**Is Consequentialist Perdurantism in Moral Trouble?**

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*There has been a growing worry (raised in some form or another by Dean Zimmerman, Eric Olson, A.P. Taylor, Mark Johnston and Alex Kaiserman) that perdurantism—and similarly ontologically abundant views—is morally untenable. For perdurantism posits that, coinciding with persons, are person-like objects, and giving them their moral due seems to require giving up prudentially driven self-sacrifice. One way to avoid this charge is to adopt consequentialism. But Mark Johnston has argued that the marriage of consequentialism and perdurantism is in moral trouble. For, depending on the nature of time, consequentialist perdurantists either are unable to do more than one good act or they are morally obliged to adopt a repugnant form of ageism. I argue that perdurantist consequentialism doesn’t have either repugnant implication.*

**I. Introduction**

On the perdurantist view of persons, persons persist through time by having temporal parts much like persons extend through space by having spatial parts. Thus, considering a person *S* that exists from *t1* to *t5*, *S* will have a temporal part at *t1*—an object that coincides[[1]](#footnote-1) with *S* at *t1* but doesn’t exist at any other time—and likewise for each of *t2* through *t5*. But perdurantists also ordinarily accept unrestricted composition. This principle says that, for any objects, the *x*s,there is an object composed of the *x*s. Here the locution ‘for any objects’ is intended to employ a ‘timeless’ quantifier that takes objects at any times. Thus, there will be an object that is composed of *S*’s *t1-* and *t2*-temporal parts, and yet another composed of *S*’s *t1-*, *t2*- and *t3-*temporal parts, etc. Each of these objects—call them ‘personites’—is much like *S* given that they coincide with *S* and therefore[[2]](#footnote-2) share *S*’s conscious experiences, joys and sadness, etc. They are in fact, *just like S*, save for the fact that they exist for a subset of the times that *S* does. This gives us compelling reason to think that personites have moral worth. (Kaiserman (2019, 5) has pointed out that other similarly abundantist views have such personites.[[3]](#footnote-3))

But some (for instance Olson (2010), Taylor (2013), Johnston (2016, 2017) and Kaiserman (2019); see also Zimmerman (2003, 502) for a similar worry) have complained that this leads to a troubling "Personite Problem": with personites in the picture, prudentially-driven self-sacrifice is morally wrong. Take the following example given by Johnston (2017, 623). Suppose you want to learn Hungarian for the next three months in order to improve your experience in Hungary in three months time. But suppose you also know that learning the language will be rather excruciating for you. Nonetheless you decide to take it up, calculating the reward to be worth the drawbacks. This decision seems morally wrong since it fails to take into account the many personites who will experience the drawbacks without the attendant rewards—namely, those personites that exist only within the next three months and go out of existence before you arrive in Hungary. Your decision violates their right to not be used without informed consent or compensation. Thus, this and other acts of prudentially-driven self-sacrifice—such as dieting, exercising, studying, etc.—turn out to be morally wrong.

Consequentialist perdurantism, however, seems to have a rather easy way out of this problem. For it can point out that the suffering of the unfortunate personites can be outweighed by other consequences. For consider those personites who will come into existence only when you’ve reached Hungary. They will experience the benefits of knowing how to speak Hungarian without having to undergo the torture of language training. Thus the benefits they receive can outweigh the drawbacks the less fortunate personites experience.

Anticipating the consequentialist response, Mark Johnston has argued that the marriage of consequentialism and perdurantism is in fact a troubling one. His criticism takes the form of the following dilemma. Time is either continuous or discrete. If continuous, then consequentialist perdurantism implies that, once you’ve done some good, it’s impossible to do more. If time is discrete, then consequentialist perdurantism implies a repugnant form of ageism. Either way consequentialist perdurantism gives us morally problematic results. In this paper, I will argue that neither horn of the dilemma has the results that Johnston claims they have. If I'm right about this, then Johnston fails to show that combining consequentialism and perdurantism raises any new moral problems beyond the sorts of issues that consequentialism itself already faces. Notice that I do not claim that the consequentialist response to the Personite Problem is the only or best line of response. I only intend to argue that, insofar as consequentialism itself is a rationally acceptable moral theory, it provides perdurantists *one* available way out of the problem.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the next two sections I will in turn take the two horns of Johnston's dilemma against consequentialist perdurantism.

**II. If time is continuous**

For the first horn of the dilemma, Johnston draws inspiration from Nick Bostrom’s work on infinitary ethics. Bostrom points out that if recent cosmological evidence suggesting that there are an infinite number of galaxies, planets and people is right, then typical consequentialist theories are in trouble. The problem is essentially this:

Suppose the world contains an infinite number of people and a corresponding infinity of joys and sorrows… call such a world *canonically infinite*. Ethical theories that hold that value is aggregative imply that a canonically infinite world contains an infinite quantity of positive value and an infinite quantity of negative value. This gives rise to a peculiar predicament. We can do only a finite amount of good or bad. Yet in cardinal arithmetic, adding or subtracting a finite quantity does not change an infinite quantity. Every possible act of ours therefore has the same net effect on the total amount of good and bad in a canonically infinite world: none whatsoever. (2011, 10)

Call this the ‘C-Infinite Paralysis Problem’. What Johnston points out is that, even if the number of galaxies and people is *finite*, so long as time is continuous the believer in personites is trapped in the very same sort of paralysis. Johnston (2017, 637-8) argues:

If time is continuous, so that there are differences among the lengths of the lives of the personites that cannot be measured by the rational numbers, but only by irrational real numbers, then one can only do an infinite amount of good whenever one benefits some person. In fact, one then does an uncountably infinite amount of good, in the sense of advancing the interests of an uncountable infinity of beings with a moral status. One can’t help but do this whenever one advances some person’s interests, even if one is just advancing one’s own interests! One will always thereby benefit an uncountable infinity of personites. Mutatis mutandis, for an uncountably infinite amount of bad. One brings this about whenever one frustrates the interests of some person, even if that person is oneself. For one thereby harms an uncountable infinity of personites.

So, given our assumptions, each of us has already done an uncountably infinite amount of good, and an uncountably infinite amount of bad. Now the paralysis sets in. How could we now do more good? Or more bad?

So if time is continuous, then for any point in a person’s life, there will be an infinite amount of coinciding personites. To see this more clearly, consider person *S* at time segment *t1-t2*. Since time is continuous, there’s an (uncountably) infinite amount of non-overlapping moments between *t1-t2*. And at each one of those moments, a new personite that coincides *S* comes into existence and continues to exist at *t2*. Hence, *S* has an infinite number of coinciding personites at *t2*. Likewise, if person *S\** improves *S*’s wellbeing at *t2*, *S\** thereby does an infinite amount of good by improving the wellbeing of *S*’s infinitely manypersonites. But given:

(Adding Principle) adding two infinities of the same cardinality simply gives back an infinity of the same size[[5]](#footnote-5)

*S\** can’t do any more good, since there’s no way for *S\** to increase the cardinality of the good *S\** has already done. But this is absurd, and consequentialist perdurantism is to blame. Call this the ‘Perdurantist C-Finite Paralysis Problem’.

My response is that even if Bostrom is correct about the C-Infinite Paralysis Problem, Johnston’s Perdurantist C-Finite Paralysis Problem fails. In other words, even if the non-perdurantist consequentialist suffers paralysis in a world with infinitely many galaxies and people, the perdurantist consequentialist does *not* suffer paralysis in a temporally continuous world with finitely many galaxies and people—despite the fact that there are infinitely many personites. In which case Johnston fails to show that adding perdurantism to consequentialism makes consequentialism a worse moral theory.

To see why, begin by considering this parody argument:

There has been a second of time. If time is continuous, then there is an (uncountably) infinite amount of non-overlapping moments within that second of time—call the set of those moments ‘*s*’. But given the Adding Principle there couldn’t be another second of time. This is just because another second of time wouldn’t increase the cardinality of *s*.

The conclusion—that there’s no more than a second of time—is false. And the premises appealed to are (i) there has been at least a second of time (ii) the Adding Principle, and (iii) time being continuous. But (i) is obviously true, and premises (ii) and (iii) are crucial to Johnston’s argument. So, at first glance, it would seem that anyone who accepts Johnston’s argument must also agree that there’s no more than a second of time!

Perhaps the best response to the parody argument is simply to hold that the argument is invalid—the conclusion doesn’t follow from (i), (ii) and (iii). What the parody argument overlooks is the fact that there are different ways of measuring time. For even if time couldn’t ‘increase’ in the sense of increasing the cardinality of the set of time, it could still ‘increase’ according to other measures—such as increasing the amount of times the earth rotates relative to the sun or increasing the amount of cycles of the radiation produced by the transition between two levels of the cesium 133 atom, etc.

We can likewise charge Johnston’s argument with making a similar mistake. One way to measure goodness is to measure the amount of morally relevant beings at a time whose wellbeing is increased. Thus, as Johnston points out, if by increasing person *S*’s wellbeing at *t1* you have increased the wellbeing of an uncountably infinite number of personites, then you have also done an uncountably infinite amount of good. (Thus, it’s impossible to do any more good.) But perhaps this isn’t the *only* way to measure good. But is there a plausible alternative measurement of good that avoids the paralysis?

To tackle this question, begin by considering yet another parody problem for the non-perdurantist:

If time is continuous, then there is an (uncountably) infinite amount of non-overlapping moments within a second of time. Thus, if one improves person *S*’s wellbeing for an entire second, there is an infinite number of moments at which the person has been made better off. One thereby does an infinite amount of good by improving *S*’s wellbeing for a second. But given the Adding Principle one could no longer do any more good.

Call this the ‘Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem’. One natural solution is to place a restriction on what sorts of temporal units can receive units of good. (Alternative solutions include an extensionalist approach (Vallentyne and Kagan, 1997) and a hyperreal number approach (Sobel, 2004). Though both have been attacked by Bostrom (2011, 16-30).) On this solution we adopt the following restriction:

Temporal Restriction: assigns units of good to seconds of time rather than to each of the infinitely many moments within a second.

(Of course, one could instead state the restriction in terms of a millisecond or some other more fine-grained unit, so long as there aren’t infinitely many of them within a second). Thus, as long as we only assign finite units of good to each second of time at which there is wellbeing, we *do not* in fact do an infinite amount of good by improving an individual’s wellbeing for a second. Thus the Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem would be avoided.

As Bostrom points out, the Temporal Restriction does little to help address his C-Infinite Paralysis Problem. As he says, “attempting to salvage aggregative consequentialism by modifying the substantive component [which specifies what kinds of local phenomena have value] is not promising, because any plausible kind of phenomenon is infinitely instantiated in a canonically infinite world” (2011, 14). In a canonically infinite world, there’s an infinite number of seconds at which there are persons. Thus, even if we only assign a finite value of good to a single second, since there are an infinite number of these values, the total amount of good will be infinitely large. Thus, the original paralysis problem returns. But the crucial thing to notice here is that this is not a problem for my claim here. My project is not to defend consequentialism *per se*, but rather to argue that *uniting it with perdurantism* doesn’t raise any especially difficult new problems. And Johnston’s claim is that it does: he claims that even in canonically *finite* worlds, perdurantist consequentialists will face the paralysis problem. But since Bostrom’s objection to the Temporal Restriction applies only in the case of canonically *infinite* worlds, it fails to apply to our current concern.[[6]](#footnote-6)

So non-perdurantist consequentialists can use the Temporal Restriction in finite worlds to avoid the Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem. Perdurantist consequentialists can likewise employ a similar restriction to avoid Johnston’s Perdurantist C-Finite Paralysis Problem. Let’s say that a ‘personal set’ is a set that contains a person and all of that person’s coinciding personites and contains nothing else. The restriction then is this:

Personal Restriction: assign units of good to personal sets at a secondrather than assigning it to each of the infinitely many members of the set, or to each of the infinitely many moments of the second.

Thus, so long as we assign only finite units of good to each personal set at a second, we avoid the Perdurantist C-Finite Paralysis Problem. For by benefitting a person at a moment, we do *not* thereby do an infinite amount of good. Hence, we can do more good by adding more finite amounts of good to the finite good we have already done.

The Temporal and Personal Restrictions are only *parts* of the solutions to the C-Finite Paralysis Problems. For though they tell us *what* to assign goodness to, they don’t tell us *how much* to assign. Return to the Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem. Suppose *S* experiences a wellbeing value of 4 at each of the infinitely non-overlapping moments in second *t*. The Temporal Restriction will be useless if we determine the goodness value of *S* at *t* by adding up all of the wellbeing values. We would just have an infinite amount.[[7]](#footnote-7) So it’s better to determine goodness this way:

Temporal Value Assignment: the amount of goodness of a person *S* at second *t* is a function of the *average* wellbeing experienced by *S* at *t*.

Thus, if *S* experiences 4 units of wellbeing at each of the infinitely many moments within second *t*, then we should assign 4 units of *goodness* to *S* at *t*. On the other hand, if *S* experiences 4 units of wellbeing for the first half of second *t* and 5 units of wellbeing for the second half, then we should assign 4.5 units of goodness. And so on.

The Temporal Value Assignment bears similarity to the Value-Density Approach Bostrom criticizes (*ibid*., 23-4). On this approach, one begins by assuming that the world is approximately homogeneous. From there, one selects an arbitrary spacetime point and considers a finitely large hypersphere centered on that point. One then takes the average value (value density) of the hypersphere to determine the goodness value of the world. A crucial difference between this approach and the Temporal Value Assignment is that where the Value-Density Approach determines the value of the *whole world* based on the average value of a hypersphere, the Temporal Value Assignment only attempts to determine the goodness of a single second of time—which can then be used to aggregatively determine the goodness of the world. (And we can successfully use this aggregative strategy with the Temporal Value Assignment to avoid the Parody C-Finite Paralysis problem since we’re concerned only with canonically finite worlds.) This difference prevents most of Bostrom’s criticisms from transferring over to the Temporal Value Assignment.

For instance, his first criticism of the Value-Density Approach is that it fails to imply that “a large world with positive value-density is better than a small world with the same value-density” (*ibid*.,23). For, if two worlds are indistinguishable in terms of the phenomena within the selected hypersphere, they will receive the same value. It won’t matter that the one world is very large—with a vast amount of homogenously distributed wellbeing outside of the hypersphere—whereas the other is very small. But, intuitively, this is mistaken. This problem doesn’t confront the Temporal Value Assignment, since it doesn’t require us to determine the goodness of the world simply in terms of a limited portion of that world. However, one criticism of the Value-Density Approach that does transfer over is the objection “if a single location can have infinite value, it also fails for worlds that have such singularities” (*ibid.*,23). One might not be too bothered by this, since it might seem impossible for a person to have an infinite amount of wellbeing at a single moment. But even if such is possible, keep in mind that my aim is not to defend consequentialism *per se*, but only to argue that joining it with perdurantism doesn’t make the view any worse. So if the consequentialist’s best attempts[[8]](#footnote-8) at defeating the Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem have defects, then even if the consequentialist perdurantim uses an analogous principle with the same defects, this itself doesn’t entail that consequentialist perdurantism is any worse.

The analogous principle for the perdurantist would be:

Personal Value Assignment: the amount of goodness of a personal set at time *t* is a function of the *average* wellbeing experienced by the members of that set at *t*.

Thus, if the wellbeing of each of the members of a personal set at *t* is 4, then the goodness assigned to that set at *t* is 4. This is all well and good for sets where all of the members experience the same amount of wellbeing at a time. And it may seem that the members *necessarily* experience the same amount of wellbeing given that a person and their coinciding personites all share the exact same mind—how could one personite be happier than another if they share all the same mental properties? But one might prefer a view on which wellbeing at a time isn’t determined solely by one’s actual mental properties (such as Railton 2003, 54), opening up the possibility of differing degrees of wellbeing.

How then do we determine the goodness value of such a heterogenous set? Here I won’t attempt a complete theory, but just a simple sketch. The strategy is to divide a personal set into subsets—subsets that are determined by how the wellbeing is distributed—and then to determine how much weighting each subset should receive based on the temporal (and perhaps spatial[[9]](#footnote-9)) origin of the personite.

Consider an example. Suppose person *S* exists for exactly 3 seconds. For simplicity, let’s also suppose (contrary to what the perdurantist would actually say) that though *S* has personites coming into existence at each of the infinitely many moments within the 3 seconds, none of them go out of existence until the person does (which is the end of the third second). Call the personal set of *S* and *S*’s personites at the third second ‘*St3*’. Suppose that some of the members of *St3* have a wellbeing of 4 and the others have a wellbeing of 5. What goodness value should we assign to *St3*? Should we just split the difference and assign it 4.5? The above strategy gives us a more sophisticated approach. We can first determine what measure of members experience 4 units compared to those that experience 5. So suppose that all the members of *St3* that experience 4 units of wellbeing are those that came into existence in the first second, and all those that experience 5 units are those that had come into existence during the second and third second. We can then subdivide *St3* into the following subsets: *M1* is the subset of those that came into existence during the first second, *M2* is the subset that came into existence during the second second, and *M3* is the subset that came into existence at the third second. Since every member of *M1* experiences 4 units of wellbeing, we can assign a 4 to *M1*, likewise we can assign a 5 to each of *M2* and *M3*. How do we decide how much weight to give each of these subsets to determine the average? We can determine it on the basis of the corresponding temporal measures: since each of *M1*, *M2* and *M3* correspond to a second of time, and each second of time is equally large, we can then say that each of these three subsets are equally large. So one straightforward strategy for weighing them is to say that since they are equally large, they are to be weighed equally—*M1*’s 4 value is a third of the value and the 5 value of the two other sets is two thirds of the value. Thus we would assign *St3* a goodness value of 4.6666….

One problem for this strategy is that it might not seem fair to weigh *M3* as heavily as *M1* or *M2* since the members of *M3* only come into existence part way through the third second, whereas the members of *M1* and *M2* exist for the entire duration of the third second. Likewise we might want the members of *M3* that came into existence earlier to have a greater weighting than those who came into existence later. Thus, we might instead have *M3*’s weight also be partially determined by how long each of its members existed during the third second. Presumably, then, *M3* would weigh half as much as *M2* (or *M1*) since, on average, the members of *M3­* exist for only half of the third second. In this case, *M3*’s 5 value will count for only one-fifth of the goodness value, whereas the values of the other subsets will each count for two-fifths. Thus the goodness value of *St3* will be 4.6.

The above illustrates how we can determine the goodness value of heterogenous personal sets. The example is a very simple one, but it illustrates that the relative measures of subsets within a single personal set can be determined on the basis of the moment in time at which the members came into existence. Though I have not given a full-fledged theory here, there seems to be no principled barrier to extending this idea to much more complicated examples.

In sum, I have argued that even though in a temporally continuous but canonically finite world the perdurantist has infinitely many morally relevant beings whose total wellbeing is infinitely large, we can still assign finite amounts of good to individual seconds and the world as a whole. Thus, Johnston’s Perdurantist C-Finite Paralysis Problem is avoided. And the non-perdurantist should be sympathetic with the solution since it parallels a plausible solution to the Parody C-Finite Paralysis Problem—a problem the non-perdurantist faces in temporally continuous but canonically finite worlds.

**III. If time is discrete**

So we have seen Johnston's reason for thinking consequentialist perdurantism is in moral trouble if time is continuous, and my response. Let's now turn to the problem Johnston raises if we instead assume time to be *discrete*. Johnston thinks the problem here is that consequentialist perdurantism would lead to a potentially repugnant form of ageism. As he says:

Given that time is discrete, then whatever the minimal temporal length of a personite is, it will follow that the number of personites found within the life of a given finitely existing person is proportional to the length of that life: the longer the life, the more personites…. This has the pleasing implication, pleasing at least for us codgers and codgettes, that you should really respect your elders, even if they are not your betters! For the longer the life, the more beings with a moral status it contains. So benefitting us, attending to our interests, is ipso facto doing a lot more good than benefitting you young things. (2017, 640)

Johnston (*ibid*.,640-1) further points out that the problem becomes even worse if the consequentialist calculations should be based, not on one’s current actual age, but rather on one’s *expected* lifespan. For then the wealthy will morally matter more than the poor since the wealthy generally have longer lifespans. Likewise, we should favor the intelligent over the unintelligent, the healthy over the unhealthy, females over males, Armenians over Russians, etc.

My response is that the objection rests on a faulty understanding of what morally relevant beings coincide with persons. Though I will concede that personites should be considered morally relevant, I think there are yet other such beings the perdurantist should also include on the list. To explain, consider the following toy example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *t1* | *t2* |
| *P1* | alive | dead |
| *P2* | alive | alive |

Here we have two people and two times. One person, *P1*, exists at only *t1*, and the other person, *P2*, exists at both *t1* and *t2*. Now the question is: ‘how many morally relevant individuals does each person coincide with at *t1*?’ Johnston would answer:

*P1* has only one: itself—i.e. the object that exists only at *P1* at *t1*.

*P2* has two: (i) itself—i.e. the object that exists at both *P2* at *t1* and *P2* at *t2*—and (ii) the personite that exists at only *P2* at *t1*.

On this way of counting, *P2* morally matters more at *t1* than *P1* at *t1*. But this way of counting overlooks other morally relevant beings. For, given unrestricted composition (see section I), there also is a ‘crossperson’ (to take Olson’s (2010, 260) phrase) that exists at *P1* at *t1* and *P2* at *t2*. When our counting takes into consideration crosspersons, then the score becomes even—*P1* also coincides with two morally relevant beings at *t1*.

But are crosspersons really morally relevant? Notice that Johnston’s (2016, 201) argument for the moral status of personites doesn’t extend to crosspersons. The argument is this. Imagine a world where Dum and Dee, two identical twins, are as qualitatively similar throughout their lives as possible, except that where Dum lives for sixty years, Dee lives for sixty years and one day. Now consider Dee’s personite “Dee-minus” that coincides only with Dee’s first sixty year of life—thus going out of existence only a day before Dee dies. Now if we hold that only persons are morally relevant, then we must hold that Dum, but not Dee-minus, is morally relevant. Yet this seems absurd since Dum and Dee-minus are intrinsically exactly alike. Notice that no similar intrinsic duplicate strategy can be given to argue that crosspersons have moral status since no portion of a person’s life mirrors the life of a crossperson. Nonetheless, consequentialists usually have principled reasons for including particular beings as members of the moral community. For instance Jeremy Bentham (1780) famously says “the question is not, ‘Can they reason?’ nor, ‘Can they talk?’ but ‘Can they suffer?’” The point being that a being’s ability to suffer suffices for them to be morally relevant. On this standard, we should include crosspersons since they also have mental lives and the ability to suffer. Perdurantist consequentialists who don’t have a principled way of determining the members of the moral community, or who adopt a different principle, might avoid this conclusion. But Johnston’s point shows that their view suffers from ageism. Better to include crosspersons.

We can expand the boundaries of morally relevant beings even further by including objects that also coincide inanimate objects—such as *P1*’s corpse at *t2*—for some portion of their lifespan. Thus, we can say that *P1* in fact coincides a third morally relevant being: one that exists at both *P1* at *t1* and *P1* at *t2*. But the scores will still remain even given that *P2* also coincides a third morally relevant being: one that exists at both *P2* at *t1* and *P1* at *t2*.

Of course, it will still remain true that *P2* ‘morally matters more’ than *P1* in the sense that *P2* has a larger *total* number of morally relevant beings coinciding with it. This is just because *P2* has a personite that exists only at *P2* at *t2*—a personite that doesn’t coincide with *P1*. Hence, *overall* *P2* has a higher score of morally relevant beings coinciding with it. But this doesn’t imply that we should weigh *P2*’s wellbeing more heavily at *t1* than *P1*’s. It just amounts to the fact that we should weigh *P2*’s wellbeing at *t2* more heavily than *P1*’s at *t2*. And this is precisely what consequentialists should want given that *P1* doesn’t exist at *t2*, and so should not count at *t2*.

**IV. Conclusion**

I have argued that Johnston has failed to show that the marriage between perdurantism and consequentialism is defective. Johnston argues that if time is continuous, then consequentialist perdurantism implies that you couldn’t do more than one good act. But I argued that the argument can’t work, otherwise parody arguments would also be successful. Likewise perdurantists can effectively use strategies to avoid the problem that parallel plausible responses to the parody arguments. Johnston also argues that if time is discrete, then consequentialist perdurantism implies ageism. But I argued that this alleged problem overlooks the existence and moral worth of crosspersons. Furthermore, as we have seen, consequentialism allows perdurantism to avoid the charge that perdurantists are morally required to give up prudentially-driven short-term sacrifice. Though one might have independent reason to reject consequentialism, it doesn’t seem that joining it with perdurantism makes it any worse of a moral theory.

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1. That is, the object overlaps only and every part that *S* overlaps at *t1*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Perdurantists could, however, take inspiration from Shoemaker (2008) and Madden (2016) and hold that personites lack consciousness or other mental properties. (Though see Arnadottir (2010) for criticism of Shoemaker.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kaiserman gives Magidor’s (2016) ‘liberalist endurantism’ as an example. He also argues that Johnston’s argument that personites have moral status fails if we adopt stage theory. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See also Longenecker (forthcoming) for a non-consequentialist response to the personite problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Johnston (2017, 638) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This isn’t entirely accurate. Bostrom (*ibid*., 11) argues for the following epistemic claim: even if the world is canonically finite, so long as we cannot epistemically *assume* that it is finite in that way, then the paralysis problem still arises. If this epistemic claim is correct, then this blunts Johnston’s criticism of perdurantism. For in canonically finite worlds, even non-perdurantist consequentialists are stuck in the paralysis problem (so long as they can’t assume it’s canonically finite). So adding perdurantism in such a case wouldn’t make things any worse. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. And this problem will arise no matter how short of a duration we choose, so long as a person has wellbeing at each of the infinite number of moments within the duration. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Of course, the consequentialist could instead try defending the extensionalist or hyperreal number approaches that Bostrom criticizes. But whatever success those approaches have, it seems that they would straightforwardly work to help the perdurantist avoid Johnston’s problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. If, as I suggest in the next section, there are crosspersons, then we may need to take locations into consideration as well. For instance, suppose there are exactly two persons, *S1* and *S2*, and they exist for exactly two seconds. Let’s say personal set *S\** is the set that includes all and only *S1* at *t2* and all of *S1*’s coinciding personites at *t2*. *S\** will then include not only personites that coincided with *S1* at *t1*, but also crosspersons that coincided with *S2* at *t1*. Thus we can take the subset of members of *S\** that came into existence at *t1*, and further subdivide the members into sets based on their location of origin and have the resulting sets be of equal measure. Basing measures on locations may be problematic in canonically infinite worlds. But, again, the problem Johnston presents only concerns canonically finite worlds. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)