

Presentism and Truthmaking*

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1. An inconsistent triad

Let's start with two questions about the nature of reality. The first question is about whether reality is dynamic or static. That is, does it fundamentally change or not? In answer to this question, it is fairly natural to think that reality is dynamic, that it fundamentally changes. In particular, it is fairly natural to think that time passes, that the future becomes present and the present slips into the past.¹

The second question is about the temporal extent of reality. Does it include the past and the future, or is it limited to the present? In answer to this question, it is fairly natural to think that reality is limited to the present and that the past and the future are, in some sense, unreal. This view is known as *Presentism*.

Presentism: Reality is limited to the present.

It is especially tempting to accept Presentism if one already thinks that reality is dynamic. For it is natural to think that, as the future becomes present, it comes to be: it becomes a part of reality. And, conversely, it is natural to think that, as the present slips into the past, it ceases to be: it ceases to be a part of reality. Presentism is often contrasted with *Eternalism*, according to which reality includes the past and the future as well as the present. Eternalists have to account for the dynamic nature of reality in some other way or deny that reality is dynamic.²

One consequence of Presentism is that the only things that reality includes are things that presently are. For example, according to Presentism, if Plato no longer exists and the first philosopher to be born in the twenty-third century doesn't exist yet, then they aren't parts of reality; but, given that Saul Kripke does exist now, he is a part of reality. (He's a part of reality now; but—given that he didn't exist a hundred years ago and won't exist a hundred years from now—he wasn't a part of reality a hundred years ago and he won't be a part of reality a hundred years from now.) Another consequence of Presentism is that the only instantiations of properties and

* We owe thanks to Scott Brown, Ross Cameron, Tom Crisp, Simon Keller, Ted Sider, and an anonymous referee for comments and discussion; and we owe apologies to Simon Keller for the title, which we have lifted from Keller 2004. (But we are not the first to have done so. See Tallant 2009b.)

¹ On dynamic versus static theories, see, for example, McCall 1976: 340-343, 1994: 29-35; Tooley 1997: 13-16. That reality is dynamic is one of many things that can be meant by saying that reality is "tensed," and that reality is static is one of many things that can be meant by saying that reality is "tenseless."

² On Presentism, see, for example, Prior 1970, Hinchliff 1988, Crisp 2003, Markosian 2004. (On how to state Presentism more carefully, see, for example, Crisp 2004a, 2004b; Ludlow 2004; Sider 2006.) On Eternalism, see, for example, Sider 2001: 11-52, Rea 2003, Lewis 2004. (A terminological warning: Rea and Lewis call Eternalism 'four-dimensionalism', but Sider uses that term to refer to a different view.) An alternative to Presentism and Eternalism is *The Growing-Block View*, according to which the universe is a growing block: the future comes to be as it becomes present but the present does not cease to be as it slips into the past. See Broad 1923: 53-84, Tooley 1997.

relations that reality includes are present instantiations of properties and relations.³ For example, according to Presentism, reality doesn't include Plato's instantiating the property *being someone who is writing The Republic*, since *The Republic* has already been written; nor does it include any object's instantiating the property *being someone who is writing the greatest work of the twenty-third century*, since that work hasn't been written yet. But reality does include your instantiating the property *being someone who is reading this paper*, since you are now such a person. (Your instantiating this property is a part of reality now, but it wasn't a hundred years ago, since this paper wasn't written then; nor will it be a hundred years from now, since you won't be reading this paper then.)⁴

Although Presentism is a fairly natural view to hold, it is inconsistent with a pair of claims, each of which is also fairly natural. The first of these has to do with the relation between truth and reality. Some propositions—for example, the proposition that Saul Kripke is a philosopher—are true. Other propositions—for example, the proposition that Saul Kripke is a barber—are not. This is no accident. Reality has a say in which propositions are true and which are not. There are various ways of capturing this idea. One is to say that there cannot be a difference in truth—in which propositions are true—unless there is a difference in being: in what there is or what it's like. In short, truth supervenes on being. This view is known as *Truthmaking*.

Truthmaking: Truth supervenes on being.

Saul Kripke exists and has the property *being a philosopher*, and the proposition that Saul Kripke is a philosopher is true. According to Truthmaking, if that proposition were false, then there would have to be a difference in being. Perhaps Saul Kripke wouldn't exist. Or perhaps he would exist but wouldn't have the property *being a philosopher*.⁵

³ Reality might include properties and relations that aren't instantiated now; if properties and relations can exist at times at which they're not instantiated, then properties and relations that aren't instantiated now can exist now, and reality can include them. What reality won't include is their instantiation, even if they were instantiated or will be instantiated.

Also, some Presentists restrict their claim to temporal reality: the whole of *temporal* reality is present reality, but atemporal things—for example, the number 2—exist, and instantiate properties and relations, timelessly. See, for example, Chisholm and Zimmerman 1997.

⁴ We are here assuming that you are someone, that you are not an unusually slow reader, and that you did not have, 100 years ago, the power to read papers not yet written. These assumptions can be challenged. Against the first assumption, see Unger 1979a, 1979b; Rosen and Dorr 2002: 159-160. Against the second assumption, see Nietzsche 1881: 5. As for the third assumption, if you are in fact reading this paper in 1910, please remember, in the twenty-first century, to choose an example that better fits your case.

⁵ On Truthmaking (and how to state it more carefully), see, for example, Bigelow 1988: 121-134, 1996: 38-39; Lewis 1992: 206-207, 2001: 612-614; Crisp 2003: 237-239, 2007: 118-120; Keller 2004: 85-87; Merricks 2007: 68-97. For other ways of capturing the idea that reality has a say in which propositions are true and which are not, see, for example, Parsons 1999; Lewis 2001, 2003; Rosen and Lewis 2003; Armstrong 2004; Rodriguez-Pereyra 2006; Merricks 2007: 1-67. On whether a principle like Truthmaking is justified by the idea that reality has a say in which propositions are true and

The second claim has to do with the relation between past and present. Intuitively, many truths about the past hold independently of the present. What there was and how things were is not always settled by what there is and how things are; the present could be just as it is even if the past had been different in innumerable ways. In short, the past does not supervene upon the present. Call this *Independence*.

Independence: Not all truths about the past supervene on the present.

Plato existed and had the property *being bearded*, and the proposition that Plato had a beard is true. This proposition is a proposition about the past. Independence does not tell us which truths about the past supervene on the present and which do not, but suppose, for the sake of example, that this truth does not: the world could be exactly as it presently is even if Plato had not had a beard.

Presentism, Truthmaking, and Independence are inconsistent. By Truthmaking, truth supervenes on being. And, by Presentism, reality is limited to the present, so being just is present being. So Truthmaking and Presentism entail that truth supervenes on present being. But, by Independence, some truths about the past do not supervene on, and hence some truth does not supervene on, present being. (A similar problem arises for Presentism, Truthmaking, and the principle that some truths about the future do not supervene on present being.)

Faced with this inconsistent triad, many philosophers are prepared to give up on Presentism.⁶ This is a neat solution to the problem, but it's not a solution that is available to Presentists. Presentists must give up on either Truthmaking or Independence. .

2. Giving up on Past Truths

Independence entails

Past Truths: Some propositions about the past are true.

If there were no truths about the past, then *ipso facto* there would be no truths about the past that fail to supervene on the present. Since Independence entails Past Truths, giving up on Past Truths is one way to give up on Independence. Some Presentists might be prepared to give up on Past Truths.⁷ At least, some Presentists might be prepared to accept that there are fewer truths about the past than one might have ordinarily thought, since propositions about the past aren't true if their truth isn't determined by the current state of the universe together with the laws of nature.⁸ (But

which are not, see, for example, Liggins 2008.

⁶ See, for example, Adams 1986: 32-33, Lewis 1992: 207, Tooley 1997: 232-238, Sider 2001: 35-42, Armstrong 2004: 145-150, Dummett 2004: 73-74, Parsons 2005, Schaffer 2008: 315-316.

⁷ Bourne (2006: 40-41) attributes this view to Prior (1957, 1967).

⁸ See Markosian 2005. For critical discussion of this sort of view, see Sider 2001: 37-39, Bourne 2006: 47-52. For similar views, but with a more verificationist spin, see Łukasiewicz 1922: 38-39, Dummett 1968-1969, Ludlow 1997: 147-152. (But Łukasiewicz is not a Presentist, since he accepts that those

what of the laws of nature? Are they grounded in present reality? If so, how?⁹) So, for example, if the current state of the universe and the laws of nature don't determine that the proposition that Plato had a beard is true, then that proposition is not true. Presentists might seek to soften the blow by saying that, although the proposition that Plato had a beard is not strictly true, it is nonetheless quasi-true, in something like the sense that there is an underlying truth in the vicinity: a true proposition that, together with Eternalism, would entail the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard.¹⁰

But, by and large, the view that there are no—or few—truths about the past has met with ridicule. For example, Michael Dummett (2004: 44) calls the view “repugnant.”¹¹ To give up on Past Truths is, in effect, to settle for an impoverished conception of the past. It would be good for Presentists if they didn't have to do that.

3. Giving up on Truthmaking

Instead, some Presentists are prepared to give up on Truthmaking.¹² *Conciliatory* Presentists who reject Truthmaking replace it with another principle; *incendiary* Presentists who reject Truthmaking, by contrast, do not. Indeed, some incendiary Presentists think that it would be a mistake to replace Truthmaking with another principle.¹³

There are two main conciliatory strategies.¹⁴ The first is to expand the supervenience base: that is, to expand what it is that truth is said to supervene on. For example, Presentists who reject Truthmaking might replace it with something like the following principle.¹⁵

parts of the past that have effects now are real. See Łukasiewicz 1922: 38-39. And, if Dummett was ever a Presentist, he is no longer. See Dummett 2004: 73-74.)

⁹ See, for example, Sider 2001: 37-38, Bourne 2006: 48-50.

¹⁰ See Rea 2003: 266-267. (But Rea is not a Presentist. See Rea 2003.) For similar views, see Markosian 2004: 56-58, 65-73. The notion of quasi-truth comes from Sider 1999, but Sider (1999: 325 n. 1) doesn't address Truthmaking in connection with quasi-truth. (And Sider is not a Presentist either. See Sider 1999: 325 n. 1, 2001: 11-52.)

¹¹ See also Sider 2001: 38; Crisp 2003: 238, 2007: 118; Armstrong 2004: 145; Keller 2004: 88; Bourne 2006: 40-41; Kierland and Monton 2007: 487; Hinchliff 2010: 95.

¹² See, for example, Gallois 2004: 649; Merricks 2007: 119-145; Soames 2008: 318-319, 320-321; Tallant 2009a, 2009b: 412-415, 2010; Hinchliff 2010: 105-107; Sanson and Caplan 2010: 30-31. Soames (2008: 320 n. 4) says that his view “doesn't fit very well” into Presentism, since his view allows for quantification over objects that don't exist and allows objects that don't exist to have properties and stand in relations. But that's just to say that his view is Meinongian Presentism. (According to Meinong's Principle of Indifference, some objects don't exist and don't have any other kind of being either; and, according to Meinong's Principle of Independence, some objects that don't exist and that don't have any other kind of being either nonetheless have properties and stand in relations. See Meinong 1904a: 82, 86.)

¹³ See, for example, Merricks 2007: xvii. For critical discussion, see Keller 2009: 275-276.

¹⁴ For variations along these lines, see, for example, Daly 2005: 85-86.

¹⁵ See, for example, Gallois 2004: 649, Tallant 2009a: 426, Sanson and Caplan 2010: 37-38. (Westphal (2006: 4) suggests a similar principle, but he is not a Presentist. See Westphal 2006: 4-5.) Armstrong (2004: 147) attributes Wide-Base Truthmaking to John Heil. For complications about how to state

Wide-Base Truthmaking: Truth supervenes on what was, is, or will be.

Wide-Base Truthmaking is consistent with Presentism and Past Truths, since the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard, for example, supervenes on what was. Plato existed and had the property *being bearded*. According to Wide-Base Truthmaking, if the proposition that Plato had a beard were false, then there would have to be a change in what was, is, or will be. Perhaps Plato wouldn't have existed. Or perhaps he would have existed but wouldn't have had the property *being bearded*.

The second main conciliatory strategy is to restrict the class of superveners: that is, to restrict what it is that is said to supervene on being. For example, Presentists who reject Truthmaking might replace it with something like the following principle.¹⁶

Narrow-Top Truthmaking: Truth about the present supervenes on what is.

Narrow-Top Truthmaking is also consistent with Presentism and Past Truths. The truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard, for example, doesn't supervene on what is; but it's not a truth about the present.

Presentists who give up on Truthmaking face at least three problems. First, there is Theodore Sider's worry that they will let cheats go scot free. Truthmaking, Sider (2001: 36, 40, 41) says, is designed "to rule out dubious ontologies" and to catch "dubious ontological cheats."¹⁷ Consider the view that some objects have dispositional properties—for example, this copy of Peter Abelard's *Theologia 'scholarium'* has the dispositional property *being flammable*—and that some counterfactuals—for example, the proposition that this copy of *Theologia 'scholarium'* would burn if Abelard were to throw it on the pyre—are true, even though neither is grounded in the non-dispositional, non-modal properties of the world.¹⁸ Let's call this view *Freedom*.¹⁹ Freedom is the sort of ontological cheat that Truthmaking is designed to catch.²⁰ Some Presentists who reject Truthmaking and replace it with

Wide-Base Truthmaking, see Krämer 2010: 290-293, Tallant 2010: 1-3. (The principle that Tallant (2010) ends up endorsing does not follow either of the main conciliatory strategies discussed in the text.) For complications about whether Wide-Base Truthmaking is consistent with Presentism and the truth of the proposition that there have been *n* Roman Emperors, see Lewis 2004, Brogaard 2007, Krämer 2010: 293-294, Tallant 2010: 3. For some pretty trenchant criticism of Wide-Base Truthmaking, see Keller 2004: 89-91. See also Armstrong 2004: 147.

¹⁶ See, for example, Tallant 2009b: 412-415. This sort of strategy is suggested by some of Merricks's (2007: 166-169) remarks. But it's not his preferred view. See Merricks 2007: xvii, 24-26, 40-41; 2008a: 290-291.

¹⁷ See also Armstrong 2004: 1-3.

¹⁸ For this view of counterfactuals, see, for example, Merricks 2007: 146-169.

¹⁹ Sider (2001: 36) says that the view posits "truths that 'float free' of the world." (Freedom is also related to certain views about free will. See, for example, Merricks 2007: 146-155.)

²⁰ See, for example, Sider 2001: 36, 40-41; Armstrong 2004: 1-3.

another principle argue that the replacement principle works just as well as Truthmaking does at ruling out Freedom.²¹ But, if Presentists can expand Truthmaking so that the supervenience base includes what was and will be (or, alternatively, restrict Truthmaking so that the class of superveniers excludes truths about the past), why can't those who defend Freedom expand Truthmaking so that the supervenience base includes what would and could be (or, alternatively, restrict Truthmaking so that the class of superveniers excludes dispositional and counterfactual truths)?²² Other Presentists who reject Truthmaking argue that ontological cheats should get away with it.²³

Second, there is Thomas Crisp's (2003: 239-240) worry that Presentists who give up on Truthmaking are committed to odd claims about whether or not the truth of a proposition supervenes on being. Suppose that David is now sitting, and consider the proposition that David is sitting. That proposition is now true, and the truth of that proposition now supervenes on being, which includes David's having the property *being seated*. Wait a few seconds while David gets up. The proposition that David is sitting is now false, but the proposition that David was sitting is true. Does the truth of that latter proposition supervene on being? If so, what does it supervene on? It seems that incendiary Presentists, who reject Truthmaking and don't replace it with anything else, have to say that the truth of the proposition that David is sitting did supervene on being in a way that the truth of the proposition that David was sitting does not supervene on being now; and that might seem odd. This oddity also faces conciliatory Presentists who reject Truthmaking and replace it with a principle like Narrow-Top Truthmaking; but it might not face conciliatory Presentists who reject Truthmaking and replace it with a principle like Wide-Base Truthmaking. Perhaps this is a point in favor of Wide-Base Truthmaking.²⁴

And, third, there is John Bigelow's worry that Presentists who give up on Truthmaking will find it hard to retain their realism. Bigelow (1988: 123) says, of an axiom in the vicinity of Truthmaking,

I have sometimes tried to stop believing in the ... axiom. Yet I have never really succeeded. Without some such axiom, I find I have no adequate anchor to hold me from drifting onto the shoals of some sort of pragmatism or idealism.

²¹ See, for example, Gallois 2004: 649.

²² See Sider 2004: 674. Heathwood (2007: 141) offers a similar objection to Westphal 2006.

²³ See, for example, Tallant 2009a, 2010. For a reply to Tallant 2009a, see Krämer 2010.

²⁴ For a similar objection, see Keller 2004: 91-93. For a reply, see Merricks 2007: 142-144. Incendiary Presentists who deny that the truth of any proposition supervenes on being can, of course, reply that there is no asymmetry here: the truth of the proposition that David was sitting doesn't supervene on being, but then the truth of the proposition that David is sitting didn't ever supervene on being either. But incendiary Presentists needn't deny that the truth of any proposition supervenes on being. Perhaps there's no true principle that says which truths supervene on being and which do not; or perhaps there is such a principle, but incendiary Presentists are not interested in formulating or accepting it. Thanks to an anonymous referee here.

To give up on Truthmaking is to give up, in one way or another, on the idea that reality invariably has a say in which propositions are true and which propositions are not. It is, if you like, to let truth swing free from the world. Will this then lead to idealism or pragmatism?²⁵ Perhaps not: still, it is something many would like to avoid. So can Presentists who reject Truthmaking retain a sufficiently robust form of realism? The question is more pressing for incendiary Presentists, who don't replace Truthmaking with an alternative principle.²⁶ But it might also arise for conciliatory Presentists. Are principles like Wide-Base Truthmaking or Narrow-Top Truthmaking enough?

4. Giving Up on Independence

We have seen one way of giving up on Independence: give up on Past Truths. And we have considered the consequences of giving up Truthmaking. Most Presentists, however, accept Truthmaking and Past Truths. Their strategy is to enrich the present so that it contains enough to form a supervenience base for truths about the past. In this way, they can accept Past Truths while giving up on Independence.

To do this, they equip the present with a perfect record of the past: everything about the past gets recorded, in one way or another, in the present. For example, if Plato had a beard in the past, then the record in the present says "Plato had a beard in the past." If the present contains a perfect record of the past, then the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard supervenes on present being. For, if that proposition were false, then Plato wouldn't have had a beard, in which case the record in the present would be different: it would no longer say "Plato had a beard in the past."²⁸

There are many different ways of equipping the present with a perfect record of the past. First, Presentists could appeal to special, tensed facts or to their surrogates. Perhaps the present contains a multitude of tensed facts: for example, the fact that Plato had a beard.²⁹ Or Presentists could replace tensed facts with tensed memories. Perhaps the present contains a multitude of tensed memories in the mind of God: for example, the memory that Plato had a beard.³⁰

²⁵ On whether Truthmaking plays a role in grounding realism, see, for example, Dodd 2001: 83-84; Daly 2005: 94-98; Cameron 2008b: 116-123, forthcoming a.

²⁶ On realism about truth, see Merricks 2007: 170-191. Merricks (2007: xiii, xvi, 110, 186-187; 2008a: 289) says that truth depends on being in a "trivial" (and "innocuous" and "uncontroversial") way, since, for example, the proposition that Plato had a beard is true because Plato had a beard. But it is not clear why this counts as a dependence on *being*, since nothing in Merricks's ontology is Plato's having had a beard. So it is not clear whether this would help Presentists retain a robust form of realism. See Caplan 2008.

²⁸ This requires the assumption that a perfect record isn't accidentally correct. The metaphor of a perfect record—or rather, of an "error-proof" "universal recording device"—is used in Rhoda 2009: 53; cf. Rhoda 2009: 59.

²⁹ See, for example, Tallant 2009b: 409-412. For critical discussion, see, for example, Tooley 1997: 236-238, Bourne 2006: 41-46, Kierland and Monton 2007: 497.

³⁰ See Rhoda 2009.

Second, Presentists could appeal to special, tensed properties. Perhaps the present includes the world, which has a multitude of tensed properties: for example, the property *being such that, in it, Plato had a beard*.³¹ Or perhaps the present includes the world, which has a complicated, temporal distributional property that is roughly equivalent to a conjunctive property like *being such that first this happened and then that happened and then this other thing happened and ...*, where anything that has that complicated property also has the property *being such that, in it, Plato had a beard*.³² (Temporal distributional properties are perhaps a bit tricky. But here's a helpful way of thinking of them: a temporal distributional property is the temporal analogue of a spatial distributional property like *being polka-dotted*. The property *being polka-dotted* is roughly equivalent to a conjunctive property like *having a dot here and another dot here and another dot here and ...*, where anything that has that complicated property also has the property *having a dot here*.³³) Or perhaps the present contains an eternally existing abstract object—for example, the property *being blue*—that has a multitude of tensed properties: for example, *being such that Plato had a beard*.³⁴ Or perhaps the present contains a multitude of eternally existing mereological atoms that have a multitude of tensed properties: for example, the property *being such that they composed something that was Plato and had a beard*.³⁵ Or perhaps the present contains a multitude of uninstantiated haecceities—for example, the property *being Plato*—that have a multitude of tensed properties: for example, the property *being such that it was instantiated by something that had a beard*.³⁶ Or perhaps the present contains a multitude of objects that were concrete but are no longer—for example, Plato himself—that have a multitude of tensed properties: for example, the property *having been bearded*.³⁷

Many of the views just described combine appeal to tensed properties with appeal to unexpected or exceptional entities: the world, *being blue*, eternal atoms, uninstantiated haecceities, etc. But some Presentists reject tensed properties, attempting to make do with appeal to special entities alone. Perhaps the present contains a multitude of sets of propositions, one for each past time, ordered from

³¹ See Bigelow 1996. For critical discussion, see, for example, Sider 2001: 40-42, Sanson 2005: 42-48, Merricks 2007: 133-137, Rhoda 2009: 47-49, Sanson and Caplan 2010: 30-31. Sider's objection is discussed below in Section 4.1. Merricks's objection—which is also Sanson's objection and Sanson and Caplan's objection—is discussed below in Section 4.2.

³² See Cameron 2008a: 296-299, forthcoming b. For critical discussion, see Merricks 2008b: 330.

³³ On temporal distributional properties, see Parsons 2000, 2004.

³⁴ See Chisholm 1990a: 416, 1990b: 553-554.

³⁵ See Keller 2004: 99-101. For critical discussion, see Armstrong 2004: 146-147, Rhoda 2009: 49-51. A mereological atom is something that has no proper parts: that is, no parts other than itself. Some things compose something just in case they're all parts of it and every part of it overlaps one of them. (Two things overlap just in case they have a part in common.)

³⁶ See, for example, Keller 2004: 96-99. (See also Rea 2003: 264-265. But Rea is not a Presentist. See Rea 2003.) For critical discussion of this sort of view, see Armstrong 2004: 146-147, Lewis 2004: 8-11, Markosian 2004: 54-56, Rhoda 2009: 49-51. On haecceities, see, for example, Plantinga 1974: 70-77; Adams 1979, 1981, 1986.

³⁷ See Williamson 1998, 1999, 2002.

earlier to later, and one of those sets includes the proposition that Plato has a beard.³⁸ Or perhaps some *sui generis* presently existing entity—call it *the past*—has an intrinsic property that manages to reflect everything that has ever happened so that, for example, it would have that intrinsic property—that shape—only if Plato had a beard.³⁹ (This last view might seem a bit mysterious. An analogy helps: the shape of an old frying pan—an intrinsic property—manages to reflect a fair bit about its past; this *sui generis* entity is like a metaphysician’s all-encompassing frying pan, the intrinsic property its “shape”. But such analogies only help so much. Here’s a four-step program (four stages of ascension?) to help move your mind to a better understanding of the view. Step one—Start with the view that the present contains a multitude of tensed facts about the past. Step two—Replace the multitude of facts with a single all-encompassing conjunctive fact. Step three—This all-encompassing tensed fact is dubious: replace it with a simple untensed fact, consisting the existence of an entity—*the past*—having some intrinsic (but not tensed) property that reflects everything that has ever happened. Step four—Refuse to reduce this entity to anything more familiar: truths about *the past* don’t depend in any way on (ordinary) present *things* and how they are; *the past* is a *sui generis* presently existing entity of its own. Voilà!)

4.1. Hypotheticality

Sider (2001: 41) objects to views that appeal to tensed properties, like *having been bearded*, on the grounds that such properties are objectionably “hypothetical,” in that they “‘point beyond’ their instances.”⁴⁰ Although it might not be entirely clear what Sider is objecting to, exactly, it seems that his objection equally applies to views that appeal to tensed facts, like the fact that Plato had a beard, or to their surrogates, like the memory that Plato had a beard.⁴¹ Rhoda (2009: 54) disagrees with this assessment of the extent of Sider’s objection. Rhoda takes Sider to be asking for an explanation of whatever special properties or special facts Presentists appeal to; and Rhoda thinks that, although tensed properties and tensed facts are inexplicable, memories in the mind of God are not. But this does not seem to capture the intuition behind Sider’s objection: memories in the mind of God are just as hypothetical as the

³⁸ See, for example, Crisp 2003: 240-242, 2007; Davidson 2003, 2004: 20-22; Markosian 2004: 75-79; Bourne 2006: 39-69. For critical discussion, see, for example, Armstrong 2004: 147, Sanson 2005: 9-10, Merricks 2007: 125-133, Rhoda 2009: 51-53, Sanson and Caplan 2010: 32-35. Merricks’s objection—which is also Sanson’s objection and Sanson and Caplan’s objection—is discussed below in Section 4.2.

³⁹ See Kierland and Monton 2007.

⁴⁰ See also Sider 2003: 185.

⁴¹ Tallant (2009b: 410-412) argues that tensed facts, like the fact that Plato had a beard, are just as hypothetical as negative facts, like the fact that no hair on Kripke’s head is made of gold. (See also Merricks 2007: 135-136.) So, if we need negative facts in our account of how reality has a say in which propositions are true and which are not, then we should accept tensed facts, too. But one of the advantages of Truthmaking over alternative ways of capturing the idea that reality has a say in which propositions are true and which are not is that it doesn’t require negative facts. See, for example, Lewis 1992: 206-207, Merricks 2007: 80-85.

tensed properties and tensed facts that other Presentists appeal to; they all “point beyond” what is actually going on at a given time.⁴²

Sider’s objection would appear to apply equally to views that appeal to temporal distributional properties, like the one that is roughly equivalent to the conjunctive property *being such that first this happened and then that happened and then this other thing happened . . .*. Cameron (forthcoming b) disagrees with this assessment of the extent of Sider’s objection. Cameron takes Sider to be objecting, not to properties that *do* make a difference to the *past or future* intrinsic nature of the things that instantiate them, but rather to properties that *don’t* make a difference to the *current* intrinsic nature of the things that instantiate them.⁴³ Cameron points out that temporal distributional properties do, in fact, make a difference to the current intrinsic nature of the things that instantiate them. But, by our lights, the force of Sider’s objection is, not that hypothetical properties *fail* to point *at* their instances, but that they point *beyond* their instances. If so, noting that distributional properties both point beyond their instances and point at their instances misses the mark. (“It’s rude to point at others!” “But I’m also pointing at myself!”) Put another way, if there’s something objectionably hypothetical about the property *having been bearded*, then there’s also something objectionably hypothetical about the property *being 6’ tall and having been bearded*, even if things that instantiate that property also instantiate the property *being 6’ tall*, which isn’t objectionably hypothetical.⁴⁵

⁴² We do not mean to say that memories in the mind of God are *wholly* hypothetical. According to Ockham, claims about what God believes will happen in the future are wholly hypothetical: they “are about the present as regards their wording only [...] since their truth depends on the truth of propositions about the future” (Ockham 1983: 46). Presumably he would say the same of claims about what God believes did happen: they are really about the past, not the present, and so are wholly hypothetical. But, as Ockham’s critics have often pointed out, the claim that God believes that, say, Antichrist will come, is not *wholly* about the future: it is *partly* about the present and *partly* about the future. Likewise, the claim that God remembers that Plato had a beard would seem to be *partly* about the past and partly about the present, and so partly, but not wholly, hypothetical. For discussion of the relation between Ockhamism and Presentism, see Finch and Rae 2008.

⁴³ There’s a reason Cameron (forthcoming b) doesn’t take Sider to be objecting to properties that do make a difference to the past or future intrinsic nature of the things that instantiate them. Cameron distinguishes two senses of ‘peculiarity’: in one sense, a property is peculiar if it points beyond its instances; in another, a property is peculiar if it fails to point to its instances. Speaking of the first sense of ‘peculiarity’, he says that he doesn’t “recognize this sense of ‘peculiarity’ as something that ought to be avoided.” Cameron offers the following example. Perhaps something can have the property *being charged* only if it’s (at least minimally) temporally extended and has that property at other times. In that case, an object’s instantiating the property *being charged* at a time would entail something about its intrinsic nature at other times. Cameron says that the property *being charged* would therefore be peculiar in the first sense but wouldn’t be objectionable.

We draw a different inference: if *being charged* is not just a matter of how a thing presently is, then it is at least partly hypothetical in a way that is, in fact, objectionable. (Note, however, that the mere fact that *being charged* entails facts about how a thing is at other times might not suffice to show that *being charged* is not just a matter of how a thing presently is: from the fact that I am sitting, it follows that I will have been sitting, but this entailment does not show that the fact that I am sitting is not just a matter of how I presently am.)

⁴⁵ In reply to something like this objection, Cameron (forthcoming b) says that, although the conjunctive property *being such that first this happened and then that happened and then this other thing*

But Sider's objection doesn't apply to all of the views that equip the present with a perfect record of the past. The shape of my frying pan is not hypothetical (the fact that it is *dented* probably is), but it does manage to encode some information about how my frying pan has been treated over the years. Perhaps a view that appeals to a mysterious entity that has some intrinsic property can avoid the charge of hypotheticality in this way.⁴⁶ And perhaps a view that appeals to sets of propositions and brute relations among them can avoid the charge of hypotheticality as well.⁴⁷

4.2. Explanation

We might want a theory that does more than provide a supervenience base for the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard; we might want a theory that also *explains* why that proposition is true. In this vein, Rhoda (2009: 46) says

To offer a theory of truthmakers for some class of truths is to explain their truth. It is to specify the features, aspects, or constituents of reality that ground the truths in question. As such, an adequate theory of truthmakers for some class of truths must satisfy the norms of explanation.⁵⁰

Rhoda (2009: 46-47, 48-49, 50, 51, 59) takes the norms of explanation to require that we have something informative to say about what grounds the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard. On his account, a memory in the mind of God grounds the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard. So, on his account, the norms of explanation require that we have something informative to say about memories in the mind of God.⁵¹ But the norms of explanation also require that our

happened and ... is not fundamental, the temporal distributional property is. (The idea is that something has the conjunctive property in virtue of having each of its conjuncts, but it's not the case that something has the temporal distributional property in virtue of having each of those conjuncts.)

But, even if that's right, it's not obvious that the increase in fundamentality is correlated with a decrease in hypotheticality. Perhaps temporal distributional properties are both fundamental and hypothetical, in precisely the way that the properties that other Presentists appeal to—for example, the property *having been bearded*—are said to be both fundamental and hypothetical. If properties like *having been bearded* can be objectionably hypothetical even if they're said to be fundamental, then temporal distributional properties can also be objectionably hypothetical even if they're said to be fundamental.

⁴⁶ See Kierland and Monton 2007: 494 n. 23. For a different reply, see Kierland and Monton 2007: 492-494.

⁴⁷ See Crisp 2007: 133-135. For a different reply, see Crisp 2007: 121-126.

⁵⁰ Compare Rhoda 2009: 59. See also McFetridge 1977: 38-39, 42, 44-48; Bigelow 1988: 121; Swoyer 1999: 108-109; Molnar 2000: 73-74, 82-84; Rodriguez-Pereyra 2000: 261, 2002b: 45-46; Keller 2004: 86-87; Liggins 2005: 111-115; Schnieder 2006: 30-31; Merricks 2007: 30. (For a related view, on which Truthmaking has to do with dependence, see, for example, Rodriguez-Pereyra 2002a: 34, 2006: 186; Schaffer 2008.) For a contrary view, see Lewis 2001: 611-612; MacBride 2002a: 31, 2002b: 49-50, 56-68, 2005: 131-139; Daly 2005.

⁵¹ See Rhoda 2009: 54, 59.

explanations point to the right things. And, when it comes to explaining the truth of the proposition that Plato had a beard, Rhoda's account points to the wrong thing: his account points to a memory in the mind of God, but a memory in the mind of God doesn't explain why the proposition that Plato had a beard is true. God remembers that Plato had a beard for the same reason that the proposition that Plato had a beard is true: because Plato had a beard. But it is not because God remembers that Plato had a beard that the proposition that Plato had a beard is true.⁵²

The objection equally applies to the view that equips the present with an extra entity that has an intrinsic shape property. That the extra entity has that intrinsic shape property doesn't explain why the proposition that Plato had a beard is true. The proposition that Plato had a beard is true for the same reason that the extra entity has that intrinsic shape property: because Plato had a beard. But it is not because the extra entity has that intrinsic shape property that the proposition that Plato had a beard is true. Kierland and Monton (2007) disagree with this assessment of the extent of the objection. They say that, since "there is nothing more to" Plato's having had a beard than the extra entity's having that intrinsic shape property, their explanation points to the right things.⁵³ They call this extra entity 'the past' and say that it is "what *has* happened: what things existed and how they *were*."⁵⁴ But Kierland and Monton face a dilemma: either the extra entity, which they call 'the past', is really what happened, or it isn't. If it is, then it becomes implausible to claim, as they do (and, as Presentists, must), that the extra entity is an aspect of the present; and, if it isn't, then Plato's having had a beard isn't simply a matter of the extra entity's having that intrinsic shape property. To make it plausible that what they call 'the past' is an aspect of the present, Kierland and Monton (2007: 496) distinguish what they call 'the past' from "that one big event [that] consists of all past events." This suggests that what they call 'the past' isn't really what happened.⁵⁵

Indeed, the objection equally applies to any view that equips the present with a perfect record of the past. That the perfect record in the present says "Plato had a beard in the past" doesn't explain why the proposition that Plato had a beard is true. The proposition that Plato had a beard is true for the same reason that the perfect record in the present says "Plato had a beard in the past": because Plato had a beard. But it is not because the perfect record in the present says "Plato had a beard in the past" that the proposition that Plato had a beard is true.⁵⁶

⁵² Schaffer 2008: 309, 312. A strong theological commitment to divine impassibility might tell against our claim; we find the view that results from such a commitment—that *p* is the case because God believes *p*, and not vice versa—exceedingly strange.

⁵³ See Kierland and Monton 2007: 492.

⁵⁴ See Kierland and Monton 2007: 491; italics in original.

⁵⁵ This paragraph borrows heavily from Sanson and Caplan 2010: 31 n. 10.

⁵⁶ See Sanson 2005: 27-51; Merricks 2007: 131-133, 136-137; Sanson and Caplan 2010. Merricks is objecting to views that appeal to tensed properties and abstract times (or sets of propositions), but his objection generalizes. And Merricks presents his objection as being about "aboutness," but his talk of "aboutness" is really about explanation. See Merricks 2007: 30. (Schaffer (2008) criticizes Merricks's appeal to "aboutness" and suggests replacing it with an appeal to dependence. Merricks's objection could be recast as one about dependence. On "aboutness" and dependence, see Merricks 2008b: 335-337. On "aboutness," dependence, and explanation, see Caplan 2008.)

5. Conclusion

Presentism, Truthmaking, and Independence cannot all be true. Those who are antecedently committed to all three are advised to reconsider the sources of those commitments before deciding which to give up. The attempt to save Presentism and Truthmaking by giving up on Independence—the attempt to find, in the present, materials adequate to account for Past Truths—has led to a rich landscape of metaphysical views and mysterious posits. But these views continue to disappoint: if they don't founder on the rocks of hypotheticality, they miss the boat when it comes to explanation. The attempt to save Presentism and Independence by rejecting Truthmaking, by contrast, runs into a different kind of wall: for many, Truthmaking is dogma, not to be given up lightly or, indeed, at all.

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⁵⁷ Some errors in titles have been corrected: a colon has been added to the title of Chisholm 1990b; a hyphen has been added to the title of Sider 2001 in the title of Gallois 2004; and italics have been added to the title of Merricks 2007 in the title of Schaffer 2008.

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