

- of personal identity, a thesis more or less equivalent to animalism. Defenders of animalism include van Inwagen (1990) and Olson (1997, 2007).
- 3 If an entire detached brain would be an organism (van Inwagen 1990: 169–81; Olson 1997: 44–46), let only the cerebrum be transplanted. This applies to the remnant-person problem discussed below as well.
 - 4 For a different response to the problem, see Noonan 1998; Olson 2002.
 - 5 For one that does, see Shoemaker 1999. Olson 2007 discusses all the main accounts of what we are.
 - 6 Or maybe we would be certain parts of brains, since the brain has parts – blood vessels, for instance – that perform the same functions as parts of the organism outside the brain. Puccetti (1973), Tye (2003), Hudson (2007), Campbell and McMahan (2010), and Parfit (2012) all endorse this view or something like it.
 - 7 Campbell and McMahan (2010: 289f.) disagree, as do Aristotelian hylomorphists. This is a thought worth exploring further. It may also solve the remnant-person problem by explaining how the operation creates a new intelligent being.
 - 8 “Functioning brains” is not the best description of what we would be in this view. If a brain could be psychologically continuous with an inorganic machine, the view implies that we could become inorganic nonbrains. But I have no better description.
 - 9 Shoemaker (1999) and Baker (2000) endorse views like this.

3 Persistence and time

Issues about life and death seem intertwined with issues about persistence and time: we live as long as we persist through time, and our deaths seem to mark the limits of our persistence. Metaphysicians have thought deeply about the nature of time, and about what it is for things in general to persist through time. In this chapter I outline some metaphysical views about time, and about persistence, and discuss how they can help us clarify our thinking about life and death.

TIME AND EXISTENCE

To understand time, let's start with space. Think of something which is not here, in the place where you are reading this chapter, for example Halley Research Station in Antarctica. Does Halley Research Station exist? It can be difficult for us to find out what exists far away, but we accept that many things do exist far away. From an ontological point of view, every spatial location is on a par with every other: things in all those places are real. Far-away things exist although they do not exist here.

Let's turn to possibilities. Think of something which is not actual, for example the 2010 Olympic games held in Timbuktu, Mali. Do these Olympics exist? Well, no. There were no Olympic games held in 2010, and the Olympics have never been held in Mali. From an ontological point of view, merely possible things and events are not

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on a par with actuality: they are not real. Merely possible things do not exist, because they do not exist in actuality. [Lewis 1986a is a famous exception to this ontological consensus.]

What about time? Think of something which is not present, for example the Tolpuddle Martyrs, pioneers of British trade unionism in the 1830s. Do the Tolpuddle Martyrs exist? According to some philosophers, other times are like other places: from an ontological point of view, every time is on a par with every other, and past and future things, the Tolpuddle Martyrs for example, exist although they do not exist now. For other philosophers, temporal distance is very different from spatial distance: from an ontological point of view, other times are not on a par with the present, and past and future things do not exist, because they do not exist now.

Presentism is the view that past and future things do not exist, whilst *eternalism* is the view that past and future things exist although they do not exist now. (For guidance into the literature about these matters, see Markosian 2010: section 6.) Presentists and eternalists disagree about whether the future is real. This sounds like a matter of pressing importance for all of us, since so much of what we do and feel is oriented towards the future.

Why should I bother preparing for that talk I'll be giving next month? Wouldn't a presentist advise me to seize the day, live for the moment, since the future does not exist? No. Presentists believe that my talk next month does not exist, but they also believe that next month my talk will exist, and that it will go better if I start preparing now: my choices and actions today will affect the future as it comes into existence. Moreover, presentists accept that the Tolpuddle Martyrs used to exist, and that their actions long ago have consequences for us today. But they deny that the Tolpuddle Martyrs have the same ontological status as Halley Research Station, just as most of us deny that the 2010 Timbuktu Olympics have the same ontological status as the 2012 London Olympics.

Eternalism, on the other hand, might seem to threaten my authorship of my own life. If my talk next month exists, then so does the audience reaction, for better or for worse. They like it, or they don't like it. This can prompt the fatalistic thought that there's no point in my preparing for the talk, since the future audience reaction is just as real as anything which exists right now. Wouldn't an eternalist advise me that it can make no difference how I decide to spend

today? No. Eternalists believe that my talk next month exists, but they also believe that the talk is causally affected by my preparations between now and then.

Both presentism and eternalism treat past things and future things symmetrically: neither exists for presentists, whilst both exist for eternalists. An intermediate view – the 'growing-block' account – breaks this symmetry. According to the growing-block account of the metaphysics of time, past and present things exist, but future things do not: the universe grows larger with every moment which passes, as new things come into existence, and they remain in existence even as they move into the past.

PERSISTENCE THROUGH TIME

Just as there are rival metaphysical views of what time is, there are rival metaphysical views of how things persist through time. I will explain these rival views of persistence, before connecting them with the rival views of time. (For guidance into the literature about these matters, see Hawley 2010.)

Again, it is helpful to think about space. You currently occupy a modestly extended spatial region, and you have different features in different places, warm up here where you're holding your coffee, cold down there on the tiled floor. How do you do this? A natural explanation is that you have different parts in different places: warm hands here, cold feet there. You yourself vary across space as you are composed of your various spatial parts.

Now think about time. You persist through a lifetime, and have different features at different times, hungry when you woke up this morning, feeling full once you'd eaten breakfast. How do you do this? According to *perdurantism*, you persist through time much as you extend through space. You have an early-morning temporal part which is hungry, and a post-breakfast temporal part which feels full. You yourself vary across time by being composed of these various temporal parts.

According to *endurantism*, on the other hand, persistence through time is quite different from extension through space. You yourself, in your entirety, are first hungry and then full as you move through time, existing as a whole at each moment of your lifetime. Although you have spatial parts, you do not have temporal parts.

Both perdurantists and endurantists face further questions about what it takes for a single person to persist through time. Is this a matter of psychological continuity, or of biological development? When the teleportation device disperses Spock's molecules and creates a perfect duplicate of him from fresh matter down on the planet, is it Spock who steps out at the other end, or merely a simulacrum of Spock? If we hold out the hope of an afterlife, a spiritual or bodily resurrection, what exactly are we hoping for? What would it take for *me* to be resurrected?

Perdurantists and endurantists understand these questions in different ways. Perdurantists understand them as questions about what it takes for a sequence of temporal parts to compose one and the same person. Do the pre-teleportation temporal parts and the post-teleportation temporal parts together compose Spock, or do they compose, respectively, Spock and Spock's successor? Endurantists, on the other hand, understand them as questions about the identity or distinctness of entities wholly existing at different times. Is Spock, wholly present as he steps into the teleporter on the *Enterprise*, identical to the person who is wholly present moments later on the planet?

These are tough questions, but choosing between perdurantism and endurantism will not settle how to answer them. Perdurantists and endurantists alike can prioritize psychological continuity as the basis of personal persistence if that's what the arguments favor; alternatively, perdurantists and endurantists alike can prioritize our biological natures if the evidence points in that direction. The difference in underlying metaphysics will make some difference in how these views of personal persistence are articulated, but they do not dictate our choices.

Admittedly, there are more subtle ways in which the choice between perdurantism and endurantism, once embedded in a wider theoretical network, can make a difference to the relative attractiveness of different theories of personal persistence. For example, perdurantism is often held along with the view that any old collection of temporal parts, no matter how disparate, composes an object, on this view the world is jammed full of overlapping objects. Then questions about personal persistence become questions about what distinguishes individual people from the myriad of very similar people-like entities with which they mostly overlap; this in turn

makes a kind of conceptualism about personal persistence attractive, though not compulsory. Different theories of persistence cannot, in and of themselves, settle all the interesting questions about what it is for us people to persist, though they can play a part in more complex arguments about these matters. (See Sider 2007b: section 3 for related discussion.)

How do the rival views of persistence cohere or clash with the rival views of time I reviewed in the preceding section? Eternalism – which countenances the existence of past, present, and future – is usually taken to be compatible both with endurantism and with perdurantism (although Merricks [1994] argues that eternalism commits us to perdurantism). Presentism might seem to rule out perdurantism, but if we squint a little perhaps we can combine the two: on this view, first one part of you exists, and then another, never the whole you at once, though by the end of your life each part of you will have existed in turn. Growing-block perdurantism would have it that more and more of you exists as time goes by.

In short, there are no direct paths between particular views of persistence, particular views of time, or particular accounts of specifically personal persistence. Nevertheless, keeping these different positions clearly distinguished may help us avoid confusion as we investigate issues surrounding life and death. To that end, we should clarify some terminology. As we have seen, the view that past, present and future things exist is known as 'eternalism'; it is also sometimes known as 'four-dimensionalism'. But these two terms also have other meanings in the literature on death, time, and persistence. 'Eternalism' can refer to the view that death is bad for us at all times, i.e. eternally (Luper 2009: 126). And 'four-dimensionalism' can refer to the view I have been calling 'perdurantism' (strictly speaking, in this sense 'four-dimensionalism' refers both to perdurantism and to the related stage theory of persistence) (Sider 2007a). I will stick with 'eternalism' for the view that past, present and future exist, and I will not use 'four-dimensionalism' again in this chapter.

TIME, EXISTENCE, AND DEATH

Is there life after death? Some of us believe that people continue after their deaths in another realm or in another form, whether physical

reincarnation or spiritual presence. In contrast, some of us believe that death is the end: there was no Nelson Mandela in 1900, and likewise there will be no Nelson Mandela in 2100. An intermediate belief is that death is merely a transition from living human being to corpse, and that the end comes a little later once bodily remains decay or are cremated.

We could think of this as a debate about our existence after death, a dispute between those who believe we continue to exist long after our deaths, those who think that death marks the end of existence, and those who think that we exist just as long as our corpses still remain. But, in the context of the eternalism–presentism debate, this would cause confusion. After all, eternalists believe that past things, including Queen Cleopatra, exist in the same way as present things. Does this commit eternalists to thinking that Cleopatra survived her death?

No. Whilst eternalists might, perhaps for religious reasons, believe in 'life after death' they are not committed to this by their eternalism. Eternalists who believe that death marks the end believe that Cleopatra exists, but that she is not located at any times during the twenty-first century. This might seem puzzling, but again we can turn to the spatial analogy for clarification. Think of Halley Research Station in the Antarctic. Halley exists, and you can say truly, sitting here in the warmth at home, that Halley exists. But Halley is not located in your home. So Halley exists, but is not located *here* where you are. Likewise, say the eternalists who deny life after death, Cleopatra exists, but she is not located *now*. From the eternalist perspective, disputes about whether death marks the end of us are not disputes about existence, they are disputes about where our temporal boundaries lie.

EXISTENCE AND POSTHUMOUS HARMS AND BENEFITS

These points about existence and time may help us understand whether it is possible for us to be harmed or benefited by what happens after our deaths, if death is indeed the end. When someone dies, it matters whether we arrange a decent funeral for her, follow the directions in her will, and try to do "what she would have wanted." It matters partly because it's a consolation to those left behind, and a reassurance about what will happen after our own deaths. But in

addition it seems important for the sake of the person who has died. How can this be? What difference could posthumous events make to how well someone's life has gone: surely it's too late by then?

In the face of this puzzle, we could try to explain away the intuition that posthumous harms and benefits are possible. We might try to understand the moral importance of our behavior with respect to the dead without reference to harming or benefiting the dead, either by taking morality beyond harms and benefits more generally, or by stressing the potential harms and benefits of post-death rituals for the living. Moreover, we might argue that belief in the possibility of posthumous harms and benefits is merely a cultural relic from a time in which almost everyone in our communities accepted that life continued in some form after death, and that the dead are aware of, or otherwise affected by, what the living do. Then those of us who now want to deny this should also now reject the possibility of posthumous harms and benefits. Or we might argue that the intuition that posthumous harms and benefits are possible is fuelled by a mistaken view of what well-being is. (Bradley [2009: 42–43] adopts some of these strategies.)

Alternatively, we can try to vindicate the thought that posthumous harms and benefits are indeed possible. We might pursue this by investigating the nature of harms and benefits more generally, attempting to understand what it is for us to have a good life, and trying thereby to understand whether the quality of our lives can be in part determined by what happens after our deaths. But in this chapter I will confine myself to the question of whether metaphysical accounts of time can help us understand the possibility of posthumous harms and benefits, prior to adopting any specific, substantive account of what our well-being consists of.

Harry Silverstein (1980, 2000, 2010) has argued that posthumous harms and benefits are impossible unless future things exist. He argues that an event can be good or bad for someone only if it is a possible object of that person's positive or negative feelings: as his slogan goes, "Values Connect with Feelings." Events which happen after your death can benefit or harm you only by being possible objects of your feelings now, whilst you are alive. And, argues Silverstein, if future things and events do not exist, then they are not the possible objects of your feelings now whilst you are alive. If, on the other hand, future things and events do exist, they can be

the possible objects of your feelings now whilst you are alive. Thus what happens in the future, after your death, can be good or bad for you.

Let's suppose that Silverstein is right that posthumous events can benefit or harm us only by being the possible objects of our feelings whilst we are alive. Does this really generate a special problem for presentism, as Silverstein suggests, or, indeed, for the growing-block theory? No. If presentism could not account for the obvious fact that we sometimes think about the future, then nobody would be a presentist. (Likewise, we sometimes think about alternative possibilities, about what might have happened, without commitment to the existence of merely possible events such as the 2010 Timbuktu Olympics, or merely possible objects such as the older sibling I wish I'd had.)

Many presentists take it that there are, right now, truths about how the future will be: we have beliefs about the future, some of those beliefs are true, and some of them are false. Presentists owe us a story about what makes those beliefs true or false, given that future things do not exist. So, for example, Bourne (2006) argues that non-present times are abstract entities, which make our future-directed beliefs true or false. And Prior (1968) argues that present things exemplify all the future-directed and past-directed properties needed to provide truth values for our beliefs about the past and the future. (Merricks [2007] argues that presentists are entitled to truth and falsity about the past and the future, and that they need not provide any substantive story about what makes the relevant claims true or false.)

There are, admittedly, certain sorts of thoughts we are unable to have about the future: singular thoughts about wholly future objects. But this limitation is generated by our lack of causal contact with such objects, not their failure to exist: eternalists too must concede that we cannot have such thoughts. And in any case this doesn't restrict us too much: I can still hope that my great-great-grandchildren will have a liveable planet, even though I cannot have singular thoughts about those future people. So we can have feelings about the future, even if presentism is correct.

Bradley (2009) discusses a different challenge to presentists. His concern is not about our ability, whilst alive, to have feelings about the future beyond our deaths. His concern is that, once we are dead,

we are not available to feature in singular propositions which say that a certain posthumous event is good or bad for us, or that we would have been enjoying good lives had we still been alive at that time (notice that this concern does not affect the growing-block theory). But as he later concedes, this is just an instance of the general challenge to presentists, "a problem about how to ground truths about past things and people. The presentist must have some general story to tell about such truths; that story should just be applied to truths about dead people" (2009: 83). (Bradley 2004 and 2010 offer further reasons to think that presentists are worse-off than eternalists in dealing with these issues, but Bradley 2009 seems to retract these.)

Presentists must have some means of accounting for truths about the past and the future, and for our present ability to think those truths, even whilst they deny the existence of objects at those non-present times. So presentists and eternalists need not differ significantly in their treatment of posthumous harms and benefits: ontology isn't doing much work here. (Thoughts like this lead some philosophers to skepticism about the presentism-eternalism debate more generally; Sider (2012) sees in this an illustration of the gap between fundamental metaphysics and ordinary human concerns.)

Moreover, this is what we should have expected. If there is a genuine tension between the claim that death is the end of us, and the claim that posthumous events can harm or benefit us, this is rooted in the temporal separation between the person and the posthumous events. How can posthumous events "reach back in time" to affect us? *When* do they affect us: when we're still alive, or when the events occur? Even eternalists acknowledge that things and people are located at certain times and not at others. Given that Mandela is not located at the year 2100, how can he be harmed or benefited by events that occur then? When does the harm or benefit occur? Mere temporal separation seems to generate these concerns, without reference to non-existence.

How might we address these concerns or try to resolve the tension? As before, one good strategy would be to develop a substantive theory of well-being, of harm, and of benefit, then use that to understand whether, how, and when, posthumous events can contribute to our well-being by harming or benefiting us. For example, perhaps nothing can harm or benefit us except via our experiencing