

Metaphysics of Persistence and Time

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INTRODUCTION:

Change has been a pressing philosophical problem since the ancient Greeks, yet it is one of the most pervasive and undeniable phenomena. On the face of it, change is contradictory. The strict philosophical definition of "identity" as expressed in Leibniz's law is that two objects are identical only if they share all the same properties. The problem of change arises since a thing before a change has different properties than the thing after the change. For example, in the morning I was sitting at home, in the afternoon I was standing in the library. In the morning I was a bent shape (since I was sitting) and in the afternoon I was straight shape (since I was standing). Applying Leibniz's law to this case, it would appear that I am not the same thing in the morning as in the afternoon. This conclusion runs counter to our everyday understanding of change. Worse, the problem generalizes to all cases of change: if x changes, then x is the same identity before and after the change, and x has some property before the change that it lacks after (otherwise there is not really change), but by Leibniz's law this entails a contradiction. There are two parallel problems of change, the first deals with material objects and the second with persons. In ordinary life, we interact with changing material objects all the time without worry. We treat objects like tables and chairs as things which can survive change, but the problem of change seems to undermine this idea. In regards to other problem of change, the idea that persons survive change is essential to our conception of personhood. Jettison the identity of persons over time and then most of the attitudes we take, such as hope, blame, and regret lose their appropriateness. These attitudes only make sense if we think of persons as things which survive change.

LEIBNIZ'S LAW:

$$\forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy) \rightarrow x=y$$

if, for every property F, object x has F if and only if object y has F, then x is identical to y.

TWO THEORIES OF PERSISTENCE:

Perdurance Theory: "Something perdures iff it persists by having different temporal parts, or stages, at different times, though no one part of it is wholly present at more than one time;"

Endurance Theory: Something, "endures iff it persists by being wholly present at more than one time."

APPLICATIONS:

Statue and the Lump of Clay. Below is Michelangelo's statue



When an artist transforms a lump of clay into a statue we say that they create a statue, but the artist never destroys the lump of clay. It seems that there are two different objects in the same place at the same time. There is a statue with unique properties like being romanescque and would be destroyed if smashed with a hammer. There is also a lump of clay with unique properties like being able to survive being smashed by a hammer. Perdurance theory helps explain this puzzle. The lump and the statue have share temporal parts like how two rooms might share a wall. Endurance theorists have much more trouble with this case.

TWO THEORIES OF TIME:

Eternalism: past and future times and their contents are just as real as the present and its contents

Presentism: only the content of the current time exists

My project defends a combination of the perdurance theory of persistence and an eternalist theory of time.

CONCLUSION:

As a result of my work this summer I was able to produce an initial draft of my senior thesis. Going forward I plan on continuing to working on this project in defense of a combination of perdurance and eternalism. Over the course of this academic year I will complete my senior thesis on this topic. This will involve delving more into the time aspect of the project. In addition I plan on looking at various objections to perdurantism and eternalism in order to produce a more robust defense of the position.

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