

### 9.1 Introductory remarks

Perceptual experience is, at least partly, a way to “be in contact” with what goes on in the world around us. Philosophers have speculated on the nature of this contact. One way to think of it is in terms of mental representations. Roughly speaking, *representationalists* (as they are sometimes called) think that to perceive the world is to represent features of the world in the mind. Perceptual experiences, on this picture, are individuated by their representational *content*, which is a feature of the experience that in turn is individuated by the *accuracy conditions* of the mental representation involved. At least in its contemporary form, representationalism does not violate the central idea of *transparency*, that is, the thesis that in perception, primarily at least, we are *aware* of the worldly entity that we perceive. To visually experience a seagull flying past the church bell is to represent the seagull as flying past the church bell. And to represent the seagull in perception is to be aware of, or be presented with the seagull passing by, rather than being aware of one’s own experience.<sup>1</sup> Note that it is crucial that the awareness in question be of a perceptual nature. “Awareness” is a loose term, since we can be aware also through reflection and overt inferences of things involved in our perceptual activities. In what follows, I will use expressions such as “being aware of” and “being presented with” (and cognates) to refer to this kind of perceptual awareness achieved through phenomenally conscious states initiated by external stimuli.<sup>2</sup>

Representationalism is a popular view, but it is not universally accepted. There are two common ways of departing from it. The first, more radical, way is to deny that perceptual experience involves representing the world around us at all. *Naïve realists* think that to perceive the world is to be in some relation with it—a relation that is explanatorily primitive, or at least that is not to be characterised as representing. Perceptual experiences, in this picture, are (at least partially) *constituted* by the external object that we are presented with in having them. Whether transparency is among the motivations for adopting such a view of perception or not, naïve realism seems particularly congenial to it. After all, if perceptual experiences are individuated not by their representational content, but by a relation to external features, then there is no risk of being presented, while perceiving something, with features *of the perceptual experience itself* (rather than with features of what we are perceiving). The second, *sensationalist*, way does not need to deny that *when* we are aware of what we perceive, we are representing entities in the world around us. The sensationalist

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<sup>1</sup> This is at least true of representationalists with “externalist” inclinations (cf. Tye 2002). Others with more “internalist” inclinations (cf. Gow 2016, 2017b) would say that we are aware of the content of our mental state, which is what represents the seagull, rather than being presented with the seagull. However, they would also add that it seems to us as if there were a seagull out there, and that’s enough not to violate transparency. I will be more precise on this in what follows, when introducing the distinction between metaphysical and phenomenal transparency (which is Gow’s). For now I just want to stress that I am not questioning that the representationalist understanding of perceptual content as a feature of a mental state *is* compatible with transparency.

<sup>2</sup> I will also often talk of *features* (of the world/of experience itself) as what we are aware of (or what we are presented with). This expression is meant to cover various theoretical options such as properties, state of affairs, and also (with respect to the transparent cases at least) objects, events, and processes.

departs only from representationalism as an all encompassing claim: perception does not only (and does not always) present us with features of the world around us, it also presents us (at least sometimes) with features that belong to the experience itself.<sup>3</sup>

Sensationalism (as opposed to naive realism and representationalism) seems to be in direct contrast with transparency. If we are perceptually presented with features *of our own experience*, then the central idea of transparency has to be weakened, if not abandoned. A great deal of the literature on transparency concerns phenomena such as afterimages, phosphenes (the “spot of lights” that appears when our closed eyes are pressured), and other “eerie” experiences that usually come with a sense of irrealism or at least a lack of objectivity of some sort.<sup>4</sup> A more recent strand focuses on temporal experience, in particular experiences that involve cognitive contact with temporally extended entities, e.g., experience of successions of events and their properties, such as their durations.<sup>5</sup> In this contribution, after some reflections on temporal transparency in general (Section 9.2), I propose an account of experience of duration and succession that includes a radical form of transparency (Sections 9.3 and 9.4). In the last part (Section 9.5), I will tackle the problem of temporal transparency in the experience of temporal flow itself—a feature of our experience over which there is disagreement on whether it is to be understood as a perceptual aspect or not. I will argue that my *temporal modifier* theory of the felling of time passing—roughly, the thesis that we are aware of an internal flow in virtue of being presented in a “flowy” manner with successions of events—has certain explanatory advantages over rival views in explaining how the flow of time that we experience in the *external* succession of events, and that which we experience *within us* can be unified.

## 9.2 Perceptual transparency and temporal transparency

Although the central idea of transparency is, as I said above, that in perception we are aware of an external world, I think its broader formulation should be in terms of metaphysical priority.

***Perceptual transparency.*** Awareness of features that appear to us as externally located is *prior* to the awareness of features of our own experiences.

Transparency can be construed along at least two pairs of distinctions. The first is the distinction between *positive* transparency and *negative* transparency (Martin 2002). Positive transparency is the thesis that when we inspect our perceptions we are aware of properties of external objects. Negative transparency is the thesis that we are *never* aware of the properties of our experiences themselves. *Full* transparency is the conjunction of the previous two

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<sup>3</sup> An exception is Papineau 2021, who denies that we are *ever* perceptually aware of features of the world around us, although our sensations contingently represent them.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Boghossian and Velleman 1989, Kind 2008. For a critical discussion, Phillips 2012b.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Phillips 2014a, Soteriou 2013. There is also another debate involving transparency, which is relevant for temporal experience, and it is the debate about presentness (namely the awareness that our perceptions occur in the present). I will touch upon it only marginally in this contribution. See Hoerl 2018.

theses, namely the tenet that external objects and their properties are the *only* things we are aware of in perception.<sup>6</sup> Note that the negative reading excludes that we are presented with intrinsic properties of our own perceptions, while positive transparency is compatible with the claim that we are sometimes aware of the intrinsic properties of experience, but only while perceiving external objects. Negative transparency thus requires that the priority claim above is trivially true (as in “auditory experiences of vibrations within the audible spectrum are prior to auditory experiences of vibration outside the audible spectrum”), but positive transparency allows for non-trivial readings of the priority claim, in which awareness of intrinsic properties of experience is in some sense dependent on awareness of mind-independent properties of objects. There are various ways to capture this idea. For instance, we can be aware of intrinsic properties of experience only within our peripheral attention, while the focus remains the external objects<sup>7</sup>; or perhaps awareness of properties of our experience is only obtained through our awareness of properties of external objects.<sup>8</sup>

The second distinction is between the *metaphysical* and the *phenomenal* readings of transparency (Gow 2017a). On the metaphysical reading, transparency is the thesis that we are *de facto* aware primarily of properties of external objects (regardless of what it seems to us). Thus the first part of the general thesis, about our awareness of features that “appear to us as externally located” has to be read as implicitly stating that those very features also are externally located. On the phenomenal reading, transparency is the thesis that *it seems to us that we are* primarily aware of properties of external objects (regardless of whether we actually are). Thus the first part of the general thesis is read without further implication. The metaphysical reading is compatible with the claim that people nonetheless can sometimes make the *internalising content* mistake (Millikan 1991), that is they attribute features of the world out there to the experience itself. For instance, one can maintain that afterimages are (illusory) perceptual presentations of light phenomena, but given the presence of certain defeaters of their objectivity (they “move” with us, they cannot be inspected by going around them, etc.), we tend to experience them as “internal” (cf. Phillips 2013a). The phenomenal reading is compatible with the claim that people nonetheless can sometimes make the *externalising content* mistake (Millikan 1991), that is they attribute intrinsic properties of experience to the world out there. For instance, one can maintain that the phenomenal character of our perceptual experience is internally constituted, but it comes with a *presentational phenomenology* “by which we experience ourselves as creatures existing in a mind-independent world.” (Gow 2017a: 413).

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<sup>6</sup> Although in the literature negative transparency is usually understood to entail positive transparency, I prefer to keep them separate. A position that upholds negative, but not full, transparency is, for instance, one according to which we are never presented with external objects, but also never with features of our own mental states. Such a position is strange, but not unheard of; think of Berkeleyan idealism.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Richardson 2014, who argues that this is the case for what she calls “structural properties of perception”, such as the boundaries of the visual field: ‘... when we turn attention from the mind-independent objects of perception, to the experience we have of those objects, the objects remain the focus of attention ... But in thus attending ... we find those phenomenological differences that can, we have argued, be understood as a matter of the form or structure of the experience’ (p. 10).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Richardson 2018, commenting on Hoerl 2018’s “eliminativist” take on tensed properties in perception, suggests this for “perspectival” temporal features such as presentness.

What I call temporal transparency is the application to temporal features—such as duration, temporal order, flow or passage—of the ideas that I have just discussed. In its general form, thus, it is the following thesis.

**Temporal transparency.** Awareness of temporal features that appear to us as externally located is *prior* to the awareness of the temporal features of our own experiences.<sup>9</sup>

The events that we perceptually experience have temporal properties, such as having a certain duration and being constituted by possibly qualitatively distinct parts. But experiences are also events that happen in time and have temporal properties. Full temporal transparency in the metaphysical reading tells us that whatever the temporal properties of our own experiences are, they are not the object of our awareness; we can only be presented with temporal properties of the events that we perceive, not of our own perceptions themselves. However, if only the positive reading holds, it may be that we are *derivatively* aware of the duration and order of our own experiences, by being aware of the duration and order of the events that we perceptually experience. Full temporal transparency in the phenomenal reading rules out the view that it seems to us as if our experiences have temporal properties. The phenomenal reading is *prima facie* more problematic than the metaphysical one. Experience seems *somehow* to contain information about *both* the temporal properties of what it presents to us *and* of itself. For instance, we seem to know by perceiving a brief event that we had an experience of *some* duration.<sup>10</sup> Weakening the full claim as to keep only the positive horn may help us out, since positive temporal transparency in the phenomenal reading is compatible with having a secondary or derivative awareness of the temporal properties of our own experiences. In the rest of the paper, I will discuss two problematic cases for temporal transparency — that of temporal structure (duration and order) and that of the experience of passage — and argue that we may need to treat them differently.

### 9.3 Duration and order

As already pointed out, transparency is threatened by our experiences of order and succession, which seem to involve not only events around us but also those events that are our own perceptions. More precisely, there is a phenomenological datum concerning perceptual experiences of duration and succession that is at odds with temporal transparency. We can formulate it as the conjunction of the two following pairs of theses.

**(i.a)** We are aware of the durations of the events that we perceive as well as of the durations of the corresponding experiences;

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<sup>9</sup> Notice that Temporal transparency, so defined, it is not merely an instance of Perceptual transparency, since it requires that the externally located features and those of our experiences are of the same kind (namely, temporal), while Perceptual transparency is more liberal on this.

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps even more, we know that our experience must have had the same duration. Cf., for instance, Phillips (2014b: 143): ‘However, we can all agree that the naïve view is committed to the following conditional: if you experience an event as lasting two seconds, your experience of it must itself last two seconds.’

**(i.b)** We are aware of the order of succession of the events that we perceive as well as of the order of succession of the corresponding experiences;

**(ii.a)** Discerning the duration of our own experiences is as easy as discerning the duration of the events that we experience;

**(ii.b)** Discerning the order of our own experiences is as easy as discerning the order of the events that we experience.

If (i.a)-(ii.b) reflect a natural way of characterising perceptions of duration and order, it is obvious why phenomenal temporal transparency is problematic. (i.a)-(i.b) entail, and (ii.a)-(ii.b) presuppose, that we are aware of temporal properties of our own experience, and thus are in conflict with at least the negative horn of full transparency. If we put on the side the possibility of flat-footedly denying (i.a)-(ii.b), we are now faced with three options. First, we could ditch transparency altogether, and embrace the datum expressed by (i.a)-(ii.b) at face value. Second, we could weaken it to positive transparency only (and cook up a story about awareness of the temporal properties of our own experiences being parasitic on awareness of temporal properties of the content of perception). Third, we could stick to full transparency and give a deflationary account of the datum, according to which (i.a)-(i.b) only seem to entail, and (ii.a)-(ii.b) only seem to presuppose, that we are presented with the temporal properties of our own experiences.

Roughly, I will follow and defend the third strategy. The idea is that when we perceive an external event, we thereby have the *tendency to describe* our own experience as possessing the corresponding *temporal profile*, that is as having the same duration and presenting the same order. But before going into some more detail, let me say something about the two other strategies, in order to show their weakness and indirectly support my claim that the third strategy is the best. The first option, abandoning transparency, goes hand in hand with the idea that we represent the time of our own mental states through *time markers*. According to the time marker view, a perceptual content that has a certain temporal profile, for instance that of a succession of two short events  $e_1$  and then  $e_2$ , does not need to be neurally realized in the brain by a process that has the same temporal profile, that is the realization of a perception of  $e_1$  followed by the realization of a perception of  $e_2$ . This view entails, roughly speaking, that perceptual contents come with temporal information about their occurrence that is not encoded through their own duration (or temporal order).<sup>11</sup> The thesis is compatible with the claim that experience presents us, independently, with the temporal properties of the events that we perceive; but it is not compatible with the idea that our awareness of the timing of our mental life is somehow derivative on perception of temporal properties. The time marker model has been defended by some psychologists.<sup>12</sup> However, the rival *brain time* model seems to have more empirical corroboration.<sup>13</sup> According to the latter, which is sometimes also called the TOR (time as its own

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Johnston and Nishida 2001. Strictly speaking, the time marker view (and the rival brain time view, see below in the main text) are theses about the relation between the neural realizers of our experiences and the perceived contents, but they have consequences for the issue of perceptual transparency.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kiverstein and Arstila 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Arstila 2015a.

representation) model, there is a correspondence between the temporal profile of the content of our perception and that of the neural realisers in which the content is processed. Therefore, if the content is that  $e_1$  follows  $e_2$  in a certain amount of time  $n$ , such a content is realized by a perception of  $e_1$  followed by a perception of  $e_2$ , and this has overall duration  $n$ . Although the brain time model is compatible with having some form of derivative awareness of the temporal properties of our own experiences, I will argue that it sits better in a framework where full phenomenal transparency is adopted. If I am right, and it is also true that the brain time model is to be preferred to the temporal markers model, it follows that we should at least try to find an alternative to the first strategy. I will argue for the association between the brain time model and temporal transparency in the next section, in the context of discussing certain temporal illusions; in the rest of this section I provide independent objections against the second, weakening strategy: retreating from full to positive transparency is not a good move.

In order to see why a restriction to positive transparency is problematic, let us take a step back and ask about the relationship between the temporal profile of the content  $C$  of a perception  $E$ , and the temporal profile of  $E$  itself. Unless those temporal profiles are independent from each other, there seem to be two possible options, which correspond to the theses that in the literature are sometimes labelled the *Inheritance* thesis and the *Projection* thesis and which I give in their metaphysical readings (hence the subscript) below.

**Inheritance<sub>M</sub>** An experience  $E$  has a certain temporal profile because its content has a certain temporal profile.<sup>14</sup>

**Projection<sub>M</sub>** The content of an experience  $E$  has a certain temporal profile because  $E$  has a certain temporal profile.<sup>15</sup>

The formulations above reflect the metaphysical readings of the explanatory relations between content and experience (or the content and vehicle of experience, as it is sometimes put), because they are silent on the relationship between the *awareness* of the temporal properties of the content and the awareness of the temporal properties of the experience itself. Therefore, both the claim that the relation of priority goes from the content to the vehicle (the *Inheritance* thesis), and the opposite one (the *Projection* thesis) are compatible with positive *phenomenal* transparency. One can maintain that it seems to us that we are directly aware of the temporal features of the events that we perceive, and conjoin that claim either with (i) the thesis that such features also determine the temporal profile of our own experiences, or with (ii) the thesis that the temporal features of which it seems to us we are directly aware are determined by the temporal features of our own experience.

Neither combination is particularly appealing though. If we employ option (i), that is the coupling of phenomenal transparency and the inheritance thesis in its metaphysical construal, we leave the datum (i.a)-(ii.b) unaccounted for. Assume that we have a complex experience  $E$  of a three note arpeggio, which is a succession of three shorter experiences  $E_1$ - $E_2$ - $E_3$  of the three individual notes *do*, *mi*, *so*. From *Inheritance<sub>M</sub>* it follows that  $E$ 's temporal profile can be explained in terms of the temporal profile of the arpeggio as it is presented to

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Soteriou 2013; Phillips 2014a.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Lee 2014.

us. However, from  $\text{Inheritance}_M$  it does *not* follow that our *awareness* of E's temporal profile can be so explained, indeed it does not follow that we are aware of E's temporal profile in the first place—the thesis can be true regardless of whether we are aware of it. The hypothesis that the temporal profile of our perception is determined by that of its content is explanatorily idle with respect to accounting for why we report being aware of the temporal profile of our own experiences. Appealing to such a hypothesis is like trying to explain our awareness of an emergent feature of a percept, let us say a shape that we see in a constellation of dots, simply by saying that the shape is determined by the constellation of dots. That just does not seem to be enough, if only because *other* shapes are determined by the same constellation, if we do not take into consideration also our visual system.

If we employ option (ii), that is the coupling of phenomenal transparency and the projection thesis in its metaphysical construal, we are claiming that something analogous to an externalizing mistake happens. Although it seems to us that the short arpeggio that we are listening to has a certain duration, say, it has that apparent duration only in virtue of the fact that it is presented to us in an experience that possesses such a duration. Would this be a violation of *metaphysical* transparency? It depends on how we construe the dependency relation in  $\text{Projection}_M$ . If the temporal profile of the content is reduced to that of the experience, then it is a violation after all. Be that as it may, the point is, similarly to what we have seen for the previous option, one of explanatory deficiency.  $\text{Projection}_M$  entails that the temporal profile of an experience E metaphysically explains the corresponding temporal profile of its content C, but it is silent with respect to what explains our *awareness* of E to begin with. We are presented with the arpeggio as having a certain duration and showing a certain order because our experience of it has this very same temporal profile: E has a certain duration and it is constituted by  $E_1$  followed by  $E_2$ , followed by  $E_3$ . But  $\text{Projection}_M$  can be true also if we are *not* aware of the temporal profile of E. And adding that we *are* aware of the temporal profile of E exposes us to the risk of abandoning positive phenomenal transparency, since it is difficult to see how such an awareness could be derivative on the awareness of the temporal profile of the content, given  $\text{Projection}_M$ .

One may think that rather than looking at the metaphysical formulations of the two theses, we should see whether there is an available phenomenal (hence the subscript 'P') formulation. One way of doing this would be as follows.

**Inheritance<sub>P</sub>.** We are aware of what appears to be the temporal profile of an experience E in virtue of being aware of what appears to be the temporal profile of its content C.

**Projection<sub>P</sub>.** We are aware of what appears to be the temporal profile of the content C of an experience E in virtue of being aware of what appears to be the temporal profile of E.

Inheritance in its phenomenal formulation is tailor-made for preserving positive phenomenal transparency of duration and succession. But how *independently* plausible is it? I will try to answer this question not by appeal to intuitions, but by investigating whether the thesis in question is explanatory felicitous vis à vis explananda such as (i.a)-(ii.b). The question is muddled by the fact that principles in the ballpark of inheritance and projection are discussed in the literature about the temporal structure of experience. In particular, the debate concerns whether experience comes in “units” that are temporally extended, as according to

*extensionalism*, or it comes in virtually instantaneous atoms with a temporally extended content, as according to *retensionalism*, or, rather, it is structured as a series of instantaneous mental events with an instantaneous content, as in the *snapshot* view.<sup>16</sup> However, the problem of accounting for the datum (i.a)-(ii.b) is not trivially solved by solving the problem of temporal structure of perception, and vice versa. When we ask whether reports such as (i.a)-(ii.b) have to be taken at face value, we are asking whether perceptual awareness comes with an awareness of how long the experience lasted and of the order of its qualitative parts. The idea of the three different strategies is that of three possible answers: (i) it does and we are aware of it by introspective the temporal profile of experience itself; (ii) it does and we are aware of it indirectly, in virtue of being aware of the temporal profile of what we are experiencing; or (iii) we are not, although we are led to describe our experience in those terms (more on the third one below). What we are *not* asking is whether by introspection we can know the temporal structure of our experiences. Think of what a snapshot theorist could say to account (i.a)-(ii.b). They can grant that there is a sense in which our experience of a small arpeggio lasts a second and a half (say), and we are somehow aware of this. And they can provide an explanation of it in terms of their theory, according to which the auditory experience of a short arpeggio is a short sequence of atomic experiences. Now, perhaps in the context of discussing the temporal structure of experience *Inheritance<sub>P</sub>* is plausible (as the extensionalist thinks), but it does not follow that it also plausible as an explanans for data such as (i.a)-(ii.b). It remains thus at best unclear that we are justify in restricting transparency on the basis of *Inheritance<sub>P</sub>*.

What about *Projection<sub>P</sub>*? On the face of it, it is incompatible with positive transparency. If being aware of the temporal profile of our own experience is what grounds the awareness of the temporal profile of their content, then the latter cannot be prior to the former. However, whether the two theses are incompatible depends on whether the awareness of the temporal profile of our own perceptions is gained through introspection of our perceptions. If the awareness that our perception of the arpeggio E has a certain duration and it is constituted by the succession of E<sub>1</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, and E<sub>3</sub> is *not* to be understood as introspective knowledge of the temporal structure of our own experiences, but rather derivative on *having* such experiences, then maybe there is a sense in which we can use *Projection<sub>P</sub>* to explain the datum, thus abandoning negative transparency, but not positive transparency. The problem with this manoeuvre is that *a succession of experiences is not, in and of itself, an experience*

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<sup>16</sup> In particular, the Principle of Presentational Concurrence (PPC), according to which ‘[t]he time interval occupied by a content which is before the mind is the very same time interval which is occupied by the act of presenting that very content before the mind’ (Miller 1984: 107). PPC is silent with respect to the order of dependence (if any) between the two time intervals “before the mind”. That is, it is compatible with either *Inheritance<sub>P</sub>* or *Projection<sub>P</sub>*, as it is with the negation of both (although, arguably, it is not compatible with the truth of both). However, PPC is not silent with respect to the temporal profile of experiences. Indeed, it is a principle that extensionalists usually defend, since it entails that if we are aware of temporally extended events, as it seems we are, then our experiences of them are temporally extended too. In contrast, the retentionalists reject it in favour of the Principle of Simultaneous Awareness (PAS), according to which ‘If one is aware of a succession or duration, one is necessarily aware of it at some one moment’ (Phillips 2014a: 140). PSA is in tension with extensionalism, since it suggests that experiences of successions are themselves virtually instantaneous, and it is not compatible with *Inheritance<sub>P</sub>*, if we read the latter in a theoretically loaded way, that is as entailing that the temporal profile of E is the same as that of C. On extensionalism, retensionalism and snapshot view, see Dainton 2000. For a recent defence of the snapshot view, see Arstila 2018.



*of succession*.<sup>17</sup> Less elliptically, it is difficult to see how we can be aware of the temporal profile of our own experiences *simply by having them*.

Certain extensionalists appeal to a *holistic* conception of experience, according to which the temporally extended experiences are more fundamental than their successive parts. And they do so in the context of vindicating some form of transparency.<sup>18</sup> One could think that to have a temporally extended experience E in which a short arpeggio is presented is to be aware of the temporal profile of E itself. The projection of the temporal profile of E onto its content does not require that the temporal profile of E is presented to us. Now, on the one hand, I fail to see how the fact that the extended experience is metaphysically more fundamental than its parts helps us do without the need to be presented with its extension, and for reasons analogous to the ones we have seen with respect to the metaphysical readings of the two thesis: we cannot pull a phenomenological rabbit out of a metaphysical hat. Whatever exactly the “projection” amounts to here, it seems to me that it entails at least that we are aware of *both* temporal profiles. But maybe I am wrong, and I have read uncharitably the extensionalist maneuver. However, if the idea is to appeal to the brain time model (that is, TOR) *without* assuming that we are aware (directly or indirectly) of the temporal profile of our own perceptions, then Projection<sub>P</sub> starts looking very similar to the idea of the deflationary strategy I defend. Our reports about being aware of the temporal profile of our own experiences should not be taken at face value, as reports on a piece of phenomenology. They are rather the best way to describe situations in which extended contents seem to be presented to us. To put it in terms of an inferential reasoning, the idea is that from the fact that what is presented to us has temporal extension we infer that our experiences also unfold in the same stretch of time. Note two things here. First, it looks like we are using a heuristic based on Inheritance<sub>M</sub>, rather than Projection<sub>M</sub>. This is not surprising, since if we appeal to the brain time model, but without assuming that we are aware of the temporal profile of our own experiences, their content is the only element that comes with an *experienced* temporal profile. Second, the appeal to extensionalism and holism is explanatorily idle; the heuristic does the whole job. If we are not aware of the temporal profile of our own experiences, then the explanation works perfectly even if our experiences are virtually instantaneous, as the retentionalist and the snapshot theorists maintain. Let us then have a closer look at this proposal.

#### 9.4 Illusions

Many cases of *illusory experiences* involving duration and order are discussed in the literature. Some of them are cases of temporal illusions, in the strict sense that the property that is illusorily experienced is a temporal property. For instance, in the so-called oddball

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<sup>17</sup> As for the famous dictum by James (1890, Vol. I: 629). Many examples of analogous points made in the literature are given in Hoerl 2013b: 374.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Phillips 2011 and 2014a, but also Hoerl 2009. Other accounts explicitly reject positive phenomenal transparency here, for instance by appealing to an “inward” higher order experience in which the succession of the first order experiences is represented. See Sattig 2019. He is providing an account of the experience of time passing, but the point can be adapted for the case of duration and succession.

effect, it is the *duration* of the stimulus that is misperceived (or at least misreported).<sup>19</sup> Although we are presented with a succession of stimuli each of the same temporal length, in certain circumstances we report one of them as lasting longer than the others. Other cases involve an illusory experience of the *distributional qualitative profile* of an event, and thus strictly speaking are not temporal illusions (although they are sometimes so labelled). Rather than being inaccurately presented with the *temporal* features of the events we perceive, we are inaccurately presented with how an event qualitatively develops through time. An example is apparent motion (the phi-motion phenomenon). While the stimulus is constituted by a dot flashing for a moment on the left, followed by a “blank” short period, followed by a dot flashing for a moment on the right, it is reported as being experienced as a continuous motion of the dot from left to right. (Other examples are the so-called “cutaneous rabbit”, and in general all postdiction effects.<sup>20</sup>)

The first case of illusion is not particularly problematic for *temporal* transparency. To see why, consider the relation between the phenomenon of *perceptual inaccuracy*, which in principle seems to involve any kind of perceptual experience, and the perceptual transparency thesis. Perhaps illusions *are* problematic for the idea that perception presents us features of the world around us.<sup>21</sup> But it seems too quick to consider cases of inaccurate perception of a feature F as conclusive evidence for the claim that F is not transparent to us, namely that in order to explain the inaccuracy we *have to* appeal to awareness of a feature of the (inaccurate) experience itself.

The second case, postdiction effects, is more interesting for the issue of transparency, because they constitute a challenge to the brain time thesis, which is crucial to the understanding of the deflationary strategy, as I mentioned above. Consider again the case of illusory motion. We have a succession of three stimuli:

- (S<sub>1</sub>) A dot flashing for a moment on the left
- (S<sub>2</sub>) A “blank” short period
- (S<sub>3</sub>) A dot flashing for a moment on the right

The report is of an experience of a continuous motion of the dot from left to right. What the report suggests is that the experience of the third stimulus S<sub>3</sub> (when it comes after the previous two) influences the experience of the previous two. We do not experience the succession of S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> as a stationary dot followed by a “blank” experience, but rather as parts of a continuous movement of the dot from the left towards the right. There are two main interpretative frameworks of this situation: *Orwellian rewriting* and *Stalinesque delay*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Tse et al. 2004.

<sup>20</sup> In the cutaneous rabbit illusion, a sequence of groups of taps delivered at the wrist and in other locations of the arm “seem to the subjects to travel in regular sequence over equidistant points up the arm – as if a little animal were hopping along the arm.” (Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992: 186). Roughly, cases of postdiction are situations in which there is a mismatch between the how the stimulus develops through time and how it is reported to have developed. Cf. Gepshtein & Kubovy 2007 for a general discussion.

<sup>21</sup> Papineau 2021 seems to defend an analogous point.

<sup>22</sup> See Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992, who criticize both models in favour of the *Multiple Drafts* model (see next footnote). Todd 2009 argues, against them, that the distinction is significant. See Grush 2007 on the Orwellian strategy, and Dainton 2008 on the Stalinesque one.

According to the Orwellian rewriting, there is never a moment in which we experience movement. The experience of the succession of  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $S_3$  can be seen as having three parts,  $E_1$ ,  $E_2$ ,  $E_3$  respectively, each with a veridical content. That is, the content of  $E_1$  is a stationary dot on the left, the content of  $E_2$  is a “blank” moment, and the content of  $E_3$  is a stationary dot on the right. However, right after  $E_3$  an inaccurate *memory* of what happened imposes on us, and we thus report our experience having been that of seeing a continuous movement of the dot from left to right. (The brain in this account is like Big Brother in Orwell’s 1984, and has the capacity to delete the past and write a new version.) The Orwellian rewriting scenario is not compatible with the brain time model. Remember, the brain time model entails that the very occurrence of an experience provides us with the information about its occurring at a certain time, relative to other experiences. But if Orwellian rewriting happens, an experience occurring *after*  $E_1$  provides us information about the temporal location of  $E_1$ . This picture requires that temporal markers enter the scene.<sup>23</sup> I will then put it aside.

Appealing to Stalinesque delay is more promising. The idea is that the elaboration of  $S_1$  takes time, and the time at which it becomes conscious has been influenced by processes initiated by stimulus  $S_3$ . So the content of  $E_1$  is that of a spot that begins to move towards the right. According to the model, therefore, we do experience movement (although not veridically), and there is no misremembering. (The brain in this account is like Stalin’s secret police that creates bogus evidence in trials.) If the Stalinesque delay model is understood linearly, it predicts a delay in the elaboration of the stimulus that seems to be in contrast with the hypothesis that there is always the minimum delay necessary for a stimulus to be elaborated consciously. This is implausible for evolutionary reasons. However, Arstila (2015b) has elaborated a non-linear version of the theory, which is supported by empirical evidence and does not require an extra delay. This concludes my discussion of postdiction illusions. I can now explain how I intend to use the brain time model to motivate the third strategy in the case of experience of duration and successions.

According to the brain time thesis, there is no temporal information about the temporal profile of our own experiences other than what we get from the fact that we experience certain events in certain order and with certain durations. No *phenomenal* awareness of the temporal location of our own mental episodes is available in introspection. However, since we retrospectively can easily *infer* that of which we were aware during the experiences in question (otherwise how could have we been presented with anything?), it is not surprising that we accept (i.a)-(i.b) as a good way to characterise our experience of temporal properties.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising that we show a tendency to describe the temporal properties of our own experiences as identical with those of the events that we have been presented with. Something similar happens with (ii.a)-(ii.b). Assuming that by

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<sup>23</sup> This is true also of the more complex Multiple Drafts model. I agree with Arstila 2015b, who argues that the Multiple Drafts model is Orwellian in the crucial sense that according to it, too, there is never a moment in which we experience movement. The difference between the Multiple Drafts model and the other two models is that the first rejects the “Cartesian” assumption of a point of entrance of the experiences to consciousness.

<sup>24</sup> See also Tye (2003: 97): ‘Continuity, change, and succession are experienced as features of the items experienced, not as features of experience.’ Notice that here I am talking about the way we characterise our phenomenology, and not about the fact that we may evaluate the duration of definitely longer portions of our stream of consciousness through memory. The well-studied kind of inaccuracy of those situations is irrelevant here.

being presented with the temporal properties of an event we are in a position to discern their duration and order of parts, it follows from the above consideration that we *take ourselves* to be in the same position with respect to the temporal properties of the experiences in which we are presented with them.

The heuristics that we use to evaluate the length of our own experiences, according to the hypothesis that I am defending here, bears analogy with the inheritance principle for the case of duration and succession. Notice that the heuristic is specific to the temporal case. There is no reason to think that we should use it for the case of colours and shapes (assuming phenomenal transparency holds for them), and other non-temporal properties. The reason is that simply assuming that one must “be there” to experience a colour or a shape does not entail further similarity between the experience and what is experienced. Contrariwise, in the case of temporal properties, it is very plausible to assume that the default position is that our experience and the event that we experience “live in the same temporal dimension”, as it were. Finally, notice that one can interpret this strategy as the claim that (i.a)-(ii.b) are false, or at least that they are false if we understand “being aware” and “discern” in sensory terms.

This concludes my account of transparency in the case of experiencing duration and order of events. Although I do not have knock-down arguments against all alternative proposals, my conclusion is that we should embrace the full thesis of phenomenal transparency and “soften” the transparency-threatening implications of the datum (i.a)-(ii.b). I now move to the case of the experience of the flow.

### 9.5 The experience of time passing

Recall the three options we saw with respect to the clash between the fact that we report being aware of properties of our own experiences such as duration and order, and the idea of transparency. First, we can abandon both conjuncts of full phenomenal transparency. Second, we can try to make sense of the positive conjunct and reject the negative one. Third, we can embrace full transparency and “revise” the problematic datum. In this last section, we face another datum that is in tension with the idea of temporal transparency. We can formulate it as follows.

**(iii)** We are aware of the passage of time with respect to the world around us, and with respect to our own mental life.

An important qualification: (iii) does *not* entail that we experience *two* flows (although it does not rule out it either). What (iii) says, taken as a datum, is that people tend to describe the flow of time both as involving the event that they perceive and the internal state that they possess.<sup>25</sup> The experience of flow is, in a sense, undetermined with respect to the outward and inward aspects of our conscious experience. However, as long as our own “mental life” also includes perceptual awareness, (iii) clashes with the thesis that perception is always

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<sup>25</sup> Jaszczolt (2020) gives an account of the relation between the two flows at the level of belief, rather than phenomenal character. See also next footnote.

outward oriented, and does not reveal in introspection features of itself as a vehicle. Notice that there are two elements in tension with transparency here.

The first is that (iii) suggests that we are presented not only with time flowing in the external world, but also with an “inner flow”, which involves not only thoughts, desires, and cognitive states more generally, but — crucially for the failure of full transparency — also our own perceptions. The inner flow is part of our awareness also when we are focused on perceptual activities, and not merely when we are lost in the stream of our thoughts. Although I do not take the phenomenological datum to be that there are two flows, any theory of this aspect of temporal experience has to specify if this aspect of experience entails a failure of transparency or not, since an all but obvious interpretation is to take it as an awareness of the inner succession of mental states, including perceptual ones.<sup>26</sup> The second is that even if the inner flow has nothing to do with perception (and thus it does not impinge on transparency), our awareness of the external flow may require that we are aware of features of our own experience. The second worry is particularly pressing if we do not think that there is an objective flow of which we can be aware, but I will try to set metaphysical considerations to one side as much as possible. What is important here is that the second worry is part and parcel of my *phenomenal modifier account* of the experience of passage, as shall become clear in a moment.

As mentioned, I will defend a form of the second strategy for the case of the passage of time (abandoning negative, but retaining positive phenomenal transparency). Before proceeding, let me say something about the third strategy. The idea of embracing full transparency and reinterpreting (iii) accordingly is similar to what elsewhere I have called the *deflationist* take on the experience of passage, viz. the idea that our awareness of movement and change is mistaken for an experience of flow, the mistake being a cognitive, rather than perceptual one.<sup>27</sup> I say that it is “similar to” rather than the same because deflationism (as intended here) is silent with respect to the inner flow: the experience that is “deflated” is the passage of time out there in the world around us. However, it is possible to adopt a more general version of deflationism, according to which we are aware neither (a) of a flow in which the perceived events unfold, nor (b) of a flow in which our own experiences unfold. Given that I have argued against (a) elsewhere,<sup>28</sup> I will not consider this expanded deflationism here. However, one may *adapt* deflationism rather than expand it. This means rejecting (a) and keeping (b), that is giving a non-deflationist account of the perceptual experience of passage, at the same time treating our report about an inner flow as spurious— at least when the inner flow is that of our perceptions, rather than thoughts. I will say something about this *midway deflationist* strategy later on. Suffice for the time being to notice that accounting for being aware of a flow in which the perceived events unfold in a

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<sup>26</sup> Jaszczolt (this volume) analyses the awareness of our internal flow in terms of a subjective overt qualifier (SOQ), and our awareness of the external flow in terms of an objective covert qualifier (OCQ). She then identifies the belief in an internal flow as the application of the overt subjective awareness to the objective covert awareness of external time. As I read it, her proposal relies on the idea that the awareness of an internal flow is parasitic on that of an external one, and it is thus compatible with positive epistemic transparency (as mine is too, although for a different reason, see below).

<sup>27</sup> Hoerl 2014, and Huggett 2014.

<sup>28</sup> See my Torrenco 2017a.

way that is both non-deflationist and compatible with full transparency is not trivial (remember our second worry: it may be that being aware of time passing by outside us requires that we are aware of features of our own experience).

Let us see then whether we can implement the second strategy (trying to save positive transparency), or whether we are forced to retreat to the first one (abandoning transparency altogether), which, as I pointed out above, seems to be a quite natural framework to interpret the idea of an experience of an inner flow of experiences. The second strategy requires that we are presented with a dynamic aspect of our own perception *through* being presented with an external flow of events; in addition we may still be aware in some more direct way of an inner flow with respect to non-perceptual experiences. At first sight at least, the view seems in line or compatible with my theory of the phenomenal modifier. Roughly, the idea is that we could be presented with the internal flow of our perceptions in virtue of being presented in a “flowy” manner with successions of events. If so, our experience of an inner flow is compatible with positive transparency, although not with negative transparency.

Unfortunately, there is an immediate problem with this project. The phenomenal modifier theory (PMT) of the experience of passage is a form of sensationalism, according to which (in a nutshell) the dynamic character of our phenomenology is an *intrinsic feature of experience*, a modification of its content that is phenomenally apparent. Therefore, the flow of time is not something that we are presented with in perception, as we are presented with colors, shape, movements, and changes. However, we are aware of such a feature of our perceptions by being presented in a “flowy” manner with the content of our perceptions *and our mental life in general*. Crucially, in my account, not only perceptions, but any mental state that presents us with a content (imagining, remembering, desiring and the like), in such a flowy manner, invites the thought that time passes. Insofar as our experience is outward directed, the thought is that the events around us flow in time, and insofar as our experience is inward directed, the thought is that our own experience flow in the *same* temporal flux.

It is important to realise that PMT is *not* detrimental to the idea that perceptual experience *in general* presents us with a variety of worldly features,<sup>29</sup> and thus it is not detrimental to the thesis that transparency *in most of the cases* holds. Indeed, as long as there are no other reasons to doubt that transparency is in good standing, the fact per se that the experience of the flow of time requires a local failure of transparency is not a reason to abandon transparency in other cases. After all, the experience of the passage of time *is* a sui generis experience, and it should not be too shocking to discover that it requires to be treated as an exception-like case. Even more importantly, with respect to the external flow, such a “local” failure involves only *metaphysical* transparency. From the point of view of what *seems* to us to be the case, the perceptual experience of the passage of time is an experience that comes with a *presentational* aspect as perception in general (Gow 2017a). Perceiving is perceiving a world in flux.<sup>30</sup>

The situation is quite different to the previous case of experience of duration and order. There we needed to appeal to time markers or temporal modes of presentation in order

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<sup>29</sup> Besides, such a form of sensationalism with respect to the experience of passage is neutral with respect to whether other experiences are explained in terms of mental representations or in relational terms (see section I).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. O’Shaughnessy 2000: 49 and ff.

to make sense of the idea that we are aware of the temporal profile of our own perceptions, without construing it as derivative of the awareness of the temporal profile of their contents. Applying the first strategy in the case of perception of duration and order would have meant to admit that the failure of transparency is indeed pervasive. Dialectically, on the one hand, for certain temporal features, such as duration and order, which potentially threaten transparency extensively, there is a viable “deflationist” alternative; and on the other hand, if we drop full transparency for the case of the experience of time passing, the failure is restricted to an exception-like feature of experience anyway. But do we have to drop positive transparency too for the experience of time passing, if we explain the latter in terms of the PMT?

Here is a rationale in favour of a compatibility between the phenomenal modifier theory and full phenomenal transparency. If PMT is correct, our awareness of the modification of the contents of experience is the basis of the belief that time passes. The best way to understand such awareness, given its role as basis of the belief in the passage of time, is in terms of how the events that we perceive seem to us. But then *phenomenal* positive transparency is not violated, although *metaphysical* positive transparency is, as we noted above. We are aware of an intrinsic feature of our own experience, but we systematically make the externalising mistake with respect to it. Therefore, it seems to us that time passes; it does *not* seem to us that our own perceptions have a certain intrinsic feature that “tricks” us into thinking so.

Unfortunately the rationale leaves something out. If (iii) above is a good *prima facie* characterization of our phenomenology, we are aware not only of the events around us happening in time, but also of our own mental episodes, including perceptions, happening in time. Compare the difference between the experience of time passing and experiences that are usually taken to be fully transparent, such as visual experience of shape and color. If I perceive a tree in front of me, I don’t gain more insight about my own mental states by introspecting: it is still the tree that experience presents me with.<sup>31</sup> But in the case of the passage of time, the situation seems to be slightly different. In line with (iii), by shifting my attention from the perceived world to my inner mental life it seems to me that the flow of time is still somehow presented to me.

Or it doesn’t? Perhaps. I do not intend to dismiss entirely the rationale above by appealing to a possibly dubious phenomenological datum. I reckon that the rationale is good within its own boundary, but that is not enough. To see why, think first that when we have experiences that are *not* perceptual, such as memories or imaginings, we do *not* commit the externalising mistake — unless for some “unusual” circumstances they come with a presentational phenomenology. Or, more precisely, we do not think that the events that are presented to us in memory or imaginations are happening *at the time in which we are presented with them*. We are, however, still aware of the passage of time, or at least we are aware of our inner flow.<sup>32</sup> Second, given that perception is virtually always part of our mental

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. the “original” discussion of transparency, presented as a datum rather than as a thesis, by Moore 1903.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Phillips 2012. The claim that in cases in which perception does not play any significant role in our mental life, as when one is immersed in their own thoughts, it seems that we are aware of our internal time passing can be challenged. What is important to me here is that it is compatible with the fact that in certain cases we “lose track” of the external time, that we are aware of the inner flow.

life, it is doubtful that it should be exceptional in this respect. It is exceptional in the fact that it (as opposed to imagination, desiring, etc.) is characterised by a presentational phenomenology, as already noted, and this is part of the explanation of why we make the externalizing mistake with respect to the passage of time. But it is not an exception with respect to presenting to us *also* with an internal flow. If so, the PMT requires that metaphysical negative transparency fails, since we are aware of an intrinsic feature of our perception (the flowy manner in which we experience events around us). Phenomenal negative transparency holds “locally,” since it seems to us that time flows in the world, but fails with respect to our inner flow, because it seems to us that *our mental life* (including perceptions) is flowy. I do not want to put too much weight here on introspective data. I take it that it is not obvious that the best reading of (iii) entails that we are aware of the flowy nature of our own perceptions. However, in what follows I aim at providing broader theoretical reasons to give this account of the phenomenology, rather than one in which perceptual and non-perceptual states are treated differently.

But let us consider such an alternative, asymmetric view first. Although, as I have just argued, I think that there are good reasons for maintaining that negative phenomenal transparency *is* violated, the midway deflationist third strategy which I sketched above could come in handy here. The idea would be the following: we are aware of the flowy manner in which perceptions, memories, and any phenomenally charged mental episodes present contents to us (full metaphysical transparency fails), but it seems to us as if time “out there” passes (full phenomenal transparency holds), and yet when we report on our being aware of an internal flow, this does not involve perceptions, but only other types of mental episodes. If we think otherwise, this is because we confuse the flowy way perception presents to us the external events with the way we are aware of our own mental life. When we diverge our attention from the passage of time out there to our own mental life, we either keep on “tracking” the external flow and misattribute it to our own experiences, or we inadvertently switch to the inner flow of our non-perceptual mental life and misattribute it to the external world too.

This position is problematic. Take again the example of someone visually perceiving the seagull passing by the church bell. If they report that it seems as if they are aware of the passage of time with respect to *both* what they see and their seeing it, this position predicts that they are somehow mistaken. I think this is puzzling, not as a description of the phenomenology, I have granted that the issue of the introspective data here is as delicate as it could be, but with respect to the contrast with perceptions of duration and succession. The idea is that if the midway deflationist explains awareness of the inner flow as an interiorizing of awareness of the external flow, then they leave the non-perceptual case unexplained. And if they explain the non-perceptual case differently, they introduce a further complication in the account which can be avoided. My aim of the last part of this final section is to show how we can have a more “uniform” theory, one based on the PMT and restricted to the second strategy. We have to be careful here and not read the idea of a derivative experience of inner flow as a form of what I have called *reductionism* with respect to the experience of the passage of time. Reductionism is the thesis that we are presented with the passage of time in the world through being presented with qualitative temporal features such as movement,



change, duration and the like.<sup>33</sup> The idea that I am exploring here is rather that we become aware of our own perceptions flowing in time in the same way that we become aware of any of our experiences as flowing in time, namely through being aware of the flowy manner in which we are aware of our conscious contents in general.

The first step is to clarify what it is to be presented in perception in a “flowy manner” with an event. On the face of it, it sounds like a temporal mode of presentation, and thus not something compatible with positive transparency after all. Now, this criticism is not totally off the tracks, methinks. But let me dispel how we should *not* understand it. The idea is not to construe perception as having a temporally extended and *tensed* content as in the so-called modal view of the specious present.<sup>34</sup> Following certain ideas of Husserl, some construe perceptual experience as one in which we are presented with extended events. For simplicity, let us identify an event *e* with which we are presented with a succession of moments  $\langle m_1, m_2, m_3, \dots \rangle$ . Different moments in *e* are presented in different ways,  $m_3$  is presented as present (say),  $m_2$  as just past,  $m_1$  as a bit more past, and possibly still others as future. Perception comes with a *primal impression* focus, its *retention* tail (and possibly a *protention* front)—to use Husserl’s original terminology. Whether such modes of presentation are compatible or not with positive transparency is controversial,<sup>35</sup> and indeed it is also a matter of debate as to whether or not perception requires them to begin with.<sup>36</sup> Be that as it may, we have to carefully distinguish the merely perspectival elements involved in this picture, from the dynamic element. If  $m_1$  is presented as *present*, it is presented as occurring roughly at the same moment in which our own experience is, and if  $m_2$  is presented as *past*, it is presented as just “over there” in the temporal dimension. As I have argued elsewhere, the perspectival elements are insufficient for accounting for the modification that gives rise to our belief in the passage of time.<sup>37</sup> Of course we can “read more” into tenses and understand them as contributing some *primitive* dynamic ingredient. But then, given that the whole idea of perceptual contents being tensed is problematic, why not address this primitive dynamic element directly?

So what could this flowy mode of presenting events in perception be? Let us come back to the idea of saving phenomenal positive transparency by dropping metaphysical positive transparency, and keep in mind that the aim is to have an account that is *not* limited to the perceptual case. If we were to provide an account that works only for the perceptual case, then we would not be better off than midway deflationism. The analogy, which inspires the PMT more generally, is with seeing through a blurred glass. The visual experience presents us with objects that have determinate boundaries in a blurred way. In certain conditions, we attribute the lack of determinacy to the boundaries of the perceived objects. It

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<sup>33</sup> Torrenco 2017a. Defenders of versions of the view are e.g. Paul 2010 and Prosser 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Dainton 2008, p. 375.

<sup>35</sup> Richardson 2014 seems to think that the spatial analogue, perspectival features, are structural features that are compatible with positive transparency, and suggests (in 2018) that perhaps also the temporal case is analogous.

<sup>36</sup> I myself (with Hoerl 2018) do *not* believe that perceptual contents are tensed.

<sup>37</sup> Torrenco 2018. In a nutshell, the idea is that clearly our perception of space is perspectival, but we do not come to believe that space is dynamic. Hence the reason we think time is dynamic must be based on something different than the mere perspectival element (if it is there to begin with). Jaszczolt 2020 argues that our increasing awareness of Einstein’s relativity may contribute to the explanation of how come that we can experience things in spacetime as dynamic, while knowing that neither space nor time are so.

is also possible to be in a situation in which we both see the objects as lacking determined boundaries, and we are aware of the blurriness of the glass itself. The suggestion is to consider the awareness of our *inner* flow as analogous to the latter situation. We are aware of the modification of our perceptual contents in a way that it seems to us both that time passes and that our perceptions happen in the very same flow—the phenomenal modifier is the great binder. Think of the inferential consequences of this hypothesis. According to it, we come to believe that time passes, because of the flowy character of our experiences, and such a belief does not distinguish between an internal and an external flow.

It is important to notice that, on this picture, our awareness of the inner flow is derivative of the awareness of the flowy manner in which the perceptual contents are presented to us, and yet the account of the non-perceptual cases is not treated differently, as it would have been if we had followed the midway deflationist strategy. An account of the inner flow based on the PMT seems to sit better with the thought that the experience of passage is not confined to perception, and lead to a belief that the inner flow is *the same* as the outer flow. When we do not attend to perceptual content, we may possibly “lose track” of the passage of time; but this does not mean that we do not experience time flowing when we are absorbed in our imagination, memories, mental imageries, thoughts, since they all present us contents within the flow of time. Losing track of the flow of time simply means no longer being in a position to make accurate judgments about durations, but this is hardly a reason to take (iii) as a mischaracterization of our temporal phenomenology.

Now, on the one hand non-perceptual experiences are not a threat to temporal transparency, but on the other maintaining that we are presented with a stream of thoughts or memories *independently* of our awareness of what we think, remember (and perceive) does not necessarily capture the phenomenology of our inner flow better. According to PMT non-perceptual experiences are characterised by a flowy mode of presentation as much as perceptual ones. The theory allows us to have a uniform explanation of the perceptual and non-perceptual cases, because it entails that whatever we are presented with in experience (perceptual or not), we are presented with it in a flowy manner. Therefore, even if there is no presentational phenomenology in the case of imagining or memories, and we are not presented with events as happening “out there”, around us, we are still presented with contents as if they happened in time. And even if we are aware that the contents are not happening as our own experiences unfold, we are aware that our experiences unfold while we are presented with them as happening. My hypothesis, in accordance with PMT, is that the explanation is the same as in the perceptual case. We are aware of our own experiences unfolding in virtue of being aware of their content being presented in a flowy manner. Therefore, even though supposing that we are non-perceptually presented with our non-perceptual experiences themselves as unfolding in time would not be a violation of negative transparency, I do not think we should assume that we are. In both cases the awareness of the passage of time is mediated by the awareness of how our contents are modified. The PMT allows us to have a more general account of our experience of the inner flow (regardless of whether it involves perceptions), and one that seems to have at least as much explanatory power as the midway deflationist one. Again, negative phenomenal transparency fails because it seems to us as if our experiences unfolded in time also in the case of perception.

However, the positive thesis, in its phenomenal reading, holds: this feature of our own perceptions is nothing over and above a flowy content being presented in awareness.