

7 Persistence and Responsibility

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Introduction

Let me begin with the seemingly simple fact that I persist through time. If, while preparing dinner sometime next week, I accidentally cut off the end of my finger, I will survive. And not just in the ordinary sense that this biological organism will continue functioning; even in the philosopher's sense, I'll survive. That is, the person who gets rushed to the hospital will be the same person who is sitting here typing these words, with all ten fingers intact. And it's not that I'm special; you persist through time too. That persons persist through time is not in question. What *is* in question is what persistence through time amounts to. Do persons persist, on the one hand, by *enduring* through time?¹ Or do persons persist by *perduring* through time?² This is the genuine metaphysical dispute.

As with many important metaphysical questions, however, the consequences of this dispute reach beyond metaphysics. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the debate over persistence and another philosophical thesis that is not in question, namely, that persons are at least sometimes morally responsible for their actions.³ Some philosophers have thought that persons cannot properly be held morally responsible for their actions unless they endure through time.⁴ On this view, if persons perdure, then no person is morally responsible for anything. If true, this would be a telling objection against the view that persons perdure.

Unfortunately, the remarks made in the literature against the compatibility of perdurance and moral responsibility, though suggestive, are often quite brief. In order to remedy this, I aim to expand on these suggestive remarks in order to see what *arguments* can be found for the incompatibility claim. Not that these arguments will turn out to be more convincing than the suggestive remarks, though. Indeed, though there are five such arguments I will be considering, we will see that the proponent of

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perdurance can successfully rebut them all. The upshot will be that we have yet to see a good reason to think that perdurance is incompatible with morally responsible agency.

Theories of Persistence

First, let me say a bit more about theories of persistence. There are actually a number of different theories one might have about persistence through time. The two most common are endurance and perdurance, but at least one other theory deserves to be mentioned here: stage theory.⁵ I will not be discussing stage theory directly in what follows, but it will help if I include it in this section so that we can better understand the philosophical terrain.⁶

Following Ted Sider, let the term ‘continuants’ refer to those things that we ordinarily talk about, quantify over, and (I’ll add) attribute responsibility to in everyday contexts (Sider 2001, 191). This way of using the term will help us better understand the different theories of persistence. Each theory has a view about which objects are continuants, and each theory has an explanation about how those continuants persist through time. Both endurance and stage theory maintain that continuants are three-dimensional things, that is, things that are only extended in the three *spatial* dimensions.⁷ According to perdurance, on the other hand, continuants are four-dimensional things extended in three dimensions of space and one dimension of time. Endurantists and stage theorists maintain, in other words, that continuants have spatial parts but no temporal parts, whereas perdurantists maintain that continuants have both spatial and temporal parts. Though the concepts involved here are notoriously difficult to pin down, we can get the intuitive idea of a temporal part as follows. Just as I have a part that I ordinarily call ‘my head’, which occupies the region of space from somewhere on my neck on up, perdurance says that I also have a part that we might call ‘my last-year-self’ that occupies the region of time from the beginning of 2005 to the beginning of 2006. What I am, on this view, is the four-dimensional object composed of all of my many temporal parts.

Now that we have each theory’s understanding of continuants out of the way, let me turn to each theory’s account of how continuants persist through time.⁸ Up to this point, I haven’t mentioned any differences between endurance and stage theory, but there’s a big difference. According to endurance, continuants persist through time by being *wholly present*

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(another notoriously slippery concept that I will leave at an intuitive level) at each time when they exist. The very same continuant is located first at t_1 , and then again at t_2 , and so on. According to stage theory, on the other hand, continuants are instantaneous stages that persist by bearing important relations to distinct future instantaneous stages. The instantaneous stage that is located at t_1 is not identical with the instantaneous stage located at t_2 , but it still makes sense to talk about persistence because the two stages are related to one another in the appropriate way.⁹ So, what makes endurance different from stage theory is that according to the former, continuants are multiply located in time, whereas according to the latter, they are not. Finally, according to perdurance, a continuant persists by having a temporal part at each time when it exists. Though the temporal parts are wholly present at particular moments, the continuant itself is not wholly present at any one moment, but rather stretches through a four-dimensional spatiotemporal region.

Each theory gives a distinctive account of persistence. According to endurance and stage theory, continuants are three-dimensional objects without temporal parts; according to perdurance, continuants are four-dimensional objects with temporal parts. Endurance has it that continuants persist by being wholly present at each time when they exist; stage theory has it that continuants persist in virtue of the intimate relations they bear to other instantaneous stages; and perdurance has it that continuants persist by having a temporal part at each time when they exist.

The foregoing remarks are not meant to be a complete explanation of these theories of persistence by any means, but rather a rough sketch to help us get our bearings. We now have enough information to move on to the main attraction. Why might someone think that perdurance is incompatible with moral responsibility?

Objections to the Compatibility of Perdurance and Responsibility

Agency

The first objection to the compatibility of perdurance and responsibility alleges that if perdurance is true, then there are no morally responsible agents because there are no agents at all. And the reason why there aren't any agents at all if perdurance is true is because perdurance includes temporal parts in its ontology and it is absurd to think that a temporal part has what it takes to be an agent.¹⁰ Walter Glannon raises this particular objection when he says that the perdurantist

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cannot offer a satisfactory account of agency necessary for responsibility. To be an agent means having the capacity for practical reasoning about action, which involves having interests, formulating long-term projects or goals, and having beliefs about the likely consequences of acting to achieve these goals. . . . It is extremely difficult to see how a four-dimensionalist account of person-stages or time-slices could capture these essential features of agency. (Glannon 1998, 234)

I won't spend much time on this objection in the current essay, however, because I think that this objection is more appropriately aimed at stage theory than perdurance. Indeed, Glannon goes on to say that *instantaneous stages* "cannot give us the diachronic conception of agency we need for responsibility." So, if this is not an objection against perdurance, why do I bring it up here?

I point it out here to show how important it is to consider perdurance and stage theory separately. I think that many who have these concerns about agency in general have conflated the two theories. In fact, though this is an objection the stage theorist must take very seriously, if anyone were to raise this objection against perdurance, it would be based on a misunderstanding. As we've seen, perdurance does *not* identify persons with instantaneous stages. Rather, persons are four-dimensional objects composed of instantaneous stages. And four-dimensional objects *do* exist at more than one time (just not wholly). One might worry whether four-dimensional objects can have the characteristics needed for *responsibility* (as we will see below), but granting *agency* to four-dimensional objects is, I think, considerably less worrisome.¹¹

Numerical Identity

The second objection has to do with considerations of numerical identity. It is clear that if anyone is ever morally responsible for their actions, then persistence through time must be a real phenomenon. Suppose that Shady (who will be our protagonist for the remainder of the essay) robs a bank today. In order for an attribution of moral responsibility to be appropriate tomorrow, Shady must still exist tomorrow. That is, Shady must have persisted through time from today until tomorrow, so that the person we arrest tomorrow *is* the person who robbed the bank today, where the 'is' in question is the 'is' of identity.

Some philosophers have argued, moreover, that only endurance can accommodate the intuition that the person we arrest tomorrow is numerically identical to the person that robbed the bank today. This notion of numerical identity through time is what makes for *genuine* persistence

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through time, and it is this notion that cannot be reconciled with the temporal parts picture of perdurance.

Let me give a couple of examples of how this argument might go.¹² Vinit Haksar, for instance, argues against perdurance in this way: “It would seem that the view that persons endure is inconsistent with much of our moral and practical thinking. For instance, our system of moral and criminal responsibility presupposes that the person to be blamed or punished must be the very same individual that performed the past action” (Haksar 1991, 244). Though less explicit, something that Peter van Inwagen says may be interpreted in a similar manner.¹³ Imagining a rather tragic but fictional example, van Inwagen says:

If moral responsibility is real, there must be real identity across time. If I say to my father’s second wife, ‘I hold you responsible for my father’s death’, then the person I am addressing, the person denoted by my use of the word ‘you’, must have existed in the past; she must be identical with the person who persuaded my father to forsake conventional medical treatment. (van Inwagen 2000, 15)

Now, what Haksar and van Inwagen say sounds quite reasonable. So, let us grant for now that in order for it to be appropriate to ascribe moral responsibility to a person who is arrested tomorrow, the person who is arrested tomorrow must be *numerically identical* with the person who robbed the bank today. Why can’t perdurance accommodate this claim?

Here’s the thought. According to perdurance, the object that exists today and robs the bank today is not all of Shady; rather, it is a day-long (or maybe a robbery-long) temporal part of Shady. Call this temporal part of Shady ‘Shady₁’. Additionally, according to perdurance, the object that we arrest tomorrow is not all of Shady; rather it is a day-long (or maybe a getting-arrested-long) temporal part of Shady. Call this temporal part of Shady ‘Shady₂’. The perdurantist must admit that Shady₁ is distinct from Shady₂. That is, after all, the way perdurance works. Shady (no subscript) is a four-dimensional object, and the *today* temporal part of Shady is distinct from the *tomorrow* temporal part of Shady. So, it seems that the perdurantist is forced to say that the person who robbed the bank today (Shady₁) is not, after all, identical to the person who gets arrested tomorrow (Shady₂). But if the person we arrest is not the same person as the person who committed the crime, then how can we legitimately hold the person we arrest responsible for the crime? He didn’t do anything wrong!

Though *prima facie* plausible, this objection actually misinterprets the perdurance view. Recall that according to perdurance, when we use the name ‘Shady’ to talk about Shady, we refer to a four-dimensional object.

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Since Shady₁ and Shady₂ are mere temporal parts of the four-dimensional Shady, neither is an appropriate referent of our term 'person'. Rather, the term 'person' refers to the four-dimensional Shady. But if that's true, then perdurance has no problem accommodating numerical identity at all.

Is the person we arrest tomorrow numerically identical to the person who robbed the bank today? Yes, since it is just Shady who is arrested tomorrow and also Shady who robbed the bank today. And Shady is surely identical to himself. That is, since persons are four-dimensional objects, the person who is arrested tomorrow is identical to the person who robbed the bank today because it is the same four-dimensional object under consideration. Of course, I'm not saying that tomorrow there will be a four-dimensional object sitting in a three-dimensional jail cell. That seems like nonsense. Rather, it is just a temporal part of Shady that will be sitting in jail tomorrow. But it is in virtue of having a temporal part in jail tomorrow that we can truly say of Shady (the four-dimensional object) that he will be in jail tomorrow. And since the temporal part of Shady that robbed the bank is part of the same four-dimensional person as the temporal part of Shady that is arrested tomorrow, perdurance has a natural way of meeting the above objection. The person that robbed the bank today is numerically identical to the person that is arrested tomorrow, because that person is a four-dimensional object.

Perhaps this seems like some kind of trickery. You may protest that a perdurantist is nevertheless *still* committed to the claim that the two temporal parts of Shady are distinct objects. And perhaps you may want to claim that moral responsibility requires more than merely that the two temporal parts are parts of the same person. You may want to claim that moral responsibility requires that the person that committed the crime be wholly present at the time when we arrest him. D. H. Mellor seems to claim as much when he says, "Now whatever identity through time may call for elsewhere, here it evidently requires the self-same entity to be wholly present both when the deed was done and later when being held accountable for it" (Mellor 1980, 106). This sentiment, however, is no more than sheer prejudice against perdurance. The perdurantist can quite plausibly claim that what is required for an attribution of moral responsibility to be appropriate is not that "the self-same entity" be "wholly present" at both times, but rather that the self-same *person* be present (but not wholly) at both times. In virtue of having a temporal part today and a temporal part tomorrow, Shady (the four-dimensional person) is present both today and tomorrow. And it is only this type of *being present* that is required by moral responsibility. (Or, at least, it is not at all *evident*, as Mellor claims,

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that moral responsibility requires more than this. Additional argumentation would be needed.) So, the perdurantist *is* able to successfully account for numerical identity after all.

Who's Responsible?

The third objection to the compatibility of perdurance and moral responsibility asks: "Who's responsible?" Put in the form of an argument, the objection runs as follows:

1. If we ever make true moral responsibility attributions, then if perdurance is true, we attribute moral responsibility to four-dimensional objects.
2. Attributing moral responsibility to a four-dimensional object makes no sense.

3. Therefore, if we ever make true moral responsibility attributions, perdurance is false.

Clearly, the premise of interest here is (2). Indeed, I will argue that the perdurantist can successfully reject premise (2).

Why might it be thought unintelligible to attribute moral responsibility to persons if persons are four-dimensional objects? Here's how one philosopher has put it:

[The suggestion of attributing responsibility to me] is a rather bizarre suggestion if I am what [perdurance] says I am—namely, a very complex temporal solid embedded in a [four-dimensional] spatiotemporal matrix with other objects and events and standing in changeless causal relations to other [four-dimensional] existents. This [four-dimensional] person is not itself conscious, although many of its parts are. What would it mean to assign responsibility to such an individual? I have no idea, nor can I imagine any point in doing so. (Delmas Lewis 1986, 307)¹⁴

The thought seems to be that it's just plain weird to assign responsibility to a four-dimensional object. Responsibility is a notion that we use in everyday, down-to-earth circumstances, and it's just implausible to think that when we assign responsibility to persons, we are assigning responsibility to four-dimensional objects. Moreover, and perhaps more forcefully, what are the characteristics of this four-dimensional object in virtue of which it is an appropriate candidate for responsibility attributions? It seems natural to suppose that in order for anything to be appropriately held morally responsible, it has to have certain characteristics such as consciousness, responsiveness to reasons, rationality, and the like. But if (what might also seem natural to suppose) a four-dimensional object can have none

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of these characteristics, then in what sense can we say it is morally responsible?

Again, though these considerations are *prima facie* plausible, I think they can be resisted by the perdurantist. To the first part—the claim that it’s just weird to attribute moral responsibility to a four-dimensional object—the perdurantist can point out that we do it all the time. As we saw above, perdurantists think that all continuants are four-dimensional objects. So, if perdurance is true, then we *do* attribute moral responsibility to four-dimensional objects, for we attribute moral responsibility to persons and persons are four-dimensional objects. Sure, we may not realize that we are talking about four-dimensional objects, but that makes no difference. It remains true, the perdurantist claims, that continuants are four-dimensional objects. At this point, you may object that we do not actually quantify over and talk about four-dimensional objects. This, however, is an objection against perdurance itself and not against the compatibility of perdurance and moral responsibility. The strongest claim I need is merely this: Given perdurance, it makes perfect sense to attribute moral responsibility to a four-dimensional object—we do it all the time.¹⁵

But the first part of the objection isn’t the strongest part, anyway. What is more important, I suspect, is the claim that certain characteristics are required for a thing to be morally responsible, and that four-dimensional objects cannot have the requisite characteristics. As I mentioned above, these characteristics likely include consciousness, rationality, and responsiveness to reasons. But if a four-dimensional object cannot have these characteristics, we can conclude that no responsibility attribution is ever appropriately applied to a four-dimensional object.

In order to respond to this objection, the perdurantist needs to appeal to the difference between *tenseless* and *temporally indexed* property instantiation. Whereas tenseless property instantiation is a two-place relation between an object and a property, temporally indexed property instantiation, on the other hand, is a three-place relation between an object, a property, and a time. This distinction furnishes the perdurantist with the resources for an adequate response.

Can a four-dimensional object be conscious? The question is ambiguous. If the question is whether a four-dimensional object can be *tenselessly* conscious, then the answer is pretty straightforwardly negative. Over the course of one’s lifetime, one may go in and out of consciousness. According to perdurance, this change from being conscious to being unconscious is accounted for by reference to the fact that the person has one conscious temporal part that precedes an unconscious temporal part. But given

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these considerations, it is clear that the question, "Is the person conscious *simpliciter*?" is misguided. The person has a conscious temporal part at t_1 (say), and an unconscious temporal part at t_2 , and so we can truly say that the person (the four-dimensional object) is conscious at t_1 and unconscious at t_2 . If a person is a four-dimensional object, it makes no sense to ask whether or not the person is conscious *simpliciter*. What this shows is that whereas temporally indexed property instantiation applies to four-dimensional objects, *tenseless* property instantiation does not.

The perdurantist can respond, then, by pointing out that four-dimensional persons *do*, after all, possess characteristics in virtue of which they can be appropriately held morally responsible. They can be conscious at a time, rational at a time, and appropriately responsive to reasons at a time. And what matters for responsibility, the perdurantist might continue, is merely whether or not a person has these properties at the relevant times, not whether a person has them *simpliciter*. After all, it seems that our attributions of responsibility must themselves be indexed to a time. A person is not morally responsible *simpliciter*. Rather, a person is morally responsible at a time for some particular action or event that takes place at a specific time.

It seems, then, that there is nothing so odd about ascribing moral responsibility to a four-dimensional person, and hence premise (2) of the above argument can be rejected by the perdurantist.

Who Gets Punished?

Two objections remain.¹⁶ The fourth objection is related to the third. Whereas the last objection asked, "Who's responsible?" the current objection asks, "Who gets punished?" Again, this objection can be stated clearly using an argument analogous to the one in the previous section.

1. If perdurance is true, then when we punish a person, we punish a four-dimensional object.
2. The idea of punishing a four-dimensional object makes no sense.
3. Therefore, perdurance is false.

We saw above that the perdurantist can plausibly claim that it does make sense to attribute responsibility to a four-dimensional object, and, as you might expect, the perdurantist's response to this objection will be similar. But first let's get clear on why someone might object to perdurance in this way.

Even if you are willing to concede that a four-dimensional object is able to have the requisite characteristics for moral responsibility, you may still

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be doubtful that we can ever adequately punish such an odd object. Our world is phenomenologically three-dimensional, so if perdurance is true, any punishment that a court deems appropriate will have to be meted out to some temporal parts of a person and not others. Vinit Haksar raises worries about this as well when he says, "Who then is being punished on [perdurance]? Is it [Shady]? But [Shady] is a logical construct. A logical construct such as [Shady] does not suffer except in the sense that the items that it is made up of include the experiences of suffering" (Haksar 1991, 220). Given that we cannot change the past, one might wonder whether it makes any sense at all to claim that when we punish people, we are punishing four-dimensional objects. We don't have access, so to speak, to *all* of the person, since some of the person existed at times past. So how on earth can we punish a four-dimensional object?

The perdurantist can respond, however, by first conceding that we don't have access to *all* of the person, and then by pointing out that we don't *need* to have such access in order to punish the person. All we need to do is punish the temporal parts of the person that we *do* have access to, and the four-dimensional object is thereby punished. So, to go back to our previous example, when we arrest Shady and put him in jail, it is in virtue of the fact that Shady has various temporal parts that are punished that we can truly say of Shady that he is being punished. Of course, we can't say that Shady is being punished *simpliciter*, because Shady has some temporal parts that are punished and some that are not. Rather, Shady is being punished *at certain times*, namely those times at which he has temporal parts that are being punished. But the temporally indexed claim seems to be what we should want to say in any case.

So, according to perdurance, when we punish people, we are indeed punishing four-dimensional objects. It's just that the *way* you punish a four-dimensional object is by punishing some of its temporal parts.

Punishing Innocent People

The final objection I will consider is that if perdurance is true, then when we punish people, we end up punishing innocent people for crimes they didn't commit. According to perdurance, the objection begins, the temporal part of Shady that is arrested tomorrow is not identical to the temporal part of Shady that robbed the bank today. But then when we punish Shady tomorrow by putting him in jail, we are punishing an innocent person. After all, the temporal part of Shady that is arrested tomorrow did not itself commit the crime.

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This is the naive version of the objection. For we can easily respond to this line of reasoning as we did above. It's true that the temporal part of Shady that is arrested tomorrow did not *itself* commit the crime, but that's irrelevant. Just so long as the temporal part that is arrested is part of the same four-dimensional person as the temporal part that robbed the bank, punishment is just. We are punishing the whole person in virtue of punishing one of his temporal parts.

But the rejoinder to this is not quite so naive. Granting that both temporal parts are indeed parts of the same four-dimensional person, the objector might continue as Vinit Haksar does: "But I do not find such reasoning any better than the following reasoning: It is perfectly just to punish the current members of the Smith family for the crimes of their parents because they are all parts of the same family; it is the same family that committed the crime as is being punished now" (Haksar 1991, 246). Or again, attempting to use the perdurantist's commitment to unrestricted composition¹⁷ against him: "We could punish Reagan for the crime committed by a former President by treating the several Presidents as forming one four dimensional object. We could punish the son for the crimes committed by his father by treating them both as belonging to the history of the same four dimensional object" (Haksar 1991, 247). The idea here is that even though the two temporal parts bear some kind of intimate relation to one another (since they are both parts of the same four-dimensional person), they are nevertheless distinct objects in their own right and ought not to be punished for crimes that they did not commit.

The perdurantist must respond, I think, by pointing out that the relation that ties together a *person's* different temporal parts (the relation sometimes called 'genidentity') is a much more intimate relation than the relation that ties together a family's different members. Whereas it *is* just to punish one temporal part for a crime it didn't commit just so long as it is part of the same four-dimensional person as the temporal part that did commit the crime, it is *not* just to punish Smith's son for Smith's crimes just because they are each members of the Smith family.

I say this is how the perdurantist must respond, but I think an adequate response must be much more sophisticated than what I have just said. What this particular objection shows, I think, is how important it is for the perdurantist to spell out in detail just what this relation of genidentity is. What is it that makes the relation *being part of the same four-dimensional person* a more intimate relation than *being part of the same family* and in virtue of which standing in the former relation might get you punished

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whereas standing in the latter relation would not? I suspect different perdurantists will have different answers to this question. So long as an answer can be formulated, though, I think the perdurantist is able to respond adequately to this last objection as well.

Final Considerations

Although perdurance emerges from the above objections relatively unscathed, I think that our consideration of these objections highlights the aspects of perdurance that deserve the most attention from metaphysicians who are also interested in issues about agency and responsibility. For instance, we have seen that it is especially important for the perdurantist to spell out just what the relation is that makes it the case that two temporal parts are parts of the same four-dimensional person. It is only with an adequate account of this relation that the perdurantist will be able to respond to certain pressing objections.

Another important question that deserves attention, I think, is how to account for characteristics that, once one temporal part comes to have them, “infect” future temporal parts of the person. Moral responsibility seems to be such a characteristic. When Shady commits his crime at t_1 , not only is he responsible at t_1 for robbing the bank, he is also responsible at all subsequent times for robbing the bank at t_1 . How is it that responsibility infects future temporal parts of a worm without infecting past temporal parts?¹⁸ All this is just to say that although perdurance so far seems perfectly compatible with moral responsibility, there are still many interesting questions about this topic that deserve further thought. For now, though, it appears that we thus far have not been provided with any good reason to think that perdurance is a threat to moral responsibility.

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Notes

1. Proponents of this view include Peter van Inwagen (1990) and Trenton Merricks (1999).

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2. Proponents of this view include David Lewis (1986) and Mark Heller (1990).
3. Or, at least, I will not question it. Some philosophers, though, do. See, for example, Strawson 1986.
4. These philosophers include Randolph Clarke (2003), Walter Glannon (1998), Vinit Haksar (1991), Delmas Lewis (1986), D. H. Mellor (1980), and Marc Slors (2000).
5. Proponents of this view include Theodore Sider (1996, 2001) and Katherine Hawley (2001). Haslanger (2003) uses the term 'exdurantism' for stage theory. There is logical space for a fourth view as well, what Gregory Fowler (2005) has dubbed 'transdurantism'.
6. Not surprisingly, many of the objections to the compatibility of perdurance and responsibility can also serve (with slight modifications) as objections to the compatibility of stage theory and responsibility. On this issue, see Tognazzini 2005.
7. This is not to say that if it turns out there are more than three spatial dimensions (as some theories in contemporary physics have it), then endurance is false. The important point is that according to endurance, objects are not extended in any temporal dimension.
8. I'm following David Lewis (1986, 202) in using 'persist' in a theory-neutral way.
9. Just what the 'appropriate way' is, however, is a large and important question. Without getting too much into the details, the important point is that the stage theorist devises a way to do justice to our everyday claims about people by situating the instantaneous stages in a complex network of relations to other instantaneous stages.
10. It's interesting to note that some of these objections to the compatibility of perdurance and responsibility (and this objection in particular) sound quite similar to objections that have been raised against the causal theory of action. The trouble for the causal theory of action is supposed to arise from the fact that the theory's explanation of what makes an agent active rather than passive with respect to her behavior isn't robust enough. Similarly, those who object to the compatibility of perdurance and responsibility seem to be driven by the thought that temporal parts of a person aren't robust enough to play the role of the agent. Not surprisingly, I'm inclined to think both sorts of objection are mistaken. I thank an anonymous referee for bringing this parallel to my attention.
11. You may be more worried about it than I am. If so, I suspect that your worry is based on considerations that I will address throughout the course of this essay. Come back to this issue at the end and see whether you are still as worried.
12. Besides Haksar and van Inwagen, this worry about numerical identity is also stated in some form by Glannon (1998), Mellor (1980), and Slors (2000).

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13. I say ‘may be interpreted’ because I am unclear whether van Inwagen (himself an endurantist) intends these remarks as considerations against the compatibility of perdurance and moral responsibility. In any case, I think they do hint toward that conclusion, and that is why I have chosen to include them.

14. Lewis is here actually discussing reasons for thinking that the tenseless view of time is incompatible with moral responsibility. Since most (all?) perdurantists accept the tenseless view of time, the objection can be aimed at perdurance as well, and so I have made the appropriate modifications. William Lane Craig (2000, 210) agrees with Lewis here: “I think that [Lewis’s] conclusion is undeniable; and since our moral judgments are plausibly not absurd, it follows that the perdurantist conception of persons is false.”

15. For more on this, see the discussion of Lewis’s “best-candidate” theory of content in Sider 2001, xxi.

16. These last two objections actually deal with punishment rather than moral responsibility proper. However, since the two are so intimately linked, I think it is incumbent on the perdurantist to address these objections as well.

17. Unrestricted composition is the view that any two objects, no matter how widely scattered in space and time, compose a third, which has the first two as parts. The typical perdurantist uses this view to “hook” the different temporal parts of a person together, so to speak.

18. Then again, if determinism is true, perhaps moral responsibility does infect past temporal parts of the worm as well, and perhaps a person can be punished at times prior to his committing the crime. This is another question worth taking up.

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