1. Introduction

Let us say that an entity is *present* just in case some moment in its lifetime is present; let us say that an entity is *past* just in case every moment in its lifetime is prior to the present moment; let us say that an entity is *future* just in case every moment in its lifetime is posterior to the present moment. According to presentism, there are present things, but past and future things do not exist. According to eternalism, in addition to present things, there are also past and future objects, such as dinosaurs and manned moon-bases.¹ According to the *growing block theory*, both present and past objects exist, whereas the merely future is unreal. These views appear to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive: you can’t endorse more than one of them and must endorse at least one of them.² This appearance is due to myopia. Here I present, articulate, and defend a fourth view, which I call *presentist existential pluralism* (PEP).

All three views presuppose that there is exactly one way for objects in time to exist. Presentist existential pluralism (PEP) distinguishes between two modes of existence: *past existence*, which is the way that past things exist, and *present existence*,

¹ See Markosian (2002) for a nice discussion of presentism and eternalism, as well as related views.

² Provided, of course, that you believe that anything is in time at all. I suppose there are other options in logical space, such as the *shrinking block view*, according to which the future and the present (but not the past) are real, and the *no-present view*, according to which only the future and the past are real. These views are obvious non-starters. An anonymous referee has also pointed out to me that another stance towards this debate is to hold that it is a pseudo-debate because it is terminologically defective, or because each view is an ‘equally good way of talking about time’. This latter position will be revisited in section 2.
which is the way that present things exist. The doctrine that there are modes of existence originates from the teachings of Aristotle and has had impressive champions throughout the ages. Recently, Kris McDaniel (2009, forthcoming-1, forthcoming-2) and Jason Turner (forthcoming) have defended the doctrine that there are different modes of being. In an interesting paper on presentism, Simon Keller (2004) alleges that Augustine, despite his strong presentist inclinations, didn’t fully give up the idea that past things are in some way real. And in the 20th century, Nino Cocchiarella (1969) embraced the view that past and present objects enjoy different modes of being.

A theory of time is worthy of belief to the extent that it is supported by intuition, solves or dissolves philosophical problems facing rival theories, doesn’t suffer from serious difficulties of its own, and is consonant with the findings of the physical sciences. In my view, the last consideration trumps the others. Unfortunately, the question of whether a view that holds that the present is in some way metaphysically distinguished can be consonant with physics is too large to address here.

Accordingly, my aims here are limited to the following two. First, I want to show that PEP does at least as well with respect to the remaining factors as other theories in which the present is in some way metaphysically distinguished. (Call a theory according to which the present is in some way metaphysically distinguished an “A-theory”.) For

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3 In this paper, I ignore the questions of whether there are any future existents, and if there are, in what way they are. By the end of this paper, it will be clear how one might formulate variants of PEP that take stands on these issues.

4 McDaniel (2009) discusses some well-known champions of the plurality of ways to be.

5 Cocchiarella (1969) defends an attractive system of modes of being.

6 See Balashov and Janssen (2003) for a discussion of some of the difficulties.
this reason, I will contrast PEP with those A-theories that are well-discussed in the literature. Second, I want to show that the best versions of the A-theory are versions that embrace the view that there are ways of being. For this reason, I will sometimes contrast PEP with other A-theories that either make use of the notion of modes of being or ought to make use of this notion.

My plan is as follows. In section 2, I briefly explain the interpretation of the doctrine that there are ways of being adopted here—ontological pluralism—and then formulate PEP as a version of ontological pluralism. The formulation of ontological pluralism makes use of the notion of logical joints, recently articulated by Ted Sider (2001, 2004, 2006, forthcoming). Because PEP is a novel view, its differences and commonalities with the standard views in the literature might not be immediately apparent. I therefore contrast PEP with presentism, eternalism, and the growing block theory in this section.

In section 3, I contrast PEP with Meinongian presentism, the view that there are things (past things in particular) that do not exist. I discuss Meinongian presentism because it is the extant view in the literature that is most similar to PEP. Moreover, I argue, the best version of Meinongian presentism is an ontologically pluralist view that is minimally different from PEP. However, the minimal difference between it and PEP is one that favors PEP, or so I argue.

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7 Ontological pluralism is defended by McDaniel (2009), but not under that name; the name ‘ontological pluralism’ is introduced by Turner (forthcoming). McDaniel (forthcoming-1, forthcoming-2) has since adopted the name as well.
In section 4, I contrast PEP with *degrees presentism*, which is the doctrine that existence comes in degrees, and that past objects are less real to the extent that they are temporally distant from the present. I argue that PEP is a better view than degrees presentism.

By the end of sections 2-4, I will have contrasted PEP with a number of standard and non-standard views in the literature. Moreover, I will have argued that PEP is preferable to the non-standard views I discuss. In section 5, I return to a discussion of one of the standard views, specifically presentism. I argue that PEP satisfies many of the intuitions that motivate presentism while avoiding an objection that appears to refute presentism, namely the so-called truth-making objection.

In section 6, I contrast PEP with a view defended by Timothy Williamson (2002), according to which material objects are only contingently and temporarily concrete. I argue that Williamson’s view is also problematized by the truth-making objection.

The final sections are devoted to issues raised by PEP. Section 7 discusses how the friend of PEP should account for the fact that objects change properties over time. Section 8 focuses on whether PEP does violence to the intuition that objects belong to their ontological categories essentially.

2. **Formulating Presentist Existential Pluralism (PEP)**

PEP is a version of *ontological pluralism*, the doctrine that there are modes of being or different ways to exist. Here I explicate this doctrine.

The background: Ted Sider (2001, 2004, 2006, 2009) has recently argued that we should extend the notion of a natural kind or property in two ways. First, he notes that
even someone who does not believe in *kinds* or *properties* should grant that there is an important *metaphysical* difference between predicates like ‘x is green’ and ‘x is grue’. There are many ways in which the anti-realist about properties can accommodate this distinction. One way is to take the notion of *naturalness* to apply to predicates of a language instead of to properties or kinds.\(^8\) The second extension Sider proposes is to apply the notion of naturalness to expressions of other grammatical categories, such as names or quantifiers. On this proposal, some quantifier-expressions might be more natural than others: languages with these expressions are *metaphysically better languages to speak*. According to Sider, the unrestricted existential quantifier is a perfectly natural expression.

McDaniel (2009, forthcoming-1, forthcoming-2) makes use of the notion of a *semantically primitive restricted quantifier*, which is a quantifier that, in virtue of its meaning, ranges over only some of what there is.\(^9\) A semantically primitive quantifier is *not* a quantifier defined by way of the unrestricted quantifier and a restricting predicate or a sentential operator, but is rather semantically simple. Although English and other actual

\(^8\) Instead of employing a predicate true of expressions, Sider’s (2009) preferred framework posits a two-place operator \(N\) that converts pairs of open-sentences into closed sentences. Informally, such sentences express facts of comparative naturalness, such as ‘to be an \(F\) is more natural than to be a \(G\)’. Alternatively, one could simply take ‘is perfectly natural’ and its ilk to be predicates of predicates (or other expressions). As far as I can tell, nothing in what follows turns on this issue, and so I will conflate the two ways of regimenting talk of naturalness.

\(^9\) McDaniel borrows the notion of a semantically primitive restricted quantifier from Hirsch (2005).
natural languages might not have these quantifiers, we can envision languages that do.\textsuperscript{10} McDaniel formulates ontological pluralism as the doctrine that there are possible languages with semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are at least as natural as the unrestricted existential quantifier in ordinary English. The version of ontological pluralism endorsed here holds that these semantically primitive quantifiers are more natural than the unrestricted quantifier.

This is a relatively minimal formulation of ontological pluralism, but it is nice for the following reasons. First, this formulation of ontological pluralism agrees with the neo-Quinean orthodoxy that there is a deep connection between quantification and existence: since there are fundamentally different ways to exist, there are corresponding to them metaphysically important distinct quantifiers.\textsuperscript{11} Second, this way of formulating ontological pluralism is neutral on the question of whether there are entities that are literally the ways of being, and so takes no stand on whether existence is a property. Third, it is arguable that participants in the current debate between the growing block theory, presentism, and eternalism need to appeal to logical kinds in order to ensure that their debate is genuine. This requires further comment.

We live in strange times: one of the hottest topics in contemporary metaphysics is whether contemporary metaphysics is possible. Some philosophers are concerned that

\textsuperscript{10} Some philosophers have held that there are several senses of the word ‘being’ or ‘exists’ or ‘there is’ are present in ordinary English. Presumably, many of these senses would be semantically primitive, and if so, the best way to disambiguate ordinary English would be via semantically primitive quantifier-expressions. For further discussion, see McDaniel (2009).

\textsuperscript{11} For further discussion, see McDaniel (2009, forthcoming-1) and Turner (forthcoming). For a relatively recent predecessor to the view, see Cocchiarella (1969).
many disputes in ontology are merely apparent. Is the dispute between presentism and eternalism merely apparent? The presentist grants that, although there are no dinosaurs, there *were* dinosaurs, and although there are no manned moon-bases, there *will be*. The eternalist claims that, tenselessly speaking, there are all of these things, that, e.g., \( \exists x \; x = a \) dinosaur. But one might worry that what the eternalist means by ‘\( \exists \Phi \)’ is simply what the presentist means by ‘it was the case that \( \exists \Phi \) or it is now the case that \( \exists \Phi \) or it will be the case that \( \exists \Phi \).’ And the presentist thinks that, in this sense, of ‘\( \exists \)’, the claim that there are dinosaurs true! And so the apparent disagreement between the presentist and the eternalist over what exists is merely verbal: the presentist and the eternalist mean different things by ‘\( \exists \)’, but it is possible to translate claims made by the presentist to claims acceptable to the eternalist, and vice-versa.

In order for presentists and eternalists to disagree about what there is, they need to mean the same thing by ‘\( \exists \)’. But if meaning is determined by *use* and the use of a term consists of dispositions to assert certain sentences employing the term, then it looks like the presentist and the eternalist must mean different things by ‘\( \exists \)’. But the alleged ‘translatability’ of claims made by the presentist into claims made by the eternalist (and vice-versa) shows that there is some phrase employed by the presentist that has the same *use* as ‘\( \exists \)’ when employed by the eternalist. This helps cement the idea that the presentist and the eternalist are ‘speaking past each other’, that their ‘dispute’ is not genuine.

One could argue that the presentist’s ‘there will be, there is now, or there was an F’ does not have the same use as the eternalist’s ‘there (tenselessly) is an F’, since the
two expressions have different logical properties.\textsuperscript{12} But an independent (and more general) rejoinder is that meaning is not determined by use alone. Use plays a large role in determining meaning, but it does not play the only role. Nor is it the case that the contribution use makes to determining meaning always trumps other factors. David Lewis (1983, 1984) has convincingly argued that a second factor is naturalness: certain meanings are simply more eligible than others for being meant. (I don’t think that naturalness and use are the only factors; causation plays a role as well, and there might be others.) According to Sider (forthcoming), there is a metaphysically fundamental meaning for ‘\(\exists\)’ that both the presentist and the eternalist employ when they argue about what exists, and this is why their debate is genuine.

Let’s characterize presentism, eternalism, and the growing block theories in such a way as to make this ‘presupposition’ of their debate explicit:

\textit{Presentism}\textsuperscript{*} = the view that there is a metaphysically fundamental sense of ‘\(\exists\)’ such that ‘\(\sim\exists x (x \text{ is a past or future object})\)’ is true.

\textit{Growing Block Theory}\textsuperscript{*} = the view that there is a metaphysically fundamental sense of ‘\(\exists\)’ such that each of the following is true: ‘\(\exists x (x \text{ is a past object})\)’, ‘\(\exists x (x \text{ is a present object})\)’, and ‘\(\sim\exists x (x \text{ is a future object})\)’.

\textit{Eternalism}\textsuperscript{*} = the view that there is a metaphysically fundamental sense of ‘\(\exists\)’

\textsuperscript{12} This line is pursued in Sider (2006). Sider (2001, pp. 15-16) points out that there are sentences that are true according to the eternalist, but false according to the presentist. For example, consider: ‘There is a set that contains a dinosaur and a computer.’ The eternalist believes this sentence is true, but the presentist doesn’t think there was such a set, is such a set, or will be such a set, and so will deny it. In a similar vein, Cocchiarella (1969, p. 37) suggests that past existence cannot simply be understood in terms of present existence and tense operators.
such that each of the following is true: ‘∃x (x is a past object)’, ‘∃x (x is a present object)’, and ‘∃x (x is a future object).’

Let’s contrast these views with PEP. PEP is a version of ontological pluralism, which as I have formulated it, is the doctrine that there is not a unique metaphysically fundamental meaning for ‘∃x’. Instead, the metaphysically fundamental quantifiers are semantically restricted. The unrestricted quantifier corresponding to the ‘there is’ of ordinary English is not metaphysically fundamental, but is rather something more like a disjunction of these metaphysically fundamental quantifiers.¹³ (‘has -1 charge or 3 units of rest mass’ is not a metaphysically fundamental predicate, but is rather a mere disjunction of metaphysically fundamental predicates.) Consider now this possible formulation of presentist existential pluralism (PEP):

PEP = the view that there are two semantically primitive restricted quantifiers, ‘∃ₚ’ and ‘∃ₖ’, the first of which ranges over all and only past objects whereas the second of which ranges over all and only present objects. Both quantifiers are metaphysically fundamental. There is no fundamental quantifier that ranges over both past and present objects.

PEP distinguishes between two kinds of existence: the way that past things exist, represented by ‘∃ₚ’, and the way that presently existing things exist, represented by ‘∃ₖ’. According to PEP, there is a sense in which both present and past things exist: the generic quantifier ‘∃’ is in effect the disjunction of these two quantifiers. But this generic quantifier is not perfectly natural.

¹³ The fact that we can introduce this ‘disjunctive’ quantifier in this way raises interesting philosophical issues. For more on them, see McDaniel (2009) and Turner (forthcoming).
There is a second way of understanding PEP and other ontologically pluralist views. There are two things we could mean by calling a quantifier ‘unrestricted’. McDaniel (2009), calls the fundamental quantifiers he believes in restricted because each quantifier individually does not range over all that is ranged over by the ‘there is’ of ordinary English, even though none of them is defined in terms of the ordinary English ‘there is’ and restricting predicates. This use of the term ‘restricted quantifier’ is legitimate. However, it also seems appropriate to say that a quantifier is restricted if and only if its domain is a proper subset of the domain of a fundamental quantifier. On the view defended here, the ordinary English ‘there is’ is not metaphysically fundamental. Neither ‘∃ₚ’ nor ‘∃ₑ’ is restricted in this second sense. This suggests that a second way of understanding ontological pluralism is as the doctrine that there is more than one metaphysically fundamental meaning for the unrestricted ‘∃’. And accordingly a second way of understanding PEP is as:

PEP* = view that there are two metaphysically fundamental meanings for the unrestricted quantifier ‘∃’: ‘∃ₚₓ’ ranges over all and only past objects, whereas

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14 See Turner (forthcoming) for further discussion of these issues. Views that allow for nesting of fundamental quantifiers (such as the version of Meinongian presentism discussed in section 3) raise additional thorny questions. Such views will have fundamental quantifiers that are restricted both in the sense of not ranging over everything ranged over by the ‘there is’ of ordinary English and in the sense of ranging over only some of what a fundamental quantifier ranges over.
‘∃ₓ’ ranges over all and only present objects. There is no fundamental quantifier that ranges over objects in both domains.\textsuperscript{15}

Let’s adopt PEP* as our canonical formulation of PEP. According to PEP*, there is a perfectly natural sense of the quantifier according to which only presently existing things exist. The friend of PEP* can say that in a very strict and metaphysical sense, there are no non-present objects. If we understand presentism as presentism*, then PEP* is a version of presentism. In fact, PEP* entails presentism*. Moreover, PEP* is inconsistent with the growing block theory* and eternalism*.

However, according to PEP*, there is also a perfectly natural sense of ‘∃’ according to which there are non-present things. Few presentists would approve. Perhaps then we should understand presentism not as presentism*, but rather as:

Presentism ** = the view that there is exactly one metaphysically fundamental sense of ‘∃’, and this sense is such that ‘¬∃ₓ (x is a past or future object)’ is true.

Presentism understood as presentism** is inconsistent with PEP*. PEP* is a fourth view about the metaphysics of time. According to PEP*, there are different ways to be, and the past and the present are both real but in different ways. According to T.L.S. Sprigge (1992, p. 1), the ordinary person’s view is ‘that the present is fully real, that the past has a kind of secondary reality, and that the future is hardly real at all.’ If this is right, then PEP* is the view most supported by pre-theoretic intuition.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} It is not clear to me whether the quantifiers embraced by PEP* are appropriately titled ‘primitive tensed quantifiers’ in the sense of Lewis (2004, pp. 11-12). Note that the friend of PEP* does not deny that these quantifiers have domains.

\textsuperscript{16} Note that the ordinary person’s view is not Sprigge’s: his paper is titled ‘the Unreality of Time’.
‘∃ₚ’ and ‘∃ₖ’ obey different fundamental principles. A statement making use of one of the quantifiers might state something necessarily true, while a statement differing from the first only in that it employs the other quantifier might say something that is at best contingently true. For example, (a) is necessarily true whereas (b) is contingently false:

(a)  \( \forall x \forall y (x \text{ and } y \text{ are simultaneous at some time}). \)

(b)  \( \forall x \forall y (x \text{ and } y \text{ are simultaneous at some time}). \)

(a) is necessarily true, since all things that exist as present things occupy the present moment, and hence are simultaneous at that moment, whereas (b) is contingently false since not all past things overlap temporally: no human person is simultaneous with a dinosaur.

Depending on which quantifier is in play, different tense-logics might even be appropriate. Let ‘\( W \)’ be the it was the case that sentential operator; let ‘\( N \)’ be the it is now the case that sentential operator; let ‘\( F \)’ be the it will be the case that sentential operator.\(^\text{17} \) Suppose you hold the Lockean view that nothing can enjoy two beginnings.\(^\text{18} \) Then you will hold that every statement that results from uniformly substituting for the free variable in (c) is necessarily true, whereas (d) is necessarily true of few or no values of the free variable:

(c)  \( \exists x \ x = y \rightarrow F(\exists x \ x = y) \)

(d)  \( \exists x \ x = y \rightarrow F(\exists x \ x = y) \)

\(^\text{17} \) Note that I understand these operators in such a way that neither \( N(P) \rightarrow W(P) \) nor \( N(P) \rightarrow F(P) \) is a tense-logical truth.

\(^\text{18} \) See Locke’s Essay, p. 328.
Moreover, you will hold that all instances of (e) are necessarily true, whereas some ways of uniformly substituting for the free variable in (f) yield contingently falsehoods:

\[(e) \quad \exists_p x \ x = y \rightarrow \neg F(\exists_c x \ x = y)\]

\[(f) \quad \exists_c x \ x = y \rightarrow \neg F(\exists_c x \ x = y)\]

Informally, (e) says that once something becomes past, it will never again be present, whereas (f) says that once something becomes present, it will never again be present. The only time (f) is true of some object is when that object is enjoying the last instance of its (present) existence.

Regardless of whether one accepts the Lockean view, one should hold that all ways of substituting for the free variable in (g) yield necessary truths, whereas not all instances of (h) are necessarily true:

\[(g) \quad \exists_p x \ x = y \rightarrow W(\exists_c x \ x = y)\]

\[(h) \quad \exists_c x \ x = y \rightarrow W(\exists_c x \ x = y)\]

Informally, (g) says that all past things once were present, which is clearly necessarily true, whereas (h) is false of some entity at the time at which it first comes into being.

3. **PEP* and Meinongian Presentism**

**Meinongian presentism** is the view that, although non-present things do not exist, nonetheless there are non-present things.\(^{19}\) There are obvious commonalities between

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\(^{19}\) See Keller (2004) and Markosian (2004) for critical discussion. Defenders of Meinongian presentism include Gallois (2004), Hinchliff (1988), and Yourgrau (1993). The real Meinong rejected Meinongian presentism for most of his career. See, for example, Meinong (1983, p. 60), in which eternalism is
Meinongian presentism and PEP*. Allow me to highlight some differences. First, the friend of PEP* need make no dealings with non-existent entities per se: she can hold that, although there are different ways to exist, everything that there is exists in some way or other. Second, the friend of PEP* can insist that it is metaphysically mistaken to assimilate dinosaurs to elves: past things have ontological status, whereas there simply are no fictional, imaginary, in short, non-real entities.\(^20\) A view that treats past entities as fundamentally on a par with ‘creatures of fiction’, mere possibilia, or even impossibilia, as standard meinongianism does, fails to respect to the ontological facts.

Of course, the Meinongian presentist could minimize these differences by holding that the only non-existent objects are past objects. Call this view Minimal Meinongian Presentism (MMP). MMP and PEP* are not merely notational variants. I understand Meinongianism as the view that there are two fundamental quantifier locutions, which we can neutrally call the inner quantifier and the outer quantifier;\(^21\) According Meinongians, the outer quantifier—henceforth ‘\(\exists_o\)’—corresponds to the unrestricted ‘there is’ of ordinary English, whereas the inner quantifier—henceforth ‘\(\exists_i\)’—corresponds to ‘there exists.’ Table momentarily this linguistic thesis, and focus on this key feature of

\(^{20}\) As Yourgrau (1993, p.140) writes, ‘…talk of the dead is of an entirely different order from, say, talk of the tooth fairy, which cries out for paraphrase.’ Note, however, that Yourgrau is himself a friend of non-existent past and future objects, non-existent possible worlds, and babies that are never born. Given this, it is unclear what he has against the tooth fairy.

\(^{21}\) See van Inwagen (2006, pp. 122-125) for discussion.
Meinongianism: everything within the domain of the inner quantifier is within the domain of the outer quantifier, but the converse does not hold. In short, the two fundamental quantifiers are nested. (This is why a Meinongian says that there are some things that do not exist, but doesn’t say that there are some existents that nonetheless aren’t.)

By contrast, the fundamental quantifiers recognized by PEP* have disjoint domains. So according to PEP* there is no fundamental sense of ‘there are’ whereby ‘there are both past and present objects’ is a truth. Note that, although both PEP* and MMP are inconsistent with presentism**, MMP unlike PEP* entails both the Growing Block Theory* and presentism*. These facts ensure that PEP* and MMP are not mere notational variants. However, I grant that both views might receive support from some of the same considerations.22

4. PEP and Degrees-Presentism

PEP is in some respects like the view recently defended by Quentin Smith (2002), Degrees Presentism (DP). According to DP,

Being temporally present is the highest degree of existence. Being past and being future by a merely infinitesimal amount is the second highest degree of existence. Being past by one hour and being future by one hour are lower degrees of existence, and being past by 5 billion years and being future by 5 billion years are still lower degrees of existence. The degree to which an item exists is proportional

22 They might also face some of the same objections. For example, Simon Keller (2004) claims that it is very hard to see how one knows that one is present given Meinongian presentism. I imagine a similar worry could be raised about PEP. I take this worry very seriously, but won’t address it here. For a discussion of this worry and a possible response to it, see Bricker (2006).
to its temporal distance from the present; the present, which has zero-temporal
distance from the present, has the highest (logically) possible degree of existence.
…. There is a difference of degree and not of kind between the present and what
is no longer present or not yet present. [Smith 2002, pp. 119-120]

While PEP says that past existence and present existence are different kinds of
existence, DP claims that they are merely different degrees of existence. PEP is the better
theory, and in what follows I will explain why.

We have seen how one can make sense of ways of being, but how should one
make sense of degrees of existence? There are two options: define the notion or take it as
primitive.

I take it that Smith (2002) takes the notion of degrees of existence as a primitive.23
There are at least two ways in which one might do this. Way one: take as primitive the
relation \( x \) is more real than \( y \). Way two: take existence to be a determinable property, and
let each quantity of existence be a primitive property that something either has or doesn’t
have, just as having a mass 5 kg and a mass of 6 kg are basic determinates of mass.

Given how contentious the notion of degree of existing is, it would be unfortunate
if we were forced to take it as primitive. Two strategies for defining this notion present
themselves. Strategy one: define degrees of existence directly in terms of concepts other
than being or mode of being. For example, one might define \( x \) has more existence than \( y \)
as \( y \) ontologically depends on \( x \) but \( x \) does not ontologically depend on \( y \). Or one might
define \( x \) has more existence than \( y \) as \( x \) has more causal power than \( y \). (Obviously, more
sophisticated definitions could be offered.) Note that neither definition is promising for

23 This view is also defended in Skow (ms).
the temporal case. Defining degrees of reality in terms of ontological dependence gets things backwards: I am ontologically dependent on my parents, and they are dependent on my grandparents, and so on. But my great-grandparents are not ontologically dependent on my grandparents, nor are my grandparents dependent on my parents, and so on. So, on this way of defining degrees of reality, my great-grandparents enjoy a higher degree of reality than I do, even though I am present and they are past. Similarly for definitions that appeal to causal power. The big bang that began the universe had more causal potency than I ever will, and yet it is past and I am present. One way of defining the notion of degrees of reality gets the right result but at the cost of utterly trivializing Smith’s view: \( x \) exists to a greater degree than \( y = \text{df.} \) \( x \) is closer to the present moment than \( y \). (The B-theorist could accept this definition and then say that the past is less real than the present!)

This suggests we should pursue the second strategy, which is to define degrees of existence in terms of modes of existence and (perhaps) other concepts. Suppose, for example, you hold that there are substances and immanent universals, which exist in substances. You might then hold that there are two different ways of being, the kind of being exemplified by substances, absolute being, and the kind of being exemplified by attributes, being-in.\(^{24}\) The logical form of absolute being is 1-placed—substances exist absolutely, not relative to anything else—whereas the logical form of being-in is 2-placed: every attribute exists in (and so relative to) some substance or other. With a scheme like this, there is something to be said for the idea that substances enjoy more reality than attributes: \( x \) is more real than \( y = \text{df.} \) the logical form of the kind of existence

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\(^{24}\) See McDaniel (forthcoming-2, forthcoming-3) for details.
enjoyed by $x$ is less polyadic than the kind of existence enjoyed by $y$. This way of defining degree of existence makes ineliminable appeal to ways of existing. It also seems to capture something intuitive: it seems right to say that things that exist absolutely have more being than those that exist relatively.\(^{25}\)

I am attracted to the idea that present existence is the only kind of absolute existence, whereas things that exist in the past enjoy only a kind of relative existence, specifically existence relative to a time. This view implies that past existence is a deficient mode of existence. But it doesn’t imply that, as you recede further into the past, your mode of being proportionately deteriorates. There is no obvious way of appealing to relational modes of being to achieve the result Smith wants.

From the perspective of DP, PEP itself is a kind of ‘degrees presentism’, albeit one that recognizes only two ‘degrees’ of being and that does not explicitly state that being presently existing is a greater degree. This suggests that one way of modeling DP is to hold that, for each time, there is a unique way of being corresponding to that time. One could then claim that there is a primitive relation ordering the ways of being, which is formally analogous to the greater than relation and which has the way of being corresponding to the present moment at its apex. But it is hard to see why this relation, despite its formal character, really correlates with ‘amounts of being’.

Here is a suggestion by [BLINDED] that seems to do the trick. Corresponding to the present moment is a unique way of being. Additionally, corresponding to every

\[^{25}\text{McDaniel (forthcoming-2) explores other ontological schemes in which a distinction between absolute and relative existence is drawn. One such scheme is a Platonic scheme in which forms enjoy absolute being, whereas material objects enjoy a kind of relative existence, existence-at-a-time. Recall that Plato himself held that the forms enjoy more reality than their instances, which are mere shadows of the forms.}\]
temporal interval centered on the present moment is a unique way of being. (So there is a way of being corresponding to the interval beginning one second before the present moment and ending one second after the present moment, there is a way of being corresponding to the interval beginning one hour before the present moment and ending one hour after the present moment, and so forth.) On this suggestion, things enjoy more than one way of existing.  

We now define \( x \) has more being than \( y \) as: the set of ways of being enjoyed by \( y \) is a proper subset of the set of ways of being enjoyed by \( x \). On this account, things that presently exist have more being than things that do not, and the further an existent is from the present, the less being it has. Moreover, it makes sense to say that some things have more reality than others: a thing that exists \( \text{in more ways} \) than others has a richer existential profile and hence enjoys more being.

DP is formally consistent, and we can make sense of it without taking degrees of existence as primitive. But it is hard to see what theoretical advantages it has over PEP. And there are theoretical costs: DP, as understood above, posits literally infinitely many modes of existence, whereas PEP posits only two. Smith’s (2002, pp. 119-120) main motivation for DP is phenomenological: he holds that degrees of existence are given in experience, and that it is obvious that DP is true. However, I don’t think that Smith has correctly described the phenomenology. It doesn’t seem to me that it is given in

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26 \text{ This is somewhat odd, but perfectly consistent. There is no difficulty envisioning a theory in which the perfectly natural semantically primitive quantifier expressions overlap. (Meinongian presentism is one such theory.) See McDaniel (forthcoming-1, section 5) for further discussion.}
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\[
27 \text{An even more general proposal but in the same spirit is this: } x \text{ has more reality than } y = \text{df. let } Cx \text{ be the class of ways in which } x \text{ exists; let } Cy \text{ be the class of ways in which } y \text{ exists; then: the cardinality of } Cx \text{ is greater than the cardinality of } Cy.
\]
experience that Socrates is less real than Aristotle. (Which experiences did I have in which this fact was given?) What does seem true is that, as events recede in time, our memories of them (typically) become less vivid and vivacious. And, as events move from the future towards the present, our anticipation of them grows greater. I suspect that these psychological facts are partially responsible for the illusory belief that things are proportionately less real as they are distant from the present.

5. PEP, Presentism, and Truth-Making

PEP*, along with other A-theories of time, takes the present to be metaphysically distinguished in some way. Pre-theoretical intuition favors the A-theory. But does pre-theoretic intuition favor presentism over PEP*?

A.N. Prior (1970, p. 245) offered this pithy formulation of presentism: ‘The present simply is the real considered in relation to two particular species of unreality, namely the past and the future.’ According to presentism, both the past and the future are completely unreal. But intuitively this is true only of future objects. That the past has some ontological status is a datum, which some philosophers have tried to respect by (mistakenly) identifying past existence with ‘existence in our memories or other intentional states.’ Consider the following remarks by Sidgwick:

… one has to distinguish different modes of real existence. It would be absurd to say that the great study of History is not conversant with reality. So far as the

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28 So-called B-theories deny that the present is in any way metaphysically privileged. I have nothing new to say about the B-theory here. For a defense of the B-theory, see Mellor (1981, 1998).

29 In a similar vein, Lotze (1887, p. 355) writes, ‘The history of the world, is it really reduced to the infinitely thin, for ever changing, strip of light which forms the present, wavering between a darkness of the Past, which is done and no longer anything at all, and a darkness of the future, which is also nothing?’
historian attains truth—as doubtless he does in some degree—the past exists for him as an object of thought and investigation: but so far as it is past it has ceased to exist in the sense in which the present exists. [Sidgwick 1894, p. 443]

Note that there is an unstrained reading of this passage according to which Sidgwick endorses PEP. This reading places weight on the first two sentences of the quotation. But there is also a reading in which Sidgwick hold that the (only) way in which the past exists is as the object of intentional states of presently existing beings. This seems to be the view defended by Augustine in his *Confessions*, XI.18-21.

What makes it the case that a particular memory (or some other intentional state) is of some particular past object rather than another? And what makes that mental state a genuine memory (i.e., a true representation of the past) as opposed to a mere seeming? If the past is literally nothing, it is very hard to see how these questions can be answered.\(^{30}\) A related concern is that it seems that memory provides us with knowledge by acquaintance rather than knowledge by description of past things.\(^{31}\) But how can we be acquainted with that which in no way exists?

Bernard Bosanquet held that the position of the common person once it has been clarified of certain confusions is that

past and future ... exist, so to speak, indirectly. ....the present tense alone,

implying a certain duration, would predicate existence in the full sense. It would be quite agreed that past and future make a difference to the present. But they


\(^{31}\) See Russell (1915) and Cockburn (1997, pp. 54-57) for discussion.
would be held to exist only in and through this difference, and would be realities only, in the case of the past, as effects, and in the case of the future, as anticipations… [Bosanquet 1897: 229]

I doubt that Bosanquet is correct. Suppose there are island universes—spatially and causally isolated parts of reality—and suppose that we live in one of them. Suppose that moments from now, one of these island universes will cease to be, leaving no trace at all of its ever having been, leaving no final effects on what remain. Surely it would nonetheless be true that it existed, that it had various features, etc. The view that Bosanquet describes is untenable.32

Intuition demands that the past must have some sort of reality. Past entities must enjoy some mode of being. This intuition is what makes the so-called truth-maker argument against presentism so compelling.

There are contingent truths about the past. For example, it is true that World War I was horrific. But what in the world makes it true? The eternalist, who believes in past, present, and future objects in all their glory, has an easy answer: since World War I is in her ontology, she can say that World War I’s being horrible is the truth-maker for the proposition that World War I was horrible. But there seems to be nothing in the presentist’s ontology to serve as a truth-maker.

32 Sprigge (1992, p.3) also presents an argument along these lines. In fairness to Bosanquet, I should note that this is not his considered view. A view of this sort is defended by Lukasiewicz (1967), who holds that past truths are made true by present truths and the laws of nature, but if the laws of nature are indeterministic, then many of the propositions about the past that we take to be true are not in fact true.
Some presentists resist the demand for truth-makers for truths about the past. I have nothing new to say to convince them to change their minds. Other presentists accept the demand, and attempt to produce present truth-makers for contingent truths about the past. These present truth-makers are states of affairs of the form the world is such that it was the case that P. The truth-maker for the claim that World War I was horrific is the state of affairs the world is such that World War I was horrific.

A response with which I sympathize is to charge the presentist with cheating: the properties postulated by the presentist—being such that the world was P—are not fit to be fundamental features of reality. And yet the presentist cannot hold that they supervene on fundamental categorical properties exemplified by present objects, since two possible worlds could be exactly alike with respect to how things are (categorically) now, but differ with respect to how things were (categorically). Ted Sider makes this point nicely:

The point of the truth-maker principle and the principle that truth supervenes on being is to rule out dubious ontologies. Let us consider some. First, brute dispositions. Many would insist that the fragility of a wine glass—its disposition to shatter if dropped—must be grounded in the non-dispositional properties of the glass, plus perhaps the laws of nature. It would be illegitimate to claim that the glass’s disposition to shatter is completely brute or ungrounded. Second example: brute counter-factuals. Most would say that when a counter-factual conditional is

33 See, for example, Merricks (2007).

34 For a defense of this view, see Bigelow (1996).

35 This is made clear in Keller (2004). Keller discusses some other ways to defuse the objection from truth-making. I won’t pursue these here.
true, for example, ‘this match would light if struck’, its truth must be grounded in the actual, occurrent properties of the match and its surroundings. … The argument against allowing the presentist to ‘cheat’ by invoking primitive properties like *previously containing dinosaurs*, or by invoking tenses themselves as primitive, is that this cheat seems of a kind with the dubious ontological cheats [just mentioned]. What seems common to all cheats is that irreducibly *hypothetical* properties are postulated, whereas a proper ontology should invoke only *categorical*, or occurrent, properties and relations. [Sider 2001: 40-41]

I find Sider’s claim here compelling. The truth-maker objection seems to refute presentism. Does PEP* suffer the same fate?

Intuitively, the answer is no. For PEP* recognizes a fundamental quantifier that ranges over past objects. To return to our earlier example, World War I is in the domain of this quantifier, and it has the feature of being horrific. So it seems that PEP* does not face the truth-making objection.

To make sure that this appearance is not deceptive, we need to think about how the ontological pluralist should formulate the truth-maker principle. The standard formulation of this principle is as follows:

(TM): For all $P$, if $P$ is true then $\exists x \ (x \ makes \ P \ true.)$

There is an intramural dispute among truth-maker theorists about what sort of relation the *makes-true* relation is. I hold that, at the very least, if $x$ makes $P$ true, then
there is no world in which \( x \) exists and \( P \) is not true.\(^{36}\) But this is all I will say about the makes-true relation here.\(^{37}\)

Focus on the quantifier that appears in TM. Recall that the ontological pluralist believes that there is more than one fundamental quantifier. An implicit assumption in the formulation of TM is that there is exactly one fundamental quantifier. If we embrace PEP*, we drop that assumption. PEP* is a version of ontological pluralism that accepts two fundamental quantifiers, ‘\( \exists_p \)’ and ‘\( \exists_c \)’. A PEP*-friendly version of TM is the following:

\[(\text{PEP-TM}): \text{For all } P, \text{ if } P \text{ is true then either } \exists_p x (x \text{ makes } P \text{ true}) \text{ or } \exists_c x (x \text{ makes } P \text{ true}).\]

The thought behind PEP-TM is this. If you accept that there is a close connection between existence and quantification, you will be attracted to Quine’s slogan that to be is to be the value of a bound variable.\(^{38}\) And if you also think that there are fundamentally different ways to exist, you will hold that there are different fundamental quantifiers. You should then hold that to be in some fundamental way is to be within the scope of a

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\(^{36}\)D.H. Mellor (2003, pp. 213-214) holds that this claim is too strong; D.M. Armstrong (2004, pp. 10-12) suggests that truth-makers must not only necessitate their truths, they must relevantly necessitate them.

\(^{37}\)A principle weaker than TM is sometimes appeal to, specifically, that truth supervenes on being. On this principle, truths are true in virtue of existing objects having properties or standing in various relations, but there need be no entity that is ‘an object having a property or some objects standing in a relation’, and hence there need not be anything whose existence is modally sufficient for the truth of contingent propositions. (David Lewis (2001) defends a version of this view.) I believe that all of the points I want to make about presentism, PEP, and the truth-making objection could be made by way of appeal to this weaker principle.

\(^{38}\)See Cocchiarella (1969, p. 42) for discussion.
fundamental quantifier. The truth-maker principle says that whenever something is true, some existent makes it true. The generalized truth-maker principle says that whenever something is true, something existing in some way or other makes it true.39

PEP-TEM is the proper way to formulate the truth-maker principle given PEP*. PEP* is consistent with PEP-TEM. Since the fact that World War I is horrific is within the range of ‘∃p’, it is the case that ∃p x (x makes it true that World War I is horrific). And so forth for other truths about the past. PEP* does not face the truth-making objection that devastates presentism, despite the fact that PEP* implies that there is a metaphysically fundamental sense in which no past objects exist.

Given PEP*, reformulating the truth-maker principle as PEP-TEM is motivated. Likewise, it is sometimes suggested that it is not unmotivated for the presentist to reformulate the truth-maker principle as the view that truths are made true by things that do, did, or will exist.40 Define the following ‘quantifier’ as follows: ∃d Φ =df. ∃ Φ or W(∃x Φ) or F(∃x Φ). We now reformulate the truth-maker principle as:

(Pres-TM): For all P, if P is true then ∃d x (x makes P true).

Grant that ‘∃d x’ functions enough like a quantifier to deserve to be called one. So the friend of Pres-TM can at least mouth the slogan that ‘truth is determined by being’.

39 In stating the truth-maker principle, I quantified over propositions. Which quantifier was employed?

The view that I prefer holds that abstracta do not exist in the same way as concretia; to use the older terminology, abstracta subsist rather than exist. So I am inclined to hold that there is at least a third fundamental quantifier in play here. But I needn’t defend this here. Another plausible view is that abstract objects presently exist, and so are within the domain of ‘∃c’.

40 See Gallois (2004, p. 649).
But that isn’t enough. *Defined* quantifiers are cheap.\(^{41}\) Suppose one believes that statements about nomic possibilities are true, but is worried that their truth requires uncomfortable additions to one’s ontology on pain of violating the truth-maker principle. No need to worry! Simply *define* a new notion of *being* as follows: let ‘\(L\)’ be the *it is nomically possible that* operator, and define ‘\(\exists_L \Phi\)’ as ‘\(\exists \Phi \lor L(\Phi)\)’. And then reformulate the truth-maker principle as:

\[(TM^\#): \text{For all } P, \text{ if } P \text{ is true then } \exists_L x \ (x \text{ makes } P \text{ true}).\]

\(TM^\#\) clearly violates the spirit of the truth-maker principle.\(^{42}\) The lesson here is that the truth-maker principle must be formulated so as to appeal only to what exists in some fundamental sense of ‘exists’, instead of appealing to defined or non-fundamental notions of existence. And the motivation for this restriction is straightforward. Truths about ‘what there is’ in some non-fundamental sense must be grounded in truths about what there is in some fundamental sense. But the problem for the standard presentist is that, by her lights, there is exactly one fundamental sense of ‘there is’ which is such that nothing that exists in that sense could serve as such ground.\(^{43}\)

However, since PEP-TM appeals only to fundamental senses of ‘exists’, PEP-TM satisfies this demand. Truth is determined by what exists in some fundamental way or other. Past existence is a genuine kind of existence, and so truths about the past are appropriately grounded.

\(^{41}\) See Turner (forthcoming) for related discussion.

\(^{42}\) Sider (2004, p. 679) makes a similar response.

\(^{43}\) Unless of course the presentist appeals to ‘cheating properties’, but doing so would eliminate the motivation for endorsing PRES-TM rather than TM.
Another view in the philosophy of time worth considering is defended by Timothy Williamson (2002), which we will call *Williamsonian Present-Centrism* (WPC). According to WPC, there are past and future objects, but they have virtually none of the interesting properties that presently existing objects have:

…it is said, Trajan’s Column in Rome is now a trace of the Emperor Trajan, and the name ‘Trajan’ refers to him, so various objects now stand in causal and semantic relations to Trajan. By the same token, Trajan now stands in causal and semantic relations to various objects. He still has relations, but does not still exist. Such examples are not decisive. Doubtless, *in some sense* Trajan no longer exists. Specifically, he is no longer anywhere; he lacks spatial location. Although atoms which once composed him may still be spatially located, he is not identical with those atoms. More generally, we may say that he is no longer *concrete*. ….

Whatever can be counted exists at least in the logical sense: there is such an item. … ‘Trajan does not exist’ is true when ‘exist’ is used in the nonlogical sense of concreteness, not when it is used in the logical sense. Existence in the sense of concreteness is of crucial significance for metaphysics; for logic it is just one more property, which objects may have or lack. [Williamson 2002, p. 245]

On WPC, Trajan exists, but he is neither tall nor short. In fact, he has no material parts and stands in no spatial relations. WPC is not a kind of Cartesian Dualism: rather, Williamson’s view is that Trajan is not even a person, let alone a conscious being. Given WPC, the fundamental difference between past and present objects is *qualitative*: no past
object shares any fundamental qualitative properties with presently existing objects.

According to PEP*, the difference between past and present things lies in how they exist, not in what sort of qualities they have. PEP*'s ontology is not populated with entities that are merely shells of their former selves. It might even be the case that some past objects are qualitative duplicates of present ones. (In the next section, we will discuss what the friend of PEP should say about how objects change properties over time.) This underscores the claim that, for PEP*, the difference between the past and the present does not consist merely in the fact past things lack a quality had by present ones. The difference is deeper than that.

Because WPC strips past things of their qualities, WPC is also subject to the truth-making objection. For what in WPC’s ontology makes true it true that World War I was horrific? One apparent advantage of WPC over presentism is that at least WPC recognizes the existence of World War I. However, recall that on WPC, World War I is not even a war, let alone a horrific one. It merely has the property being such that it was a horrific war. But this property is no less of a cheater than being such that World War I was horrific. Both properties are such that objects could be exactly alike with respect to categorical properties and yet differ with respect to them. According to WPC, there are incredibly many merely past objects that are exactly alike with respect to their categorical properties, but only a few of them are such that they were horrific wars.

44 Williamson (2000, p. 204) writes, ‘What distinguishes a past mountain \( m_1 \) from a distinct past mountain \( m_2 \)? If one is forbidden to refer to the past, perhaps one can say only that they are distinct.’ I take it that the idea is that past objects are presently indistinguishable. See also Williamson (1998, pp. 265-266). For criticism of Williamson, see Zimmerman (2008).
Consider the following scenario. At t1, there were exactly two objects, an electron and a positron. Now, at t2, there is only the electron. In effect, at t2, the electron is the world. According to the presentist, this electron has the property *being such that it was the case that there was a positron*. Here is how the friend of WPC describes this scenario.

At t1, there are exactly two objects, an electron and a position. At t2, there are exactly two objects, an electron and something that lacks accidental intrinsic qualities. This something is an almost bare particular. According to WPC, this object exemplifies the property *being such that IT was a positron*. I suppose that according to WPC, the electron also has the property *being such that it was the case that there was a position*. And I suppose that the friend of WPC should claim that the electron has this second property in virtue of the ex-positron having its past-tensed property. But with respect to the categorical properties exemplified, the sole difference between presentism and WPC seems to be the presence of an extra nearly-bare particular at t2, as is illustrated by the following diagram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According to Presentism</th>
<th>According to WPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2: ( o^{-1} )</td>
<td>( o^{-1} o^\circ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1: ( o^{-1} o^+1 )</td>
<td>( o^{-1} o^{+1} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The nearly invisible ‘\( o \)’ represents the almost bare particular.)

How could this difference make a difference? In general, why would it be better to have a bunch of entities that instantiate cheating properties rather than have the
presently existing universe instantiate the cheating properties? It seems that, at least with respect to the truth-making objection, WPC fares no better than standard presentism.\(^45\)

Let ‘C’ be a fundamental predicate such as ‘is negatively charged’. Let’s assume (to avoid unnecessary distractions) that whenever some object presently falls under ‘C’, that object falls under ‘C’ as long as it is present. (Consider, for example, an electron – as long as the electron presently exists, it is negatively charged). What is the salient difference between ‘\(\exists_x (C_x)\)’ and ‘\(\exists (W: F)\)’? Why does appealing to the latter cheat whereas appealing to the former does not? According to PEP\(^*\), ‘\(\exists_p x (C_x)\)’ contains only fundamental vocabulary. But similarly, according to WPC, ‘\(\exists x (W: C)\)’ contains only fundamental vocabulary, since the existential quantifier and the past operator are both fundamental notions according to WPC.

There are two salient differences. First, truths involving intensional operators, such as ‘W’ or ‘◊’, should ultimately be grounded in truths not involving them. On WPC, it is just a brute fact that some object was C, ungrounded in any further fact stateable without appeal to a tense-operator. According to PEP, what makes it the case that some object \(x\) was C is the past existence of a fact that \(x\) is C. (In other words, ‘\(\exists x (W: C)\)’ is true because ‘\(\exists_p x (C)\)’ is true.) Similarly, what makes it the case that an object \(is\) F is the present existence of a fact that \(x\) is F. In general, given PEP, all truths stateable using tense-operators are grounded in truths stateable that do not use them.\(^46\)

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\(^45\) I reject the claim that all objections against presentism work equally as objections to WPC. I claim only that the truthmaking objection, which I take to refute presentism, refutes WPC as well.

\(^46\) This fact suggests that one might be able to give explicit definitions of the tense operators in terms of the modes of being countenanced by PEP. This is a project I am more than open to exploring, but I won’t explore it here.
One might worry about what grounds the truth that a past object once was present, or the putative truth that every present object will be present. The former worry is easily quieted: the past existence of past objects suffice to ground the claim that they once were present. The latter worry is less easy to quiet. First, it is not obviously true that every present entity will one day be merely past. On the version of PEP* defended here, there are no merely future existences, and so next to nothing exists to ground future contingent truths. I am therefore inclined to hold that, in general, future contingents have no truth-value. If, however, every (actually) presently existing object has part of its essence that it will one day cease to be present, then each such object grounds the truth that it will one day be past. Alternatively, if the actual laws of nature presently ensure that every (actually) presently existing object will one day cease to be, then this claim is also grounded. But if a putative truth is neither determined by the laws of essence nor the laws of nature in conjunction with past and present facts, then I reject the claim that it is true.

Second, consider the monadic properties denoted by the open sentence ‘\(W: (Fx)\)’. Are any of these properties fundamental? If not, then in virtue of what other fundamental properties do objects have them? It is hard to see what they could be. If some of them

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47 Save for those future contingents whose truth-value is entailed by facts about the past or the present.

Note that views that recognize a mode of being for future existences obviously need not worry about the grounding problem for alleged truths about the future. Perhaps this is one advantage of such a view over PEP.

48 For each presently existing object, it is probable that it will one day be past. But I take these truths about probability to be grounded in the nature of the objects in question in conjunction with the actual laws of nature.

49 … has suggested to me that Williamson might hold that these properties are not fundamental but deny
are fundamental properties, then some of these properties are intrinsic properties, since fundamental monadic properties are intrinsic properties.\(^{50}\) But it does not seem that, e.g., *being such that x was an electron* is an intrinsic property. Nor does it seem that *being such as to have once been an electron* is an intrinsic property.\(^{51}\) Note that the friend of PEP need not countenance any fundamental properties of this sort: it is consistent with PEP that all fundamental monadic properties are intrinsic properties. This is another advantage of PEP over WPC.

7. **PEP and Persistence through Time**

Objects persist through time, and as they persist they enjoy different properties at different times. How should a view like PEP accommodate these facts? Are there any views about persistence over time that are either inconsistent with or in tension with PEP?

Let \( x \) be an object that exists at \( t1, t2, \) and \( t3. \) \( t1 \) and \( t2 \) are past times, whereas \( t3 \) is the present moment. Pretend that colors are intrinsic properties, and that \( x \) is red at \( t1, \) blue at \( t2, \) and green at \( t3. \) According to *perdurantism*, objects persist through time by having temporal parts. On this view, \( x \) has a temporal part that exists at and only at \( t1, \)

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\(^{50}\) This claim is highly plausible in itself. Note that it is also a consequence of the definition of ‘intrinsic property’ defended in Lewis (1986).

\(^{51}\) See Cameron (ms) for a discussion of this sort of worry.
and this temporal part is red, and distinct temporal parts at \( t_2 \) and \( t_3 \) that are blue and green simpliciter.\(^{52}\)

The friend of PEP could endorse perdurantism, but she faces an interesting question if she does: what is the mode of being enjoyed by entities that have presently existing and pastly existing parts? Four answers are possible: a \textit{sui generis} mode of being, present existence, past existence, and both present and past existence.\(^{53}\)

We should probably reject the view that such objects have a \textit{sui generis} mode of being, unless in general we are attracted to the view that wholes enjoy a different mode of being than their parts. The option that such objects enjoy both modes of being seems the least arbitrary of the remaining three, but it also seems to me that someone attracted to this option should probably prefer the view discussed in section 3 called \textit{Minimal Meinongian presentism} (MMP). Recall that, on MMP, every present object enjoys two modes of being, one of which is also enjoyed by past objects. And since the primary difference between MMP and PEP was that the fundamental quantifiers recognized by MMP overlap, once the friend of PEP gives up this claim, she might as well go all the way to MMP.

Suppose the friend of PEP rejects the fourth option. Why prefer present existence over past existence? No friend of PEP can deny that this question deserves a principled

\(^{52}\) See Sider (2001) for a defense of perdurantism.

\(^{53}\) … has suggested to me a fifth possibility, specifically, that the mode of being enjoyed by these objects is a \textit{deficient} mode of being. According to McDaniel (forthcoming-3), something has a deficient mode of being just in case no perfectly natural quantifier includes it within its domain. If something has a deficient mode of being, there is no fundamental sense in which it is real.
answer. Unfortunately, I am without principles. So instead I will sketch some pictures that I hope will at least be attractive.

First picture: the highest kind of being elevates all that it touches. Pre-theoretically, it is better to be present than to be past. This is partly why we grieve when someone or something we care about becomes past: their ontological status has become degraded. On this picture, a whole with a present part is thereby elevated to the status of being present, regardless of whatever else it may contain. Second picture: the lowest kind of being degrades all that touches. On this picture, a whole with a past part is thereby rendered itself past. Both pictures seem reasonable to me, although if pushed, I prefer the first. Clearly, though, more on this issue needs to be said.

Another option is to reject temporal parts, and in general reject the claim that objects at different times ever compose a whole. The considerations above suggest that the friend of PEP should not adopt perdurantism.

Note, however, that even if the friend of PEP rejects temporal parts, there are still troubling questions in the neighborhood. Suppose that whenever there are some individuals, there is a set of those individuals. Then, given PEP, there are sets whose elements are cavemen and members of congress. In which way do these sets exist? Suppose that there are facts, which are complex entities consisting of objects and properties or relations. My great-grandfather is merely past whereas I am present, but there is a fact that he is my great-grandfather. In which way do facts of this sort exist?

Note that, it is not at all obvious that mixed mereological sums, mixed sets, and mixed facts should be treated uniformly. One might hold, for instance, that sets and facts enjoy a different kind of being than individuals. They after all are objects that form
fundamentally different ontological categories. This suggests that the case of mixed mereological sums is the most problematic for PEP, since there is no motivation to hold that a sum of some xs always belongs to a different ontological category than any of the xs. One possibility is to simply deny that there are any mereological sums of past and present objects. Such a view isn’t unmotivated and, despite the protestations of some philosophers, there isn’t much to be said in favor of absolutely unrestricted composition.54

Let’s return to the problem of persistence over time. Suppose that we reject perdurantism, perhaps because of the above considerations. As far as I can see, PEP raises no new difficulties for endurantism. One endurantist account of change holds that what we took to be intrinsic properties are really relations to times. x bears the red-at relation to t1, the blue-at relation to t2, and the green-at relation to t3. Another view, adverbalism, claims that, it is not the property that should be ‘relativized’ but rather the having of it. On this view, x is-in-a-t1ly-way red, is-in-a-t2ly-way blue, and is-in-a-t3ly-way green.55

Adverbalism fits nicely with PEP. PEP recognizes a plurality of ways to be, and adverbalism recognizes a plurality of ways to have a property. There might even be a deeper reason for thinking these views fit nicely together. As I mentioned in section 4, it

54 For a defense of unrestricted composition, see Lewis (1991).
55 See Haslanger (2003) for a discussion of this view. Haslanger distinguishes two theories, which she calls copula-tensing and adverbalism. Both views take adverbial modification of the copula metaphysically seriously, but only the former view is explicitly committed to there being an instantiation relation that relates objects, properties, and times. With the exception of that commitment, the views seem to me to be indistinguishable, and so I will conflate them in what follows.
is tempting to think that present existence is a kind of absolute existence, whereas things that exist in the past enjoy only a kind of relative existence, specifically existence relative to a time. This is why past existence is a degenerate way to exist: things whose sole mode of being is past existence do not exist in themselves but only relative to a moment. The only kind of existence Julius Caesar enjoys is existence at some times or others, whereas present things just plain exist. It would be natural to supplement this view with the idea that, just as there are two ways to exist, there are ultimately two sorts of ways to have a property: to have-at-some-time the property, or to just plain have the property. Only presently existing things just plain have properties, whereas pastly existing things merely have-at-times properties. Intuitively, having-relative-to-something-or-other a property is a less respectable way to have a property than just plain having it. Becoming merely past is, from a metaphysical perspective at least, truly terrible.

However, on this view, some past objects might be intrinsic duplicates of some presently existing objects, even if they differ in how they have their properties. Past objects are not shorn of properties, although they do have-at-times these properties. And truths about the past are still appropriately grounded: for example, propositions of the form ‘W(Fx)’ are entailed by propositions of the form ‘∃pt (t is a time and x-has-at-t Fness’.

Although adverbalism fits nicely with PEP, the friend of PEP is not required to endorse adverbalism. There are special reasons, discussed above, to think that perdurantism will not be congenial to PEP, but as far as I can see any endurantist theory of change is acceptable.

8. **Ontological Status**
Does PEP imply that it is possible for an object to change which ontological category it belongs? And if so, is this a reason to doubt PEP?

According to PEP, the past and the present exist in different ways. It is natural to think that modes of being and ontological categories go hand in hand, i.e., that two things belong to the same ontological category if and only if they exist in the same way.\textsuperscript{56} Let’s provisionally assume that this is the case, although the friend of PEP needn’t be committed to this claim. Intuitively, if something belongs to an ontological category, then it essentially belongs to that category. However, present things become past things, and hence are not essentially present. How should the friend of PEP respond?

On some ontological schemes it is plausible that everything is essentially a member of its category. For example: could I have been a universal?\textsuperscript{57} Could a number have been a region of spacetime? But not all ontologies are like this. For example, on the version of modal realism defended by Phillip Bricker (2001, 2006) the possible and the actual form different ontological categories. Yet each possible object could have been actual. Most of the ontological schemes that we consider are ‘static’ ontological schemes that take no account of the passage of time. This gives rise to the illusion that all ontological schemes must be ones in which things do not change categories. Once the passage of time is taken with full seriousness, the temptation to claim that objects essentially belong to their ontological categories dissipates.

\textsuperscript{56} This account of ontological categories is in fact defended in McDaniel (ms).

\textsuperscript{57} See MacBride (1999) for an interesting discussion of this question.
Interestingly, there is a somewhat trivial sense in which the friend of PEP can grant that objects do not change ontological categories. Recall the standard definition of an essential property:

\[(SD): y \text{ has } F \text{ essentially just in case, necessarily, if } \exists x \ x = y \text{, then } Fy.\]

Given SD, it is trivial that being an existent is an essential property of everything that exists. Note ‘∃x’ appears in the statement of SD. The friend of PEP distinguishes two meanings for ‘∃x’, which we represented with ‘∃px’ and ‘∃cx’. Accordingly, just as the friend of PEP distinguishes between two ways in which something exists, so too will the friend of PEP distinguish between (at least) two ways in which something has an essential feature:

\[(SDP): y \text{ has } F \text{ essentially}_p \text{ just in case, necessarily, if } \exists_p x \ x = y \text{, then } Fy.\]

\[(SDC): y \text{ has } F \text{ essentially}_c \text{ just in case, necessarily, if } \exists_c x \ x = y \text{, then } Fy.\]

In this context, we can also introduce a notion of a strong essential property as follows:

\[(SDS): y \text{ has } F \text{ essentially}_s \text{ just in case, necessarily, if either } \exists_p x \ (x = y) \text{ or } \exists_c x \ (x = y), \text{ then } Fy.\]

We can now see that, according to PEP, there is some sense in which present things are essentially present things, i.e., they are essentially\(_c\) present. (There are many properties that are not essential, to their bearers.) However, there is also a sense in which present things are not essentially present things, in which ‘essentially’ means ‘essentially\(_s\)’.\(^{58}\) It is worth noting, however, that is a necessary truth that nothing has two

\(^{58}\) Anyone who believes in multiple modes of being will want to distinguish multiple modes of essentiality along these lines. For example, Aquinas (1993, pp. 92-93) argues that substances and attributes do not
modes of being simultaneously, and so it is never the case that an object belongs to two ontological categories.

9. Conclusion

In what preceded, I articulated and defended PEP, the view that past things and present things both exist, but exist in different ways. I argued that PEP is at least as intuitive as other versions of the A-theory of time, and that PEP provides the resources to solve problems that plague other versions of the A-theory. I defended PEP from some interesting objections. I conclude that PEP deserves further consideration from philosophers interested in the metaphysics of time.  

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have the same mode of being, and draws the conclusion that just as attributes have being in an attenuated way, attributes can be said to have an essence in an attenuated way.

59 Thanks to ____


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