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NOÛS

Towards a theory of presence

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Abstract

The present paper presents a new (formal) theory of presence according to which, roughly, to be present at a place is to have a delegate located at that place. One crucial feature of the theory is that something can be present at a place without thereby being located there. The theory is then applied to several central issues in metaphysics, such as persistence through times and worlds, theories of universals, the ontology of social entities, and the nature of God.

> Death is not anything…death is not…It's the absence of presence, nothing more…the endless time of never coming back…a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound…
>
> T. Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

1 | PRESENCE

Material objects (and events) are present at times and worlds. Universals are somehow present in their instances, or where their instances are. Organizations are present (at least in some circumstances) where their members are, and the Abrahamic God is said to be present everywhere.[1] And yet *presence* remains an elusive notion. So much so that, for example, Fine writes:

[1] The list is not meant to be exhaustive. For instance, modes are sometimes said to be present in their substances. Or types are present in their tokens. Or in bundle theories of substances, one may want to say that bundles are present in their instances. The list above simply anticipates the examples that will be addressed in the applications.

> It must be admitted that these explanations do not go far enough. For *we lack a clear understanding both of what it is to be completely present* and of why it is in general impossible for an object to be completely present at a partial location or partially present at a world (Fine 1994, 145, italics added).

One may protest already. Certainly, presence just is *location*, one could say. And we have detailed theories of location by now.[2] And yet, this is problematic insofar as many philosophers—as we shall see in due course—want to be able to say that, for example, material objects *are not located* in time, or that, for example, universals and God *are not located* in space. This paper develops—to my knowledge—the first *theory of presence* that is (i) *general* enough to be responsive to all the cases listed above,[3] and (ii) *flexible* enough so as to deliver that entities need not be located wherever they are present. For lack of imagination, let me call them the *generality* and *flexibility* requirements. They may be somewhat vague, but they are important guides nonetheless.

Let me be upfront. My main aim is *constructive* and *exploratory*: I want to flesh out a particular theory of presence in some detail and make a case that it is a real contender. But I do not lay any claim that this theory is the *only* theory of presence that meets the requirements above. Also, I do not make (m)any substantive comparative claims with respect to other theories. A fully fledged critical comparison with other views deserves an independent scrutiny. That said, I will register different approaches to presence to help situate the proposed view. I take this constructive and exploratory task to be important in its own right, especially given the widespread usage of the notion of presence in philosophically significant disputes. It might also shed new light on such disputes, even if simply by showing that they conform to a similar pattern or structure.[4] However, let it be clear that the focus of the paper is not on those disputes. They are discussed insofar as they provide paradigmatic applications of the general theory of presence—*that* is the focus here. It goes without saying that many substantive issues in those disputes require an independent assessment, one that goes beyond the theory elaborated here.

2 | FUNDAMENTALS OF A THEORY OF PRESENCE

In this section, I present the two pillars of what I shall call the *delegation theory of presence*, namely the notion of delegation structure and the definition of "presence". I then go on to present a few alternatives.

2.1 | Delegation structures

The key theoretical notion is that of a *delegation structure*, as I will call it.

[2] The interested reader can start from Gilmore et al. (2024).

[3] Note that not all the cases above are uncontroversial. For example, one may dispute the claim that organizations are present where their members are, especially if the members are not at the relevant place in any *official capacity*. However, I take it, there are certain circumstances in which we want to make such a claim. I will return to this—albeit briefly—in Section 4.4.

[4] Or fail to conform—see footnote 40.

Definition 1. [Delegation Structure]: *A delegation structure is an n-tuple of the form* $< \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{D}^+, \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}, @_?, D >$ *where*:

$\mathcal{P}$ is a non-empty set of *positions* or *places*, $\mathcal{P} = \{x|P(x)\}$;
$\mathcal{D}^+$ is a non-empty set of *delegators*, $\mathcal{D}^+ = \{x|D^+(x)\}$;
$\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ is a non-empty set of *delegates* in $\mathcal{P}$, $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} = \{x|D^-(x)\}$;
$@_?$ is a set of two-place *locative relations* such that, for each $@_i \in @_?$, $@_i \subseteq \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$;
D is a three-place relation such that $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^+ \times \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$.[5]

I will not pose sortal restrictions on any of the sets $\mathcal{P}$, $\mathcal{D}^+$, and $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{S}}$. Positions (or places) can be instants or times, points or regions of space or spacetime, worlds, and even somewhat less familiar places such as positions in quality spaces. Delegators can be material objects, universals, or social entities. Delegates can be material objects, social entities, *ersatz* constructions, and so on. Crucially, I do not require that the relevant sets are disjoint. In particular, for some applications, it is crucial that $\mathcal{D}^+ \cap \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \neq \emptyset$, and for other applications that, for example, $\mathcal{P} = \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$. The picture I am going to develop is, intuitively, the following: some things, the *delegators* in $\mathcal{D}^+$, *delegate* (D) their *presence* at places in $\mathcal{P}$ to things, their delegates in $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ (which may or may not be distinct from the delegators themselves), that are somehow located ($@_?$) at those places. I have said a few things already about the three basic sets. Let me spend a few words on the two sets of relations, starting from $@_?$. By now, we have theories of location that are rigorous and general, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Here, we will simply consider the following notions:

- x is weakly located ($@_\circ$) at y iff x (in whole or part) occupies y (in whole or part).[6]
- x is pervasively located at y ($@_>$) iff x completely fills y (Parsons 2007, 203);
- x is entirely located at y ($@_<$) iff x lies within y (Correia 2022, 560);
- x is exactly located at y ($@$) iff x perfectly fits in y without gaps (Casati and Varzi 1999, 119; Sattig 2006, 119), and with a "single occurrence".[7]

It is customary—though problematic—to single one out as a primitive and define the rest of them in its terms. For the purpose of the paper, all we need to assume is that logical relations between the notions conform to Figure 1, entailment going upwards along the lines:

Thus, $@_\circ$ and $@$ are the weakest and strongest locative relations in $@_?$, respectively. Definition 1 entails

P.1 $x@_?y \rightarrow D^-(x) \wedge P(y)$.

[5] I am very loosely drawing from Varzi (2020). Varzi uses the expression "duty-doers" for what I call delegates. The "duty-doers" terminology traces back to the classic Chisholm (1973).

[6] Note that I did not use the gloss in Parsons (2007, 203) for weak location. According to such informal gloss, x is weakly located at y iff y is not free of x. I will develop a theory of presence in which a thing x can be present at place y without being even weakly located at y. In such case, one may still want to claim that there is an intelligible sense in which y is not completely free of x. That is why I decided to use a different gloss.

[7] The somewhat vague clause "in a single occurrence" is there to avoid the impression that exact location is additive, that is, that if x is exactly located at y and z then it is also exactly located at the mereological sum of y and z, a consequence that is well-known to be problematic in paradigmatic cases of multilocation. The idea is that whereas it is true that an entity that is exactly located at both y and z also perfectly fits in the mereological sum of y and z without any gaps, it does that "having multiple occurrences," being "repeated throughout" such mereological sum, so to speak. This characterization is far from being precise, but it should be enough for the purpose of the paper.

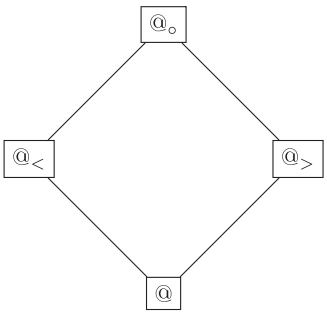

FIGURE 1 Locational relations.

What about D? As of now, let me assume that there is one primitive D relation—I will return to this shortly. How to characterize D? Similarly to **(P.1)**, Definition 1 yields

P.2 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow D^{+}(x) \wedge D^{-}(y) \wedge P(z)$.

The only other principle I will *require* is the following:

P.3 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow y@_{\circ}z$.

The principle ensures that delegates are at least weakly located at the relevant place of delegation. It is supposed to capture the idea that delegates cannot perform their duties *in absentia*.[8] By contrast, so the thought goes, delegators can perform such duties in absentia *through their delegates*. There are other principles that look "attractive":

P.4 $x@_{\circ}y \rightarrow D(x, x, y)$.
P.5 $D(x, y, z) \wedge D(y, x, z) \rightarrow x = y$.
P.6 $D(x, y, z) \wedge D(x, w, z) \rightarrow y = w$.

I listed them in order of plausibility, starting from the most plausible. In effect, I think (P.6) faces very plausible counterexamples, in that delegators can have more than one delegate at the same place.[9] None of them is indispensable for the basic theory of presence to be developed, so I will assume none. But I will discuss (P.4) again throughout the paper. I will also argue that delegates

[8] See footnote 9 for a complication.

[9] A similar but different principle would be the following:

$D(x, y, z_1) \wedge D(x, w, z_2) \rightarrow y = w$. Note that this is not the same principle as (P.6). That principle says that nothing can have more than one delegate *at a given place* whereas this one says that it cannot have more than delegate *simpliciter*. Thus, the present principle is stronger than (P.6). As I will argue, there are reasonable cases in which the weaker principle fails. This would be enough to reject the stronger one as well. But it is interesting to note that the stronger one I am considerig here would be particularly problematic in *some specific cases*. Consider the case of Platonic universals. Under the assumption that the delegates of Platonic universals are present in space by delegating things that instantiate them, the stronger principle above would deliver that any universal could be instantiated by only one thing—which may undermine the very reason universals were introduced in the *one over many* argument (that reason being that something remains numerically *identical* throughout a *multiplicity* of things).

can have delegates.[10] However, we should not require that, in that case, delegation is *inherited*. More precisely, we should *not* require

P.7 $D(x, y, z) \wedge D(y, w, s) \rightarrow D(x, w, s)$.

Once again, I will argue for this claim shortly. We actually need a little bit more to appreciate those arguments.

One may wonder whether the three-place relation $D(x, y, z)$ can be defined in terms of a two-place relation of delegation and location as follows: $D(x, y, z) \equiv_{df} D^*(x, y) \wedge y@_\circ z$, where $D^*(x, y)$ stands for "y is a delegate of x." This is not only an interesting suggestion on its own. Its shortcomings also illuminate the workings of the chosen three-place relation $D(x, y, z)$. First, the definition would validate a controversial principle that I will discuss later on, namely (P.10). Second, it will deliver problematic verdicts. Nothing prevents delegates to be exactly located at different places in a given set of positions. For the sake of concreteness, consider a case I will discuss in some detail in Section 4.2, that of Platonic universals. Platonic universals are supposed to be present in space without being located in it. In effect, this was one of our starting examples. More precisely, Platonic universals are supposed to be present in space by delegating things that instantiate them. The "instantiators" are located in space. Suppose now the Platonic universal "Being Black" has material object x as a delegate at a region of space r_1. In this case, x instantiates "Being Black" at r_1, that is, x is black at r_1. But suppose x is also exactly located at r_2 but it is white at r_2. x is a delegate of the Platonic universal "Being Black," and given that x is also weakly located at r_2, the proposed definition would deliver that "Being Black" is also present at r_2. But there is no blackness there. By contrast, the three-place relation $D(x, y, z)$ does not face these shortcomings.[11]

What we have so far is enough to provide the other central plank of the delegation theory, the definition of presence, to which I now turn.

2.2 | A definition of presence

The attentive reader probably guessed the proposed definition from the discussion in the previous section. In effect, once that material is in place, a natural definition suggests itself:

Definition 2. [Presence]: For x to be present at place y (Pr) is for x to have a delegate at y: $Pr(x, y) \equiv_{\text{df}} \exists z(D(x, z, y))$.[12]

[10] This raises the following interesting issue. Suppose I hire *First Lawyer* in London to represent me in court in Oxford. It turns out that *First Lawyer* cannot go to Oxford on the trial date. So *First Lawyer* hires *Second Lawyer* to go to court. One would have to say that *First Lawyer* is not my delegate in Oxford, though she might be my delegate in London. *Second Lawyer* might be a delegate of both me and *First Lawyer* in Oxford.

[11] That said, I will discuss a potential case for the two-place relation in footnote 12. Thanks to an anonymous referee.

[12] Definition 2 gives us a single notion of presence. However, as we saw, we routinely distinguish between different notions of location. One may think that we can distinguish between different notions of presence as well, corresponding to those notions. Here is one possible way. For each location relation $@_i \in @_?$, we introduce a distinct delegation relation $D_{@_i}(x, y, z)$, and a schematic principle $D_{@_i}(x, y, z) \rightarrow y@_i z$—on the model of (P.3). We then provide the following "schematic definition" of presence: $Pr_{@_i}(x, z) \equiv_{df} \exists y(D_{@_i}(x, y, z))$. This schema will generate four different notions of presence that correspond to the four location relations. Different substantive questions arise. One is whether the logical

Definition 2 immediately yields

P.8 $Pr(x, y) \rightarrow D^{+}(x) \wedge P(y)$.

Now, the set $\mathcal{P}$ of positions usually comes with at least a *mereological structure*. This is most evident in the case of space, time, and spacetime. In effect, our best spacetime theories seem to agree that spacetime is a model of classical extensional mereology. This might be too strong for other sets of positions. But we do not need full-blooded classical extensional mereology here. To raise the points I want to raise that we just need somewhat weak assumptions, namely that sometimes places are parts ($x < y$) of other places, and sometimes have fusions that are also places. Let me write $F(z, y_1, \ldots, y_n)$—sticking to the finite case for the sake of simplicity—for z is the fusion of $y_1, \ldots, y_n$. Granted these mild assumptions, one may ask whether Pr is *dissective*, *monotonic*, and *additive*. That is, if it obeys the following, respectively:

P.9 $Pr(x, y) \wedge z < y \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$.
P.10 $Pr(x, y) \wedge y < z \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$.
P.11 $Pr(x, y_1) \wedge \ldots \wedge Pr(x, y_n) \wedge F(z, y_1, \ldots, y_n)) \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$.

The theory developed so far entails none of (P.9)–(P.11) above. It is instructive to see why. Take, for example, (P.10). Given plausible principles about $@_{\circ}$,[13] the theory entails that the delegate that is weakly located at y is also weakly located at an extension z of y, but nothing in the theory entails that it is a delegate of x there. Does this make the theory too weak? This is as it should be. First, it is a sign of the theory's generality rather than its weakness. Relatedly—and more importantly—all of the principles above fail in some cases, as we shall see in due course.[14]

We can already define two interesting notions, that of an *occupant* and that of a *proper delegate*.

Definition 3. [Occupant]: For x to be an occupant is for it to be weakly located: $O(x) \equiv_{df} \exists y(x@_{\circ}y)$.

According to Definition 3, delegates are occupants:

P.12 $D^{-}(y) \rightarrow O(y)$.

relations between locational notions are simply mirrored by the logical relations between notions of presence. Another substantive question is which notions of presence are involved in different cases. Not every notion would in fact do. For example, consider a classical (pointy) spacetime setting where instants of time are just maximal fusions of simultaneous points. One may wish to say that a persisting object is present at an instant but surely not every persisting object will have delegates that are *exactly located* (or *pervasively located*) at instants. It should be noted that the proposal above may not be very satisfactory in that it multiplies primitive delegation relations. A more satisfactory one would allow us to define all notions of presence without multiplying primitives. In this respect, a proposal I discussed (and rejected) might actually fare better. This is because we could easily define different notions of presence in terms of a two-place relation of delegation $D^{*}(x, y)$ and location. First, *define* a schematic notion of $@_i$*-Delegation* as follows: $D_{@_i}(x, y, z) \equiv_{df} D^{*}(x, y) \wedge y@_i z$. Then, define presence in terms of such $@_i$*-Delegation* as before, that is, $Pr_{@_i}(x, z) \equiv_{df} \exists y(D_{@_i}(x, y, z))$. We only need to use locational notions and *one* primitive two-place notion of delegation. And, these are not the only directions worth exploring. Another would be to define *one* particular notion of presence in terms of delegation and location and then define other notions of presence in terms of *it*. Even from these very few remarks, one gets a glimpse that substantive work awaits us. Thanks to an anonymous referee for the discussion.

[13] Namely that $@_{\circ}$ is *monotonic* in that everything is weakly located at every extension of one of its weak locations.

[14] Note that any violation of *Additivity* (P.11) constitutes a violation of *Monotonicity* (P.10) as well.

Definition 4. [Proper Delegate]: For y to be a proper delegate of x at position z is for it to be a delegate of x at z and distinct from x: $PD(x, y, z) \equiv_{df} D(x, y, z) \wedge x \neq y$.

It is clear from Definitions 3 and 4 that proper delegates are delegates and therefore occupants (of the relevant $\mathcal{P}$). Importantly, nothing in the theory developed so far, entails that *delegators* are occupants. A fortiori, delegators need not be (weakly) located where they are present. This is enough to lay claim that the theory satisfies the *flexibility* requirement. For the *generality* requirement, we have to wait until Section 4.

Before we move to alternative theories of presence, I want to discuss yet another principle. As we saw, it is crucial that presence does not entail location—so as to satisfy the *flexibility* requirement. Consider the converse principle according to which location entails presence, that is,

P.13 $x@_{\circ}y \rightarrow Pr(x, y)$.

One may find it intuitive, even appealing. This is where (P.4) needs to be discussed again (for the first—and not last—time). (P.13) follows from (P.4). This is a significant result. In the absence of (P.4), there are no entailments between presence and location. By contrast, in the presence of (P.4), the latter entails the former. That said, I will rest content to register such a result and will not take any stance here on whether (P.13) should be included in a theory of presence.

Let me anticipate a few worries. First, one might be worried that the theory does not specify the circumstances under which x is a delegate of y (at place z). And, therefore, it is silent as to whether, in specific cases, x is present at z. This is not a worry, I take it, about the specific theory at hand. Rather, it is a worry about formal theories in general. A formal theory of a relation R usually does not provide specific verdicts for specific cases. For instance, a formal theory of parthood does not specify whether my hand is part of my body. Nor a formal theory of essence specifies whether "being rational" is essential to "being human". Such claims are arguably delivered by specific metaphysical theories of parthood and essence. Likewise, one would need to develop specific *metaphysics of delegation*. And this goes beyond the scope of the paper.[15] Second, and relatedly, one may think that the delegation relation is not sufficiently constrained so as to make it almost trivial that something is (or at least can be) a delegate of something else. In response, let me note that, arguably, (P.3) (and (P.4)) offer more constraints than one may realize at first. For example, consider some cases we started from that of universals and persisting objects. Suppose one wants some universals to be present in time by delegating material objects that instantiate them. Then (P.3) delivers that such material objects are at least located in time. As I mentioned already, and as we will see in detail, this runs afoul of so-called *transcendentist theories* of persistence—to use the terminology that will be introduced rigorously in Section 4.1. One may still protest that this is still not enough. But the material in this section represents only the *core* of the *delegation theory*. It is to be expected that further developments may provide more stringent constraints. And in any case, I will show how much one can do with this simple core theory.

[15] To lay my card on the table, I think that formal frameworks are important in their own right. Having a formal systematic theory of a given notion—here, the notion of presence—is generally needed to fully grasp that notion and to distinguish it from other notions in the vicinity. One might even go as far as claiming that the formal characterization fixes the very meaning of notion at issue. It is only after such an investigation into its formal profile that one can ask substantive questions about *it*, and about *its* interactions with other notions. In other terms, the formal framework may be seen as defining the logical space within which substantive questions can be asked and specific theories formulated.

2.3 | Alternatives

The *delegation theory of presence* is not the only one available, as I noted already. The first alternative that comes to mind is the simplest one, namely that presence just is weak location:

Definition 5. [Weak Location Theory of Presence]: For x to be present at place y is for it to be weakly located at y: $Pr_w(x, y) \equiv_{df} x@_\circ y$.

The *weak location theory of presence* is certainly simple and elegant. Its main drawback is that it fails the *flexibility* requirement in Section 1. Here is another interesting alternative. Roughly, it amounts to the claim that for the delegator to be present at a place is to be (weakly) located at one of its delegates that is weakly located at that place.

Definition 6. [Delegate Location Theory of Presence]: For x to be present at place y is for it to be weakly located at one of its delegates at y: $Pr_{D^-}(x, y) \equiv_{df} \exists z(D(x, z, y) \wedge x@_\circ z)$.

I find the *delegate location theory of presence* interesting in its own right. Furthermore, it seems to meet the *flexibility* requirement. There are two main drawbacks to the *delegate location theory of presence*. First, it arguably fails the other desideratum, that is, the *generality* desideratum insofar as there are cases in which weak location at a delegate seems implausible. In effect, I will provide direct arguments against the *delegate location theory* in Section 3.1. Second, it is actually logically stronger than the *delegation theory of presence*. To wit, the following holds:

P.14 $Pr_{D^-}(x, y) \rightarrow Pr(x, y)$

—at least in the presence of (P.3). By contrast, the converse does not. Thus, the *delegation theory of presence* is less costly and, ceteris paribus, should be preferred.

Finally, we should not discard the *primitive theory of presence*. According to it, roughly, *presence* is irreducible to notions such as location and delegation—even if it might display some substantive connections to them—and should not be defined in their terms. In effect, it should be taken as *primitive*. Hence the name. Taking *presence* as primitive certainly gives ample margins to satisfy the requirements in Section 1, as primitive posits are as flexible as their chosen axioms. The apparent cost is that it introduces another primitive. To be fair, this would be a cost provided one also needs notions of location, parthood, and delegation for independent reasons. It is widely agreed—at least in the debates on our guiding examples in Section .1—that one does need mereological and locational notions. The case of delegation is more complicated. Varzi (2020) provides some considerations in favor of admitting some sort of delegation relation in our ideology—though, admittedly, not the same one that is used here. And a case can be made that delegation might play a crucial role in *social metaphysics*. After all, for example, lawyers seem to be the paradigmatic examples of delegates. I readily admit these considerations do not add up to an argument. For better or worse, I think systematic comparisons between different theories of presence would have to wait for other occasions.[16]

[16] There is one related consideration that is worth discussing. Every time, we introduce two (or more) primitive notions something needs to be said about their interaction. Assuming there is such interaction, substantive principles governing it will express—to speak loosely—*brute* facts. One may also think that there is a difference in taking *certain kinds of facts* as brute as opposed to others. In the case at hand, for example, one may think that it is better to take as brute facts about the

Before pressing on, I should note that these are not the sole alternatives to the *delegation theory*. I will discuss a few other (alleged) alternatives shortly.

3 | DEVELOPMENTS OF A THEORY OF PRESENCE

The *delegation theory of presence* can be developed in various ways. Here, I am interested in some developments that are crucial in the discussion of the examples we started with. Being able to handle such examples signals that the theory satisfies the *generality requirement*.

3.1 | Induced relations and the *strength* of presence

As I noted already, the *delegation theory of presence* satisfies the *flexibility* requirement in that nothing forces the entailment between presence and location. More can be said. Looking at the examples we started from, one cannot help but notice that in particular cases of delegational structures the D relation *backs up*, or *induces*, as I will say, other significant relations. By this, I simply mean that it supports conditionals of the following form:

P.15 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow R(y, x)$.

As a way of illustration, consider the following examples:

- A perduring object delegates its instantaneous temporal parts at instant t;
- An enduring object delegates itself at instant t;
- A (contingent) object delegates its counterparts at world w;
- A universal delegates one of the things that exemplify it at spatial region r;
- A social entity delegates its members at spatial region r;
- God delegates created things at spatial regions r_i or delegates regions themselves at themselves.

The list above suggests different relations one can plug into the schematic principle (P.15), namely *parthood*, *identity*, *counterpart*, *exemplification*, *being a member*, *being created*, to mention a few. I will call the relations in the consequent of the exemplifications of the schematic principle (P.15) *relations induced by delegation*, or *induced relations* for short. (P.15) is important on its own. It can also shoulder (at least) two kinds of substantive considerations.

interaction between location and delegation rather than location and presence on the grounds that location and delegation seem "more independent" from one another (so to speak). At least more independent than location and presence. Or so the thought goes. If this is the case—and it is a big if—one could construct an argument in favor of the *delegation theory* over the *primitivist theory*, at least in the presence of (P.4). For one may think that location entails presence—something which the *primitivist theory* should arguably take as brute. By contrast, the *delegation theory* could explain it in terms of (P.4). Naturally, (P.4) itself expresses—speaking loosely again—a brute fact. But it is a brute fact of a different type, about the interaction between location and delegation. Not about location and presence. And we are working under the assumption that this would be, at the end of the day, more tolerable. Once again, I readily admit these considerations do not add up to an argument. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing this point.

- First, one may argue that we should really countenance many D relations, one for each induced relation. That said, for the sake of simplicity, I will continue to talk as if there is one D-relation.
- Second, this opens up the possibility of other theories of presence. An example would be the higher order identification of presence with the relevant D-induced relation. As a way of illustration, consider the case of universals. For a universal to be present at a region *just is* for it to be exemplified at that region—where *just is* should be cashed out in terms of higher order identity as in, for example, Dorr (2016) or Correia and Skiles (2019). This would form the core of what I shall call *higher order identity theories of presence*.[17] A related—yet different—view would be to hold that claims about presence are *grounded* in claims about what I called induced relations. In our chosen illustrative case, the view would be that a universal is present at a region *in virtue of* being exemplified at that region. It is unclear whether the latter provides a *theory* of presence, rather than simply providing grounding claims for claims of presence.

Discussing these developments thoroughly goes well beyond the scope of this exploratory paper. Let me return to the *delegation theory* then. Just to give a few concrete examples of induced relations, consider identity, counterpart (C), and parthood:

P.16 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow y = x$.
P.17 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow C(y, x)$.
P.18 $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow y < x$.

I did not choose the induced relations above randomly, and I will explain why. The main point here is that we can classify induced relations with respect to whether they are *location conducive* or not. Let me be a bit more precise and stipulate the following:

Definition 7. [Location Conducive]: For an induced relation R to be location conducive is for it to entail that the delegator is weakly located at the place of delegation. That is, a location conducive induced relation obeys: $D(x, y, z) \wedge R(y, x) \rightarrow x@_{\circ}z$.

Definition 8. [Location Exclusive]: For an induced relation R to be location exclusive is for it to exclude that the delegator is weakly located at the place of delegation. That is, a location exclusive induced relation obeys: $D(x, y, z) \wedge R(y, x) \rightarrow \neg x@_{\circ}z$.

Definition 9. [Location Indifferent]: For an induced relation R to be location indifferent is for it to be neither location conducive nor exclusive.

Suppose that relative to any delegational structure delegation induces one relation—which is highly nontrivial. Then, if all induced relations were location conducive, the *delegation theory of presence* would collapse into the *weak location theory of presence*.[18] It would be great to

[17] I speak of "theories"—plural—because every induced relation would correspond to a specific theory of presence.

[18] In effect, in that case, a natural thought is that presence need not be mediated by delegates. Rather, it is "direct" so to speak. In which case, the *delegation theory* is extensionally equivalent to the *weak location* theory, at least in the presence of (P.4). Here is a quick argument. We need to establish that $Pr(x, y) \leftrightarrow x@_{\circ}y$. The right-to-left direction is guaranteed by (P.4). For the left-to-right note that a natural way to require that "presence is direct," assuming that D always induce

have a paradigmatic example of a location-exclusive relation. But first, notice that *identity* is the paradigmatic example of a location conducive relation. In effect, it is immediately checked that

P.19 $D(x, y, z) \wedge y = x \rightarrow x@_{\circ}z$.

At least traditionally, counterpart theorists in the metaphysics of persistence and modality have taken counterpart to be *location exclusive*. Counterparts were supposed to be exactly the kind of delegates that were able to shoulder claims about the presence of contingent and exduring objects and allow the delegator to be "confined," "bounded" so to speak to a world w or a time t.[19] That is, the following was part and parcel of, for example, orthodox exdurantism:

P.20 $D(x, y, z) \wedge C(y, x) \rightarrow \neg x@_{\circ}z$.

What about a *location indifferent* relation? Interestingly enough, there are indications in the literature that parthood might be one. Let me elaborate. What we need to establish is whether one of the two holds:

P.21 $D(x, y, z) \wedge y < x \rightarrow x@_{\circ}z$.
P.22 $D(x, y, z) \wedge y < x \rightarrow \neg x@_{\circ}z$.

There seems to be plenty of counterexamples to (P.22). Let us focus on (P.21) then. Such a principle is entailed by (P.3) together with the following, apparently mild principle about weak location:

P.23 $x@_{\circ}y \wedge x < z \rightarrow z@_{\circ}y$.

Ney (2021) considers the possibility that the fundamental quantum wavefunction field is located exclusively in configuration space, whereas its derivative three-dimensional parts are located exclusively in three-dimensional space. If this is correct, we would have a violation of (P.23). Violations of a similar principle have also been discussed:

P.24 $x@y \wedge z < x \rightarrow z@_{\circ}y$.

Intuitively, the difference between (P.23) and (P.24) is that the first requires wholes to inherit (weak) locations from their parts, whereas the second requires parts to share locations with their wholes. It should also be noted that the first principle is only about weak locations, whereas the second is about the interaction of weak locations with exact locations. This last principle has been questioned in the literature on quantum gravity.[20] According to certain views, spatiotemporal atomic regions of spacetime (regions of spacetime that have no other regions as proper parts) are exactly located at themselves—and therefore entirely and weakly located in spacetime—but their (non-spatiotemporal) parts are not even weakly located there. This would constitute a violation of

some relation, is to impose that it induces identity. That is, $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow x = y$ holds. In that case, the desired conclusion follows from (P.3). Thanks to an anonymous referee.

[19] On some understanding of entire location, one could identify confinement with entire location. This in turn depends upon whether entire location entails that something entirely located at a place cannot be even weakly located at any place disjoint from the first. For a technical discussion on these subtle issues, see Correia (2022).

[20] See, for example, Baron (2020) and Baron and Le Bihan (2022).

(P.24). Another putative counterexample comes from Fine's theory of hylomorphic compounds, as developed, for example, in Fine (1999) and Fine (2022). According to such a theory, material objects are compounds of matter and form—or "gloss," as Fine puts it—which is a *predicative part* of said compound. However, such a predicative part, the gloss, is not even weakly located at the (exact) location of the compound, thus violating (P.24).[21]

For us, this is interesting insofar as whether parthood is location indifferent turn on the acceptance of said principles. My suspicion is that at least *restricted* versions of principles (P.23) and (P.24) are hardly negotiable. Let me expand. The guiding idea is that one can restrict principles (P.23) and (P.24) to cases in which parts and wholes "share the same space" or be "space-mates". There are different ways to implement this guiding idea. A flat-footed suggestion is to take those spaces to be simply the *sets* of positions $\mathcal{P}$ in the relevant delegation structure. The problem with the flat-footed suggestion is that the set-theoretic structure might be too weak to shoulder a satisfactory implementation. Given two sets $\mathcal{P}_1$ and $\mathcal{P}_2$ one can always define the *set* $\mathcal{P} = \mathcal{P}_1 \cup \mathcal{P}_2$. Then, for any $\mathcal{P}_1$-occupant x and any $\mathcal{P}_2$-occupant y, x and y will count as $\mathcal{P} = \mathcal{P}_1 \cup \mathcal{P}_2$-space mates. Something stronger is required. Here is a possibility. Say that a set of positions $\mathcal{P}$ is a $\mathcal{P}$-*system* of positions—that I will indicate as $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$—iff the set $\mathcal{P}$ is closed under a relevant relation R.[22] Then, we define $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$-system mates as occupants of the same $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$-*system*. This seems to overcome the initial difficulty for it is not guaranteed that the union of any two systems will be closed under a relevant relation R and will thus constitute a system. Finally, we require that variants of principles (P.23) and (P.24) restricted to $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$-mates hold. One may worry that it is not general enough insofar as there is no guarantee that one cannot exclude that, for any two entities, there is a relevant system $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$ such that the entities are $\mathcal{S}_\mathcal{P}$-system mate. A more general way is simply to restrict principles (P.23) and (P.24) to *occupants*. This can be done by simply adding a conjunct in the antecedent of both principles to the point that z is an occupant[23]:

P.25 $x@_\circ y \wedge x < z \wedge O(z) \rightarrow ((x@_\circ y \wedge x < z) \rightarrow z@_\circ y))$.
P.26 $x@y \wedge z < x \wedge O(z) \rightarrow ((x@y \wedge z < x \rightarrow z@_\circ y))$.

The examples above that violate (P.23) and (P.24) do not violate the restricted variants (P.25) and (P.26).

[21] To be fair, the case might depend on further metaphysical assumptions that, even if plausible, for example, Fine (1999) does not make. The first one is that *predicative parthood* is just mereological parthood and not some other notion of parthood for which, for example, the counterpart of (P.24) might not hold. Fine (1999) is silent on this, whereas Fine (2022) endorses the view (predicate parthood is mereological parthood) explicitly. And second, that the properties and relations that are the semantic values of the "gloss" are not located in space. For if they were, they would be plausibly weakly located where the hylomorphic compound is. Once again, Fine (1999) is silent on this. Fine (2022) contains some discussion of the location of hylomorphic compounds, but the discussion does not rule out conclusively the possibility that glosses are occupants. In the light of this discussion, this much can be said: if one were to supplement Fine's view with, for example, (i) mereological monism and (ii) a Platonic theory of universals, one would have a genuine counterexample to (P.24).

[22] I am being deliberately vague here. I think it is a substantive question whether there is a single, somewhat general relation R that turns every set of positions into a system of positions. Or if there is at least some minimal relation R every set is required to be closed under in order to be a system of positions. On the face of it, one may think that a set of spatial regions needs to be closed under, for example, metrical or at least topological relations, whereas a set of modal positions does not require a metric to be defined. Mereological relations might seem the weakest relations a set needs to be closed under if it is to be a system of positions, but even this claim might be more controversial than it looks.

[23] This all discussion is indebted to a referee for this journal.

In context, this is interesting because whether $<$ is location conducive would depend on whether delegators and delegates are occupants of the relevant delegation structure. If they are, then $<$ is location conducive; if they are not, it isn't. This, I take it, can provide an argument (certainly a defeasible one) for the conclusion that $<$ is location indifferent.[24]

Note that for any induced relation that is location conducive the delegator turns out to be an occupant of the relevant set of positions. However, the converse need not hold. A delegator can be an occupant even when the respective induced relation is location exclusive. Once again, the case of counterpart is paradigmatic in this sense. Delegators are usually thought to be occupants both in the temporal and the modal case, being weakly located (at least) at times and worlds. And, as we saw, the counterpart has been traditionally taken to be location exclusive. In effect, distinguishing between location conduciveness and occupation conduciveness turns out to be crucial for some applications. It is therefore worth to spell out that distinction:

Definition 10. [Occupancy Conducive]: For an induced relation R to be occupancy conducive is for it to entail that the delegator is an occupant. That is, an occupancy conducive induced relation obeys: $D(x, y, z) \wedge R(y, x) \rightarrow O(x)$.

Definition 11. [Occupancy Exclusive]: For an induced relation R to be location exclusive is for it to exclude that the delegator is an occupant. That is, an occupancy exclusive induced relation obeys: $D(x, y, z) \wedge R(y, x) \rightarrow \neg O(x)$.

Definition 12. [Occupancy Indifferent]: For an induced relation R to be occupancy indifferent is for it to be neither occupancy conducive nor exclusive.

Occupation conduciveness and location conduciveness are not the same notions. In general, location conduciveness entails occupancy conduciveness but the converse does not hold. Conversely, occupancy exclusiveness entails location exclusiveness but the converse does not hold. Intuitively, a location conducive relation requires the delegator to be *there*, namely at the relevant place of delegation, whereas an occupancy conducive relation only requires it to be *somewhere* in the set of places. But if the delegator is required to be at the place of duty—to speak in metaphors—why do we need a delegate as well? The thought here is that in some cases, despite being somehow there the delegator cannot perform that duty on its own. One clear example is the discussion of partition principles in theories of location. Consider a material object that pervades a given region of space. One may think that it pervades it by having parts there. It cannot do it on its own. In particular, it cannot extend in space (on its own) further than its parts. In this case, both the delegator and the delegate are required to be (weakly) at the relevant place of duty. Indeed, talk of delegation is exactly supposed to match this use in theories of location. For instance, Gilmore and Leonard, discussing partition principles, write

> [I]f r is the location of a complex object o, then no part of r is filled by o alone, without the help of some proper part ("*delegate*") of o (Gilmore and Leonard 2020, 169, italics added).

[24] In effect, one may turn the argument on its head and use the violation of the unrestricted principles (P.23) and (P.24) as evidence that the relevant entities are not parthood related.

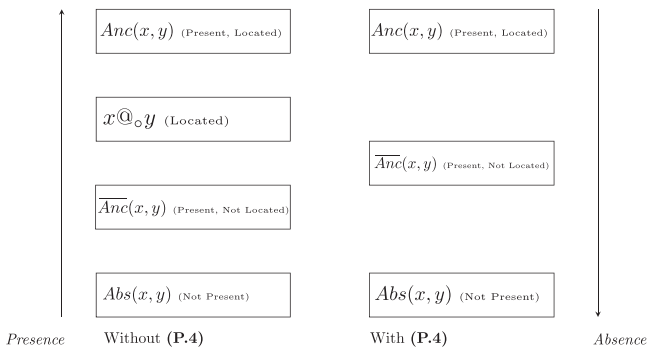

FIGURE 2 "Strength" of presence and absence.

As I noted already, these distinctions will become crucial in some applications. In light of the discussion above, we can define other notions that will take central stage shortly. I shall call them *anchored at* (Anc), *disanchored from* ($\overline{Anc}$), and *absent from* (Abs):

Definition 13. [Anchored At]: For delegator x to be anchored at y is for it to be both present and weakly located at y: $Anc(x, y) \equiv_{df} Pr(x, y) \wedge x@_{\circ}y$.

Definition 14. [Disanchored From]: For delegator x to be disanchored from y is for it to be present but not weakly located at y: $\overline{Anc}(x, y) \equiv_{df} Pr(x, y) \wedge \neg x@_{\circ}y$.

Definition 15. [Absent From]: For delegator x to be absent from y is for it to be not present at x, that is, not to have any delegate at y: $Abs(x, y) \equiv_{df} \neg Pr(x, y) \equiv_{df} \neg \exists z (D(x, z, y))$.

I restricted my attention to delegators in the definitions above because, interestingly, delegates cannot be disanchored from the relevant places. It follows from Definition 2 that they are weakly located there. Whether they are anchored at those places turns on whether they are present there. This would follow, once again, from principle (P.4). Be that as it may, in the applications we will mostly be interested in whether delegators are anchored or disanchored. The framework thus developed entails substantive consequences, some of which we noted already:

- Location conduciveness entails occupancy conduciveness, but the converse does not hold.
- Occupancy exclusiveness entails location exclusiveness, but the converse does not hold.
- If the induced relation R_i is at least occupancy conducive, delegators and delegates are occupants.
- If the induced relation R_i is location conducive, delegators are anchored wherever they are present.
- If the induced relation R_i is location exclusive, delegators are disanchored from all the places in which they are present.
- If location entails presence—for example, in the presence of (P.4)—delegates are anchored at the place of delegation.

In effect, the notions we have defined would provide some sort of (somewhat metaphorical) *measure* of the strength of the presence (and absence) of a given delegator at a given place. This is summed up in Figure 2, where arrows indicate an increase in "metaphorical strength."

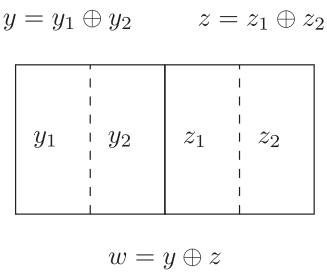

FIGURE 3 Violation of dissectivity, monotonicity, and additivity of *Pr*@.

Finally, we are now in a position to appreciate some of the arguments we briefly anticipated when discussing alleged failures of several principles about D and Pr. Let us start with the former. I claimed that (i) principle (P.6)—that is, $D(x, y, z) \wedge D(x, w, z) \rightarrow y = w$—faces plausible counterexamples and that (ii) it is inconsistent with (the plausible) principle (P.4), that is, $x@_\circ y \rightarrow D(x, x, y)$. An argument against (P.6) is readily available by focusing on a case in which D induces a (modal) counterpart relation, that is $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow C(y, x)$. We need only imagine a simplified Lewisian case in which two qualitatively indiscernible counterparts of x are co-located at the same world.[25] For the incompatibility between (P.4) and (P.6), we can instead consider a case in which D induces a (proper) parthood relation between occupants. In that case, it follows from principles (P.24) and (P.25) that (P.4) and (P.6) cannot be both true. In effect, if D induces *proper parthood* rather than *parthood*, then (P.4) would be inconsistent with a fairly mild mereological principle, namely *irreflexivity* of proper parthood. The argument generalizes. (P.4) and (P.6) are incompatible in all of those cases in which (i) $D(x, y, z)$, (ii) $x \neq y$, and (iii) $x@_\circ z$.[26]

Let us then move to principles about Pr, namely its *dissectivity*—that is, $Pr(x, y) \wedge z < y \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$—, *monotonicity*—that is, $Pr(x, y) \wedge y < z \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$ —, and *additivity*—that is, $Pr(x, y_1) \wedge \cdots \wedge Pr(x, y_n) \wedge F(z, y_1, \ldots, y_n)) \rightarrow Pr(x, z)$. Failures of those principles are better illustrated with another example, one in which D induces the (location indifferent) relation of exemplification or instantiation.[27] Consider Figure 3, where $\oplus$ is short for (binary) mereological fusion.

Intuitively, the immanent universal "being a square" is present at y and z but neither at, for example, y_1 thus violating dissectivity, nor at w, thus violating both monotonicity and additivity. The *delegation theory of presence* yields all the (intuitively) right verdicts.

Next, there was (P.7)—$D(x, y, z) \wedge D(y, w, s) \rightarrow D(x, w, s)$. Violations of (P.7) are best appreciated by looking at counterparts again. Suppose D induces C and C is characterized in broadly Lewisian terms of similarity. A little more precisely, x is a counterpart of y (at w) iff there is no $z \neq y$ that is more similar to x than y (at w). According to this characterization, counterparts can have counterparts, and therefore delegates can have delegates. In this case, (P.7) will yield that

[25] A parallel argument establishes the same conclusion for times.

[26] In the terminology, I will introduce shortly, this is a case of an *outsourcing* delegator *anchored* at the place of delegation. And, there are many such cases. A paradigmatic one is that of a perduring object and its temporal parts—see Section 4.1.

[27] I claimed that instantiation is location indifferent simply because some philosopher think that in the case of immanent universals, exemplification is location conducive and some think it is location exclusive—see Section 4.2. It seems a fair assessment that in general it might be location indifferent and whether it induces location or not depends on details about different theories of instantiation.

whenever y is a counterpart of x (at z), and w is a counterpart of y (at s), then w is a counterpart of x (at s). But this can fail given that counterparthood is not transitive.[28]
Finally, I had reservations about the *delegate location theory of presence*. There are cases that seem to provide direct arguments against it. Consider the following ones. First, suppose one endorses a Lewisian view according to which individuals are world-bound. They are still present in modal space by delegating their counterparts at different possible worlds. However, the *delegate location theory of presence* would now deliver that every individual is located at its counterparts and thus would plausibly fail to be world-bound. Or consider universals. On some construals, the difference between Platonic and Aristotelian universals is exactly that the former are not located in space. But, once again, they might be present there by delegating things that instantiate them. Think now of the Platonic universal "Having Shape S." Arguably, some regions of space have shape S. But the *delegate location theory of presence* would now entail that "having shape S" is located in space, which was supposed to be the hallmark of Aristotelian rather than Platonic universals. I should note that in this last case the *delegation theory* entails that regions of space are at least weakly located at themselves—and there is some debate about whether regions of space *have* locations at all, or rather *are* locations–see, for example, Parsons (2007) and Varzi (2007).

3.2 | Defining other notions

We already saw a substantive fragment of the *delegation theory*. In this section, I want to define other notions in its terms that are (i) philosophically interesting in their own right and (ii) prove crucial in the discussion of possible applications. This also provides an indirect measure of the fruitfulness of the theory we developed so far. The first significant notion is that of extension in a set of places. We can define several such inequivalent notions. I will stick to two here. Let $x \wr y$ for places be defined as $\neg\exists z\,(P(z) \wedge z < x \wedge z < y)$, that is, places x and y are disjoint iff they have no place in common. Then,

Definition. [Extension$_1$]: For a delegator to be extended $_1$ is for it to be present at two disjoint places, or equivalently, to have delegates at two disjoint places: $Ext_1(x) \equiv_{df} \exists y \exists z(Pr(x,y) \wedge Pr(x,z) \wedge y \wr z) \equiv_{df} \exists y \exists z \exists x_1 \exists x_2 (D(x,x_1,y) \wedge D(x,x_2,z) \wedge y \wr z)$.

Suppose one has a notion of "extended place" (EP) at hand.[29] Then, borrowing the terminology from Simons (2014), we could define the *locus* of a delegator x, $\ell(x)$, as "the" sum of the exact locations of its delegates, and then define Extension $_2$ as having an extended *locus*:

Definition 17. [Extension$_2$]: For a delegator to be extended $_2$ is for it to have an extended locus: $Ext_2(x) \equiv_{df} EP(\ell(x))$.

The two definitions are not equivalent for several reasons. First, the equivalence arguably depends on the details about EP, which we did not discuss. Furthermore, nothing in our back-

[28] I am assuming here that $\mathcal{P}$ is the complete modal space, that is, the space of all possible worlds. This assumption might be challenged on different grounds, and different restrictions on $\mathcal{P}$ might be required.

[29] For possible definitions, see, for example, Goodsell et al. (2020), Calosi (2023, 2024), and Ehrlich (2022).

ground theory guarantees that delegates have exact locations.[30] And if they do not, a delegator with two delegates that are weakly located at disjoint places but do not have any exact location would count as extended $_1$ but not extended $_2$. Next, we could define two notions of multipresence by simply identifying them with extensions:

Definition 18. [Multipresence(s)]: For a delegator to be multipresent $_1$ is for it to be extended $_1$. For a delegator to be multipresent $_2$ is for it to be extended $_2$.

Let me note that multipresence as defined in Definition 18 should not be conflated with the much discussed notion of *multilocation*.[31] More interestingly, for the purpose of the paper, we can define different notions of *omnipresence*—which will turn out to be crucial in some applications, namely the one about the nature of God.

Definition 19. [Omnipresence]: For a delegator to be omnipresent is for it to be present at each place: $OMP(x) \equiv_{df} D^{+}(x) \wedge \forall y(P(y) \rightarrow Pr(x,y))$. Equivalently, it is for x to have delegates at each place: $OMP(x) \equiv \forall y(P(y) \rightarrow \exists z(D(x,z,y))$.

Note that Definition 19 is silent as to whether the relevant delegator is even an occupant, let alone whether it is *located* at every place. We can then define notions of *omnilocation* and *omniexistence* in terms of *omnipresence* and *(dis)anchoring*.

Definition 20. [Omnilocation]: For a delegator to be omnilocated is for it to be omnipresent and anchored at each place at which it is present: $OL(x) \equiv_{df} OMP(x) \wedge \forall y(Pr(x,y) \rightarrow Anc(x,y))$.

Definition 21. [Omniexistence]: For a delegator to be omniexistent is for it to be omnipresent in and disanchored from each place at which it is present: $OE(x) \equiv_{df} OMP(x) \wedge \forall y(Pr(x,y) \rightarrow \overline{Anc}(x,y))$.

Finally, this framework also allows us to distinguish two ways something can occupy different positions, namely by being *outsourcing*, and by being *insourcing*:

Definition 22. [Outsourcing$_i$]: A delegator x is outsourcing $_i$ iff it is multipresent $_i$—that is, extended $_i$—, and distinct from each of its delegates: $OutS_i(x) \equiv_{df} Ext_i(x) \wedge \forall y \forall z(D(x,y,z) \rightarrow x \neq y)$.

Definition 23. [Insourcing$_i$]: A delegator x is insourcing $_i$ iff it is multipresent $_i$—that is, extended $_i$— and identical to each of its delegates: $InS_i(x) \equiv_{df} Ext_i(x) \wedge \forall y \forall z(D(x,y,z) \rightarrow x = y)$.

[30] This is widely discussed in the literature on formal theories of location, the issue being possible violations of the so-called *exactness* principle. *Exactness* claims that every occupant has an exact location. For an introductory discussion, see Gilmore et al. (2024).

[31] For an introduction, see Gilmore et al. (2024). My conjecture is that, provided one specify the right theory of location for delegates, one could recover the proxy theory of location in Correia (2025). If the conjecture is correct, then one can use Correia's very general definition of multilocation.

Once again, I did not define all the notions above on a whim. As we will see shortly, differences in substantive metaphysical theses will be reflected neatly in different patterns of location (occupancy): conduciveness and exclusiveness, omnilocation, and omniexistence, outsourcing and insourcing, and the like.

4 | APPLICATIONS OF A THEORY OF PRESENCE

Finally, this section is devoted to applications of the *delegation theory of presence*. I will discuss only one such application in detail—the first one. For the rest, I will simply focus on how the *delegation theory of presence* is able to model distinctions and differences that have been thought to be crucial in the literature and also able to offer (at least sometimes) possible solutions to hotly debated puzzles in said literature. I take it that the arguments in this section show that the *delegation theory of presence* meets the *generality* requirement in Section 1. But before I discuss applications in (some) detail, let me reiterate the initial disclaimer: my focus here is on the applicability of the *delegation theory* to specific cases. A discussion of the overall consequences of the *delegation theory* for subtle issues internal to such cases requires independent scrutiny.

4.1 | Persistence: time and modality

Persistence through times and worlds is surely among the most central applications for a theory of presence. I will focus on persistence in time, but one can do the same for modality, mutatis mutandis.[32] One would be forgiven if one were under the impression that the most basic distinction in the metaphysics of persistence is between perdurantism, endurantism, and exdurantism. Or under the impression that it is between mereological and locational modes of persistence.[33] Before all this, there is a distinction to be made about whether one believes that persisting material objects are *located* in time. Costa (2017) calls theories of persistence according to which material objects are somehow located at times *immanent* theories. By contrast, theories that maintain that material objects are *not located* at times are *transcendentist* theories in his terminology. Orthodox perdurantism, endurantism, and exdurantism of both the mereological and locational variety are immanent theories.Transcendentist theories of persistence are developed in Costa (2017) and Costa and Giordani (2013, 2016), Fine (2006), and Simons (2000, 2014). They all draw a distinction between material objects and events: events are located in space and time, whereas things are located in space but not in time. Costa (2017) goes even further: for a material object to be at a time is for it to *participate* in an event located at that time.[34]

The *delegation theory of presence* is suitable to provide a general model for transcendentist theories that applies independently of specific detail. Here is a sketch. First, say that material objects persist in time iff they are *extended*$_1$ in time. That is, they are present at at least two disjoint temporal places. This by itself does not entail that material objects are located in time. Immanent theories of persistence are theories of persistence according to which the *D*-induced relation is at least *occupancy conducive* if not even *location conducive*.[35] Transcendentist theories of persistence are, in general, theories according to which the *D*-induced relation is *both location and occupancy*

[32] For a recent brief introduction to the similarities between the cases, see, for example, Iaquinto (Forthcoming).

[33] For an introduction, see, for example, Costa (2020).

[34] See Costa (2017), and Costa and Giordani (2013, 2016).

[35] It should be flagged that nothing in the *delegation theory of presence* guarantees that there is *at least* one *D*-induced relation, nor that there is *at most* one. So that talk of "the" *D*-induced relation might be misleading at best, misguided

exclusive. As a way of illustration, let us focus on Costa's preferred transcendentist theory. Here, the delegation structure $< \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{D}^+, \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{S}}, @_?, D >$ can be characterized as follows—where *PC* stands for the relation of "event-participation":

PARTICIPATION TRANSCENDENTISM

(i) The set $\mathcal{P}$ of places is that of *temporal regions*;
(ii) The set $\mathcal{D}^+$ of delegators is the set of (persisting) material objects;
(iii) The set $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ of delegates is the set of events;
(iv) The set of relations $@_i$ is the same set we have been using all along;
(v) The relation $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^+ \times \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$ is such that $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow PC(y, x)$, and *PC* is both *occupancy* and *location exclusive*. It follows that persisting material objects are outsourcing delegators, and, therefore, their delegates are proper delegates.

For immanent theories of persistence, one obtains the by now orthodox characterizations in Gilmore (2007) by identifying the path of a persisting object with its *locus*, and persistence with having an *extended*$_2$ *locus*. Then, restricting the focus on the somewhat more traditional side of the debate, the *mereological side*, one gets the classic views as in below[36]

MEREOLOGICAL PERDURANTISM

(i) The set $\mathcal{P}$ of places is that of *temporal regions*;
(ii) The set $\mathcal{D}^+$ of delegators is the set of persisting material objects;
(iii) The set $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ of delegates is the set of temporal parts;
(iv) The set of relations $@_i$ is the same set we have been using all along;
(v) The relation $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^+ \times \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$ is such that $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow y <_t x$ and the temporal parthood relation $<_t$ is *location conducive* (and therefore occupancy conducive)—note that members of $\mathcal{D}^+$ and $\mathcal{D}^-$ are occupants. With further assumptions about the location of temporal parts, persisting material objects are outsourcing delegators, and, therefore, their delegates are proper delegates.

MEREOLOGICAL ENDURANTISM

(i) The set $\mathcal{P}$ of places is that of *temporal regions*;
(ii) The set $\mathcal{D}^+$ of delegators is the set of persisting objects, or things;
(iii) The set $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} = \mathcal{D}^+$
(iv) The set of relations $@_i$ is the same set we have been using all along;
(v) The relation $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^+ \times \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$ is such that $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow y = x$ and $=$ is *location conducive* (and therefore occupancy conducive). According to mereological endurantism of the immanent variety persisting material objects are insourcing delegators.

at worst. Here the thought is simply that we are trying to recover somewhat orthodox immanent theories of persistence. In the light of this, the suggestion is that there is a paradigmatic *D*-induced relation, namely *the* one that is central to those (immanent) metaphysics of persistence: temporal parthood (perdurantism), identity (endurantism), and temporal counterparthood (exdurantism). Thanks to an anonymous referee.

[36] For the distinction between mereological and locational characterizations of persistence, see Gilmore (2007).

TABLE 1 Metaphysics of persistence

	Occupancy conducive	Location conducive	Outsourcing	Insourcing
Transcendentism	×	×	✓	×
Immanent perdurantism	✓	✓	✓	×
Immanent endurantism	✓	✓	×	✓
Immanent exdurantism	✓	×	✓	×

TABLE 2 Material objects and events: Anchored and disanchored.

	Material Objects	Events
Time	Disanchored From ($\overline{Anc}$)	Anchored At (Anc)
Space	Anchored At (Anc)	Anchored At (Anc)

Mereological Exdurantism

(i) The set $\mathcal{P}$ of places is that of *temporal regions*;
(ii) The set $\mathcal{D}^{+}$ of delegators is the set of persisting material objects;
(iii) The set $\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{P}}^{-}$ is the set of temporal counterparts;
(iv) The set of relations $@_i$ is the same set we have been using all along;
(v) The relation $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^{+} \times \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{P}}^{-} \times \mathcal{P}$ is such that $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow C(y, x)$ and C is *location exclusive* but *occupancy conducive*. Persisting material objects are outsourcing delegators, and therefore their delegates are proper delegates.

One can immediately see that the differences between various metaphysics of persistence are nicely reflected in different patterns of location and occupancy conduciveness, and outsourcing and insourcing, as summed up in Table 1.

It is not without interest that the present framework seems to handle, in general, the distinction between different modes of temporal occupation that transcendentists have in mind. Recall that according to them events but not material objects are located in time. Material objects "exist in time" as they put it.[37] And both events and material objects are located in space. This translates into the following. Both events and material objects are present in both time and space. However, material objects are *disanchored* from time and are *anchored* in space. By contrast, events are *anchored* at both time and space. Table 2 sums this up.

It is no chance that Table 2 bears substantive similarities with the ones in Fine (2006, 702) and Fine (2006, 703). However, I should be clear that Fine endorses a different view. Indeed, he might find the approach behind the *delegation theory of presence* "misguided." For he is skeptical about

> [P]resence as a uniform phenomenon that stands in need of differentiation into distinct species or kinds (…) it is to be regarded as an essentially disjunctive phenomenon that must be itself understood in terms of the more specific kinds. (Fine 2006, 701)

As I said already, I do not think that the *delegation theory of presence* is the only game in town. It seems to me that Fine is better characterized as a *primitivist* of sorts, in fact a *pluralist primitivist*—

[37] See, for example, Fine (2006), and Costa (2017).

someone who roughly believes there are different notions of presence that are both (i) irreducible to one another and (ii) irreducible to other notions.[38]

As I noted, similar arguments seem to apply, mutatis mutandis, to the modal case. To wit, immanent theories seem to be matched up as follows: mereological endurantism with trans-world identity, mereological perdurantism with the doctrine of modal parts, and exdurantism with counterpart theory. Here, nothing new under the sun.

4.2 | Universals

The debate over transcendentism and immanentism in the metaphysics of persistence is similar to discussions over realism about universals.[39] Costa (2017) is explicit:

> There are basically two views: *immanentism* and *transcendentism*. According to immanentism, universals are present in space by being located at regions thereof. According to transcendentism, universals are not located in space; they are present at regions of space only by being instantiated by objects, which, in turn, are located at regions of space. (Costa 2017, 67).

The *delegation theory of presence* handles such cases similarly, simply replacing *participation* with *instantiation*. According to both immanentists and transcendentists, universals are present in space. Immanentists go on to claim that they are anchored in space, whereas according to transcendentists they are disanchored from it. That is, they are merely present somewhere. In this respect, the *delegation theory* allows us to reveal clearly and immediately the common (logical) structure between the debates on persistence and universals—a commonality that was already explicitly noted, for example, in Lewis (1986, 202).

In effect, there is an alternative in the debate on universals that, interestingly, closely resembles the *delegate location theory of presence*. For instance, Costa and Calosi (2022) describe a view in which immanent universals are located at the things that instantiate them—rather than at the spatial regions at which their instances are located. Because of that, immanent universals are said to be "in their instances." The similarity of this option with the *delegate location theory of presence* in Definition 6 is immediate and striking.[40]

[38] One may think that the generality of the claims that the *delegation theory* delivers is a sign of the fact that different cases have little in common and thus one should not (want to) provide a general account of them. Granted. As I said repeatedly it is not my aim to *defend* the *delegation theory*, but to develop it, and explore its applications. Furthermore, I take it, in the case we are considering, such development would be important insofar as it might be taken to shoulder up the claim that the similarities between different cases are not enough to warrant a general account of presence.

[39] This does not mean that the use of location to phrase the dispute between transcendentist and immanentist is mandatory. There are surely other ways to capture the substantive difference at stake. One such ways is to use *dependence* and claim that according to immanentist universals depend for their existence from something that instantiate them. By contrast transcendentists insist that they are not so dependent.

[40] Gilmore et al. (2024, 20) discusses what seems to be yet another possibility, which they label the "burying strategy" and attribute to (Armstrong 1989, 99) and (Lowe 2006, 25). According to such a strategy, roughly, universals are "buried"—and therefore in—in their instances but do not have any location. I take this to mean that they are neither located in space nor at their instances, thus distinguishing it from the views discussed in the main text.

4.3 | Social science

Hindriks (2013) introduces what he calls the *location problem* for social entities:

> We have conflicting intuitions about the location of such social entities. And we seem to be left with no clear and convincing philosophical answer to the question of where they are located. This is what I shall call "the Location Problem in social ontology." (Hindriks 2013, 414)

One prominent intuition among the conflicting ones is that social institutions such as organizations are at least partially located where their members are.[41] However, a famous case by Ruben (1985) seems to threaten—if not undermine—the view. In a nutshell, Ruben asks us to imagine a group of Red Cross officials that visit a country like Albania with no national Red Cross. As Ruben writes:

> Locating those individuals in that country for however long a period does not necessarily bring it about that the Red Cross can also be located in Albania. (Ruben 1985, 54).

This is where the *delegation theory of presence* might help. Here is a way:

THE RED CROSS CASE

(i) The set $\mathcal{P}$ of places is that of *countries*;
(ii) The set $\mathcal{D}^+$ of delegators is the singleton set of the Red Cross;
(iii) The set $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ is the set of the Red Cross members[42];
(iv) The set of relations $@_i$ is the same set we have been using all along;
(v) The relation $D \subseteq \mathcal{D}^+ \times \mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} \times \mathcal{P}$ is such that $D(x, y, z) \rightarrow M(y, x)$–where M is the relation of "being a member of." [43]

The main advantage of this treatment is that it (a) allows us to say that the Red Cross is present (at a time) in Albania, but (b) does not force us to say that it is located there. Claims (a) and (b) are arguably able to capture exactly what we want to say in the Red Cross case—at least if we are moved by Ruben's worries. Indeed, as should be clear by now, the *delegation theory of presence* is compatible with the Red Cross both being located in Albania, if M is taken to be, for example, location conducive, or not located in Albania, if M is, for example, location exclusive.[44] In the

[41] As I anticipated in Section 1, this claim needs to be qualified. There might be circumstances in which the monarchy is present at Wimbledon because the Queen is there in her official capacity, and therefore acts as a delegate for the monarchy. There might also be circumstances in which she visits Wimbledon simply as a tennis lover, or as a friend of Roger Federer. In which case, she might not act as a delegate of the monarchy and, consequently, we might want to refrain from the claim that the monarchy is present at Wimbledon.

[42] For the sake of simplicity, we restrict our attention to members. But one could, for example, envisage different kinds of delegates, such as offices, documents, and so on.

[43] If we take "The Red Cross" to be a singular term that refers plurally, we might perhaps identify M with the plural logic predicate "being one of"'—for an introduction, see, for example, Linnebo (2022).

[44] This is what Hindriks himself ends up suggesting.

first case, the Red Cross would be anchored in Albania (at a time), and in the second it would be merely present there.

4.4 | God

The Abrahamic God is said to be *everywhere*.[45] One natural way of cashing out this "intuitive" notion of divine omnipresence is to say that God is somehow located at every region of space. However, it is widely agreed that this faces a(n allegedly) powerful objection.[46] To be quick, the objection goes as follows. Being even weakly located in space is sufficient for being material. But God is immaterial. Hence, divine omnipresence cannot be a matter of location. Let me call this the *materiality objection*. Swayed by the materiality objection—and other considerations—many have provided alternative accounts. In context, Cowling and Cray (2017) deserve a special mention. This is because they suggest that we should cash out divine omnipresence in terms of a new *primitive notion* of "existing at." Even by these few lines, it should be clear what the *delegation theory of presence* will allow us to say. First, we could simply cash out divine omnipresence as omnipresence in the technical sense of Definition 19. As I noted time and again, this is compatible with both omnilocation and omniexistence. Whether we should choose one or the other probably depends on further background theses one endorses. I, for one, am unmoved by the *materiality objection*. This is because I think there is a good case to be made that immaterial things (holes, cavities, fractures, boundaries, and the like) can be somehow located in space. That being said, it is important to note that the technical distinction between omnilocation and omniexistence *does not track* another important distinction in the literature. Inman (2017) puts it as follows. First, we distinguish between *fundamental* and *derivative* location:

> *Fundamental Location*: x is located at p fundamentally $=_{df}$ x is located at p in its own right, that is, not in virtue of standing in relation(s), R(s), to some distinct y that is located at p in its own right.
>
> *Derivative Location*: x is located at p derivatively $=_{df}$ x is located at p in virtue of standing in some relation(s), R(s), to some distinct entity y, where y is located at p fundamentally (Inman 2017, 169).

Then we could cash out divine omnipresence in terms of *fundamental* or *derivative* location. But derivative location is still location, as witnessed in the right-hand of Inman's characterization, to wit "x is *located* at p in virtue of (…)" (italics added). The difference is not about whether x is located or not located at p, but rather whether locative claims such as "God is located at y" are, for example, ungrounded in other locative claims (as per *fundamental location*), or partially grounded in other locative claims (as per *derivative location*).[47] Whatever one may think of the materiality objection, it seems clear that *such understanding* of derivative location is no help against it.[48] By contrast, omnipresence as per Definition 19 does help. This is because presence *is*

[45] For an introduction, see Wierenga (2019).

[46] For a recent discussion see Hudson (2008).

[47] I used "ground" here for the sake of simplicity, and, by now, familiarity.

[48] Naturally, this does not mean that *different* understandings are of no help. Nor does it mean that the *delegation theory* offers the best overall solution to the materiality objection.

not sufficient for being material. In effect, omniexistence does not face the objection at all. And in contrast with Cowling and Cray (2017), one need not resort to a new primitive. Naturally, this sketch is at best incomplete. For instance, one may ask: What *delegation structure* in particular are we dealing with? $\mathcal{D}^+$ is clearly the singleton set of God, but what about $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$? One possibility is to take regions of space themselves to be the set of delegates. This will, for example, yield that $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}} = \mathcal{P}$ and that regions of space are at least weakly located at themselves. A different, broadly Thomistic option would be to take $\mathcal{D}^-_{\mathcal{P}}$ to be the set of *created things*. But are they everywhere in the intended sense? Clearly, all these questions need to be discussed. Clearly, this deserves an independent scrutiny—as I mentioned time and time again. For now, I hope I said enough in the paper to prompt a discussion about the notion of presence, and to support the claim that the *delegation theory* warrants serious consideration.

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