

Methodological Problems in the Phenomenology of Time

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§1. Introduction

It is generally acknowledged, at least since Augustine, that the philosophy of time poses challenging problems. This is certainly true, but hardly interesting enough to make time a special philosophical topic. There is a more specific and more interesting version of the claim, which is closer to what Augustine actually said. This is the claim that it is particularly difficult to develop a coherent conception of time on the basis of our experience of time. Augustine's famous statement¹ can thus be read as indicating that experience presents us time, or the temporal properties of what is in time, in a way that we find hard to articulate within a coherent theory of time. This sounds as if our experience of time were at least puzzling, if not contradictory.

A phenomenology of the perception of time² studies our experience of time. So it might be expected to offer a view of time-consciousness that solves the apparent puzzles. But how exactly should this be done? How does phenomenology contribute to the solution of the puzzles of time-consciousness? This paper offers no solution to the puzzles of time-consciousness. It rather aims at clarifying some methodological issues related to the way phenomenology proceeds in this area. More precisely, the paper inquires into the relation between the phenomenology of the perception of time and the metaphysics of time. It describes the specific contribution we obtain from phenomenology for our understanding of the nature of time. It argues that a genuine phenomenological inquiry into the perception of time establishes what we are rationally entitled to believe about the nature of time on the basis of the way we experience time. It contrasts this understanding with a conception that takes phenomenology to describe the

¹ «What is time? If nobody ask me I know», but «who is able so much as in thought to comprehend it?» (Augustinus and Chadwick (2008): section XI, 14).

² Unless otherwise stated in a particular context, I do not distinguish between time-consciousness, perception of time and time-awareness.

qualitative features of the experience that would be used as evidence speaking in favour of a particular conception of time. The paper describes the main differences between the two philosophical projects and establishes that the kind of weaknesses one might find in the second project cannot be transferred to the first. The task of a philosophical inquiry into the nature of time can be understood as aiming at an integration of the phenomenology of time with other approaches about the nature of time.

The paper has seven sections. I shall now summarise them. More detailed arguments will follow. The next section describes three puzzles that are generated by our experience of time. They concern the temporal properties of our experience of time, the way time is presented in consciousness, and the relation between our experience of time and the metaphysics of time. These three puzzles have a number of independent problems. For the purpose of the present paper the differences will be ignored and the emphasis will lie on those aspects that concern the relation between time-consciousness and the metaphysics of time. A philosophical treatment of the puzzles should ultimately aim at a coherent view that explains how our metaphysics of time is related to time-consciousness. Following a rather natural understanding, this would mean to integrate two explanatory strategies. The first strategy, which is experience-driven, starts by analysing our perception of time and then inquires into the consequences one can draw from it with respect to the nature of time. The second strategy, which is world-driven, starts by developing an independent metaphysical conception of time and then determines which features of the experience of time are compatible with it. The two strategies are described in section three. The paper thenceforth aims at elucidating the precise nature of the experience-driven strategy. In order to do so, section four and five discuss an influential conception of the opposition between the two strategies, presented by L.A. Paul. Paul assumes that we experience time as passing and events as present, past and future. She further presupposes that an experience-driven approach uses these features of the experience as evidence speaking in favour of

an A-theoretical conception of time: no other conception of the nature of time would explain those features of our experience of time. She criticises this inference and presents an alternative explanation, which leads to the conclusion that our experience of time is systematically misleading. The argument in favour of Paul's conclusion is questionable, not because of its intrinsic weaknesses, but because the experience-driven strategy should not be taken to involve the kind of inference Paul is criticising. Paul's argument depends on taking a third person point of view about the experience of time. In section six it is argued that an experience-driven strategy should be expected to take a first person point view. In this perspective, an experience provides one with a reason for a belief, but the experience itself does not appear to respond to reasons one is independently aware of. There is no first personal explanation of why one has an experience. The inference Paul attributes to the experience-driven strategy does not make sense within such a perspective. Section seven provides further methodological details about the phenomenology of time consciousness. Phenomenology adopts a first personal experience-driven strategy in the analysis of the experience of time. It studies the intentional content of experience. This means that it determines the nature of the facts for whose acceptance the experience provides a reason. It does not mean that one draws conclusions concerning the nature of time from an inspection, possibly introspection, of the properties of the experience. The beliefs for which the experience offers a reason are typically about the world, not about the experience itself. So phenomenology involves an inference from world – as given in experience – to world – as given in some other context. This sheds a different light on the nature of integration.

§2. Three puzzles

There are several perspectives under which the experience of time appears puzzling. It appears puzzling first because it presents itself with puzzling, maybe even contradictory features. It secondly appears puzzling because it presents the world as

having puzzling, or even contradictory features. And it finally appears puzzling because it presents itself or the world (or both) as having temporal features that contradict our best metaphysical, and possibly empirically based theories about time. The following three examples illustrate the distinctions. They are not meant to establish their cogency.

There are reasons to take an experience of time to be both punctual and extended in time. It seems to be punctual in so far as it makes us directly aware only of the present, which is arguably punctual.³ But it seems to be extended, in so far as it makes us aware of duration, which develops over time.⁴ So, for one and the same experience to make us aware of the present and of duration, it ought to be both punctual and extended in time. This looks like a contradiction in the way an experience of time presents itself.

Consider now the way time, and temporal properties of items in the world, appear in experience. Let us agree that the ways things appear in experience determine (at least partially) the properties things appear to have. Our second observation is that experience presents the world, or items in the world, as having incompatible temporal properties. For an experience to present a temporal succession of events, for instance, these events should be presented as following each other. And for a present event to appear to follow a previous event, the latter must appear to be past. In order to hear a succession of sounds, say, the present sound must appear to follow the previous one, and the latter must appear past. But a past sound is a sound one does not hear anymore, not a sound that sounds differently, not a sound that sounds past. How can a sound acoustically appear to be past, if for it to be past means for it not to appear

³ Consider for instance the following argument: «if experience is confined to the present, and the present is durationless, it seems experience must be literally instantaneous» (Dainton (2000): p. 120).

⁴ As William James, quoting James Mill, puts it: «if the constitution of consciousness were that of a string of bead-like sensations and images, all separate, we never could have any knowledge except that of the present instant» (James (1890): p. 605).

acoustically at all? It looks as if a sound should somehow be present in order to appear past.⁵

Our third observation concerns the compatibility of our experience of time with some metaphysical theory about time, or with some purportedly empirically confirmed view about the nature of time. Consider two examples. The first example concerns the way the experience presents the world. The second example concerns the way the experience presents itself. If, first example, there were conclusive reasons to believe that there is no passage of time, no present, no past and no future,⁶ then obviously there is a problem with our experience of time, as long as we grant that we really seem to experience things as passing from the future to the present and to the past. If, second example, deep metaphysical insight should lead us to deny that the present is more than a boundary between past and future,⁷ which both do not exist, then the very existence of an experience that extends in time would become questionable.

Suppose for the moment that at least some of these puzzles are genuine. Suppose that they do not rest on obvious conceptual confusions. Suppose that in order to solve them we need to revise some of the substantial claims they rely on, or some of the key concepts that are used in order to formulate them. What should we then expect from a philosophical treatment of these claims? And what would be distinctive, in this respect, of a phenomenological approach? Let me start to discuss the first question. We shall return later to the second one.

§3. *Integration*

It would be natural to expect from a philosophical treatment of the puzzles mentioned above that it aims at integrating the different perspectives that yield the puzzles. Such integration would ideally solve the apparent puzzles, or at least provide

⁵ See Chisholm (1981: 5) and Miller (1984: 106 ff).

⁶ See for instance: Williams (1951), Le Poidevin (1991), Mellor (1998).

⁷ See Brentano (1988): p. 74 ff.

a homogeneous explanation for their origin. We should expect a coherent view that explains how our metaphysics of time is related on one side to the temporal features the world appears to have in experience, and how it is related on the other side to time-consciousness as it presents itself. Although we are supposing that such integration would require a revision of some of the central claims and concepts used in order to formulate the puzzles, we cannot simply aim at minimising the amount of revision. We would have to weight the different claims within the different perspectives and across them. So we would have to take a number of preliminary decisions. We would have to settle which metaphysical claims are crucial and which are less important. And we would have to decide which apparent properties the world would need to have for our experience of time to make any sense. We would further need to clarify how those different issues stand in relation to each other. We would have to clarify, for instance, whether one can use metaphysical results in order to avoid the puzzles that were generated by our assumptions concerning the nature of time-consciousness and whether one can use results which are obtained from the analysis of time-consciousness in order to settle issues in the metaphysics of time.

Observations of this kind may lead one to think that there really are two main strategies of integration one must choose from. The first strategy would address issues in the metaphysics of time first, independently of the nature of time-consciousness, and evaluate different conceptions of time-consciousness in the light of their compatibility with metaphysical results. The second strategy would start instead by elaborating an account of the experience of time and then proceed to determine the temporal properties the world would need to have in order for the experience to be veridical. Let me label the first strategy *world-driven* and the second strategy *experience-driven*.

We were wondering what it takes to develop a conception of time on the basis of our experience of time. One might surmise at this point that to develop a conception of time on the basis of our experience of time means to develop a conception of time

following an experience-driven strategy. If phenomenology is the discipline that studies the experience of time, then one might conclude that phenomenology stands at the core of any such experience-driven conception of time. To develop a conception of time on the basis of our experience of time would thus ultimately mean to start with the phenomenology of time-consciousness and to draw conclusions from there about the nature of the temporal properties the world needs to have in order for our experience to be veridical.

Plausible and familiar as it may be, this conception of the role of phenomenology in a philosophical theory of time can generate serious misunderstandings. Mistakes can especially be made with respect to what it means to develop a conception of time on the basis of our experience of time, and thus of what it means, from a phenomenological point of view, to meet the integration requirement. As we shall see, these mistakes can lead to a rather biased conception of the relation between the study of time-consciousness and the determination of the ultimate nature of time.

In the next section I shall present a reductionist view that adopts a world-driven strategy. It reacts to an antireductionist account that contains some of the misleading assumptions I just mentioned. The study of that debate will help to determine the mistakes one ought to avoid.

§4. Paul's reductionism

In a recent article L.A. Paul has argued for a reductionist account of time. «The antireductionist», she writes, «holds that temporal properties of nowness and passage exist (as opposed to it being merely as if such properties exist) and that real change requires passage. The [...] reductionist holds that there are no properties of nowness or passage and that change is just the replacement of properties at successive times» (Paul (2010): 338). The antireductionist criticises his opponent in following terms:

[...] such views cannot account for the character of our experiences as of nowness and our experiences as of passage. We need properties of nowness and passage to explain the fact that we have experiences as of nowness and as of passage (and change). In general, the objection [...] is that, without the properties of nowness and passage, we would not have any way to account for the features of our temporal experience. Since we do have experiences as of nowness and experiences as of passage and as of change as flowing or animated, the reductionist's parsimony is a false economy. (p. 337)

This passage suggests that Paul's antireductionist embraces an experience-driven strategy. He draws conclusions concerning the nature of time from his analysis of temporal experience. He assumes that our experiences are 'as of' temporal presence ('nowness') and temporal passage and concludes from there that there must be properties of temporal presence and passage. But what exactly is the argument supposed to be?

We need to distinguish three issues. There is first a metaphysical issue: are temporal presence and passage genuine properties of the world? There is second an issue concerning the nature of our experience of time: is it true that in experience events occasionally appear to happen now and that time appears to be passing? There is finally an issue about integration. Are temporal properties presented in experience in a way that suits our metaphysics of time? Let me slightly modify Paul's terminology in order to keep track of those distinctions. Let B-timers be those who believe that temporal presence and change are no (real) temporal properties of the world, and let A-timers be those who believe that they are.⁸ On Paul's account everybody should

⁸ The terminology comes from (McTaggart (1908)). Paul gives the following description of the A-timer's view: «We can cash out the overall antireductionist claim about change more precisely as the claim that, first, for O to change from being P (at t₁) to being Q (at t₂), the event of O having P must become present at t₁ and then the event of O having Q must become present at time t₂ (while the event of O having P is not present at time t₂). Second, we detect this change in virtue of detecting its flow or dynamic character. Antireductionists infer from this that, for there to be real change, there has to be

agree, at least for the sake of the argument, that in experience some events appear to happen now, and that there appears to be passage in time.⁹ She proposes a description of experience such that «the what-it' s-like of an experience contains within it the experience as of nowness along with further experience (for example, as of redness). What it is to have an experience as of nowness is part of what it is to have an experience *simpliciter*» (Ibid: 342). So, the difference between reductionists and antireductionists really concerns integration. Antireductionists, but not reductionists, think that experience provides us with a ground for being an A-timer. So, once again: what sort of ground could that be?

Inferences from experience to world are notoriously delicate. We often form false beliefs about the world on the basis of how things appear to us in experience. It is far from clear that experiences must always be blamed for it. A coin seen from a certain perspective doesn't offer a reason to believe that it is elliptical, even if the experience may happen to make us believe that it is. So, the simple fact that we take things to be in a certain way on the basis of our experience suffices neither to infer that things must be that way nor to infer that the experience presented them as being that way. Antireductionists should be expected to have a rather special argument for the case at stake. Paul describes what she considers to be the crucial premise in their argument as follows: «the thesis that there are temporal properties of nowness and passage provides *the only reasonable explanation* of why we have these experiences» (ibid: p. 338; my emphasis). Let me call this the antireductionist *explanation premise*. It is obviously an important claim, and one wonders again how the anti-reductionist is supposed to establish it.

passage, cashed out as the successive nowness of different events moving from the future to the present and into the past.» (p. 335).

⁹ She writes, for instance, that the reductionist «definitely should not deny that we have experiences as of change. We do have such experiences» (p. 346).

It might be thought that it can be established on the basis of an idea Paul describes as follows: «our ordinary judgments *drawn from our experience* of the world can give us knowledge about the world [...]. According to this sort of view», Paul says, «experience provides an almost non-negotiable starting point for a metaphysics of time» (p. 335). I take this to mean that we have something like an irresistible belief concerning the nature of time that is based on how time appears in experience. Now: would this really help in order to establish the explanation premise? Let us grant for the moment that we really have such an irresistible belief, which might be what Paul sometimes calls an intuition.¹⁰ The problem is that even so, the idea could not be used in order to establish the explanation premise. For it is one thing to say that experience provides evidence for a certain view about the nature of time. It is another thing to submit that the nature of the experience can only be explained by appeal to certain conditions the world must satisfy. The two claims can be combined, but not in any direction. If it can be shown that there are conditions the world has to satisfy in order for one's experience to be what it is, then one may ground metaphysical conclusions on the simple *presence* of the experience. This would hold independently of how the experience presents the world to be. But the fact that the experience irresistibly makes us believe that the world has certain properties does not prove, a least not by itself, that the experience is best explained by the fact that the world has those properties. Various alternative explanations ought first to be ruled out. So if this were indeed the argument offered in favour of the explanation premise, then the antireductionist would be well advised to decline it.

The antireductionist's position, one might surmise at this point, really depends on the assumption that the belief generated by the perception of time is not just irresistible, but infallible. The antireductionist might hold that the perception of time would not present time as passing and events as happening now, if they did not have

¹⁰ For instance on p. 344 and p. 357.

those properties. The experience would be incorrigible in this sense and the belief based on it could not be false.¹¹ This might, but need not, be a position defended by a philosopher who thinks that we directly perceive the temporal properties of the world. The simple presence of the perceptual experience would then suffice to infer that time must indeed be passing and that some events do indeed happen now. And contrary to the case above, this inference would depend on the way the experience presents the world to be.

Such a move on behalf of the antireductionist would only be superficially beneficial in the present context. The antireductionist is supposed to offer a ground for the explanation premise, the premise which says that «the thesis that there are temporal properties of nowness and passage provides the only reasonable explanation of why we have these experiences» (ibid: 338). An argument establishing the incorrigibility of our experience of time, however, should not be expected to deliver an explanation of why we have such an experience. Consider the analogy with a classical example. Some¹² think that the feeling of pain is incorrigible and that the belief that one is in pain based on it is consequently infallible.¹³ Now, the experience is arguably incorrigible because one could not possibly feel pain and not be in pain. If this is an acceptable explanation of why the feeling of pain is incorrigible, it certainly is not an explanation of why one feels pain. That explanation presumably has to do with nociception and some kind of bodily ailment. There is hence little ground to expect the supposed incorrigibility of our perception of time to bring any light upon what explains the fact that we have such experiences.

Antireductionism would be left with the sheer inference from the incorrigibility of the experience of time to the truth of an A-theoretical conception of time. If it were

¹¹ For the present context I shall assume that a belief is infallible when it is justified by evidence that is incompatible with its falsity and that an experience is incorrigible when there are no conditions that would make its occurrence incorrect. The view under consideration further assumes that justification earned by an incorrigible experience grounds an infallible belief.

¹² See for instance (Jackson (1973)).

¹³ The analogy has its obvious limitations: we are not wondering whether the experience of time yields the infallible judgement that one has the experience of time.

established that the experience of time is incorrigible, and that the belief we form on its base is indeed infallible, then we would not need to wonder how the experience is best explained in order to find an argument for being an A-timer. We would have had the argument from the very beginning independently of what explains the experience. So this is obviously not the position Paul is attributing to the antireductionist. It is certainly an open question, to say the least, whether our experience of time really is incorrigible and even more so whether the beliefs we typically form on the basis of our experience of time are infallible. But whatever position one prefers on this issue, it would be unfair to saddle the antireductionist with the obligation to carry such a heavy premise.

The result so far must be that the antireductionist, as described by Paul, cannot use the experience as evidence for being an A-timer, neither by virtue of its content, nor by virtue of its sheer occurrence. The antireductionist has not shown so far why one ought to be an A-timer in order to explain the experience of time. But since Paul announces that she will precisely focus on undermining this assumption (p. 339), one might expect her to attribute a further and better argument to the antireductionist. And indeed she does. The real argument she attributes to the antireductionist is different from the kind of arguments we have been discussing so far. Ignoring the difference between these various arguments might lead one to miss the point of integration. In the next section I shall present the real argument Paul attributes to the antireductionist and her reductionist reply to it. In the subsequent section I shall show why this understanding of the debate fails to offer a contribution to integration.

§5. The illusion of flow

Paul says that she «will argue against [the explanation premise] by providing an account of how temporal experience could arise from the way the brains of conscious beings experience and interpret cognitive inputs from series of static events»

(p. 339). She submits that the antireductionist «inference to the existence of passage is the inference that there exists some sort of physical flow or ontological relation (namely, passage) that we are *detecting* via our experience as of change, such that this physical relation (namely, passage) is the *source of the character* of the experience that we are having» (p. 345; my emphasis). She opposes to that view the claim that «(non-temporal) qualitative properties of events *cause* phenomenal properties in us» and that «the experience that is the having of a neural state is more than just an experience as of a quality like redness; it is an experience as of temporal presence (and of thereness or hereness) as well» (p. 347; my emphasis). «In other words», she concludes, «the reductionist can use the experimental facts involving apparent motion, apparent change, and apparent persistence to argue that, even though all she endorses is the existence of a static universe of a series of stages, this is sufficient *for the brain to produce the illusion* of motion and flow involved in the experience as of change» (p. 353; my emphasis).

All this suggests a fairly clear line of argument. The antireductionist is pictured as supposing that passage and change are necessary in order to causally explain some phenomenal properties of the experience. The appearances of passage and of temporal presence are said to be phenomenal properties of this sort. The alternative reductionist view starts from the observation that experiences of this kind can be generated in situations where there is no real passage, such as in a quick sequence of static pictures that are perceived as involving movement. The reductionist then goes on arguing, on the basis of empirical research in cognitive science, that the experiences of passage and of temporal presence are illusions generated by the brain on the basis of a certain kind of stimulus.

This interpretation of the dispute between the antireductionist and his opponent recalls an old issue in the theory of perception, related to what is sometimes called ‘the causal argument’ (Robinson (1994): p. 84 ff.). It concerns the question as to whether an external object can account for the occurrence of a perceptual experience if

it stands at the beginning of a causal chain that contains proximal events, such as brain stimulations, whose isolated triggering can yield an experience of the same kind. If an experience of the same kind can be produced in the absence of the external object, it is argued, then no experience of that kind depends on the presence of the external object. So the external object is not essential to the causal explanation of the occurrence of *any* experience of that kind. If external objects do not play any role in explaining the occurrence of perceptual experiences, then we cannot directly perceive external objects.

Applied to our case the argument starts from supposing that the antireductionist holds that we perceive the properties of temporal presence and passage because our experience is causally explained by their instantiation. The reductionist replies that that very experience, or experiences of the very same kind, could be caused by more proximal events in the brain, which do not involve the instantiation of such properties. So, she infers, the experience does not causally depend on them. Therefore we do not literally perceive temporal presence and passage of time. Since the reductionist has independent arguments for denying the instantiation of such properties, she concludes that our perceptual experiences are systematically misleading. They are nothing more than illusions.

There are serious issues in the above presentation of the original argument as well as in its application to the dispute between the reductionist and the antireductionist. As it stands the argument rests on a number of controversial premises and doubtful inferential steps. But this is not what we should worry about at this stage. The point that needs to be emphasized concerns the way integration is understood in the present interpretation of the debate. How is the antireductionist supposed to understand integration and what alternative, if any, is the reductionist suggesting? I contend that in this debate neither the reductionist, nor the anti-reductionist, offers a proper contribution to integration. So if integration was the goal, then the present in-

terpretation of the debate is of little help. Repairing the argument presented above would be useless in this respect. Let me explain.

§6. Explaining experience: first and third personal perspective and the contribution of phenomenology

Let us return to Paul's original question. What is the best explanation of our experience of time? Much depends on the kind of explanation one is looking for and on what exactly one wishes to explain. Different explanatory perspectives offer different routes for integration. One such difference concerns the opposition between first personal and third personal explanatory projects. Let me first give a broad description of the opposition and then show how it pertains to integration. What follows is a description of some distinctive features of the two projects and a determination of several consequences that are relevant for a proper understanding of integration. It is not an argument in favour of any of the two explanatory projects.

Consider the first personal perspective to begin with. Suppose you listen to a melody. The melody – one of Schubert's trios, say – appears to be sounding right now, while you listen to it. You exclaim: 'One of Schubert's trios is being played right now!' Somebody asks you: 'why do you think that Schubert's trio is being played right now?' It would be perfectly acceptable for you to answer: 'because I can hear it!' But imagine the person goes on asking: 'why can you hear it being played right now – why does it acoustically appear present to you?' What sort of answer are you supposed to give? There is an asymmetry between the two situations that manifests itself in the fact that the first question is perfectly understandable while the second question sounds awkward. A rather common way to explain the asymmetry is this. You may answer the first question by citing your experience as offering you a reason for believing that the melody is being played right now.¹⁴ There is no such reason you are in a position to

¹⁴ Arguments that go in this direction can be found for instance in Moran (2012) and Boyle (2011).

present as an answer to the second question. The perceptual experience does not present itself as a response to a reason you are somehow aware of. It rather presents itself as a reaction to conditions you thereby become aware of. One becomes aware of the melody by hearing it, but one doesn't experience the melody as a reason for hearing it. The second question sounds awkward when it is understood as an inquiry about the reasons for one's experience.

The issue doesn't depend on whether one finds oneself in a situation of public conversation. I may wonder myself what makes me think that a melody is being played right now and contrast that question with wondering why I am having an acoustic experience of some melody being played now. The asymmetry does not depend on there being somebody asking those questions. It rather concerns the specificity of a first-personal explanation of experiences and beliefs. The question is whether both *explanans* and *explanandum* are accessible from the perspective of the first person. When I cite my experience of hearing a sound as offering me a reason to judge that a sound is being played now, the experience and the belief are both given to me as *my* experience and *my* belief. The best I could say, instead, when I try to explain the fact that a sound appears present to me, is that there must be some sound presently causing my experience. I may indeed experience my hearing as caused by some present sound, but I do not experience the sound produced by the violin as my sound. When I judge that some sound causes my experience, the *explanandum* is first personal but the *explanans* is not.

The situation is different from a third personal perspective. There is nothing awkward in me wondering what explains the fact that you have a certain kind of experience. I might indeed wonder what events, distal and proximal, have been causing it. In this perspective your experience can appear to me as a response to conditions I am independently aware of. I may consider your experience as a more or less appropriate response to those conditions. The way the experience presents the world to you is crucial for the identification of the experience, but it is not decisive for the determination

of the events that I take to be causing it. It is not incoherent for me to think that your experience of hallucinating a flying horse is caused by something that does not involve any flying horse. So when I consider the fact that the melody appears to be presently sounding to you, I am not committed to the claim that there must be an instance of temporal presence causing it. This is not so for the first personal explanation of a belief. I could not appeal to my experience as offering a reason¹⁵ for me to believe that the melody is being played right now, if the melody did not acoustically appear to sound now. The experience must present the melody as instantiating the property of temporal presence in order to offer a reason to believe that the melody is being played now. The same kind of consideration would have to apply to a first personal explanation of the production of the experience: one would have to determine a reason, accessible in the first person, speaking in favour of having the experience. But this is unavailable. There is no first personal explanation of our experience of time in this sense. Paul's question makes sense only in the perspective of the third person.

This broad description of the distinction between first and third personal explanation is fairly common. It might be useful, at this point, to emphasise some less obvious details that are relevant for our later discussion about integration. It is first to be noticed that the description given above neither implies that one cannot ask oneself why one is having a particular experience, nor that one cannot ask oneself whether one's own experience is an appropriate response to some external conditions, nor that one cannot find a reason speaking in favour or against an experience. I can indeed, and in fact occasionally do, wonder why things appear this way to me rather than some other way or not at all. In order to address that question I have to take a third personal perspective towards the conditions to which my experience is responsive. There is nothing special about this. I can look at the origins of my experience of hearing a melody just like a physician would do. When I take this external perspective, my experi-

¹⁵ I am assuming here that the experience is supposed to deliver a non-inferential reason. More on this in Soldati (2013).

ence might appear to me as a more or less appropriate response to the conditions I have independently determined, or to conditions that I take to be holding for independent reasons. I may do something in order to enhance my response, to make it more appropriate. And I may have good reasons to do so. So the way things appear to me in perception may be influenced by rational considerations. But none of this would make my experiences respond to reasons I am independently aware of. Things would not appear to me in some particular way in response to my acceptance of some external conditions. Suppose for instance that I am in a store and look at a tie that appears blue to me. I know that the light in the store is not ideal, so I move towards the window in order to be in daylight. The tie now appears violet. I did something for the tie to visually appear violet. And I had a good reason to do so. Or suppose I look at my watch without my glasses and I read '12:00'. I think: 'this can't be right, it must be later!' I slightly blink and now I read '13:00'. I did something for the symbols on the watch to appear differently because I knew it could not be noon. In both cases, I was able to modify my experience in order to make it more accurate. In both cases I had a good reason to modify my experience. But in none of those cases my experience was responsive to my endorsement of some external conditions. I moved to the window because I believed that the light would be better. But the tie did not appear violet in response to my belief that the conditions would be more appropriate. The belief played a role in bringing me in a situation where I had a more appropriate experience. But the belief plays no role in the explanation of why, given that situation, I had that particular experience. So one might not only ask oneself why one is having an experience, one may even have one's own experience modified in the light of reasons that speak against its appropriateness. But in both cases, one's attitude towards the origin of the experience remains third personal. The experience is mine, but that to which it responds is not.

The second detail that will be relevant for our later discussion about integration concerns the nature of the reasons to which one's beliefs are responsive. Following the considerations made above, perceptual experiences make reasons available for beliefs. So if the melody acoustically appears to sound now, I have a reason to believe that it is being played now. The acoustic experience could not offer me a reason to believe that the melody is being played now if it was not an experience of a melody appearing to sound now. Does this alone imply that there must be a property of temporal presence the melody I hear is instantiating? Could the acoustic experience offer me a reason to believe that there is a melody being presently played if in fact nothing could ever instantiate temporal presence? There are serious philosophical grounds for maintaining that it cannot. In the present context, however, it is enough to establish that from the first personal point of view, the reason provided by the experience is undermined by considerations that question the accuracy of the experience. So, from the first personal point of view, it is not the occurrence of the experience as such that constitutes the reason, but rather the fact the experience invites to accept. What constitutes the reason the acoustic experience offers me to believe that Schubert is being played now is not the experience as such, but, if anything, the fact that some music is being presently played.

So we have two different explanatory projects. The issue as to whether the cause of one's experience of time ought to be proximal or distal is part of an inquiry which is made within a third personal perspective. The dispute between the reductionist and his opponent as described at the end of the last section is a dispute that makes sense only within the third personal perspective.

§7. The contribution of phenomenology

A number of questions have to be addressed at this stage. The first question is whether the anti-reductionist's position is presented under the correct light in the dispute. The second is whether the phenomenological point of view corresponds to that kind of anti-reductionism. The third question concerns the relation between phenomenology and the idea of an experience-based conception of time. And the final question concerns the contribution of phenomenology to integration.

The first question is rhetorical. We should expect the antireductionist to frame his position in the first personal perspective.¹⁶ So the real question is how one can come to neglect this simple assumption. How can it seem to one that the antireductionist would want to defend his position by adopting a third personal point of view? Paul's line of argument is symptomatic in this respect. She takes the antireductionist to be mainly interested in being an A-timer and she then wonders how the antireductionist might use experience as evidence speaking in its favour. Adopting a third personal point of view, she wonders how the occurrence of an experience of a certain kind can speak in favour of there being A-temporal properties. Rather unsurprisingly she discovers that it does not. It is typical in this respect that the fact that experience presents the world in a certain way need not to be taken as a reason for believing that the world is such and so. It is rather considered to be an aspect of the experience that calls for an explanation. This is precisely the opposite of what one would expect from the first personal perspective, where there is no room for inquiring into the reasons of one's own experiences.

This does not mean that from a first personal perspective one is bound to trust the beliefs one forms on the basis of one's perception of time. To say that there is no room for wondering why the experience presents the world in a certain way is not to say that there is no room for me to wonder whether the belief I form on the basis of my experience is indeed the belief for which the experience offers me a reason. When I

¹⁶ The role of the first personal perspective in phenomenology has been widely discussed. See for instance : Siewert (2008).

am asked what reason I have for believing that the melody is being played now, I would normally cite the experience: I *hear* it! I may however enter into a more philosophical mood and take the question to go deeper. I may wonder whether the nature of my experience really gives me a reason to form that very belief. Could the content of my experience not be articulated in other terms? Could the very same experience not offer a reason for a belief of a very different kind? Entering into this kind of philosophical mood with respect to the analysis of one's own experiences means to adopt a phenomenological point of view. A phenomenology of one's own experiences questions the precise nature of what those experiences offer reasons to believe. We often say that in phenomenology one aims at determining the intentional content of one's experience. To determine the intentional content of one's experience, we can now say, is to determine the nature of the fact for whose acceptance the experience provides a reason. To say that the experience has intentional content p is to say that the experience provides me with a reason for believing that p . It is misleading to suppose that a phenomenological inquiry into the nature of experience aims at explaining the origin, or the cause, of the qualitative character of one's experience. There simply is no such explanatory project to be pursued from the phenomenological, first personal point of view. So phenomenology could not possibly be identified with the sort of third personal antireductionism Paul is arguing against.

We were wondering what it means to develop a coherent conception of time on the basis of experience. We were wondering whether such a conception would have to be experience-driven and whether it would have to be a phenomenology of experience. We are now in a better position to understand what is at stake. To develop a phenomenological conception of time on the basis of the experience of time is not simply to take into account and to explain some qualitative features of the perception of time. It is rather a matter of making room for the kinds of reasons the experience of time makes available. In so far as phenomenology is the study of the experience of time in

this perspective, phenomenology stands indeed at the core of such an experience-driven approach.

But an experienced-driven strategy, in the way we are now envisaging it, should not be understood as a strategy that draws conclusions concerning the nature of temporal properties from an inspection, possibly introspection, of the properties of the experience. The beliefs, for which the experience is supposed to offer a reason, are about the world, not about the experience itself. We inspect the world through our experience. I do not find out whether my hearing the melody gives me a reason to believe that it is played now by introspecting my experience. I rather concentrate on the melody, as it acoustically appears to me. I try to describe with more precision how exactly it appears to pass in time, how its past and future parts are given to me and I try to determine, for instance, whether those past parts are given to me as remembered phases of the same melody. So even if we allow ourselves to describe the phenomenological strategy as experience-driven, it does not really involve any inference from experience to world. If at all it involves an inference from world – as given in experience – to world – as given in some other context.

This brings us to our final point about integration. Integration is a matter of balancing reasons provided by experience with other kinds of reasons one might find relevant for the establishment of one's view about the nature of time. No position that fails to make room for these different reasons can aim at integration. This of course is not yet to explain how a phenomenology of the perception of time contributes to a solution of the puzzles I mentioned at the beginning. There are two points however that might be derived from what we obtained so far with respect to integration. The first point is that the hypothesis that our perception of time is systematically illusory must remain questionable as long as we are not sure that our way of articulating the beliefs we form on its basis is entirely accurate. A simple look at the many hundred pages Husserl has written on time consciousness suggests that this matter cannot be settled

by some simple assumption concerning, for instance, the qualia of nowness. For all we now, our perception of time might be perfectly accurate. We simply have not learned yet to properly articulate the beliefs we ought to ground on it. This line of argument would only be confirmed if one were to maintain that in perceptual experience we do not represent more or less accurately the world: we become directly aware of some its features. Integration might then, this is my second point, concern the question of how those facts, the facts we become aware of in perception, stand in relation to other kinds of facts, e.g. facts about time that we might come to recognise on the basis of empirical science. Might it not be, for instance, a relation of constitution, or grounding? Integration in this sense is entirely world-driven. But it requires a proper understanding of the role of our experience of time.¹⁷

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¹⁷ Much of this paper has been triggered by discussions with Jiri Benovsky. I am never sure whether we really disagree. But I am sure I owe him gratitude for the disputes.

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