

Chapter 2

Partially Equivalent Metaphysical Theories

Abstract In this chapter, I discuss the case of a metaphysical debate that has been the target and centre of interest for many of those who work on meta-metaphysics, namely the problem of how objects persist through time: the endurantism versus perdurantism controversy. Some have argued, for various reasons, that this debate is a good example of a merely verbal one, where two allegedly competing views are in fact translatable one into the other—they end up, contrary to appearances, to be equivalent. In my discussion, I conclude that this is correct, but only to some extent, and that there does remain room for substantive disagreement. The second thing that I wish to achieve in this chapter is to start to defend a metaontological view that emphasizes a point which I think is often taken and acknowledged by many of those who are involved in metaontology, but which is not so often explicitly defended, namely that when asking the question “Are metaphysical debates substantive or verbal?” the correct answer is “It depends.” Some debates are substantive, some debates are merely verbal, sometimes it is true that a problem or a question can be formulated in equally good frameworks where there is no fact of the matter as to which one is correct or where we just cannot know it. Furthermore, importantly, as my examination of the persistence debate will show, there is room for the view that such a debate is largely merely verbal but not entirely and that some parts of it are substantive, and decidable by philosophical methods. It is possible, and it is the case with respect to the persistence debate, that inside a debate some points are merely verbal while other are places of substantive disagreement. A moral of this is that, at the end of the day, the best way to do meta-metaphysics is to do first-level metaphysics.

§1. In this chapter, I shall have a close look at one metaphysical debate that has been the target and centre of interest for many of those who work on meta-metaphysics, namely the problem of how objects persist through time: the endurantism versus perdurantism controversy. McCall and Lowe (2003), Miller (2005a), and Hirsch (2008) have all argued, for different reasons and in different ways, that this debate is a good example of a merely verbal one, where two allegedly competing views are in fact translatable one into the other—they end up, contrary to appearances, to be equivalent. In my closer look at this debate, I will conclude that this is correct, *but*

only to some extent, and that there does remain room for substantive disagreement. To do this, I shall proceed somewhat differently: instead of looking for a general way to translate or to make equivalent the two (actually, more, as we shall see) competing views, I will go through several *first-level metaphysics* steps and look for places where alleged disagreement turns out to be merely verbal.

The second thing that I wish to achieve in this chapter, that was already apparent in Chap. 1 as well, and that will reveal a bit more about my methodology, is to exhibit a metaontological view that emphasizes a point which I think is often taken and acknowledged by many of those who are involved in metaontology, but which is not so often explicitly defended,¹ namely, that when asking the question “Are meta-physical debates substantive or verbal?” the correct answer is “It depends.” *Some* debates are substantive, *some* debates are merely verbal, *sometimes* it is true that a problem or a question can be formulated in equally good frameworks where there is no fact of the matter as to which one is correct or where we just cannot know it. Furthermore, importantly, as my examination of the persistence debate will show, there is room for the view that such a debate is *largely* merely verbal but *not* entirely and that some parts of it are substantive, and decidable by philosophical methods. It is possible, and it is the case with respect to the persistence debate, that *inside* a debate some points are merely verbal while other are places of substantive disagreement. A moral of this is that, at the end of the day, the best way to do meta-metaphysics is to do first-level metaphysics, from which meta-metaphysical claims (such as equivalence claims) can arise. The priority should be given to the low-level considerations, and meta-metaphysical claims should not be made in too general a way but should come from particular decisions taken case by case on the level of metaphysics.

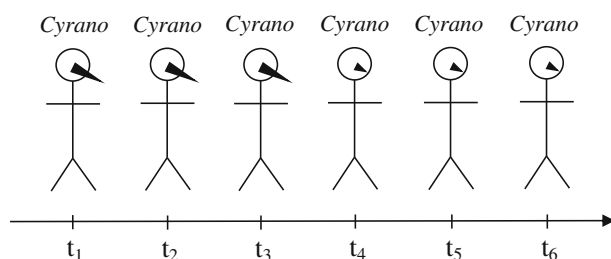
§2. In this chapter, I will focus on perdurantism and endurantism under the assumption that eternalism is true. Presentism (and eternalism as well) will be discussed in Chap. 3. Perdurantism comes in two main versions—the *worm view* and the *stage view*—and endurantism comes in two main versions as well—*indexicalism* and *adverbialism*. I will now carefully compare these four views, and in a way that is different from considerations put forward by McCall & Lowe (2003), Miller (2005a), and Hirsch (2008), we will see that some of these traditional enemies (namely, the perdurantist worm view and the various endurantist theories) are actually very much alike, and that some alleged points of substantive dispute fall prey to closer scrutiny.

A good way to see how the perdurantist worm view and its alleged opponents work is by examining how these theories handle the case of intrinsic change through time. My neighbour Cyrano, for instance, had a big nose, but after some time he discovered that there is a new easy, painless and very quick plastic surgery method that can replace his big nose with a small one, he then decided to undergo the procedure, and consequently he now has a small nose. In this case, Cyrano then undergoes intrinsic change—he first has a big nose and then a small one. What the worm view theorists claim here is that Cyrano is a *space-time worm*, that is, a

¹See also Bennett (2008) and Chalmers (2008).

temporally extended entity that has temporal parts at every time at which it exists, and that his having of different incompatible properties at different times is a matter of him having different temporal parts at different times that have *simpliciter* the incompatible properties. Temporal parts are entities just like Cyrano, only temporally smaller, but not necessarily instantaneous—they can be temporally extended exactly as Cyrano is. Thus, according to the worm view, people are spatio-temporally extended worms that have temporal parts, and the phenomenon of qualitative intrinsic change over time is handled in terms of the having of qualitatively different temporal parts at different times.

Endurantism, on the other hand, claims that objects and people like Cyrano persist through time by being *wholly* present at all times at which they exist—they are thus *multiply located* at various times. Here is how one could start to try to understand this claim:



Such a picture of what endurantism is or could be is (would be) a strange one. Try to consider the analogous spatial picture: an object like a person ‘multiply located’ at several places in a conference room, say. Imagine an entire audience at your talk, only composed of one ‘multiply located’ person that would thus occupy the whole room. Since material objects are not universals, such a claim clearly does sound unacceptable, and the more natural thing to say would be that there is not one single object but a series of different objects laid before one’s eyes. Since we are working here under an eternalist hypothesis, the endurantist picture about how Cyrano persists through time would then be as strange as in the analogous spatial case.

None of this shows that there is a problem with endurantism. Rather, it shows that the picture above and the way this picture suggests we should understand how endurantism works is a bad one. To understand why, and to better understand what the endurantist claim amounts to, let us see how endurantists typically answer an often-raised objection against their view: the Lewis-style objection from temporary intrinsics. Following endurantism, Cyrano at t_1 is numerically identical to Cyrano at t_6 . At t_1 , he has a big nose, at t_6 , he has a small nose. But if we follow Leibniz Law, then if Cyrano at t_1 and Cyrano at t_6 are numerically identical then they should have all the same properties. But this leads to the untenable claim that Cyrano, the very same object existing at t_1 and t_6 , has the two incompatible properties of having a big nose *and* having a small nose. David Lewis once considered this problem to be “the principal and decisive objection against endurance” (Lewis 1986, p. 203). To answer any worries about the having of incompatible properties, *perdurantists* defend a claim that is revisionary about what it is that has the incompatible properties: temporal parts, rather than ‘whole’ people—since the

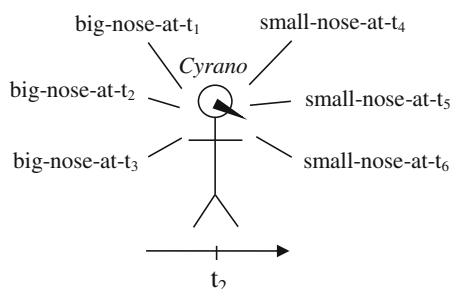
different temporal parts that compose a single space-time worm are not numerically identical, no threat of contradiction arises here. *Endurantists* typically appeal to at least two different strategies to answer the Lewisian worry. The first is Peter Van Inwagen (1985)'s strategy which is revisionary not about what it is that has the incompatible properties, but about the properties themselves. According to such a view, properties are always *time-indexed* and consequently Cyrano does not exemplify two incompatible properties such as "having a big nose" and "having a small nose", but rather he has the time-indexed properties "having-a-big-nose-at- t_1 " and "having-a-small-nose-at- t_6 " which are perfectly compatible. Contradiction avoided.

There is a follow-up to this argument that perdurantists often raise: granted, there is no problem in the having of the two time-indexed properties, but even if we grant that there are such properties, there still also are non-indexed properties like "having a big nose" and, if that's the case, the contradiction has not been avoided because even if Cyrano has at different times non-contradictory time-indexed properties, he also has the non-indexed properties—and so trouble comes back through the back door.

I find this perdurantist reaction somewhat strange. What it commits one to is to claim that Cyrano's having of a property is his having of it *simpliciter* without any disguised relations to times being involved. The reason why such a reaction is a strange one, coming from a perdurantist, is that while it is true that endurantism cannot accommodate this claim, the perdurantist (worm) view does not accommodate it either. Indeed, according to perdurantism Cyrano *also* has his properties only via a *temporalizing device* (think of the parallel with the *unifying device* we encountered in Chap. 1, §3): Cyrano, the temporally extended space-time worm, does not have a big nose. He can only be said to have this property by having a temporal part that has it. As a consequence, neither endurantism nor the perdurantist worm view can defend the claim that *Cyrano* has his temporary intrinsic properties *simpliciter*.² Perdurantists temporalize objects, while endurantists temporalize properties, and despite Lewis's objecting to the use of temporalized properties, and Van Inwagen's objecting to the use of temporalized objects (see for instance Van Inwagen (1985, p. 194)), what both views do is use a theoretical temporalizing device that plays the same theoretical role of making it possible for *Cyrano* to have properties. More precisely, the device "to be a t_n -part of" plays here the same overall theoretical role, and helps to solve the same problem, as the device "-at- t_n ". As in the case of the bundle theory, the substratum theory, relationism, and substantivalism, we step here again on these theoretical tools I call "problem-solvers". A problem-solver is a primitive of a theory that is there to solve a problem. Both perdurantists and endurantists account for the phenomenon of intrinsic change through time by using their primitives: the temporalization of objects, or the temporalization of properties. At the same crucial places, both views introduce a tool with the same function: to avoid any contradiction arising from Cyrano's persisting

²It is true that only the perdurantist worm view allows for *something* (but *not* Cyrano) to have temporary intrinsic properties *simpliciter*, namely, temporal parts of Cyrano. I will come back to this later.

through time and having incompatible properties. Thus, both endurantism and perdurantism use a theoretical temporalizing device in order to avoid the threat of contradiction from the having of temporary intrinsic properties, and so, not only should endurantists be allowed to use *their* temporalizing device by their opponents, but also we have just made a first step towards the claim that the difference between endurantism and perdurantism is perhaps not as big as one would initially think. Furthermore, what we learn here is how we should picture endurantism correctly:



Following Peter Van Inwagen's way of drawing the picture, if t_2 is the present time, Cyrano is depicted as having a big nose, but he also has all of his time-indexed properties, which he has at all times at which he exists. This latter point is an important one, and we shall now see it brings us closer to the idea that endurantism and the perdurantist worm view are more similar than one could have thought. To better understand why, let us examine the traditional 'no-change objection' to the worm view.

The worm view's solution to the problem of the changing of intrinsic properties through time has raised a worry about its adequacy. Peter Simons for instance claims that the "four-dimensional [i.e. worm view] alternative is not an explanation of change but an elimination of it, since nothing survives the change which has the contrary properties" (Simons 2000a, p. 64). The problem here is that instead of accounting for one object's persistence and change through time, the perdurantist gives us a story about different objects (different temporal parts) that have different properties. Furthermore, if it is true that a temporal part of Cyrano has a big nose, it will always be true—such a fact cannot, accordingly to the worm view, ever change. One way to put this point as an objection is to charge perdurantism with the allegedly unpalatable task of defending a 'static' ontology where everything just seems to *be there* and where no object can ever *genuinely* change.

Now, the point of interest for us today is that this objection, if it were correct, would apply in exactly the same way to endurantism. Under endurantism as well as under perdurantism, the fact that Cyrano has the property of having-a-big-nose-at- t_1 is true at all times and can never change. All properties, according to indexicalist endurantism, are time-indexed, and consequently any property that Cyrano has, he has at all times at which he exists. Interestingly, he has at t_1 *the very same properties* that he has at t_5 , and so, the friend of the 'no-change objection' can claim, he does *not* undergo genuine change between t_1 and t_5 (and so on). My aim here is of course not to object to endurantism. Like many others, I believe that these worries

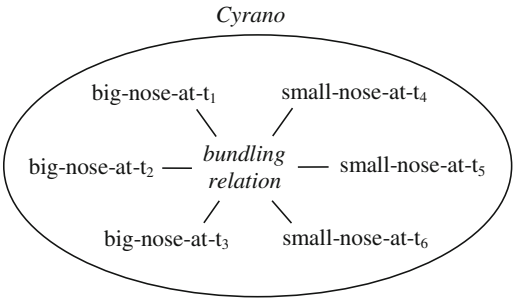
are easily answered. What is at the centre of my interest here is that *if* the ‘no-change objection’ applies, it applies equally to both endurantism and perdurantism (and *if* it does not apply, it does not apply to either of the two views).

§3. We have seen above the case of temporary intrinsics, which was supposed to be an objection to endurantism and a reason to favour the perdurantist worm view, but we have seen that it is not, and we have also seen the case of the no-change objection, which was supposed to be an objection to the perdurantist worm view and a reason to favour endurantism, but it is not—either both theories are guilty or neither is. (Actually, if anyone is guilty here, it is eternalism.) Thus, until now we have seen two steps towards the claim that the perdurantist worm view and endurantism work in a very similar way in some crucial places of alleged disagreement. Let us now see another traditional problem that is typically said to favour perdurantism over endurantism, and see the way the two views handle it: the Statue and the Lump case.

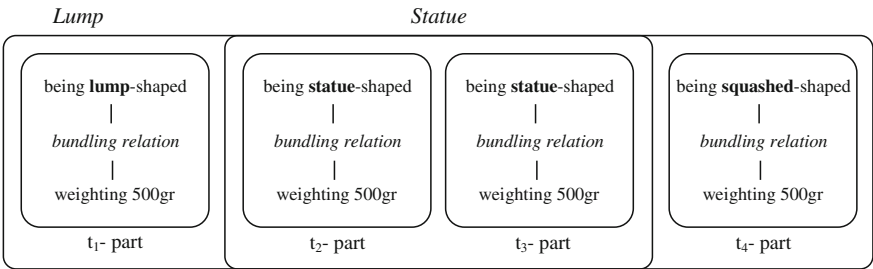
At t_1 , there is a lump of clay that at t_2 an artist forms into a statue. A statue is thus created at t_2 . Let us suppose that it persists until some later time, say t_3 , and is then destroyed (squashed). Consequently, at some time after its destruction, at t_4 , the statue does not exist anymore but the lump of clay still does: it persists from t_1 to t_4 where it existed at t_1 in some (let’s say cubic) form, then it was shaped into the form of a statue and, after the destruction, it was shaped again into some other squashed form. The traditional puzzle consists in the fact that in the interval of time from t_2 to t_3 , the lump of clay and the statue are one and the same object (they have the same form, the same location, they are made up of the same particles) but that if they were one and the same object, they should, following Leibniz Law, share all their properties, which is not the case since the lump of clay has, for instance, the historical property of being cubical at t_1 that the statue has not. So, after all, the statue and the lump of clay are different objects. But then, it seems that we have a situation where two distinct objects coincide between t_2 and t_3 , which is typically supposed to be an unacceptable claim (as Lewis puts it: if the lump weighs 500 g, and the statue weighs 500 g, and if both objects are there between t_2 and t_3 , why don’t we have in this interval of time something that weighs 1000 g?). Traditionally, perdurantists use this case to show that their view is superior to endurantism. Indeed, perdurantism has a simple reply: the t_2 -part and the t_3 -part of the statue *are* numerically identical, respectively, to the t_2 -part and the t_3 -part of the lump of clay. The t_2 -part of the statue and the t_2 -part of the lump of clay *do* share all of their properties, and relevantly, they don’t have any different historical properties such as “being cubical at t_1 ” because none of them existed at t_1 . But this does not entail that the *statue* and the *lump of clay* (the worms) are identical since for instance the lump of clay has parts at t_1 but the statue does not. So they are not identical but they share identical temporal parts: they temporally overlap. Consequently, following the perdurantist worm view, the case of ‘coincident entities’ is no more remarkable than the spatial case of two overlapping roads, one of them being a sub-segment of the other (see Sider 2001a, pp. 6 and 152). Endurantists, on the other hand, do not seem to be able to face this puzzle as easily, since it is the entire statue, and not a part of it, that is wholly present at t_2 or t_3 , since the same holds for the lump of clay, and since they are distinct objects because they do not share all of their properties, the endurantist has to endorse the claim that, between t_2 and t_3 ,

there are two numerically distinct objects that coincide. This is why the case of the Statue and the Lump (as well as similar cases involving coincident entities) is typically taken to be a strong reason to favour the perdurantist view over endurantism.

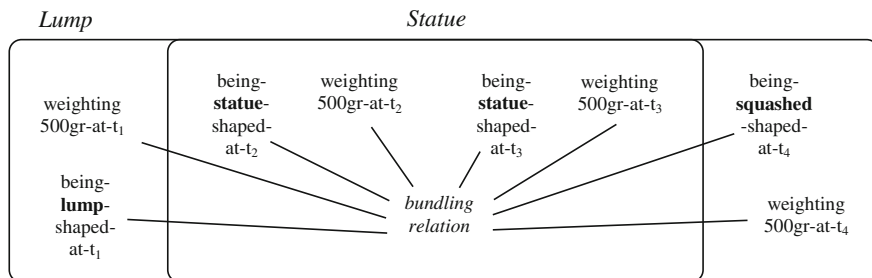
Before we see if this is really so, let us concentrate more carefully on how endurantism works and let us try to be more precise about the theory’s structure. To be more precise, we need to stop drawing the endurantist picture in terms of drawings of people with big noses, and consider what the picture looks like when representing the fundamental components of the nature of Cyrano. To echo our discussion of Chap. 1, I shall consider here the two main options: either Cyrano is a bundle of properties, or he is a bare particular (substratum) that instantiates properties—with no surprise now, we shall see that choosing one rather the other will not make much of a difference. Under the view which is a combination of eternalism, endurantism, indexicalism, and the bundle theory, Cyrano is a bundle of properties (that is, *all* of his time-indexed properties) glued together by a special primitive bundling relation whose theoretical role is to bundle together properties in order to make particulars such as Cyrano.



Now, how can such a view handle the case of the Statue and the Lump? The *perdurantist* bundle-theoretic picture of the case is the following, where the bundle Statue is simply a *sub-bundle* of the bundle Lump—this is how, in terms of the bundle theory, we get the notion of temporal overlap used above by the perdurantist.



Having learned how the *endurantist* (indexicalist) picture should look like, we can now see how it can treat this case:



Lump is a bundle of time-indexed properties, Statue is a bundle of time-indexed properties, and one of the bundles is simply a sub-bundle of the other. Thus, such a picture provides a nice surprise for the endurantist: to account for this case, she can use the very same strategy that the perdurantist has been using all along. Exactly as under the perdurantist worm view, the bundle Statue is a sub-bundle of the bundle Lump, and consequently we get here an implementation of the notion of temporal overlap. Under both perdurantism and endurantism, this notion gives us the means to talk about two objects (if you want, you can say two “coincident” objects, but they are not coincident in any objectionable way, there are two objects in the perfectly acceptable sense in which there are two objects where there is a common part of two Siamese twins), but also to talk about one object (the common part of the two Siamese twins is one). Both views can thus equally well account for talk of two objects and talk of one object in a non-objectionable way. The endurantist can simply appeal to the same strategy the worm view does.

Nothing hinges here on the choice of the bundle theory, since the same treatment can be given under both perdurantism and endurantism if one embraces the substratum theory as well. According to the substratum (or ‘bare particulars’) theory, Cyrano is not only a bundle of properties, rather his properties inhere in a substratum that exemplifies them and unifies them in order to make a (thick) particular. With respect to my present concerns, this difference does not matter: whether it is a substratum that unifies the properties in order to make a particular, or whether they are united by the bundling relation, the resulting structure is such that it can easily accommodate the notion of temporal overlap as it is needed to provide a satisfactory treatment of the Statue and Lump case. This adds up to my discussion from Chap. 1: here again, we see that the bundle theory and the substratum theory can play the same role in the same way.

It took us a little time to get there, since we needed to be careful about clarifying how endurantism is to be understood, but here we are: first, endurantists can handle as easily as perdurantists the case of the Statue and Lump (as well as all similar cases involving so-called ‘coincident entities’), and second, the general and more important truth is that the difference between the perdurantist worm view and endurantism is getting smaller and smaller. Indeed, contrary to the way these two alleged enemies are usually presented, *both views* implement the notion of *temporal overlap*.

§4. We have seen that endurantists can easily face some of the strongest objections that are often raised against their view, namely those that arise from

apparent cases of coincident entities such as the case of the Statue and the Lump. Generalizing, we can conclude that endurantism and the perdurantist worm view have the same explanatory power with respect to the puzzle cases involving coincidence, and this completes another important step towards the claim that the difference between these two views is much smaller than what is usually thought. To sum up, we have gone through four steps:

- i. both views have to use a temporalizing device (“to be a t_n -part of” and “-at- t_n ”) in order to be able to say that Cyrano has a big nose or a small nose, and none of them can say that Cyrano has a big nose or a small nose *simpliciter*
- ii. both views have to (and can) equally face the ‘no-change objection’
- iii. both views implement the notion of a temporal part (temporal overlap)
- iv. by using the notion of a temporal part (temporal overlap) both views can equally well provide a satisfactory treatment of puzzle cases involving coincidence such as the Statue and Lump case

All of the four steps above were supposed to constitute the main differences between the two views, and all four have even been considered as being decisive in favour of one of the views over the other. (To provide only one reference for each step: Lewis (1986, p. 203) at one point thought that (i) was decisive against endurantism; Simons (2000a, p. 64) thinks that (ii) is decisive against perdurantism; Van Inwagen (1981, p. 90) thinks that (iii) is decisive against perdurantism since the notion of a temporal part is unintelligible; Sider (2001a, Chap. 5) thinks that (iv) is decisive against endurantism.) So, if these four central points of alleged disagreement between the two views collapse, doesn’t it in the end turn out that there is *no* difference *at all* between the two views, and that they only are some sort of terminological variants of each other? No. Such a conclusion cannot be drawn from the considerations I put forward in this chapter, and I believe that it is also an incorrect one, because there are some genuine and substantive differences between the two theories.

A first and important point of departure between endurantism and the perdurantist worm view is that while it is true that neither of them can say that Cyrano has a big nose or a small nose *simpliciter*, the worm view *can* say that *something* has a big nose or a small nose *simpliciter* (i.e. one of his temporal parts). A second difference between the two competitors is that they are structurally different: this is easily seen if one uses the substratum theory, for the perdurantist worm view will claim that there is one substratum per time that unifies the properties had by Cyrano at that time, while the endurantist view will claim that there is only one substratum that unifies all of the properties that Cyrano ever has (a parallel claim can of course be made under the bundle theory as well, appealing to one or to several relations of compresence, as we have seen in Chap. 1). This justifies the *endurantist* claim that material objects persist through time by being *numerically identical at different times*, while this is how perdurantists account for the claim that *nothing is ever numerically identical at different times* and that objects persist through time by having temporal parts. There is a link between these two differences between our two theories, since it is only because of their different structure that they exhibit a difference in the way the two views can or cannot claim that *something* has

properties such as having a big nose *simpliciter*. Thus, what we have learned is *not* that the perdurantist worm view and endurantism are somehow, on a general level, equivalent; rather, we have seen that some traditionally important points of departure actually show how similar the two views are, but that they also are different with respect to some other points. It would thus be incorrect to say that they are ‘equivalent’ or ‘merely terminological variants’ in general, while it *is* correct to say that this is true to some (important!) extent.

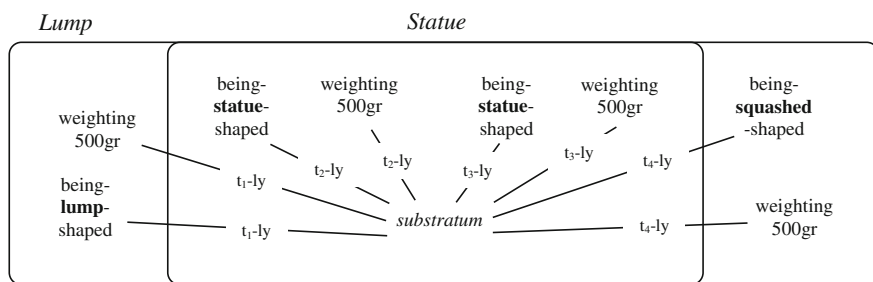
§5. In the discussion above, I have used the indexicalist version of endurantism, but this is not the only strategy endurantists can appeal to in order to answer the problem from temporary intrinsics. Importantly, there is the *adverbialist* solution according to which one should not temporally modify the properties Cyrano has, but the having of these properties. Under adverbialism, “Cyrano has a big nose at t_1 ” is to be analyzed as “Cyrano has-at- t_1 a big nose” or as “Cyrano has t_1 -ly a big nose” as Johnston (1987) more elegantly puts it. In this view, there is not just the having of a property, there is always t -ly having (or having-at- t) of a property. Any worries about the having of temporary intrinsic incompatible properties are thus easily dissolved, since while it is true that Cyrano has a big nose at t_1 and has a small nose at t_4 , and so he has both the incompatible properties, he has the former t_1 -ly and the latter t_4 -ly and this is how contradiction is avoided. (I focus here on Johnston’s brand of adverbialism because it seems to me to be the best—and the most straightforward—version of the view. Other versions can be found in Lowe (1987, 1988) and Haslanger (2003). I critically discuss these versions in Benovsky (2006, Part I, Chap. 4, §16–21).

With respect to my discussion above, there is one important difference between adverbialist endurantism and indexicalist endurantism: only indexicalism, but not adverbialism, is compatible with the bundle theory. The *substratum* theorist, if she wants to be an adverbialist, can say that there are three components in her view: a substratum, its properties, and a relation of exemplification that holds between the substratum and the properties (and which is time-indexed, as the adverbialist view requires it). The *bundle* theorist, on the other hand, does not have room for such a picture in her ontology, since she does not postulate a substratum that needs to be related by a special relation to its properties—rather, in her view, such intermediaries should be avoided and so she cannot be an adverbialist since there simply is no suitable place to put the adverbialist index.³ This, of course, holds only for a very special version of the substratum theory, namely an unpopular version of this view which insists on there really being this third component in the theory: the (time-indexed) relation of exemplification between the substratum and the properties it has. Many substratum theorists often rightly agree that this is a bad version of their view, among other reasons because of Bradley-like regresses and related worries. As Sider (2006) in his recent defence of substrata insists, this relation of exemplification should not be taken too seriously, in the sense in which it is often claimed that exemplification is not a genuine relation, that it is a “non-relational

³If one were to put the index on the bundling relation, it would straightforwardly become a *perdurantist* view.

tie”, and that we shouldn’t “reify” exemplification (see, for instance, Lewis 1983, pp. 351–355). To my mind, these worries are justified, and relevant to my discussion here, if the friend of the substratum theory follows these recommendations, she then cannot be an adverbialist for the simple reason that if she takes away from her view the ontologically significant relation of exemplification there will be no good place to put the adverbialist index anymore. Only if she is not impressed by the troubles that arise when one takes exemplification ontologically seriously as a relation (that one can put an index on), does she have the option of holding an endurantist-adverbialist-substratist view. (To my mind, this makes adverbialism an unpalatable solution to the problem of persistence through time in the first place.)

This being said, let us now see how adverbialism compares to indexicalism and to the perdurantist worm view. The first point of similarity between these views holds: exactly as it was the case for endurantist indexicalism and for the perdurantist worm view, adverbialism also has to use a temporalizing device (“ t_n -ly”) in order to be able to say that Cyrano has a big nose or a small nose: all three views thus *cannot* say that Cyrano has a big nose or a small nose *simpliciter*. Furthermore, since the adverbialist theory is here combined with eternalism it also has to (and easily can) face the ‘no-change objection’ for the very same reasons we have already given in the case of indexicalism (and the perdurantist worm view). Interestingly, adverbialism also implements the notion of temporal overlap and, exactly like the two other views, it can equally well provide a satisfactory treatment of cases such as the Statue and Lump case, as the following figure shows—analogously to what we have seen in the indexicalist’s case.

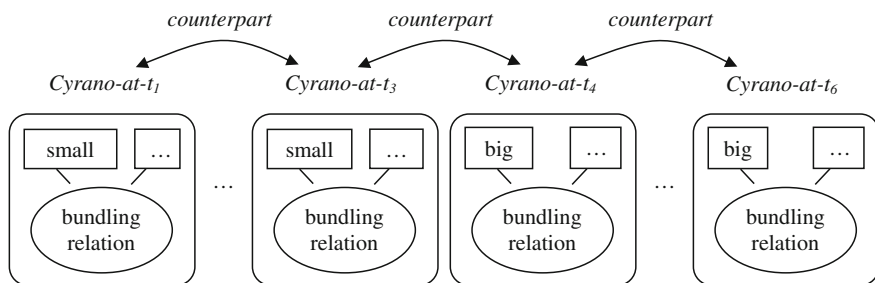


As a consequence, we can affirm that endurantism-adverbialism-eternalism-substratism is *not* very different from the perdurantist worm view and the endurantist indexicalist view with respect to the same (important) points of alleged disagreement between endurantism and perdurantism, while it *does* differ from the perdurantist worm view for the same two reasons we have seen above concerning the difference between indexicalism and the worm view—the additional difference being here that only the worm view, but not adverbialism, is compatible with the bundle theory.

§6. Finally, I now turn to an eternalist theory of persistence through time that *is* different from the other three views with respect to the four steps examined above:

the perdurantist *stage view*. I shall first go through the four steps (i)–(iv), and then ask what kind of difference we are dealing with here: metaphysical, or purely semantic/linguistic?

The stage view's account of persistence and change over time is the following (I use the bundle theory, but like in the case of the worm view and of endurantist indexicalism and *unlike* in the case of adverbialism, using the substratum theory would make no relevant difference here—strengthening again my claim from Chap. 1):



According to this view, a person like Cyrano exists only at *one* time and is an instantaneous entity (an instantaneous ‘stage’), and it persists through time by having different temporal counterparts at other times. The ordinary object we refer to as Cyrano is not a four-dimensional (temporally extended) entity, rather, there is a series of stages interconnected by a counterpart relation, and ordinary objects are conceived of as being the stages rather than the whole composed of them. Strictly speaking, the different Cyranos are only momentary entities, but they are nevertheless said to persist through time by having counterparts at other times. However, the stage view is still a four-dimensionalist view since it does not deny the existence of temporally extended objects—the four-dimensional entities that are aggregates of stages—they exist as well as the stages do. It’s just that, according to the stage view, the objects we ordinarily name and quantify over are stages rather than worms.

Let us now see how the stage view behaves with respect to the four steps (i)–(iv) above.

The first point of departure from the three other views is already easily seen when it comes to the having of temporary intrinsic properties *simpliciter*. The stage view, unlike the perdurantist worm view and the two endurantist views, can guarantee the having of temporary intrinsic properties *simpliciter* by ordinary objects themselves. This is easily achieved since, according to this view, ordinary objects like Cyrano(-at- t_1) are (instantaneous) stages, and those can have properties *simpliciter* without making them to be relations to times. So such a view allows Cyrano to have *simpliciter* the property of having a big nose (in a non-derivative way, contrary to what the worm view has to say).

What about the second step, the ‘no-change objection’? It seems that here also, the stage view behaves differently than the three other views—the fact that it appeals to different counterpart-related objects to provide an account of persistence

makes it *weaker* against the objection. Let us remember shortly how it goes: perdurantism (worm view) does not account for genuine change in persisting material objects like Cyrano, because it tells us a story about different objects (his different temporal parts) existing at different times and having different properties, but none of those objects can change. And similarly for endurantism (take the indexicalist version here): the fact that Cyrano has the property of having-a-big-nose-at- t_1 is eternally (always) true and can never change; indeed, any property that Cyrano has, he has it always and forever, and so he has at a time t_1 the very same properties that he has at a later time t_2 , and so the ‘no-change objection’ goes, he does not undergo genuine change.

As I already mentioned above, and as many have argued, I don’t think that either of these views really has anything to fear here, since all have an equally adequate reply to the objection. In short, here it is: the perdurantist can say that there is something that changes, namely the four-dimensional Cyrano who is composed of all of his temporal parts. Once one of his parts has any intrinsic property, it cannot change, and it will always be true that it (tenselessly) has this property, but the four-dimensional entity can be said to undergo a change by having different parts at different times. Change is simply the having of different properties at different times, and the perdurantist’s worm can easily accommodate this claim. And so can (obviously) the endurantist.

But if one endorses the stage view, such a reply seems unavailable—for there is no *one* thing that ever has the different properties. The worm view theorist claims that the temporally extended Cyrano has them in a derivative way, and the endurantist claims that he has different time-indexed properties, or that he has them t_n -ly, but the defender of the stage view does not have room for any of this in her theory: she cannot show anything that could be said to undergo a change, even in a derivative way. Of course, she can say that a certain stage, say at t_1 , is F and will be $\neg F$ at t_2 in virtue of being a temporal counterpart of another stage existing at t_2 that is $\neg F$. This could maybe sound like a solution, but it is not: for these two stages are just two completely different things. As Mellor (1998, p. 89) puts it, “change needs identity as well as difference”. But there is only difference in the stage view, there are only different things with different properties.

This is not the end of the story, of course. For what is involved here, and what the stage view theorist’s reply will criticize, is a version of the ‘Humphrey objection’ applied to temporal counterpart theory. The objection runs as follows: if Cyrano says now that he will visit Roxanne tomorrow, then the sentence turns out to be true iff he’ll visit Roxanne tomorrow. But this is, according to the stage view, simply impossible, because the person who says now that he’ll visit Roxanne tomorrow is a stage, a momentary entity that will not itself persist until tomorrow and thus, will not be able to visit anyone. Cyrano, the person who is doing the speaking, is simply not identical, in any sense, to the person who’s supposed to do the visiting. Granted, Cyrano has a counterpart tomorrow that’ll visit (or not) Roxanne. But whatever the counterpart relation is, it is not identity. So, the objection goes, if Cyrano says he’ll visit Roxanne tomorrow, why would Roxanne care that someone else, similar to Cyrano and linked to him by a counterpart

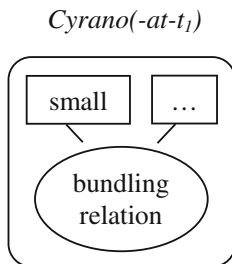
relation, will visit her? Note that the “someone else” claim is very strong here: if one endorses the stage view, there is no sense in which Cyrano from today is identical to Cyrano tomorrow. If one generalizes this objection, one can simply claim that it denies persistence altogether. For the stage view ontology provides us only with instantaneous entities, and aggregates of those, but it rejects ‘worms’ in the sense that it rejects the view that ordinary objects like people are four-dimensional entities. The stage view’s persistence, the objector says, is not genuine persistence.

Sider defends the stage view against this objection as follows: “[It] is wrong to say that the stage view denies that ‘You will do it’ means that you will do it. ‘Ted was once a boy’ attributes a certain temporal property, the property of once being a boy, to me, not to anyone else. Of course, the stage view does analyse my having this property as involving the boyhood of another object, but I am the one with the temporal property, which is the important thing. The stage view is consistent with stages having temporal properties; it’s just that temporal properties are given a counterpart theoretic analysis” (Sider 2001a, p. 195).

But this reply is not likely to give satisfaction to the objector. Granted, the stage view is consistent with stages having temporal properties, but they are not the ones we want. To take Sider’s example, if we say “Ted was once a boy”, we are ascribing a certain temporal property to Ted (who exists now). But if we want to endorse the stage view, it is not the property of “once being a boy”, but rather, the property of “once there being a counterpart of Ted that is a boy”. If the stage view theorist allows these two properties to be equivalent then she is mistaken—for if it is the former that we ascribe to Ted, we are speaking solely about Ted, but if we ascribe him the latter, we are speaking about Ted and someone else, and that makes all the difference. Sider’s response can only appear to be satisfactory if one takes the expression “once being a boy” to be a suitable paraphrase of the expression “once there being a counterpart of *x* that is a boy”, but such a strategy, objectors like Sally Haslanger will claim “strains the limits of credibility” (Haslanger 2003, p. 337).

Although I have sympathies with the objector, my point here is not to claim that we should reject the stage view because of this objection. Rather I only wish to claim that the stage view has more to do than the worm view or any of the versions of endurantism in order to answer the no-change objection (step (ii)), and that its reply has to be different, since it cannot appeal to any *one* object having different properties at different times, in the way the two other views do it.

With respect to step (i), the stage view has an advantage over the other competing views, and with respect to step (ii), it seems, on the contrary, to be in a weaker position. This should not be very surprising, since the stage view is also structurally different from its competitors (this is step (iii)). As we have seen, according to the stage view, a person like Cyrano is ‘no more’ than this:



which is quite different from the worm view and both versions of endurantism. To put it simply, the three other views claim that Cyrano is ‘bigger’—he is a bundle not only of properties he has at one time, but of *all* of his properties he ever has. And this salient difference in structure will also make the stage view behave very differently with respect to step (iv): the case of the Statue and the Lump. While the crucial notion that is appealed to by the worm view and endurantism in their treatment of the puzzle is the notion of overlap, nothing similar is either available or needed if one embraces the stage view, since there is nothing temporally extended that could be said to overlap. At a time t_2 , for instance, there is only one instantaneous entity that is a statue made out of a lump of clay but there are not two coincident objects at this time, since the reason for thinking that there could be two different objects was that they were suspected to have distinct historical properties like “being cube-shaped in the past” or “having existed at t_1 ”, but no instantaneous entity has any such properties. It can be said to have them by having different temporal counterparts at different times, but the counterpart relation being flexible (context dependent), it will be able to have different counterparts qua Statue than it has qua Lump—so what we have is just one object that has different counterparts under different counterpart relations and there is no threat of ending up with coincident entities.

To sum up: the stage view is different from the three other views with respect to all four steps (i)–(iv). It behaves better in the case of temporary intrinsic properties, it is weaker with respect to the no-change objection, it is structurally different, and it provides a different treatment of the Statue and Lump case.

The diagnosis of why exactly this view is different from the others is readily at hand: it takes objects like Cyrano to exist at only one single time, while all the competing views take them to exist at more than one time. To put it in a more objection-like way: it actually denies genuine persistence through time instead of providing an account of it.

One way to support this objection is to insist on the importance of the fact that the stage view is weaker with respect to the no-change objection, as we have seen above, and to insist that the ‘Humphrey objection’ to temporal counterpart theory succeeds. But there is also another (but related) way to see this defect of the stage view: the view does not allow ordinary objects to do the things they typically can do. People, like Cyrano, are stages. But stages are instantaneous entities, they do not have temporal extent. The unwelcome consequence of this is that people cannot

do many of the things we would expect them to be able to do. For instance, it seems that a person should normally be able to utter a sentence. But, on the stage view, this turns out to be impossible, strictly speaking: the utterance of a sentence takes some time and a stage does not last long enough to make such a performance. Or, normally, Cyrano can run, but again, not according to the stage view; strictly speaking nobody can run because a person is an instantaneous entity and running takes time.

The obvious reply of the stage view theorist to this is that Cyrano can utter a sentence and run because he has counterparts at ‘neighbouring’ times and if we take several counterparts together, they can achieve such a performance. It takes more than one single stage to speak or to run.

But then, what do we really mean when we say that a person runs? What do we refer to by “this person”? We have seen that it seems that if we refer to the instantaneous stage (as we should, if we follow Sider’s recommendations: space-time worms “are not ordinarily named or quantified over” (Sider 2001a, p. 191)) it is impossible for our sentence to be true (an instantaneous entity does not have enough time to run).

Maybe we refer to a sum of successive person-counterparts, which is a thing that lasts long enough to do the performance. But what is this sum? I see two possibilities: first, that it is a set of numerically distinct entities (the distinct temporal counterparts), or second, that it is a whole composed of the different counterparts. The first possibility seems really unpalatable: the view according to which a set of distinct objects can run would be hard to defend. We are then left with the second possibility; but this just amounts to embracing the worm view, for the thing that has the properties we are interested in (running, speaking, and so on) is a temporally extended four-dimensional entity—and so, those properties are really had by a ‘worm’ rather than by a stage. So, since this way out (a way that nobody takes, as far as I know) is closed, the stage theorist will have no choice but stick to his original claim: “this person” refers to an instantaneous stage, and it has the property of running in virtue of having temporal counterparts at neighbour times—and this is how a person can run. Very well. But what this claim commits the stage view theorist to, is to endorse the further claim that since the person has the property of running in virtue of its relations to other persons (his past and future counterparts), this property turns out to be extrinsic, contrary to what we’d usually say. And for the same reasons, a lot of properties that we usually take to be intrinsic turn out to be extrinsic, according to the stage view. So if one wants to account for the fact that people can speak and run, and that the properties involved here are intrinsic, one should embrace the worm view or endurantism rather than the stage view.

Again, this is not the end of the story. For the stage view theorist will defend his view here by simply biting the bullet and accepting that most properties we thought to be intrinsic are, in fact, extrinsic.⁴ But, again, my point is not here to establish

⁴Both Ted Sider and Achille Varzi do accept this consequence of the stage view (personal communications, 2005); see also Sider (2001c).

whether we should accept the stage view or not, although I have been offering reasons that point towards rejecting it. The point I wish to make by raising the objections above is to show in what respects the stage view is different from its competitors, and I think that this has been established.

Still, one might wonder what kind of difference this really is. Is it a metaphysical difference? It certainly is not a difference in what there is, since all the views are eternalist and postulate the existence of the same distribution of matter across space-time, and the stage view does not deny the existence of mereological sums of stages that correspond to the worm view's space-time worms.⁵ So the difference is not one in what there is (contrary to what is the case in the presentism-eternalism controversy, which will be the concern of Chap. 3), but in the analysis of what ordinary objects like tables or people are. Is this a metaphysical or a semantic difference? In a sense, as Sider himself claims, it seems only to be a semantic/linguistic one, since the disagreement only seems to be about ordinary language terms and reference—a disagreement located in what we usually name and quantify over when we make claims about ordinary objects.

But, as Parsons (2004, p. 3) points out, rightly I think, metaphysical questions are not only questions about *what* there is, but also about *how* things are. To take his example: “Does time pass?” is as much a metaphysical question as “Does the future exist?” It is true, Parsons says, that the worm view and the stage view agree on the stuff there is, but it doesn't follow that they agree on all metaphysical questions—like the question of what the nature of tables and people is, that is, *how* they are. The question whether, for example, I am three or four-dimensional *is* a metaphysical one. Or, the two views do not provide the same answer to the question: “how many people are there crossing the street when Cyrano crosses a street?”—indeed, there are *much* more people there according to the stage view (as many as there are instants, or infinitely many if time is continuous) than according to what the other views say. So it seems that the disagreement between the stage view and the other competing views I have discussed is not merely semantic/linguistic but genuinely metaphysical, and that it is about whether ordinary objects are best conceived of as time-bound (momentary) or extended in time.

§7. We have seen that the debate between endurantists and perdurantists is, to a large extent, verbal and that there is much less substantive disagreement than we could have thought. But, importantly, genuine differences and room for substantive disputes remain. I would like to suggest that this is quite representative of the state of metaphysics, given the ongoing meta-metaphysical debate: some areas of metaphysics, that we thought were well explored and that we thought gave rise to competing incompatible views, turn out to be places of merely verbal disputes. But not all. And more: even ‘inside’ one particular debate, like the persistence one, there are merely verbal points and substantive ones. This is why I would like to emphasize something that is probably (hopefully) not very original: that we should

⁵Besides, it is likely that whatever the temporal counterpart relation is, it will turn out to be the same as the ‘glue’ relation that unifies the temporal parts of a single space-time worm.

not make any very general claims about the status of metaphysical debates, and not even about a status of one metaphysical debate, in order to claim that it is verbal or substantive or otherwise; rather, we should do first-level metaphysics in detail, examine the nature of particular detailed points of disagreement, and only then raise any meta-theoretical claims, like claims of metaphysical equivalence. In Chaps. 3 and 4, I will have more to say about this.

Meta-metaphysics

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Choice

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