

# An Enduring Problem for Complex Animalism

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**Abstract:** I argue that complex animalism—roughly, the view that we are each a human animal and persist by virtue of some biological or psycho-biological fact—is inconsistent with endurantism—roughly, the view that one and the same object exists at different times or with different classes of features without temporal parts. I analyze connections between the core animalist ontology of life and the persistence conditions of animals as developed by Eric Olson and Peter van Inwagen. It is argued that lives do not endure and therefore cannot ground the endurance of an organism or human animal. I then show how a disjunctive complex account, which factors in psychological continuity, does not help avoid this problem. A likely objection is considered which further reveals difficulty of this new problem of endurance for animalism is: that the enduring problem shows how animalism gets the modal facts about us wrong. In conclusion, I offer suggestions for moving forward.

**Keywords:** Animalism, Personal Identity, Ontology of Human Persons, Grounding.

## 1. Introduction

The ability to persist, to continue to exist through time and change, is essential to being human. Whatever we are, we persist. Hence, we ought to reject any ontology of human persons that is incompatible with our persistence. Animalism, roughly, the view that we are each a human animal,<sup>1</sup> has faced a variety of objections, some of which concern persistence.<sup>2</sup> I offer a new objection, namely, that animalism, at least in conjunction with

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<sup>1</sup> Early advocates of animalism include Michael Ayers, *Locke*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1991); William R. Carter, “How to Change Your Mind,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1989): 1–14; David Mackie, “Animalism Versus Lockeanism: No Contest,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 49 (1999): 369–76; Trenton Merricks, *Objects and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity Without Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997); and Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Paul F. Snowdon, “Persons, Animals, and Ourselves,” in C. Grill (ed.), *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 83–107; David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001). More recent proponents include Andrew Bailey, “Our Animal Interests,” *Philosophical Studies* 174 (2017): 2315–2328, Stephan Blatti, Stephan, “A New Argument for Animalism,” *Analysis* 72 (4) (2012): 685–690; David Hershenov, “Persons as Proper Parts of Organisms,” *Theoria* 71 (2005): 29–37; and Eric Yang, “Unrestricted Animalism and the Too Many Candidates Problem,” *Philosophical Studies* 172.3 (2015): 635–652.

<sup>2</sup> Some argue that human persons cannot be identical to animals because the persistence conditions of human persons (psychological persistence conditions) are different from the persistence conditions of animals. Christopher Belshaw has argued that animalism runs into problems of persistence concerning how animals cease to exist (“Animals, Identity and Persistence,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89, No. 3

a complex theory of identity, is inconsistent with endurantism, roughly, the view that one and the same object exists at different times or with different classes of features, without having temporal parts.<sup>3</sup>

Animalism is consistent with both complex and simple theories of our diachronic identity. Broadly stated, the complex view reduces our diachronic identity to non-trivial, non-redundant, and non-identity-involving constraints or relations.<sup>4</sup> These are usually developed as biological, bodily, or psychological relations. By contrast, the simple view denies such reductive accounts, holding instead that our identity through time consists in nothing other than itself. Complex animalism has two extant varieties: biological animalism and psychologically-serious animalism. Biological animalism has been extensively developed by Eric Olson and Peter van Inwagen to include the thesis that facts about the endurance of an organism are wholly grounded in the fact that a life endures. I argue that because life does not endure, a life cannot wholly ground the endurance of an organism. Hence, if biological animalism is true, then organisms, including you and I, do not endure. After analyzing the connections between the biological animalist notion of a 'life' and the persistence conditions of animals, I argue that lives cannot endure and that the persistence of an animal is grounded in the persistence of that animal's life. I then argue that the other extant version of complex animalism, psychologically-serious animalism, is likewise susceptible to the enduring problem. Consequently, complex animalism entails that you and I cannot endure.

## 2. *Animalism, Grounding, and Personal Identity*

Animalism is a simple thesis, according to which, each one of us, every human person, is a human animal. Consequently, when I refer to myself, I refer to a biological organism. However, the term 'person' is as a phase sortal, a functional concept that tells us only what we do.<sup>5</sup> The terms 'animal,' 'organism,' and 'human animal,' however, are understood as substance sortals, capable of explaining the conditions under which we persist.<sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, then, personal identity is not a real thing.<sup>7</sup> If the main issue is not personal identity, but rather the identity of a living organism, then we should want to pursue what it is for a living organism to persist.

Admittedly, the basic thesis of animalism does not entail a theory of persistence more specific than the commitment that the persistence conditions of a human are the same as the persistence conditions of an animal. Some understand animalism as agnostic about

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(2011): 401-419). Lynn Rudder Baker has argued that animalism fails to take the persistence of persons seriously (*Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 224-26). E. J. Lowe has raised a problem regarding animalism and synchronic identity (*Subjects of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 31). John Dupré has recently argued that it is quite difficult to say what an animal is qua individual organism, which problematizes the animalist notion of personal identity. ("Animalism and the Persistence of the Human Organism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52, Spindle Supplement (2014): 6-23.

<sup>3</sup> I am following the conventional use of 'persists,' 'endures,' and 'perdures' as introduced by David Lewis in *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986, 202.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Harold W. Noonan, "The Complex and Simple Views of Personal Identity," *Analysis* 71 (1) (2011): 72-77.

<sup>5</sup> Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Nichols offers an interesting argument intended to undermine this view. See his paper, "Substance Concepts and Personal Identity," *Philosophical Studies* 150 (2010): 255-70.

<sup>7</sup> Olson, *Ibid.*, 26-27.

persistence conditions in general.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, most animalists privilege biological accounts of diachronic identity over psychological accounts. In fact, animalists typically consider this an advantage over rival accounts of what we are. It is, therefore, appropriate to envisage a biological account of persistence from the animalist.<sup>9</sup> However, some animalists are anti-criterialists holding that there are no informative criteria of diachronic identity including biological criteria.<sup>10</sup> In order to distinguish between mere animalism and the form of animalism that embraces a biological account of persistence, I will refer to the later as biological animalism.

Olson is quite clear on what is meant by biological persistence:

As for identity over time, I am inclined to believe that an organism persists if and only if its life continues. This has the surprising consequence that an organism ceases to exist when the event that maintains its internal structure stops and cannot be restarted—that is, when the organism dies.<sup>11</sup>

Elsewhere Olson states,

What it takes for us to survive is the same throughout our careers: we persist, as other animals do, just in case our biological lives continue. At any point in my career I survive if and only if my vital functions—those complex biochemical and mechanical activities of my atoms by virtue of which they compose a living organism—are preserved.<sup>12</sup>

The thought is that organisms are not the kinds of things that can persist on their own. “An organism’s life,” says Olson, “enables it to persist and retain its characteristic structure despite constant material turnover.”<sup>13</sup> Organisms undergo constant part replacement and, therefore, can persist only in virtue of being caught up in a life. This is expressed in the form of a principle van Inwagen calls ‘Life’<sup>14</sup> which I state as follows:

**SAME-LIFE CRITERION:** if  $O_1$  is an organism and  $O_2$  is an organism, then  $O_1 = O_2$  iff the thing that is  $O_1$ ’s life at  $t_1$  = the thing that is  $O_2$ ’s life at  $t_2$ .

To be clear, “sameness of life” is understood as numerical identity.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly,  $O_1$  persists and is thereby the same thing as  $O_2$  just in case  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are caught up in a life at  $t_1$  that is numerically identical to a life at  $t_2$ . Consequently, animalism is committed to a complex view of diachronic identity, as there is some further fact that makes it the case

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<sup>8</sup> See, Eric T. Olson, “What Does it Mean to Say That We Are Animals?” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22 (11–12) (2015): 84–107; Andrew M. Bailey, “Animalism,” *Philosophy Compass* 10/12 (2015): 867–883; and Allison Krile Thornton, “Varieties of Animalism,” *Philosophy Compass* 11/9 (2016): 515–526.

<sup>9</sup> There is a divergence of opinion regarding whether or not being alive is a necessary condition for our persistence and those who deny this. Those such as Olson and van Inwagen fall into the former camp, while those such as David Mackie (“Personal Identity and Dead People”, *Philosophical Studies*, 95 (1999), 237), and Michael Ayers (*Locke* (London: Routledge, 1991), vol. 2, 224) fall in the latter. For the purposes of this paper, I am concerned only with those animalists in the former camp.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Trenton Merricks, “There are No Criteria of Identity Over Time,” *Noûs* 32 (1) (1998): 106–124.

<sup>11</sup> Olson, *What Are We?*, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Eric T. Olson, “Was I Ever a Fetus?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, no.1 (March, 1997), 106.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>14</sup> van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Olson confirmed this through a very helpful email correspondence.

that  $O_1$  is identical to  $O_2$ , namely that the life of this organism is numerically identical despite the passage of time.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1. SAME-LIFE & Grounding Personal Identity

According to Olson, complex views of diachronic identity involve a *grounding claim* and a *criterion of identity*. It is the life that accounts for both. According to Olson and van Inwagen, the persistence conditions of an organism are grounded in the persistence of the biological life in which it is “caught up.” According to Olson, the SAME-LIFE CRITERION can only be informative if the persistence of an organism cannot ground the persistence of a life. Otherwise, one couldn’t know if a specific life persists without first knowing that the organism persists. However, Olson contends we can know that a life persists without making any judgments about the persistence of material objects in the same way we can know that a storm persists without making any judgment about the material parts that compose the storm.<sup>17</sup> Hence, the persistence of an organism is wholly grounded in the persistence of a life.

A second reason to think the persistence of an organism is grounded in a life is that it follows from the SAME-LIFE CRITERION that life is more fundamental than organisms. According to standard accounts, *As* are ontologically more fundamental than *Bs*, in the relevant sense, if facts about the existence of *Bs* are grounded in facts about *As*.<sup>18</sup> This notion of fundamentality is no mere add-on to animalism, as animalist John Dupré explains:

However, without some identification of fundamentality, we are in danger of disturbing an intuition that surely is part of the motivation for animalism—that something biological is more fundamental than the psychological capacities on which rival accounts of personal identity are based.<sup>19</sup>

So, animalism requires that facts about the persistence of organisms be grounded in facts about lives. The persistence of an organism is grounded in or inherited from the life in which it is caught up. Hence, lives are ontologically more fundamental than organisms.

### 2.3. ANIMAL IDENTITY & Grounding

According to Olson, on complex views such as animalism, there is a constitutive criterion of identity which provides individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the persistence of a human animal.<sup>20</sup> This criterion of identity is understood in terms of being ‘caught up in a life’ that persists numerically identical from moment to moment. It

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<sup>16</sup> Olson, “In Search of the Simple View,” *Personal Identity: Complex or Simple* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012): 46-47.

<sup>17</sup> Olson, *The Human Animal*, 139-140.

<sup>18</sup> For example, according to Jonathan Shaffer, ‘*x* is fundamental’ just means that ‘nothing grounds *x*’, while ‘*x* is derivative’ just means that ‘something grounds *x*.’ See, Jonathan Schaffer, “On What Grounds What” in David Manley, David J. Chalmers & Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 373. See also, Gideon Rosen, “Metaphysical Dependence, Grounding and Reduction,” *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*, edited by Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 109-135; and Kit Fine, “Guide to Grounding,” *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, edited by Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 37-80.

<sup>19</sup> John Dupré, “Animalism and the Persistence of Human Organisms,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52, *Spindel Supplement* (2014), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Olson, “In Search of the Simple View,” 47.

is the persistence of the unity and biological function of a life—a metabolic process—that is both necessary and jointly sufficient for a human animal to persist.<sup>21</sup>

We should, therefore, understand the same-life criterion as *an identity criterion expressing a grounding claim*, which is expressed as follows:

**ANIMAL IDENTITY:** Necessarily, if  $O_1$  is a human at time  $t_1$  and  $O_2$  exists at another time  $t_2$ ,  $O_1$  is numerically identical to  $O_2$  iff the thing that is  $O_1$ 's life at  $t_1$  is numerically identical to the thing that is  $O_2$ 's life at  $t_2$ .

Note that the SAME-LIFE CRITERION entails ANIMAL IDENTITY because the SAME-LIFE CRITERION is a complex view of personal identity, which is an identity criterion expressing a grounding claim. Hence, a human animal persists just in case the life it is caught up in persists.

#### 2.4. *Composition & Unity of an Organism*

In addition to grounding facts about persistence, facts about lives also ground facts about the composition of organisms. “The objects that compose the organism,” says Olson, “are the ones whose activities constitute its life.”<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere Olson states, “Organisms have parts: vast numbers of them...What are the parts of an organism? Where does an organism leave off, and its environment begin? Where an organism's boundaries lie has presumably to do with the spatial extent of its life.”<sup>23</sup>

The human organism, then, is a complex aggregate of parts that are unified by the life it is caught up in. More precisely this is stated as,

**ANIMAL COMPOSITION:** For any  $x$  and  $y$  and  $z$ , if  $x$  is an organism and  $y$  is the life of  $x$ , then the  $z$ s wholly and entirely compose  $x$  iff the activity of the  $z$ s constitutes the life of  $y$ , and for any  $w$ ,  $w$  is one of the  $z$ s iff the activity of  $w$  partly constitutes the life of  $y$ .<sup>24</sup>

This can be applied to persistence in the following way. According to ANIMAL COMPOSITION,  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are the same organism even though the atomic simples of  $O_1$  are not identical to the atomic simples of  $O_2$  provided that  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  are caught up in a life that itself remains numerically identical over time. That is, according to ANIMAL COMPOSITION, constituting a part of the life's activities is a sufficient condition for parthood. The organism can gain and lose parts without retaining its numerical identity insofar as the various parts at different times are caught up in the numerically identical life. As it is, the mereologically complex organism is a unified whole insofar as its parts count toward sustaining the structure and activities of the life. This is what makes it possible for the term ‘organism’ and ‘animal’ to be sortal concepts. *Notice that, according to this view, without life as a unifying principle, the complex, ever-changing human organism would fall prey to mereological essentialist constraints on persistence, that a thing's identity and persistence is constituted by its separable parts.*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Olson, *The Human Animal*, 137.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>23</sup> Olson, *What Are We?*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Peter van Inwagen holds to a stricter theory of composition. However, his composition commitments are not entailed by animalism. See his, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Notice a further interesting consequence. As I have argued, according to the animalism of Olson and van Inwagen, parthood depends on being caught up in a life. Regardless of how Olson talks, it seems that on this view organisms don't have lives, but rather that lives have organisms. That is, life is primitive, and

This kind of robust animalism is committed to the view that the unity of the life is metaphysically more fundamental than the unity of an organism. This is entailed by the SAME-LIFE CRITERIA, according to which my persistence conditions are determined by the persistence conditions of a biological life. This is at odds with, for example, an Aristotelian view of organisms as substances and ontologically more fundamental than lives.<sup>26</sup>

Admittedly, animalists have not clearly made this point. However, it does seem clear that on this view a life consists in the unified structure of the activities of all the parts at a time and is capable of sustaining its identity as the individual activities of the parts change. Hence, the unity of an organism is derived from the activities of the organism's parts at a given time which is either identical to or constitute the life of the organism at that time. As long as the structural arrangement of living activities remains the same, parts can come and go, while the diachronic identity of the organism is retained. As a result, animalists that follow Olson and van Inwagen must deny that the unity of the organism comes first. It just is the case that the unity of a life—the sustaining of the activities of the parts into a stable structure of activities—is ontologically prior to the unity of the organism and that the parts of the organism are unified if they count towards sustaining that unity.

To summarize, after clarifying the fundamental thesis of animalism I offered four reasons to think that if animalism is true, then the endurance of an organism is wholly grounded in a life. First, this is entailed from a central thesis of biological animalism: the SAME-LIFE CRITERION. Secondly, according to the SAME-LIFE CRITERION lives are more fundamental than organisms, which is a feature of the grounding relation. Third, the SAME-LIFE CRITERION entails ANIMAL IDENTITY, which is an identity criterion expressing a grounding claim. Lastly, facts about the unity of an organism are grounded in facts about a life. Hence, life is what makes an organism a unified whole, which is necessary if it is going to persist by being wholly present. Concerning persistence, life does for the animalists what the substantial soul does for the substance dualist, or what form does for the hylomorphist.

### 3. Can a Life Endure?

For  $x$  to endure means that one and the same object,  $x$ , exists at different times or with different classes of features without having temporal parts. On this view, identity over time is strict numerical identity between objects that are wholly present at different times. That is, an enduring object,  $x$ , at time  $t_1$  is identical to itself at another time  $t_2$ .<sup>27</sup> Hence, for any object to endure it must maintain its strict identity at any time it exists. With this in mind, I argue that lives do not endure.

Consider, first, how biological animalists characterize life. Olson states,

By a life I mean...a self-organizing biological event that maintains the organism's complex internal structure...an organism's life enables it to persist and retain its characteristic structure despite constant material turnover.<sup>28</sup>

So, a life is a special kind of event, a self-maintaining event, where particles of matter are continually and rapidly drawn into the organism and expelled. More specifically, according

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organisms only exist in so far as the activities of their parts are caught up in a life. This may be a difficulty for animalism as biologists seem to talk of an organism having a life. It appears the animalist may have it backward.

<sup>26</sup> Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz, *Substance: Its Nature and Existence* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 93-94.

<sup>27</sup> Trenton Merricks, "Endurance and Indiscernibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 91 (4) (1994), 183.

<sup>28</sup> Olson, *What Are We?*, 28.

to van Inwagen, a life has the following essential features.<sup>29</sup> First, a life is a homeodynamic, self-maintaining, storm of simples, continually sucking up new parts and expelling old parts. Secondly, life is an event composed of smaller events that are self-directing and self-sustaining processes. Third, a life is a jealous event, seeking to sustain itself, and striving to maintain its own identity, form, and structure.<sup>30</sup>

If life endures, it will do so only in virtue of the endurance of these metabolic activities. Whatever the endurance conditions the life has is determined by the endurance conditions of the activities that constitute the life (relation tokens and part tokens constituent of the metabolic process). However, given this picture, it seems that a life does not itself endure. Recall that the reason organisms do not persist on their own is that they are mereological aggregates perpetually undergoing part replacement. But it seems to me that this is also true of a life. A life is an event composed of a collection of separate relation instances and atomic parts. As parts are replaced, so are the relation instances. Because of this inherent process, a life at  $t_1$  is not numerically identical to a life at  $t_2$ . Although the relation types and part types may remain, the specific relation tokens and part tokens are expelled and replaced. That is, the life at  $t_2$  might have the same type of structure and the same type of parts as the life at  $t_1$ , although the life at  $t_2$  does not have the numerically identical structure or the numerically identical parts as the life at  $t_1$ . The life just is this storm of parts and relation instances. It isn't as if there is some fundamental thing that has various separable parts and relation instances. A life just is the storm, the collection of parts and relations. The result is that a life does not endure.

The consequence is quite considerable. As it turns out, a life is a mereological aggregate just as much as the human organism and its material parts. The overarching relation instance at time  $t$  is a sum of the relation instances in flux at  $t$ . However, if life is a mereological aggregate in flux, as I have argued, then a life at  $t_1$  will never be numerically identical to a life at  $t_2$ . But this is the very problem that requires the persistence of an organism to be grounded in something else. The reason for the animalist to conclude that organisms do not themselves persist is the same reason to conclude that a life does not persist. Consequently, a life does not endure.

#### 4. *Can Life Ground the Fact that I Endure?*

With the conclusion of the previous two sections in mind, it is now imperative to ask if a life is the kind of thing that can ground the endurance of the human animal? That is, can the unifying work of a life make the mereologically complex human organism a literal continuant, existing as one and the same object at different times or with different classes of features without temporal parts? Although animalists answer in the affirmative, I suggest such a view is problematic. If a life does not endure, then it cannot wholly ground the endurance of an organism.<sup>31</sup> The essence of the problem is this. Upon reflection it seems that a life does not itself endure. Therefore, animalists who adopt the SAME-LIFE CRITERION must hold that a human animal endures in virtue of being caught up in a life that does not endure. But what then does it mean for life to ground the endurance of an organism when life does not endure? This objection can be understood in two ways. On

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<sup>29</sup> van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> There may be a problem of circularity for the animalist here. The self or the animal has to exist before it is maintained. However, on this view maintenance is required before there is a self.

<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, Olson realizes there is an objection to be made against animalism's current treatment of the persistence conditions for organisms in terms of biological life (Olson, *The Human Animal*, 139-40). Unfortunately, Olson misdiagnoses the problem as an epistemic issue, an issue of knowing which animal I am in relation to the life in which I am caught up. However, the problem, as I have stated it, is strictly metaphysical and does not yield to considerations of epistemology.

one reading, it reveals a weakness in the work of Olson and van Inwagen. On a broader reading, these objections reveal a fundamental problem with the biological approach to animalism, and as I ultimately argue, all extant forms of complex animalism. Either reading pushes the discussion forward. I find both readings compelling.

#### *4.1 A Weak Problem*

There are at least two possible considerations here. First, how is it metaphysically helpful or even philosophically meaningful to posit a view of grounding where the grounds have nothing significant about them that could be taken to be the ground of endurance? The fact that a human animal endures is supposed to be grounded in some fact about lives. The most plausible fact would be that lives endure. But, as I have argued, that isn't the case. Consequently, what are we to make of the grounding relation between the human animal and the life in which it is caught up? What fact or set of facts about the life is it that ground the endurance of the human animal? There is at least a problem the animalist needs to give an account of. Otherwise, it seems meaningless to speak of grounding the endurance of a human animal in a life. Here the enduring problem raises the need for an account of how a non-enduring entity can wholly ground the endurance of something else. This at least shifts the burden of proof onto the animalist. However, this can be leveraged into an argument against biological animalism.

#### *4.2 A Stronger Problem*

There is a stronger way of putting the enduring problem for animalism. One could argue that the sameness of life simply cannot ground the persistence of an organism because a life isn't the kind of thing that can remain numerically identical from one moment to the next. More specifically, because the life at  $t_1$  is not numerically identical to the life at  $t_2$  the life that is taken to ground the persistence of the organism is not wholly present at  $t_1$  or at  $t_2$  and therefore does not endure.

This argument is motivated by the following intuition:

**GROUNDING INTUITION:** For any entity  $e$ ,  $e$  can wholly ground the endurance of  $y$  iff  $e$  itself endures.

The GROUNDING INTUITION seems uncontroversial, especially for those views that adopt grounding claims. Accordingly, it just is the fact that what grounds  $y$  enduring just is the fact that  $e$  endures. Notice what follows: For any entity  $e$  that does not itself endure, call such entities  $e^*$ ,  $e^*$  cannot wholly ground the fact that any entity  $y$  endures. This seems correct. Just how could it be the case that a life, which does not itself endure, wholly ground the fact that an organism endures? The relevant fact needed is that life endures and thereby grounds the endurance of the human animal. Unfortunately, it is not a fact that life endures. Consequently, life isn't the kind of thing that can wholly ground an organism's endurance. A life is not an ontologically unified continuant that endures, but a mereological aggregate in constant flux. Moreover, the life is neither unified in its self nor unified by anything else. Life simply lacks unity and endurance, and, therefore, can neither ground the endurance of an organism nor the unity an organism needs in order to endure.

I suspect some might not find GROUNDING INTUITION plausible. Here is an alternative way of making the grounding objection. Recall why the biological animalism needs both the SAME-LIFE CRITERION and ANIMAL IDENTITY. "An organism's life," says Olson, "enables it to persist and retain its characteristic structure despite constant

material turnover.”<sup>32</sup> That is, according to biological animalism, an organism cannot persist on its own. Why? Because an organism is continually undergoing part replacement. This rests on the following:

**REPLACEMENT PRINCIPLE:** If  $x$  undergoes rapid continuous part replacement, then  $x$  cannot endure on its own.

Because an organism undergoes constant part replacement, if it is to endure it can only do so in virtue of some other thing. The biological animalist posits life as that in virtue of which an organism endures. However, we should ask the following question: Does a life satisfy the REPLACEMENT PRINCIPLE? As I have argued, the answer is no. Life cannot endure on its own, because it too undergoes constant part replacement.

To be clear, I am not arguing that if  $x$  grounds the existence of  $y$ , then  $x$  exists at the same time as  $y$  does. That seems false. Consider the two events: “World War II” and “World War II being over”. The first grounds the second. But the two events do not happen at the same time, and temporal parts of the former do not induce temporal parts in the latter. What I am arguing is that if  $x$  wholly grounds the total endurance of  $y$  (the endurance of  $y$  from  $y$ ’s beginning to end), then  $x$  exists at the same times as  $y$ ’s total endurance.

As I have argued, a life does not exist at the same times as an organism’s total endurance. Life cannot endure as it undergoes constant part replacement. Hence, the very entity posited by biological animalism to ground our persistence suffers the very problem it was intended to solve. Biological animalism, it turns out, is incompatible with endurantism.

## 5. Objections

### 5.1 *Life as Temporally Extended?*

Perhaps, the animalist can escape this enduring problem by arguing that a life is as a temporally extended event and therefore endures making it possible to ground the endurance of a human animal. Not only is this a consistent view for the animalists, given that van Inwagen conceives of a life as *an event* composed of smaller events, this may actually be his view. Accordingly, lives are not ‘built up’ from smaller units. Instead, lives are temporally extended wholes that can be divided into indefinitely many parts, each of which is also a temporally extended event.<sup>33</sup> A life then is like a baseball game composed of stages or sub-events, such as innings, plays, and at-bats. It is a collection of particular activities, parts, and relations that are in constant flux.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, a life is temporally extended like an object being specially extended, such that the life does not exist in virtue of its parts existing. Rather, it is a fundamentally or intrinsically extended thing in a similar way some think of a fundamental causal process. If a life is a temporally extended event and such events can be metaphysically fundamental objects, then an organism can endure by being caught up in a life that is temporally extended.

The central question to ask here is, are temporally extended events necessarily dependent or derivative objects or is it possible for temporally extended events to be

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Huemer and Ben Kovitz, “Causation as Simultaneous and Continuous,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2013), 560.

<sup>34</sup> It is not clear to me if a life, on this view, is a continuant or an extended event. If it is a continuant, then it seems to be a substance, which animalists do not seem to hold.

ontologically independent? To clarify,  $x$  is *fundamental* just in case nothing grounds  $x$ , while  $x$  is *derivative* just in case something grounds  $x$ .<sup>35</sup> It is clear that animalism holds life to be fundamental, but it isn't clear that this can be the case if life is understood as a temporally extended event. There is, I think, a convincing reason to reject such a view, namely, that such a view gets the modal facts wrong.

According to a popular view of events, the property exemplification view, most notably defended by Jagewon Kim,<sup>36</sup> events have their identity in virtue of an object's having a property at a time.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, an event is a dated particular, "a concrete object (or  $n$ -tuple objects) exemplifying a property (or  $n$ -atic relation) at a time." Events, Kim says, are "complexes of objects and properties, and also time points and segments..."<sup>38</sup> For example, the birth of Socrates is the exemplification of the property of coming-to-life-by-Socrates, just as the death of Socrates is the exemplification of the property of dying or life-ending-by-Socrates at a particular time.

Events on such a view are individual entities with a fine-grained structure. Hence, a variance in any constituent of an event is sufficient to yield a different event. Alter one feature, and the resulting event is a different event. Notice what this entails: *extended events, on this view, cannot have a temporal extent different from the temporal extent they have.* For example, the life of Socrates is an event of a specific duration, a constituent of which is Socrates exemplifying the property of existing from, say,  $t_1$  through  $t_{10}$ . It is necessary to the event—Socrates' life—that it have the temporal extension it has, because its temporal extent is constitutive of the event. It couldn't be any longer or any shorter.

Here is my point. Such a view will get the modal facts about Socrates wrong. It is a modal fact about Socrates, for example, that he could have lived longer had he not taken the hemlock. Nevertheless, if Socrates' life grounds the endurance of Socrates, then it can't be the case that Socrates lives any longer than he actually lived. These modal facts are quite obvious, as E. J. Lowe points out, "... it is part of the essence of Socrates' life that it is the life of Socrates, but it is not part of the essence of Socrates that he is the person who lived that life..."<sup>39</sup> However, that isn't true given the conjunction of biological animalism and lives understood as temporally extended events, as the temporally extended event has its temporal extension necessarily. Hence, the biological animalist gets the modal facts about us wrong.

While this objection may have initially seemed plausible, raising it actually reinforces the principal argument of this paper. What this shows is that the biological animalist has the dependence relation between a life and a human animal backward.

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<sup>35</sup> For more on this distinction see, Jonathan Shaffer, "What Grounds What," in David Manley, David J. Chalmers & Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> See the following papers by Kim: "On the Psycho-Physical Identity Theory," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1966): 227-35; "Events and their Descriptions: Some Considerations" in Nicholas Rescher, et al (eds.) *Essays in Honor of Carl G. Hempel*, (Reidel, Dordrecht-Holland, 1969); "Causes and Events: Mackie on Causation," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 426-41; "Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 217-36; and "Events as Property Exemplifications," *Action Theory*, edited by Myles Brand and Douglas Walton (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1976): 159-77.

<sup>37</sup> Similar accounts of events are given in Jonathan Bennett, *Events and their Names* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1988); Barry Taylor, *Modes of Occurrence: Verbs, Adverbs and Events* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985); R. M. Martin, "On Events and Event-Descriptions," *Fact and Existence*, edited by J. Margolis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969): 63-74; and N. L. Wilson, "Facts, Events, and their Identity Conditions," *Philosophical Studies* 25 (1974): 303-21. Alvin Goldman gives a similar account of action in, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

<sup>38</sup> Kim, "Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event," 223.

<sup>39</sup> E. J. Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 153.

According to biological animalism, a life determines the persistence of an organism. However, as I have argued, this has unforeseen difficulties. Biological animalism, as it turns out, is at odds with endurantism.

## 5.2. *Psychologically-Serious Animalism?*

The biological approach is not the only extant form of complex animalism. Perhaps the complex animalist can avoid the enduring problem with a disjunctive criterion for the persistence of the animal. Kevin Sharp has developed such a view, which he calls psychological-serious animalism.<sup>40</sup> Here the persistence conditions of a human animal are both biological and psychological. Sharp offers the following persistence conditions,

**PS ANIMAL IDENTITY:** Necessarily, for any  $x$  and  $y$ , if  $x$  is a human person at  $t_1$  and  $y$  is something that exists at another time,  $t_2$ , then  $x = y$  if and only if (i)  $y$  is biologically continuous with  $x$  and (ii)  $y$  is psychologically continuous with  $x$ .

This disjunctive account is thought to have greater explanatory power than the biological approach by adding psychological continuity to our persistence. I am not convinced.<sup>41</sup>

The enduring problem I've raised against the biological approach is likewise problematic for psychologically-serious animalism in the following way. The result is that one of the disjuncts, biological continuity, fails. Right away the advantage that psychologically-serious animalism intended to provide is stripped away. The enduring problem forces the psychologically serious animalist to ground facts about the persistence of the human animal in facts about psychological continuity alone. This result alone is enough trouble for psychological serious animalism. As already mentioned, many find animalism attractive as it does not ground facts about our persistence in facts about our psychological continuity. The animalist no longer has this motivation.

## 6. Moving Animalism Forward

What then is the complex animalist to do? I see a number of options. The most obvious solution is to reject complex animalism and endorse anti-criterialism, also known as the simple view of personal identity. On this view there are no informative criteria of our diachronic identity.<sup>42</sup> So, the endurance of an animalism, of me, of you, is not reducible anything else, such as a biological process or psychological continuity. However, not all animalists are willing to adopt the simple view.

Alternatively, the complex animalist might adopt a process ontology according to which processes, such as a life, are fundamental continuants.<sup>43</sup> Following John Dupré, the animalist might endorse the view that living systems, such as the animal itself, is a process composed of multiple biological subprocesses.<sup>44</sup> One might argue that lives are enduring

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<sup>40</sup> Kevin W. Sharp, "Animalism and Person Essentialism," *Metaphysica* 16 (1) (2015): 53-72.

<sup>41</sup> For an animalist criticism of this view, see, Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 109–11.

<sup>42</sup> For a defense of anti-criterialism, see, Trenton Merricks, "There are no criteria of identity over time" *Noûs* 32 (1) (1998): 106–124; E. J. Lowe, "The Probable Simplicity of Personal Identity," in *Personal Identity: Complex or Simple*, eds. Georg Gasser and Matthias Stefan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 137–55; and Alexander R. Pruss, "A Deflationary Theory of Diachronic Identity," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1) (2012): 19–37.

<sup>43</sup> For recent work that weighs the pros and cons of process ontology, see, David Wiggins, "Activity, Process, Continuant, Substance, Organism," *Philosophy* 91 (2016):269-280; and J. Seibt, "Process Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/process-philosophy/>>S

<sup>44</sup> See, John Dupré, "Animalism and the Persistence of Human Organisms," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52 (2014): 6-23.

things. There is a small literature on “occurrent continuant,” within which some authors argue for a species of occurrences or events that actually do endure.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the complex animalist can show that lives are occurrences of this sort.<sup>46</sup>

Third, one might embrace an even less popular view, ensouled animalism, according to which ensouled animalism—the view that we are identical to animals that have immaterial souls as parts.<sup>47</sup> This version of substance dualism is likely unattractive to animalists. However, it may avoid the enduring problem as a substantial soul itself endures and so can ground facts about the endurance of the organism.

Lastly, one could embrace hylomorphic animalism.<sup>48</sup> On such a view a life would be an immaterial form, capable of its own endurance as well as grounding the endurance of the animal. Alternatively, one might be able to avoid the full commitments of hylomorphic animalism yet embrace a hylomorphic ontology of life in order to avoid the enduring problem.<sup>49</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Of course, each of these ways forward come at a cost. But perhaps these alternatives make possible for the persistence of animalism itself. Of course, given the enduring problem, the degree to which one finds these alternatives implausible is the degree to which one should find animalism implausible. Regardless of where one comes down on that issue, what must be contended with, or so I have argued, is that complex animalism is incompatible with endurantism.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Rowland Stout, “The Category of Occurrent Continuants,” *Mind* 125 (497) (2016): 41-62; and Rowland Stout, “The Life of a Process,” in Guy Debrock (ed.), *Process Pragmatism: Essays on a Quiet Philosophical Revolution* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 145-158.

<sup>46</sup> I am grateful to REDACTED for this suggestion as well as his encouragement to pursue the argument in this paper.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua C. Thurow, “Animals with Souls,” *Sophia* 57 (1) (2018): 85-101.

<sup>48</sup> See, Patrick Toner “Hylemorphic animalism,” *Philosophical Studies* 155 (1) (2011): 65–81.

<sup>49</sup> See, Christopher J. Austin and Anna Marmodoro, “Structural Powers and the Homeodynamic Unity of Organisms.” In William M. R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, and Nicholas J. Teh (eds.), *Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives on Contemporary Science* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 169-184.

<sup>50</sup> I wish to thank J. P. Moreland, Timothy O’Connor, Eric Olson, Alexander Pruss, Timothy Pickavance, Brad Rettler, Jeremy Skrzypek, and Eric Yang for helpful comments on the earlier draft of this paper.