DEFENDING 'DEFENDING MUSICAL PERDURANTISM'

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Julian Dodd has recently objected to musical perdurantism—the view that a musical work is a fusion of performances—on the grounds that it entails that one cannot hear all of a musical work and that a musical work can have temporal parts that belong to different ontological categories. We defend musical perdurantism from both objections.

ACCORDING to musical perdurantism, a musical work is a fusion of performances.[1] On this view, works persist by perduring: that is, they exist at different times by having different temporal parts—for example, different performances—at those times.[2] In a recent book, Julian Dodd has offered what he takes to be 'two disabling objections' to musical perdurantism.[3] In this brief note, we reply to those objections. We conclude that musical perdurantism remains ambulatory.

I. ON 'THE ABSURD THESIS THAT WORKS OF MUSIC CANNOT BE HEARD *IN TOTO*'

The first objection to musical perdurantism is that it 'entails the absurd thesis that works of music cannot be heard *in toto*' (p. 157). Suppose that Vaughan

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[1] See Peter Alward, 'The Spoken Work', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 62, no. 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 331–337; Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson, 'Defending Musical Perdurantism', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 46, no. 1 (January 2006), pp. 59–69. See also Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson, 'Can a Musical Work Be Created?', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 44, no. 2 (April 2004), pp. 113–134, at p. 133. x is a fusion of the ys $=_{df}$ each of the ys is a part of x, and every part of x overlaps one of the ys. (x overlaps $y =_{df}$ there is a z such that z is a part of x and z is a part of y.)

[2] x is a temporal part of y at $t =_{df} x$ is a part of y at t, x exists only at t, and x overlaps at t everything that is a part of y at t. (x overlaps y at $t =_{df}$ there is a z such that z is a part of x at t and z is a part of y at t.) For a more careful definition of temporal part, see Theodore Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 55–62.

[3] Julian Dodd, *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2007), p. 156. Unless indicated otherwise, numerals in parentheses refer to pages in this work.

Williams's *A London Symphony* was performed in London, England in 1914 and that it will be performed in London, Ontario in 2114. In that case, musical perdurantism entails that *A London Symphony* has both of those performances as parts. One might think that to perceive all of a whole at some time all of its parts must exist then; or, as Dodd puts it, 'one cannot perceive the whole of something at *t* unless it exists as a whole at *t*' (p. 159). That is, one might accept something like the following principle:

(1P)   For any *x*, *y*, *z*, and *t*, if *x* perceives all of *y* at *t* and *z* is a **part** of *y*, then *z* exists at *t*.[4]

There is no time at which the England performance and the Ontario performance both exist; and, according to musical perdurantism, both are parts of *A London Symphony*. So, given (1P), musical perdurantism entails that there is no time at which one can perceive all of *A London Symphony*.

A parallel objection can be raised against Dodd's view, according to which a musical work is a type whose tokens include performances. If one accepts (1P), one might accept a parallel principle about tokens: namely,

(1T)   For any *x*, *y*, *z*, and *t*, if *x* perceives all of *y* at *t* and *z* is a **token** of *y*, then *z* exists at *t*.[5]

There is no time at which the England performance and the Ontario performance both exist; and, according to Dodd's view, both are tokens of *A London Symphony*. So, given (1T), Dodd's view entails that there is no time at which one can perceive all of *A London Symphony*.

Dodd replies that the parallel objection could be raised only 'by someone who had failed to see the crucial difference between types and perduring entities' (p. 159): namely, types, unlike perduring entities, are wholly present whenever they exist. As a result, there is an asymmetry between (1P) and (1T): (1T) is false, whereas (1P) is 'as strongly intuitive as philosophical theses get' (p. 160 n. 8).

But (1P) is false. For one can see stars now, even if some of them do not exist now. Consider a star, *s*, that one can see now but that does not exist now. *s* is a part of itself (since parthood is reflexive), and *s* does not exist now, so *s* has a part—namely, itself—that doesnot exist now.[6] So, contrary to (1P), one can see *s* now, even though some of *s*'s parts do not exist now.

Dodd might reply that, although one can see *s* now, one cannot see *all of s* now, so *s* is no counterexample to (1P), which is about perceiving *all of* an

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[4]   'P' is for 'part'.
[5]   'T' is for 'token'.
[6]   One need not accept perdurantism to accept this conclusion.

entity. But then a musical perdurantist could say that, although one cannot hear *all of A London Symphony* now, one can nonetheless hear the work now. Dodd insists that we have a 'strong intuition that we hear a whole work—that is, all of it—in performance' (p. 160). A musical perdurantist could question whether we really have an intuition that we hear *all of* a work (rather than simply the work itself). And, even if we do have an intuition that we hear *all of* a work, it is not clear how costly it would be for a musical perdurantist to deny that we hear *all of* a work. After all, if we can't see *all of s*, one's perceptual contact with works isn't any worse than one's perceptual contact with stars; and that might be good enough.

II. ON 'THE PROBLEMATIC THESIS THAT THE TEMPORAL PARTS OF MUSICAL WORKS MAY DIFFER WITH RESPECT TO THEIR ONTOLOGICAL NATURE'

The second objection to musical perdurantism is that it 'implies the problematic thesis that the temporal parts of musical works may differ with respect to their ontological nature' (p. 160). Suppose that two performances of *A London Symphony* occur in different places at the same time: *p1* occurs in Winnipeg in 1975, whereas *p2* occurs in Columbus in 1975. *p1* and *p2* are parts of a single temporal part—call it '*p1+p2*'—of *A London Symphony*. So *p1+p2* is spatially scattered: one part of it, *p1*, is in Winnipeg, whereas another part of it, *p2*, is in Columbus. But not all of *A London Symphony*'s temporal parts are spatially scattered. If in 1977 *A London Symphony* is performed only in Manchester, then *A London Symphony* has a temporal part—call it '*p3*'—that is spatially unified: all of it is in Manchester. Assuming that spatially scattered and spatially unified entities 'differ with respect to their ontological nature', it follows that *A London Symphony* has temporal parts—namely, *p1+p2* and *p3*—that differ with respect to their ontological nature.

Dodd has noticed something interesting here: according to musical perdurantism, the temporal parts of works are sometimes, not performances themselves, but rather fusions of performances. But musical perdurantism implies that the temporal parts of works differ with respect to their ontological nature only if spatially scattered and spatially unified entities differ with respect to their ontological nature, and it is not clear that we always think of spatially scattered and spatially unified entities as differing in that way. Suppose that three battles occur during the First War of the Prairies. The first battle occurs in Winnipeg on 1 January 1975; the second battle occurs in Saskatoon on 1 February 1975; and the third battle occurs in Calgary on 1 February 1975. The war has each of these battles as parts. (The war might also have other events— negotiations, acts of espionage, and so on—as parts, but we can safely ignore them here.) In addition, the war has all sorts of other parts: for example, the part of the war that occurs at noon on 1 January 1975 and the part of the war

that occurs at 2 p.m. on 1 February 1975. It is not obvious that a military historian, say, would regard those parts as differing with respect to their ontological nature, even if the part that occurs at noon on 1 January 1975 is a spatially unified battle-slice, whereas the part that occurs at 2 p.m. on 1 February 1975 is a spatially scattered fusion of battle-slices.

In any case, even if spatially scattered and spatially unified entities differ with respect to their ontological nature and hence musical perdurantism 'implies the… thesis that the temporal parts of works may differ with respect to their ontological nature', why is that thesis 'problematic'? The main reason, according to Dodd, is that it 'violates the… principle that all of a perduring entity's temporal parts fall into the same ontological category' (p. 161). We assume that each entity belongs to exactly one ontological category. We also assume that entities that differ with respect to their ontological nature do not belong to the same ontological category. As a result, the assumption that spatially scattered and spatially unified entities differ with respect to their ontological nature is equivalent to the assumption that those entities do not belong to the same ontological category. The principle that is violated, then, is something like the following:

(2)   For any x, y, and z, if x is a perduring entity and y and z are temporal parts of x, then it is not the case that there is an ontological category C such that y belongs to C and z does not belong to C.

According to musical perdurantism, *A London Symphony* is a perduring entity, $p1+p2$ and $p3$ are temporal parts of it, and they do not belong to the same ontological category, so (2) is false.

But that musical perdurantism violates (2) is problematic only if (2) is true. And there is independent reason to think that (2) is false. Consider the First War of the Prairies again. It has three battles—one in Winnipeg on 1 January 1975, one in Saskatoon on 1 February 1975, and one in Calgary on 1 February 1975—as parts. Even many who think that objects such as persons endure (that is, persist by being wholly present at every time at which they exist) admit that events such as wars perdure.[7] On this view, the war persists—it exists on 1 January 1975 and on 1 February 1975—by having different temporal parts at those times. The temporal part of the war on 1 January 1975 is a spatially unified battle: the Winnipeg battle. By contrast, the temporal part of the war on 1 February 1975 is not a battle; rather, it is a spatially scattered fusion of two battles: the Saskatoon battle and the Calgary battle. Given the assumption that spatially scattered and spatially unified entities belong to different

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[7]   See, for example, Michael Rea, 'Temporal Parts Unmotivated', *Philosophical Review*, vol. 107, no. 2 (April 1998), pp. 225–260, at p. 235 n. 15.

ontological categories, the temporal parts of the war on 1 January 1975 and on 1 February 1975 belong to different ontological categories. So, contrary to (2), the war is a perduring entity that has temporal parts that belong to different ontological categories.

We can now see where Dodd's argument for (2) fails. He argues for (2) as follows: 'An entity's temporal parts are just time slices of that entity, and so they all inherit its ontological nature' (p. 161). But musical perdurantists might think the reverse: the ontological category that a work belongs to is determined by the ontological categories that its temporal parts belong to; and there is no guarantee that a work will belong to the same ontological category as its temporal parts. For, in general, there is no guarantee that a perduring entity will belong to the same ontological category as its temporal parts. Suppose that two battles occur during the Second War of the Prairies. The first battle occurs in Regina on 1 January 1977, and the second battle occurs in Edmonton on 1 February 1977. The war is a perduring entity that has both of these battles as temporal parts. The war is a spatially scattered entity: one part of it—the first battle—is in Regina, whereas another part of it—the second battle—is in Edmonton. But neither of the battles is a spatially scattered entity. So, given the assumption that spatially scattered and spatially unified entities belong to different ontological categories, the war is a perduring entity that belongs to a different ontological category than its temporal parts—the Regina and Edmonton battles—do.

Let us step back for a minute. According to musical perdurantism, *A London Symphony* has a fusion of performances in Winnipeg and Columbus as its 1975 temporal part and a performance in Manchester as its 1977 temporal part. We see no reason to deny that the fusion of the Winnipeg and Columbus performances is a temporal part of *A London Symphony*. *A London Symphony* has many temporal parts, most of which are strange and uninteresting. For example, the fusion of the sixth second of its 1975 temporal part and the eighteenth minute of its 1977 temporal part is itself a temporal part of *A London Symphony*, but ordinarily we would never have any reason to think of it. Similarly, even though it is a temporal part of *A London Symphony*, we would ordinarily have little or no reason to think of the fusion of the Winnipeg and Columbus performances.

As metaphysicians, one of our concerns is figuring out what the temporal parts of *A London Symphony* are. As music-lovers, however, our concerns are rather different: we are not interested in figuring out what the *temporal parts* of *A London Symphony* are, although we might be interested in figuring out what other sorts of parts of *A London Symphony* are. Which parts we are interested in depends, of course, on our interests. Given our interests as people who think about and listen to music, a particularly useful way for us to divide

A London Symphony into parts is to divide it into *performances and parts of performances*.[8] What Dodd's thought experiment, in which a work is performed simultaneously in distinct locations, shows is that we cannot always identify performances with temporal parts of works; in some cases, we should identify performances with spatial parts of temporal parts of works instead.

Metaphysically, all of the parts of *A London Symphony* are on a par. Musically, some of those parts matter more than others. To introduce such inegalitarian distinctions among the parts of *A London Symphony*, we need to appeal to what we care about.[9]

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[8] Of course, there might be other useful ways of dividing *A London Symphony* into parts.

[9] Thanks to Joyce Jenkins and Tim Schroeder for discussion.