

2 Time for a Change: A Polemic against the Presentism–Eternalism Debate

Lawrence B. Lombard

“It depends on what the meaning of the word ‘is’ is.”

—William Jefferson Clinton

“No, it doesn’t.”

—Anonymous

Introduction

An intuitive criterion much discussed by the ancient Greek philosophers gives conditions under which an object can be said to change.¹ According to that criterion, an object changes just in case it has a property at one time that it lacks at another:

(ACC) An object, x , changes if and only if

- (i) there are distinct times, t and t' ,
- (ii) there is a property, P , and
- (iii) x has P at t and lacks P at t' .²

Both Heraclitus and Parmenides, each in his own way, denied the possibility of change.

A thing, in going from having P , and thus being a P -thing, to lacking P , apparently becomes what it is not, namely a non- P -thing. Since, according to Parmenides, nothing can become what it is not, no thing can change.

Heraclitus seems to have found nothing to complain about in Parmenides’ argument. Yet, he held that change was a pervasive feature of reality; he held that *changes* are constantly occurring. So, he needed to sever what seems to be a connection between the idea that *a thing changes* and the idea that *a change occurs*, a connection expressed by the claim that a change occurs just in case some thing changes.³ The connection can be

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seen to be severable by noticing that the ACC requires that changing things *endure* the changes they undergo; the thing that had *P* must be the very thing that lacks it. One consequence of this aspect of the ancient criterion is that, if nonexistent things neither have nor lack the properties changes with respect to which constitute alterations, then no thing changes just in virtue of the fact that it comes into or goes out of existence. But surely, it might be said, a change occurs when a thing comes into or goes out of existence. Thus, if the *only* changes that occur are comings into and goings out of existence, then one can maintain *both* the Heraclitean thesis that change is a pervasive feature of reality *and* the Parmenidean thesis that no thing changes. The price for Heraclitus' view, however, is the abandonment of the idea that the things that come into and go out of existence are also things that can alter; one must accept the idea that no thing can endure or survive alteration. Heraclitus was a temporal parts theorist.

So, both Heraclitus and Parmenides denied that any thing could change. In an attempt to steer a course between these rival,⁴ but, by my lights, equally implausible, views, Plato denied "full" reality to the world of changeable physical objects (because it was a real though contradictory world in which things become what they are not), and postulated, in addition, an "ideal" world, a "really real" Parmenidean world of entities that neither change nor come into or go out of existence.

Aristotle rejected this solution, first, by arguing that Plato's "ideal" world in fact reproduced the problems that Plato had found with the changeable world of physical objects, and, second, by arguing that there is a way to explain how it is possible for ordinary, physical things both to change and to satisfy the principle of noncontradiction, that is, to change without becoming what they are not. He drew the distinction between those features of things which they *cannot* lose without becoming what they are not (their *essential* properties) and those features of things which they *can* lose without becoming what they are not (their *accidental* properties). This distinction effectively undermines Parmenides' argument by accusing and convicting it of an equivocation. What a thing is is determined by its *essential*, not its accidental, properties. So, a thing can change with respect to its *accidental* properties without becoming what it is not. In this way, Aristotle ended the ancient debate over the possibility of change in enduring things.⁵

A New Problem Concerning Change

Although Aristotle might have ended the *ancient* debate over the possibility of change, a new version of this debate has recently made its presence felt. This new version employs a contrast between two apparently incompatible theories concerning the reality of times and the reality of the things that exist in time: *presentism* and *eternalism*.

Subject to revision and clarification, *presentism* is the view that only the present time exists, that the only things that exist are the things that exist at the present time, and that the only properties a thing has are those it has at the present time. *Eternalism* is the view that there is nothing privileged about the present time, that all times exist, and that all things, whenever they exist, are equally real. Although these formulations of presentism and eternalism may, and undoubtedly will, require clarification or refinement later on, it can be, and has been, argued that each of these apparently contrary views creates a difficulty for the idea that things change.

Trenton Merricks, for example, argued for the thesis that no possible universe can contain both things that have temporal parts and things that don't (Merricks 1995). His argument looked like this:

(M) Eternalism entails that there are no enduring objects.

Presentism entails that there are no things with temporal parts.

Either eternalism or presentism is true (but not both).

Therefore, either there are no enduring objects or there are no things with temporal parts.

On the one hand, a world in which there are no enduring things is one in which the only (relevant) things that exist are things with temporal parts. To the extent that I can make sense of such a world, it is a world in which no thing really changes; it is, rather, a world in which things go out of existence and other things come into existence; it is a world in which the idea that things change is *simulated* but not realized. According to temporal parts theory, a thing composed of temporal parts changes by having *distinct* temporal parts that are qualitatively different. This is a view that, since it denies that any thing successively (and nonderivatively) has contrary properties, takes change to be the *replacement* of one thing, one temporal part, by another. That is what I mean by saying that such a view *simulates* the idea that things change—in roughly the way that a series of still photographs, when streamed rapidly before our eyes, simulates motion.

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Heraclitus held that to change is to become different in the sense of becoming a *different thing* (one cannot, he said, step into the same river twice). Thus he held that, although there are changes—the goings-out-of and comings-into existence of things—no thing endures through any change. A world in which there are perduring, but no enduring, entities is Heraclitean. A thing's coming into or going out of existence is *not* a change in the thing that comes into or goes out of existence (according to the ACC), since it does not, in coming into or going out of existence, endure. A world without enduring things is a changeless Heraclitean world.

Merricks argued that, if eternalism is true, then there are no things that endure, for if eternalism is true and an enduring thing apparently changed from being *F* to not being *F*, then that object would, impossibly, be both *F* and not-*F*; this is the so-called problem of temporary intrinsics. Thus, since to be an enduring thing is to be a thing that endures through change, if eternalism is true, then there are no enduring things, and the world is Heraclitean.

On the other hand, a world in which there are enduring entities, but no entities with temporal parts, is a world in which, since *events* have temporal parts, there are no events.⁶ Since a world without events is a world in which, it seems to me, nothing happens, and, since I think that the connection between the idea that things change and the idea that change occurs should not, Heraclitus notwithstanding, be severed,⁷ a world populated only by enduring things is *also* a world in which no thing changes. But, in this case, the world would be Parmenidean.

If presentism is true, then, apparently, not all of the parts of a thing with temporal parts exist, since those parts do not all exist at the present time. However, Merricks thinks that the claim

(1) An object cannot have another object as a part if that other part does not exist

is obviously true (Merricks 1995, 524). Therefore, since a thing with temporal parts has as parts objects that do not exist at present, then, if presentism is true, either (1) is false or there are no things that have temporal parts. But Merricks thinks (1) too obvious to deny. Thus, if presentism is true, there are no things with temporal parts. But if there are no things with temporal parts, then there are no events. And if it is the case that, if a thing alters, then there is an event that is that thing's changing, then no thing alters, and the world is Parmenidean.

As I see things, then, Merricks has argued that the world must be changeless in either a Heraclitean or a Parmenidean way. And thus, we have a

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new challenge to the apparently obvious truth that things change; for it appears that, if either presentism or eternalism is true, change is impossible.

There are at least two ways in which this challenge might be met. One involves challenging the arguments that, respectively, have presentism and eternalism as premises and the denial of change (in one form or another) as conclusion. I have attempted to do that elsewhere.⁸ A second involves attempting to undermine the very terms in which this new challenge to the possibility of change is framed. And that is what I would like to do in this essay. I want to argue that the contrast between presentism and eternalism, as substantive and contrary metaphysical views about time and the reality of things that exist in time, has yet to be made, and that it appears that this contrast, so understood, is spurious.⁹ And so, unless further work is done which shows that presentism and eternalism are substantive and contrary views, these new arguments do not really pose any new challenge to the idea that things change.¹⁰

A Challenge Too Facile?

According to Merricks, presentism is

the doctrine that the present time is ontologically privileged. According to the Presentist, all that exists, exists at the present time; and an object has only those properties it has at the present time. (Merricks 1995, 524)

But, although this expression of presentism might seem, to both the view's adherents and opponents, to be adequate, it also seems, at least at first glance, difficult to take it as expressing a view that might inspire controversy.

Does Merricks's statement express the view that the present time is the *only* time that exists? Well, it is certainly the only time that exists *now*; but that is hardly controversial. Does it express the view that the present time is the only time that exists at *any* time? If so, the view is uncontroversially *false*. Similarly, it is hardly controversial that the only things that exist now are things that exist now; and the denial of that is uncontroversially false. And, if the first occurrence of the word 'has' in the claim that "an object has only those properties it has at the present time" is in the present tense, the claim seems trivially true; if the claim means that the only properties that an object *ever* has are the ones it has at the present time, the claim seems obviously false. So, presentism seems either trivially true or obviously false.

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Eternalism is alleged to be the view that *all* times are on the same ontological footing, and that all things, whenever they exist, are equally real. Does eternalism assert that *all* times exist now, and that all things, whenever they exist, exist now? Such a view seems obviously untrue—unless, as *presentism* appears to insist, only one time, namely the present, exists. Does eternalism assert that *all* times exist at some time or other? Now that view seems true; but it is not one that would inspire even the most argumentative among philosophers to object.

In the paragraph to follow, I want to play a little fast and loose with the word ‘real’ in order to highlight the charge of triviality. I will get more serious about it below, where it will be seen how important it is to be clear about the distinction between ‘exists’ and ‘is real’.

Of course, both Bill Clinton and Aristotle each exist at some time or other. But are they *equally* real? On the one hand, hardly—Clinton, it might be said, *is* more real than Aristotle, for Clinton *is* (real) and Aristotle isn’t (or so it seems). And though Aristotle *was* just as real as Clinton *is* (and Clinton will be just as unreal as Aristotle now is), does that make them equally real *now*? On the other hand—and this is the hand I prefer, for reasons that will emerge later—Clinton and Aristotle are, in some sense, equally real. It is not as if Aristotle, having lived and died many centuries ago, now has some sort of shadowy existence, one that is less substantial than the existence that Clinton now has (though it is also not the case that Aristotle now has an existence that rivals Clinton’s in robustness). There aren’t two, or three, kinds of existence for contingent things—past existence, present existence, and, perhaps, future existence—which are such that objects that possess one of them, present existence, are “more real” than objects that possess the others. (Indeed, I do not think I understand the idea that is supposed to be expressed by the words ‘more real’ at all.) Now, is this an issue that presentists and eternalists can profitably argue over? I think not, but I shall be returning to the words ‘exist’ and ‘real’ in due course.

It may be argued that this reduction of presentism and eternalism to trivial truth or obvious falsehood is too facile. *If* presentism and eternalism meant what I have just taken them to mean, then, it might be said, the charge of triviality would be justified. However, to see the depth of the debate between presentists and eternalists and the depth of the challenge to the idea that things change, we need to see presentism and eternalism as more sophisticated than I have represented them as being.

Dean Zimmerman, for example, says something like this, admitting that there is a version of presentism that is either trivially true or obviously

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false (Zimmerman 1998, 209). With respect to the statement, “the only things that exist are those that exist at present,” he too notes that if the occurrence of ‘exist’ is in the present tense, then the statement is a trivial tautology; but if it means ‘did exist, exists, or will exist’, then it expresses an “implausible metaphysical thesis.” But, he continues, “Presentism is neither a boring truth nor an interesting falsehood” (ibid.). Rather, according to Zimmerman, the presentist holds, that

(2) There is only one largest class of all real things, and this class contains nothing that lies wholly in the past or future (Zimmerman 1998, 210).

But this at least seems to be subject to the same kind of objection that plagues the “trivial” versions. If the “real” things are just the things that exist, Zimmerman’s statement of presentism seems equivalent, if all the verbs are in the present tense, to this:

(2’) There is now one class that contains all the things that exist now, and this class contains nothing that does not exist now.

And this seems trivially true. So, if (2) is understood in this way, it is trivially true as well. And if (2) is read with its ‘exists’ given a reading according to which ‘x exists’ means ‘x existed, exists, or will exist’, it is, I believe, just as problematic as Zimmerman’s interesting falsehood. And so, just what is this version of presentism that is neither a boring truth nor an interesting falsehood?¹¹

Now, it might be charged that I have not given Zimmerman’s idea sufficient attention here. And that is true. But I will later, when the issue of the meaning of ‘real’ will come up again.

Ted Sider’s book, *Four-Dimensionalism* (Sider 2001), is an extended defense of temporal parts. Like most philosophers involved in the discussion of presentism and eternalism, he thinks temporal parts theory is closely allied with eternalism. Thus, Sider is concerned to argue against presentism and in favor of eternalism. Here is Sider’s statement of eternalism:

past and future objects and times are just as real as currently existing ones. Just as distant objects are no less real for being spatially distant, distant times are no less real for being temporally distant. . . . In the block universe, dinosaurs, computers, and future outposts on Mars are all equally real. . . . According to *presentism*, on the other hand, only currently existing objects are real. (Sider 2001, 11)

But this statement appears to make presentism obviously true and eternalism false, if its verbs are taken to be in the present tense.¹² And if what is now real is what now exists, it is simply not true that past (and perhaps

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future) objects are *now* just as real as presently existing ones. But, again, the issue of the meaning of ‘real’ will come up below.

Perhaps it will be said that I am still taking a cheap shot at the presentism–eternalism dispute, and that a more careful look at it is called for. But before doing so, I want to make a brief remark about what my skepticism about the debate between presentists and eternalists does and does not concern.

Whatever it is for something to exist is something that the presentist, the eternalist, and I can (and should) agree about. No party to this dispute thinks that Aristotle currently has a shadowy, ethereal existence, which replaced the robust existence he had when he “really” existed, with the presentist insisting that shadowy existence is not real existence and eternalist insisting that it is. The presentist denies that Aristotle exists now; but so does the eternalist, and so do I. But the eternalist claims to see in that no impediment to Aristotle’s existence. My complaint is *not* that the presentist and the eternalist only appear to disagree because they equivocate on the word ‘exist’, in the sense of that word which currently applies to Bill Clinton, and once applied to Aristotle. According to me, ‘exists’ is univocal; it always expresses the property of existence. Now, the number two has this property “tenselessly” in the sense that the number two would exist even if there were no times. My computer, however, would not; it has the property expressed by ‘exists’ only at times. Despite this contrast, though, in worlds in which there are times, the number two exists in all of them.¹³ Tenseless existence and tensed existence are *not* two kinds of existence. There is only one kind of existence, though certain entities, if they exist at all, have it tenselessly, whereas others have it tensedly.¹⁴ My complaint concerns, not any equivocation on the meaning of the word ‘exist’, but rather that aspect of occurrences of the word ‘exist’ that has to do with their *tense* (or lack thereof). It also concerns the word ‘real’.

Tensed Readings

Are there *tensed* versions of presentism and eternalism that can inspire reasonable controversy as to which is true?¹⁵ In a way, we have already considered this in the previous section. But, to review, consider this typical statement of presentism:

(3) Everything that exists exists now.

Since in this section I am assuming all verbs to have a tense, and since (3)’s third word is ‘exists’, there seem to be three interpretations we can give

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to (3). We can interpret that occurrence as in the present tense, giving us the trivial

(3a) Everything that exists now exists now.

We can interpret the tense of 'exists' tense as disjunctively omnitemporal; (3) would then mean

(3b) Everything that existed, exists, or will exist exists now.

But, since it seems obvious that Aristotle did, but does not now, exist, it seems that (3b) is obviously false.¹⁶ Third, we can interpret the first occurrence of 'exists' in (3) as "conjunctively omnitemporal," that is, as meaning 'did, does, and will exist'; then it means

(3c) Everything that exists at all times exists now;

and that seems trivially true.

In a similar way, consider a central claim of eternalism:

(4) There are things that do not exist now.

If (4)'s second word has a tense, there seem to be three ways in which it can be understood. Construing 'are' as in the present tense gives us the trivially false

(4a) There now are things that do not now exist.

Construing it as disjunctively omnitemporal gives us the obviously true

(4b) There were, are now, or will be things that do not now exist.

And third, (4) can be interpreted as the obviously false

(4c) There are things that exist at all times that do not now exist.

Generalizing, it appears that typical presentist claims come out trivially *true* when construed as either present-tensed or conjunctively omnitemporal and obviously *false* when construed as disjunctively omnitemporal. And typical eternalist claims come out obviously *false* when construed as either present-tensed or conjunctively omnitemporal and trivially *true* when construed as disjunctively omnitemporal.

Surely both the presentist and the eternalist will agree about the truth-values that (3a–c) and (4a–c) have. So what is it that they disagree about? Presentists and eternalists insist that they disagree about (3)—Everything that exists exists now—the presentist holding it true, while the eternalist insisting that it's false. After all, doesn't the eternalist insist that there are dinosaurs (Sider 2001, 11)?

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Yes, but surely the eternalist does *not* insist that there *are* dinosaurs, that is, *right now*. Yet he insists that, despite that fact, dinosaurs nevertheless exist. But what could this mean except that there were, are, or will be dinosaurs? So, a disagreement over dinosaurs can be fomented between the eternalist and the presentist only if we allow them to equivocate; the equivocation concerns not what it is to exist, but the *tense* of claims that assert existence. The presentist denies that there are dinosaurs in the sense of (3a), whereas the eternalist insists that there are dinosaurs in the sense of (4b). This is no real dispute.

Well, not so fast!

The Master Class and the Word 'Real'

Let us reconsider Zimmerman's formulation of presentism, for it is here that the real source of whatever disagreement there is between presentists and eternalists may very well lie:

(2) There is only one largest class of all real things, and this class contains nothing that lies wholly in the past or future.

The suggestion that (2), like "more naive" expressions of presentism, is trivially true assumes that the largest class of all real things is the largest class that contains all and only the things that exist; and since I have been taking this last occurrence of 'exist' to be in the present tense, that largest class would seem to be the class of all things that exist *now*. Thus, that every member of that class is a presently existing thing is a trivality.

But to argue in this way is to assume something that I believe we have *no* right to assume. And I think that presentists assert, and eternalists reject, (2) at least in part because they make the same assumption. The assumption in question is this:

(5) If a class *S* exists at a time *t*, then everything that is a member of *S* exists at *t*.

With this assumption in hand, we can see why the presentist would have to be asserting something trivial: at any time *t*, the largest class of real things just is the class all of whose members exist at *t*. So, of course, at present, everything in that class exists at present.

But what is it that warrants this assumption? As far as I can tell, *not much*.

There is the idea that the principles of class membership are, in effect, *mereological* principles (consider (1), above). Of course, all the things that

are now parts of my bicycle are things that exist now; I don't think I would understand someone who told me that my bicycle *now* has a part which, perhaps unfortunately, does not now exist. Indeed, the very fact that some thing does not now exist (e.g., the rear reflector) implies that that thing is *not* now a part of my bicycle.

But why should one think that such a mereological principle governs classes? Why isn't the following principle the proper one governing class membership?

(6) If a class *S* exists at a time *t*, then everything that is a member of *S* exists *at some time or other*.¹⁷

According to (6), the existence condition on members of classes is disjunctively omnitemporal. And so, the largest class of all real things would, then, be the class of all things that exist at some time or other. There would thus be no impediment to there currently being a class whose members include not only Bill Clinton, but also Aristotle, dinosaurs, and perhaps future outposts on Mars (but *not* Superman).

Actually, (6) needs to be amended. We need to append to (6) the words 'or would exist even if there were no times', in order to take account of things, like numbers, that are sometimes said to exist timelessly, in the sense that they would exist even if there were no times. If the sentence 'the number seven exists but does not exist now' expresses any proposition at all, then it expresses a proposition that we know a priori to be false. The proposition, if any, that it expresses is not a contradiction, for there are, I suppose, possible worlds in which there are no times. But in any possible world in which it does express a proposition, the word 'now' would have to have a referent; and in any such world the proposition expressed would be false.¹⁸ If there are things that would exist even if there were no times, then the largest class of all real things should include them. It should be noted that, if there are times—a condition necessary for things to change—then it would be true to say, for example, that the number seven exists now. The timelessly existing things, if there are any, belong to the "Master" class.

What are the consequences for presentism and eternalism with such an understanding of class membership? Let the Master class, the class over which all unrestricted quantifiers range, be the largest class of all "real" things, that is, the class of all things that have existed, do exist, or will exist, or would exist even if there were no times. Would it then be true, as the presentist asserts, that the only things that exist are the things that exist at the present time? Well, though the Master class includes all the

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“real” things—not all of those entities, obviously, exist now. So, the answer to the question “Does everything in the Master class exist now?” is No.

However, the claim that everything that exists exists now, if the first of its occurrences of ‘exists’ is in the present tense, is true. But this is still not an interesting thesis. What makes that claim appear to be an interesting, nontrivial thesis is that the idea that some thing exists *now* can be confused with the idea that it is now *real*, that is, with the idea that it is a member of the Master class. And that there is such a thing as the Master class is permitted by the rejection of the mereological conception of classes.

The eternalist’s assertion is that all things, whenever they exist, are equally real. This claim is surely true, in the sense that all such things are members of the Master class. But not all such things exist (that is, exist now). Yes, everything in that Master class is equally real. But, again, it is not a condition on a thing’s current membership in the Master class that it exist now; what is required is only that a thing be real. And for a thing to be real it is enough that it exist at some time or other (or is such that it would exist even if there were no times).

Aristotle, though he no longer exists, is real. Although the claim that Aristotle is real can be understood as ‘it is true at all times that Aristotle did, does, or will exist’, it is also true that Aristotle is real *now*. After all, as a member of the Master class, Aristotle can be the value of a variable of unrestricted quantification. Aristotle can be referred to (indeed, he is now being referred to by me), and can be the subject of present-tensed predications (though he cannot now have any property that implies current existence). So, Aristotle is real now. But from this it does not follow that Aristotle *exists* now.

What this shows is that the words ‘real’ and ‘exist’ do *not* mean the same thing. Whereas the tensed ‘exists’ distinguishes Aristotle, who doesn’t, from Clinton, who does, the word ‘real’ distinguishes Aristotle and Clinton, who are, from Superman and Sherlock Holmes, who aren’t.

Thus, the claim that dinosaurs exist may be conflated with the claim that dinosaurs are real; and this conflation is encouraged by the assumption of the mereological conception of classes. Dinosaurs don’t exist;¹⁹ but they do belong to the Master class and are, therefore, real.

This issue is related to the issue of translation. Sider writes: “Since ordinary talk and thought are full of quantification over non-present objects, presentists are in a familiar predicament: in their unreflective moments, they apparently commit themselves to far more than their ontological scruples allow. A familiar response is to begin a project of paraphrase”

(Sider 1999, 325). But Sider notes that, by and large, the presentist will have not too much trouble finding paraphrases of “difficult” sentences, except for those that involve cross-time relations (Sider 2001, 25ff.).

However, the problem of paraphrasing statements involving cross-time relations, for example, ‘Clinton admires Plato’, disappears if there can be true singular propositions concerning things that do not exist. That there cannot be such singular propositions is held, I think, for roughly the same sort of reason that the mereological conception of sets is held. And such a conception of singular propositions—that a singular proposition that is about an object, x , exists at a time t only if x exists at t —seems just as unmotivated as a mereological conception of sets. A proposition is not a collection or mereological sum of entities (e.g., things, properties). It is, I think, enough for a singular proposition to be about an object, x , that x exist at some time or other (or would exist even if there were no times). Thus, there can be singular propositions that exist now that are about Plato, but no singular propositions about, say, Superman.

In any event, as long as both Plato and Clinton belong to the Master class, we can express propositions that say that latter admires the former. Of course, an admirer cannot admire anything at a time at which the admirer does not exist; but the objects of admiration do not need to exist at the times at which they are admired.

Even if the Master class is admitted as the largest class of all real things, that will, by itself, help neither the eternalist nor the presentist. ‘ $(\exists x)(Fx)$ ’ means ‘from among all the members of the Master class, there exists something that is F ’. And if the word ‘exists’ is in the present tense, the presentist’s creed—everything that exists exists now—still appears to be a trivial truth, for all it means is ‘from among all the members of the Master class, everything that exists (now) exists now’.²⁰

Perhaps it will be insisted that the dispute between presentists and eternalists is indeed a dispute about the Master class. The presentist might be taken to be asserting that, although the Master class is, as I am insisting, the class of all things that have existed, do exist, will exist, or would exist even if there were no times, the only things that are *currently* members of that class are those that exist *now*. And the eternalist will, presumably, deny this.

All parties to the dispute between presentism and eternalism can agree that an object cannot exist at times other than the times at which it exists. This is trivially true, and implies nothing about the population of the Master class. In addition, the claim is wholly independent of the claim

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that objects can have properties, and bear relations to other things, at times at which they do not exist. In addition, as I shall now argue, this latter claim seems clearly true.

Class membership is determined solely by *conditions*. And here is the condition determining membership in the Master class:

(MC) $(x)(x \in \text{MC} \equiv x \text{ exists, did exist, will exist, or would exist even if there were no times})$.

The presentist claims that the Master class now includes only things that exist now. But this view seems to be generated by the idea that class membership is determined by something other than conditions.

Consider the class of things that existed in 1950. Surely that class includes Bertrand Russell. And consider the class of things that exist now. Clearly the Eiffel Tower belongs to the intersection of these two classes. Now, surely, not only does that intersection exist, but so do the classes that “intersect.” Thus, the class of things that existed in 1950 exists now and now includes things that existed in 1950 but do not exist now (e.g., Bertrand Russell).

So, the question whose answer apparently separates presentist from eternalist is this: Can the condition on class membership specified in (MC) be satisfied at a time, t , by objects that do not exist at t ? The presentist answers “No,” because she holds that an object can satisfy a condition at a time t only if that object exists then. But this answer assumes that objects cannot have properties, or bear relations to other things, at times at which they do not exist. And this assumption is false.

Aristotle was a philosopher. The statement ‘it was the case that x was (then) a philosopher’ clearly expresses a property. And it is a property that Aristotle has, and, indeed, has *now*. If Aristotle does not have that property now, then it is simply not now the case that he was a philosopher. Similarly, ‘it was the case that x was taught by Plato’ expresses a relational property that Aristotle has, and has *now*.

The proposition that Aristotle existed is equivalent to the proposition that it was the case that the proposition that Aristotle exists was true. But take the sentence ‘the proposition that it was the case that the proposition that Aristotle exists was true’, and replace ‘Aristotle’ by ‘ x ’. Then we have an expression—‘the proposition that it was the case that the proposition that x exists was true’—that expresses a property which an object has just in case the proposition that it exists was true. But clearly, Aristotle has that property, and he has it *now*. And that is sufficient for Aristotle’s being a member of the Master class, because any object that satisfies the condi-

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tion expressed by ‘the proposition that it was the case that the proposition that x exists was true’ clearly satisfies the condition of having existed. And satisfying that condition is sufficient for being a member of the Master class, that is, for being real.

It should also be noted that it is clearly true that for some time, t , Aristotle exists at t . But the proposition expressed by the sentence ‘for some time, t , Aristotle exists at t ’, is true at *all* times, even at those times at which Aristotle does *not* exist.

One might argue, I suppose, that the sentence ‘it was the case that Aristotle existed’ does not now express a proposition on the grounds that Aristotle does not now exist (see Markosian 2004, 51–60). But if that were so, then it would not now be true that Aristotle was a philosopher, that Aristotle taught Plato, that Aristotle wrote *Metaphysics*, and so on; there would now be *no* truths about Aristotle. But this is absurd. In attempting to defend presentism, Ned Markosian, in effect, accepts the view that such claims are false, but insists that there are truths that are *much like* the ones that he thinks are, owing to the nonexistence of Aristotle, false, claims like ‘it was the case that there was someone whose was the referent of ‘Aristotle’ and was a philosopher’. But, first, it just *is* true that Aristotle was a philosopher, despite Markosian’s attempts at explaining away the appearance of truth. Second, it would have been true that Aristotle was a philosopher even if there had never been anyone who was the referent of the name ‘Aristotle’ (after all, Aristotle’s name could have been ‘Fred’); ‘Aristotle was a philosopher’ and ‘it was the case that there was someone whose was the referent of ‘Aristotle’ and was a philosopher’ are just not close enough in meaning. And third, if, in order to formulate (and defend) presentism, we have to reject the obvious truth that Aristotle was a philosopher in favor of what seems to be a highly implausible view about what propositions expressed by sentences like ‘Aristotle was a philosopher’ would have to mean, if they are to come out to be “close” to true, why should one think that presentism was worth formulating and defending in the first place?

It might also be suggested that in sentences like ‘it was the case that Aristotle was a philosopher’, ‘Aristotle’ does not refer, since the tense operator, ‘it was the case that’, creates a context in which names within its scope are not “ontologically committing.” However, though it is, of course, the case that ‘Aristotle’ does not now refer to anything that exists, it does *not* follow from this that ‘Aristotle’ does not now refer to anything.

Thus, it seems that objects *can* have properties and bear relations to other things at times at which they do not exist (see Soames 2002, 91). Of course, I am *not* arguing that Aristotle can truly be the subject of just any

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old predication. Aristotle does not *now* have the property of being a philosopher or the property of getting older, for anyone who now has these properties must exist now. But he does now have the property of having been a philosopher, and he does now have the property of being dead. Aristotle can now have properties that do not imply that he exists now. The claim that objects *cannot* have any properties or bear any relations to other things at times at which they do not exist strikes me as simply false; and thus I do not see a serious objection to its being the case that currently nonexistent objects can satisfy the condition for membership in the Master class, and thus be real.²¹ Nor do I see a serious objection to its being the case that currently nonexistent objects can be the subjects of singular propositions.

If the dispute between the presentist and the eternalist is a dispute about whether the Master class now contains things that do not now exist—with the presentist saying “No” and the eternalist saying “Yes”—then the eternalist wins, hands down.

The dispute between presentists and eternalists is supposed to be a metaphysical dispute about time and what exists; presentists appear to be asserting that only what exists in the present exists, and eternalist appear to be asserting that things other than presently existing things exist as well. Both can agree, if they reject a mereological conception of classes, that there is a class—the Master class—that contains exactly the objects that the eternalist says there are: the objects that have existed, do now exist, and will exist (and the things that would exist even if there were no times). This class, however, contains more objects than the presentist says there are. But this should give no comfort to the eternalist and need cause no dismay to the presentist. The presentist will insist that not all of the entities in the Master class exist now. And, of course, in this the presentist is absolutely right. But when the tense of that occurrence of ‘exist’ is interpreted as disjunctively omnitemporal, the eternalist is right; everything in the Master class exists, did exist, or will exist (or would exist even if there were no times). And, the presentist will have to admit that, in that sense, there exist things that do not exist now; for the class of things that are now real includes more than just the things that now exist.

But there is no disagreement here concerning what exists. The source of the apparent disagreement is, at least in part, the acceptance of a mereological conception of sets. Once that conception is accepted, the presentist will insist that the eternalist’s Master class is too large—too large, that is, to tolerate the claim that everything in that class exists (in the sense of ‘exists *now*’), and the eternalist will have to insist that the presentist’s Mas-

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ter class is too small—too small to tolerate the claim that everything that is real is in that class. But no issue is joined. That is, no issue is joined that is about what presentists and eternalists have said they were arguing about—times and the existence of things that exist in time. The dispute might be shifted to one concerning the principles of class membership, the constituents of singular propositions, and the interpretation of quantifiers; but it is *not* about what exists.

So, if the crucial verbs are construed as being tensed (either as present tensed or as disjunctively omnitemporal), then both presentism and eternalism appear to be either trivially true or obviously false.

And if presentism is trivial in the way just suggested, then Merricks's argument for the Parmenidean denial of change collapses. The claim, crucial to the argument for the claim that presentism implies that there are no things with temporal parts—that an object cannot have another object as a part if that other part does not exist—is clearly true, when all verbs in it are interpreted as in the present tense. However, so construed, the claim does not imply that objects cannot have, at times other than the present, parts that do not exist at the present time. That is, if (1) is interpreted as

(1') $\sim\Diamond((\exists t)(\exists x)(\exists y)(t \text{ is a time \& at } t, x \text{ has } y \text{ as a part) \& } y \text{ does not exist at } t)$,

the claim is clearly true; but (1') does not imply the desired conclusion.

But if the claim is interpreted as asserting that objects cannot at some time or other have another object as a part if that other part does not exist at some time or other, it should be interpreted as

(1'') $\sim\Diamond((\exists t)(\exists x)(\exists y)(t \text{ is a time \& at } t \text{ } x \text{ has } y \text{ as a part) \& } (\exists t')(y \text{ does not exist at } t'))$.

(1'') does imply the desired conclusion, but it is simply not true, so long as an object can have parts at some times and not have them at others (see Lombard 1999).

And the arguments that allegedly derive a contradiction from eternalism and the idea that enduring objects change do so only by committing scope fallacies (see Lombard 2005). Thus, the differences between presentist and eternalists seem to have no consequences for the issue of whether changeable objects persist by enduring or by perduring, or for the possibility of change itself.

Sider has insisted that there is a single sense of 'exists' in which the debate between presentists and eternalists can be framed (Sider 2001, 17). If Sider is right, then 'exist' in that sense cannot have a tense. If there are

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nontrivial versions of presentism and eternalism, they will have to be formulated in a way that does not employ a tensed sense of 'exist'. It is to this subject that I now turn.

Tenseless Formulations

There *appears* to be a dispute between presentists and eternalists concerning what exists. Eternalists appear to insist that there are dinosaurs, despite the fact that no dinosaurs exist now; presentists appear to deny this. But, if the eternalist means that there were, are, or will be dinosaurs, then the presentist will readily agree, and no battle will be joined. If the presentist means that there are no dinosaurs in existence now, then the eternalist will (or should) readily agree, and again no battle will be joined.

Both eternalist and presentist insist that they disagree about the truth of some existential claim. But just what existential claim it is that they disagree about is unclear. They cannot, I have argued, be disagreeing about some existential claim expressed with *tensed* verbs. So, the eternalist must be claiming that 'there are (exist) dinosaurs' is true, while the presentist insists that it's not—in some univocal sense of 'are' (and 'exist') that is *not* tensed. But what does the untensed 'are' (and 'exist') mean in the context of assertions of existence concerning contingent things?

While they take the concept of existence *simpliciter* to be primitive, Scott Hestevold and W. R. Carter offer the following informal explication:

(HC₁) *Something* exists *simpliciter* if and only if it is among the things that the universe includes—if and only if *it is real*. (i) That *something* exists *simpliciter* implies neither that *it did* exist nor that *it will* exist; and (ii) that *two things* both exist *simpliciter* does not alone imply that *they* coexist (Hestevold and Carter 2002a).

I propose that we understand this suggestion along the following lines.

Suppose that someone were to say "there's a rabbit," where the occurrence of 'there' does *not* mean anything like 'over there' or 'in that place'; rather, one is simply *placelessly* asserting the existence of a rabbit. That there is a rabbit, in this sense, implies neither that it is here nor that it is there, and that there are two rabbits does not imply that they are in the same place.

In a similar way, suppose that the occurrence of 'is' in 'x is red' does *not* mean anything like 'is now', that it is tenselessly predicative. That something is red implies, on this interpretation, neither that it was nor that it will be red; and that there are two red things does not imply that they are red at the same time.

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Similarly for the “existential” but untensed ‘are’ in ‘there are dinosaurs’. In this tenseless sense, to say that there are dinosaurs is not to say that dinosaurs exist *now*. In this sense, ‘there are dinosaurs’ does not imply that they either did or will exist; and the fact that there are dinosaurs and humans does not imply that dinosaurs and humans coexist. The occurrence of ‘are’ in ‘there are dinosaurs’ is not temporal; it is purely existential.

Presentists and eternalists, in insisting that the dispute between them is genuine and substantive, must at least agree on the meaning of key expressions, particularly that of ‘exist’ (and its cognates). And it strikes me that Hestevold and Carter have hit on a reasonable explanation of the idea of tenseless existence. It detaches the idea of existence from the idea of existence at some particular time. In addition, it appears to allow the eternalist to insist (either truly or falsely) that both Aristotle and Bill Clinton exist (that is, exist *simpliciter*), and to allow the presentist to insist that only presently existing things exist without falling into triviality.

Presentism appears to assert that nothing exists that does not presently exist. Hestevold and Carter propose the following formulation of that doctrine:

(PR) Necessarily, if x exists *simpliciter*, then x presently exists (Hestevold and Carter 2002a).²²

(PR) seems as good an attempt as any at saying what presentism is, since it links an apparently untensed concept of existence (existence *simpliciter*) with present existence. Clearly, the eternalist will insist that there is such a concept of existence *simpliciter*, under which both Plato and Clinton fall; and, consequently, the eternalist will insist that (PR) is false. And, the presentist will argue that, even if there is such a conception of existence, only presently existing things fall under it. Thus, it appears that (PR) expresses a view that presentists accept and eternalists reject.

It seems to me that (PR) is as good an explanation of presentism as one could have. And the debate between presentists and eternalists over the truth of (PR) appears substantive and genuine. I think, however, that appearances deceive.

First, if ‘existence *simpliciter*’ means what I mean by ‘is real’, and it surely looks like that is so,²³ then (PR) implies that either Aristotle exists now or Aristotle isn’t real. But both these disjuncts are false. Aristotle surely does not exist now; and Aristotle, having once existed, is real. So, if (PR) is to be true, ‘ x exists *simpliciter*’ must mean ‘ x exists (now)’. But then, (PR) is trivial.

Second, it should be noted how odd principle (PR) is. Presumably, (PR) must be true at every moment, t , which is such that t is referred to by

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‘presently’. But, since every moment is a now at some time, past, present, or future, that is *every t*. So, if (PR) is true, then it is true at every time. But then it follows that, necessarily, every object that exists *simpliciter* exists *at every time*. This is surely *not* a result that presentists want.²⁴ Nor is it, by the way, a result that eternalists should welcome. After all, it is they who believe that there are objects (that is, objects that exist *simpliciter*) that do not exist now, that the present nonexistence of a thing is not an impediment to its existence. But, if (PR) is true at all times, there can be no such objects. Alternatively, the presentist may want to pick out some *really special* time, *t*, such that (PR) is true precisely when, and only when, ‘presently’ refers just to *t*. But which time might that be? And why is that time so special?

Third, there is another problem, a problem that arises when Hestevold and Carter’s characterization of presentism, (PR), is combined with their conception of existence *simpliciter* (HC_i). Suppose that some objects, *x* and *y*, both exist *simpliciter*. Then it follows from (PR) that *x* presently exists and that *y* presently exists. And, given what ‘presently exists’ must mean, it follows trivially that *x* and *y* coexist. But that conclusion, when conjoined with clause (ii) of (HC_i) and the claim that something exists *simpliciter*, yields a contradiction.²⁵ So, if (PR) and (HC_i) are true, then *nothing* exists *simpliciter*.^{26,27}

Thus, if Hestevold and Carter have indeed isolated a correct understanding of tenseless existence (existence *simpliciter*), and they have if ‘exists *simpliciter*’ means what I mean by ‘is real’, we should conclude that presentism, understood as (PR), is false. Victory for eternalism! However, a victory achieved by virtue of one’s opponent’s stipulative definition, however plausible it might be, is a tainted victory. But before victory—tainted or otherwise—is conceded to the eternalist, we need to look a bit more carefully at the concept of tenseless existence.²⁸

Though it might be claimed that the purely existential ‘there’ is “placeless,” it might be difficult to defend such a claim. If there is (in the purely existential sense) a rabbit, then there is a rabbit *somewhere*; and this is *not* an accident. After all, rabbits, being physical beings, have spatial locations. If, for every “there” (that is, for every place), it is false that there is a rabbit *there*, then it is simply false that there is any rabbit at all. And, if there is a rabbit somewhere, then there is a rabbit *simpliciter* (that is, in the purely existential sense). It appears, then, that ‘there is a rabbit’ (in the purely existential sense) is equivalent to ‘there is a rabbit somewhere’. If it is going to be said that there is a difference between a clearly “placed” sense of ‘there’—a disjunctively omnispatial sense, equivalent to ‘exists

somewhere or other’—and a “placeless,” purely existential sense, we are, I think, owed an explanation of the difference and an account of the latter.²⁹

And I should think that, if ‘the barn is (tenselessly) red’ is true, then, despite the fact that ‘is’ is supposed to have no tense, the barn must be red at some time or other; and this is *not* an accident. If, for every “now,” it is false that the barn is red *now*, then it is simply false that the barn is red. And, if the barn is red at some time, then it is red *simpliciter*, that is, it is red in the tenseless sense of ‘is’.

Similarly, it might be claimed that there is a purely existential, tenseless sense of ‘is’ or ‘exists’ that applies to contingent entities; but it might be difficult to defend that claim. After all, rabbits are physical beings. If there is (in the purely existential sense) a rabbit, then some rabbit exists at some time or other; and, if a rabbit exists at some time or other, then there is a rabbit (in the purely existential sense). It appears, then, that ‘there is a rabbit’ (in the purely existential, tenseless sense) is equivalent to ‘there is a rabbit at some time or other’. If it is going to be said that there is a difference between a clearly tensed sense of ‘exists’—a disjunctively omnitemporal sense, equivalent to ‘exists at some time or other’—and a tenseless, purely existential sense, we are, I think, owed an explanation of the difference and an account of the latter.³⁰

I just do not understand what the tenseless sense of ‘is’ or ‘exists’ is supposed to mean, as it applies to contingently existing things, unless it means what the disjunctively omnitemporal sense of those expressions means (that is, ‘is, was, or will be’). But, on such a construal, there seems to be no substantive point of controversy between presentists and eternalists, and thus I do not understand how a substantive ontological debate between them is to be framed. It cannot be framed by using tensed verbs; and I just do not see what the sense of an untensed verb is supposed to be in terms of which the debate is to be conducted.³¹

Presentists and eternalists need to provide explications of tenseless senses of ‘is’ and ‘exists’ and nontrivial versions of presentism and eternalism that are formulated in terms of that notion of existence. But what could those explications and formulations be? I just don’t know.

There are issues that need to be settled concerning how quantifiers, tensed and untensed, are to be understood. And, there can be a debate between those who think that presently nonexistent things can now be members of classes, and that currently nonexistent things can now be constituents of singular propositions, and that things can have some properties (and bear relations to other things) at times at which they do not exist,

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and those who don't think so. But, it seems clear who wins that debate. More importantly, however, it seems clear that such a debate is not about time or the existence of things that exist in time. And since, I have argued, presentism does not imply that there are no things with temporal parts, and eternalism does not imply that things cannot endure the changes they undergo, the debate seems to have no consequences either for the issue of whether things endure or perdure, nor does it constitute a new threat to the idea that things change.

A Verbal Dispute?

It has been said that the dispute between presentism and eternalism is an ontological dispute, a dispute over what there is, and that it cannot be dismissed without dismissing other existential disputes in metaphysics as well. For example, Sider insists that presentism and eternalism are metaphysical views about what there is—specifically, about what times exist, and which things that exist in time exist—on a par with other metaphysical views concerning, say, whether universals exist, whether disembodied mental substances exist, whether God exists, and whether (merely) possible entities exist; and that to dismiss the controversy between presentism and eternalism would open the door to dismissing these other, clearly substantive, metaphysical controversies (Sider 2001, 17).

Sider's argument for this conclusion rests on the idea that the dispute between presentists and the eternalists is often dismissed by accusing the parties of meaning different things by 'exist', and thus accusing the parties of "dispute by equivocation." Thus, it might be argued, if 'exists' means 'existed, exists now, or will exist', then, of course, dinosaurs exist and the eternalist is right; but if 'exists' means 'exists now', then dinosaurs do not exist and the presentist is right. But if that is how the "dispute" is framed, there is no dispute, only the illusion of one.

Similarly, Sider suggests, if 'exists' means 'actually or possibly exists', then, of course, there are possible objects (in addition to actual ones), and the modal realist is right; but if 'exists' means 'actually exists', then there are no (merely) possible objects, and the modal actualist is right. And thus, the debate between modal realists and modal actualists is spurious, depending on an equivocation for its appearance of legitimacy. And similarly, if 'exists' can mean 'mathematically exists', then there is a sense in which 'numbers exist' is trivially true, and there is no real debate between mathematical realists and their opponents.

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But, it is said, the dispute between modal realists and modal actualists and the dispute between mathematical realists and their opponents are *genuine* disputes, and are not to be dismissed as “disputes by equivocation.” So, it is argued, the debate between presentists and eternalists is not trivial, for it is like these other, clearly substantive, ontological disputes in metaphysics.

However, I do not accept Sider’s claim that the disputes he mentions are analogous to the alleged dispute between presentists and eternalists. First, ‘exists’ does *not* mean ‘mathematically exists’. As I understand the latter phrase, it means ‘exists and is a mathematical entity’. So, there is a *real* question of whether any entity satisfies that predicate; it is *not* a triviality that numbers exist mathematically. Of course, one could *invent* a predicate that is true of an entity if and only if it is a number and exists; but it would not be a trivial matter whether anything satisfied that condition. The dispute between mathematical realists and their opponents does not involve an equivocation on the word ‘exist’.

Similarly, the dispute between modal realists and modal actualists does not depend on any equivocation. Both parties to the dispute mean by ‘exist’ what we all mean by it (whatever that is). The modal realist does *not* think that possible entities exist in some strange or shadowy way, unlike the robustness with which actual entities exist. The modal realist thinks that possible entities are concrete things just like us and the things in our surroundings; it is just that they are spatially unconnected to us (see Lewis 1986, 2, 82). And ‘exists’ simply does *not* mean ‘exists and is spatially connected to us’. The dispute between modal realists and their opponents is about what exists, in the only sense of ‘exists’ there is (or needs to be). ‘Exists’ does *not* mean ‘either exists or possibly exists’; it means *exists*. The modal realist holds that *possibilia* are not *mere* *possibilia*; they are *actualia* relative to things spatially connected to them, *possibilia* relative to things that are not. (Thus the insistence that ‘actual’ is an indexical.) That is, they do not merely possibly exist; they exist in the only way that something can (only they are not spatially connected to us).³² The dispute is (at least in part) over whether or not there are physical objects that are not spatially connected to us, and that dispute is genuine.

As for skepticism about the apparent debate between presentists and eternalists, matters are quite different, I contend. The charge of triviality is *not* grounded in a claim that the word ‘exists’ is being equivocated on. What is being equivocated on are the *tenses* of the word ‘exist’. If all the relevant verbs are in the present tense, there is no substantive dispute

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between presentist and eternalist. And if all the relevant verbs are disjunctively omnitemporal, there is again no substantive dispute between presentist and eternalist. The only hope for a substantive dispute between presentist and eternalist lies with construing the relevant verbs as tenseless. But, when applied to contingent, changeable things, the tenseless 'is' and 'exist' seem equivalent to a disjunctively omnitemporal construal, in terms of which no nontrivial version of the debate can be framed. And if there is a tenseless construal of these words that is different from a disjunctively omnitemporal interpretation of their tenses and in terms of which the dispute between presentists and eternalists can be conducted, I do not believe that we have been told by the presentists and eternalists what it is.

The alleged controversy between presentists and eternalists does *not* involve, as the other metaphysical disputes mentioned by Sider do, any dispute about what exists. There may be genuine issues over which presentists and eternalists disagree; but those issues are *not* about the reality of time, the reality of what exists in time, or the nature of persistence. Nor do those issues, however they are resolved, appear to pose any threat to or force any realignment of the idea that things change.

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Notes

1. See, e.g., Plato 2005, *Theaetetus* 155a3–5, and Aristotle 1995, *Physics*, Bk. 1, ch. 7, 191a3–7.

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2. There are many issues this criterion raises that I will not be discussing in this chapter, for example, its apparent commitment to the existence of properties and times, and the problem of relational or “Cambridge” change. By the way, (i) is to be understood as ‘there was, is, or will be a time t , and there was, is, or will be a time t' , and $t \neq t'$ ’.

3. For this connecting claim to be, by my lights, more plausible, it should be understood as asserting that a change occurs just in case some thing *alters* (for a thing that changes relationally, say, by becoming a widow, does not alter). I shall here understand the claim in this way.

4. They are rivals in the sense that, if it is indeed true that a thing changes if and only if a change occurs, then Parmenides’ view implies that changes cannot occur, contrary to Heraclitus’ view, and Heraclitus’ view implies that things can change, contrary to Parmenides’ view.

5. It also ended the ancient debate over the principle of noncontradiction, a principle that was believed to be threatened by the phenomenon of change; see Powers 2005.

6. Events, by their very nature, have temporal parts. See Lombard 1995, esp. pp. 347–348.

7. That is, I think that a change (i.e., an event) occurs if and only if a thing alters.

8. See Lombard 1999, in which I argue that presentism does not imply that there are no things with temporal parts, for a response to (M)’s first premise; Lombard 2005, in which I argue that the problem of temporary intrinsics cannot be generated (nonfallaciously) from eternalism and the idea that things endure change; and Lombard 2003 for responses to (M)’s second premise.

9. However, it might turn out to be the case that presentists and eternalists are disagreeing about something else.

10. A third way would be to argue that the temporal parts theorist’s understanding of change does not constitute a mere simulation of change. In this essay, however, I shall not attempt either to construct an argument for that conclusion or to refute such a proposal.

11. It is certainly not this semantic thesis: an utterance of ‘ x exists’ is true if and only if x exists at the time at which existence is attributed to x . For this is trivially true. And the companion version of eternalism—that existence can be attributed to x at times at which it does not exist—is trivially false.

12. Which is, undoubtedly, *not* how Sider meant it. Tenseless interpretations will be taken up below.

13. More on this below.

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14. One reason for thinking that tenseless and tensed existence are not two kinds of existence is that certain entities, e.g., numbers, if they exist at all, not only exist in worlds in which there are no times (and thus exist tenselessly), but also exist in worlds in which there are times and in which they have properties at times.

15. What I mean by a 'tensed version' of presentism or eternalism is a version that interprets the verbs contained in them as having a tense, in the semantic sense of indicating something about the time at which some utterance is true, some state of affairs obtains, some property is exemplified, or the like.

16. A presentist might argue that the truth of the claim that Aristotle did, but does not now exist, is not incompatible with the truth of (3b), on the grounds that the extension of 'everything' in (3b) is just the things that exist now. I will take up this issue below.

17. That a slightly emended version of (6), one that takes into account "timeless" entities, e.g., numbers, is the correct condition to place on class membership will be defended below.

18. I owe this point to Michael McKinsey.

19. That is, dinosaurs do not exist *now*. But in the disjunctively omnitemporal sense, they do.

20. And 'everything exists' should be understood in the following way. If 'exists' is in the present tense, and 'everything' covers the entire Master class, then it is false. But if 'exists' means 'did exist, does exist, will exist, or would exist even if there were no times', then 'everything exists' comes out true. Alternatively, one could tense, and thereby restrict the quantifier 'everything'; with the quantifier restricted to currently existing things, and 'exists' in the present tense, 'everything exists' come out true.

21. 'All humans are bipedal', if its quantifier is unrestricted and its 'are' construed as in the present tense, is simply *false*. The unrestricted quantifier 'all humans' picks out all the humans who have existed, do exist, and will exist; 'are bipedal', with its 'are' construed as in the present tense, is true of those things that are now bipedal; and so construed, 'all humans are bipedal' is not true, since nonexistent humans are now neither bipedal nor nonbipedal. If 'all humans are bipedal' is to express a truth, either its quantifier must be unrestricted and its 'are' construed as disjunctively omnitemporal, or 'all humans' must be construed as a quantifier restricted to only present humans and its 'are' construed as present tensed.

22. '(PR)' is *my* designation of Hestevold and Carter's (2002a) formulation.

23. If some object is real, then it either existed, exists, or will exist (or would exist even if there were not times). Thus, to say of some object that it is (now) real is to say neither that it did nor that it will exist; and to say of two things that there are

(now) real does not imply that they coexist. Thus, Hestevold and Carter's (2002a) concept of tenseless existence seems clearly to match my notion of what is real.

24. The presentist might respond that this result is fine, since the present time is the only time that exists. But surely, it is the only time that exists *now*. If the presentist takes this line, we are back to a tensed and trivial version of presentism.

25. If (PR) is a *necessary* truth, then its appearance in this argument, from the claim that some objects exist *simpliciter* to the claim that those objects coexist, should not be seen as contravening clause (ii) of (HC₁). And it certainly seems that (PR) is a necessary truth, if a truth at all.

26. Note that if nothing exists *simpliciter*, then (PR) is trivially true, owing to the falsity of its antecedent; and it would also follow that every thing that exists *simpliciter* exists at all times.

27. My thanks to Michael McKinsey for helping me with this argument.

28. In another attempt, Hestevold and Carter retain their version of presentism (PR), but revise their explication of existence *simpliciter* as follows:

(HC2) x exists simpliciter if and only if x is among the things that the universe includes—if and only if x is real. That x exists simpliciter does not alone imply that x did exist, that x presently exists, nor that x will exist. (Hestevold and Carter 2002b, 499)

But the combination of (HC2) and (PR) will not do at all. According to (PR), that something exists simpliciter implies that it presently exists. But according to (HC2), that something exists simpliciter does not imply that it presently exists. So, if both (HC2) and (PR) are true, then the existence simpliciter of any object both does and does not imply that it presently exists. But that is impossible. So, either Hestevold and Carter's characterization of existence simpliciter or their characterization of presentism is false, or nothing exists simpliciter.

29. Here's one difference. The claim 'there is a prime number between 3 and 7' does not imply that there is a prime number between 3 and 7 somewhere or other, since the former claim is true and the latter false, if numbers have no spatial location. Thus, the 'there' in 'there is a prime number between 3 and 7' must be placeless. However, this difference is of no relevance when objects that are essentially spatial are involved.

30. It might be argued that 'there is a prime number between 3 and 7' does not imply that there is a prime number between 3 and 7 at some time or other. However, again, even if numbers are "timeless" entities, 'there is a prime number between 3 and 7 but not now' cannot express a true proposition. In any case, my challenge concerns claims that are about contingently existing things that are subject to alterations; and numbers, if they exist, are not such entities.

31. The following might be suggested. Having argued that there is a sense of 'there is' in which 'there is a rabbit' is equivalent to 'there is, was, or will be a rabbit', I have in effect argued that there is no other "tenseless," purely existential sense of 'there is' or 'exists' that applies to contingent things. But there would be such a sense if the following argument were sound:

- a. Necessarily, there is a single mode of existence had by everything.
- b. Possibly, an atemporal entity exists.
- c. Necessarily, an atemporal entity does not have a tensed mode of existence.
- d. Therefore, an atemporal entity does not have a tensed mode of existence.

Given (d), then, if (a), *contingent* entities must have an atemporal mode of existence, contrary to what I have been arguing. (This argument was offered by an anonymous donor.)

However, (a) is true if what it means is that all things that exist have a single property in common, namely, the property of existence. (b) is true in that there are entities, e.g., numbers, that would exist even if there were no times. But, (c) is *not* true. In every possible world in which there are times, it is true that the number 3 exists at all times. So, if it is true that if the number 3 exists now, then that number has a tensed mode of existence, then (c) is *false*. (And we should conclude that existence at a time is *not* a "mode" of existence.) I suppose that one might instead infer that my argument shows that the number 3 is not an atemporal entity. But if it isn't atemporal, then it is hard to see what entity would be.

32. At least that is what, I presume, most modal realists think. For those who believe in mere *possibilia*, there is, I think, a genuine question of whether their dispute with modal actualists is merely verbal.

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