its only convert. Then intuitively we shall want to say that I stand in the *being of the same religion* relation to F. But there is no present individual with whom I stand in the *being of the same religion* relation who did stand in the *being of the same religion* relation to F.

There is a more fundamental problem with this solution to the problem of relations. How does it make any difference as to whether I *now* stand in a relation to a past individual S that I now stand in some relation to some other individual S' who *did* stand in a relation to S? The existence of this other set of relations has nothing to do with whether or not I now stand in a relation to some past individual; Chisholm's truth conditions appear to be a complete *non sequitur* with respect to the truth of the proposition consisting of my now standing in a relation to a past individual. Hence, I conclude Chisholm's solution fails.

II. THE NEGATIVE PARAPHRASE STRATEGY

The second strategy we will examine is what I shall term the "negative paraphrase strategy." On this approach it is conceded that (many, at least) propositions that appear to depend on relations

holding between present and non-present entities are false.³ So the proposition *I am of the same political party as FDR*, would be false, since it seems to be true iff I stand in the *being of the same political party* relation to FDR; again the sentence that expresses it certainly appears to have the logical form aRb . That these propositions are false clearly is a problem for the presentist, for they certainly seem to be true. But the presentist need not simply admit defeat and go home. She is free to present true propositions “in the neighborhood” of the false relational proposition whose truth will help to make the denial of the relational proposition more plausible. It should be noted that the negative paraphrase theorist doesn’t claim to be providing a proposition or propositions that preserve the meaning of the relational sentence in question. The only work the “paraphrasing” is doing is to ease the sting of the claim that apparently true sentences are false.

The strategy will be to attempt to distinguish between two sorts of false relational claims: those that are “clearly” false and those that are false, but “closer to being true.” To illustrate, consider again the sentence “I am of the same political party as FDR.” Though on a standard reading of the logical form of this sentence it is false, because its truth depends on a relation between FDR and me holding, there is a proposition that is true that is very similar to the false proposition this sentence expresses. *There is a political party such that I am a member of it and FDR was a member of it*, (or in a form which is more presentist-friendly, *there is a political party such that I am a member of it and it was the case that FDR is a member of it*). Consider on the other hand the sentence “I am of a different political party than FDR.” The first relational sentence is, loosely speaking, “nearly true;” whereas, the second is “clearly false.”

Above, the relation *being of the same political party* holds between a and b iff it holds between b and a . What about non-symmetrical relations? Suppose I utter “I am dumber than Einstein.” Anyone who knows the work of Einstein and knows me will claim readily that this sentence is true. Yet on the negative paraphrase strategy it is false. What proposition or propositions can we point to make our denial of this sentence more palatable? I think that we can take some guidance from our FDR example. There we found

something, a political party, such that, FDR did bear a relation to it and I do bear a relation to it. Perhaps we can do similarly in this case. We might try “There is a level of intelligence such that my level of intelligence fails to meet that level of intelligence and Einstein’s level of intelligence met or exceeded that level of intelligence.”⁴ The same sort of paraphrase could be used in the case of the sentence “I am taller than Goliath.” This relational claim we might paraphrase as “There is a height such that my height is greater than or equal to that height and Goliath’s height is smaller than that height.”

So there emerges a general strategy for paraphrasing problematic relational claims, in our case assertions of relations that hold between present and non-present individuals. We quantify over an entity (e.g., a political party or a height), and we assert that a particular relation did hold between an entity (e.g., FDR or Goliath’s height) and that entity, and a particular relation does hold between an entity (e.g., me, or my height) and that entity. If it turns out that the entity that is first quantified over in the paraphrase (e.g., a political party or a height) is objectionable (perhaps one winds up quantifying over a club, and one doesn’t think that there are such things), further paraphrase to eliminate reference to the unpalatable entity may be undertaken. So suppose I think that there aren’t any clubs, but there are sets of individuals whose members have certain intentions and goals and engage in social relations with each other in order to achieve these goals. So whereas I might appear to quantify over clubs and reify their existence, actually all I am quantifying over are the entities in the above paraphrase. (This may fail as a paraphrase of what a club is, but what is important for present purposes isn’t correctly paraphrasing away objectionable entities here, but seeing how such paraphrases would fit into the general paraphrasing scheme of the negative paraphrase theorist.) So, for the negative paraphrase theorist, the paraphrase of “I belong to the same club as FDR” might begin as “There is a set of individuals whose members have certain intentions and goals and engage in social activities to achieve these goals . . .” The rest of the paraphrase will be tricky, though, because it won’t be the case that FDR and I are members of the same set of individuals, rather we are members of distinct sets whose members overlap, or which are such that there is some sort of ancestral of an overlap relation. Anyway, again the point here

isn't to get the paraphrase exactly correct, but simply to point out that sometimes the entity that is first quantified over in an attempted paraphrase of a relational statement may be objectionable to some, and paraphrase of the existence of that entity may itself be needed.

So, will this general strategy work for all instances of sentences that assert that relations hold between a present entity and a non-present entity? I think that for intentional relational statements, a similar yet different strategy will need to be adopted. Consider "I adore Eleonore Roosevelt." This seems to resist paraphrase in the above fashion. However, there is a similar sort of paraphrase available to the negative paraphrase theorist: "There is a set of properties P such that Eleonore Roosevelt exemplified the members of P and anyone who exemplifies the members of P I adore." No paraphrase of this form will be an entirely happy one for the presentist, though, for the universal quantifier in the second part of the paraphrase ranges only over presently existing objects, and hence not over ER.⁵ But it still goes some way in accounting for why the past/present relational sentence appears to be true.

No doubt the negative paraphrase theorist needs to say more about how she will provide paraphrases that take the sting out of the denial of apparently true statements that assert that relations hold between present and non-present objects. But we've seen that she can go some way toward providing these sorts of paraphrases. There remain problems, however. First, the negative paraphrase theorist, in at least many of her paraphrases, winds up quantifying over what might appear to be strange sorts of entities (e.g., hair-styles, levels of strength, senses of smell). If many of these entities require further paraphrase, and there is no unified account of how one might give paraphrases for all of these entities (as seems to be the case) the negative paraphrase account becomes piecemeal and inelegant. Second, despite the fact that she may be able to ease our intuitions somewhat by providing paraphrases, the negative paraphrase theorist still is committed to the fact that apparently true relational statements are false. This counts strongly against the negative paraphrase view. Just how strongly will depend on how well the paraphrases the negative paraphrase theorist produces ease our minds regarding the denial of what appear to be true relational propositions concerning present and non-present objects. But

it certainly would seem preferable to have a solution to the problem of relations that didn't commit us to the falsity of a myriad of propositions which certainly seem to be true.⁶

III. HIDDEN LOGICAL FORM SOLUTIONS

We will consider two solutions to the problem of relations that center on the fact that the logical form of propositions such as *I am of the same political party as FDR*, where one of the apparent relata is non-present, is other than aRb . The proponent of a hidden logical form solution is able to deny that relations hold between present and non-present individuals, and yet claim that the propositions expressed by relational sentences such as "I am of the same political party as FDR" are true. We will look at two variations of the hidden logical form solution: what I shall call the "existential quantification solution" and the "relational properties solution."

a) *The Existential Quantification Solution*

On this solution to the problem of relations, it is claimed that the problematic relational propositions that appear to have the logical form aRb actually are existential quantifications of the sort that the negative paraphrase theorist employed in her paraphrases. In particular, the logical form of a sentence that appears to have the logical form aRb , where either a or b is non-present, typically will be $\exists x(aRx \ \& \ W(bR'x))$.⁷ So, as we saw before, we might claim that "I am of the same political party as FDR" expresses the proposition *There is a political party such that I am a member of it and FDR was a member of it.*

There are several problems with this solution. One of them already has been noted with the negative paraphrase theory: This sort of paraphrase appears to be committed to quantifying over all sorts of questionable entities, and it's not clear that there is any systematic, or even piecemeal method of eliminating these entities from one's ontology. Second, it's not clear that one always can come up with an appropriate x to fill in the schema $\exists x(aRx \ \& \ W(bR'x))$. Take one of the most important relations, that of causation. How is one going to give an existentially quantified paraphrase of the claim *a caused b*, where a is a past event? I don't see any way of doing this.

One might take events to be abstract entities or repeatable entities – though there still will be many instances where mere repeatability won't suffice for the truth of aRb where a and b are events and R is a causal relation. It won't always be the case that a repeats such that it occurs at the same time as b . I will raise more objections to the hidden logical form solution and hence to the existential quantification solution below.

b) The Relational Properties Solution

On the relational properties solution, the logical form of a sentence like “I am of the same political party as FDR” turns out to be Fa , where F is a *relational property*. A relational property is a property like *being taller than Tom* or *being meaner than Leroy*, a property that “makes reference” to (a) particular individual or individuals. Relational properties aren't relations. They're possessed by a single individual in the same sort of way as non-relational properties like *being blue* are possessed. They don't “hold between” individuals in the way that relations do; rather, they're exemplified by a single individual – they're monadic. Normally one might think that for each relational property that is exemplified by an individual S , there is a corresponding relation that S stands in to some other entity (or entities) S' . For instance, if I have the property *being taller than Tom*, then a relation holds between myself and Tom, namely the *being taller than* relation. However, on the relational properties solution this correspondence won't hold. It can be the case that an individual S have a relational property that involves another individual S' in the same sort of way that *being taller than Tom* involves Tom, and it not be the case that there be the corresponding relation (analogous to *being taller than*) that holds between S and S' .

It should be noted that relational properties are structured sorts of entities, in the sort of way that many think that propositions are structured. They are complex entities, built up of more primitive entities that stand in certain relations to one another. In particular, a relational property will be composed of the relation that is “mentioned” in the expression of the property, and an individual essence of the individual that the relational property is “about.” An *individual essence* is a property p such that if it is possibly exemplified by some entity o , then necessarily, if o exists, o has

p, and necessarily, for any o' , if o' exemplifies p, then $o=o'$. So, the relational property *being taller than Frank* is a complex entity, composed of the relation *being taller than* and an individual essence of Frank. That the relational property is composed of these two elements is of great importance. The fact that the relevant relation is included in the structure of the property gives us an explanation of why certain logical inferences will hold in virtue of individuals having certain relational properties. For instance, if Joe has the relational property, *being taller than Frank* and Frank has the relational property *being taller than Fred*, then Joe should have the relational property *being taller than Fred*. How can we account for this? It is because the relation *being taller than* that is a constituent of the relational property in question is a transitive relation. So we have some sort of metaphysical explanation of why certain inferences that ought to hold among propositions that predicate relational properties do hold.

The fact that these properties have as a constituent element an individual essence is crucial as well. Insofar as certain terms, such as names and indexicals are rigid, we need some sort of way of picking out a particular individual across worlds when we have a relational property that is expressed using a name or indexical. Were we the analogue of direct reference theorists about properties, we would think that the way to do this is to have as a constituent of the property the individual who is involved in the relational property. So the relational property *being taller than Frank* would contain Frank as a constituent. But this obviously won't work for the presentist in addressing the problem of relations; non-present individuals don't exist to be parts of relational properties. However, their individual essences, which exist necessarily, are available to go "proxy" for the individual in the structure of the property. So this will allow the relational property that is expressed by a gerundial phrase that uses a proper name or indexical to be about the same individual from world to world.

On the relational properties solution as we first will consider it, non-present and present individuals will have relational properties that undergird and will provide for the truth of relational propositions like *I am of the same political party as FDR*. In this case, FDR would have the property (now) of *being of the same political party*

as me and I would have the property *being of the same political party as FDR*. Or if I say “He is more ruthless than Stalin,” this sentence may express a true proposition not in virtue of a relation holding between a present individual and Stalin, but in virtue of Stalin’s having a relational property, *being less ruthless than him*, and his having a property *being more ruthless than Stalin*.

However, I don’t think that this first-blush strategy will work. Consider the view *serious presentism* – objects can exemplify properties or stand in relations only at times when they exist.⁸ I think that there is a strong argument that presentism entails serious presentism. Consider the following argument.

- (1) Necessarily, for any time *t*, whatever there is (in as temporally-neutral sense as one likes) exists at *t*. (presentism)
- (2) Necessarily, for any property *F* or relation *R* and time *t*, if *F* or *R* is exemplified at *t*, there is/are (in as temporally-neutral a sense as one likes) something or things that exemplifies or exemplify *F* or *R* at *t*.
- (3) Therefore, necessarily for any property *F* or relation *R* and time *t*, if *F* or *R* is exemplified at *t*, then *F* or *R* is exemplified by something or some things that exists or exist at *t*.
- (4) Therefore, necessarily, objects exemplify properties or stand in relations at a time only if they exist at that time.

This argument looks to me to be sound. (4), serious presentism, entails that objects that don’t exist now can’t exemplify any properties, and hence can’t exemplify relational properties. So neither Stalin nor FDR can have the relational properties that we ascribed to them. Note also one other consequence of serious presentism – it entails (P). So any attempt to solve the problem of relations by denying (P) is undercut by the truth of serious presentism.

So if we’re going to use relational properties to deal with the problem of relations we will have to use those that are instantiated presently, such as the one I have, *being of the same political party as FDR*. Can we use presently instantiated relational properties to respond to the problem of relations? There are problems with this strategy. First, as noted it cuts the connection between a relational property and its corresponding relation. Intuitively, I exemplify the property *being of the same political party as FDR* iff I bear the *being*

of the same political party relation to FDR. But this isn't so on the relational properties solution.

Furthermore, there are problems that plague both versions of the hidden logical form solution. First, we have no independent syntactic evidence for thinking that the logical forms of sentences like "I am of the same political party as FDR" are anything but aRb . The posit of the modification of logical form is theory-driven; it is motivated by an attempt to avoid a seemingly significant problem for presentism. Since our other attempts (the overlap strategy and the negative paraphrase strategy) failed to solve the problem of relations, assuming that I have covered the options for solutions to the problem of relations (and I think I have), this posit of a hidden logical form is only as plausible as presentism is. That presentism is taken to commit us to the claim that there are significant divergences from the apparent logical forms of relational propositions expressed by relational sentences can be taken as a strike against presentism. It should be noted, though, that it seems that the relational properties solution fares better than does the existential quantification solution in this regard. *I am of the same political party as FDR* certainly seems to have the logical form aRb , and it doesn't seem to be an existential quantification, or a proposition of the form Fa . But at least on the relational properties strategy something *relational* is left in the paraphrase. As noted before, the relational property will contain as a constituent the relation which *prima facie* seems to hold between a and b . The existential quantification solution eliminates the relational element entirely. Thus, though purely syntactically both strategies posit significantly different logical forms for propositions which seem to have the form aRb , the structure in the "F" in the relational properties' rendering of the relational sentence allows it to mimic the relational element in the relational sentence were it taken straightforwardly to be a sentence of the form aRb . For this reason and reasons mentioned in the discussion of the existential quantification solution, if one is going to adopt either of the hidden logical form strategies, the relational properties solution seems preferable.

However, there is a significant difficulty with any hidden logical form solution. This sort of solution states that a proposition a sentence expresses will vary in logical form simply in virtue of the fact that one of the apparent relata doesn't exist. It can't be that all

relational sentences express propositions of the form Fa or $\exists x(aRx \ \& \ W(bR'x))$. Both of these modifications of logical form themselves involve relations. It is clear how the existential quantification solution makes use of relations. The relational properties solution uses some sort of relation to serve as the “glue” for the constituents of the complex relational property. On pain of regress, in neither of these cases can the relational claims involved in both of these strategies be taken to be either existential quantifications or instances of relational properties. So not all relational sentences will have a hidden logical form; some will be of the form aRb . Furthermore, the only reasonable bifurcation as to whether a relational statement has a hidden logical form or has its apparent logical form of aRb would be when we have a relational statement involving a present and a non-present object. Note that both of the uses of relations in the two hidden logical form solutions make use of relations that hold between presently existing objects. So once we allow that we have some relational statements that have the form aRb that relate present objects, it seems arbitrary not to say that all of them do. But this means that I’m saying something of a very different form when I say “I am of the same political party as FDR” and “I am of the same political party as Russ Feingold.” The former is either of the form $\exists x(aRx \ \& \ W(bR'x))$ or Fa , and the latter has the logical form it appears to have, aRb . Surely this can’t be right; surely the logical form of the proposition I express doesn’t change simply because one of the objects doesn’t exist because it’s not present. The truth of the relational statement may change, but surely the logical form of the proposition can’t vary only with the existence or non-existence of the “related” objects.

I conclude that the relational properties solution is preferable to the existential quantification solution. But both of them run into serious difficulty with a seemingly arbitrary bifurcation of the sorts of propositions expressed by relational statements.

In this paper I have investigated what I take to be the contenders for a solution to the problem of relations. All contenders have been found wanting. Insofar as we think it’s true that, e.g., I am of the same political party as FDR (and it certainly seems to be true), I conclude that this is a *prima facie* consideration against presentism. Certainly my attempt to show problems with all the possible solu-

tions to the problem of relations doesn't amount to a conclusive argument that presentism is false. There are many other arguments for and against eternalism and presentism that must be considered. But I contend that the inability for the presentist to solve the problem of relations gives us at least some reason to think that presentism is false.⁹

NOTES

¹ There are some who think that presentism is either trivially true or obviously false. So, if we take presentism to be the view that necessarily, whatever there is, is present, one might ask what the sense of "there is" is in the universal quantification in the definition. Does "there is" range over presently existing objects only? Then presentism is trivially true. Or, is the "there is" "tenseless"; does it mean something like "there was, is, or will be?" If so, then presentism is obviously false. It is contended that these are the only two ways of understanding the presentist thesis, so there is no real metaphysical dispute between the presentist and eternalist. I think that this is misguided. Presentism is to be understood in a manner analogous to the manner in which actualism is understood, where actualism is the view that necessarily, whatever there is exists actually. The universal quantifier in the statement of actualism is "loosed" so that it may range over possibilities. Similarly, with presentism, the universal quantifier in the statement of the view is "loosed" so that it may range over past and future objects. Both presentism and actualism employ unrestricted quantification in their definitions to avoid the trivially true/obviously false objection. Unfortunately, when this is pointed out to those who think that presentism is either trivially true or obviously false, they tend not to understand the notion of unrestricted quantification. Thus, many such people also don't think that actualism is a substantive philosophical thesis. It is difficult to know what to say to such people. I think I understand the sort of unrestricted quantification employed by the presentist, and thus I can make sense of the presentist's thesis. But I have no way of convincing those who are skeptical of the coherence of an unrestricted quantifier that presentism is a robust philosophical claim. See Plantinga (1985, pp. 314–316) for discussion of similar concerns with respect to actualism. I am indebted to Tom Crisp for discussion of this issue.

² For instance, she might take times to be propositions or states of affairs that for some time *t*, entail only every true proposition or state of affairs that is true or obtains at *t*.

³ Or, if they're not false, they're at least not true. See Sider (1999). Sider adopts the notion of "quasi-truth" where a proposition is "quasi-true" informally if it is true "philosophical niceties aside" (p. 332). More, formally, in the case of relations to the non-present, a proposition is quasi-true iff if eternalism were true there would be a true proposition that would entail it (p. 339). It's not clear to me exactly what quasi-truth amounts to; so far as I can tell he's not proposing

it as a third truth value. I think that the best way to view his strategy is as a sort of negative paraphrase strategy. He is trying to provide true propositions that ease the sting of the denial of the relational statement, which is what the negative paraphrase strategist is doing. Sider has just given a specific way of generating the propositions which the negative paraphrase theorist will use to make more plausible the denial of the truth of the relational statements.

⁴ Again, in all of these examples we could turn the past tense existential quantifier into a sentence operator with present tense quantification (“There was an *x*” becomes “It was the case that there is an *x*”).

⁵ An anonymous referee suggested that I use individual essences so that I may avoid the problem of the “anyone” only ranging over present individuals, and hence not over ER. So, rather than saying “anyone who exemplifies *P*, I adore,” I should say “if there were an instantiation of an individual essence *E* such that that instantiation exemplified *P*, then I would adore the instantiation of *E*.” The presentist, like the actualist, will want to make use of individual essences to “go proxy” for nonexistent individuals. This much is clear. But I can’t see how the above paraphrase is any better than the one I give with respect to quantifying over only present objects, and hence not over ER. Any instance of *E* that exemplifies *P* will be a present object, and hence *E* will not be any individual essence of ER. Thus, the presentist still is left with the fact that the entity quantified over in the second part of the paraphrase isn’t going to be ER, whether or not one employs individual essences.

⁶ Again, on Sider’s view, these propositions won’t be false; they’ll be “quasi-true.” But then the objection can be recast: There are serious problems with a view doesn’t allow to be true a myriad of propositions which certainly seem to be true. Also, a presentist may well say, “You’re right, there are some costs to this solution. But the costs outweigh the costs of adopting any other view in logical space. So, I’m justified in holding to my presentism.” I leave it up to the presentist to judge for herself whether these costs outweigh the benefits of being a presentist. I present in this paper simply a *prima facie* case against presentism.

⁷ I leave aside the paraphrase of intentional claims (such as “I adore Eleonore Roosevelt”). The analysis I provide here suffices to capture at least an essential part of the existential quantification solution’s picture. If I can show that there are problems paraphrasing sentences into this form, which must be done for many relational sentences, I will have shown that there are problems with the existential quantification solution. The “*W*” in the existentially quantified sentence is a past-tense temporal operator. I should be read as “It was the case that.”

⁸ The name is an analogue of Plantinga’s “serious actualism,” see Plantinga (1985). See Salmon (1998), and Bergmann (1999).

⁹ I am indebted to Gordon Barnes, Tom Crisp, Dave VanderLaan, Mike Byrd, and Alan Sidelle for helpful discussion of these issues. Thanks to an anonymous referee from *Philosophical Studies* for helpful comments on the paper.

REFERENCES

- Bergmann, M. (1999): '(Serious) Actualism and (Serious) Presentism', *Nous* 33(1), 118–132.
- Chisholm, R.M. (1990): 'Referring to Things That No Longer Exist', *Philosophical Perspectives* 4, 546–556.
- Plantinga, A. (1985): 'Replies', in J. Tomberlin, and P. van Inwagen (eds.), *Alvin Plantinga*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Salmon, N. (1998): 'Nonexistence', *Nous* 32, 277–319.
- Sider, T. (1999): 'Presentism and Ontological Commitment', *Journal of Philosophy* XCVI, 325–347.

Department of Philosophy
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407
USA
E-mail: mld@csusb.edu