

The flow of time and temporal experience

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- **What does it mean for reality to possess T ?**
- **What does it mean for experience to make manifest to us T ?**

The debate in metaphysics: A- vs. B-theory

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- Eternalist ontology, but possibly different topologies (linear, branching)

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- Block universe (it doesn't contain T)
 - Human experience is just a world-line of conscious events

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The theoretical question

What is (the status of) the feeling of time passing?

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- Experiences of qualitative temporal features (*T-features*): change (E_C / C_C), movement (E_M / C_M), succession, persistence, duration ...

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- **Phenomenal Modifier View:** it is a non-representational feature of content, which modifies the way the content feels (like being *vivid* or *blurred*)

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 - Hoerl's **intelligibility problem**: our experience as of T cannot be explained in terms of a perceptual illusion if we *cannot* perceive T

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- Therefore, we cannot exploit reductionism to solve the intelligibility problem

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- Experiences of T-features are largely independent from each other: why they all get mistaken for E_T ?

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- In order to establish the falsity of WH_2 , it should be established that experiences lacking any phenomenal character connected to T-features would not give rise to the belief that time passes
- Difficult issue, which requires trade-off with theoretical decisions in other disciplines too

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- **Phenomenal modifier**: non-worldly feature of experience that make a difference for the way a concurrent mental episode with a content feels to us
- They typically have an influence on the beliefs based on the concurrent content (whether beliefs is accepted or not may depend on broader factors)

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 - A slowed down time makes longer the perceived durations – roughly as a vivid visual perception makes the perceived colours brighter

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- But if phenomenal modifier view is correct, there is a **distinction** between duration perception and experience of passage

Internal Clock vs. Flow of Consciousness I

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“Imagine that you are a caveman or -woman on the veldt. Scanning the horizon, you spot a sabre-toothed tiger heading your way. Then suddenly the world around you seems to slow down and the tiger appears to be running more slowly. How is this helpful? The tiger is not actually running any more slowly. And the illusion of time being drawn out gives you no extra seconds in which to flee. We get a much more satisfactory explanation of what is going on if we consider how things look on a mental activity picture. Here the effect of the fear-based dopamine spike is to speed mental activity. That, in and of itself, is an adaptive response”. (Phillips 2013: 246)

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- There is a *logical* connection: once we reason about the speed of a certain movement that we have misperceived as lasting an amount of time that *we know* is longer than usual, we conclude that the movement must have seemed as slow down
- But it does not follow from the fact that we can perform such a piece of reasoning, that *when* we misperceive the duration as longer we also have a “time is slowing down” sensation

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- Analogy with other phenomenal modifiers: if we are experiencing a very vivid visual experience, the experienced redness of an apple may appear as “unusually” bright
- If E_T is due to a independent cognitive mechanism, then it may be that the mechanism it is influenced by dopamine peak, and as a consequence duration perception and evaluation is altered

Thanks!

The End