A Case for Stage View Presentism

0. Abstract

Until recently, perdurantism has been considered to be incompatible with the presentist ontology of time. However, discussions about presentist theories of perdurance are now surfacing, one of the most prominent arguments for which being Berit Brogaard's essay: "Presentist Four-Dimensionalism". In this paper, I examine Brogaard's argument in contrast to Ted Sider's arguments for (an Eternalist theory of) the "Stage View". I then argue for another (and, I think, novel) view of presentist perdurantism, which avoids the problematic consequences that Brogaard's view faces, and which also successfully solves philosophical puzzles without the difficulties that Sider's view faces. This view, which I call "Stage View Presentism," thus seems to be an appealing alternative for presentists who remain impartial to both the endurantist and the worm theories of persistence.

1. Presentism, Eternalism, and Perdurantism

In her paper entitled "Presentist Four-Dimensionalism"[1], Berit Brogaard argues for a presentist theory of perdurantism. *Perdurantism* is the view that objects are 'spacetime worms', which persist through time in virtue of having temporal parts at any particular time. Objects, then, are aggregates of these temporal parts (which I will call *stages*). Each stage is not temporally extended *per se*, but each spacetime worm (or aggregate of stages) extends temporally by having stages fixed at many successive times. Thus, perdurantists argue that stages exist at a time, whereas worms exist over time. *Presentism*, in contrast, is the view that "the only things that exist are things that presently exist" [Brogaard 2000: 3]. Presentism is often regarded as being incompatible with perdurantism. If it is the case that only present things exist, then it seems that temporally extended worms cannot exist.

Brogaard counters this claim by arguing that only *stages* (instantaneous temporal parts) of objects *exist*, but that "objects have four dimensions in the sense that they have

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[1] See Brogaard (2000).

an unfolding temporal dimension in addition to the three spatial ones" [Ibid: 4]. So at any (present) time, every stage is wholly present, but stages themselves never persist from time to time – i.e. stages only exist at the (present) time, but never at multiple times. Thus, Brogaard's view can so far be summarized as follows: only the present exists, and only stages exist at any present time; but stages are merely *parts* of worms, so it seems that things like persons, cups, and so forth never actually exist. So, what we seem to have here is a three-dimensional view that has been "smuggled… in the back door" [Ibid: 7]. However, Brogaard also counters this objection by pointing out that *events* are temporally extended, and yet these never exist wholly at one time. Brogaard argues that, similar to events, "objects, such as you an me, may have extended temporal parts even though these are parts which exist always only in the sense that they unfold themselves, incrementally, through their successive stages" [Ibid.]. Accordingly, although objects never wholly exist, they can temporally extend (or persist) in virtue of their successive stages.

Thus, Brogaard argues that *we are worms*, but I, the worm, only partially exist at any given (present) time. This is similar to the eternalist version of the worm theory. The eternalist (or non-presentist) ontology is one wherein the past, present, and future all really exist. So, the present enjoys no privileged existence. The worm extends temporally by having parts at every successive time, just like a spatial object (such as an arm) extends spatially by having parts at every successive place. The eternalist worm view differs from the presentist view, however, in that the spacetime worm itself, as well as all of its parts, exists (tenselessly) over time – just like an arm exists over space. Whereas on Brogaard's view, the analogy between space and time seems to disappear, in that the spacetime worm never actually exists *per se*, due to the fact that only present things exist.

This point is pressed by Jiri Benovsky[2], in an attempt to refute Brogaard's thesis. Benovsky argues that the presentist version of perdurantism faces a problem that the eternalist version avoids: the problem of *objects having non-existent parts*. Benovsky asks "how is it possible to claim that material objects have temporal parts at other times than the present if these parts don't exist?" [Benovsky 2007: 83]. The problem for the presentist perdurance theory, then, is that on this view objects never wholly exist, but only partially exist; so at any time at which a part exists, all other parts of that so-called object do not. So where the eternalist worm theorist is committed to the view that objects only partially exist at any given time, such a view allows that one can take a tenseless perspective, where *all other parts* also exist, however just not at *this particular time*. But the presentist is committed to the former claim, where other such parts simply do not exist, since tense is taken seriously. Thus, on Brogaard's view, the vast majority of any object's parts are absent at any present time. Benovsky cites this problem and asks why we should regard these stages as *parts* of any object – given that no such object exists?[3]

I find Benovsky's argument against Brogaard's view very strong – strong enough, at least, to warrant a revision of her view. Presentists usually avoid perdurantist claims of persistence *for the very reason* that saying an object only *partially* exists at any given (present) time is an unattractive consequence to have. Thus, when Brogaard states

> According to presentist four-dimensionalism, then, to say that W. V. O. Quine exists (with tensed 'exists') must be characterized as loose talk. What we really mean is that an instantaneous stage of W. V. O. Quine

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[2] See Benovsky (2007).
[3] Benovsky also argues that Brogaard's view does not avoid the problem of change, a claim which Brogaard argues makes her view more attractive than the eternalist view.

exists. One might feel uneasy about [this] idea... [b]ut there is nothing strange here. We also speak of time as if it existed, although strictly speaking, at any given moment, only one of its instants… exists. [4]

I believe this statement yields two unattractive results. First, Brogaard states that only a *part* of Quine exists, a problem presentism not only usually avoids, but a problem that most presentists *want* to avoid. Second, Brogaard seems to characterize 'time' in such a way where each present instant exists only as *part* of some larger thing that is *time itself*. This, to me, seems to present presentism in a way which is contrary to the standard view. Ned Markosian (who argues in favor of presentism) states: "Presentism seems to entail that there is no time except the present time."[4] This claim seems much more accurate to me. When Brogaard states that only one of *its* [i.e. *time's*] instants exists, she seems to characterize time in such a way that it, too, has parts. But this seems to closer resemble *eternalism*, where time is understood as having parts.[5] In light of these problems which face Brogaard's view, I find the presentist version of the worm theory to be less attractive than the eternalist version. But, I argue that there is still hope for presentist perdurantism, because the 'worm theory' is not the only perdurantist view of persistence.

2. Stage View and Persistence

Ted Sider has offered another version of perdurantism, which he calls the "Stage View".[6] According to the stage view (which, one should note, entails an eternalist ontology on Sider's view), *we are stages* [Sider 1996: 433]. Persons, cats, rocks, cups, and all other

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[4] Markosian (2004), p. 51.
[5] At least in the sense that time is spread out, and is analogous to space in that it has parts.
[6] Sider (2001) refers to perdurantism as 'four-dimensionalism' and Haslanger (2003) refers to persistence on the stage view as 'exdurantism'.

everyday objects are not spacetime worms. Rather, each stage (or instantaneous temporal part) of a spacetime worm is the thing itself. Also, the predicate 'person' typically applies to the person stage and not the spacetime worm on this view [Sider 2001: 190]. Note, however, that Sider does *not* reject the existence of spacetime worms, he merely rejects that *we are* spacetime worms. How, then, if we are stages, is this a view of persistence?

Sider argues quite eloquently that persistence on the stage view happens in virtue of a counterpart theory of *de re* temporal predication. According to Sider's counterpart theory, objects persist by having distinct counterpart stages at every time at which they exist. So the utterance 'Ted was once a boy' is true just in case there exists some person stage x (prior to the utterance) that bears the temporal counterpart relation to the Ted-stage that currently exists.[7] Sider argues that even though these two stages (Ted the adult and Ted the boy) are distinct, it is still true that Ted *was* once a boy. The fact that Ted is no longer that exact same stage is not problematic for persistence on his view.[8]

Sider argues that the stage view solves many of the puzzles of persistence over time better than either the worm theory or three-dimensionalism [Sider 1996: 433]. For example, the stage view better explains how we count (namely, by *identity*). Sider states that "[c]ounting must be by identity when we count objects not in time (numbers, for example), and surely we count persons in the same sense in which we count numbers" [Sider 2001: 189]. The idea here is that, if we count by identity, we must count person stages rather than worms. Whether we count stages or worms *can be* indeterminate, but

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[7] See both Sider (2001) p. 193 and Haslanger (2003) p. 318.
[8] Sider's view (obviously) has more depth than how I have presented here. However, since the focus of my paper is in critiquing and revising Brogaard's argument, I will not go into great depth regarding Sider's view. Although I will offer comparisons from my view to Sider's, for the purposes of this paper, the description I've provided will suffice.

typically it depends on the 'speaker's interests'. However, the stage view faces some difficulty when sentences include what Sider calls 'timeless counting'. To quote Sider: "sentences involving 'timeless counting' are ill-handled by temporal counterpart theory" [Sider 2001: 197]. This difficulty arises because whenever statements involve *temporally extended predication* (for example: 'how many people were in your office *over the last hour*?') our reference in counting shifts from stages to worms. Thus, a concession is required for friends of the stage view, and Sider obliges with such a concession [Ibid.].

Another type of puzzle that Sider argues the stage view solves better than the worm view or the three-dimensional view is that of the statue/lump. Because we typically quantify over stages rather than worms, the fact that there seem to exist both a statue and a lump in the same place at the same time is not so problematic.[9] Since the case entails two distinct spacetime worms, which share one or more stages in common, then, if we count stages instead of worms, the lump and statue never coincide. However, as Sider admits in the concession above, we *sometimes* quantify over spacetime worms. Thus, if one takes a 'timeless perspective' and adds temporally extended predication to a question or a sentence, such as 'how many statues and lumps were there *in the last minute*?' Sider would be forced into a shift of reference, on his view, wherein he would count *worms* rather than stages. The result is problematic, in that it seems spacetime worms (which are objects on Sider's view) *sometimes* – albeit not typically – coincide. Indeed, Sider recognizes and explicitly discusses this very problem in an earlier essay,[10] where he states:

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[9] I use the phrase 'not so problematic' rather than 'not a problem' because, as I will argue, I think that *some* problem remains in Sider's version of the stage view.

[10] See Sider (1996), and also note that these posit only *semantic* problems for Sider.

I do grant the existence of aggregates of stages, and such aggregates do sometimes coincide; but I deny that these aggregates are people, statues, coins, quarks, etc. Moreover, I deny that these objects are (typically) in the range of our quantifiers. [Sider 1996: 15]

So while Sider avoids the problem that *statues* and *lumps* coincide, his view still admits that *objects* sometimes coincide. Indeed, this is not a knockdown argument by any means, however, the problem of coinciding *objects* apparent remains on Sider's view.

Sider does recognize that the stage view faces some difficulties, as do most views, but he argues (and correctly so, I think) that its benefits vastly outweigh its costs. But if another view could handle these problems better, I think it would be worth considering.

3. Stage View Presentism

While elucidating his view, Sider anticipates the emergence of a presentist version of the stage view. He argues that "a certain kind of presentist" could advocate the temporal counterpart theory of stage view. But ultimately, this view would be much less attractive, considering that by endorsing such a view, the presentist would have to relinquish *de re* temporal predication[11] – which is one of the primary reasons the view is so appealing. Such a concession, Sider argues, is "obstacle enough" for the presentist. However, I argue that one can make a case for a presentist version of the stage view, *without* the use of a counterpart theoretic view of persistence.[12] But before expounding such a view, I must first lay further groundwork for the presentist stage view, so that its persistence conditions can be more salient once presented.

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[11] See Sider (2001), Chapter 2 and specifically p. 208.
[12] For the detailed discussion of persistence on my view, see sect. 4.3 of this paper.

First, I argue for a presentist ontology which seems to differ from Brogaard's understanding of presentism. I argue that, in order to make proper sense of presentism, we must view all existing objects as being *wholly* present. Brogaard argues that existing objects are only *partially* present.[13] However, my ontology of existing things is one wherein 'exists' is predicated only of things which are wholly present at that time – otherwise, such a thing cannot be said to truly exist. When contrasting Brogaard's claim about partially existing objects with my claim about wholly existing objects, it becomes clear that my understanding of the presentist ontology differs deeply from the presentist ontology which her worm theory entails. For instance, on my view, no object can contain non-existent parts, whereas on Brogaard's view, this is simply how objects exist.

The fact that existing things must be wholly present on my view happens in virtue of the fact that any wholly present thing *is a stage*. Brogaard makes this same claim, but for different reasons. On my view, *objects are stages* and *vice versa* – and therefore, objects and stages are identical. Where Brogaard argues that objects are aggregates of stages, which are partially present at any given time, I argue that the object *is* the stage and that it is wholly present at any time at which it exists. However, it should be noted that my view of stages is *not* tantamount to Sider's, because the eternalist stage view posits that some objects only partially exist at a time – namely, spacetime worms. Therefore, on my view, aggregates of stages are *not* themselves objects.[14] This better accords with the presentist ontology, because, as the quote from Markosian in section one

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[13] Note that I am not certain she would say that *all* objects are partially present. However, any object that is thought to persist cannot be wholly present on her view, given her claim that "no stage is wholly present at more than one time" (Brogaard 2000: 4).

[14] For a much more thorough discussion about why this is the case, see sects. 4.1 and 4.2 in this paper.

illustrates, presentism entails that there be no time except the present time. Thus, an aggregate of stages at different times would not necessarily entail the constitution of an object – which, remember, was Benovsky's primary charge against Brogaard's view.

Thus, both Sider and I agree with Brogaard when she states: "No stage is wholly present at more than one time; every stage is wholly present at exactly one time. There is a new stage for every moment at which a given thing exists" [Brogaard 2000: 4]. But the three of us agree for fundamentally different reasons. Also, my reasons for affirming such a claim turn out to be opposite from Brogaard's. Brogaard makes this claim in an attempt to argue that objects are *never* wholly present, whereas I affirm the same claim to argue that objects are *always* wholly present. I also make the stronger claim that all objects are stages and all stages are objects – thus, aggregates of objects are not objects themselves. What then, on my view, do aggregates of stages constitute? *Events.* Where events remain ambiguous on Brogaard, Sider and David Lewis's views, I offer a precise description of the nature of events. (However, I will postpone such discussion until section 4.2.)

To sum up: The Presentist Stage View is such that (i) there is no time except the present time, (ii) that only wholly present stages exist, and that (iii) everyday objects, such as persons, cats, cups, etc. *are* stages. If some thing is not wholly present, it cannot be said of that thing that it exists, nor that it is an object. Thus, on my view, 'exists' can only be predicated of *objects*, but not of events.[15]

So far, I have not yet provided a detailed description for objects or events. Indeed, the most important part of my view, *persistence*, has also been conspicuously absent. Now that I have laid much of the groundwork for the view, I will turn to the heart of it.

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[15] This can be thought of similar to how Brentano and others argue for 'different modes of being'. See Brentano (1976) and McDaniel (2008).

4. Existing, Occurring, and Persisting

In this section, I will explicitly lay out the details my view. I will thoroughly examine the nature of *existing* objects and of *occurring* events. I will also elucidate as to how my view accounts for persistence *without* using temporal counterpart relations. If I am successful in this, the presentist stage view will avoid Sider's anticipated critiques and it will avoid the problems that Brogaard's view faces.

4.1 Existing

On the presentist stage view, 'existing' is predicated only of objects, which are *wholly* present at any given (present) time. Such objects, remember, *are* stages, and stages never exist as parts of other objects. Thus, objects and stages are synonymous on this view. If this were not the case, then *existing* things would necessarily have *non-existing* parts, which the presentist stage view rejects. This ontology of existing things (or objects) is not particularly controversial, so I feel this description will suffice. Formally put:

> *Existing things* = (i) actual, (ii) three-dimensional, (iii) spatially extended,
> (iv) objects, that are (v) wholly present (vi) at a time.

Such existing things are called 'stages' or 'objects'.

4.2. Occurring

'Occurring' on this view is something to be understood quite differently than 'existing'. 'Occurring' is predicated only of events, which are *partially* present at any given time, in virtue of having an existing thing as its part at any present time; an event must also be (partially) present at more than one successive time. Occurring, therefore, has a different

'mode of being' than existing, in that the ontology of occurring differs from the ontology of existing.[16] Such entities can be understood as *successive aggregates of stages*, which have an ending at some time later than the time at which they began.[17] Formally put:

> *Occurring entities* = (i) non-actual, (ii) four-dimensional[18], (iii) temporally extended (iv) events, that are (v) partially present (vi) at more than one successive time.

Such occurring entities are called 'worms' or 'events'.[19]

    Prima facie, occurring entities seem much more controversial than existing things on the presentist stage view. Controversy arises primarily because of the first attribute ascribed to events: namely, that occurring entities are *non-actual*. But I argue that, because of the following two examples, this should not seem so counterintuitive. First, on the presentist view, events *cannot* be actual (if by *actual* we mean wholly present or existing or as containing no non-existent parts). Second, an event must not be viewed as something which spans *over* time, but rather as something that occurs *through* times[20]. An event occurs in virtue of having successive stages at many present times, which make

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[16] Once again, see Brentano (1976) and McDaniel (2008).

[17] Again, the fact that only the present exists does not undermine the fact that there are events. This is because of the fact that events *occur* rather than *exist*. So if multiple stages exist successively and participate, say, in the same motion through space and time, then such a motion is understood as an occurrence, or an event, which begins at time t1 and ends at time t6. However, the motion *itself* cannot be said to 'exist' on this view.

[18] However, these are not four-dimensional in the standard sense. But rather, they are only four-dimensional in virtue of having begun at an earlier time, and where they are still occurring at a later (present) time, at which there exists a three-dimensional object as a part of the same event, which 'unfolds' or occurs *through* time. Also see the discussion later in this paper regarding Brogaard's 'temporally unfolding' fourth dimension to better understand how occurrences take up four dimensions rather than merely one dimension.

[19] Note that, like 'stage' and 'object', 'worm' and 'event' are synonymous terms as well.

[20] Note the plurality of the word 'times'. As stated above, an event must be present at more than one *successive* time.

up a part of that numerically same event. Thus, once the event no longer has an existing *part*, the event no longer occurs. Occurrence, then, depends upon existence for its being.

Although an event on this view is entirely made up of distinct stages at different times, it is not reducible to any one stage. When we quantify over events, we count *one* event, even though events are made up of many distinct parts. An event, then, has the property of ending at a later time than at which it began (or unfolding temporally) in virtue of each stage *at a time* existing as a part of that event, which, in a sense, can be understood as *pushing* time along.[21] So one event contains many parts – similar to how eternalists view spacetime worms, but it never actually exists, it only occurs. Thus, we have one stage existing *at a time* and one event occurring *through time* (or at many successive times). I think Brogaard explains this quite well when formulating her view about how *objects* persist. Brogaard argues that only "stages of objects exist, but that objects have four dimensions in the sense that they have an unfolding temporal dimension in addition to the three spatial ones" [Brogaard 2000 :7]. I argue, however, that if we apply this 'temporal unfolding' to events, rather than objects, it becomes much more plausible. Indeed, Brogaard also states that "events are commonly understood as having temporally extended parts even though these never exist as a whole but only through their successive stages." This explains events quite well. So I share Brogaard's intuition about how this fourth dimension 'unfolds', but only in the sense where events, not objects, do the unfolding.[22]

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[21] See Brentano (1976), pp. 101, 215 and Brogaard (2000) p. 6.

[22] In his (1980), p. 283, D. H. Mellor states: "All… events take time, and none is wholly present at any one time. An instant of time indeed contains no part of such events; it merely separates temporal parts [or stages] of them, as an internal surface separates the spatial parts of a thing." Although he was arguing for 4Dism, this is relevant here.

Therefore, my view accounts for events quite nicely. Brogaard argues for the persistence of objects, but in a way that seems more fitting for the occurrence of events. Indeed, Brogaard never explicitly defines events on her view. And given that aggregates of stages constitute *objects*, events remain ambiguous. Sider's stage view and Lewis's worm view[23] seem to share this ambiguity about events as well. And another eternalist perdurantist, W. V. O. Quine, has stated:

> Physical objects, conceived thus four-dimensionally in space and time, are not to be distinguished from events, or, in the concrete sense of the term, processes. Each comprises simply the content, however heterogeneous, of some portion of space-time, however disconnected or gerrymandered.[24]

Thus, where eternalist views (and Brogaard's view) are lacking, my view provides a straightforward and distinct ontology of both objects *and* events, without leaving such things up to the imagination of the reader.

4.3. Persisting

On the presentist stage view, 'persisting' differs from 'existing' and 'occurring', but only in that persistence is not reducible to either existing alone or occurring alone. Rather, persistence entails the occurrence of a continuous career-event, wherein an object exists at any present time. *Prima facie*, 'persisting' sounds like something that is synonymous with 'occurring'. I argue, however, that although objects do persist by occurring, that persistence differs from occurrence in that persisting things are *wholly* present at any given time, whereas occurring things are only *partially* present at any given time. For

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[23] See Lewis (1986).
[24] See Quine (1960), pg. 171.

instance, when we talk about what persists, we are talking about the cup or person itself, not just the event of which it is a part. I will elucidate this argument here.

Take 'Smith' for example (but note, that the example could just as well be a cup). Smith is an object, and he is therefore wholly present at any given (present) time. But, he is also just a stage, so it seems as though he cannot persist through more than one instant. However, I argue that Smith not only exists, but he exists as part of one continuous life (or life-event).[25] Thus, the presently existing Smith has the property of **being an existing part of one continuous life-event**. The object that stood next to a computer just before sitting down to work on a paper, then, held the property of being an existing part of the same event to which the object that currently works on the paper belongs. They are both the existing part of the same life-event at any time they exist. Therefore, at any present time during Smith's continuous life-event, there is a wholly present object that holds the property of **being an existing part of one continuous life-event**. Both the object which stood by my desk and the object working on the paper have this same property. To further elucidate this point, I will examine this in two different ways: the first being what Sider calls a *typical* case, and the second being what Sider calls a *timeless* case.

The *typical* case pertains to Smith *at a time*. This is the typical way we view persons, according to Sider, in that we typically quantify over stages and not worms. So on the presentist view, this ostensibly present Smith is wholly present, and therefore exists. Thus, there is a stage which *is* Smith. The *timeless* case (or what I call a case which includes temporally extended predication) pertains to Smith 'over time' or at multiple successive times. Sider cites that in such cases, our reference shifts to quantify

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[25] One can substitute 'career (or career-event)' for an object, such as a cup, fork, etc.

over worms rather than stages. Thus, on the presentist stage view, where worms (or aggregates of stages) are events, we then quantify over Smith's continuous life – which is still counted as *one*. So in the typical case we have a wholly present Smith, but what about in the timeless case? Once we regard Smith's continuous life on the presentist stage view, we recognize that such a life cannot be wholly present at a time for the same reason that a continuous war cannot be wholly present at one time. However, when regarding this continuous life-event (which ends at some time after the time at which it began), at any present time the event is instantiated, it is because of the fact that there is a wholly present Smith, which holds the property of **being an existing part of one continuous life-event**. Now, at a time five seconds later, there still exists an object Smith, which possesses that same property. Thus, to be straightforward in my claim:

> If *s* = a stage (Smith) at a time *t* and *w* = a worm (Smith's life) at multiple successive times; then *s* = a wholly present person and *w* = that person's continuous life; each *s* is the same type of *s* iff each *s* has the property of **being an existing part of the same numerical *w***, and this is the case. So while each *s* remains distinct, they are *all* still a part of the same *w,* and since only one *s* ever *exists* at a time (and no two *s*'s ever exist at the same time), that *s* persists by existing at every time at which *w* occurs.

Thus, at any given time, Smith is wholly present, and his continuous life (or indeed any other continuous sub-event, such as reading for five seconds, running for ten minutes, etc.) occurs in virtue of having Smith exist at any present time it is occurring. Since there is no time except the present time, only one Smith ever exists: namely, this

wholly present Smith. And since events occur at multiple successive times, only one life ever occurs. So, once again, when Brogaard states that

> According to presentist four-dimensionalism, then, to say that W. V. O. Quine exists (with tensed 'exists') must be characterized as loose talk. What we really mean is that an instantaneous stage of W. V. O. Quine exists.

we would agree (on presentist stage view) with the second sentence, but the first sentence we would adamantly reject. For on the presentist stage view, when we say 'Quine exists' (in the tensed sense) we *literally* mean it. However, given that no such Quine presently exists, we would correctly say that no such Quine exists, nor does Quine's continuous life still occur, and hence, Quine no longer persists.

5. Counting, Puzzles, and an Objection

I will now briefly examine some of the implications of, and an objection to, this view.[26]

5.1. Counting

Counting, on this view, happens similarly to how Sider presents counting his view.[27] That is, we typically quantify over stages (objects at a time), but sometimes our reference will shift and we will quantify over worms (which, on my view, are events), instead. But , I offer another reason for why this shift in reference happens, which stems from my view that objects and events have ontologically distinct modes of being, and which challenges Sider's view that referential shift typically depends on the 'speaker's interests'.

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[26] However, the majority of this work will be postponed to subsequent papers.
[27] See Sider (1996) and (2001) sect. 5.8.

Sider argues that, when statements or questions include temporally extended predication (or 'timeless counting'), our reference shifts from counting stages to counting worms. And such referential shifts typically depend on the 'speaker's interests' [Sider 2001: 189]. What Sider means by 'typically' here entails that, if I ask somebody how many roads I must cross to get to the bakery – which happens to be across one road that winds back and forth six times between where I am and where it is – the appropriate response would be 'six roads', even though there is only one continuous road. However, I argue that questions such as 'how many people were in Bob's office *over the past hour*?' should invoke different responses, since people certainly tend *not* to think of 'Bob' in terms of stages and aggregates of stages. If this were the case (that Bob is in fact a stage at a time or an aggregate of stages over the past hour), then people would remain entirely unaware of this fact and their 'interests' would not be a factor in the question. Therefore, to anchor such referential shifts in the *interests* of those whom remain unaware seems rather implausible.

I argue, on the other hand, that such a change in reference depends not upon the speaker's interests, but rather upon the fact that stage aggregates compose events instead of objects. If objects exist *at a time*, whereas events occur *through time* (or at multiple successive times), then the fact that we count stages when answering questions not in time, but count worms when answering questions which include temporally extended predication makes much more sense. This does not depend on the speaker's interests, but rather, depends on the fact that *this is the way things are*, and our intuitions track such truths. Thus, whenever statements or questions contain temporally extended predication, we will typically conceptualize 'occurrences' (events or worms). But whenever questions

or statements do include such predication, we count 'existents' (objects or stages). This is what causes the shift in reference between stages and worms – not the speaker's interests.

So, when someone asks me 'how many people are in Bob's office?' I will answer 'one' – because I will conceptualize an object, which contains mass and volume and which therefore fills up a spatial region. But if someone asks 'how many people were in Bob's office over the past hour?' I will be inclined to think abstractly about Bob, which takes up many different possible spatial regions at different times, and I will answer 'one' in reference to Bob's worm (or event) which took place over the past hour. And since this does not depend upon my interests (which are hopefully conscious interests on Sider's view), I need not be aware of the fact that I am counting an event rather than an object. The fact that events are temporal, whereas objects are spatial, provides a good reason for why Sider claims that we count stages *at a time,* but count worms (which are events on my view) whenever we take such a 'timeless perspective'.

5.2. Puzzles

Here, I will give a very brief treatment of the puzzle of coincident entities – which, as noted above, caused a problematic consequence for Sider's view. But, I claim that my view can solve the statue/lump puzzle, while also avoiding the problem that Sider faces.

A sculptor gets a lump of clay on Thursday and molds it into a statue of David on Friday. Disappointed with his work, he destroys the statue of David on Monday, but the same lump of clay still exists thereafter. The statue and the lump hold different properties (the statue holds the property of coming into existence a day after the clay and going out of existence before the clay), and thus, they appear to be distinct objects. Do these two

objects coincide on the stage view? Sider (mostly) avoids this problem, as we examined above, but is left with a view wherein we sometimes quantify over worms, and thus, worms (which are objects on his view) sometimes coincide – albeit never having persons, cats, etc. coincide. However, on my view since we *also* count stages rather than worms (at a time), the two never overlap. But, like Sider, once temporally extended predication is included in the statement or question, then our reference shifts and we count worms. But, on my view, *worms are events*. So, on the presentist stage view, when someone asks 'how many statues and lumps were in there *in the last minute*?' our reference shifts to quantifying over *events*, rather than objects, but objects still *never* coincide – because worms are not objects.[28] The fact that events coincide is a fact on every ontology (as far as I know). I walk and think at the same time quite often, but this is not a problematic consequence of an ontology.

5.3. Objection

I have nearly exceeded the scope of this paper. But I will briefly address a one objection. One might object to my theory of persistence on the grounds that *it makes no sense that distinct objects can make up a continuous life-event, because this event would be composed of disjointed stages, which cannot bear relations to non-existent things.* I will answer this in two ways. First, Sally Haslanger points out that she has the property of being the daughter of her parents, even though her parents don't presently exist. Thus she bears a relation to non-existent things [Haslanger 2003: 324]. They once existed, however, and she still exists, so this seems consistent to me. She was born to her parents

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[28] Also note that the statue and the lump differ only in temporal properties that pertain to events (on my view). This further shows that such 'worms' are merely events.

and will always hold the property of being their daughter (for her entire life, anyway). Thus, there should be no problem for an existing stage to bear a relation to the same event, of which it is a part, and to which it came into existence in relation. Secondly, if one wishes to obstinately adhere to the claim that existing things can bear *no* relation whatsoever to non-existent things, then I would challenge such a person to explain why they view this presently existing stage to bear the property of *being distinct* from the previous stage(s). Distinctness, after all, is a relational property – one which, in this case, would bear relation to presently non-existent objects.

6. Conclusion

Ted Sider endorses an eternalist theory of the stage view and argues that it solves puzzles better than the worm view or three-dimensionalism – and he is right. Sider also admits the possibility of a presentist stage view, but with a caveat included. In this paper, I have advocated a presentist version of the stage view, which does not depend upon a temporal counterpart theory. The fact that I have presented such a view which both avoids Sider's admonitions while also evading the most prominent problems that face Brogaard's view should attest to the appeal of stage view presentism. This view is also on par with Sider's view when it comes to solving puzzles, but it avoids the problems that his view faces. Thus, I conclude by claiming that stage view presentism is both plausible and appealing.

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