

HOW THE DEAD LIVE

Palle Yourgrau has argued in two papers: “The Dead,” and “Can the Dead Really be Buried,” that although the dead don’t exist (he assumes that they don’t enjoy a heavenly afterlife or some other manner of post-death existence), they remain among us. They remain available, as it were, to be talked about, thought about, loved, hated and harmed by the living. The dead count as examples of *non-existent objects*.

The first thing I want to do in this paper is to say why I agree with this. The second thing I want to do is to answer a question that arises if it is accepted that the dead number among the things there are. What is it to be dead? This question requests a characterisation of the state of being dead. Yourgrau hints at the sort of answer he would give: the dead are still the kinds of things they were when alive: Socrates for instance is still a person, just a non-existent person. I will advocate a very different answer. When Socrates took leave of his existence he took leave of all his (intrinsic) qualities. Socrates is no longer a person, or an entity of any *kind*. He is now a *bare particular*.

I think that Socrates doesn’t exist because I am committed to Presentism. Presentism says that only the present is real, and the only objects that count as real – as existents - are those that currently exist (I will briefly explain and defend this view). I think there is, nonetheless, such an object as Socrates, because I think we stand in relations to him (I will argue that *love* is a relation); also I am committed to the principle that every truth has a truthmaker and I think (I will try to justify this opinion) that a plausible candidate for the truthmaker of ‘Socrates was a philosopher’ should involve Socrates. A third aim of this paper is to contribute to the elaboration and defense of a version of Presentism due to Mark Hinchliff, which allows that the truthmaker for ‘Socrates was a philosopher’ involves Socrates as a non-existent object. My contribution will be the explanation and defense of the answer I will give to the question: what is it to be dead? This answer: that the dead and other former existents are *bare particulars*, is constrained by the denial, mandated by Presentism, that Socrates has any qualities he doesn’t presently have.

The notion of ‘bare particular’ has been objected to on the grounds that such bizarre and ineffectual entities as bare particulars could not exist, and that contra the Bare Particular Theory, an individual object could not survive the loss (without replacement) of all its qualities. I will suggest that existence is the possession of qualities. The bare particulars contemplated by the Bare Particular Theory *don’t exist* – there are such items but they don’t count as existents; and no object could survive (in the sense of ‘continue to exist after’) becoming bare. This suggestion saves the Bare Particular Theory.

I will argue that a conception of non-existent objects as bare particulars makes sense of Meinong’s baffling thesis that there are objects that don’t exist. The conception of non-existent objects as bare particulars is applicable to other intuitive examples of non-existent objects, I believe; a further aim of this paper is to advocate a new theory of non-existent objects. Explaining how this theory accommodates all the intuitive examples of non-existents such as fictional people and things is beyond its scope though. I will focus on arguing that it provides a fitting way of thinking of the dead.