

Blink of an Eye:
Material Nature Captured in the Momentary Now
A radical 1st person perspective

To Ula

Dwight Holbrook

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in the Momentary Now**
A radical 1st person perspective

Also by Dwight Holbrook: *The Wickham Claim: Being an Inquiry into the Attainder of Parker Wickham*, the factual account of a legally contested Revolutionary War confiscation in 1779. The book brought about a legal claim credited with blocking the development of Robins Island in the Peconic Bay of Long Island.

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Blurring the border between science and the humanities, this book scrutinizes the relation between material nature and ourselves, doing so by means of a 1st person approach to time. It takes as primordial starting point the now's immediacy – that is, the experiential immediacy of one's awakeness to, and contact with, the world and our surroundings, a momentness of time that matches and aligns with the immediate presentness of the world we're in touch with and lucidly aware of. The primordially of such alignment of time is brought out by the fact that without it there could be no communication, no con-temporaneous society, no knowledge, all of which hinge on this synchronicity of immediate time. Such a perspective entails the overturning of the all but universal bedrock presumption of sequential time, the before and after of extended time. Instead of the transient present resting precariously on the foundational notion of an ordered, sequential time that provides for causal sequence, for chronologies, and for a past "in" the past and a future "in" the future, in the schema advanced in this book it is the past and future that perch precariously on the present – the immediate present being not the present effect of a cause but the present beginning that other notions of time are predicated on. In other words, the notion of time – as this book proposes it – is turned upside down.

One might compare such a proposal to that of attempting a detour around the observational bias of searching for keys where the street light is shining, that locality being in this case 3rd person and data-compatible description – the measurable, the countable, the sequential. It is enough here to hint at the detour's vindication by citing a previewer's comment on an article in which I addressed the subject of immediate time: "This paper tackles what I'd say is the most important question in consciousness studies; namely, what is the nature of experienced temporality." (*Journal of Consciousness Studies*, in-house previewer of "The Nowness of Conscious Experience," Sept. 19, 2017).

KEY WORDS: experiential immediacy, external present time, first-person perspective, lucidity, the now, objectively present moment, present-to-past, relational time, self/other temporal alignment, temporal constraint

Dwight Holbrook, Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań,
al. Niepodległości 4, 61-874 Poznań, Poland; email: hdwight10021@yahoo.com

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Acknowledgements

A radical 1st person perspective entails a number of serious problems – some would say insuperable problems – in that it attempts, perhaps imprudently, to go beyond the hard-enough task of seeking a way around the chasm between what we know first-hand, our concrete and experiential contact with the world, and on the other hand the knowledge obtained by inferring and abstracting from the immediate to the non-immediate, the non-immediate being commonly considered a better gauge of the “objective view of that same world”, to borrow the words of Thomas Nagel.¹ The endeavor of this present book is, in essence, to apply that “objective” label to an aspect of time this book gives special attention to, namely the immediacy of now time, the immediacy of experiential contact that comes by being awake to the world now.

In this undertaking I give special mention and thanks to Harald Atmanspacher, The Mind and Matter Society, and its journal, for the range and depth of his and the Society’s innovative directions in probing questions of time and related issues. More specifically pertaining to the subject matter of this book, I owe deep appreciation to Georg Franck for pointing out a number of significant hurdles I face by my elevating now time over numbered and clock time. His comments were directed at my article “Is Present Time a Precondition for the Existence of the Material and Public World?” (*Social Epistemology*, 2015) that addressed themes taken up in this present work. Also to be thanked is Jesse Butler, my sparring partner in an exchange published online in *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*, subsequent to the publication of the article mentioned above. And most recently, I wish to thank Franz Jansen for his detailed critique of a preliminary section of this book, and Professor Roman Kopytko of this university and Professor Subhash Kak of Oklahoma State University for their helpful and commendatory comments. As well, thanks are due to the director of the English Department at Adam Mickiewicz University, Professor Katarzyna Dziubalska, as well as to mgr Michał Jankowski, for arranging the university’s publication of this book, and to the former director,

¹ Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 3.

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Titles of other earlier articles I have written on time's 1st person perspective hint at some of the initial groundwork and direction of this present work, titles like "Does Time Move? Dogen and the Art of Understanding the Moment" (Kluwer Academic, 2002), "The 'Background' Category" (Mind and Matter, 2010), and a version of chapter 10, "Do We Die?" (Ways to Religion Conference, Wroclaw, 2015), and as well a version of the final chapter of this book presented at the transdisciplinary workshop "Generalities and Particulars: A Fruitful Tension", organized by the Society for Mind-Matter Research and held at the Zen Center Johanneshof, Herrischried, in May 2017, and most recently my paper "In Defense of One Now" presented at the Mind and Matter symposium preliminary to the Toward a Science of Consciousness Conference in Tucson, Arizona, in April, 2018.

“Is there anything more certain than the knowledge we have that we are present?”²

Craig Bourne, *A Future for Presentism*, 18.

“[T]he present is not part of time. Of course ordinarily in the schools, colleges and the universities you have been told and taught and your dictionaries go on saying again and again that time has three tenses: past, present, and future. That is absolutely wrong – wrong according to those who know. Past and future are in time, but the present is not in time; the present belongs to eternity. Past and future belong to *this* – the world of the relative, change. Between the two penetrates the beyond, the transcendental, and that is the present. *NOW* is part of eternity.”

Attributed to Osho, cited in Jonathan Bricklin, *The Illusion of Will, Self, and Time: William James’s Reluctant Guide to Enlightenment*, 155.

“Again, the ‘now’ which seems to bound the past and future – does it always remain one and the same or is it always other and other? It is hard to say.”

Aristotle, *Physics* 4: (9)10.

² More specifically targeted to the momentary now, a slightly modified version in our rendering would read: “Is there anything more certain than the knowing we have of the present we are awake to?”

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Table of contents

Chapter 1.
Introduction: What If There Were Such a Thing as Present Time? 13

Part 1 **The Now in Nature**

Chapter 2.
Material Nature Here and Now 33
 1. The here and now as a 1st person perspective 41
 2. Perceiver – perceiving – object of perception 45
 3. The boundary question anew 49

Chapter 3.
Material Nature-as-other 55
 1. In defense of material nature-as-other 57
 2. Otherness as a precondition 59
 3. Otherness in via negativa terms 62
 4. Otherness and the here-and-now 64
 5. Material Nature as both *other* and *here-and-now* 65

Chapter 4.
The Now in its immediacy 69
 1. The measureless now 71
 2. The now that leaves no trace of itself 75
 3. The now in its immediacy 76
 4. Contra a nowless universe 79
 5. The now's familiarity 84

Chapter 5.
Completed Time: the Time that Stays Where It is 91
 1. Changed or changing? 92
 2. The changed and the mediated 95
 3. The changed and the timeless 98

Chapter 6.	
Con-temporaneity or the Common Now	103
1. Con-temporaneity	104
2. Presence in and out	107
3. The absent present	109
4. The Seager paradox	111

Chapter 7.	
The Notion of a Beginning	115
1. The illusion of a past in the past	124
2. A <i>changed from</i> in the present	125

Part 2

Whatever happened to a moment ago? Searching the Archives of Not-Now Time for an Answer

Chapter 8.	
The Not-Now in Its Various Designations	129
1. The just now (from a 3 rd vs. 1 st person perspective)	130
2. The lived past	131
3. The nowless	131
4. Memory	134

Chapter 9.	
The Not-Now of Knowledge	139
1. The not-now of mathematics	140
2. History	141
3. Literature and the arts	141
4. And science?	143

Chapter 10.	
Do We Die?	147

Chapter 11.	
Contra-lucidity?	155
1. Grotowski and the past/present	156
2. Ineffability and intrinsic properties: a debate	158
3. The past/present from classical theater	159
4. Sensory knowing in New Testament gospel episodes	161
5. Gospel accounts of past/present doppelganger encounters	164
6. Implications of the bi-temporal hypothesis	166

Part 3
Nature in the Now

Chapter 12.

The “in” Question Anew	171
1. An entwined now that was	172
2. The alignment itself	174
3. Otherness in the alignment	175
4. The Self in the alignment	177
5. Challenges: now or then?	180

Chapter 13.

The Nonlinear (i.e. Non-Sequential) Universe vs. Metaphysical Variants	185
1. Differentiating the now’s non-sequential model	186
2. The now that doesn’t begin, the alignment that does	187
3. A Non-sequential beginning	188
4. Nonlinear/linear as opposed to mind/body	189
5. The past and linear time: the bedrock they stand on	191

Chapter 14.

The Sun also Rises	195
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Bibliography	205
--------------------	-----

Index	211
-------------	-----

Chapter 1

Introduction: What if there were such a thing as present time?

Consider the notion: a thing-like now. In other words, a now phenomenon of nature or of external existence (leaving aside a more precise source of that “of” and what it will come to mean in later discussion). The question is: How could there be such a thing as this – a present time that is only now, only this now? A present time that comes not from ourselves, our language, our minds or subjective states, but from outside of us, just as the thingness of that table. A now, moreover, that cloaks things in their concreteness, makes them manifest that way. After all, who could imagine a nowless table being concrete?

And yet, how could this present moment, without a past or future, be a thing at all or in any way thing-like, tangible, distinct from false impressions our senses fool us into believing, distinct as well from a mere gimmick of speech or a way of speaking about fractional time? How could there be such an entity of this sort – a now that answers to such description? In his book, *The Character of Consciousness*, David Chalmers writes,

In the Garden of Eden, we had unmediated contact with the world. We were directly acquainted with objects in the world and with their properties. Objects were presented to us without causal mediation, and properties were revealed to us in their true pristine glory.¹

This book argues the case for such an “edenic” now, or put more plainly – dispensing with the Biblical metaphor – a now uncompromised by subjective considerations or mental mediation.

The challenge is indeed formidable, the stakes are high. For if what our very lucidity and sensory faculties inform us of is a presentness in our surroundings, as objectively real as that tree or any other thing, then it appears it is science that fails in its characterizing as illusory that which it is constitutionally

¹ David Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness* (Oxford, 2010), p. 381.

unable to explain. Either that or it is we who suffer the illusion – a massive one.² But if indeed the illusion is not ours, and there is this amorphous yet thing-like now, with no past or future, what happens to the past and future? What happens to the “then”, the universe with its 13.8 billion light years of age? What happens to ourselves, our past identities? What happens to the beginning, the very notion of a beginning? With such uncertainties as these, must they not call into question this thing-like attribution, this co-physical aspect which is here being attributed to the now, or must such uncertainties pull the now out from the physical to at best speculation about the meta-physical? On the one hand, it can be argued that nothing could be more physically apparent, more starkly exposed to our awakened senses, than the closeness of the present. “Is there anything more certain than the knowledge we have that we are present?” as the presentists’ manifesto puts it. But on the other hand, its inaccessibility to mathematical calculation and measured configuration, as we shall see, would seem to endow the now with credentials of a more metaphysical kind.

And yet, that is part of the appeal of this thesis of the now – its very closeness. Everything becomes close at hand, intimate, even the furthest reaches of time, even the uncaused causer. We ourselves take on a temporal significance because nowness gets posited as both part of us and part of the all, the cosmos, that changes from an indifference to a difference that we ourselves make. Not only that. The image of time reverses. Instead of this moment resting on the contingency of a transience in between an inscrutably distanced past and future, the opposite takes center stage: the time of all that belongs “in” time hinges on there being this very present moment, an enigma – it would seem – with no before or after, no sequentiality, being only now. What then, one might ask, becomes of time’s beginning, or any beginning in time, if time itself should rest on the foundation of a phenomenon that, by its very immediacy, precludes any attempt to calculate its “when”?

One might wager insuperable odds against such a notion, this thesis of an external – i.e. non-subjective – provenance of the now, a notion seemingly as farfetched as positing the devil in nature. After all, how could there be objectivity about something that has neither a past nor future? What thing does – excepting particle behavior in quantum physics? And furthermore, how could the now be thing-like yet spatially indistinguishable from ourselves the way things

² Posing the alternatives in this misestimating as either due to a blind spot of science or a massive delusion takes its cue from language in Miller. Miller uses the expressions “extrinsic presentness” and “a single moment that is objectively present” to describe the now that is uncompromised by subjective considerations, a notion she contextualizes in a passage-of-time framework, a framework she discredits as illusory, a “massive and pervasive delusion” given by our experience, rather than “reason to be skeptical of our best science”. Kristie Miller, “Time Passages”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 24/3-4 (2017), 151, 174.

are considered to be? Odds whatever they may be, the wager of this book is that it's so nonetheless, it is there outside where nature's domain is, this beginning of time, this momentary now, unmeasurable, unrepeatably, thing-like yet already there, a beginning before anything else.

How, then, does one arrive at such an egregious conclusion?

It all begins on familiar grounds, the experience of waking up in the morning, where the having of that experience is the knowing that one does indeed wake up rather than a belief induced by causal (past-to-present) mechanisms, this knowing being an assumption equivalent to the one we make about you, that you – the reader – are indeed reading this sentence right now rather than only being induced to believe so by causal mechanisms, neural circuitry and the like. It would seem we have no choice in the matter but to grant the folk truth of such assumptions if only to secure knowledge's foundation, resting as it does on the certainty of one's wakeful knowing.³ Science, then, becomes by derivation a science we are awake to, nature as we know it likewise a nature we are awake to.

And so it is from that unegregious starting point – the alarm clock that stirs us from sleep – that we proceed to plot a seemingly unnavigable course by taking on the world we're awake to from a 1st person perspective, endeavoring to reorient our understanding of its temporality, its nowness, in keeping with a present-to-past readjustment that takes into consideration the immediacy of our experiential contact, rather than an exclusive rendering of things from one's distanced appraisal, the 3rd person vantage point from which one normally applies standards of objectivity.

The alarm clock rings, and the waking exposes us to our surroundings, to the world we live in and share, this waking that brings our attention to all that is other than ourselves, the otherness of our surroundings, the otherness of other people, the otherness of the world. Our cognitive faculties do much of the constructing and interpreting of this otherness, as does our phenomenology and psychology. The picture that comes through to sentient beings like ourselves varies to a degree, depending on our minds, our experiences, our evolutionary stage of development. Nevertheless, there is that bedrock we speak of here, that otherness we wake up *to*, a world that temporal nowness makes concrete and elicits as very different from a dream. Gibson once put it this way: "I should like to think that there is sophisticated support for the naïve belief in the world of objects and events, and for the simple-minded conviction that our senses give knowledge of it. But this support is hard to find when the senses are considered as channels of sensations; it becomes easy when they are considered as percep-

³ Denying the wakefulness of our knowing leaves us with nothing we can claim to have knowledge of, only the impression of knowledge. As the Greek skeptic Metrodorus put it, "None of us knows anything, not even this, whether we know or do not know, . . .".

tual systems.”⁴ In essence, the distinction drawn here is between explanation that runs past-to-present (the sensations inducing us to believe we’re awake) and explanation that runs counter-wise – present-to-past – (the lucidity, the awakening that brings about the possibility of knowledge about sensations). And so the core significance that emerges from this unegregious starting point is as follows: The role of our mental constructing of this world-as-other is one thing; the fact that this otherness is present and present now to us who are awake to it is quite another. Working out what implications this distinction leads to, how the “present and present now” affects the objectivity standard applied to material nature, will be the challenge addressed in the first of our chapters in Part 1 – “Material Nature Here and Now”. The chapter that follows, “Material Nature-as-Other”, will contest what it deems a false dichotomy, that between nature’s otherness vis-à-vis our perspective and, on the other hand, the otherness beyond, which in any case cannot but be vis-à-vis our perspective.

But now comes the focus on this centerpiece of our investigation, this “now”. In chapters 4-7 of Part 1, we move from the nature component of our conceptual framework to the component of this immediacy, the immediacy of one’s present perception.

The standard positions taken on the now are that it is an outcome of consciousness, serves as an indexical marker, or a clock time we take note of. Where its source is taken to be consciousness, “consciousness” is generally understood to mean our cranium enclosed, brain-based housing of awareness. The indexical variation on that theme would argue that just as words like “here” and “there” reflect how the speaker or conscious observer perceives the surroundings, so also words like “now” or “then” do the same, being a habit of expression that reflects the viewer’s perspective, not the world as it really is. Alternatively, the momentary present gets translated as a specifiable clock time, time in a linear or dimensional sense that can be measured and calculated. We will generally refer to these ways of speaking about time as linear, the time that takes time, as opposed to the time before the linear can even take off, the time of simply being awake to the world – this *now* in our sense of the word.

But the topic of this now provokes questions on all sides.

To begin with, we have contended that the now is thinglike and yet without a past or future. Incredible enough as a phenomenon of that description, it becomes even more perplexing when one considers the enigma of our having no memory of this now, finding no trace of it in the past. This would suggest, as an analogy, the effect of trauma on one’s capability to recognize a calamitous event at the time it happens. As Anne Whitehead puts it, citing Cathy Caruth’s work:

⁴ Gibson’s notion of “perception” can be defined as “lucidity” as we shall use that term, the state of experiential access or having an open conduit to the world. James J. Gibson, “New Reasons for Realism,” *Synthese* 17:2 (June 1967): 167.

When the present was present, it could not be remembered; once it is past, its presence is only in recall. This is not the same presence that it had when it first occurred; in this sense, then, remembering involves the revival of a past that was never present.⁵

That analogy suggests the puzzle before us: how a present that was never past can be recognized as present in the first place? What explains its astounding familiarity? Memory provides a past. It provides matters of content. But that is not the glue that holds the present together, gives us its signature quality – namely, its lived immediacy. And it is furthermore that which comes without the slightest shock. Yet how could that be so, that familiarity every morning we wake up?

And what about this external source we've attributed to the now? One might compare such a notion to Max Velmans' thesis about perceptual projection, his proposal that our perceptions extend outside the physical boundaries of our bodies, the projection being an "*empirically observable effect . . . viewable only from a first-person perspective*".⁶ We illustrate with an example. You and I are looking at the same tree. We both see this tree while nevertheless neither of us can see each other's observation of the tree. The seeing is restricted to the "first person", meaning that for you to see my observation you'd have to get into my skull and see things through my eyes, or I get into yours to see your observation. This restriction notwithstanding, Velmans is saying it's not just the tree that's out there but our individual perceptions of the tree as well. This openly opposes the position that representative theory takes, according to which lucidity – what the eye's observing makes visual contact with – gets translated as representative constructions of our mental faculties by which the world gets indirectly known to us.⁷ A sampling of reaction to Velmans from demurrers is cited by Velmans himself:

It is a theory which cannot be falsified, because its prediction, that nothing will be detected, is identical to the null prediction, that nothing is projected. Therefore it is not a scientific hypothesis about how spatial experience arises from the brain, but rather, it is a theory that banishes the most interesting and challenging part of that problem into a spirit world of ghostly structures that have no mass, occupy no space, consume no energy, and have no physical presence in the world known to science.

⁵ Anne Whitehead, "Trauma," *Theories of Memory: a Reader*, ed. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 188.

⁶ [italics his] Max Velmans, "Where Experiences Are: Dualist, Physicalist, Enactive and Reflexive Accounts of Phenomenal Consciousness," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6(4) (2007): 557.

⁷ According to Smythies, the debate over extended "phenomenal" visual sensations vs. representative theory lacks satisfactory answer. John Smythies, "Consciousness and Higher Dimensions of Space," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 19/11-12 (2012): 225.

Should we take projection seriously and interpret Velmans as saying that the brain is in fact projecting “stuff” onto the things themselves? This would amount to a world that contains the individual things themselves and further is smeared all over by projected phenomenal experiences belonging to all kinds of different creatures like for example *Homo sapiens*.⁸

Even with that said, we go a step further than Velmans in postulating a thinglike now that, rather than being understood as an extension or projection of our sense perceptions, derives from outside, a temporal phenomenon arising in and from a realm our mental faculties do not engineer.

Along with this puzzle of the unrepeatable now, the untraceable now, there is the conundrum of how, from a 1st person perspective, there can be only the now of one’s immediate experience, not the now of my next door neighbor and those of other people. Surely the 1st person perspective must here give way to the distanced appraisal of 3rd person rationality. We all have our lived experiences. Hence, we all must have concomitant nows by which to engage in our experiencing in the first place. And yet even to speak of “nows” in the plural presents somewhat strained usage. But in any case is it appropriate to do so? To a rational understanding, based on 3rd person assumptions that we have no doubt are true, it of course seems evident that we each have our nows. And among eminent proponents of an extrinsic now – or a version of it that is other than subjective or illusory – the choice is almost invariably in the plural, whether it be Barbour’s “nows”, Whitehead’s “occasions”, or Leibniz’s “monads”. That choice, however, bends to a 3rd person mode of inquiry, as if from a detached view, from nowlessness, by which to appraise what can only be fathomed by 1st person means, this now that first and foremost is experiential. So is it now or nows? That, it turns out, is the core of the challenge before us – that choice between the instant acquaintance view that informs us of the now directly vs. the appraisal view that abstracts from experience and from the now as well.

The chapters on the now begin their probe of such questions by taking into consideration what it means, in the first place, to speak of one’s experienced contact with the now. What exactly is this contact all about? A seminal figure in the field of consciousness studies, David Chalmers once commented, “Possible nonphenomenal cases of instance acquaintance include temporal properties on a view where we are acquainted with the time or duration of an experience, . . .”⁹ This book shares that view to the extent that the now, or present time, is what we have direct acquaintance of by our simply being awake to the world, an acquaintance of a nonphenomenal nature in that the now is externally derived,

⁸ Comments from Lehar and Van de Laar cited by Max Velmans, “Reflexive Monism,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15/2 (2008): 28, 41.

⁹ David J. Chalmers, “The Contents of Consciousness: Reply to Hellie, Peacocke, and Siegel,” *Analysis* 73(2) (2013): 345-368. [consc.net/papers/contents.pdf]: 6.

from outside our consciousness. That evinces one clue as to where we are going with this now. Another comes from a question Peter McInerney asks in his book *Time and Experience*:

[H]ow can consciousness at one time perceive the temporal extension of worldly entities that extend beyond that time?¹⁰

The answer proposed here? It doesn't. Temporal extension being a matter of linear (i.e. sequential or before-and-after) time, the immediate time of a present perception ("at one time") doesn't encompass it. Instead, the immediate time that we mean by the now is portrayed, as we shall see, as an "in between". Not what was a moment ago, not will be in a moment to come, but midstream in that nebulous in-between which teases our efforts to measure its momentary existence even as it is so intrinsically a part of what we're awake to, so plainly shared by you and me, so implicit in the evidence of change from what was to what will be. Hence the now, as we shall advance the notion, will be shown to be a thing unmeasurable, resisting the calculations of minute and second, but a thing nonetheless.

A final clue, a final paradox about the now, will be enough to flesh out this preview of the now chapters. And that is its ambivalence, the contradiction of an immediate present being both clear to anyone with a lucid mind yet inscrutable, both transparent yet obscure. As for the now's clarity, one simply has to query how it could be that anyone with a lucid mind could confuse the present with the past, or the present with the future. How could any civilization function where such confusion was the norm? On the other hand, lacking traces of this lived phenomenon in the past or in memory, how is it that one can even write a sentence about it, which would seem to presuppose enough of its memory to start the sentence and complete what one had in mind. And yet here is a book that proposes to do just that – give expression to the now in sentences. The question, in other words, is how one goes from an instant acquaintance of the now that purports to be just this instance, this now in the singular – so much so as to make comparison with any other now impossible –, to a conceptual level of discussion about this experience.¹¹ The acquaintance is necessarily shared or else no one would know what I'd be talking about. How this gets explained poses yet another challenge in the pages that follow. What we will do is move in reverse of

¹⁰ Peter McInerney, *Time and Experience* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1991), 231.

¹¹ Acquaintance can be regarded as a relation involving immediacy and experiential contact between a subject and an instance of a quality, such as a greenness, without the subject necessarily recognizing the green as belonging to a category or type of color that things have. Cp. Livingston's definition (and his reference to Chalmers), in Paul Livingston's "Phenomenal Concepts and the Problem of Acquaintance," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20/5-6 (2013): n. 20.

common assumptions, assumptions that go all the way back to Plato and Socrates, as in this sample of the latter's syllogistic reasoning, "Then knowledge does not consist in impressions of sense, but in reasoning about them; in that only, and not in the mere impression, truth and being can be attained?"¹² To the contrary, it will be found that, in the direction we take, knowing – the immediacy of one's impression – provides a crucial link to "truth and being", a link that knowledge – the mediating process of the mind – cannot grasp. And this will be further explored when we come to the discussion of acquaintance and the enigma of the now in the singular that, on a conceptual level, makes no sense at all, but on an immediate level, the level of undetached sensory immersion, bears a coherency of meaning prior to reasoning. It can be illustrated, as we shall see, in a passage where William James speaks about the duration block of a perception, the holistic datum, and where the immediacy of that sensory perception gets subsequently decomposed upon being reasoned about in a detached way. What becomes important in all this is that conceptualization can only go so far and that the 1st person perspective, insofar as it delves into the terrain of the immediacy of the now, requires the tolerance of one's exposing oneself on that level. We shall call it the immediacy of a 1st person perspective, as opposed to a 1st person perspective in hindsight, the distanced appraisal one gives to one's experiential contact, or as William James phrases it, "attention looking back".¹³ Hence, throughout this book we shall generally have in mind by "1st person perspective" that which immediacy brings to awakened attention, prior to appraisal.

While the subject of the now, given its immediacy to the 1st person perspective, may appear a daunting task to write about, it is arguably no more intractable than other phenomena of a configuratively elusive nature – phenomena like consciousness, mind, body and spirit, the physical world's ontology, transcendent realms. Such topics as these have not been beyond attempted description, however ineffable. So why not something as seemingly banal as the now?

About the converse of the now, or as we shall designate it, "the not-now", various ways of speaking about its nuances will be brought out in discussion. Some of the neologisms we have given to variants in this category are "the just now", "nowlessness", "the not-now of extended time". In Part 2: "Whatever Happened to a Moment Ago?" we will embark on an excursion round about these outposts of the not-now in search of that "moment ago" mentioned in the title of Part 2. By "moment ago" we mean that lived moment – not its linear designation, not the flotsam and jetsam of images as memory portrays it, but the immediacy of that moment as originally experienced. A task that seemingly

¹² Benjamin Jowett, *Gramatica Arcana: Plato Theaetetus*, trans. B. Jowett (Demosthenes Koptis, 2016), 123.

¹³ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1890), 610.

flouts everything we will and have said about lucidity and the temporal constraint. This peregrination to various islands of not-now territory eventually lands us in the chapter “Contra-lucidity?”, where we witness an unexpected encounter with what purports to be a moment ago.

A sliver of time, this now. We take it to be evanescent, and yet evanescent relative to what? A long time? It is these two counterparts, the sliver of now time and the not-now of extended time, that we will adjudge as comprising an archetypal distinction, primal in the sense that from them as a starting point all else follows.

And what is this “long” time with its before and after? One has only to consider the overwhelming extent to which “material”, in most scientific parlance, is understood to refer to all that pertains to not-now dimensions of time, the persistence of things in temporal sequence, their existence necessarily premised on a before and after, the calculations that transcend the ephemeral, the predictions about what is presently not now but which come true in the future, the constancy implied by the laws of nature. As Wandschneider puts it:

But what is ‘nature itself’? Certainly not the actual state of nature in its transient manifestations. For knowledge of nature, only the lawfulness underlying nature can be of interest; accordingly, the object of science is not any single natural object existing here and now but rather the law of nature: that is, a universal of nature that transcends time and space or – to use a classical philosophical term – nature’s underlying essence.¹⁴

Take a tree or any material object, or notions of a wider scope such as evolution, the earth and its history, the universe and its space/time, the past and future. Where in all of this does one detect a trace of the momentary now, or present time, except perhaps in the brevity of humanity’s glimpse at the all-encompassing that surrounds us, this not-now?

That question brings us back to the question we started with, the puzzle this book is out to explore – the thinglike now. How something with such recalcitrance to number, size, and quantity, and to configurations of any kind, can have a place in material nature? How something without detectible or at least specifiable duration, without a past or future, can be anywhere, let alone in the world that scientists investigate and mathematicians theorize about? It is a problem akin to attempting to bridge the gap, or epistemological hiatus, between psychological time and physical time. The historian Paul Ricoeur describes it this way: “Just as it seemed impossible to generate the time of nature on the basis of phenomenological time, so too it now seems impossible to proceed in the opposite direction and to

¹⁴ Dieter Wandschneider, “On the Problem of Direction and Goal in Biological Evolution,” *Darwinism and Philosophy*, ed. Vittorio Hosle and Christian Illies (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2005): 207.

include phenomenological time in the time of nature, whether it is a question of quantum time, thermodynamic time, the time of galactic transformations, or that of the evolution of species.”¹⁵ And more recently, the quantum theorist Harald Atmanspacher echos the same dilemma in pointing out, “Although various interesting ideas in this direction have been published (also in *Mind and Matter*) over the years, there is no conclusive account of how the bridge between physical time and mental time could be built.”¹⁶

How to bridge the gap? Our starting point in attempting to do this is not to use opposites like physical and mental time, or phenomenological time vs. time of nature, but to provide grounds for portraying the now, or present time, as having an external source and as being thinglike, not in a shape-like sense, but nonetheless objectlike in existing outwardly, in such a way as to be incompatible with mental or phenomenological characterizations. By Part 3 of this book – “Nature in the NOW” – this notion of nowness will have evolved from thinglike, in manifesting externally and concretely the way things do in nature, to something not conceivable in spacetime nature at all, that is to say not material in the sense of being dimensionally, spatially, or mathematically accessible, but rather underlying all of that, it being the premise, the starting point, by which measurement and material descriptiveness in nature become possible. The now’s immediacy thereby comes to be seen as something alien and at variance with the linearity and the distancing configurations of a spacetime universe. And the very notion of distancing itself becomes antithetical to what the meaning of the now is all about.

How then does all this translate into the layout of this book? As already indicated, the book is arranged in three parts, each part and the chapters in each as given in the table of contents.

Part 1: “The Now in Nature” begins with an assault on a long established exclusion in the paradigm of a material and spacetime nature, an exclusion that would cede no ground to the notion of an external now, a now transparent to our senses yet intractable to a reductive analysis that would more or less relegate it to the confines of cognitive processing and subjectivity. And so we begin with this notion of nature conjoined with the now. What kind of nature is brought out here where the now, or present time, enters in? And so we begin with a contrary notion of nature, a nature conjoined with the now.

Part 1 begins with chapter 2, following this introduction. Chapter 2 takes up the subject of this prototype of nature where both the now and linear time – the time that takes time – play a role. Entitled “Material Nature Here and Now”, the chapter explores the notion of things in relationship and of how objects

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 3: 91.

¹⁶ Harald Atmanspacher, “Editorial,” *Mind and Matter* 11/1 (2013): 4.

in their linear dimensionality in spacetime entail a configurational relationship, a connectedness with other objects based on size and linear distances – however remote or near. The most elemental and necessary feature of this relationship is portrayed as its coming about, its being actualized, by a now connection to that which ascribes the usage of linear dimensions to the material universe, namely sentient beings like ourselves. And so, the question – are these linear dimensions there in the universe or not? The chapter proposes its answer, arguing the case for immediacy as taking on the foremost aspect of object relationship. A nature that is concretely here and now, and only secondarily – by abstraction and our cognitive extrapolation – there and then.

Chapter 3, “Material Nature-as-other”, takes on a second feature that distinguishes this prototype of nature being advanced. It is, as it’s described, a nature that is invariably other with respect to every thought and observation, mental and visual, that humanity is capable of. Otherness implies nature’s foreign extract vis-à-vis the biases of our sense impressions, our subjective perspectives and phenomenologies, all that our minds and neural complexities construct about the world that’s present to everyone who’s lucidly awake to it. Hence, a dualist self/other framework is proposed here but only as to the *what* of this world and nature’s otherness, not as to the *when* – the immediate *when*. As it shall be contended, in terms of time – immediate time – there is not that duality but instead a connective matching or uniformity common to both self and other, or in other words, as we shall describe it, a self/other alignment. What comes out of this distinction between the what and the when amounts to an enigma, a paradox. On the one hand, the temporal alignment argues for inseparability, familiarity. On the other hand, there is nature’s alien side, the fact that it is *other* to begin with. And yet, despite this otherness, the unfamiliar, alien, and strange about nature, there is much about nature that is understood, made possible by our configurative and abstracting capacities that dimensionalize nature in linear space and time, equations, and measurements. It is an understanding that science takes to be objective and yet, paradoxically enough, is postulated on our ability to stand outside of time – that is to say, outside of the predetermined causal mold of a past-to-present time. As Einstein once put it, “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.”¹⁷

Having addressed this conjunction of a material nature that is both immediate and other, the next four chapters turn our attention to the centerpiece of this self/other framework, the now itself that is the subject of this book. But how does one exactly proceed to do this? How does one describe what escapes configurational description, eludes the way objects in dimensional space and time can

¹⁷ Cited in Peter L. Galison, Gerald Holton, and Silvan S. Schweber, *Einstein for the 21st Century: His Legacy in Science, Art, and Modern Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008): 36.

be described? Do we deem this presentness what our attention finds most conspicuous, or do we side with William James when he refers to the “present” as “the darkest in the whole series” [of past, present, and future]?¹⁸

Many who have written on the subject adopt the position that the now is epitomized as a seamless flowing, or that it passes and moves sequentially and successively from future to past, or that in fact it is we who are doing the moving in time, or that in any case this immediate present, infused with memory, provides us with that sense of uninterrupted constancy and gradual fading from awareness, rather than “a stroboscopic succession of disconnected selves and worlds”.¹⁹ Our strategy, by contrast, will move in a somewhat different direction from all of these approaches. It will explore and assess in ways that might at first seem highly counter-intuitive even though our project aims at a close up encounter and, what comes out of that, namely a 1st person insider view of things rather than the distanced appraisal.

Chapter 4, “The Now in Its Immediacy,” begins our scrutiny of this topic, the temporal present we awaken to, by pointing out how, first of all, the now confronts us with its unmeasureability, nowness being itself a precondition for any measureable determination to take place. The temporal present that we both share, you and I, in conversing with each other is contrasted with the notion of simultaneity, the co-occurrence of two events based on measured time. This nowness I share with you or with my present surroundings stands as the self-evident starting point, the premise behind the very act of calculating occurrences in linear or measured time. From the enigma of its unmeasureability – we assume that the immediacy of the now is brief, evanescent, and yet on what basis? – the chapter leads to a consideration of the now’s holistic character and, what results from this, its incompatibility with notions of divisibility, countability, enumeration. And yet, can I deny that my neighbor experiences a now as much as I do? Two nows? And what about that now from yesterday? From such questions emerges a crucial distinction between what one has knowledge of as opposed to what one knows from a radical 1st person perspective. The first step in defining the meaning of that distinction begins in this chapter. Later chapters explore it further. In a final segment of discussion here, we turn to the aspects of tracelessness and the now’s familiarity. No matter how much we are awake and alert to presentness or seek to find it, there is no trace of it. No code, no message

¹⁸ William James, quoting Shadworth Hodgson; cited in Jonathan Bricklin, “Consciousness Already There Waiting To Be Uncovered,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 17/11-12 (2010): 66.

¹⁹ Quoting Jason Brown, “Simultaneity & Serial Order,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17/5-6 (2010): 10. For a sampling of the various strategies by which the temporal present has been schematized, particularly in relation to tense and aspects of past and future, see, for example, L. Nathan Oaklander and Quentin Smith, eds., *The New Theory of Time*; (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994).

or information is divulged to our experiential contact with it, the now's immediacy. The trace of an object, a reflected piece of sensory data in the form of a light pulse, hits the retina of the eye and with it comes a time that was presumably a moment ago, a time already past belonging to whatever it was the light reflected from. And yet the now, given its makeup, can never take the form of that or any other trace, for a light reflected trace of something is always invariably in the past, always a record of what was, even just a fractional moment ago, whereas what *is*, temporally speaking, is unreplicable whether as a copy or effect, code or message, sequence or consequence, and hence cannot take the form of a trace from before. For if it could, the present would be in the past.

This now that has no past is yet familiar to us, taken for granted. Why should we not be startled by something new, alien in its novelty, something that cannot be conceived of in the past or past tense?

Chapter 5, "The Now that Stays Where It Is" reasons this way: Adopting the insider viewpoint – what we have dubbed a radical 1st person perspective –, one starts with what the immediate confronts us with, the experientially immediate time of being simply awake to the world. Given that immediacy, we do see a *changed*, a difference that marks presentness, but we do not see borders that mark off the change itself, the differentiation between present and past or day and night. Framed insofar as it is immediate, the now is nonetheless borderless, without extent or countable configurations. As for the past and future, we remember the one and anticipate the other and consider them quintessential features of time, yet in no other precinct of time except what is immediately before us, among and between us, does one find this now that stays where it is, given of course that one is in a lucid state of mind. And yet the paradox that this chapter presents us with: the *changed* itself, the dynamic sense that this now is not static, not frozen in time, but has changed from what was a moment before. Unlike Herman Weyl's famous dictum – "The objective world simply *is*; it does not *happen*"²⁰ – the now does happen and it is part of the objective world, or at least that is the proposition this chapter will seek to support. Furthermore, it will be pointed out the distinction between "memory-linked" and "lucidity-linked" and why it is that the two key elements that bring about the now's happening – the *changed from* and the *changed to* – must both be lucidity-linked, or in other words features of the world that our perceptions are exposed to, rather than aspects of memory or mind that we bring to the world.

The title of the next chapter, "Con-temporaneity", adopts a hyphenated spelling of this word to emphasize the enigma of our shared temporality, that my living in the present is the same, temporally speaking, as yours. Chapter 6 defines this term "con-temporaneity" as a temporal uniformity or alignment that

²⁰ [italics his] Herman Weyl, *Philosophy of Mathematics and Natural Science*, trans. O. Helmer, rev. ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), 116.

undergirds society's cohesion by making possible social and sentient interaction, communication, and knowledge exchange.

One hypothetical challenge to this con-temporaneity is posed by a thought experiment involving a scientific scenario known as the twin paradox, based on how near light speed travel affects (linear) time, as postulated by relativity theory. As we shall see in this discussion, what the twin paradox is really about is distortions in linear time – the time that takes time, not distortions in now time.

The chapter concludes by exploring two other scenarios of now interaction and how they exemplify con-temporaneity and defy segmentation into multiples or before-and-after distinctions of time. The examples given are that of delayed responses in televised overseas interviews, as well as in overseas phone conversations. Instead of the TV viewer or listener on the phone experiencing the time lag as evincing distinctly separated nows, what gets communicated is a uniform field of present time despite the time lag. It is not that the time lag has been misconstrued as present time. Rather, it is that a lucid observer or listener can never be awake to a non-con-temporaneous world, a world that is other than in the present.

“The Notion of a Beginning,” the title of chapter 7, takes on the task of extracting an answer from the proverbial “Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?” As applied in this instance, the question is about the now's immediacy as a starting point and how that can be reconciled with the configural content given to one's present perceptions, content recognizable only because of familiarity gained from past perceptions, past experiences. On the other hand, can there be even a past perception, a past experience, without the now already presupposed, already in place as a starting point? There is that chicken-and-egg question, but then there is the more notorious question about the notion of any nowness coming before nowness. Must we necessarily assume that by “beginning” – let's say of the universe –, we mean before the present, and if so which notion of “beginning” are we adopting, one based on linear, measured time, or one based on the unmeasurable, the now that comes immediately, without a before and after? That the linear must necessarily come before the nonlinear is the very question at issue, the topic which this chapter addresses, drawing on various fields of inquiry in search of an answer.

Back to the question: Which comes first, the now or the not-now? And what if we should find the answer, weird as it may seem, in this way: by stumbling upon the now at a time that is not now, be it the recent or remote past, for example? Achieving such a feat would at least accomplish the goal of determining that the now – this or any now – assuredly does not mark a beginning. For there would have been demonstrated a previous palpable now, something our eyes and ears have veritable evidence of. Such a curious speculation leads to

Part 2 of this book, “Whatever Happened to a Moment Ago?: Searching the Archives of Not-Now Time for an Answer”.

Thereupon in chapter 8, “The Not-now in Its Various Designations”, we start the search for that palpable past, that “moment ago” as we shall call it – be it recent or remote. The quest undertaken here, one must bear in mind, is for the essence of that moment – that is, for the experiential occasion as it was lived, not for the aftermath, how one recollects or represents it in remembered images or words. With that goal specified, the chapter explores various alternative routes to not-nowness – the “just now”, the “lived past”, the “nowless” state of dreams – as we shall label them – and memory’s not-nowness considered as an experiential medium. The quest continues in chapter 9, “The Not-Now of Extended Time”, where knowledge itself, as a category of the not-now, is put to the test of extracting this concretized moment ago as originally experienced. And on down the road, a further probing for what we are seeking takes us to more nebulous terrain – the scenario of a delayed response to trauma and the time lag experience of someone gazing at a stellar event.

Chapters 10 and 11, entitled “Do We Die?” and “Contra Lucidity?”, bring us to even more bizarre territory in this search for nowness outside of the present. “Do We Die?” swings the direction of our inquiry from the not-now of the past to the not-now of the future. In the format of this questioning of a seemingly trivial truth, our search zeroes in on the far end of one’s life, at the divide between the now and the not-yet of one’s hypothesized afterlife. Within this narrowed focus at that end, an important distinction is made between the notion of “transition”, implying a *changed* (rather than the process of changing in linear time) and “termination”, evoking the sense of an end point in linear (or extended) time. The conclusion reached is that the witnessing of death, that witnessing itself gives evidence of a transition that the not-now cannot inform us of, for the latter pertains to the arrow of time in either direction, the before and after, not to the immediate now of transition. Chapter 11, “Contra Lucidity?” takes up accounts of doppelgänger experiences from the canons of literature and history, ostensible palpable retrievals of segments from the past in the form of present, lived experiences. The question, of course, is how one determines the authenticity, as recounted, of witnessings of the absent present brought into the present. The chapter turns the spotlight on what undoubtedly has been the most influential account of such a scenario from the archives of the past – namely, the resurrection of Jesus and in particular the touch of Thomas’ hand on the resurrected Jesus’ wounds. Leaving aside the question of historical veracity, the cameo scene provides a seminal example of the retrieval of that moment ago, its lived concreteness, in the template of a present time. What comes out of this discussion are two considerations: (1) The historical gap between then and now, based as it is on linearity – chronology and measured time – loses pertinence when the scenario in question concerns an experiential immediacy, the meaning of which lies in the nonlinear immediacy itself,

not in any distanced perspective apart from it; and (2) the question “Do the witnessings qualify as history?” may not be the right question, but rather “Do the witnessings disqualify history as an arbiter?”

Part 3 of this book, “Nature in the Now”, presents a reappraisal of the relation between the two components of the conceptual framework we started with – nature and the now. Emerging from our exploration of the latter in Parts 1 and 2, a key change in the form of a clarification is shown to be needed in defining the relation between the two components, from that of a “Now in Nature” (Parts 1 and 2) to that of “Nature in the Now” (Part 3). “The ‘In’ Question Anew” (chapter 12) turns to this “in” word and its meaning as applied to that otherness that we have described nature as constituting, an otherness arising out of nature’s alterity to ourselves. In sum, how the switch is explained from “now in nature” to “nature in the now” comes down to this: Whereas the mainstream scientific model of the linear or sequential universe portrays all but a sliver of that universe as out of reach, unbounded by what we know in the present, unbounded by the now constraint, in this chapter’s exposition of the relationship between nature and the now it is the latter that is beyond reach, unbounded by nature and our linear conceptions of it, unbounded by any conceptualization of an “in” – including the “in” that connotes a space and spacetime universe, including the very linearity implied by “in”.

Following this scrutiny on relationship, we come to chapter 13, “The Nonlinear (i.e. Non-Sequential) Universe vs. Metaphysical Variants”, where comparisons are made between our self/other schema and other metaphysical schemas where consciousness – loosely speaking the self in some non-material sense – plays a role in the makeup of nature. Particular aspects of Berkeleyan idealism and panpsychism, for example, are considered by way of exemplifying how the framework adopted in this book differs from these. The distinction essentially spins on the radical 1st person perspective underwritten in our pursuit of an immediate knowing that comes by experiential contact with the now.

This brings us to chapter 14, the final chapter of Part III. The gist of this final chapter of the book is to highlight the bifurcation between the two lives we live, the two natures we experience and learn about, and the two times – one extended, the other not – that cause this split in our lives and understanding. How this divergence comes about is illustrated in the comparison between what comes to us, that sensory knowing by which immediate contact is made with the world’s presentness, and on the other hand what comes from us, the knowledge we acquire by putting things in place and in order, given the distanced appraisal. The question is then asked how, given a distanced appraisal, the knowing by initial impression could possibly matter, given its limitations from a 3rd person perspective. The answer can be summed up in the chapter’s designation, “The Sun also Rises” – to adopt the title from one of Hemingway’s novels.

* * *

In a letter to Carl Jung in 1953, quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli writes dismissively about a conceptual framework that would assay nature from the starting point of a here and now:

What Mach wanted, but what is not feasible, was the total elimination of everything in the description of nature that is *not* detectable [feststellbar] *hic et nunc*. But then one soon realizes that one does not understand anything: neither that a psyche must be assigned to others as well (detectable is always one's own) nor that different people talk about the same (physical) object (Leibniz's *windowless monads*). In order to satisfy the requirements of both instinct and intellect, one must therefore introduce *structural elements of a cosmic order* which are *not detectable as such*.²¹

What Pauli claimed as being not feasible – to posit nature's description on the foundation of the here and now – that in fact is the challenge of this book, to demonstrate the feasibility of such a thesis. In a nutshell, the line of argument proceeds in this way: Given a lucid, normal functioning mind, we do wake up.

- a. That we do wake up exposes us to what is now in our experience – our surroundings, the world as we witness it, that which is other than ourselves. (Chaps. 2, 3)
- b. The nowness of what we witness, being immediate and holistic, is indivisible, unmeasurable and unrecordable, traceless, and unrepresentable except as translated in 3rd person terms. Yet to a lucid mind, it is as familiar as the present field of view, as familiar as the distinction between present and past. (Chaps. 4-7)
- c. The now is not in measurable space and time and does not belong in that conception of nature. (Chap. 12)
- d. The not-now by comparison (Chaps. 8-11) is the time that takes time, is measured by scales and clocks, and is predicated on there being the now.

²¹ [emphasis Pauli's] Cited in Harald Atmanspacher, "Dual-aspect monism a la Pauli and Jung", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 19/9-10 (2012): 105. [www.information-philosopher.com/presentations/Milan/papers/Dual-aspect-Atmanspacher.pdf].

Part 1

The Now in Nature

Chapter 2

Material Nature Here and Now

The commonplace term “lucidity” will be the key as to how we go about uncovering the meaning of “material nature” in its and our temporal aspect of the now. Thereafter, we will move deeper into the meaning of the now itself and see what our inquiry will uncover about that.

“Lucidity” – clarity of mind – is intended, in the application given here, to signify simply the state of being awake to the world, being in contact with it as it presently manifests itself. More specifically, we shall apply this term to describe our experiential contact with the presentness of the world, the presentness of our surroundings, the table we as a group are all sitting around, its presentness aligned to each of the group’s immediate sensory witnessings of it. And, as further evidence of that lucidity, each of our witnessings of that table are as well aligned to that of each other, never skewed, never a bit off to the past or future from the nowness of all the other members’ witnessings of that table. That is one aspect of lucidity that concerns the meaning of nature proposed in this book. In the next chapter, we will take up the second aspect of lucidity that concerns us, the otherness of our surroundings, the otherness of nature, which we shall be referring to as “nature-as-other”. That too is an inherent part of what constitutes one’s clarity of mind, an inherent part of what it means simply to wake up and be awake. But we begin here with this first aspect of lucidity and probe how it affects the meaning of material nature.

Adherents of the past-to-present school of thought, as I call their theoretical premise, might question what we mean here by this clarity of mind. Some might even question whether we do wake up in the morning – as opposed to merely thinking – or being induced to think – that we do. For example, advocates of the representational theory of perception have by and large argued that waking is no more than reacting to sensory stimuli.¹ For them, the world apart

¹ Smythies, for example, points out the two contrary theories of perception – representative theory, according to which “our sensations are representative constructions of the nervous system, and are not direct views of external objects”, and on the

from our reactions exists only as inference. And yet the now in some respect would seem inescapable, even by way of those reactions. Constructivists, on the other hand, might make the “strong” constructivist claim that the “out-there-ness” or objectivity of any scientific fact about nature “is the *consequence* of scientific work rather than its *cause*”.² But then what do words like “comprehensibility”, “effectiveness”, and “understanding” come to mean in assertions like Einstein’s “One may say ‘the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility’”, Eugene Wigner’s “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences”, and cosmologist Paul Davies’ “We do more than just watch the show that nature stages. Human beings have come to understand the world, at least in part, through the processes of reasoning and science”?³ We can suppose there is an “out-there-ness” of some identifiable kind which causes statements such as these to be made.

This book will begin on that note by taking the position that there is an “out-there-ness” we wake up to, and that the out-there-ness we wake up to is a material nature here and now.

And yet, material nature *here and now*? How can that be material nature? The very phraseology would seem to flout the first things we know about nature, namely that it is for the most part not present, not here and now, but going on all the time behind our backs, with little about it elicited by the present, being by and large absent, eons absent from this or that present time.

So how does one avoid the semblance of a kind of oxymoron by juxtaposing “material nature” and “here and now”, the net effect of which would seem to bestow a transience to nature that, by contrast, is presupposed by science’s laws of nature to have the constancy that makes such laws applicable over extended time? It is this question the chapter addresses. As possible paths to an answer, let’s begin with two conditions which we shall specify as concreteness and the temporal present. Two seminal figures in science’s theoretical foundations, Milic Capek and Ernst Mach, offer some helpful suggestions that bear on these two notions insofar as they apply to nature. We begin by first quoting a passage from Capek, an excerpt taken from a discussion of his on space and time:

other hand direct realism, the theory that what we see are “literally direct views of external physical objects”. In his assessment, the problem has never been solved. Smythies, p. 225.

² Quoted from James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds., *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008): 215 (citing Latour and Woolgar, 1979, 257).

³ [*italics his*] Paul Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why Is the Universe Just Right for Life?* (Boston, MA.: Houghton Mifflin: 2006): 231. For the references to Einstein and Wigner, see the next chapter, no 58.

[A]ll physical properties of a body, even its inertial mass – which Newton called “vis insitas” residing *hic et nunc* in a certain region of space at a certain time – can only exist in dynamical interaction with other masses and cannot be conceived without it.⁴

The second remark that bears on these conditions comes from Mach:

It is utterly beyond our power to measure changes of things by time. Quite the contrary, time is an abstraction, at which we arrive by means of the changes of things.⁵

We begin with Capek. Simply speaking, his point is that everything in nature bears some intrinsic relation [“dynamical interaction”] with its surroundings. Try to imagine the opposite – an object devoid of any connection, relation, or interaction with its surroundings, even distantly. By what reasoning could one even identify it as an object or structure of some kind, given that any label of identity would itself betray a connection of sorts, an existence in relation at least to the identifier. In alluding to Newton, Capek uses the phrase “*hic et nunc*” to mean the location of physical properties (as Newton depicted it) in a certain region of space at a certain time. The essence then of Capek’s remark is that something can be said to exist as long as it is in “dynamical interaction” and not in total isolation. We might pause here a moment and extrapolate from Capek by adding that in those instances where there appears a dynamical interaction but not of a clearly specifiable kind, such as in the case of nonlocality or particle state indeterminacy in quantum physics, the dynamical interaction can be interpreted as between the quantum experimenter and the measurement performed.⁶ There will be more to say about the Capek passage, particularly about this “*hic et nunc*” and his translation of it as “in a certain region of space at a certain time”. But first a few words about Mach’s passage.

As he speaks of it in this instance, the essence of Mach’s take on nature – epigrammatic in its terseness – is that change and changes do not in themselves demonstrate a measure of time, whether that be long or short. More accurately, our estimations of long or short are what we apply to the changes, measured

⁴ [italics his] Milic Capek, *The Concepts of Space and Time: Their Structure and Their Development*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. XXII, ed. R.S. Cohen and M.W. Wartofsky (Springer-Science-Business Media, B.V., 2014): p. XLI.

⁵ Ernst Mach, *Science of Mechanics* (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1960), 273.

⁶ For example, there is the question about how to define a subatomic particle’s existence before the measurement is performed. According to one interpretation of quantum theory, the “existence” of such particles “may not be conceived of in any specific form available to our thinking, beginning with those attributes of (wave or particle) motion that define classical physics, but ultimately extending to all conceivable attributes. Accordingly, the term ‘existence’ or any other term referring to quantum objects (‘quantum’ and ‘object’ included) is ultimately inapplicable.” Arkady Plotnitsky, “The Unthinkable: Neoclassical Theory, the Unconscious Mind and the Quantum Brain,” *Brain and Being*, ed. G. Globus, K. Pribram, and G. Vitiello (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 31.

time being the product of our gridwork of abstract thinking, a notion that concurs with Bergson's view that duration is a part of consciousness, not apart from it.

We shall have to consider a moment in the unfolding of the universe, that is, a snapshot that exists independently of any consciousness, then we shall try conjointly to summon another moment brought as close as possible to the first, and thus have a minimum of time enter into the world without allowing the faintest glimmer of memory to go with it. We shall see that this is impossible. Without an elementary memory that connects the two moments, there will be only one or the other, consequently a single instance, no before or after, no succession, no time.⁷

This fusion, as Bergson sees it, of extended time with memory and consciousness does not mean, however, that Bergson necessarily excluded their role (including his pivotal notion of "duration") as constituents of nature. What it simply means, in his case, is that measured and calculated times are not out there in an external domain separate from conscious experience.⁸

Taken together, these snapshots from Capek, Mach, and Bergson posit a seismic shift from the ordinary layman's image of nature, where nature as generally – in fact almost universally – understood consists of time measures and space measures, a nature authoritatively described as going back eons to periods dated by measurements of past time and advancing forward by estimations of future time. Even so, one wonders how, given this everyday conceptualization of measured nature, such estimates can apply (except as a mental concept) to a future not yet in tangible existence, or how calculations that extend in reverse can track (except as a mental concept) a past whose existence is only detectible

⁷ Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity* (trans. Leon Jacobson) (Manchester, UK: Clinamen Press, 1999), 33. Note also how some indigenous cultures, such as the Amondawa, base time on events, not measured time. Among the conclusions of anthropologist Chris Sinha from his study of the Amondawa is this: "[I]t is the constructed temporal schemas of linearity and cyclicity that permit the conceptualization of temporal relationships as existing in a domain of content abstracted from the events themselves. It is this (in some sense imaginary) content that we designate 'Time as Such'." Chris Sinha *et al*, "When Time Is not Space: the Social and Linguistic Construction of Time Intervals and Temporal Event Relations in an Amazonian Culture," *Language and Cognition* 3-1 (2011): 141. The implanting of time units as our way of constructing temporal distance in nature can be compared to how mathematics is portrayed as deriving from the embodied mind: George Lakoff and Rafael E. Nunez, *Where Mathematics Comes from* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 2000).

⁸ Despite Bergson's phraseology in one of his books "no duration in the external world", we shall see in chapter 5, the section "The Changed and the Mediated", just how, for Bergson, memory can be understood as external, not personal, and relate to change itself. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: an Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2001), 227.

in the tangible present by someone present and in a lucid state of mind. Into this question of abstract references and how nature fits into the picture, we introduce Capek's existence criterion again – namely, “dynamical interaction” – and along with that his allusion to Newton's “*hic et nunc*”.

We note here this “*hic et nunc*” and Capek's translation. It would be a stretch of the imagination to suppose that “certain region” and “certain time” could be intended as a literal equivalence of “here and now”. Far more likely of what the translation is intended to give us is a “here and now” as defined by spatial coordinates and a calculating device of some sort that measures linear time, the time that takes time based on number. But let's hold on, for a moment, to either possibility, and return to Mach.

According to him, measurement computations of time are not out there in nature where events are. The computations surely are helpful for us but not indicative of a temporality inscribed in the events themselves. Given that premise that events are bereft of inherent linear or countable time designations, where – we might ask – does that leave the situation of nature as a whole, including any and all of its properties, their existence bearing the necessary “*hic et nunc*” credential that Capek speaks about? That's just it. If events in themselves lack inherent distancing protocols based on measured time, how could any of nature – excluding our mental concepts – be invested with inherent computations of time? Nothing of that sort, such as we can detect by our means, comes inscribed in nature, nothing in nature's topography that would situate the *hic et nunc* at a calculable distance from ourselves today and now. And here by “*hic et nunc*” it becomes evident which meaning we are referring to: the here and now in a literal, *uncalculable* sense. Taking Mach as our cue, coordinates of space and time are not out there, inscribed in nature, so as to establish distance and differentiation of a “certain region of space” and “certain time” from the immediate present, the here and now. Which is only as much as to say that “[f]or instance, the unit of a second in physical time measurement is arbitrary in the sense that physical processes are not organized in such a way that a second would be a distinguishable measure of time.”⁹ Of course, one can retort that a second is obviously shorter than an hour, or that what happened three years ago is not happening today. The fact remains, nevertheless, that those determinations are our determinations, successful in meeting our needs as humans, rather than being intrinsic to nature.¹⁰ That, at least, is what we can surmise, given a reading of the Capek and Mach quotations considered together.

⁹ Georg Franck and Harald Atmanspacher, “A Proposed Relation between Intensity of Presence and Duration of Nowness,” *Recasting Reality: Wolfgang Pauli's Philosophical Ideas and Contemporary Science* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2009): 213.

¹⁰ McInerney writes that, “Although a *de facto* empty time may be comprehensible, a time that *could not* be occupied by real entities is not comprehensible and is impossible.” But this may mean nothing other than what we have just said, namely that the enumera-

If we follow this direction of thinking, which we shall do in this chapter, where then does this put the time of nature? It puts the time of nature in the same ballpark as the time of the here and now, meaning here by “time” not computational and clock time but the time we’re awake to, the literal time now that lived experience brings to our awareness.

This much along in the chapter’s discussion provides us with an initial step in framing the basis for a “material nature here and now” – at least to the extent that the distancing from the present of what is not “here and now” is *not* out there, not distinguishable as a fissure or chasm between now and then, not evidenced as measured time except by the measurements we employ. Of course, we take measured time as a fact. But again, that’s our doing, not a feature of the landscape we witness. Moreover, our being informed about physicists entering “realms beyond our daily experience” and about phenomena being “discovered . . . that can no longer be mapped onto patterns accessible by our sense organs”, does nothing to implicate this distancing either. Instead, what it gives evidence of are detections by instruments of measure – our instruments.¹¹ Likewise, such detections of realms beyond daily experience are always in the mode of here and now, not detections of distancing from here and now.¹² To be more precise, a distancing of *that* kind – from the here and now – might be possible if we could sit down across from each other, you and I, with me thereupon engaging in a chat with a yesterday you or a you tomorrow. Hence, a brute distancing, in flesh and blood, detected from the here and now, unbiased by measurement readings on our part.

So, if there is no distancing of time (other than a calculable one) from out there in nature’s past and future pockets of events, why is it we can’t in fact sit down across from each other, you and I, and do just that – me proceeding to

tion of measured time – while not intrinsic to nature – is intrinsic to our needs and comprehensible on that basis. [*italics his*] McInerney, 223.

¹¹ The quotations are from Karl von Meyenn, “Wolfgang Pauli’s Philosophical Ideas Viewed from the Perspective of His Correspondence,” *Recasting Reality: Wolfgang Pauli’s Philosophical Ideas and Contemporary Science*, ed. H. Atmanspacher and H. Primas (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer: Verlag, 2009), 13.

¹² Nature in an abstract sense, non-experientially based and void of experiential immediacy – in a word “nowless” – is the notion being attacked here and replaced by this appendage of the “here and now”. The reasoning against it presented above can be compared to Strawson’s: “What evidence is there for the existence of nonexperiential reality, as opposed to experiential reality? None. There is zero observational evidence for the existence of nonexperiential reality – even after we allow in a standard realist way that each of us encounters a great deal in concrete reality that is not his or her own experience. Nor will there ever be any. All there is, is one great big wholly ungrounded wholly question-begging theoretical intuition or conviction.” Galen Strawson, “Mind and Being,” *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Godehard Bruntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 94.

have a chat with you here and now, along with that yesterday you of yours and the you tomorrow – all three at the same time? That kind of rejoinder is reminiscent of Capek’s quip about a future history: “If the future history of the universe pre-exists timelessly (or, as it is fashionable to say, ‘tenselessly’) in its totality, why is it not already present?” – and we might add, why not with the present included, enabling us to be spectators to both future and present (and why not the past as well?)¹³ The effect of that totality on our perceptual awareness might run, in theory, like the purported “life review” instances of some who, near death or a death-threatening situation, report experiencing their past or a part of it as if present, suddenly, all there at once, the flash before their eyes. Or it might run something like this:

I was in a place. Around me was flatness and barrenness. To talk about a sequence to the experience is to distort it. There was no time there. I now know that time is a convenient fiction for this world, but it did not exist in that one. Everything seemed to be at one moment, even when ‘events’ seemed to occur in sequence. . . .The . . . re-experiencing of my life . . . was simultaneous and yet separate and distinct. There was no such thing as the sequence of events that we believe time to be.¹⁴

As later chapters will explore in more detail questions concerning our temporal constraint to the present, the response we will offer here at this preliminary stage to this enmeshed challenge of past, present, and future will be limited to the following:

First, this book is an exploration of the phenomenon of present time which, as will later be shown, is not an endorsement of tenselessness or timelessness. That clarification hints at part of the reason why present perception is not a perception of past, present, and future. Second, we can see from Capek’s question, previous to the quote above, that it is really about a future in the present and why that isn’t so. Why, in a nutshell, are there not two present times at once, a bifurcated now that translates into two nows from two different (linear) time periods? The brief answer, the one that we will give here, is that, experientially speaking, there is no such thing as a bifurcated now, a now that can be divided in half. To suppose otherwise, would be to rewrite the nature of human experience, the nature of the now as well. One might propose, as Bradford Skow does, that the analogy of split brain patients argues a basis for the presentness of one’s experiencing two different localities and thereby, in a non-spatially/temporally divided spacetime universe, a basis for the presentness of one’s experiencing in different stages of one’s life – in short, two or more nows, even if such

¹³ Capek, *The Concepts of Space and Time...*, p. LI. Capek points out Whitrow and William James as raising similar questions.

¹⁴ Account given by Steven Fanning, quoted by William James and cited in Bricklin, “Consciousness Already There..” 63.

even if such nows – though coexisting – would be inaccessible to one another.¹⁵ The short answer given here is simply that the argument lacks observational evidence and, secondly, that the nature of nowness being advanced in these pages takes on an experiential immediacy (in the 1st person) that precludes notions of (3rd person) measurement, division, and distance in spacetime terms. Later we will have more to say on the topic of such hypothetical bifurcation, as let's say a present now and a now from the past conjoined. That will be taken up, for example, in the chapter “Contra Lucidity?” in Part 2 of this book. And thirdly, another part of our response to the bi-temporal question Capek raises will emerge in how this book advances this notion of the now, or present time, we're awake to, and the pivotal distinction between that and consciousness; between, that is, what comes to us and what comes from us. What will be brought out as we proceed is a description of the former, how it is that the now entails an immediacy, direct contact with an otherness that comes to us and that in certain ways baffles and preempts our attempts at configuring it and, for example, formulating it in terms of linear time, the before-and-after time that takes time. There is, in other words, no before or after that can come conjoined with present time for the reason that there are no two immediacies possible, a doubling which would imply countability. Present time's distinctiveness in this respect will necessitate discussion on its uncountability, a subject we will have more to speak about in chapter 4.

In the meantime, let's take a further step in brainstorming what appears as an incompatibility: how nature can be both material, as mainstream science understands it to be, and nonetheless here and now; how in other words it can be both configural – measureable, divisible in spatial terms, sequential in linear time – and unconfigurable, unmeasurable, indivisible, unsequential. Our way to confront this issue is to do the following. We begin by taking a closer look at this “here and now” attribution, what it implies in giving us a 1st person approach to nature, how it contributes as well to satisfying an objective basis by which to understand nature. Next, we point out the distinction between nature's here and now on the one hand and conscious awareness on the other, by which we mean that which concerns one's state of mind in a privatized sense. We proceed from there by probing how a here-and-now material nature differs from conscious awareness, and from there we move on to show yet another way the “here and now”, distinct from conscious awareness, undergirds and serves to validate not only itself as an objective concept but “material nature” as well – a nature responsive to objective methodologies by which verifiable data can be obtained.

Being the centerpiece subject of this book, the now, or present time, is of course a topic in itself we will have much more to speak about in the coming

¹⁵ Bradford Skow, *Objective Becoming*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 223-224.

chapters. Our purpose here is to provide the opening scene by starting with the “here and now” and how that fits into the framework of nature. From there we proceed to an additional affixation of nature, this one proposed in the next chapter – namely, a nature that is not only “here and now” but additionally nature-as-other. Subsequent chapters of Part 1 will take up the profiling of the now itself as externally depicted, a now in nature, in the setting of such a nature as the current and next chapter describe.

1. The here and now as a 1st person perspective

And so now back to the task of expanding on that seeming incompatibility: how nature can be both material, as mainstream science understands it to be, and nonetheless here and now. Since “here and now” is inseparable from that which is given by 1st person means, we had best start with this latter term “1st person”, particularly in a context where its meaning is highlighted by comparison with “3rd person”. The definition given by Overgaard, Gallagher, and Ramsøy, is sufficient for our purposes not only because it highlights the comparison but also because it passes on the standard downgrading, the standard suspicion about taking the 1st person perspective at face value:

From a first-person perspective, objects appear in a certain way, with a certain experienced quality, to a given subject. Such observations are relative to the subject and may be influenced by personal history, so that one person cannot share another person’s subjective point of view, and cannot from the outside “measure” what this other person is experiencing. The third-person perspective is generally taken to mean an “objective” perspective where information can be shared by individuals, or where any individual can make in principle identical observations (e.g., using mathematical measurements, counting, using an apparatus for scientific measurements, etc.).¹⁶

The important consideration about “first-person” is brought out here. “[O]bjects appear in a certain way, with a certain experienced quality, to a given subject.” This is as much as to say that whatever it is one is awake to, having as it does a certain experienced quality, the experienced quality necessarily exposes itself in an immediate sense, the objects necessarily here and now, not there and then, from that 1st person perspective. To an extent, one’s perspective can share another 1st person perspective when the two persons having them stand next to each other and observe the same objects, thus both participating in a similar experienced impression necessarily here and now. But on the other hand, the two observations in each case are relative to the

¹⁶ Morten Overgaard, Shaun Gallagher & Thomas Z. Ramsøy, “An Integration of First-person Methodologies in Cognitive Science,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15/5 (2008): 103.

subject. I cannot get into your body and mind and experience things from your perspective. Hence, the perspective is from the person who witnesses the scene directly. By contrast, the 3rd person perspective applies information to the scene or infers information from the scene, easily shareable, though less likely to be directly evident from the 1st person perspective. An illustration of how the two perspectives differ comes out in the following critique of neutral monism, a philosophic schema that – according to one interpretation – posits direct encounter as the conduit by which nature’s primal reality is exposed. The critique is from the standpoint of dual aspect monism, its perspective one that steps outside of direct encounter:

Assuming that the neutral can be apprehended directly, how could it be apprehended if not mentally?¹⁷

The information that the 3rd person perspective adds to the scene is in that word “mentally”. The 1st person perspective takes account only of the “directly apprehended”, whereas the “mentally” aspect is nowhere in sight.

And so where do we find the downgrading, the pejorative judgment toward the 1st person perspective in the definition given by Overgaard, Gallagher, and Ramsøy? It starts with the imputed subjectivity of the 1st person perspective – “Such observations are relative to the subject and may be influenced by personal history” – and, following that, the deficiency implied by the fact that “one person cannot share another person’s subjective point of view, and cannot from the outside ‘measure’ what this other person is experiencing”. By contrast, a higher assessment gets ascribed to the 3rd person perspective in that it “is generally taken to mean an ‘objective’ perspective where information can be shared”. The discrepancy in how the two perspectives get evaluated comes down to this feature of shared information, which is deemed to make a perspective objective. But let’s contest that. Let’s take the example of a table that we’re all sitting around. If we’re all sitting around this table, we must be all sitting around this table now. Needless to say, that table’s existence is not relative to a particular perspective. We’re all sitting around it, and that information can be shared. And what about this table we’re all sitting around *now*? Is the *now* any less evidence of sharing just because its evidence is experiential, not informational? Can there even be what we call “information”, or access to it, without an implicitly shared *now*? And wouldn’t that consideration put the bedrock of objectivity in the

¹⁷ Harald Atmanspacher, *Dual-aspect*, 99. This “directly apprehended” aspect of the neutral monist’s posited epistemic access to a primal (ontological) truth by direct encounter is further phrased by Atmanspacher as: “direct, basic, pure, raw modes of apprehending it [the underlying domain], for instance experientially or phenomenologically”. Atmanspacher, *Dual-aspect*, 99.

1st person perspective? Hence, it would seem necessary to provide a supplement to the initial definition of “1st person” given above, something like the following:

Although first-person reports may fail to be self-sufficient pieces of knowledge (beyond acquaintance), they remain the unique and inescapable basis of any further empirical knowledge of ourselves and of our environment. First-person access is the testimony of our being-in-the-world, and the source of every claim of the availability of a surrounding world. . . . One also too often loses sight of the fact that even the “objective experimental data” of natural science are nothing else than convergent *first-person reports* of a certain type.¹⁸

Thus “first-person”, in our usage, is intended to be understood, not as a byword for subjectivity and potential bias, but as (1) a way to describe experiential access by the consciously aware subject, or in other words (2) being lucid, consciously aware of one’s present surroundings.

With this groundwork given for the meaning of “1st person”, let us now proceed to the next step in substantiating this chapter’s framework of nature by showing how the here-and-now, necessarily entailing a 1st person perspective, excludes in this given description the imputation of its being a mirage of some kind, a *mere* indexical marker reflective of one’s conscious awareness and subjective state of mind, rather than a temporal immediacy attributable to what’s outside us. But then the question: On what grounds does one go about ascribing this here-and-now to material nature, as distinct from the realm of our own individual phenomenologies and cranium enclosed mental mechanisms?

The answer requires, first of all, a brief backtracking to the definition of “1st person perspective” given by Overgaard, Gallagher, and Ramsøy, specifically the part about observations being relative to the subject’s perspective: “Such observations may be influenced by personal history, so that one person cannot share another person’s subjective point of view, and cannot from the outside ‘measure’ what this other person is experiencing.” The key is “measure”. I, from my perspective, cannot measure what you are feeling and what tinge of personal background you are applying to whatever you are observing. Nor am I seeing objects in view from the direction you are seeing them. All of this ties into that aspect of a 1st person perspective that can appropriately be labeled indexical and subjective. We each have our different angles of perception, give different coloring and emotional quality to whatever it is we perceive. To that extent the 1st person perspective is slanted individually, oriented by personal differences, and in those respects sub-

¹⁸ [italics theirs] Michel Bitbol and Claire Petitmengin, “On the Possibility and Reality of Introspection,” *Mind and Matter* 14/1 (2016), 52. Their clarification avoids the ambiguity of such expressions as, for example, “subjectivity captures the first-person aspect”: Luis Favela, “Consciousness Is (Probably) Still Only in the Brain, Even Though Cognition Is Not”, *Mind and Matter* 15/1 (2017), 52.

jective. Likewise, the “here”, severed from the “and now” in our usage, admits to an indexical meaning insofar as the landscape one observes reflects one’s individual perspective, one’s angle of view. The question is how all this changes when the now comes into the picture – that is, the here and now of a 1st person perspective. The answer requires a further look at this “here and now” as a combined attribution. In how we are using the term, the combined designation implies neither a subjective perspective nor an indexical reflexivity, as we shall see.

The “here and now”, as a combined attribution, puts the brunt of meaning on the now and its constraints. Lee Smolin describes that constraint in this way: “The world is presented to us as a series of moments. We have no choice about this. No choice about which moment we inhabit now, no choice about whether to go forward or back in time. No choice to jump ahead. No choice about the rate of flow of the moments.”¹⁹ While Smolin’s usage of “moments” in the plural runs counter to our description of the unmultiple now (as we shall later elaborate on), the constraint we have in mind is otherwise well depicted in his description. So where does that put the “here”, given its context in the “here and now”? A “here” in isolated usage is a here I can choose depending on where I want to be. By contrast, the here in “here and now” is fixed temporally to where I’m presently at – necessarily a here now, not a here yesterday or tomorrow. Hence, the implied indexicality of a “here” in usage by itself gets, in the combined phrasing, impeded by a temporal factor, about which my 1st person perspective, in an indexical or subjective sense, is totally irrelevant. In short, when we speak of the “here and now” in this chapter, the “here” should be understood in that involuntary sense: necessarily a here now, as opposed to a here yesterday or tomorrow. We shall be carrying over that involuntary sense of the “here and now” when the focus of our discussion narrows to the now itself in the forthcoming chapters of Part 1 that investigate it (chapters 4-8).

Keeping in mind this temporal fixity of the “here and now”, in the way we have just explained it, the affixing of that phrase as a 1st person attribution of material nature can be seen as consonant and compatible with the picture that scientists give us of material nature, a nature responsive to 3rd person methodologies by which verifiable data can be obtained. After all, scientists do not con-

¹⁹ Lee Smolin, *Time Reborn: From the Crisis in Physics to the Future of the Universe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013 [First Mariner Books edition]), 92. Smolin implies a usage of the “here” that suggests indexicality and self-reference when that word is applied to space location and apart from the context of the here and now. His words quoted above continue: “In this way, time is completely unlike space. One might object by saying that all events also take place in a particular location. But we have a choice about where we move in space. This is not a small distinction; it shapes the whole of our experience.” Still, the notion of a “here” in isolation, or one’s moving in space in isolation, is little more than academic in the sense that, as the truism goes, no one has ever witnessed a here without a now, or a now without a here.

duct their research in a dream or by eluding their sense perceptions or 1st person perspective, but conduct their actions in a world they're awake to, their research necessarily grounded in an actuality of nowness their minds are not simply constructing or inventing.

So much for our opening salvo on the compatibility question – namely, between nature, on the one hand, and the attribution of “here and now”. The next step is how we go about plotting this here and now in material nature. If truly it is there, in material nature, the logical conclusion would seem to be that it too – this here and now – must possess thinglike attributes of some kind (configurability, measurability, and so on) the way other material things in nature do. But that seems impossible to maintain. The here and now – configurable? Measureable? For more on that, see chapter 4. On the other hand, being a phenomenon arising out of a 1st person perspective, the temptation is to go in the reverse direction, which tailspins us back to consciousness, situating the here and now as arising from there, an epiphenomenon of one's state of mind. And then we are back to the incongruity of proposing that a subjective attribute could apply to an out-of-subjective realm, namely that of material nature. A contradiction no less.

2. Perceiver – perceiving – object of perception

Another way to pose this problem of situating is to ask where might the temporal constraint of this here and now be plotted along the sensory stream of *perceiver – perceiving – object of perception*. We have ruled out explaining it as a product of subjective influences and self-referentiality – that is, if we admit to a present world at all, a present world we wake up to, given a lucid state of mind. Still, we have not ruled out a possibility not quite in the same subjective league – namely, that what the “here and now” refers to, what it's really all about, occurs at stage 2 in the profile of the sensory stream as shown above – that is, at the stage of perceiving. In that case, the temporal constraint would nonetheless turn out descriptive of a mental process after all, an effect of the mind, though not of subjectivity in the sense of biases, temperament, personal character, and background that frame the partiality of a particular outlook an individual has on the world. Even so, plotting the here and now at stage 2 resurrects the compatibility issue again, the problem in this case of attributing perceiving, understood as what's in one's head, to what's outside one's head. How, in other words, can a phenomenon at stage 2, a phenomenon that arises from us, be attributable to what arises apart from us, from material nature? More specifically, how can a 1st person phenomenon – the here and now – merit the same objective credentials, an equal object status, that other objects are shown to have from a 3rd person perspective? I observe my surroundings. Where exactly is this here and now?

How do I distinguish it as an object from my act of perceiving? Failing that, how then can I deny this second version of the subjectivity claim?

It must be clear, at the onset, what this question is restricted to. We are not addressing a theory question about consciousness, speculations about its extended borders in the cosmos, which opens the door to metaphysical schemas about nature as found in panpsychism. Instead, we presume here the more familiar notion of consciousness, the consciousness delimited by one's skull, and hence a conscious awareness contained within, and not outside, the confines of the individual self. Taking as our border one that delimits the demarcation between conscious perceiving and whatever aspect of nature perception takes in, our question becomes one of simply determining the basis for plotting the here and now at stage 3, where the objects of perception are, rather than at stage 2, the stage of perceiving. How do we counter, in other words, an effect-of-the-mind adjudication, a stage 2 allocation of the here and now, on the basis of that subjectivity claim in its second version?

We find the answer in the word "consensus". There is this take-for-granted consensus we all share, let's say, in the stadium watching that football game, a consensus about what is now and what isn't. One cannot imagine a football game without it, or any other human interaction without it, for that matter. That distant star? Maybe there's a time lag of millions of light-years. Maybe that distant star is extinct. But on the other hand, the star you and I see is a present sighting for both of us, not a present sighting for me and a yesterday or tomorrow sighting for you. Today is today for me as well as for you, the here and now necessarily now. Why, then, this consensus and how does it argue – if it does so – for a stage 3 allocation of the here and now?

One argument *against* a stage 3 allocation conforms to the pattern of reasoning typical for all of us, a cause and effect explanation that relies on a before and after, the presumption of a previous cause to explain a present occurrence of some kind. According to that argument, the common now – or consensual here and now – is pinned as a stage 2 phenomenon, a neural transmission effect of the conscious mind that brings about precise attunement to other minds or conscious states at this or that precise moment. This comes about, according to this line of reasoning, by means of a connective alignment to an information stream, a neural processing that converts the data into discrete perceptual episodes. Such a notion is totally at odds with the concept of a self/other alignment we will be discussing, an alignment that makes lucidity possible and that preempts by its very nature the notion of data or encoded information. About that we will have more to say in coming chapters. As for how, according to the schema based on information transmission, the impression arises that makes you think you're in the world *now*, it is attributed to this processing mechanism in the brain. Hence, you're not really awake to the world here and now. It is only an epiphenomenon, the effect of a brain mechanism that produces this impression, this illusion of momentness that

as well is propagated by other brains. Hence, a grand illusion – grand illusions that happen to match. The internal device responsible for this stage 2 phenomenon has been dubbed by one theorist on the subject a “temporal integration device”.²⁰ The problem with this explanation is how one goes about verifying it. If it is all a subjective manifestation at stage 2, how does one go about ascertaining that this is so, or determining that this theory about time is not itself just the product and concoction of a temporal integration mechanism? Perhaps a superior brain mechanism of my colleague could inform us of what’s really the case, but then if his enlightened view as well is only the effect of a brain mechanism, where does that get us? There is no retrieving in this case an objective standpoint if there is no stage 3 phenomenon of the here and now to begin with. In sum, by this accounting of things, the very notion of “cause” nullifies the authenticity of the effect.

Another way to explain this temporal consensus is as a reflection of a cultural norm, a standard adopted in a period of a society’s development by which notions of objectivity and justified truth are constructed, the implication being that the consensus in question – this consensus we have about the here and now – is just another one of those relative truths, relative to the values, social norms, standards of evaluating evidence in a particular period in any society’s development.²¹ Here the problem is one of falsifiability. Could there conceivably be a time of no temporal constraint at all? But then there would end up being no consensus about present and past and hence no society, let alone a particular period in a society’s development by which to promulgate relative truths.

A more plausible way to explain this temporal consensus of the here and now is as evidence that what we are dealing with is a stage 3 phenomenon, a phenomenon with objective credentials. We have only to take the perceiving, let’s say, of the here and now of this table we are all sitting around, to take that stage 2 perceiving not as the point of origin of the here and now of this table but as the point of its reception. That explanation falls naturally in place when one considers how closely linked to a lucid mind the concepts of perceiving and conscious awareness are, and how closely linked lucidity is to this notion of a consensus about the here and now. What seems a tautology – one cannot be judged in a lucid state of perceiving and being conscious of what’s going on if one is not perceiving and being conscious of what’s going on now – is actually evidence of a two-fold consensus: not only a consensus about the here and now but also a consensus about what a functioning human mind constitutes based on the here and now. In both instances

²⁰ Callender’s term. Craig Callender, “Explaining the Common Now”: 19, 35. [www.diffusion.ens.fr/databis/diffusion/bonus/2010_02_15_callender.pdf]: 19, 35; also C. Callender, “The Common Now”, [philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/ccallender/Papers/The%20Common%20Now.pdf]: 12; *Philosophical Issues* 18 (2008).

²¹ On this see, for example, John McDowell, “Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity,” *Richard Rorty and His Critics*, ed. Robert B. Brandom (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000): 117, 119, 125.

we are talking about convergent 1st person reports of a certain type. Such consensus or convergence backs up the claim that the here and now does, in fact, belong in category 3, not category 2, as this attribution “here and now” is based on convergent 1st person reports that qualify as “objective experimental data” as described by Bitbol and Petitmengin, cited earlier –

. . . even the “objective experimental data” of natural science are nothing else than convergent *first-person reports* of a certain type.

By way of emphasizing the point, it should be noted that what adds weight to the ascription of the here and now as objectively based and in the same category as “objective experimental data” is that it meets equally the tests of consensus, repeatability, and falsifiability – three standards of the scientific method. One simply has to ask if a person could be alive yet not be witness to the here and now? Poellner has described a phenomenon that meets the repeatability test “as not exhausted by any particular experiential state which purports to represent it, and it is available for various numerically distinct experiences of it by oneself and others – ready to be experienced, as it were.”²² What could be more ready to be experienced? The temporal constraint common to sentient beings like ourselves provides the consensus and never ceases to repeat – i.e. from a 3rd person perspective during one’s life -- the evidence of its presence, though how it manifests is neither in measurable form nor as discrete data. And as for that third test – the test of falsifiability, as we shall see in the case of dreams the here and now is falsifiable, a subject we will get into in Part 2.

The compatibility challenge we started with appears to have been successfully met. The here and now, it seems, does conform to a stage 3 description, and by doing so it falls in place as a constituent of material nature – being thinglike in that respect and compatible with third-person designations of what material nature consists of and pertains to. We, however, apply this term “here and now” not only as a constituent of nature but as a characterization of nature as well. This is because, from a 1st person perspective, there can be no nowless characterization of material nature. The very characterization insinuates a presentness, the here and now of the nature being characterized – unless one resorts to a 3rd person perspective and treats nature in the abstract, the view from nowhere. But can such a nature in the abstract exist without its concrete manifestation?

²² Peter Poellner, “Affect, Value, and Objectivity,” *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. B. Leiter and N. Sinhababu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 233. [www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/staff/poellner]: 9.

3. The boundary question anew

Let us now proceed to exemplify much of what we have just said by taking up two 1st person accounts of what purportedly was witnessed as elements of the perceptual scene, though adjudged paranormal, at least in part, by most standards. In the one account we have neuroanatomist Jill Taylor's published report of her altered sense of momentary time after a massive stroke on the left side of her brain, and in the other a former Jesuit priest's recollection of a moment of stilled silence in the desert after a long drive and a heavy consumption of coffee along the way. Taylor's account runs as follows:

Time stood still. . . . I found myself floating from isolated moment to isolated moment. . . . When I lost my left hemisphere and its language centers, I also lost the clock that would break my moments into consecutive brief instances. Instead of having my moments prematurely stunted, they became open-ended, and I felt no rush to do anything.²³

The second account by James Connor is described this way:

At last I lost all thought of myself. I lost the sense of myself watching myself, and was just there as the desert and the comet were there with the stars, the cold, . . . Halfway through a single breath, the night revealed itself as joy. The joy did not rise up from me, nor was it in me – or if it was in me, it was only because I was in the night. It was more than a feeling; it was an understanding, a knowledge beyond words.²⁴

To what extent are these descriptions simply effects of mental aberrations (stage 2) induced by injury or an overdose of coffee? To what extent do we find elements of potential objectivity that can be allocated to stage 3?

As for Taylor's stroke and Connor's sojourn to the desert at night, a factual check of one kind or another would presumably verify that such events did occur. And so to that extent, consensus by independent investigation would warrant objectivity of those parts of each description and stage 3 designation, meaning that such incidents were actual and not simply divagations of one's state of mind. As for Connor's ambiguous allocating of the revealed joy, the ambiguous hovering between feeling and understanding, the knowledge beyond words, here there are the obvious failures of substantiation by consensus and repeatability. The experience, the claimed actuality of what happened in that desert, was virtually one of a kind, unavailable for a second investigator to relive and confirm. One might loosely compare it to the unrepeatability of a quantum measurement that galvanizes an immediate effect on two entangled particles vast distances apart. It

²³ Jill B. Taylor, *My Stroke of Insight* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008), 50, 68.

²⁴ James A. Connor, *Silent Fire: Bringing the Spirituality of Silence to Everyday Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 2.

can't be redone or undone. That limitation, in either case, is not, however, to disprove the attested descriptions. It is only to deny them the kind of stage 3 objectivity that attains when such verifications as described above have been carried out. But here is where we turn back to another place in Taylor's description – where she refers to her moments – and find ourselves at loggerheads with the stage 2/3 border question anew.

She describes those moments as open-ended, unstunted, unbroken by clock time, and herself as floating from isolated moment to isolated moment. The problem is essentially this: On the one hand, it would seem impossible to validate the objective standing of such moments as she experienced them subsequent to her stroke, and for the same reasons as expressed above – lack of consensus and unavailability of the experience for others to repeat. Hence, lack of sufficient basis to assign her time perception to the stage 3 side of the border where we've plotted the here and now. On the other hand, one notes a curious resemblance between her experience, while in a brain-damaged state, of open-ended, unbroken moments and the temporal constraint of the now we've talked about and shall be talking about throughout these pages, how it defies easy configuration and breakdown into instances. Furthermore, in her case one can speak of repeatability at least to a limited extent – that is, the repeated experience of the state she describes herself as having been in prior to her recovery. In view of all this, how do we assess her description of moments and time? On both sides of the fence? Mostly deranged? The answer requires that we take a closer look at the nature of the now consensus in normal circumstances – a consensus on the here and now about which there is little dispute. As much of this gets further explored when we turn our attention exclusively to the now component of the self/other framework (chapters 4-7) put forth in these pages, we'll give only a proposed brief overview here:

Consensus: The now is a first-person phenomenon.

Consensus: When awake to the world, every perceiving and experiencing is a perceiving and experiencing now.

Consensus: When awake to the world, the now is experienced as indivisible and unmultiple, without a beginning or end, and – however prolonged – yet not a moment ago or a moment after.

Consensus: In any meeting or encounter with our surroundings, we and whoever or whatever we encounter share the same now. I cannot meet with a yesterday you or encounter a surroundings that are not here now – barring a simulation, but even that must be encounterable at a present time.

What immediately stands out in this overview is the idiosyncratic makeup of these four constituents. This is discerned by noting the absence of a “what”, the absence in other words of configurative content, not only of a measurable kind but even simply of a quality, like blueness, something that catches our sensory pick up. Instead, what these four constituents of consensus give recognition to are features of the here and now that essentially reduce to the *via negativa*, “not this, not that” – i.e., not past, not future, not divisible, not configurable, not countable, and so on. One might question how such a contentless instance – a moment of occurrence, a moment of presentness – can be distinguishable at all as an instance if it is not configurally distinguishable from any other instance, since it has only to do with time, not specifiable content. One encounters a comparable question of sorts in the philosophic way of speaking about quality instance or property instance of anything, but there the question is how, from our being exposed to an instance or example of a quality such as blueness, it comes about that propositional distinctions about it are possible: “That is blue, not red.” In the case of the now, there is no sensory quality or property to get a handle on. Instead, it is what defines the possibility of a sensory quality or property to begin with, by providing the possibility of concreteness. How then does this content-less instance – this temporal constraint of the here and now as we’ve been speaking about it – become graspable at all as the centerpiece concept of this book? Explaining how will be the ongoing aim of this book.

Expanding a bit on this aspect of quality or property, one can add to the mystery just posed, how there can be consensus about the here and now proposed in the overview above, by thinking about it this way: For there to be a quality or property of anything there must be an instance of it. Hence, the expressions “quality instance” and “property instance”. However, given our focus of concern, we will construe “instance” not as “example”, as is customarily meant by such expressions, but as a here-and-now occurrence. Consequently, our line of inquiry becomes not the expected one about content, not in other words about how a quality or property – naked and brute-like in its exposure to perception – gets clothed into propositional statements that distinguish it, such as “that is blue, not red”, but rather about how this content-less instance (construed as moment of occurrence, moment of presentness) can be distinguishable at all as an instance if it is not distinguishable *from*? How does this content-less instance – this temporal constraint of the here and now as we’ve been speaking about it – become graspable at all? It is another way of highlighting the challenge we’ve just posed above.

In the meantime, seizing upon this criterion of “lack of *distinguishable from*”, one might find provocation yet again for raising the boundary question by inquiring how the here and now can be distinguishable, in conceptual terms, from a state of mind, that of the mind of a conscious perceiver. Both consciousness and the here and now admittedly share elusive features, elusive boundaries as we have shown, resisting easy description in configurative and measurable

terms. Moreover, their interdependency seems indisputable. Can there be a here and now without consciousness? But equally, evidence points the other way – Can there exist the here and now without experiential and objective-based content at stage 3? The perplexity of this boundary question between consciousness at stage 2 and the here and now at stage 3 is exemplified by how one scholar of temporality, Georg Franck, defines “mental presence”:

Mental presence is the feeling of being a conscious mind. . . . The state of mental presence is what we know best of all because it is what every act of experiencing is in. Yet it is completely alien to us because we cannot grasp it in its own reality. Mental presence is a byword for concreteness. Still, it is not a thing we can experience with our senses. Nor is it accessible by abstract thought. It ceases to be what we are trying to grasp as soon as turned into an object of thought.²⁵

How closely does this notion of “mental presence” identify the immediate present of the here and now? It captures the sense of elusiveness, the alien aspect, and with it the paradoxical concreteness of the here and now, its familiarity – “what every act of experiencing is in”. On the other hand, as to its category – stage 2 or stage 3 – “*mental presence*” would suggest the former, and yet if it is what every act of experiencing is in how can it not be at stage 3, just as that table or any material object that manifests its concreteness by its presence?

How we have already shown the here and now to be attributive of material nature, rather than an indexical reflection of ourselves, is suffice for the present distinction we are seeking, although more will be said on this as we proceed. We need only point out here how consciousness, when understood as the consciousness in our head, answers to a stage 2 allocation, and how, by contrast, the here and now serves a foundational role at stage 3 that satisfies various objectivity criteria we have applied to it.

Turning back to an earlier puzzle, it is the query that touched off “the border question anew”, namely the question of how insightful Jill Taylor may have been, even before her recovery, in her description of “moments”, as she describes them.

Was her description, in short, insightful in portraying something at stage 3? What we can say is that insofar as the moments, as she described them, defied configurative description as clock time or definable breaks in time, it can be argued her attestation shows compatibility with at least the here-and-now consensus profile we laid out earlier, in spite of (or perhaps even because of?) her

²⁵ Georg Franck, “Mental Presence and the Temporal Present,” (p. 48) *Brain and Being: at the Boundary Between Science, Philosophy, Language and Arts*. Ed. Gordon G. Globus, Karl H. Pribram, and Giuseppe Vitiello (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 47-68.

brain disorder.²⁶ The compatibility seems elicited by how she describes moments, although in the plural, yet as unbroken, open-ended, lacking the structure of “consecutive brief instances”. More on those aspects when we come to the uncountable and traceless now in chapter 4.

What we can conclude is that it is the very objective character of the here and now, its foundation in stage 3, which makes possible the determination, in a here and now, of everything else of an objective character, including material nature’s status as other, other than our own arbitrary ways of thinking, other than what our state of mind induces us to believe. Let us propose to legitimize this here and now by designating it a kind of Archimedian point that makes possible, to whatever degree, an understanding of material nature from a human vantage point.²⁷

²⁶ The suggestion here that one’s insight about nature and the external world may vary depending on one’s state of consciousness recalls Charles T. Tart’s notion of state-specific science.

²⁷ That there is in fact an Archimedian point by which to adjudge nature was questioned, for example, by Rorty and Dennett. Daniel Dennett, “Back from the Drawing Board,” *Dennett and His Critics: Demystifying Mind*, ed. Bo Dahlbom (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 205.

“Each of us divides what is into two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive parts: the part that one is and the remainder that one is not. That this distinction obtains is a metaphysical mystery, a presupposition of the ordinary intelligibility of the world. . . .”

Stephen Priest, “Radical Internalism”, p. 155, n. 6.

Chapter 3

Material nature-as-other

In this chapter we proceed to that second facet of lucidity that was indicated previously at the beginning of chapter 2. And by that we mean the facet of lucidity that sheds light on otherness, the otherness of the world and material nature. Much of what we take for “otherness” consists of what we ourselves bring to our sensory field, our recognition of shapes, the names for things, their functions, our feelings about them, associations, and so on. But that is not the kind of otherness we’ll be discussing. What then is this world-as-other, this material nature-as-other, we will be discussing? On the one hand, it is external. It is out there. The very fact that we recognize it as such, given our lucidity, implies a direct realist position that is being advanced here on this issue of otherness. Justification for this position is not difficult. It is one thing not to recognize what an object is and yet to be aware that it is other and apart from one’s mind. It is quite another to hallucinate or to take what’s in the mind for something that’s out in the world, or vice versa. That distinction between a contacted otherness and mistaking it or being oblivious to it forms the basis for this second aspect of lucidity we are targeting here, the kind of lucidity that informs us about otherness. This is not to imply any assessment about the degree to which lucidity about otherness, from a 1st person perspective, is informative about material nature from a 3rd person perspective. And here we raise a legitimate question. What exactly is the basis for asserting that otherness exists in the first place if, by its very immediacy of presentation, it precedes any of our ways to configure it in such a way as to identify what it is? One answer might be that the evidence for this otherness is change itself, the visceral sense of exposure to the just

now/now disjuncture. Another answer might be that the now itself, or the nowness of consciousness, is in two locations – self and other – entangled and nonlocal, and that you need both to be in a social condition with the world and to connect to our surroundings, just like the smile on my friend’s face. I am here and yet I am there where that smile is, sharing the experience of that smile rather than figuring out the cognitive significance of that smile, reportedly symptomatic in cases of autism.¹

What can be asserted is simply the trivial truth that without that lucidity which opens the doorway to otherness, there is no foundation on which information and knowledge can rest, including what can be known about material nature. But from that modest claim we now proceed in this chapter to the more radical one – namely, that this otherness is not our lucidity per se but an intrinsic part of material nature.

What we are about to say here unabashedly conflates two disciplines, merges them into one, i.e., epistemology – the study of knowledge and ways of knowing – and ontology – the study of being, ultimate reality, regardless of how or what we know. In what way then does this con-flating of the two disciplines come about? How is it justified?

It starts with what may appear a trivial truth to anyone who concedes we are not simply a mirror or reflex of nature and that likewise nature is not a mirror of ourselves.² The trivial truth being this: Whatever it is we are aware of when awake to the world, whatever appears in our particular field of view, that field of view – unless it be a literal mirror – is not a mirror of ourselves, but entails something else. Its source lies elsewhere, not in the perceiver’s mind. That difference of provenance, disclosed by the scene of objects that a lucid spectator perceives, is how we intend this term “otherness” and the title “Material nature-as-other”. The trees, the landscape, the moon, other people, my own hands and feet – all specimens of otherness by the very condition of their being viewed and distinguished from our source of self. I am not that tree. That is what I know by looking at that tree. It is that mark or imprimatur of distinction that underwrites the confidence that my senses are intact, that I am in fact awake to the world. Precisely it is that otherness that comes into my field of view – world-as-other, nature-as-other – that likewise betrays the inescapable constraint of time. I can be in contact with otherness that is only now, not at other times. Whether this is due to my human condition, a structural defect intrinsic to knowledge itself, or whether indicative of a dualist metaphysics, what results from this temporal self/other constraint is a smudging over of the dichotomy between our epistemic

¹ For more on this, see for example Steve Torrance, “Contesting the Concept of Consciousness”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 16/5 (2009), 119 *et al.*, and Alex Seemann, “The Other Person in Joint Attention: a Relational Approach”, *JCS* 17/5-6 (2010), 178.

² As, for example, suggested in Richard Rorty’s *Mirror of Nature*.

foothold, our capability to know in an immediate sense, and material nature's "being" in any ultimate sense. For I can only know its ontology likewise as an otherness I am directly confronted with – a view, a conception, a thought, a theory –, not as a being or otherness roped off from my temporal self. Hence, the mingling of the two disciplines. Analogous to this merger, we might borrow for our purposes one of Heidegger's aphorisms in his writing about Dasein's Being: "Dasein's Being is itself a definite characteristic of understanding of Being."³

In a nutshell, aside from adding as a designation of nature the attribution "here and now", which chapter 2 gave reason to do, this chapter will show the basis for a second appendage, why the attribution of "otherness" as well applies – "material nature-as-other". The schema of nature that then emerges from this second attribution, as we shall see, can be likened to a seesaw effect, with nature-as-other at one end of the seesaw, balancing as a counterweight to what's on the other end of the seesaw, another of nature's appended trademarks – the here and now – that invokes the perspectives of sentient beings like ourselves. Let's see how this comes about.

1. In defense of material nature-as-other

How exactly does the notion of nature transform when we move from its consideration as two words – "material nature" – to its designation as "material nature-as-other"? As has been intimated above, what changes is a contingency gets introduced – the seesaw effect. Instead of a nowless and indifferent nature suggested by the two words alone, a nature in which the scales of time stretch on relentlessly, leaving the transient present irrelevant by comparison, instead of that this second designation "material nature-as-other" throws an uncertainty into the picture. A cosmos that is not so oblivious to what happens now. But can it be believed?

Can it be believed, for example, that the here and now might not only have some part to play in all that stands in contradistinction to ourselves – all that vastness of time and space, all that otherness – but might actually be the very thing that makes that vastness possible? And that, for example, nature's autonomy, which we traditionally aver to be boundless and self-sustaining, might actually be in some way the outcome of the here and now? Can that be believed?

Attempting to treat such proposals seriously requires that we begin, first off, by taking a closer look at this "otherness", how it can be corroborated and what exactly it implies.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 32 [12]. On this convergence of the epistemic and ontic in the form of knowing (as distinct from knowledge), see chapter 4, sec. 4 and chapter 4, n. 28.

We will start with how we have proceeded from the beginning, providing as a ground or first postulate that without which we end up with a self-defeating skepticism. In other words, adding to what we have just said about “otherness”, we can define nature-as-other in terms such as these: this present world, our present surroundings which all lucid minds are aware of, and most fundamentally that which we do indeed wake up to in the morning. Otherness comprises whatever it is that confronts our lucid state of mind and that interacts with our sensory awareness. It locates on that side of things where an obvious distinction is recognized – I am not that tree, that specimen of otherness –, it being on that side, that stage 3 side of things, where what we perceive as things in “nature” in the loosest sense of the word can be adjudged to be so based on objective assessments. This is where we begin.

Now for the embarrassing implications of that above snapshot. Specifically, what gets excluded by way of implication? Indeed, it then seems all that comes *from* us is excluded, the cognitive spelling out and translation that we give to that otherness, the shapes and forms as part of our decipherment of the raw and mentally unconstructed outside, our ways as humans of recognizing and organizing things, such as ways of calculating time and measuring distance that reflect our own input, memories and expectations that color 1st person impressions, as well as misconceptions and ideas that reflect simply our own inner worlds.

Well, but does that leave any room for otherness? The classic question: Is there, in fact, a mind-independent reality? Or as Cooper has put it:

- (1) Is there a way the world anyway is, irrespective of how we take it to be?
- (2) Is an articulable world anything but the “product” or “construct” of human thought and attitude?⁴

And so, we might ask, on what basis can an endorsement be made of otherness, and the proposition implied by it that what we wake up to, that source of content, lies in the otherness zone – that is, outside of ourselves? How is such an endorsement possible when the very semblance of otherness may be fallacious, at least to an indeterminable degree, an effect of our own minds doing the trick of constructing what we see, think, and believe to be other?

Of course, one can highlight, as alternative, the self-defeating pit that the skeptical argument falls into. If otherness is but an effect of our minds, then even that conclusion cannot escape the same delusion – it too falling into the same category as an effect of our minds. Where does it end? The quicksand under the skeptical argument does nothing, in itself, to bolster the claim for nature’s other-

⁴ Quoted from David E. Cooper, *The Measure of Things* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 1.

ness. It comes down to this: Where can we find an independent means, outside of mere impressions of otherness, on which to base this notion? Let us therefore proceed by setting out on this task of finding one, working out a strategy by which otherness can be independently established. We will pursue this in three steps, starting with (1) Otherness as a pre-condition, then (2) Otherness in via negativa terms, and finally (3) Otherness and the here-and-now.

2. Otherness as a precondition

We start with the orange on that tree. Step 1: I see the orange. I touch the orange. It tells me, so to speak, that I have sensory experiences. Step 2: The orange is there. The orange is not me. That tells me, presumably, there's an external world. Hence, there's that otherness. But on the other hand, suppose it all starts with a dream of that orange, a dream of that sensory orange? How then can that orange in a dream tell me anything about the world, or about otherness? A world in my dreams? Where then, looking elsewhere, excluding the evidence of my own senses, do I find that independent basis, that justification, for the otherness I'm awake to?

One route to an answer has been to dispense with the apparent futility of finding a justification – “justification” in this context being the attempt to build the case for external otherness on what reasoning powers construct as an edifice of logic leading to that end. Instead, the alternative proposed in recent years is to take at face value the obviousness of what strikes everyone as psychologically immediate and irresistible, everyone with a lucid mind, that is. How could anyone doubt the obvious presence of the world? Bertrand Russell puts it this way: “Skepticism, while logically impeccable, is psychologically impossible, and there is an element of frivolous insincerity in any philosophy which pretends to accept it.”⁵

Belief based on acknowledgment of the obvious, or what is termed “entitlement”, points to the key ingredient of this alternative approach, which goes by that name.⁶ The entitlement position would therefore find its basis or “warrant”, not in reasoning powers, but in the salience of otherness that confronts us, regardless of our reasoning powers. Which stands as more warranted, that you are reading this sentence or that you only seem to be reading this sentence? Hence, the warrant of cogent confrontation. More technically, this entitlement position is described as an “externalist type of epistemic warrant”, which suggests a foundationalist epistemology – that is to say, the foundations of its system of

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge, its Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948), 9.

⁶ Epistemic entitlement, as it is referred to, is overviewed by Jon Altschul (2016), who gives an account of the approaches of various of its proponents, such as Dretske, Crispin Wright, and others. (www.iep.utm.edu/ep-en/).

belief are deemed as self-sustaining (“foundational” in that sense), and not derived from or justified by further beliefs or chains of reasoning.

We start with this entitlement position as an alternative route to otherness because it suggests immediacy and salience may be stronger indicators of the world – the world that the self perceives as other – than what reasoning powers come up with. It is an externalist viewpoint that coincides with the one to be laid out in these pages. Of course, one can always argue that immediacy and salience are aspects of dreams as well, especially nightmares. But this depends on how we construe the immediacy and salience of otherness. Let us turn here to that very question and in so doing move in the direction that delineates the position proposed here on independent warrant, one that finds more compelling grounds for otherness than simply our face-to-face encounter with what we take it to be.

A key step in this undertaking is to propose that “immediacy” and “salience” signal a priority indicator in the likes of a precondition with respect to time. How does this come about?

We have already spoken about how a 3rd person perspective has, as its precondition, a 1st person perspective. Without that direct contact of, let’s say, myself or yourself being immediately face-to-face with a state of affairs, or in other words engaged in lived experience in the world, any other ways of referencing a situation, any derivative 3rd person perspective, rides on nothing. We live in immediacy, no escape. And that’s the priority indicator, the precondition, implied by words like “immediacy” and “salience”. But let’s go further. Here I am, measuring the speed and time it takes for light from an object to hit the retina of your eye. I thereupon conclude that everything you see is already past, fractionally past, the objects no longer immediate with the time of your visual recognition of them. A problem arises. I’m the time keeper. But how do I know what is present and what is past if everything that hits the retinas of *my* eyes is already past? What this question moves us to is the suggestion of that priority indicator, the precondition implied by immediacy. I do the measuring (even about myself) based on my present time, the immediacy and salience I’m awake to. That’s how come I can tell you’re living in the “past”, so to speak, by measurement standards.

The radical constructivist Glasersfeld writes:

[I]t is impossible to compare our image of reality with a reality outside [...] because in order to check whether our representation is a ‘true’ picture of reality we should have to have access not only to our representation but also to that outside reality *before* we get to know it.⁷ (italics his)

⁷ Ernst von Glasersfeld, “The Concepts of Adaptation and Viability in a Radical Constructivist Theory of Knowledge,” *Piagetian Theory and Research*, ed. I. Sigel, D. Brodzinsky, and R. Golinkoff. (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1981) (<http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/EvG>), 89.

But that's exactly the feat the light-speed time keeper, and empirical scientists in that role, seeks to accomplish – gather representations of time from a 3rd person line of investigation, the investigation premised on an outside reality. And what is that outside reality? Timewise, it turns out to be precisely this immediacy and salience of the 1st person perspective which, as discussed earlier, any 3rd person perspective is predicated on. In other words, there is this precondition of immediacy and salience that defines 1st person otherness, that defines it as the starting point of investigations, and that comes necessarily with the temporal constraint built in. That is to say, it – this 1st person otherness – comes here and now, and only here and *now*. Hence, it can be seen how that precondition of immediacy and salience suggests an independent basis for otherness, it being the stepping stone for the less immediate.

Let's pose yet another scenario, this one in an excerpt from a piece by Robbins, who elicits this sense of a priority indicator by approaching otherness as “the problem of consciousness”, the problem of how this image of otherness – the image of the external world – comes to be ours. Robbins puts it this way:

The problem of consciousness is the origin of the image of the external world. Yet, we know that nothing is stored or going on in the brain that even vaguely resembles an *image* of the external world – in the brain we just see neural-chemical flows. We can only ask, unsuccessfully, how these neural processes somehow “represent” the external world or “encode” it, . . . What is the domain that the code is mapped to? And how could the brain map anything to this domain – the external world – without already knowing what the world looks like?⁸

That “already knowing what the world looks like” evokes the priority indicator in yet another way. What seems to be hinted at here is the supposition that there is something in this immediacy and salience of world-as-other that comes as an already knowing, even before the brain's encoding. Hence, we're confronted here with the enigma of this predeterminer, an acquaintance already there preliminary to what the brain encodes or represents as world image. At least that's the implication hinted at by the question that Robbins raises. A knowing inherent in the very precondition of that immediacy of world-as-other. We shall have more to say on that in a later chapter.

For now, let's summarize the essential point about the priority role of immediacy and salience by quoting Charles Taylor: “Our grasp of things is not something that is in us, over against the world; it lies in the way we are in contact with the world, in our being-in-the-world (Heidegger) or being-to-the world (Merleau-Ponty). That is why a global doubt about the existence of things (does the world exist?), which can seem quite sensible on the representational con-

⁸ [italics his] Stephen Robbins, “Form, Qualia, and Time: the Hard Problem Reformed,” *Mind and Matter* 11/2 (2013): 169.

strual, shows itself up as incoherent once you have really taken the antifoundational turn.”⁹ We need not discuss here his notion of antifoundationalism. It is enough, for our purposes, to point out, on the one hand, the concise contrast he makes between “our grasp of things” – a positing of that as the independent basis (indeed the foundation) upon which to believe the world exists –, and on the other hand “a global doubt” based on a representational construal. It brings out, in a nutshell, this immediacy of otherness in the form of “contact”.

3. Otherness in via negativa terms

So now on to our second quest for an independent basis on which to support our defense of what we’ve referred to interchangeably as “otherness”, “world-as-other”, “nature-as-other”. Faced with the problem Cooper raises of cognitive infiltration – namely, the possible extent what we take to be other and external turns out to be the effect of our mental constructions and ways of distinguishing –, given that quandary of concern let us see how well we can deal with it by using the exclusionary approach of via negativa. Accordingly, we rid from our notion of otherness configurative details that distinguish how we see things in contrast to how other species do, shapes and forms that reflect how we humans perceive things. We rid from the landscape visible objects. What then might we say is left after such exclusion – or minus such infiltration of our cognitive input? One might propose it to be mere open space, the optical field, or alternatively the content as a whole in its transparency to our lived experience from a 1st person perspective. And even if one contends that dreams can elicit the same impression, there is still the consideration of a recognizable distinction about source that one makes in being awake, as when one says, “That was only a dream.”¹⁰ If that distinction itself were deemed a mental construction, and not externally based, we’d fall back into the jumble of self-defeating skepticism.

But let’s treat the exclusionary tactic another way by taking 1st person perspectival aim even at the very via negativa distinctions implied by “not this”, “not that”, so as to cleanse our field of view of even those conceptual and configurative distinctions. What we do to carry out this further aim is add a few words about this “otherness”, make explicit that by that word what is being asserted is what comes out of an experientially direct encounter, or in other words an otherness that is so by the very fact of its confrontational aspect, its confronting our perspective, standing as it does in contrast to the subject, a sentient being such

⁹ By being antifoundational, Taylor is intending this grasp to be understood as distinct from “a construction of knowledge from the ground up,” which is how he refers to foundationalism. (p. 167) Charles Taylor, “Rorty and Philosophy,” *Richard Rorty*, ed. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 167.

¹⁰ We exclude the issue of clairvoyant dreams.

as oneself. Hence, in that more explicit language “otherness” emerges as a verifiable distinction in the form of that self/other duality as we’ve formulated it throughout these pages, namely in the form of:

This present world (or present nature, present surroundings) we’re awake to

Given this, then, as our template of otherness, can we find it possible to eliminate from it even such distinctions as “not this”, “not that”? It would seem, on the contrary, that even in this rendition obvious distinctions of that sort crop up, however implicitly: “present” as distinguished from “past”; “we’re” as opposed to “world” (the duality), “awake” as opposed to “asleep”, “otherness” in contradistinction to a presupposed opposite – self or sentient beings (again the duality). Hence, contrary to our stated aim, distinctions disclose themselves – or so it seems – of the very “not this”, “not that” character that we’re attempting to nullify.

But now let’s take a second look. We proceed by approaching the problem, as stated earlier, from a 1st person perspective because the otherness we’re talking about, the otherness under the rubric “This present world we’re awake to” is expressly “present” – immediate and salient. That level of direct experiential contact with the world is what’s involved. So the question becomes what the above putative distinctions amount to in light of this 1st person perspective?

From that perspective let us note what is discerned, or rather what is *not* discerned. There is, for example, a present state of affairs one is in contact with. In other words, this present world, but no past world, no “yesterday you” having dinner with a “present me”, nor a distinction in that immediate landscape between a today and tomorrow. One discerns in this 1st person landscape worldness, or a part of it, in a general sense and a “we’re” insofar as it applies to other visible people, but in both cases they apply interchangeably to this immediate landscape of otherness one is awake to. “Awake” and “asleep” are likewise not amenable to distinction in the 1st person landscape of otherness one is in lucid contact with when awake. Experientially speaking, one cannot be awake to the world and asleep at the same time (notwithstanding how lucid dreams construed from a 3rd person perspective). As for the implicit distinction between otherness and its opposite – whether that be self, subjectivity, or private thoughts – again a dichotomy of this sort eludes detection *in one’s 1st person immediate contact with the world*. Even one’s arms or feet, even the mirror that reflects oneself, neither do these elicit an otherness/non-otherness distinction, though from a 3rd person perspective that draws on inferentiality an otherness in these respects can obviously be disclosed as distinct from the self, the “I”, that is having the perspective.

The point of this exercise in elimination is to show how, by adopting a *via negativa* strategy, there can be found a second bulwark or warrant for otherness insofar as it eludes configurable and distinguishable elements. It is one

thing to speak of our cognitive constructions defining distinguishable contents. It is quite another to speak of the 1st person perspective that throws in relief the domain of otherness, as apart from the distinguishable input from our cognitive constructions. And even as for distinguishable input, what cognition makes distinguishable obviously acts as a response to otherness from a source outside of cognition, a trivial truth brought out by John Locke when he facetiously remarks:

If anyone say, a dream may do the same thing, and all these ideas may be produced in us, without external objects . . . And if our dreamer pleases to try, whether the glowing heat of a glass furnace be barely a wondering imagination in a drowsy man's fancy, by putting his hand into it, he may perhaps be wakened into a certainty greater than he could wish, that it is something more. . . .¹¹

This is only to underscore the fact that distinguishable input is not merely from our cognitive constructions. "It hurts!" is another way of saying the temporal redundancy "It hurts now!" – an immediacy inseparable from its otherness. And just as the heat on the hand or an earthquake is a distinguishable otherness "irrespective of how we take it to be", likewise the distinction "that was only a dream" evinces by implication the non-cognitively carved otherness we're awake to. And so it can be seen that the words "as-other" serves as a valid appendage of nature despite whatever cognitively based and configuratively based distinctions we ourselves apply to this realm.

4. Otherness and the here-and-now

Once we apply the attribute of "here-and-now" to material nature, which we have shown reason for doing so in the previous chapter, it becomes evident that yet another basis emerges for nature's otherness, for its differentiation from state of mind or dream – taking into consideration this attribution of "here-and-now" that we have given it. Quite simply that basis comes down to the temporal constraint. The fact that this "here" can only be "now", that what directly confronts us in an experiential way can only come in that mode of time, reflects a restriction on us rather than one we impose on nature. What this means is that this temporal constraint – this "here" that can only be "now" – constructs us, rather than the other way around. It defines the way we and our mental faculties operate in the world we're awake to. There is nothing we construct, or can construct, about this now. Hence, the temporal constraint is yet another demonstration of how world-as-other exposes itself, it doing this by a temporal kind of

¹¹ Cited in Galen Strawson, "Panpsychism? Reply to Commentators with a Celebration of Descartes", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13/10-11 (2006): 267, n. 168.

distinguishing but not the kind of distinguishing that we've been talking about, the kind elicited by sensory detection of detail in the landscape. It is *there*, this temporal constraint – yet not in such a way that it can be spotted out there, mentally represented, recorded and retrieved from memory.

It would seem from all this that what we are left with is a somewhat precarious foothold, that of knowing about this constraint, having inside understanding of the present time it limits us to, but no understanding of it outside of our immediate acquaintance with it – and only insofar as that acquaintance lasts! Lacking a way by which to represent it (as a spotted detail), lacking a device by which to store it (as if the now could be at another time than now), we are left in the position of knowing it but only insofar as we are currently exposed to it. The words “temporal constraint” or “now” convey nothing in themselves without this current acquaintance and knowing. But the situation becomes even more precarious. One's whole existence – that is, a person's being awake to what is here-and-now – is likewise sustained in the same way, by this direct and immediate knowing, and only insofar as that knowing lasts. Hence, that conflux again of *knowing* and *being* that we spoke about earlier.

More on this in the chapter that follows.

5. Material nature as both *other* and *here-and-now*

What we have brought out in the previous chapter is the objective basis for attributing the here-and-now to material nature in the conceptual framework we are proposing for this book. One argument in favor of this attribution is that the here-and-now is not, as we have seen, in conflict with 3rd person methodologies that investigate material nature, but to the contrary such methodologies presuppose an immediate here and now in which to conduct one's research. And furthermore, we have seen that convergent 1st person accountings of data, which is the same thing as convergent here-and-now experiential accountings of data, are the basis for obtaining objective experimental findings in the first place. From this it would seem to follow that the here-and-now is a proper characterization of nature in the ways we have shown. And so we concluded. What the current chapter has endeavored to show are the merits of this second attribution – “material nature-as-other”. The basis for this characterization of nature as *other* has been argued in a number of respects, specifically by showing (1) how the immediacy and salience of the external world serve as precondition for measured time; (2) how this nature-as-other we are awake to exposes itself as a thereness, an external field, by the very fact that we are awake to it, apart from the way distinctions in the sensory landscape are cognitively construed; and (3) by showing how the temporal constraint defines the limits of our cognitive capabilities, and not the other way around.

Still, with this new element of “otherness” introduced, and precisely because of it, an uncertainty thereupon arises as a consequence, an uncertainty about nature’s overall significance. We spoke earlier of this uncertainty, dubbing it the “seesaw” effect, with nature-as-other at one end of the seesaw and our 1st person experiential perspective, with its temporal constraint, at the other.

And so again, can it be believed? Can it be believed, for example, that material nature is in some respect in balance and in coordination with its own here and now, an attribute we have shown it to have, and that this here-and-now that constrains the temporality of our 1st person perspective likewise constrains, not just our perspective, but the cosmos itself? The implication would then seem to be this: that (1) the cosmos, far from being oblivious as commonly believed to what is happening now; and likewise (2) the vastness of space and time, far from being indifferent to the temporal constraint of the here and now, both the cosmos and its vastness would then be seen to partake of a common ground, they bearing the same temporal constraint that constrains us. Given this scenario, the “here-and-now” comes to entail not only a temporal limitation imposed on us from the outside, but as well a temporal limitation that weighs on the uncertainty of nature’s otherness, on its determinable state in any fixed way.

More on that probing of the seesaw effect in the chapters which follow. What we will do here is merely pick out, by way of summary, two classic statements, and their contexts, that can be shown to have bearing on this schema of nature’s otherness as we’ve presented it. One is from Eugene Wigner when he speaks of “the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in the physical sciences”, the other from Einstein, his remarking that “the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.”¹²

At first glance it would appear that both statements shed little light on the notion of a seesaw effect, nature’s otherness being at one end and the here-and-now at the other. Wigner’s remark appears to concern a nature grasped by mathematical description exclusive of its otherness and the temporal factor we’ve weighed in. And in similar fashion Einstein’s comment points to the world’s comprehensibility unqualified by time. In the article his statement comes from, Wigner speaks of the “fantastic accuracy” of mathematics in formulating certain of nature’s regularities in the form of laws, their validity – by the very fact of being a law – unconstrained by the here and now. But then further in his article, Wigner notes that laws of nature may change, a theory or law proven

¹² (1) Eugene Wigner, “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Physical Sciences”, *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 13/1 (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960) (<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~matc/MathDrama/reading/wigner.html>); (2) Albert Einstein, “Physics and Reality,” *Journal of the Franklin Institute* 221 (1935): 349-382; reprinted in *Out of My Later Years* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1967): 58-94. Peter L. Galison *et al*, ed., *Einstein for the 21st Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 36.

false by a subsequent model that takes cognizance of more inclusive data. Hence, that contingency of a present time and a present description, a point also stressed by Thomas Kuhn in the structure of scientific paradigms. Einstein, in the context of his statement, underscores the “miracle” of how our minds give “order” to our sense impressions, “this order being produced by the creation of general concepts, relations between these concepts, and by relations between concepts and sense impressions, . . .” Here again we have an intimation of how the here and now enters in. Sense impressions are momentary, immediate. The order, the comprehensibility, comes out from this immediacy and through the mediation of our minds. More significantly, it is Einstein’s major contributions in understanding nature which have pointed out the role that time – relative time – plays in nature’s comprehensibility. As Einstein has shown, insofar as nature at near light speed is described by measured time, that time itself is determined by the place and position of the perspectival view, the here and now one starts with.

These illustrations serve merely as starters in the direction our radical 1st person perspective is heading toward and the type of questions we will be confronting along the way – all related to that egregious suggestion already made, that it is possible the vastness of space and time might itself be actually constrained, in the way we’re constrained, to the here and now, an otherness of space and time bounded by the present and ones’ present perspective. Taking that suggestion seriously, what then becomes of the past and the future, and how are they to be conceived? And what then happens – taking as our stepping stones the here and now, along with its 1st person perspective and nature-as-other –, what then happens to the out of sight and the not here and not now, to your past, my past, our future? What then happens when we’re asleep and vanish from our present perspectives?

“Having allayed fear of logical contradiction, he does not stop to agonise over the ontological significance, let alone the possibility, of the present’s being always the present, yet having always a different position in the fixed series of instants.”

Sarah Waterlow, “Aristotle’s Now,” p. 104 *et al.*

Chapter 4

The Now in its Immediacy

In the conceptual framework we’ve been presenting, we started with the task of proposing a particular mapping of “nature” and its ambiguous territory, and making that the stepping stone for our next concern, the temporal aspect of the self/other framework we’ve introduced. And it is that aspect of *nowness* that here becomes our particular concern. The “nature” given our attention in the two previous chapters was appended in such a way as to extend the parameters of the material nature familiar in the sciences, the investigative content of which is data oriented and approached by 3rd person methodologies. By such extension as we have given there was added the two labeled appendages – “here and now” and “as other” –, the net effect of which was to throw in relief the relative certainty of objective research against a backdrop of time. This extension was motivated by several considerations. First of all, objective research is, to a degree, counterbalanced by that first appendage we have added, the here-and-now, which we have appraised as having objective credentials as well. Such research, needless to say, is carried out in the here-and-now, not in someone’s sleep. There is, therefore, this delimited temporality, this constraint, which weighs into the picture of how nature is to be seen and understood. The turn of phrase we used to describe this weighing was the “seesaw effect”. Impressions come as immediate otherness, as a starting point; the mind’s organizing takes place; and out of this comes a version of otherness that is comprehended, with nature-as-other situated on the other side of the seesaw. One way to suggest how the moorings to the traditional notion of material nature get loosened by this term “nature-as-other” is to compare it to the loosened connection drawn between “knowledge” and “behavior of particles”, as Heisenberg once described it in quantum physics:

The conception of objective reality of the elementary particles has thus evaporated not into the cloud of some obscure new reality concept but into the transparent clari-

ty of a mathematics that represents no longer the behavior of particles but rather our knowledge of this behavior.¹

Our version of this loosened connection to traditionally understood “nature” can also be compared to the following blanket statement expressing another quantum perspective. Here the role of observation – necessarily a here-and-now observation on some or other occasion – is adjudged to transmute and actualize what, before observation, is depicted as constitutionally unconfigured and ambiguous in material nature and which, after observation, is transmuted and actualized by that act of observation into definable and material concreteness. Hans van den Hooff puts it this way:

In quantum physics the idea of an objective world in which objects possess unambiguous properties independent of their observation has become untenable.²

Having said that much by way of introduction, this chapter and the three that succeed it move the focus from the “nature” part of our conceptual framework to this temporal constraint that we’ve referred to as the “here and now”. However, from this point on we’ll refer to this constraint simply as the “now” or “present time”. Singling out this “now”, and in particular its temporal constraint on the 1st person perspective our senses provide us, we thereby make emphatic the direction of our inquiry, which as well has the purpose of distancing the non-indexical now (in our usage of the word) from indexical and self-reflexive suggestions that arise in such words as “here” and “there”, “this” and “that”. The “now” in our usage is not reflective of an inside self but of an outside source, even though the “here” and the “now” are both designators to the selfsame sensory field of view.³

Being a presentness I am awake to, a presentness which defines my being awake at all, the now in its immediacy cannot be an object one views in the abstract. Necessarily presentness involves the participant in the very viewing, and that viewing is necessarily one that comes by 1st person means. Without, for example, myself as participant, there is no separate knowledge by which to edify me or you about it – even as I write this word! It stands as a truism that participation involves presentness or the now, and without it no book on the shelf, no reference, no knowledge is going to help me say anything about it. But here we are already anticipating our exploratory path of the next four chapters. Let us, therefore, begin with this chapter and what it sets out to do,

¹ Cited in Henry P. Stapp, *The Mindful Universe*. 2nd edition (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2011), 11.

² Hans van den Hooff, “Genesis of Conscious Mental States,” *Mind and Matter* 11/1 (2013): 47.

³ “Nobody has ever noticed a place except at a time, or a time except at a place,” as H. Minkowski once put it.

which is to propose some inroads into the enigma of this temporal constraint we call the “now”. That groundwork will set the stage for what follows in the next three chapters.

1. The measureless now

As for the first inroad, let’s start with this feature of the now’s inaccessibility to measurement. It may appear that right off we are postulating a contradiction – a thinglike now, yet measureless! How could that be? First of all, it must be kept in mind what we have understood “thinglike” to mean in the context of the now, namely that which manifests in the concreteness of things, but not object-like (in a traditional sense) in having itself extension and configuration. Or to put it another way, thinglike in the way the now confers immediacy and salience to the world, as opposed to a world abstracted from any experiential contact, a world in a state of nowlessness. It may seem that our notion of “thinglike” takes considerable license with the way “thing” is traditionally understood to comprise extension in space, but that license we have allowed is comparable to the evolution of “thinglike” in the sciences and their investigation of material nature:

[E]ven the answer to the apparently easy question “what is matter?” has changed dramatically several times since 1644, when Descartes characterized matter as extended substance (*res extensa*) in his *Principia Philosophiae*. Science has developed in a way leading to the refutation of the original arguments of Descartes. According to modern physics matter cannot be characterized by any concept of “extension” – besides localized matter there are nonlocal manifestations of matter and physical energy.⁴

The second point, one that ramifies from this evolution of “thinglike”, is that while all the sciences use measurement of some kind to access the facet of material nature they investigate, it does not follow that a particular phenomenon that may qualify as thinglike will be accessible to measurement. The notion of “potential particle” in quantum physics, for example, resists measurement, for the very reason that it is in that state of potentiality. One can treat it as thinglike if one assumes its having a state of existence. To cite one other example from this same discipline, the multiverse interpretation of the measurement problem. According to that interpretation, the act of particle measurement itself produces multiverses of different versions of the experimental results, each version containing the outcome of a probability. Yet where are these multiverses? No measurable detection of them has of yet been found.

⁴ Harold Atmanspacher and Hans Primas, “Pauli’s Ideas on Mind and Matter in the Context of Contemporary Science,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13/3 (2006), 30.

That same inaccessibility to measurement is how we begin this chapter's description of the now. What, then, is the evidence that gives us the outlawing of this measurement protocol? Take the criterion of lucidity. When one is awake to the world, one is awake to the present, not to the past or the future, not three minutes ago or one minute to come. And when we say "the present", we mean not presence as a conscious state but present time, namely something we are awake to and constrained by, a transient in-between, already there before any measurement is initiated, already eclipsed by the time any measurement is made.

How does one make sense of this inaccessibility to measure? Aristotle set us on the right track when he took stock of the difference between the nonlinear now and linear (i.e. measured) time: "But of time, though it is divided into parts, some of them have been and some of them will be, but no one of them is. Nor is the now a part; for the part also measures, and it is necessary for the whole to be composed of parts. But time does not seem to be composed of nows."⁵ And later Saint Augustine added this stroke of simplicity in pointing out the incongruity of applying extension – time beyond the transient in-between – to the present: "For if it is extended, it is then divided into past and future" (and hence no longer constrained to being what it is, the transient in-between).⁶ What comes out of this is not that the now occurs so briefly in time, so transient, as to escape our notice altogether, but rather that it translates purely as a part of the experiential – as part of our contact with the world we're awake to –, not as part of any mental calculation. Hestervold sums it up nicely when he takes the example of someone saying, "I have a headache now." The question: What is the "now" referring to – the clock time of the headache, say 3:15 p.m.? Hestervold's answer: The now points to "It hurts" – i.e., the experience of pain that is being felt when the person in pain utters the "now", not to what time it is.⁷ Needless to say, a headache at 3:15 p.m. is not a necessity, but a headache that is not now would not be a headache at all.

When we speak of the measureless now as having an experiential signification, there are two considerations that help to explain this. The first is that "experiential" is to be understood as that which we are lucid to, lucid to that which bears objective credentials, the same as we have characterized the here-and-now in chapter 2. This therefore puts "experiential", as we discuss it here, on an entirely different footing from subjective responses, such as how you or I might rank the duration of a dull or exciting moment, or the role the infusion of memory plays

⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, Bk. 4: 9 (10); See further, Nathanael Stein, "Aristotle on Parts of Time and Being in Time," *The Review of Metaphysics* 69/3 (March 2016). [questions.com/library/journal/1G1-446932631/Aristotle-on-parts-of-time-and-being-in-time].

⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert Outler, intro., notes, rev. Mark Vessey (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2007): 195 [Bk. XI, 15:20]. Cited in Ricoeur, 1: 231-232.

⁷ H. Scott Hestervold, "Passage and the Presence of Experience," *The New Theory of Time*, ed. L. Nathan Oaklander and Quentin Smith (New London: Yale University Press, 1994): 333-334.

when one recognizes the wave of the sea as a wave or a musical melody as an instant whole. By contrast, the experiential now that we're awake to is not derived from us, or from our mental input on time, and therefore to apply extension to it raises the contradiction – if we hold fast to this now in a purely extrinsic or non-phenomenological sense – of experiencing different present times at once by virtue of the prolongation of now time into not-now time that Augustine speaks about, thus violating the temporal constraint and the lucidity that ties us to what is immediate present, our immediately present surroundings.

Equally important is a second consideration pertinent to the measurelessness of the experiential now or present time. Not amenable to extension, there is no way to speak of this lived and immediate now in bits and pieces, a part here in the present, a part yet to come or already past. This non-divisibility implies that the phenomenon we are dealing with is to be understood in a holistic sense. William James, who, on the basis of a sense datum rather than direct realist approach, believed that the now itself was inscrutable and that what we experience is not the actual now but only its specious version, nonetheless gives us the following description of the experiential now – namely that of a “duration block”, an experienced wholeness, inaccessible to our ways of fitting time in place, *except* in hindsight, i.e. from a distanced (3rd person) perspective. That experienced present, as he expresses it, fits in precisely with our description of the now as unmeasurable:

It is only as parts of [a] *duration-block* that the relation of succession of one end to the other is perceived. We do not first feel one end and then feel the other after it, and then from the perception of the succession infer an interval of time between, but we seem to feel the interval of time as a whole, with its two ends embedded in it. The experience is from the onset a synthetic datum, not a simple one; and to sensible perception its elements are inseparable, although attention looking back may easily decompose the experience, and distinguish its beginning from its end.⁸

⁸ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Henry Holt & Co., 1890, 610.) (Christopher D. Green, “Classics in the History of Psychology” [psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles/prin15.htm]). Also close to this immediacy we have in mind is James’s attribution in the following: “The instant field of the present is at all times what I call the ‘pure’ experience.” (cited in Silberstein and Chemero, 2016, 185) What these excerpts from James are intended to illustrate is a 1st person experiential reading of the now’s non-measureability, understood in the way Capek does when he says this about the duration-block description: “But psychological experience is decisively and unambiguously opposed to the concept of infinitely divisible time and the concept of the mathematical present, but he [James] gave to this denial probably the clearest expression in a passage which has since become a classic...” [i.e., the passage quoted above]. [brackets mine] Milic Capek, *Bergson and Modern Physics: a Reinterpretation and a Re-Evaluation*. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, VII, ed. Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky (Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel, 1971), 133.

Rather than being bordered, James is depicting the interval of that moment, the experienced now, as “embedded”, an enfolding at each end (to speak of it in a spatial way). Hence, no parts to it – no beginning, middle, end. In attempting to explicate such a notion that seems illogical because this depiction of intervalness is such that it cannot be grasped as a discrete unit, one might cite a statement from Stokes: “The ‘first-personal mode of givenness’ that characterizes self-experience does not contain *in itself* any sense of temporal extension.”⁹ Or one might allude, as well, to the Zen master Dogen’s way of speaking about *mujo* (impermanence) – “the purposeless and selfless totality of each and every moment encompassing before and after. . . .”¹⁰ Dogen notes that there is no way to gauge or compare the impermanence of this moment because it is not relative to anything which is not impermanent (i.e., anything discrete and sequential). Added to this significance of “embedded” is as well that of “decomposing” in the above passage. “Decomposing” is an appropriate word in this instance for what happens when one shifts in this case from the 1st person experiential perspective to a 3rd person perspective, which imposes a mental reconstruction by way of the distanced appraisal. Here is where segmentation is brought into the picture, the proclivity to think of nows as sequential – It is there; it is there; it is there – as if a countable feature could be ascribed to the now. But then again that would not be a now we’d be lucid to. For any now to be experientially countable, we’d need to be living concurrently, and as well serially, yet all at once in the present and past, or present and future.

Although Metzinger uses the phrase “subjective NOW”, contrary to how the now has previously been shown to be objective, the following passage of his additionally conveys the essence of why, experientially speaking, the notion of the uncountable “It is there” makes sense when applied to this phenomenon of the measureless now:

I always experience the wholeness of reality *now*. . . . The whole is always given to us in a single psychological moment, that is to say in the experienced present of a subjective *Now*. The phenomenal presence of the whole springs from this “now”, i.e. from the temporal identity of a diversity of experiential contents.¹¹

The fact that our experiential now cannot come divided or in two or more pieces brings out another aspect of its measurelessness. Being holistic, there is no way

⁹ [italics his] “Patrick Stokes, What’s missing in episodic self-experience?”, p. 125 (citing Zahavi and Parnas) *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17/1-2 (2010), 125.

¹⁰ Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dogen*, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies, ed. Kenneth Inada (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1985), 90.

¹¹ [italics his] Thomas Metzinger, “Faster than Thought: Holism, Homogeneity, and Temporal Coding,” *Conscious Experience*, ed. Thomas Metzinger (Schoningh/Imprint Academic, 1995), 429. (www.imprint.co.uk/online/Metz1.html).

we can witness it in such a way as to compare it to the timing of another now, or to the measured timing of any event, for that matter. Any determination as to simultaneity, for example, requires that we step out of the immediate situation in order to appraise it by taking a measurement. But that's clearly impossible in the case of the now. Once you've stepped out and taken the time to measure, you've lost the now you're trying to appraise, along with the putative simultaneity an event might be deemed to have with it. A measuring device faces the same obstacle. It can measure the simultaneity of two events but not the now of the event I'm awake to as compared to an event outside of that now. To do that, the measuring device would have to be part of my experience of "the wholeness of reality *now*" that Metzinger speaks about.

2. The now that leaves no trace of itself

Here we proceed to the second of what this book proposes are some inroads to this temporal constraint we call the "now". This second basic consideration, one that ramifies from the measureless feature we have already talked about, is the tracelessness of this enigma of presentness. The now that our experience brings us in contact with is traceless, a now without a past – unlike the continuity that objects in nature are generally conceived as having.

Various paths lead to this notion of a traceless now. Some of them, such as measurelessness, we have already discussed. Obviously if present time cannot be extended into the past or future, how could it have a traceable lineage, a record of its existence? On the other hand, from a 3rd person perspective, one can easily implant a linear dimension on the experiential now, introduce segmentation, extend these units of now sequentially or as a succession of perceptions. After all, life does go on. We experience today, we experience tomorrow. It's not an all-at-once affair, minus a before and after. But this is to take us down a different path, using cognitive inferencing and relying on memory. The problem is that cognitive inferencing is not an inferencing from the evidence of nowness and what that now contact tells us, but an inferencing that draws primarily on memory and reasoning. But as we have seen, the now is not in memory. If it were, we'd be living in our memories instead of memory providing grist for our living. Kierkegaard captures the difference in this anecdote of one of his fictitious narrators:

It would be of real interest to me if it were possible to reproduce very accurately the conversations I have with Cordelia. But I easily perceive that it is an impossibility, for even if I managed to recollect every single word exchanged between us, it nevertheless is out of the question to reproduce the element of contemporaneity, which actu-

ally is the nerve in conversation, the surprise in the outburst, the passionateness, which is the life principle in conversation.¹²

The problem is not just the missing details. The problem is the missing spontaneity, the spur-of-the-moment interplay and actuality that mark an involvement and participation that can only be lived, not recalled. Hence, the two impossibilities: that of a now that is impossible to recall because it is still now, and that of a now that is impossible to retrieve because it is no longer now. These are really none other than variations on what we have spoken of as the temporal constraint that pins us to present time. A useful analogy in this respect might be Poellner's, who from a phenomenological perspective speaks of the failure to identify and reidentify "experiences as they are lived through", which is only another way to refer to the traceless now: "Experiences *as they are lived through* – what Husserl calls operative consciousness or absolute subjectivity – cannot in principle be identified and re-identified in their absence and therefore cannot be objects and cannot be conceptually represented."¹³ Applied to our subject, we might put it this way: The *lived-through* of present time, once gone, cannot be literally *re-presented* by mental means – since the only way to do that would be to again present it *live – today – now*, rather than merely to recall it as a mental representation.

But even so, for those nostalgically inclined there is still the Beatles' question: *Whatever happened to yesterday? To a moment ago?* It is a question we shall come back to in Part 2.

3. The now in its immediacy

Another facet of the now confronts us here, moving from its measureless and traceless aspects, the first two of the proposed inroads to the now we've discussed. This third feature of the now on our agenda we shall term its "immediacy". The notion of immediacy yields nothing about linear or measured time. This is why we cannot speak of the now, in the sense advanced here, in terms of plurality and multiplicity, as for example Barbour does.¹⁴ Instead, what the now's immediacy does is tell us about one's lucidity of contact – awakeness – that makes possible the calculations that go into measured and computed time. We refer, and will be referring, to this experiential contact with the world

¹² Cited in Patrick Stokes, *What's Missing...*, 128-129.

¹³ [italics his] Peter Poellner, "Non-conceptual Content, Experience & the Self," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10/2 (2003), 53.

¹⁴ Julian B. Barbour, *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Our Understanding of the Universe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 45-50.

as “precondition” or starting point.¹⁵ Whatever time it is that I wake up to (according to clock time), that already presupposes experiential contact, namely that I or somebody is already awake to the world now – i.e. self/other alignment is already intact – as a prerequisite to checking the time. Immediacy, in other words, is to be taken in that sense – as a temporality that precedes any determination of facts. An offhand analogy might be the entanglement scenario according to Bell’s theorem in quantum physics. Two particles can be separated by billions of light years yet both instantly affected by changes in the quantum state of either. Rather than cause and effect in a spacetime universe, it is more analogous to a now alignment already in place and preceding the act of measurement, with no 3rd person strategy – no before-now access route – to determine otherwise. A determinable effect that eludes any determination of cause. “Spooky action at a distance” – as Einstein once referred to it.

Consider the converse – the non-immediacy of the now. Can one imagine how there could be any capability to take measurements if one’s temporal present were not a prerequisite, already aligned and in tune with the temporal present of the world one is living in? What efficacy would science have, for example, if the temporal present of scientists and the temporal present of what scientists investigate were not aligned, were not uniform? By uniformity we do not mean, of course, simultaneity. We mean that which makes possible any calculation of simultaneity or otherwise. Another word for this uniformity might be simply the word we’ve been using – lucidity – one’s properly functioning perceptual processing such that the present time of one’s perceiving matches the present time of that which is perceived. A bystander watching me observe that star in the nighttime sky may know that the star I now see is not there now. It’s extinct. But on the other hand, if I see that star and the bystander does not, or the other way around, the issue of cosmology is premature. The question is rather one of lucidity or on the other hand hallucination: Whose perceiving matches the present time of the perceived in nature, and whose doesn’t? That matching or uniformity as a starting point is another way of describing the now’s immediacy. One might add that that uniformity, distinct from simultaneity as we have seen, nonetheless answers to an alignment in time, being a temporal juxtaposition of present self with whatever present other one observes at whatever distance, that star included. And even though there is no way to measure such alignment, there is no measurement without it.¹⁶

¹⁵ For more on this, see the author’s (Dwight Holbrook’s) “Is Present Time a Precondition for the Existence of the Material and Public World?” *Social Epistemology* 29/1 (January, 2015).

¹⁶ On the question of non-alignment, of experiential present-to-past or seeing into the past when we see a star that is now extinct, McInerney writes, “The complications are two-fold. First, commonsense perception does not portray the entities as temporally distant

Another way to illustrate this, and specifically the discrepancy between the now and measured time, is to take the example of the twin paradox, a theoretical scenario based on Einstein's theory of relativity, according to which measured time slows for objects approaching the speed of light. In consequence of that theory, Isaac Newton's notion of a universal cosmic now was deemed disproven – his cosmic "now" being conceived along the lines of a cosmic-wide, measurement-based simultaneity. In the twin scenario exemplifying relativity principles, a voyager in outer space, after traveling near light speed, discovers upon his return to Earth that his twin brother on this planet is already an old man, chronologically much older than the voyager. Relative to an Earth-bound perspective, measured time and chronological age had slowed for the voyager twin traveling near light speed. And yet, despite this huge discrepancy in measured time, meeting back on Earth the twins discover a common ground, a matching compatibility of their perceiving and present time of perception that enables them to communicate, share ideas, make calculations and comparisons about measured time, and talk about such things as relativity theory. In other words, they share the same now. Without that bedrock of a uniform now, it would have been like one twin watching the other from five decades ago, as if in a TV science fiction movie. In short, neither twin has been uprooted from immediate present time or the uniformity of their respective self/other alignments once they meet and share information, despite the discrepancy of their chronological ages.¹⁷ The fact of their re-encounter does not constitute one twin's future and the other twin's past. They're both in the present or they wouldn't have been able to meet again in the first place and communicate about such things as

from us. We understand that the entities are temporally distant, but we do not perceive this temporal distance in the way that we perceive spatial distance. Second, in the case of very distant occurrences, such as stellar events, we would 'see into' a past before our own births." McNerney, 231, see also 276, notes 2, 8.

¹⁷ As our concern is about alignment time and not other modalities of time that draw on simultaneity (in a measurement or other sense), we need not delve into the paradox issue based on those other modalities of time. On the single vs. multiple times question in the twin paradox debate between Einstein and Bergson, our alignment thesis fits in closer with Bergson's linkage of real time – its "contemporaneity" – with the flow of the duration of consciousness. Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, ed. R. Durie (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 1999), pp. ix-xi, 34, 46, 54-56; Elie During, "Durations and Simultaneities: Temporal Perspectives and Relativistic Time in Whitehead and Bergson", 19. But note also Capek's comment:

"[N]o asymmetrical aging can ever occur unless some acceleration occurs at a certain point and instant in the path of the traveling twin. This occurs at the point where the traveling twin reverses the direction of his motion and where his acceleration – not only with respect to the twin 'at rest,' but also with respect to the larger masses of the universe – takes place. This is . . . what Bergson failed to see."

[italics his] Milic Capek, "On an Alleged Inconsistency in Whitehead", *Process Studies* 20/3 (1991), 175-178. [<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2814>], 4.

chronological and relativistic discrepancies. Hence, that bedrock immediacy we've been speaking about, in the form of a self/other alignment of time that undergirds and makes possible other notions of time.

One might add that the connective temporal immediacy between the two twins in this mind experiment constitutes as well, a "co-presence" by the very nature of their sensory contact. Let us suppose, however, that the two twins were in the theoretical situation of both being in rockets at near light speed, speeding by each other in vastly different time zones as measured by linear time. The situation is in some ways no different than their physical, experientially immediate contact on Earth. Even to estimate vastly different scales of linear time between them in space presupposes a concrete base of some sort, a self/other alignment of nonlinear time, by which to do the estimation. But aside from that, in the scenario just portrayed, any sensory contact or face-to-face communication between the twins, even in that circumstance, would be dictated by the temporal constraint.¹⁸ That is, what would make their contact or communication possible in the first place would be their alignment in a shared present time, an experientially shared immediacy. To suppose otherwise would be to entertain the possibility of oneself moving into an experiential zone which one is present to and present in but which has long ago occurred or will occur – i.e. an experientially based non-present –, a scenario that veers into self-contradiction.

And yet, cannot one contend that a valid notion of time, time independent of the now, is sustainable nonetheless, one that encompasses measurable distances in space, even in the abstract, cut off from the self-other alignment of sentient beings?¹⁹ Such a proposal leads to the broader consideration we next consider, that of a nowless universe.

¹⁸ Compare Capek's note on Whitehead's definition of co-presence. He quotes Whitehead: "I call two event-particles which on some or other system of measurement are in the same instantaneous space 'co-present' event particles. Then it is possible that a and b may be co-present, and that a and c may be co-present, but that b and c may not be co-present." (79) But then Capek notes the ambiguity of co-presence when he states: "Essential is that there *are* two distinct observers and that their corresponding present moments remain *distinct physical events*,..." [italics his] Milic Capek, "Whitehead's Definition of Co-presence," *Philosophy of Science* 24(1) (1957), 82.

¹⁹ The underlying issue is one of starting point and whether the 3rd person perspective and the knowledge it gives us precede the 1st person perspective and the knowing it provides. We mean "precedes" in an ontological sense. Is there an out there, a world, a universe, prior to, and irrespective of, a knowing that marks one's awakeness to the world? Here again the confusion of knowing and being. It is a subject we turn to in chapter 7, "The Notion of a Beginning". On this, see also Craig Callender's critique, "The View from No-when," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 49 (1998), 157. (http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:_OmWzjAG8EsJ:philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/c...). The critique is in the form of a review of a book by Huw Price, *Time's Arrow and the Archimedes' Point: New Directions for the Physics of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

4. Contra a nowless universe

One reads that most of the universe is empty, an apparent void that, at infinitely small quantum scales, contains a sea of particles popping in and out of existence.²⁰ Where in such conception as this could sentience, or the now's immediacy, possibly fit in here? Barring that, how could it be other than that the universe is nowless, having all but a pittance of itself out of reach of the here and now? It was the question in chapter 2 provoked by Capek's quip about a future-in-present scenario which we indicated we'd get back to, and here is where we do so in the form of another of our proposed tenets about the now, a fourth consideration, which applies to its purview and extent. Namely, it is this: There is no nowless terrain, no territory outside of the now.

How do we mean this?

Granted, the notion appears outlandish at first glance (and perhaps at many glances), especially if one's conception of nature remains steadfastly "material nature", rather than "material nature-as-other". But we have only to consider this as a start: However compelling and convincing is the conclusion from a 3rd person appraisal that the knowledge we gather from observations, calculations, and collected data is but a mere infinitesimal piece of the hidden mysteries in the cosmic expanses of an essentially lifeless and nowless material universe, there is nonetheless another compelling and convincing factor to consider, which is that no one (to my knowledge) has ever delved into a realm such as a nowless universe. On the contrary, it is, and always has been, a universe that is axiomatically a present universe that one is awake to, a universe that inveterately stands as other to our investigations, and whose otherness in the form of its degree of comprehensibility is likewise constrained by the present, namely "the here and now of the perspective on the other side of the seesaw", to adopt our previous figure of speech. "Constrained by" goes a long way to explain the "captured" in the title of this book, *Material Nature Captured by the Momentary Now*.

One might dub this counterclaim expressed above "an epistemic constraint", deeming it heavily biased against the 3rd person capability of the human mind to distance intellect and reason from momentary and immediate considerations. The follow-up question then becomes: Are there any 3rd person defenses that might weigh in favor of this postulate being advanced of a "nowful" universe?

One such defense might be the argument we've been emphasizing, that whatever the approaches to an understanding of the universe, they presuppose – explicitly or implicitly – a concrete basis of some kind, an experienced otherness, an implied duality whereby nature's manifestation is not simply our own subjectiv-

²⁰ To cite a recent example of this outlook: James O. Weatherall, *Void: The Strange Physics of Nothing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

ity or theoretical conceptualizations. Even when the notion of nature is founded mathematically, as exemplified by these comments of Tegmark's – "I single out math as the underlying structure of the universe. . . ." "The human mind then emerges from math, as a self-aware substructure of an extremely complicated mathematical structure"²¹ – even so, there is Tegmark's own experiential contact, the world and nature he is awake to. Without that, where is the math? What could possibly sustain it? Our argument then continues that while our knowledge about the universe is partial and piecemeal, so much as we have knowledge at all it comes invariably platformed on the now, an experienced awakeness that is necessarily now and that exposes everything observable and outwardly experienced in a now framework. That there could be a nowlessness apart from this is to beg the question by assuming that there could exist nature as a mere structure, concrete even though abstract, absent of any nowful accessibility by observation, and yet accessible to some kind of truth determination by awakened experiencers such as ourselves.

Adopting that neologism "nowful" echoes the phraseology of the quantum physicist Henry Stapp and others in his ballpark who apply such terms as "mindful universe" and define the "primary reality" as "a sequence of psychophysical events".²² Explaining in detail his quantum direction of self/other interaction would take us off track as for the most part it deals with microscopic nature and does not specifically concern the now. However, there is one aspect of his quantum direction that does. It is found in the critique he makes of the notion of causal closure in classical physics. Causal closure, as commonly understood, is the idea that nature and our interaction with it are causally determined. That is to say, the outcome of everything we do and everything we find out is predetermined, mapped out and designed in various ways, such as by mathematical laws, natural forces, systems and patterns that are potentially predictable, and by genes and neurons that go into making us think the way we do, and so forth. What we discern here in this tendency to past-to-present reductivity, to reduce explanation to prior cause, is the human proclivity to think in terms of a before and after, a cause generating an effect, and the linearity of past-to-present that this implies. Stapp's key objection to this classical notion of cause is summed up in his phrase "causal gap", referring to what cannot be predetermined, which in his research field is the experimenter's involvement in how a quantum experiment is performed, and how the choices made in that experiment define a state of affairs in nature that, in effect, is hovering until those choices are made. The mind, in other words, becomes participatory, a part of what's out there. What connects this to our line of inquiry is that

²¹ Piet Hut, Mark Alford, and Max Tegmark, "On Math, Matter and Mind," *Foundations of Physics* 36 (2006) (arXiv:physics/0510188v2[physics.pop-ph]), 2,8.

²² Henry Stapp, "The Mind Is Not What the Brain Does!" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17/1-2 (2010), 203.

those choices of the experimenter are immediate in the sense that they do not enter into a programmable past-to-present schema of time that can be embraced by the design set-up of the experiment. They fall outside, just as the immediacy of the now falls outside of linear time.

This analogy from Stapp at most gives us the suggestion of a nowful universe on the quantum level. But what about the macroscopic universe, nature in its scale of vastness? Again we are back to this inquiry of how a 3rd person perspective can clue us to an answer, or at least that shows nature as nowful rather than nowless.

One place to find evidence of this is where past-to-present reasoning gets misapplied. Schwindt, for example, points out the mistake in construing as past-to-present explanation what in fact derives the other way around, from present-to-past:

It is sometimes argued that our conclusions (concerning the laws of nature) are very likely correct in most cases, since natural selection forced us to develop correct thinking. Otherwise we would not have survived. This argument is, however, intrinsically wrong, since our theory of natural selection is itself a result of our conclusions.²³

Another place where this preemptive immediacy of the now wedges into the picture is in the search for a complete unified theory of nature. Stephen Hawking challenges such an endeavor, arguing that a pre-set design of the universe, according to a so-called complete theory, would undermine the very search for it, by in effect denying the immediacy of the present as a starting point by which to measure, calculate, and verify the accuracy of the search.

But there is a fundamental paradox in the search for such a complete theory. . . . In such a scheme it is reasonable to suppose that we might progress ever closer toward the laws that govern our universe. Yet if there really is a complete unified theory, it would also presumably determine our actions. And so the theory itself would determine the outcome of our search for it! And why should it determine that we come to the right conclusions from the evidence? Might it not equally well determine that we draw the wrong conclusion? Or no conclusion at all?²⁴

²³ Jan-Markus Schwindt, "Mind as Hardware and Matter as Software," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15(4) (2008), 6 n.1.

²⁴ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 12. Dummett, as well, points out the problem that a complete description of reality is confronted by if time is "real" – that is, if whatever knowledge we are capable of is constrained by one's temporal perspective, the bias imposed by the particular period of time the knowledge is attained. In that case, a complete theory, or the behavior of a phenomenon throughout all of (linear) time, becomes impossible – independent of the time of the theorizer. Dummett describes that temporal limitation as "token-reflexive". Michael Dummett, "A Defense of

A material nature deemed governed solely by structure, law, and design – with the now’s immediacy thrown out – reduces to a simple quip about how knowledge defeats its own attainment: “If my mental processes are determined wholly by motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”²⁵ Similar contradictory outcomes arise simply in the way scientific language is sometimes syntactically expressed, where for example – in the literal reading – principles construct sentences and investigations are imputed to have goals. In their *Language as Ideology*, Kress and Hodge give this example from Chomsky – “Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages”. As opposed to this, their version would orient the sentence in a present-to-past direction, the way it is intended to be understood: “Syntax is the name for how someone studies the principles according to which people construct sentences and the processes which result.”²⁶ Another example comes from Richard Dawkins who, in commenting on the proposed comparison of science and scientific ideas to a computer virus generated by a form of “spread me” coded instruction, rejects such a viral-like suggestion that would conceive of science as a pawn of past-to-present deterministic forces. And yet, the language by which he describes the advances of science is put in the phraseology of “memes”, “natural selection”, “the selective forces that scrutinize scientific ideas”, “exacting, well-honed rules”.²⁷ This would suggest a return to the very viral-like comparison he rejects where the human starting point is subordinated to a programmed script.

On the other hand, one may interpret “selective forces” and “exacting, well-honed rules” not as impersonal processes that, viral-like, supersede what-

McTaggart’s Proof of the Unreality of Time,” *The Philosophical Review*, 69/4 (Oct. 1960), 503.

²⁵ C.S. Lewis quoting J.B.S. Haldane. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 22. One response: “The whole point about science is that it’s not about what is true, it’s about what works.” (asktheatheists.com/questions/625-is-physicalism-self-defeating).

²⁶ Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge, *Language as Ideology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 29-31.

²⁷ The Dawkins example is cited by Dennett: Daniel Dennett, “Back from the Drawing Boards,” *Dennett and his Critics*, ed. Bo Dahlbom (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 204. A similar contradictory semantics arises when Daniel Dennett, in seeking to elucidate the Dawkins passage, acknowledges, on the one hand, that there is no Archimedean point from which to deliver a “benediction” on science: “How clever of some memes to team together to create meme-evaluators that favor *them!*” [italics his] On the other hand, he contends that such bias does not incapacitate people – those created by the culturally inherited genes [memes] of Western rationalism – to judge the virtue of Western rationalism. It is unclear in these statements how the past-to-present causal direction of such genes accommodates the present-to-past implications of judging and evaluating. *Dennett*, 204-205.

ever choices or evaluations scientists might otherwise make, but rather as an expression of the knowledge and acquired judgments that scientists draw on in their decision-making and evaluating. Knowledge, in this reading, becomes inseparable from the tangible knower here and now. This puts the onus of objective judgment-making on the scientist's role, not on deterministic forces that – for all we know – might predispose a scientist to reach “the right conclusions”, “the wrong conclusion”, or “no conclusion at all” – to borrow from Hawkings above. Knowledge, in this reading, becomes that which one considers appropriate at a particular time and place, not that which determines what one considers appropriate. It becomes, in other words, no longer an impersonal force, no longer abstracted from its concrete manifestation in some present time. The net effect is to understand by “knowledge” not any semantic suggestion of an autonomous realm of authority that would leave us in the role of obedient subjects carrying out the will of the landlord, but rather an appendage of ourselves that bears important pragmatic value.

In Part 2 of this book, as we shall see, “knowledge” will be temporally situated as a category of linear time – namely “the not-now of extended time”. This is explained by knowledge's organized path in time, its temporal extension and applicability extending over the time that takes time (as we refer to linear time) and in that sense “not-now” – i.e., not confineable to the transient moment, the immediacy of one's experiential contact with the world. However, this later categorizing is aside from the emphasis we have given here on the human component that knowledge derives from, the present participant's role in determining the past rather than the other way around, where impersonal forces (past-to-present) are deemed to determine our choices and the outcome of our knowledge (however accurate or inaccurate that might be). In short, our later categorizing of knowledge as the “not-now of knowledge” in Part 2 relates merely to the abstracting that knowledge undergoes in being applicable to the before and after, rather than to the now. The human participant remains the center of its gravity even so, and not some autonomous realm of nowlessness.²⁸

²⁸ Sarah Waterlow (among others) points out the distinction that can logically be made between “what it is that we claim to know” and “the conditions of our knowledge” – i.e., the need to verify statements “in some present time or other”. “Of course all our statements about events and their order are made and verified in some present or other. But that is a fact about the conditions of our knowledge, not about what it is that we claim to know.” Sarah Waterlow, “Aristotle's Now,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34/135 (April 1984), 116. Another expression of that distinction runs as follows: “Although acts of knowing are causally dependent upon some NOW or other for their occurrence, the actual representational content of propositional knowledge, the truths or facts of which it is comprised, are not fundamentally constrained or constituted by the NOW through which they are known.” Jesse Butler, “Knowledge and the NOW: What Is the Epistemic Standing of the Present Moment?” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3/10 (2014), 7. He gives the

5. The now's familiarity

Should we be amazed? Freaked out when we wake up from a dream – or just simply when we wake up? Nobody seems to be. Instead, total equanimity at the news our eyes and ears and other senses tell us of being awake. And anyway, what would make one so incredulous about it? One would think this perfunctory acquaintance with our surroundings in the morning, the world instantly familiar to our opening eyes, is all about learning from birth, memory, about sensory-motor development, adaptation. So the past-to-present argument would have us believe. The problem, however, is the now's tracelessness.

Of course, if this familiarity is not about a traceless now that opens our eyes to this world as being a present world, if it is not about a now that we are lucid to, but about how memory has portrayed it, or how language has represented it by such words as “now” and “present time” (words conceived as bridging more or less the gap between the past and future of extended time), then the enigma of familiarity vanishes. We remember places, images, and of course we remember words and what they refer to. Nothing unfamiliar about that. The problem then becomes simply one of semantics, the now's misleading suggestion of referring to a category of experiential time that in its immediacy cannot be known otherwise or outside that immediacy. But that is precisely how we are intending the now to be understood – namely as original, not as copy or memory's representation – and consequently this vexing enigma of familiarity. The enigma we are posing is precisely about *immediate* experience, namely the temporal aspect of what we are lucid to, not so-called higher orders of lucidity itself, what it means to be aware or aware of being aware, and should we be amazed about that?²⁹ Our enigma here concerns the strictly temporal one – this presentness we awaken to, this presentness of our surroundings, and why it is we find ourselves unsurprised by this presentness, why we are not totally dumbfounded by something utterly new – an experience we are lucid to now.

Let's take something arguably analogous to this now we wake up to, this now that comes without a trace of the past. We'll take as our analogy the conscious experience in the debated colorblind Mary scenario, according to which a hypothetical neuroscientist named Mary, colorblind since birth yet an expert on brain processes responsible for color vision, suddenly sees color for the first time. The debate that question is intended to be centered around is: Does Mary

example of $2+2=4$. But in fact, where is this “ $2+2=4$ ” if not in some present time? For more on my response to Butler, see “What Is an Object?” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3/11 (2014), 35-38.

²⁹ For more on that issue, see for example, Sam Coleman, “Panpsychism and Neutral Monism,” *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Godehard Bruntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 270-272.

learn something new by consciously experiencing color? And yet on the other hand, considering that what strikes her is something totally new and different, traceless in her memory, an experience she can't connect to any other experience she's had, shouldn't instead the question be about her stunned emotional response, even shock, at witnessing this feature of experience for the first time? And if so, how much more so one would think our reaction should be, when what we open our eyes to in the morning is experiential contact itself, lucid awareness that there is this present world, *a now that was never before!* Considering that there are no such things as "before nows" in our memory, wouldn't that leave us in a state that can be as aptly described as stunned and startled, and even more profoundly so than what we would expect Mary's reaction to be?

Learning, memory, sensory-motor development, adaptation take us only so far. If they told the whole story about present time and human interaction in the present, we'd be products of the past – i.e., puppets of the past –, a quandary illustrated in the passage from Steven Hawkins above where the notion of a complete unified cosmic design becomes something we're unable to step out of, unable to free ourselves from so as to make conscious decisions in the present, objective assessments about any putative theory about nature.

But then back to the question. Is it really so amazing that we wake up? Should we be stunned? And if so, why aren't we? The answer – or rather the question – brings us to this chapter's fourth distinctive feature of the temporality we're awake to: namely, the now's familiarity.

Memory can't help us here. Experiential and mental development that rely on our gradual psychological and mental attainments from the past can't help us here either for the reason that the now – being our immediate, experiential contact with the lived world – is nowhere to be found in the past. Immediate present time lies only in immediacy and not in hindsight, as we have seen. Any clue from the past can't help explain our recognition of the difference between the past and the present, or between the immediacy of a dream and the immediacy of the now. On the other hand, without memory – as a case of Alzheimer's demonstrates – the present world we understand by cognitive and interpretive means becomes ever more reduced. But these are two different issues. On the one hand then, there is our lucidity to what is immediate, traceless and without a past, which the world exposes us to. There is that unexplained familiarity we have. And on the other hand, there is that kind of familiarity that our memory and adaptive learning give us, that recognition of things based on what our cognitive and mental capabilities represent as the past. Our question pertains to the former – why that lucidity should be one of familiarity, not shock, considering that any explanation by past-to-present reasoning fails to surf the answer. A useful analogy to our question is the one posed 1,700 years ago by Augustine when he queries about the presenting of God to oneself, absent one's faculty of memory: "Where, then, did I find you so as to learn about you? For you were not

in my memory before I learned of you. Where, then, did I find you so as to be able to learn of you – save in yourself beyond me.”³⁰ How, in other words, can an experience be found which memory does nothing to prepare one for – i.e., how can it be identified and recognized for what it is – so as to “learn” of it?

The puzzle of the now’s familiarity can be likened to the problem in philosophy of how one goes from a “token” to a “type”, a query raised in an article by Paul Livingston. A token – otherwise referred to as a quality instance – is a species of experience that one has yet to categorize as demonstrating this or that type – i.e., as having this or that property. It is, in other words, individual and particular – a singularity in its uniqueness. To return to that example of the color that colorblind Mary sees for the first time, how does this token acquaintance Mary has with the sensation of color – let’s say the color red – move from being a yet-to-be-identified instance of a sensory experience to a recognizable type or property of color identified on multiple objects – a red picture, a red rose, the red light, a red car? Or, to take the examples that Livingston gives in his article on this subject, how does one go from the weakly identifiable “now is the current time” or “that object [demonstrating a particular object] is as tall as that object [demonstrating the same object again]” to the more cognitively ascertainable “now is 3:15” or “that object is tall”? Is it our cognitive faculties making this type casting possible or simply our direct acquaintance?³¹

The questions serve as an illustration of the problem before us: How are we to grasp the now’s familiarity? We detect the answer in the weakly identifiable “now is the current time” above. But then, how does one move from this instance, from this token of “current time” to type casting, or from the weakly identifiable “now is the current time” to the more cognitively ascertainable “now is 3:15”?

Answer: One doesn’t, not if the now is understood as given in these pages.

The now, as its basic features have shown us, remains only as a token, a manifestation of temporal instance. One test for determining a type is to remove one’s immediate exposure to a quality instance, or token, and recognize the identical quality elsewhere, as a property of miscellaneous objects. Try doing this with the now – removing yourself from it. Even when waking from sleep, there is no property trait or distinction one can make between this now and the one before sleep since, as we have shown, the now is traceless and, being so, there is no such thing as a now before sleep. Nonetheless, there is that natural

³⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 167 [10.26.37].

³¹ Paul Livingston, “Phenomenal Concepts and the Problem of Acquaintance”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 20/5-6 (2013). [unmedu/~pmliving/Livingston-Phenomenal%20Concepts%20and%20the%20Problem%20of%20Acquaintance.pdf], 19. For an overview of definitions of “knowledge by acquaintance”, see Jesse Butler, “Introspective Knowledge of Experience,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 18/2 (2011), 135.

tendency to liken the now to a succession of impressions, to think of it as – “It is there; it is there; it is there”. Even so, given our acquaintance we have of it solely as an instance or token, given its fixture on that level that precludes any cognitively attainable comparison or repeated property application, there can be only this now, only this instance, only “It is there” without repetition.

Given its status solely as a token, there is no category it can be said the now belongs to, no property it illustrates that we can cite here or there. This, however, does not prevent us from saying what categories it does not belong to, namely the past construed as chronological measured time. This exclusion makes it evident that in the example above – “now is 3:15” – what this purported example of property or type casting of the now is really doing is not defining the now as a reoccurring property but misapplying what can only be known as an instance, a lived particular, to another species of time altogether, a system of measurement that we bring to the world and that ties numbers to a linear scale of time that extends from past to future. The now’s familiarity is precisely other than that. It is about a lived particular, a singular uniqueness that cannot be accounted for by anything prior or subsequent in time. More aptly, it can be compared to an experience such as the color red that Mary sees for the first time. Whatever Mary’s probable startled reaction at seeing color for the first time, in the case of the now we wake up to, one would expect a similar reaction. Yet in fact it is not so; instead, no surprise. Strangely, as it would seem from this angle of approach, the awakened immediacy of our surroundings comes off as ordinary and familiar. And so how does one go about accounting for our perfunctory response to the now?

Necessarily from what we have just said, the only place to look for an answer lies in the present, not in the past. Habit, repeated exposure, getting accustomed to what it’s like – all such manner of explanation relies on the assumption of the now’s having a past. On the other hand, taking this familiarity as an automatic response or as a conscious reflection about something in the present scene mistakes the now for a configurative stimulus of some kind, light from a visible object, or confuses something in the scene for the scene being present in the first place. If we are to find the explanation for this familiarity – if we are to find it at all – it is in the direct acquaintance we have with it, a knowing in the form of an already (i.e. familiar) knowing, rather than as a type or property aspect that our mental conceptualizations come up with.³² We are simply there for

³² This knowing contrasts from a dream experience in that in the former case there is an active self and experiential contact with the now’s familiarity that can’t be explained by past-to-present means. The starting point is the now’s familiarity. In the latter case the dreamer’s responses are reactive. Being asleep, there is nothing one comes to know by being awake to the world. The knowing, at most, is part of the illusion of the dream. What we mean by a knowing that’s based on a familiarity given to our now acquaintance is that its source is external and not cognitively derived. As an analogy, we can adopt Strawson’s expression

it – this familiarity with the now. Hence, nothing from our mental faculties can be said to be doing this familiarizing. The now given to our acquaintance does it for us. It communicates itself as a perfunctory ordinary morning we waken up to.

When I first broached this conundrum of the now's familiarity, this idea suggestive of a revelatory temporality, to a scholar in the specialized fields of consciousness and knowledge by acquaintance, his reaction was in the dismissive vein of a rational appraisal along the lines of "The notion of unmediated experience seems, if not self-contradictory, at best empty."³³ But it was simpler in its irony: "You mean, from God?" And yet, if one mulls on that response seriously and compares the now acquaintance with experiences that are purportedly revelatory, expressive of either a transcendent or ineffable character, it becomes clear that the now's familiarity, being so very commonplace and unextraordinary, belongs in a totally different venue than experiences of a revelatory nature. Their one common ground may be said to be this: In both cases the knowing, what the experience acquaints one with, comes not from within but from a source outside.

"the having is the knowing" when he writes: "When we claim (with Russell) that to have an experience is *eo ipso* to be acquainted with certain intrinsic features of reality, we do not have to suppose that this acquaintance involves standing back from the experience reflectively and examining it by means of a further, distinct experience. It doesn't. This picture is too cognitivist . . . The having is the knowing." Galen Strawson, *Panpsychism? Reply to...*, 251 (n. 147). Given the knowing that comes by one's experiential 1st person access to the now, it can be contended a blatant contradiction exists in my using cognitive resources – and necessarily the before and after of time – in writing this book about the now. But while cognitive resources are obviously needed, it seems accurate to say that the challenge is in moving into the now's immediacy and having that acquaintance as source, and writing about it on that basis, and of course comparing what others have to say on the subject, and from out of that distillation using the representational means of language to penetrate as best one can the enigma of this phenomenon, such as the aspect of the now's familiarity. That may be a contradictory task. I hope not.

³³ Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford, 1978), 26.

Chapter 5

Completed Time: the Time that Stays Where It is

As the now is temporal and not a spatial concept, it follows that to speak of it as locatable in any spatial sense is misleading, although we have described it as originating externally and derived from an external source. We have done this simply as a way of indicating its domain status, being a now from abroad – call it from “nature” – rather than an output of our own minds. Even to speak of it as mentally representable or physically representable is misleading, as discussed earlier. Of course I am writing this book with words that represent, employing concepts and thoughts that represent, but I do this knowing that the present only manifests as present, not as a copy of itself in memory or any other place, nor as part of my representational tool kit.

Metzinger poses the question: “How precisely is it possible for the content of phenomenal representation – as opposed to the content of phenomenal simulata – to be depicted as present?”¹ The sole answer that follows from what we’ve already said is: It can’t, at least not by the representation itself nor by a source within ourselves. Representation does not equal presentness.

And so let us try a different approach.

Please take a seat at this taverna on the island of Naxos, Greece, and gaze out at the view. You’re sitting on a hillcrest, admiring the mountain outstretched at one side, the late afternoon Mediterranean sunlight casting brilliant light on the mountain at an angle. Where the sun is too low to hit, there appears this stark line of shadow, its edge like a deep dark fissure, running down and slowly across the mountain’s craggy slopes, your eyes meanwhile fixed on the desert red texture of the sloping landscape. But here’s the thing. It’s there. You don’t see it moving. You don’t think it’s moving. But then you look again. The shadow’s spread, its streak of encroachment suddenly more pervasive. The fissure of shadow etching the boundary between shadow and light now more advanced. Did it actually spread in a moving way or simply advance in imperceptible steps of momentary time?

¹ Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: the Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 2003), 62.

1. Changed or changing?

Let's take me. I'm "going" to the store. That could mean, I will be going to the store, or it could mean I'm in the midst of going to the store. Either way, there's a part of the plan that hasn't been achieved (actually getting there), and – in the second meaning – a part achieved as well (having advanced to the midst of going). Or again, staying with the second meaning, there's the change yet to be completed (actual arrival) and the extent of completed change marked by my progress in getting to the store. The question we're getting at is this: Where is the actual changing part – the progressing and advancing on the horizontal axis of my walk to the store – once we remove from consideration the completed and uncompleted segments of the walk? It seems there is no other part left, no actual changing at all. Of course, as I proceed on my way, I am aware of a portion completed and the distance yet to be covered, just as you are in witnessing, observing my walk. Furthermore, at any moment of consideration along the way, at any now on that horizontal axis, I am aware of a *changed* in how far my walk has progressed, and I'm aware as well of the not yet of change to come, but in all of this there remains the enigma of an actual *changing* in this immediacy of the now. Where is that? And that's just it. Motion is another way of speaking about the before and after of extended time, a different notion of time altogether. The now, on the other hand – being immediate, holistic, boundary-less – it stays anchored. It neither precedes nor follows itself, neither moving from a no longer now to a not yet now. And so there we are observing that shadow on the mountainside. We note its changed character at that moment of observation. What about the changing? Of course we have the impression of changing in every motion we make and in everything that moves in a perceptibly noticeable way.² But invariably in such cases there creeps in the before and after of extended time, and the changed of immediate time ceases to become pertinent.

One might compare the impression of changing that the syntax of the present progressive tense in English provides for, compare that with its apparent absence in the future/past tense structure of Hopi, an indigenous language in the American southwest studied in previous decades by the linguistics scholar Benjamin Whorf. The Hopi verbs refer to two realms, that of the manifested (completed) and the unmanifested (future). What happens to now time is that it gets conveyed in the form of an elapsing in stages of getting manifested or completed. The Hopi notion of future comes across as incremental steps in transition from the unmanifested to the manifested, similar to an observer noticing

² For recent discussion on that "impression" issue, see (1) Christopher Hoerl, "On the View that We Cannot Perceive Movement and Change: Lessons from Locke and Reid," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 24/3-4 (2017): 88-102.; and (2) Hoerl, "Seeing Motion and Apparent Motion," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23/3 (2015): 676-702.

increments of shadow advancing over the mountainside as the sun sets. As for the actual changing or progressing of time, the actual passing of time between increments, according to Whorf it's not in the Hopi tense structure and notion of time.³ An analogy in English can be gleaned from verbs that intimate an aorist sense of the immediately achieved, transition at once, conveyed by such verbs as "see", "discover", "know", "pregnant". You can begin to know, but then you are already in the changed position of knowing to some degree. A woman's pregnancy is for a period of months, but that doesn't mean she can be half pregnant. She either is or isn't.

It comes down to three reasons for considering the now's immediacy as a completed stage – that is, a now that stays where it is rather than as a changing or passing phenomenon, and those reasons stem from, first, its holistic character, being a whole and not a part of something segmented into discrete units of time; second, its having the attribute of a one-time token or quality instance, a condition that fixes "moment" in the singular, prior to any post-appraisal in sequential terms as "moments". And third, there is no memory of the now, no re-presented now, as has been emphasized earlier. What follows, there cannot be a before and after in the form of past and future moments to sustain a person's experiential contact with present time. It goes without saying that the immediate present, its temporality, is something different from one's memory of the past or expectation of the future, although both play a crucial role in our ability to configure and recognize what we presently experience. The "you" I recognize is the "you" I remember; nevertheless, it is not an earlier remembered you or a later you that I am presently seeing. The "you" now is changed for the very reason that "present" is necessarily a changed present.

On the other hand, what brings about our configurative recognition of change is greatly due to our faculty of memory. Mellor describes that source in the format of extended time when he writes: "We perceive an event *e* which then leaves a memory trace in us. When we perceive another event *f* later than *e*, we perceive that *e* is earlier than *f* because at the time of perceiving *f*, we also remember *e*."⁴ Notice how "earlier" is described in terms of memory, and how what comes about as the changed present is described in Mellor's terms as an event *e* already in place at the time of perceiving event *f*. In other words, bracket out the already completed and the yet-to-be completed part of my walk, the residue that's left is this present perceiving at the time of event *f*, or at any point along the walk, which is a perceiving of what has changed, the difference between the before and later. As to the impression of changing, the physicist David Deutsch keeps to this

³ Benjamin Whorf's chapter "An American Indian Model of the Universe," *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA., M.I.T. Press, 1956), 59.

⁴ cited in Craig Bourne, *A Future for Presentism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 16.

distinction of changed present or “differences” as he puts it, rather than the impression of literal changing (“passing”), when he writes,

We do not experience time flowing, or passing. What we experience are differences between our present perceptions and our present memories of past perceptions. We interpret those differences, correctly, as evidence that the universe changes with time. We also interpret them, incorrectly, as evidence that our consciousness, or the present, or something, moves through time.⁵

His description points out the comparison between what amounts to the close-up experiential differentiation of time (direct acquaintance) that is correctly assessed as such, and on the other hand how that differentiation of changes gets misinterpreted as movement or passage or flowing. The experiential, as he gives it, is staked out by differences (i.e., changed differences). Such differences are the pinpoints of the now’s immediacy, as we have proposed it.

Returning to Metzinger cited earlier, and another of his relevant passages, we detect a parallel description of the now’s immediacy, its anchored foothold in experience, although Metzinger implants a “subjective” reading in his portrayal.

There is no temporal texture. There is no internal structure. There is just *this, now*. I believe that it is precisely for this reason that we experience low-level subjective qualities as immediately given. They never *become* what they are, they always already *are* what they are. The structureless character of presentational content endows it with an ahistorical character.⁶

On the one hand, it can be noted how concisely this passage makes note of aspects we have discussed of the now’s non-measurable and non-segmentable features: (1) lack of “temporal texture” and “internal structure”, which concur with the “unconfigured” description we have given of the now; (2) “immediately given”, which chimes in with the now’s immediacy; (3) “they always already *are* what they are”, which translates, in our version, as the preconditional now, the now that precludes any attempt at measuring it; and finally (4) “ahistorical character” – i.e., the traceless now, a now that memory or the past cannot retrieve. But on the other hand, the author’s difference in appraisal from the “this, now” we’ve been advancing comes out in his word “subjective” and the premise that qualities pertaining to “this, now” described as “immediately given” properly fall into the category of subjectivity. We have argued for the now’s objectivity, a now that comes to us, not from us.

This leads us to a closer look at the question of how distinct the primal reality of the now can be from one’s subjective input, and in particular distinct from memory. In short, can there be a now without it?

⁵ David Deutsch, *The Fabric of Reality* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 263.

⁶ [italics his] Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One*, 191.

2. The changed and the mediated

And so, to put the question conversely: To what extent might the now's immediacy, which we have been describing here in terms of difference – the changed element that highlights what we're presently awake to – necessarily implicate a *changed from* and a *changed to*. The *changed from* is often taken to be, as Mellor put it, a “memory trace”, or as Deutsch phrased it, “our present memories of past perceptions”.⁷ Hence comes that *apparent* mediation, the *changed from* being that memory trace of what was previously a present, and the immediate present thereby made distinguishable by comparison. The *changed to*, on the other hand, applies to the new, the different, the changed in a modified way. But then this question: How can we possibly label the now – the *changed to* – an “immediacy”, as we've labeled it all along, if the putative recollection we bring to it – that mediation from us – is an intrinsic part of the experiential contact? The psychologist William James gives us something of an analogous comparison when he referred to the present as “immediately and incessantly sensible” and described the “just now” or “changed from” in our designations as the “immediate consciousness of pastness”, distinguishing in that way the recent past from the past further down the road. We must keep in mind, however, that by his analysis of the specious present (based on his sense datum – i.e., cause/effect, before/after – notion of time), the problem of reconciling a now in nature with memory's mediation was not so urgently spelled out.⁸ The specious present was, for him, not a now intrinsic to nature. Closer to the mark on this immediacy/memory question we are addressing is Edmund Husserl's notion of the “*epoche*”, a primal experience he described as phenomenological and which presupposed the bracketing out of (linear) space and time, equivalent to our bracketing out of the before and after, the completed and yet to be completed parts of my walk to the store. The issue in Husserl's case was how this bracketing out could be achieved without memory, and conversely how it could be achieved with memory intact. Husserl's statement “the now-apprehension is, as it were, the nucleus of a comet's tail of retentions” drew this criticism from the French philosopher Derrida:

As soon as we admit this continuity of the now and the not-now, perception and non-perception, in the zone of primordially common to primordial impression and primordial retention, we admit the other into the self-identity of the *Augenblick*; non-

⁷ Note by comparison Barbour's notion of the now as changed, but not in the sense of an experientially grasped happening, but instead as a structure or configuration. Barbour, 2, 28, 34, 44, 50, 53.

⁸ Discussed in J. Bricklin, “Consciousness Already There...”, 65-67. See also James (1890), 609.

presence and nonevidence are admitted into the blink of the instant. There is a duration to the blink, and it closes the eye.⁹

So now let's apply this critique to the paradigm we're advancing. We admit into this immediacy of the blink the *changed to* and *changed from* we've described the now as consisting of. And yet, how can we do that without thereby imposing into the now's immediacy a mediating process, a not-now, namely our memory? And would not that memory invoke a past that would reduce immediate experience to a consequence of that past, an effect or product of prior causes, making the now thereby specious after all, lacking any intrinsic – or rather extrinsic – quality of its own? Doing that would seem to sound the death knell of the now, at least as we've been advancing it. Instead of making the now, and present-to-past, the priority condition by which to paradigm immediate experience, we fall back on a past-to-present scenario, and its drawbacks, to explain why we're awake to the world in the first place and on what basis an objective reality could be ascertainable. Capek's phraseology would seem to fall in line with the latter, i.e. the "[n]ovelty of the present is possible only on the background of the immediate memory of its antecedent past".¹⁰ Alternatively, if we follow a different course and withdraw the *changed from* from memory and insert it in the very nowness of immediate experience, we introduce the seeming ambivalence of two nows at once, a just now (or *changed from*) and a now (or *changed to*), contrary to how we've been describing the now as uncountable and unmultiple, only this now and no others, past or future. Even were we to do this, and posit the just now and now as part of one and the same perceptual unit, one would be hard pressed to find an experiential or empirical basis for such a distinction, both being immediate and present.¹¹

⁹ quoted from Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1993), 215.

¹⁰ Milic Capek, "Immediate and Mediate Memory": 90-96. [<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2419>], 6 (d). Note also his comment about the fading of the past's continuity as indicative that "there cannot be any *radical* difference between immediate and mediate memory." [italics his] (p. 2). Bergson, on the other hand, points out the mistake in failing to recognize the difference between perception and memory, or in other words the "radical distinction" between the present – "that which is acting" – which one's present perception takes in, and the past – "that which acts no longer" – which memory recalls. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991): 68-69.

¹¹ Gibson points to the difficulty of distinguishing the memory element one brings to the scene, distinguishing that from the external field of the present one is lucidly aware of when he writes:

The seemingly innocent hypothesis that events are perceived has radical implications that are upsetting to orthodox psychology. Assuming that shorter events are nested within longer events, that nothing is instantane-

How then do we avoid either quagmire and keep the now's immediacy intact and sufficiently autonomous from memory's mediation in such a way that the present becomes not simply a product of the past, a result of causal mechanisms? Bergson's way to do this is to conceptualize the meaning of memory as itself outside the bounds of individual minds and causal forces. He puts it this way:

[T]he *thing* and the *state* are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, and all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself. It is memory, but not personal memory, external to what it retains, distinct from a past whose preservation it assures; it is a memory within change itself, a memory that prolongs the before into the after, keeping them from being mere snapshots and appearing and disappearing in a present ceaseless reborn. . . . Thus, our duration and a certain felt, lived participation of our physical surroundings in this inner duration are facts of experience. But in the first place the nature of this participation is unknown, . . .¹²

"Lived participation" brings to mind Gibson's notion of an affordance that "cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective" and "points both ways, to the environment and to the observer."¹³

The way, on the other hand, we propose to avoid the impasses delineated above is one that – while likewise pointing to a participation, being in this case a self/other temporal fusion – is nonetheless a participation based not on memory or duration but on the 1st person perspective. Francisco Varela gives us the clue when he writes about the just-past, "In the 'present' I see what has just past; in memory I can only hold it in a representation as if through a veil. Thus memory and evocation have a mode of appearance that is qualitatively different from oneness."¹⁴ The insight this perspective gives us about that transition, the tran-

ous, and that sequences are apprehended, the usual distinction between perception and memory comes into question. For where is the borderline between perceiving and remembering? Does perceiving go backward in time? For seconds? For minutes? For hours? When do percepts stop and begin to be memories or, in another way of putting it, go into storage? . . . Equally embarrassing questions can be asked about expectation.¹¹

James J. Gibson, "Events are Perceivable but Time Is Not," *The Study of Time II: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time*, ed. J. T. Fraser and N. Lawrence (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1975), 299.

¹² [italics his] Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity*, 30-31.

¹³ J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989/1986), 129.

¹⁴ Francisco Varela, "Francisco Varela's home page: articles on neurophenomenology and first person methods" [http://www.franzreichle.ch/images/Francisco_Varela/Human_Consciousness_Article02.htm] (2009), p. 10. Note also William James: "The reproduction of an event, *after* it has once completely dropped out of the rearward end of the specious present, is an entirely different psychic fact from its direct perception in the specious present as a thing immediately past." (James, 1890, 630)

sition marked by this now, is how it becomes knowable in its immediacy according to the groundwork already laid out in this book. In other words, what we experientially get to know by means of the 1st person perspective is that the now, or immediate present time, is that which starts the ball rolling, the starting point by which questions of a 3rd person nature, such as those that concern cause and effect or the before and after of extended time, arise as a consequence of there being a now in the first place, a now accessible only by 1st person means. Additional to that starting point, what the 1st person perspective gives us, instead of a before and after, is a just now/now, or changed from/changed to, combined in a holistic way, as pointed out by James. No “just now” before and a “now” in sequence. That holistic cameo of experience gets conveyed in the form of a temporal constraint. Hence, no *this* then *that* in one’s field of sensory experience. There is only the *this* which is *now*.

From the above, we can proceed in a way that leaves our rendering unfettered by the cul-de-sac of nowness being treated either as a memory-contingent phenomenon of the mind or of a kind of perceptual double. The answer we have proposed is that the now’s autonomy is to be found, not as a result of memory or, as an alternative, an actual bifurcated seeing of what is present and just past, but as a result of its changed character and the indivisibility of its temporal exposure. And as discussed earlier, what the now entails is an alignment or attunement between *present* self and *present* other, on the basis of which are made possible 3rd person strategies of explanation and distinctions between before and after, past and present. A lapse in memory is one thing. A failure of alignment is quite another. I might forget a person’s name, not recognize a street I once lived at, or be confused about the present time of day. But confusion over the present itself – i.e., its 1st person knowability – amounts to a question of lucidity and whether one can be said to be awake at all.

3. The changed and the timeless

Having put forth here what appears as a blurred dynamics of time – on the one hand, “motioned” rather than “in motion” and on the other hand, “changed” rather than “changing” – one may question what this implies about the very meanings of “before” and “after”. As for the “before” that refers to the yet to be, i.e. future, its definitive existence from the perspective of present experience can be denied in that one detects no trace of it, given the temporal constraint and one’s lucidity in nowness. But to deny the before and after as a primal infrastructure of reality, or at least to relegate to mere memory (with all its lapses and subjective preferences) the primal status of the past – i.e. the once present --, such a dismissal is tantamount to rejecting, as a substructure of nature, the full sweep of extended time’s passing, along with its measurable and

immeasurable past. And yet this is what the now in its immediacy would leave us to believe, or so it seems. How then can this notion of changed time – time in its immediacy – be plausibly upheld that dispenses with extension altogether – namely, time in its passing and extending into the past?

Let us contemplate this question by taking as our *modus operandi* some footage from a Nazi 1942 film clip contained in a production from recent times, *A Film Unfinished*. In this film within a film, the footage begins with a few moments of grey opacity, blurs, streaks, squiggles, and watermarks, and then suddenly discernable scenes of a past can be made out. Trolleys move jerkily along tenement-lined streets, throngs of pedestrians, some looking back at the camera, food stands, and on occasional doorways a corpse, outcome of probable disease or hunger. The footage is of the Warsaw Ghetto, shot by Nazi photographers in 1942 and itself the subject of *A Film Unfinished*. While some of the scenes were staged for Nazi purposes, as the commentator from the later documentary points out, the raw graphics tell of a stark reality attested to not only by surviving witnesses seen watching the footage and commenting on it in the later film, but also by the appearance in *A Film Unfinished* of a cameraman of that 1942 footage in a post-war interview. Even beyond that, there are voiceover readings from the diary of the Ghetto's Jewish Council leader seen depicted in the Nazi film.

The past is there. And in an obvious sense no one can doubt it. A broad conclusion seems to follow: The facts of any past are there, irrespective of who knows about it today or to what extent. Irrespective, we might add, of the record keepers, record viewers living in the present, irrespective as well of what or how they prioritize and disregard, how they interpret, construct and reconstruct, how they shape, and are shaped by, new concepts for old, new words for old, and generally move about in a world so different in some ways from 1942.

On the other hand, perhaps a better word than “the past is *there*” would be “the past *happened*”. When one speaks of an absent present – i.e. the past – what does it mean to be “there”? Does the “there” exist? How so if not in any locality? Is there a tangible “there” beyond the projection of light through film?

Still, there is likewise some difficulty with the word “happened”, assuming we treat it as signifying a temporal severance from present time and from the contemporaneous world. The problem here is not so much epistemological, not so much that of knowing the past, but rather of allowing the use of tense to impute an ontological wedge between a supposed then-in-itself and a lived immediate NOW. Again our question similar to above: What does it mean to speak of a then-in-itself or a then by itself? Here we meet up with a comment from historian Paul Ricoeur, commenting on what he terms “the methodological illusion that the historical fact exists in some latent state in the documents and that the historian is a parasite on the historical equation.”¹⁵ Is there, in short, an un-

¹⁵ Ricoeur, Vol. 1, p. 99.

present past, a past split off, floating around some place? Another way to put it is: Can the present that is no longer nonetheless still be around in some sense and exist? A now that is not now, essentially speaking. And of course one detects the oxymoron in such inquiries. Can something be what it is not?

But on the other hand, why not a now that is changed, a now that by its very manner of disclosure testifies to a present that is no longer, but nonetheless a present that *is*, or at least is demonstrably shown to be so? We have only to consider that it is our present perceptions that reveal the past as a completed fact – the records, the monuments, the artifacts of history, the very buildings built or constructed at whatever stage of completion. That evidence derives not just from memory – a general consensus based for the most part on people’s memory of what preceded – but obviously as well from a source outside of people’s memory, the changed that distinguishes the now from the not-now. It would seem then that in this way we have overcome to some degree the ontological wedge or split between the past and present, between in other words unquantifiable time and spread sheet or “umbrella” time, the latter two understood in the sense that quantum physicist Wheeler gives to such terms: “‘Time’ we too easily view as a pre-established umbrella stretching over the scene of physics from big bang to gravitational collapse and beyond, extending from everlasting to everlasting.”¹⁶ The problem that stubbornly persists, however, is precisely that such consensus about what is configurative and recognizably in evidence around us, such consensus can’t escape inferential judgments and 3rd person construals derived from our own cognitive resources and memory, rather than from an outside face-to-face past. This throws us back to the dilemma of an ontological split between a face-to-face confrontation with the present and a past that is undisclosed except by representation.

The hazard lurking in such a split is the diminishing of the reality status of the past relative to the present, or simply the implied denial of time itself in an extended sense. To quote Wheeler again:

We see here, more dramatically than in any example one can easily give, the difficulties of speaking of what goes on in the old-fashioned language of determinism. What a difficulty for Einstein! What a difficulty for the view that all that is and was exists “out there,” independent of the choices made by the community of the observers in the here and now!¹⁷

We might add to that how philosopher Galen Strawson once put the prospects of this diminishing status:

¹⁶ J.A. Wheeler, “Bohr, Einstein, and the strange lesson of the quantum,” *Mind in Nature*, ed. Richard Q. Elvee, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 22.

¹⁷ Wheeler, “Bohr, Einstein...”: 16-17.

Note that if temporality goes, i.e. not just spacetime tm but temporality in any form, then experience also goes, given that experience requires time. One of the fine consequences of this is that there has never been any suffering. But no theory of reality can be right that has the consequence that there has never been any suffering.¹⁸

And yet, that is precisely the one thing our thesis about time is not denying – experience. What is being denied is that the primacy of immediate experience over notions of extended time necessarily excludes or diminishes the reality status of past experiences, the experiences our memory recalls. When one cries out in pain, the temporality of that “It hurts!” is not, as Hestervold has pointed out, about the time of day but about a present experience. Likewise, when one flinches in pain when recalling a past suffering, okay it is a memory but that does not diminish the veridicality of source of the memory, the experience as remembered. In other words, the distinction that is intended to be brought out here is not that of an ontological wedge between present and past, but rather that between an ontological bedrock of time, regardless of when, and on the other hand its chronological attribution or any given notion of extended (linear) time.

Let’s try to make this distinction clearer by means of two illustrations. Author of *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor gives reason to blur the distinction between the immediate present of experience and past experience when he takes, for example, the experience of sudden rapture:

Of course, the immediate experience could be strong and convincing on its own. . . . But even here, your past striving and moral experience would alone enable you to understand and identify this rapturous state. You would recognize it only through having striven in a certain direction, and that means again that you know what you are through what you have become.¹⁹

Taylor points to this knowing – and by implication a knowing now – as a past/present present mingling. How then does the temporal bedrock of experience enter in here? It does so precisely in the mingling. Knowing what you are is one thing. Knowing *that you are now* is another. The latter consists of being awake in and to the present, and that entails recognizing one’s surroundings as present surroundings and not those from a memory or a dream. Keeping in mind these two senses of knowing (the what and the that), we can on the one hand agree that knowing the rapturous experience necessarily draws on former experiences, sources of the self that the present rapture is built on. It is

¹⁸ Galen Strawson, “Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13/10-11 (2006): 9, n. 16.

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 48.

to this sense of experience that linear notions of time get applied, past strivings and moral experience being amenable to the schematization of sequential time. On the other side, however, there is this “knowing that”, this familiar knowing of the present, the kind of knowing that gives us this taken-for-granted sense that our present rapture is different from a recalled rapture. And that familiarity comes not from sources of past experience filtered through memory, but from present contact with the outside, a strictly now world. If it were not so, one’s present rapturous experience would not be a happening one would be awake to and in contact with, but an illusion of some kind generated by one’s own internal mediation.

Another way to show how the ontological split between present and past is challenged by our notion of experiential time is to take the example of where the experiential sense of time is put to the sidelines, denied ontological status and treated as merely subjective or phenomenological, as in temporal frameworks that give preponderance to what are referred to as tenseless B theories of time and time-reversal invariance. The quandary, in so doing, is epitomized by Glasersfeld – that of trying to get access “to that outside reality before we get to know it”. In other words, the means by which this is attempted inevitably involves a split in the ontological base, a split between the 1st person experiential evidence and a 3rd person schema of time. We see this happening in the case of physicist Weyl’s classic statement:

The objective world simply *is*; it does not *happen*. Only to the gaze of my consciousness, crawling along the lifeline of my body, does a section of this world come to life as a fleeting image in space which continually changes in time.²⁰

The question is how can he know about this non-happening? From outside the now? Weyl’s way out is to adopt a 3rd person schema of time detected in the phrase “changes in time”, thereby entailing a splitting off from the 1st person now to changes *in* time, which – as the “in” suggests – is all about umbrella time, the time that takes time, not the experiential now it is predicated on. In short, the question of starting point is presupposed rather than addressed.

²⁰ [italics his] Herman Weyl, *Philosophy of Mathematics*, 116.

Chapter 6

Con-temporaneity, or the Common NOW

So far, we've probed a number of facets of the now and its experiential immediacy that suggest some leads into the nature of this enigma – facets of this phenomenon like its resistance to our ways of conceptualizing by means of number and sequence, its originating from the external world, its precluding scientific ways of being comprehended as an object – this in spite of its thinglike attribute of being an intrinsic part of the very concreteness of objects, their being exposed that way, and only that way empirically and observationally, rather than as rendered to our awakened experience in abstract terms or as mere thoughts or speculations. Our journey, however, is as yet midstream, and there is much about this enigma of the now's immediacy that remains – and undoubtedly will always remain.

The question we probe in this chapter is a formidable one. It has to do with the now's connection to our 1st person perspective. This connection, as brought out earlier, is not of a kind that would make the now indexical or a mirror feature of awareness, but of a kind that would seem to deprive the now of any conceptual relation to the non-immediate. To reiterate questions previously asked, if present time is all about what is now – the present world one is awake to –, what happens to the rest of the world, the world one isn't awake to or aware of? And by implication, why are there not invariably multiple nows from multiple perspectives, and so a countable aspect to the now, after all? And to take this yet further, given this connection between one's 1st person perspective and the now, what effect might this have on the 3rd person perspective, or when the last person on Earth dies, and, along with that person, the 1st person perspective of that person?

In essence the problem can be framed as belonging to a branch of what can be termed “ontological relativism” – namely, how the evidence that is relative to a 1st person perspective can hold its own, claim a bearing or significance beyond one's mere narrow point of view, in the face of a broadened 3rd person outlook. It is not unlike the type of problem Thomas Nagel posed at the beginning of his book, *The View from Nowhere*:

This book is about a single problem: how to combine the perspective of a particular person inside the world with an objective view of that same world, the person and his viewpoint included. It is a problem that faces every creature with the impulse and the capacity to transcend its particular point of view and to conceive of the world as a whole.¹

The challenge before us, and has been from the beginning, is to assess how much of “the world as a whole” – and an objective view of that same world that the now provides us with – can be encompassed by the (present) perspective of a particular person, and without thereby evading the now (i.e., by “transcending” from the concrete to the abstract). In particular, how much can the 1st person witnessed perspective tell us about time without the 3rd person measuring tools thrown in that bring us information not immediately in view?

It will be the aim of this chapter to proceed with this challenge and take up the questions just posed. The notion we introduce here of con-temporaneity will be the means by which we do this.

1. Con-temporaneity

“Con-temporaneity” is spelled with a hyphen to underscore that by that word we mean the interlocking of present time, this spread feature of the now, despite variations in clock time depending on what time zone or country we live in. Additionally, it signifies the immediacy of temporal union between self and other, a temporal monism in essence, which prioritizes that lucidity we are endowed with that enables our distinguishing between present and past, that clarity of mind alert to what is now that other kinds of time – measured time, before-and-after time – are predicated on. The effect of this temporal union in self/other terms is to make the two into one in time by their having the same temporal now. Our frequent characterization of the now as “outside” is not intended to signify its being unplugged from one’s self/other con-temporaneity, but only to earmark the source of the now – i.e., in the external field, an external ambience we’ve so far ascribed as “nature”, and originating not from us, not from our mental constructs, subjective states, or however “now” might be construed as an indexical self-marker.

How then does this notion of con-temporaneity help us bridge the gap between one’s present perspective on the one hand and on the other the world and nature construed as extending in time, in evolutionary and cosmic proportions, from the standpoint of information and calculations obtained by 3rd per-

¹ Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3.

son approaches? How can the former possibly compare to the latter? Let us try several paths in seeking an answer to this question.

I make a phone call to a friend overseas. During the conversation there's a detectable pause each time before my friend responds to whatever I say. Or it may be that on the TV there's an interview going on with someone in Afghanistan. A similar slight pause is detected before the person interviewed responds to each of the reporter's questions. The delays in each case can be accounted for by the time it takes sound waves to travel the overseas distance. Such indications suggest that in cases of long distances not only are there time zone differences but differences, however slight, in what constitutes the now at each end of the conversation. It seems, in other words, that in these instances linear time – the time that takes time – predominates over the now's 1st person immediacy.

But let's look closer. The person at either end of the phone call or at either end of the TV interview is awake to the world and experiencing the now's immediacy. At no time do any of these participants drift from the now or lose their sense of now time. Nor do they suddenly find themselves in direct experiential contact with a 3-minute-ago – or 3-second-ago – friend, or a 3-second-yet-to-be interviewer. I may watch on the TV someone whose image or voice is 3 seconds ago or 3 years ago, but experientially I myself cannot exchange the present I'm awake to for a present yet to be or already past.² Nothing in my experiential field, or in the experiential field of any of the listeners or viewers, is past – not even the delayed response! And not even that star in the sky that scientific analysis tells me is extinct. That star as well is part of the immediacy of nowness I'm awake to, that temporal constraint which we discussed earlier. And so, in these instances of long distant exchanges given above, the self/other temporal alignment stays fixed regardless of perceptible delays at either end. It stays fixed thanks to the lucidity that each of these persons brings to the exchange.³ In fact, it is thanks to that lucidity, thanks to that experiential contact with our surroundings now and with the world now, that one can move at all from the experiential to questions of differences in linear time. The implication we are getting at is close to a contradiction. It is this: There is this conjoining of time at base

² Even in "back to the future" speculative scenarios, the time that diverges from ordinary experience is not *now* time but linear time, the time that takes time, its distortion coming about by such things as near light speed space travel or speculated feats of time warping, which again implicate linear time distortions. Were the now itself capable of being warped or escaped from in such scenarios, the implications would be closer to anecdotes from religious and supernatural literature rather than from futuristic science.

³ We can extend this thesis to the twin paradox, discussed earlier, arising out of Einstein's relativity theory, and to Whitehead's notion of co-presence in which space voyagers at near light speed approach each other's close proximity, although their linear time discrepancy is great. In either case, however great that discrepancy, the observing of each other is defined by a now awareness that pervades their field of view. On Capek appropo Whitehead's notion of co-presence, see chapter 4, n. 18.

level between my phone call and the person overseas at the other end, or between the domestic interviewer and the person interviewed in Afghanistan, a conjoining of self and other that underlies, and seemingly contradicts, the disjuncture in linear time between self and other, extracted by calculating speed of sound, interpreting delayed response, and so forth.

Which to trust? Can they both be right? Is that star there or not there? Am I seeing what's now or seeing into the past? If we go by way of the data that 3rd person approaches come up with, evidence of temporal conjoining doesn't exist. In fact, the now isn't even pertinent. Perhaps it could be just as well eliminated. But if we do so, and replace the present world one is awake to with a perspective that doesn't rely on one's being awake in the first place, instead of a present world we end up with a nowless state of the world – what one might posit a vacuous notion – and the edifice of knowledge itself resting on this presumption of a nowless state.

And so we see in this how con-temporaneity – this temporal conjoining of experiential time – is shown as something fundamental and how 3rd person notions of time – the time that takes time – are a derivative outcome. By means of this interlocking of present time, what con-temporaneity does is make possible our constructing a time that isn't experiential out of one that is. The rings of a tree tell us how old that tree is. Its age, however, isn't experiential. It's counted and computed. The experiential part, by contrast, is that present tree and those present rings, the fact that they are observed and that consensus about them can be had not only on the basis of what is observed – the tree and the rings – but most fundamentally on the basis of a common core lucidity among 1st person reporters that makes possible the distinction in the first place between what is present and what is past, i.e. the changed to and the changed from. Absent that, the rings and the tree's age would have no meaning. In short, given how central the now and con-temporaneity are in experiential contact and how central experiential contact is in 1st person reports, it recalls the remark of Bitbol and Petitmengin suggestive of the significance of both the now and con-temporaneity when they write, "First person reports remain the *de facto* starting point and ultimate warrant of the whole system of knowledge."⁴

Still, one might return to the Weyl challenge spoken of earlier and support with a different argument the resistance he would be expected to have had to our labeling as "fundamental" one's 1st person awareness of time and our applying "derivative" to the informational output thereby enabled, namely our 3rd person linear extrapolations about extended time. One might contend, as an alternate route in support of Weyl, that the time we're awake to is constructed, a derivative product of our senses, and that the label "fundamental" rightfully belongs to an unseen world of internal processes that only 3rd person methodologies and deduc-

⁴ [italics theirs] Michel Bitbol and Claire Petitmengin, "On the Possibility...", 53.

tive analysis can attain information about. Accordingly, the labels reverse. Access to time's real nature must all depend on 3rd person, not 1st person, approaches. Such would be the relevant part of Donald Hoffman's thesis in his book *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See*. As for that table now that we're all sitting around, for Hoffman that consensus we have about this table we see and its presence in time would be part of "an intelligent process of active construction. . . . We construct the same things because we use the same rules of construction".⁵ And so the starting point for time and everything we experience becomes 3rd person – deciphering the rules of construction. But now the problem becomes one of untangling ourselves from our constructing. If I'm constructing this world I'm awake to, including the table that we agree is there and present in time, how do I know I'm not constructing other things that consensus might show to be true – namely my thinking and drawing conclusions about the rules of construction? And how do I know I'm even awake to do that or any other constructing and not constructing the fact that I'm awake? What happens, in essence, is we end of with the same skeptical morass we discussed earlier, the outcome of taking the 3rd person perspective as our starting point.

And so with that said, let us now venture down a second path in search of how far this notion of con-temporaneity can take us in filling the gap between a present perspective that confronts time one way and the appraisal approach that takes time another way, namely as time extending and amenable to calculation. Specifically, the problem posed here concerns the 1st person accounting of things and what happens when my (or your) experiential contact with the now's immediacy connects with – or disconnects from – that of another person or thing. Con-temporaneity is all about presence, and according to its accounting of things there cannot be an absent person now that one is not in contact with, an absent world now that one is not awake to, or a present view that one is not in fact viewing. In a nutshell, and most significant of all, there cannot be countable nows, such as the presentness of my awakened perceptions and the presentness of yours back where you live in another city. Would not that blatant experiential exclusion of "nows" in the plural be reason alone to give the 3rd person perspective, based on reasoning and inference, a far superior accounting of time?

Let's turn to a less sophisticated accounting for possible insight.

2. Presence in and out

In his study of the Piraha native Americans, an indigenous group living in the Amazon region, Daniel Everett describes a culture that is without the concept of

⁵ On how he explains it, see Donald D. Hoffman, *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998): xii, 33-34, 73-74, 198.

number and without the everyday abstractions of time and space that speakers of developed cultures in today's world take for granted. For the Piraha, by contrast, their world is the world of direct experience and, for example, for them there is a cultural significance and hard to define meaning – Everett uses the term “experiential liminality” – that attaches to crossing the border between entering and leaving experiential contact, what lies on the boundaries of one's perceptual experience. He gives the example of a canoe of paddlers appearing or disappearing around a river bend and describes the distant onlookers' excitement as hard to describe – almost as traveling into another dimension. Likewise he notes the same absorption, even fascination, at the sudden appearance of an expected plane or its disappearance, or a comrade's arrival after a journey in the jungle, or a suddenly audible or inaudible voice, or the flickering light of a match or smoldering campfire about to go out.⁶ To describe these in and out transitions of experiential contact, the Piraha would exclaim a thematic word – “xibi-piio”, which Everett at first thought meant “just now”, or that designated persons just caught sight of or just out of sight. Later he realized the word applied narrowly to that moment of experiential contact, the verging in or out of it – a changed happening.

To see how this “xibi-piio” – this in and out of experiential contact – relates to the issue of absence before us, we have first of all to understand what it means to speak of a present perception. A *present* perception does not come from us or our cognitive mechanisms. I may open my eyes when I want, look the other way, move to another field of view, and choose in that way the aspect of my surroundings I wish to see, but the temporal constraint we have talked about determines that the time frame of whatever is in my view be con-temporaneous, that it falls in line with a fixed and socially interlocking self/other alignment in time.⁷ I may wake up to whatever clock time I want, but I cannot wake up to a minute before or a minute after the immediate present, the time that defines my self/other temporal alignment. Such limitations reflect the now's foreign ownership, a now in nature, an externally derived present in a present perception.

⁶ Daniel L. Everett, *Don't Sleep. There Are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008): 129-132; see also: “Cultural Constraints on Grammar and Cognition in Piraha”, 631-632; *Current Anthropology* 46/4 (August-October 2005): 621-634. [http://www1.icsi.berkeley.edu/~kay/Everett_CA.Piraha.pdf] Controversies concerning aspects of his linguistic conclusions we need not address.

⁷ Compare what John Smythies describes as a problem that has never been solved, the conflicting stands of two theories of perception, the one – the direct realist – taking literal transparency as the essential feature, the “literally direct views of external physical objects”, and the other – the representative theory – addressing the optics of seeing and basing its conclusions on the premise that “our sensations are representative constructions of the nervous system, and not direct view of external objects”. Smythies, 225.

Consonant with this setting of an externally derived present is the changed happening, which is only another way of speaking of the present – the immediately *changed to* of the present, a present that happens. Returning to the Piraha, when that canoe vanishes from sight, or the flame flickers and the smoldering fire goes out, or a voice suddenly becomes inaudible, we encounter as well the changed happening that defines the present, but in these cases the Piraha spectator is emotionally riveted to the scene, such as Everett describes, due to the absencing of something in the present perception which opens its door to self/other temporal alignment. Existence becomes a form of non-existence from the Piraha's 1st person perspective, although from our rational means of explanation we know that the canoe or that voice haven't ceased existence and that the flame has merely changed chemistry. Still, even in modern cultures, absence – or experiential non-existence – is not necessarily better explained by rational explanation, as when one confronts the baffling end of a loved person's life or when the light merely goes "out" or when one simply asks, "Whatever happened to a moment ago – that moment ago, let's say, of that flickering light?" What rational explanation can one give for that verging out of view of the moment, one's experiential contact, that xibipiiio? Whole religions have been built in quest of an explanation.

It is, however, clear that the thorn in the side of con-temporaneity has as yet not been removed by this exegesis on the Piraha system of perception, what Everett calls "the cultural immediacy of experience principle". The reality of *absence* – meaning in the Piraha case the absencing of that canoe, for example, from the immediacy of the viewer's experience – has so far not been satisfactorily accounted for, given con-temporaneity's credo as to the interlocking of *present* time. After all, what is it that becomes of 1st person phenomena absent their interlocking? No nows? Only one now, mine or yours? Can one plausibly deny that Freddy Winters in Texas has a now he's awake to, even though his can be presumed not to have any interlocking with mine? It seems, then, that con-temporaneity cannot bridge the gap between a 1st person perspective and an appraisal of time receptive to multiple nows – unless it can get around this issue of quantifiability and countability.

3. The absent present

So let's try yet one more path toward filling that gap by adopting what's called a relational approach that steers more or less within the parameters of con-temporaneity. We'll use, as our proposed model to serve this aim, a passage from Paul Baird:

How does one state of my brain relate to the state of another brain widely separated from mine? Quite simply it doesn't unless correlation between the two systems takes

place. Does a hypothetical Freddy Winters in Tucson Arizona have the same *now* as me, as I write these words in Brest France? The question has no meaning in a relational universe. I simply cannot say whether Freddy has the same *now* as myself unless I get on the phone and make a call to him. Then our systems correlate and, indeed, we will be sharing the same *now* as the state of a system which incorporates both of our brains.⁸

The relevant question applicable to our discussion is what happens when the two systems – we’ll describe them as two self/other temporal alignments, to adopt our phraseology – do not correlate? Two clues to an answer are suggested above, according to this relational approach. First clue, “I simply cannot say”. The second, “the state of a system” has yet to incorporate “both of our brains”. Let’s consider here how well this accounting accords with con-temporaneity, and what alternate path it might offer that avoids the quandary of an absent present time?

As to “I simply cannot say”, how we can translate that in con-temporaneity terms is the equivalent – “I don’t know” –, and more precisely – “I don’t know by direct acquaintance” – or in other words by personally experiencing that shared now. The question then becomes: Is there any other mode of knowing that would inform Paul whether Freddy has the same now, or different for that matter, from that of the author? “The having is the knowing” – to quote Galen Strawson’s axiom about the kind of exclusive knowing that comes from experiencing. The point is here, in the case of the now or present time, the knowing is exclusively in the currently having. No other knowing about the now that Freddy is awake to is accessible other than by the sharing of present time, and obviously with Freddy present, at least by phone contact. The notion of an “absent present” would amount to an oxymoron, the incongruity of supposing Paul’s sharing in Brest, France, the experiential evidence of what it’s like for Freddy in Tucson to be awake at present, doing so by in effect getting inside the latter’s physical and mental state. Sure, Paul can receive information indirectly that Freddy is alive and well, and so presume that Freddy must be presently awake if it’s daytime in Arizona. But that’s not our concern, nor is it Baird’s. The question is fixedly about another now – what it means to speak of another now, an absent now. Baird’s answer – “I simply cannot say” – accords with how con-temporaneity would evaluate the situation. In fact, taking “I simply cannot say” to mean “I lack the kind of exclusive knowing that comes from currently experiencing”, it turns out con-temporaneity moves part way in filling the gap between time present and the absent present by effectively nullifying the conceivability of the latter. The

⁸ [italics his] Paul Baird, “Information, Universality, and Consciousness: a Relational Perspective,” *Mind and Matter* 11/1 (2013): 33-34.

now can only be present to someone. However engrained in society this notion of things being quantifiable, however starkly apparent an absent present might seem – given all that lies outside one’s limited 1st person purview –, the failure lies not in the 1st person perspective, nor in con-temporaneity, but in the failure of the appraisal habit of mind to account for a phenomenon that cannot be absent, but only immediately acquainted with.⁹

Explanation is easy to come by if, from a 3rd person perspective, one can deem as illusory the notion of an external or extrinsic now. After all, where is the “information” that such a now exists other than as an indexical reflection of ourselves or a subjective impression brought about by consciousness? Hence, that way the problem is swept under the table. There is no now to begin with such as to cause a fuss over speculations like an absent present. But here is where Baird’s second clue about the absent now comes in, and it comes in the form of an absent correlation – i.e., “the state of a system” that has yet to incorporate “both of our brains”. The phone call between Paul and Freddy has yet to be made. Paul is not in a position to say anything about Freddy’s now. But then comes the phone call. It triggers a new state of a system that incorporates both of them: Translated, a changed happening occurs in the form of a new alignment that connects the two parties to a common circuit of nowness. What we can conclude from this? That now of the new state of a system, prior to the phone call, never even existed! We can go further: There is no history of that now, no history of whereabouts of any now prior to any experiential contact, because the now is precisely that experiential contact and nothing extending in time from out of it. What follows: No prior existence of Freddy’s now – no absent present – can be inferred (by 3rd person means) from the current contact (by 1st person means) between Paul and Freddy. The 3rd person perspective falls helpless by the way-side, unable to penetrate into a self/other alignment that can only be known by 1st person means.

This would seem to lend sufficient weight to the claim that the deficiency that is deemed to apply to immediate time and its access by experiential means, a deficiency in failing to take account of other times, reflects as well an inadequacy of 3rd person strategies, geared to the appraisal of an amount of time. The 3rd person perspective cannot find the now.

4. The Seager paradox

What has just been said about the relational approach to experiential contact and how it helps us unravel the paradox of now time can also be applied to another

⁹ One might adopt Stapp’s phraseology to describe that failure – “the dodge of characterizing as illusory that which it is constitutionally unable to explain”. Henry P. Stapp, “The Mind...,” 201.

paradox, this one proposed by William Seager, a philosopher whose field extends to quantum theory. Seager hypothesizes a mind experiment that would extrapolate in macroscopic terms the effect of observation and measurement on a particle's existence in the quantum world. The Seager paradox begins as follows: Supposing an experimenter could choose which part of potentiality to make real in present time by performing a measurement that would change potentiality to actuality, or non-locality to locality, what then?

Paradox looms! The experimenter him or herself is presumably only a part of nature rather than the entirety of the world, and so has no reality until and unless brought into being by some operation of another observer.¹⁰

Is there a way out of this paradox? The way we suggest is to approach the paradox as an artifact of 3rd person reasoning, as an illustration in other words of the human tendency to explain observation in an immediate situation according to a methodology that distances from the immediate rather than taking the immediate as a 1st person starting point that can't be distanced from. Let us see why.

Drawing on our Baird discussion, we can follow that path in interpreting the analogy implicitly made in the Seager passage between a quantum particle, such as a photon, and an observer being observed, and forge a way to unravel the paradox.

The particle's character, prior to what one's measurement determines about it, remains ambiguous until actual measurement is carried out by the observer doing the quantum measurement. For example, there is the familiar wave/particle uncertainty and ambiguity that applies to a photon prior to measurement. The now presence of the observer is what does the trick, at least according to one prominent school in quantum physics, proponents of the Copenhagen interpretation. The now observation is what concretizes the quantum object, brings about the wave function collapse, and gives definable existence to the particle. In Seager's scenario, the quantum observation is extrapolated to the macroscopic world we wake up to. Borrowing from the behavior of particles, he applies it to that of an observed observer who, by analogy, is postulated in this thought experiment to become a concrete entity, an actualized observed person, as a consequence of the second observer observing that person. His reasoning here alludes to the mainstream scientific view that would adjudge consciousness an "emergent feature" that "stands as epiphenomenal and a mere epistemic resource which appears only to . . . consciousness." [spacing periods his] In other words, one person's consciousness becomes but an emanation of another person's consciousness. A quandary here, which Seager appraises as "a worrying whiff of circularity" that betrays "the fundamental and irresolvable problem with

¹⁰ William Seager, "Why Physicalism? Reply to Atmanspacher's Comments," *Mind and Matter* 12/2 (2014), 192.

the treatment of consciousness in the scientific picture of the world”.¹¹ So how does our set up of the self/other alignment do any better?

We recall the phone call from Paul to Freddy in the Baird scenario, and the now alignment instantiated by their experiential contact. In the Seager paradox, however, what occurs is not only the instantiation of a now alignment but of an actual human being – the experimenter coming into existence by being observed! The implication: Not only no past now, but as well no previously observable experimenter prior to the conscious awareness of the second observer entering the picture.

Of course, in the case of both observed experimenter and Freddy on the cell phone, one can portray their existences from a 3rd person perspective and not on the basis of shared experiential con-temporaneity or shared 1st person alignment in present time. Proceeding thus, one has at hand the obvious inferential and informational ways of determining prior existence, among others. But then the analogy with the quantum particle ceases, as the concretized photon has no 3rd person access route that way. “No reality” and “brought into being” – such phraseology is being applied according to a 1st person criterion, not according to 3rd person methodologies of time – time as extending and amenable to calculation. The presumption that sustains the photon/observer paradox is that “no reality” and “brought into being” are construed in ways that pertain to the now – namely as outcomes of an experiential contact that brings about a new state of affairs, an actuality with nothing but potentiality preceding. Then the paradox is solved. In fact, then there is no paradox to begin with, barring the 3rd person perspective. Like a particle’s contingency, the nowness of one’s self/other alignment doesn’t exist without a sensory knowing – a consciousness – that comes about in that now alignment. This doesn’t make nowness (or consciousness, given this analogy) an epiphenomenon. Rather, it makes linear time – the before and after – an epiphenomenon or consequence of nowness (or consciousness, in the sense of a fundamental reality, a starting point).

What the Seager scenario gives us, insofar as a parallel can be brought out between the behavior of a quantum particle and one’s 1st person alignment in present time, is yet another striking example of how the latter notion of time – the now in nature – fills a gap that 3rd person methodologies of time – time as extending and amenable to calculation – cannot do and, in this case, leave as a paradox: Consciousness, when translated temporally as an exclusively 1st person experiential immediacy, entails no prior now immediacy in (linear) time. That is to say, there is no now preceding the starting point of the now, just as there is no actual particle preceding experiential contact. Of course, it can be pointed out there is the existence of that observer before the second experimenter’s observa-

¹¹ William Seager, *Natural Fabrications: Science, Emergence and Consciousness* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 4.

tion, but then again can there be that observer before the now or before experiential contact of any kind in the form of self/other alignment? In any case, the paradox is resolved if what is deemed consciousness, or more appropriately the now's self/other alignment, is considered not as an emergent property or epiphenomenon – i.e., an outcome emerging out of a cause – but as a fundamental, a starting point. Introducing this nonlinear perspective here avoids such quandaries as shown above and as illustrated earlier in the contradictions of causal closure in chapter 4.

What we can conclude about the meaning of this topic of “con-temporaneity”, the title of this chapter, is that it is integral to various aspects of immediate time. To begin with, con-temporaneity is another way of speaking about temporal uniformity, the dyadic self/other alignment in the immediacy of present time, no matter how far apart and far reaching this otherness may be. This follows from the fact that con-temporaneity functions, not “in” space, but as a temporal template on the basis of which calculations can be made about measured distances in space and spacetime. Past and future are as well, it would seem, founded on this con-temporaneity, for where else “in” space and time could they function or happen or exist except in relation to present time? Furthermore, there is the con-temporaneity that as well undergirds and makes possible such primordial needs as face-to-face communication, self/other interaction, social behavior, including basic agreement simply about what is present and past. That fallen tree, this built building, my arrived message, the records of previous experiments – the fact that there is con-temporaneous agreement about what these are all about suggests the past, as exhibited in this concrete way, is con-temporaneous as well in its present condition. But being con-temporaneous, how could one speak of it as experientially “in” the past to begin with except as a kind of metaphor that adopts a different notion of time – countable or extended time, for example? After all, how is it possible to measure past con-temporaneity – i.e., the past immediacy of experiential contact? Moreover, might there be a connection between the non-existence (in a measured time sense) of a past con-temporaneity, the non-existence of a particle's potentiality, and furthermore such a notion as the non-existence of experience itself, or even the non-existence of death? Let us see what we can do with these questions in the chapters which follow.

“The length of time of a human life, compared to the range of cosmic time spans, appears insignificant, whereas it is the very place from which every question of significance arises.”

Paul Ricoeur *Time and Narrative*, 3.

Chapter 7

The Notion of a Beginning

Bertrand Russell once wrote: “What is to say that the world has not just come into existence complete with fossil records, memories, and other such causal traces?”¹ In other words, who’s to say it all just doesn’t begin right now?

This chapter will propose that when one’s route to time is experiential it all does begin right now. Such would be the answer given here to the question “Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?” That is to say, however much the present depends on a past accounting, the fact that there is a needed present in order to make that past accounting, or any past-to-present assessment, implies an order of time where the present comes before the past. Such encapsulates the theme of “beginning” in this chapter’s discussion of experiential contact.

The problem begins here: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” How does one reconcile a timeless beginning with a creation that continues in time? Or for that matter, a spontaneous Big Bang with a subsequent universe obedient to natural laws extending in time? The quest for a logical “before” in either case reflects our natural inclination to think in terms of linear time, the time that takes time and that doesn’t just suddenly dart out of nowhere or start from scratch. “Spontaneous beginning” reflects another of those paradoxical notions that strains consistency and boggles the 3rd person perspective, as does such contra-sequential assertions as for example: “Since the Big Bang initiates the very laws of physics, one cannot expect any physical explanation of this singularity; physical laws used to explain the expansion of

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1921), 159-160. Cited in Craig Bourne, “A Theory of Presentism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 36/1 (March 2006), 10.

the universe no longer hold at any time before.”² Nonetheless, some in the scientific community might claim a loophole out by insisting there *is* a before the Big Bang – though not a “before” in sequential, measurable time, but rather a kind of “vertical” time, as suggested in Stephen Hawking’s no boundary proposal. As he puts it, “Events before the Big Bang, are simply not defined, because there’s no way one could measure what happened at them. . . . Since events before the Big Bang have no observational consequences, one may as well cut them out of the theory and say that time began at the Big Bang.” Nevertheless, as he proposes it, “The no boundary condition is the statement that the laws of physics hold everywhere.”³ But then the enigma of a “before” that is not locatable in extended time, a “before” furthermore that would seem to extrapolate from what can be measured and calculated based on the observable universe as we have it today, leaving us with a question mark about how this “before” in a non-measured and non-calculated temporal sense can translate as a “before”. In other words, it seems there is still the mystery in this notion of a beginning, how it can pop out of nowhere. And so let’s try another approach, utilizing some of the things we’ve already pointed out about the 1st person perspective to help us along our way.

Temporal starting point. Is there such a thing? How does one legitimize the notion of a beginning with nothing in extended time before it? Let’s take examples of such attempts.

The American quantum scientist J. Wheeler was an adherent of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory, which laid particular stress on the observer’s role in bringing about particle actualization, or wave function collapse, in performing a quantum measurement. Wheeler went to extreme in putting particular emphasis on the experimental set up “here and now”, noting for example the effect a last-minute decision in the present would have on “what we have the right to say about a photon that was given out long before there was any life in the universe”, and, from this apparent effect of present circumstances on a photon’s past, concluding that, in this discipline at least, “the past has no existence except as recorded in the present”.⁴ And when asked by an interviewer:

ELVEE: Dr. Wheeler, who was there to observe the universe when it started? Were we there? Or does it only start with our observation? Is the big bang here?

² Bruce Reichenbach, *The Cosmological Argument: a Reassessment* (Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1972); see also: [<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmological-argument/#Obj3PrinCausSuffReasSusp>] (6.4., 6.5).

³ S.W. Hawking, “The Beginning of Time” [2018] [www.hawking.org.uk/the-beginning-of-time.html], [2, 4].

⁴ John A. Wheeler, “Bohr, Einstein, and the Strange Lesson of the Quantum,” *Mind in Nature*, ed. Richard Q. Elvee. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982..., 14. The “past has no existence” quotation from Wheeler is cited in Craig Bourne, *A Future for Presentism*, 48.

WHEELER: A lovely way to put it – “Is the big bang here?” I can imagine that we will someday have to answer your question with a “yes.” If there is any conclusion that follows more strongly than another about the nature of time from the study of the quantum nature of space and time, it is the circumstance that the very idea of “before” and “after” is in some sense transcended.⁵

Removed from the context of quantum physics, such comments become quite controversial. I need only mention, as an example, a history professor in a forum discussion rebuking me for giving attention in an academic lecture to Wheeler’s suggestion of a non-existent past except as recorded in the present. Would not the Battle of Verdun in World War I, with over 700,000 casualties, have existed just as much in the past, he expostulated, regardless of recording in the present? In any case, Wheeler was not denying the very idea of “before”, as we see above, but rather suggesting, given evidence limited to quantum experiments, that it is in some sense transcended. And so that becomes the question, the question of applicability. Once we take it out of a quantum context, the uncertainty would seem all the greater about how there can be this beginning, this now or present time that transcends linear time and subordinates the latter to a kind of contingency.

Even in the context of quantum physics, the uncertainty arises once we move from Wheeler’s model that gives priority to present time and turn to a model that interprets differently the observer’s role in the wave function collapse by which the quantum particle concretizes from potential to actual state. Craig Callender, for example, debunks the observer’s role as having such present time priority, pointing to anti-Copenhagen interpretations, such as that of Broglie-Bohm. He cites physicist J.S. Bell’s “Against ‘Measurement’”: “What exactly qualifies some physical systems to play the role of measurer?” he quotes Bell as asking. “Was the wavefunction of the world waiting to jump for thousands of millions of years until a single-celled living creature appeared? Or did it have to wait a little longer, for some better qualified system . . . with a Ph.D?”⁶ Bell’s answer, as Callender quotes it, is “that more or less ‘measurement-like’ processes are going on more or less all the time, more or less everywhere.” No need, in other words, for experiential contact from an observational set up to do it.

Likewise, one finds on another subject – reverse causality – a similar disparity of opinion on the role of experiential contact as a starting point. One school of thought has it that in areas of the past we know nothing about, in such cases it is possible for a present decision, as for example when and in what way to perform a quantum measurement, to retro-causally bring about a determined course of history of a quantum particle. Broadening the scope of that retro-

⁵ Wheeler, “Bohr, Einstein...”, 23.

⁶ Craig Callender, “Return of the Stingy Oddsmaker: a Response”. *The New York Times*, Opinion pages/“The Stone” (July 25, 2013).

causality, it has been argued that where knowledge of the past is lacking, a present decision can bring about a past event's actualization in a way that otherwise would not have happened. Opposing that view, those in the "hold the past fixed" camp would argue that just because people at present don't know about certain events in the past, it stands to reason those facts are nonetheless immutable, having in fact happened, regardless of whether we know about them or not. Further support on this side of the fence derives from the problem of verification. I might, by ceremonial magic, try to change the winner of that race last week, but that possibility could gain credence only if I was incapable of knowing of that changed outcome in advance. An informing, however, could conceivably come by way of a light signal, allowing my capability to know in advance. Were the race results so recent as to make the signal not conceivably possible, on the other hand, it would imply the change of winner did not happen prior to my ceremonial magic, and so no retro-causation.⁷

Much of this debate stems from the semantics of "informing" and "knowing", whether we mean by these words 1st person experiential contact – a now acquaintance – or 3rd person acquisition of knowledge, by information and other indirect means. If the former, retro-causation may be a consequence of quantum observation, at least according to Wheeler and others in the Copenhagen school. Such a consequence would depend on a particle's history being undetermined by previous knowing, the now situation that a previous quantum observation had already set in place. Apart, though, from this avenue of unprecedented knowing by experimental observation, it would seem problematic how, informationally by 3rd person means, it could be determined whether magic or techno-wizardry presently engaged in could have some retroactive bearing in establishing what, in fact, is an aspect of the past we don't know about.

From what has been shown above, the evidence from quantum physics and retro-causality provides a mixed verdict about this notion of a temporal beginning from scratch, a temporal beginning with nothing in extended time before it. Given that, how else might one find a basis for sustaining such a notion? The introductory caption from the historian Paul Ricoeur, above this chapter's title, offers a clue.

In a nutshell, what Ricoeur is saying is that questions of significance – and in particular the significance of enormous time scales as compared to what might seem the insignificance of a human lifetime – begin with us, the perspective we give to the past. This is not to extinguish the fact that there is a past and

⁷ For more on the hold-the-past-fixed discussion and retro-causation, see (1) Craig Callender, "The View from No-when", *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 49 (1998): 152-157. [http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:_OmWzjAG8EsJ:philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/c...]; (2) Hanoch Ben-Yani, "The Impossibility of Backward Causation", *The Philosophical Quarterly* (2007) [www.kslinker.com/impossibility-backwards-in-time-causation.pdf].

its extended time frames, but rather that when it comes to questions of significance and choices, there is an implicitly understood beginning point, the here and now of a present perspective, transient though it be by standards of measured time. The motif of present time's significance is returned to by Ricoeur when he speaks of history as molded by a present perspective. He quotes in part the French historiographer Henri Marrou: "In any case, 'there is no *historical reality*, ready-made, prior to knowledge, which need only be reproduced with fidelity.' History is the result of the creative effort, by which the historian, as the conscious subject, establishes a relationship between the past which he evokes, and the present which is his own."⁸ The ambiguity in that phrase "no *historical reality*" is precisely what we need to address next in order to determine how far this present-to-past restructuring of significance can lead us to the notion of a beginning with nothing in extended time before it.

Insofar as the phrase "no *historical reality*" intimates the temporal status of the past, its meaning could go in a number of directions. One could argue a literal understanding, that there is no reality of the past, no separate ontological ground, according to this phrase; the only past then would be the one we construct in the present and date according to various chronologies. The Battle of Verdun, the Holocaust, consequently would lack a reality in the past, having vanished from the present. On the other hand, given a second reading, one could take "no *historical reality*" to mean that the reality of the past, the fact of its having happened, is not ontologically in question, only what significance historians in the present world choose to give to any aspects of it or how they decide to interpret it. As with nature, the final answer as to what history is all about may then remain out of reach – perhaps forever – but that reflects our epistemic limitations, not the truth of what it is we seek to know. And then one finds a third way of construing "no *historical existence*" – namely, as a past that is in some sense present. The denial here is only about its misplaced temporal situating – a past deemed situated in an order according to notions of chronology and extended time.

Despite the seeming ambiguity in the phrase above, it is clear – taking in more of his context – that what Ricoeur intends by "no historical existence" accords with the second interpretation we have given. Not that the past has no reality, but that the work of the historian – the facts as set in order and their priority – is not preordained, readymade, before his or her research has even begun. As for that past that historians seek after, "In an ontological sense, we mean by historical event what actually happened in the past," as Ricoeur puts it, deeming "past" in this sense "an absolute property, independent of our constructions and reconstructions" and as well characterizing it as the "the sum of what has actually happened", something "out of reach of the histori-

⁸ [italics his] Paul Ricoeur, vol. 1, 246, n. 8.

an”.⁹ Even with this second take on “no historical existence”, what’s important for our purposes is that Ricoeur opens the door to that third possible way of understanding that phrase, that third construal we have given above, which closes in on the notion of “beginning” we are looking for, a beginning with nothing in extended time before it. How then does this come about? We find Ricoeur opening this possibility in that instance of his book, *Time and Narrative*, where he compares the “lived past”, as he puts it, with the present:

Further, if this lived past were accessible to us, it would not be so as an object of knowledge. For when it was present, this past was like our present, confused, multi-form, and unintelligible.¹⁰

What Ricoeur opens us to here is a past the manner of accessibility to which (if there were any at all) would be by experiential contact – i.e., immediate, so much so as yet to be put in order. In other words, this accessibility would have to come to us the way the pre-appraisal present comes to us, as that 1st person mode of knowing labeled “direct acquaintance”. Contradictorily, or so it seems, the lived past, by this hypothetical route of access, would not even manifest as the past but only experientially as a now occurrence. Ricoeur acknowledges as much by his use of “instead” to distinguish what he has just said above about the “lived past” from what the history of historians search for, a quest for a past that fits conceptual schemata, and by implication amenable to 3rd person perspectives that neatly divide, order, and arrange the time that takes time:

Instead, history aims at knowledge, an organized vision, established upon chains of causal or teleological relations, on the basis of meanings and values.¹¹

So, we find ourselves confronting the question of this lived past and its relation to the present. If its status as anterior to the present can only be attested to by experiential contact – i.e., our 1st person perspective in the present world we’re awake to –, the question is, even if such contact were possible, how could that effectuate evidence of a lived *past*?

A student of mine once confided that in dreams she would on occasion be in experiential contact with an imminent future. Terrified by these oneiric episodes, a few days after such an experience she would find herself – as she alleged – on a street corner with exactly the arrangement of cars and people as occurred in the dream’s presentiment a few nights earlier. More anomalous still, a colleague at a recent conference I attended at a Zen retreat in Germany told me about a dream he had had witnessing a woman being hit by a car, and then, days later, witnessing the situation in real life, except for the fact that his shout

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, 98.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, Vol. 1, 99.

¹¹ Ricoeur, Vol. 1, 99.

prevented the woman from being hit by the car. Assuming that such incidents were more than coincidences or mistaken impressions, one might suppose there might be something in them to suggest cross-temporal direct acquaintance, a lived present/future temporal exchange.

The problem is one noted earlier, that of the anchor of temporal constraint that keeps us from drifting away, at least when awake. When awake, we are prevented by it from drifting cross-temporally to another now that is not now. And as we have seen, the now is totally oblivious to linear time differentiations, even when someone at the other end of a telephone call or video interview is speaking from a different time zone according to linear calculations, or even when those twins conversing face-to-face with each other in some locality of our planet are in fact decades apart based on chronological age, subsequent to one twin's arrival after a near light-speed space voyage. Even in cases such as these, there is no drifting to another now, or to another's con-temporaneity. The self/other alignment holds. This explains why that star we both see, though extinct based on linear calculations of time, is nonetheless fixed in the present, experientially speaking. It explains why any "past" our senses are exposed to when awake can only be present, a sign that for doctors certifies we possess a lucid state of mind. What that student and colleague experienced when asleep is not the issue here. And in any case, the subject of prophetic dreams takes us beyond the scope of this book. What concerns us is the now they're awake to. The now of that immediate situation they're awake to at the street corner or across the street from another pedestrian. Nighttime memories can't change that.

The reader may remember that old Star Trek movie. It had a complex time scenario. A stranger manifests himself into existence in front of the human occupants of a space ship in flight. Is he an alien from a different galaxy? A different time zone? He conveys a human demeanor except for a darkly brooding gaze, suggestive of hidden intentions and powers. Malignant or benevolent? Pursued by the others, he vanishes with his cat as easily as his sudden incarnation. Somehow the voyagers have wind of his intended destination, however – it being the planet Earth at a time in the past, the 1950s. Nuclear war was on the brink. The voyagers thereupon plot the course of their space ship backwards in time, to Earth in the 1950s. They land, are now visaged as pedestrians along a street in a 1950s' American city. Here one might wonder what the consequence of such time transmutations would be? Two nows? Psychotic regression to a lived past? Schizophrenia? No such complications, as it turns out. The temporal constraint ever imperiously intact. The same old guys, only dressed a little differently. The same old now. It could have been they simply visited a foreign country, a little strange and less developed. A plight it would seem Hollywood can't escape.

Even so, one finds an insightful side to this Star Trek story. The message it carries, at least by implication, is this notion of temporal constraint and tem-

poral beginning in line with our present discussion. For however successfully the voyagers could journey into the “past”, as the film depicts it, the lived present, it appears, was only as far as they could go, given the fact that the effects of their cinematic time regression resulted in no depicted regression of their present minds or retrogression to childhood or pre-childhood experience, no impression that they weren’t themselves living in an experientially familiar now, the present and not the past, no matter how unfamiliar their surroundings. Conclusion: A *lived* past cannot occur in the guise of any sequential distancing from, or before, a lived present. It is only our chronological and linear way of sequencing – the distanced appraisal of the 3rd person perspective – that makes us think it can. Simply speaking, the now is not “in” that kind of time.

But still, doesn’t memory tell a different story? The psychologist William James gives us this description of how memory represents the past in an orderly way:

Known symbolically by names, such as “last week”, “1850”; or thought of by events which happened in them, as the year in which we attended such a school, or met with such a loss. So that if we wish to think of a particular past epoch, we must think of a name or other symbol, or else of certain concrete events, associated therewithal.¹²

But this is not the lived past which he is speaking of, but the represented past. By contrast, the question we’re addressing is how a lived past can come back into the clutches of a lived present. It has already been pointed out and illustrated in an earlier chapter how representation is neither the same as presentation nor as literal *re-presentation*, both of which would necessitate a replacing of this now with another direct acquaintance with the external world, a substitute witnessing of things we are awake to. And so the problem is that, while memory gives us evidence of descriptive details and configurative images we take as content drawn from past occurrences, memory does not give evidence of an actual presenting of what was, an actual immediacy of ourselves living in that now of the past, else we would be literally living in that past – perhaps meeting deceased ancestors by some preternatural means, either psychotically or clairvoyantly. Even so, in Part 2 of this book coming up – “Whatever Happened to a Moment Ago?: Searching the Archives of Not-Now Time for an Answer” –, we will attempt just that, to achieve the very feat that we have just asserted can’t be done. We will engage in a search – crazy as it may sound – for a specimen of that lived past in the past, a specimen of that moment ago, the now in the not-now of time.

¹² William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 611 (cited in Bricklin, “Consciousness Already There...”, 67).

Proposing that memory is not conclusive evidence of a lived past, a now before the now, there is still a provoking detail that argues for the obvious counterclaim, namely for a preceding lived past. We detect it, for example, in that opening quotation from Russell, where he speaks hypothetically of the world coming into existence “complete with causal traces”. Prompted by those very quoted words, one can easily, it seems, reject such a hypothesis by pointing out the stark connections, past-to-present, that appear already built into any supposed temporal beginning, even such as the kind of experiential starting point we are advancing, a starting point in the sense of its being experientially unpreceded and unanticipated by a lived past – something that resists schematizing in the before and after of extended time, just as with the lived present. The thrust of this refutation of such a hypothesized beginning lies in those quoted words “causal traces”. It can be summed up in the form of a question: Are not present facts the effects of previous causes? And is that not sufficient to dash any such notion of a nonlinear beginning, namely that of a lived now that is not preceded by a lived then?¹³

One can reasonably ask how causes can produce effects if they are not prior to the effects. Take the court’s verdict of innocent or guilty. Is that not indicator enough of a lived past, perhaps one violently lived?

Approaching such questions will serve to summarize a number of considerations about the now or presentness worked out so far, and by this means conclude what we have to say in this Part 1 of this book.

We begin our answer with con-temporaneity and the self/other alignment. The self/other temporal alignment is the 1st person substructure for all 3rd person configurations of time. There are no nowless configurations of time that escape the precondition of that 1st person substructure. One can theorize – in a non-immediate modality of thought – about the immediacy of time, as I’ve been doing, but only because the now sustains me every moment of the way. Nor can configurations of time, such as extended time, come before the now, except as an artifact of 3rd person ways of breaking time into number and countability.

¹³ In his chapter on presentism, Tallis gives a detailed discussion of the weaknesses of the presentist’s philosophical and cosmological viewpoint that would argue for only the present being “real” – meaning in the sense that past and future are treated as devoid of an ontological basis, having (in the presentist view) no standing as source other than what present societies give to them by way of interpretation. This swallows more easily when talking about the yet-to-materialize future than about the past that has already occurred. The position we are advancing, by contrast, is that the past has an ontological basis, but it is not to be found “in” the past – that is to say, in the chronological past, the before and after of extended time. And in that negative respect, this position agrees with Tallis’s, the latter taking dates and ordered time as a form of spatialization of time. Raymond Tallis, *Of Time and Lamentation: Reflections on Transcience*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 2017). As well as his chapter on presentism, see also his pp. 40-41, for example.

Rather, it is the temporal precondition of present-to-past that comes first. And so our summary conclusion here comes in two parts:

1. The illusion of a past in the past

The drawback in such a paradigm of a past “in” the past results from lack of concrete observable evidence of such a phenomenon. While it is useful and vital to our survival to construct a chronology of what is no longer, configured as encased in a kind of pocket we call the past, it necessarily relies on an ordering principle that linear time – the calculated time that takes time – gives us. To attest to the past, we necessarily draw on inference from what is present, a present that must be presupposed to begin with. We of course observe present effects, glean the putative causes “in” the past from our memory and such things as the records of the past, the memorabilia, the very streets and cities that tell of a past. The problem, however, is in our failing to find this “before” directly, rather than inferentially. Where does one find the substantivity, the palpable existence of this thing we call the past? Our recourse is to preserve it in memory, or give representations of it, arranged chronologically and by extended time, or for example to offset lapses of memory by constructing such things as pyramids as the ancient Egyptians did, as if they could serve as guarantor.

While the sequential mindset, built into our fabric of understanding, has been the linchpin of our material success and advancement, this is far from suggesting that the secrets of nature’s temporal behavior have been unlocked by our notion of succession or “umbrella time”, as Wheeler refers to it. Our challenge then to that causal “before”, and the structure of extended time it’s built on, can be stated quite simply. It comes down to three little asides – a, b, and c – about this pleasant exchange we’re having, you and I:

a) You and I, we open our eyes. What do we see? Well, we’re having coffee. I see you across the table, not a 3-second-ago you nor a 3-second-yet-to-be you. No past, just present, every moment of the way.

b) Ops! No cheating. Don’t log into your memory. Your memory will only tell you about the represented past, not the lived past. The lived past, as we have been contending, cannot come before the lived present, not if the latter is our starting point. Nor can the lived present go back to the lived past, such as to bring back about a 3-second-ago you. So how could the represented past do a feat that the lived present and lived past can’t do?

c) What? You suddenly have contact with the past? You’re in touch with a 3-second-ago me?? Time to see the doctor. Ops! Correction. It’s not you that needs to see a doctor. It’s me that should see the doctor. We’re looking at each other

now, right? I'd be crazy if I myself was a 3-second-ago me talking to a you now, wouldn't I?

In a nutshell, the same predicament could be applied to Einstein: How could Einstein, with his notions of relative time and space, have ever come up with such conceptions if his now, his immediate present, hadn't matched the immediate world he was awake to?

2. The *changed from* and the present

So what does it mean, this "you now"? The immediate occurrence of this "you now" exhibits what we have previously talked about, a *changed from* and *changed to* that marks this situation of the present time you're a part of. Every moment we're awake there's this "just now" that highlights the now, an integral coexistence of the two from a 1st person perspective that constitutes present time. But, on the other hand, we have found this is not an outcome of sequentiality. The "just now" doesn't come before the now. No linearity is implicated. Instead, both are immediate, present. Both marking a difference that distinguishes the now.

Okay, so let's go further back, further back from the "just now". What we come across, first of all, is the completed part of present time. "I'm going to the store" implies a completed part and a part yet to be completed. That completed part – it happens to have been a long walk – is evidenced by my stopping along the way, looking back, and thinking, "Thank God that's over!" That leg of the way is past, but more correctly (from our analysis) it's of course present, the completed present. The visible progress already made, tangibly evident now. The same can apply to everything we see around us – people, traffic, the appearance of any street or city or far away object in the sky. The point is, nothing about this completed scene divulges a present scene before the present scene, a 3-second-ago or a 3-year-ago completed scene. It's memory that does that. But memory, as pointed out earlier, only provides representation and ways that help us order time and events sequentially. What it does not give us is a past happening, the past happening of an event, its lived immediacy in the past. That could only be conceivable by endeavoring to do the impossible, to be awake to the world then. A futile endeavor but let's suppose the possibility anyway, as we will do in Part 3 coming up. Be awake to the world then. Another way of expressing this quest for a past we're awake to, a lived time that was, is to phrase it as a question: "Whatever happened to that moment ago – however long ago it was?"

And so we end this Part 2 of the book with a statement that few in our modern secular world would take seriously:

Humans and other living things have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

The statement obviously collides with the fossil record, the most fundamental facts of evolutionary science and its perspective on time. We have all manner of skulls and bones to show the beginnings of pre-human existence on this planet from long before human evolution. On the other hand, if we take “humans” to mean a species with a present-to-past capacity to initiate and formulate questions about the past, to understand the past from a human perspective, and instead ask – “When did a present-to-past perspective begin?” Might that not in some way mark the beginning of time? Taking things that way, the statement about human origins quoted above takes on less absurdity, especially when it gets framed in the context we have put it in. After all, can there be a present before the present, or a beginning in extended time before a beginning that makes that possible?

And given this terrain of interrogation, should we trust 3rd person strategies of time for an answer?

Part 2

**Whatever happened to a moment ago?
Searching the Archives of Not-Now
Time for an Answer**

Chapter 8

The Not-Now in Its Various Designations

Whatever happened to that moment ago? That special moment. Shall we call it cloud 9, when things clicked? That moment of aura between the two of you, a sudden understanding, was it? Or maybe it was a shared experience, a commingled joy, or maybe a sudden loss, the loss of that someone, that moment ago. A wistful longing for its return, like the “yesterday” in that old Beatles’ song. And so what frequently comes about is the dream of recapturing it, retrieving that moment ago we long for when destiny seemed to have culminated in a climax – but then passed away. “Whatever happened to it?” one asks. Difficult as it may seem, let’s see if we can find it.

Of course, one can simply deny its existence, treat the past as total nothingness, annihilation, a mere fabrication of one’s mind and memory. But that seems hard to maintain. If memory and consciousness were all the past consisted of, if that moment ago were nothing but a pastry of our minds, “the whole distinction between the faithful and false memory, between history and myth would collapse”, to use Capek’s words.¹

And so something, we suspect, dwells in not-nowness, lingering, and that is the basis for our venturing on this search. Let us first be clear, however, that it is the immediacy of that moment we are after. The real thing, isn’t that what we long for? And even though we are skeptical about finding what we are looking for – the actual and authentic – in the memory we have of it or in how it is described and registered in words and images we represent it by, we shall check out those places nonetheless. This search, then, is a quest for the lived experience, necessarily involving a present time at least insofar as we seek it in its original form when it originally took place. Even in its immediacy, however, it is obviously not happening at the present time we are now awake to as we read this sentence, and so we label it – “a moment ago”. But that, as well, is not intended to mean that its occurrence was but a breath away into the past. The phrase is simply meant to refer to any deeply felt experience that is sorely missed and still vivid in our minds. And so the question: Where shall we find

¹ Capek, “Immediate and Mediate Memory”, 2.

this moment ago and retrieve its immediacy? Admittedly a puzzling question. Let us start our search, nevertheless, in the most likely place – the past, and in the disciplines that have that as their subject of concern. In doing so, the reader will notice that our initial stopover, before proceeding to the various designated enclaves of not-now time, will be that of a particular notion of time – the just now – which as we have seen is both integral with our holistic now but also grasped as past, or as not now, from a 3rd person perspective. From there, we will move to other not-nows evincing the familiar before-and- after pattern, and then return to nonlinear (i.e. non-sequential) possibilities in chapters 10 and 11.

1. The just now (from a 3rd vs. 1st person perspective)

A cursory inspection of the “just now” tells us our moment ago we’re seeking cannot be found there, unfortunately. This is because the “just now”, or *changed from* as we’ve described it earlier, evinces only enough of its recognition to make distinct the differentiated *changed to* of the now. It is questionable whether the “just now” even pokes its head out to our conscious awareness or whether it works subliminally. In any case, regardless of how adequately it can be recognized, the “just now” emerges as not a clearly distinct not-now, as we have noted before, but rather as that which throws in relief the external differentiation that makes up the present perception, the now that we’re awake to. Hence, although experiential and lived, we cannot classify this “just now” even as an “ago”, let alone that moment ago we’re trying to recapture. And so our search in the past for that moment ago must look elsewhere, at what is genuinely not now.

The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio once described the case of a patient he named “David”. David developed encephalitis at age 46, consequent to which his memory became limited to a span of less than one minute. As a result, the patient had no idea what time it was unless he looked at his watch, or what season it was unless he opened the curtain and looked out the window. His autobiographical memory had been “reduced to a skeleton”, and his sense of the future was absence as shown by his inability to plan ahead. Even with this deprivation of his patient, Damasio writes, “Everything indicates that he has a normal sense of self, in the here and now, . . .”² – indicating David’s capability to go back, experientially, at least to the *just now*. But it is precisely further back in time where we seek to find our moment ago, that moment in the past we seek to recapture. And so our inquiry must turn to another outpost of not-now time.

² Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens* (London: Vintage Books, 2000): 114, 118-119.

2. The lived past

Well, and what about the lived past as the logical repository of that moment ago? Keeping in mind that what we're out to find is this "ago", it seems obvious we shall not find it in the not-now of the future. On the other hand, we must also keep in mind that the lived past – being immediate and experiential – is not bound by considerations of linear distance or time spans determined by number and measure. But here is where we see a problem. Both the lived past of that moment ago and the lived present of the present moment, both are about experiential contact, immediacy, not about the before and after. Plotting a temporal distance between the two lived times is therefore impossible as temporal distance invokes linearity, which is not the name of the game when we speak of the lived past or lived present. In their immediacy they both entail a 1st person involvement, not a 3rd person appraisal of time along a timeline. Considered in this way, we can see that this moment ago – though expressed as an "ago" – must nonetheless not be understood as an "ago" in a linear sense. For to do that would be to arbitrate one notion of time in terms of another. Instead, the moment ago, understood as an immediacy of time, must be withdrawn from sequential order altogether, throwing into question how it can be said the immediacy of that time we are here seeking to retrieve in the category of the "lived past" is past in the first place. Such a designation would seem to imply a position in linear time before the time we are now living in. But this moment ago, this lived moment, cannot be "before" or "ago" in a linear sense, so it must be here, a concurrent part of the lived present. But then, where is it? And how might a concurrent now ever get discovered, since the possibility of anyone with a sound mind countenancing two nows – the present one and a concurrent one – can obviously be ruled out. Stymied by such imponderables along this path, we had best seek out other options, find another way of tracking down this moment ago.

3. The nowless

The question which this debatable malapropism prompts is whether there can be such a time zone as this, concretely accessible, to probe in the first place, a realm of nowlessness outside the now?

In the beginning pages of this book we sketched out a comparison between two primal counterparts, the now and the not now, the latter being an overall designation for the time that extends beyond the constraints of this moment, beyond the evanescence of sentient existence within the confines of the presentness of one's perceptions. At that initial stage of our discussion we weighed the scales heavily in favor of this general category of all that is not now, the before and after, the horizontal axis of time that seemed an accurate manner

by which to depict material nature's temporal extent, the enormity of which would seem, by comparison, to reduce the temporal constraint of humanity to insignificance. One has simply to ask: What species, specimen, or spectacle of nature could subsist without a past or future? How could we even know of the present if the past – that not now – hadn't helped us along the way? The question of the not-now's predominance at that early stage seemed so great that one might have had good cause to wonder if the very notion of nowness was, in fact, nothing other than a misattribution of something explainable from the past, a biological or evolutionary adaptive mechanism crucial to survival of the species, a not-now of the past masquerading in the guise of a now of the present.

Despite this backdrop of reasoning, we have proposed weighing the scales the other way, a nature oriented to what has been described as a self/other alignment – that is to say, the self's immediate percept or sensory awareness, its immediacy of time aligned to the same immediacy, the same experiential time, as that evinced by nature – specifically, by nature-as-other, the only nature we know directly. We have proposed that it all starts from this, that primal alignment. The question then becomes: Can any of those enormous time scales of the not-now universe exist without the now? And by extension, can even that “moment ago” we are here seeking to recover the experiential immediacy of, can that exist without nowness linked to it in some way? Perhaps we can say this suggests to us at least a clue here about the whereabouts of that moment ago.

But on the other hand, even that clue would seem ruled out if it should so happen that what we are seeking here, this moment ago, dwells in a sanctum of not-now time which we here refer to as the “nowless”. What we mean by that characterization is simply the domain of whatever it is that does *not* connect, one way or the other, to the now. Targeting the moment ago to within the bounds of this netherworld of nowlessness would essentially deprive it of any awakened, experiential attribution, even as an aspect of the lived past, for a lived past implies a nowness, an immediacy, of its own, and nowlessness would extirpate those very inclusions. And so, given this category of nowlessness, the moment ago would no longer become a moment ago, but rather an abstraction of sorts, but even so of questionable conceivability. One can conceive of zombies, let's say, but can one imagine a nowless moment that one is not present to, even in one's imagination?³ The now, in other words, seems inescapably implicit by the very fact that it is in the medium of human experience by which we direct our attention to a nowless domain.

³ Cp. Bergson: “We always come back, then, to the same point: there is a single real time, and the others are imaginary. What, indeed, is a real time, if not a time lived or able to be lived? What is an unreal, auxiliary, imaginary time if not one that cannot actually be lived by anything or anyone?” Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity*, 56.

There is, even so, one putative place to find this nowlessness – and it could be that the moment ago is huddled there – and that is in our dreams. A dream, given its very privacy from the present world, lacks for that reason the present we're awake to, that outside awareness, and so is nowless in that respect. Admittedly, it shares that experiential attribute of immediacy we've described the now as having, and arguably, in its narrative layout, it exhibits the aspects of *changed from* and *changed to* that feature the now. What is missing from the dream state is exposure to the present world. It draws on memory to construct its narrative, bits and pieces of remembered episodes, but not the lived exposure, the direct and immediate contact with the outside world, that we are looking for in the lived experience of that moment ago. The invented narrative of the dream originates from our minds, not from what we are awake to. And so, for that reason, we must necessarily exclude this other avenue of not-now investigation – the nowlessness of dreams – as a possibility for encountering the moment ago we are in search of.

The indigenous people in Amazonia, the Piraha, draw a close connection between dreams and wakeful life. As anthropologist Everett describes it, for these people “dreams are a continuation of real and immediate experiences”. The Piraha use the word “*xaipipal*” to designate this dreaming that is in your head but that signifies for them a real experience. “You see one way awake and another way while asleep, both ways of seeing are real experiences.”⁴ And so, for example, when one speaks of spirit creatures called the *bigi*, for the Piraha they can be evidenced both in sleep and wakefulness. Such a cultural outlook is not without some basis. Knowing by acquaintance is the means by which we perceive the immediate present world, and such manner of knowing – direct and immediate knowing – is equally applicable in the case of dreams. And even that adage of Socrates would appear to chime in on the side of the Pirahas, although Socrates implied by it that dreams and wakeful awareness – equally taken to be real at the time – were equally to be distrusted:

[T]here may even be a doubt whether we are awake or in a dream. And as the time is equally divided in which we are asleep or awake, in either sphere of existence the soul contends that thoughts which are present to our minds at the time are true; and during one half of our lives we affirm the truth of the one, and during the other half of the other; and are equally confident of both.⁵

The problem, nonetheless, is simply that we do wake up, and for most of us at least, when once awake and in a lucid state, we recall a dream or nightmare we just had by thinking, “That was only a dream”. Something about the sharp con-

⁴ Everett, *Don't Sleep...*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 131.

⁵ “Theaetetus”, *The Dialogues of Plato* [158d], trans. Benjamin Jowett (Good Time Classic Book Collection, 2014), vol. 2: 437.

trast from a dream that the present exposes when one has opened one's eyes demolishes the pretence of a dream's propriety as a lived past or a livid present, notwithstanding the immediacy of the dream in its own right. Needless to say, there are those who claim a dream's potential to open a door to another reality, more real than our awakened existence, but that takes us outside the confines of our discussion here, which is about a lived experience we are awake to and where to find it once it is gone.

Nevertheless, in that very expression "That was only a dream" we may have hit upon a promising lead, another category of the not-now prompted by the very recalling itself. Might not memory, in other words, and its mode of experiential immediacy provide us with both the whereabouts of that moment ago we are looking for and the possibility of its retrieval?

4. Memory

Given the distinction we have emphasized between the source of the past – its presentedness – and the past as recorded or represented by memory, there would seem little purpose in searching for this moment ago in memory's repository, where we would most likely find nothing more than a fading relic of what we are looking for. And yet, memory is inherent in any present awareness, in any awakened state, at least to the extent of recognizing what we see. Hence, unlike dreaming, memory – as experienced – is inseparable from the lived present, although removed from the now's extrinsic provenance, meaning that alignment that connects present self to the otherness of one's immediate surroundings. The otherness it does connect us to is strictly the not-now of the past – but this, however, is the represented past, not the past that we are living now in its original state. Hence, the reason why we have designated memory as yet another branch of not-now time.

Admittedly, memory includes all that from the beginning of our lives has molded our ability to learn and recognize, enabled our adaptation and acquired knowledge, enough so to make sense of what is configuratively present, the objects we recognize, the names we give to things – even to things that are merely thinglike or "something it is like", such amorphous entities as consciousness or the now, which to be known in the concrete can only be experienced in the 1st person – and necessarily now. This is not necessarily to imply the equating of a lived past with a linear or sequentially organized past. Despite what suggests an obvious oxymoron in the statement that follows, the lived past – precisely because it is lived and original – can only begin now.

It is precisely for this reason we find ourselves stonewalled again in attempting to salvage that moment ago from a repository of not-now of time – in

this case memory. Memory cannot take us back. If it could do that, there would be a real question about one's state of lucidity.

And yet, in its exposing and filtering of sensory and emotional details from a particular past, memory does concretize in an experiential way residues of the past that it brings back. A memory, at its most potent, can lock one's attention to a recalled incident, somewhat in the way dreams do. But even this cannot be said to actualized the original, however vivid the details and impression of impact. It is no doubt that very failure to actualize, along with memory's coloring, blurring, and fading in its very not-nowness, that explains in large part the desperate attempts to compensate by means of the monumental – tombs and pyramids, testaments and histories that act as surrogates of the past, rescue it or a version of it from the threat of oblivion that Ricoeur speaks about:

With this unsettling idea of the threat of effacement comes that of the threat of forgetting. . . . Still, there remains the threat of an irremediable, definitive forgetting that gives the work of memory its dramatic character. Yes, forgetting is indeed the enemy of memory, and memory is a sometimes desperate attempt to pull some flotsam from the great shipwreck of forgetting.⁶

So then, are we to rule out memory altogether? But how could any moment ago, any experience we seek to bring back, be an experience without memory and still be meaningful in some way? Would one even recognize the rapture or sorrow of the circumstances if one had no memory of what preceded? It would seem the problem we face here is not the memory itself but the roadblock of attempting to bring the memory to life, bringing to life its very immediacy and currency. Let us therefore make one more perhaps desperate attempt at salvaging from this repository of not-now time the source we are looking for, the source of that memory we are so anxious to retrieve. Let us do this by resorting to memory in its extreme and unforgettable state – exemplified by a case of trauma.

In her discussion of trauma, mentioned in the introductory chapter of this book, Anne Whitehead cites research by Cathy Caruth that hypothesizes the scenario of a traumatic experience wherein the past is actually salvaged. It gets retrieved belatedly in the present, but not in a way that one would relish.⁷ Ex-

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), 112.

⁷ Anne Whitehead's Introduction cites Caruth's scenario of a trauma that exceeds the individual's "capacity for registration and understanding" and so was never fully present and occurring in the sense of comprehensibility, but may belated become so, a present suddenly registered and grasped at a later time, and thereafter to become past and consigned to memory. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead, *Theories of Memory: a Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 188. See further, Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 151-153.

ceeding the victim's capacity for mental registration and understanding at the time of its original occurrence, the trauma's immediacy, its realization, comes belatedly thereafter. The rationale behind this version of a moment ago's retrieval and reliving arises from the consideration that the trauma, having never become fully present, cannot have become past and thereby recollected and represented in memory. Instead, the traumatic experience becomes "fully evident only in connection with another place and in another time."⁸ Once that occurs the trauma can fall in place and be situated as something in the past, something that memory brings back.

How, then, does this tie into that moment ago we've been on the lookout for? First of all, it provides us with a lived experience from the past that comes back as an actual occurrence. Second, it gets experienced in the lived present. The trauma, only partially registered and understood at the first time of its actual occurrence, thereafter becomes, for the victim, a belated though immediate occurrence – a first occurrence – at a later time. The question behind all this is whether, in fact, the second occurrence counts as a first occurrence. Was the trauma really brought back as it originally happened, or do we consign the impression of its reappearance to the victim's state of mind, delusional or perhaps psychotic? But then again, we may be asking the wrong question. A better question might be: Considering that our discussion here is about a now immediacy that invokes a 1st person experiential accounting of time, how could the traumatic event that first occurred come in fact *before* the second that the victim was immersed in and that was experienced as first occurring. The paradox of that "before" arises, given that immediacies cannot be separated except by linear notions of time – something a distanced appraisal would implant into the scene? From the trauma victim's perspective, the now *is* that moment ago. It never was. Still, a problem remains. From an outsider's perspective – necessarily a 1st person perspective in the now – there is no way of determining if, in some ontological or primordial fashion, the "was" for that victim had actually become an "is", or only starkly appeared that way in the victim's state of psychotic recall. Hence, no way to substantiate the time warp – except by a 3rd person distanced appraisal. Moreover, would not any outside observer who claimed to have witnessed what the victim experienced, a regression to a lived past that had become a lived present, end in the same dilemma of being disbelieved by others? It stands to reason, it would seem. Who could believe that a *then* had, in actuality, become a *now*?

It may seem that the time has come to give up this search for that moment ago, as the evidence so far suggests. Nevertheless, there are still possibilities worth pursuing, even if one's 3rd person perspective finds the search vain with little prospects of success. The direction we shall take now in this quest for

⁸ Anne Whitehead, citing Caruth, 188.

the unforgettable will move in and out of various enclaves of knowledge – “the not-now of knowledge” as it’s referred to – opening doors here and there in the hope of finding some clue disclosed that will reward our search. And even though memory is inextricably a part of knowledge, for our purposes we will treat knowledge as a separate not-now category.

Chapter 9

The Not-Now of Knowledge

Prefatory to our search in this vast domain, we had best begin by explaining the title. Why the not-now of knowledge? How is such an expression justified?

Even at the risk of over generalizing, we can propose a legitimate basis for considering knowledge in itself an appropriate category of not-now time. Much of this has to do with comments we have quoted from Ricoeur. First off, what strikes in the negative in terms of our quest for that moment ago in its lived state, knowledge is not about the immediate, or as Ricoeur has put it, about “our present”, which he deemed “confused, multiform, and unintelligible”. Rather, it is knowledge that gives comprehensibility to such that in its immediate state lacks that intelligibility – namely the order and structure – that we give to the dis-ordered and unpatterned, whatever in its exposure doesn’t follow the logical order of before and after. In the current panpsychism debates, one finds an assortment of conflicting theories about how consciousness arises from matter, or how microcosmic particles give rise to macroscopic consciousness and consciousnesses, or theories about the combination problem – how minute sentient elements of consciousness emerge into a single consciousness composed of them.¹ All such issues implicate temporal order – from, to, before and after – or in other words a logical ordering of some kind. In the above, we see here specimens of how knowledge goes about its quest for answers in its diversity of pathways, speaking in the loosest of terms. We have only to imagine the alternative, knowledge as an all-at-once affair, its ordering recomposed into a bursting forth, a catalyzt of enlightenment in a non-sequential template of immediacy. Such manner of knowledge acquisition would be difficult to conceive of, to say the least. Given, then, its essential ordering and sequential framework, we have plotted knowledge, considered in a strictly temporal sense, as appropriately belonging in the repository of the not-now of extended time. Even in the writing of a

¹ See for example Part 3, “Panpsychism and the Combination Problem”, in Godehard Bruntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla, eds., *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 179-304.

proposition, even in the coherency that comes through in the proposition's reading, the not-now of an extended time frame is invariably presupposed.

And so we began with the appropriateness of its not-now classification, but how does that make knowledge apply to what we're looking for, the immediacy of a lived past?

Let's take the other side of the coin. On the one hand, while knowledge necessarily entails, or should entail, an objective appraisal – a distancing from the immediate –, rather than the “confused, multiform, and unintelligible” that Ricoeur speaks about, on the other hand his very analysis of the now in such amorphous terms suggests, as an example, that knowledge's scope is not excluded from such expressed considerations about immediate time, or for example such inquiries as to what extent consciousness and duration play a role in the immediacy of lived experience (Bergson), or how lived experience relates to the past (the very question of objectivity itself), or what it means to speak of the intensity of *nowness* (Franck), and moreover – specifically in our present case – whether a lived experience can be retrieved from the past. And so there appear legitimate grounds to explore this branch of not-nowness. Of course, in even attempting to probe a hint of the vastness of knowledge's scope, we can do no more than try out a sampling of disciplines and give a cursory look at any leads they might suggest.

1. The not-now of mathematics

We have already adjudged mathematics as appropriately not-now in that any measurement that takes place, any determination as to extended time or extended space, any determined location in fact – in linear time and space of course –, already presupposes that one's concern is not the immediacy of time that one is awake to but the computing of measured time and measured objects, and the calculations that go with it, all posterior to the now of one's immediate existence. But then, where in all this might be found that lived experience we are in search of? That moment ago which, although chronologically distanced from us perhaps by days or months, is something we seek to recover in its visceral form, something we seek to be immediately present to and not detached from the way one's 3rd person perspective detaches itself – at least by an abstracting pathway – from the now and the immediate. Even if one should single out math, the way the Princeton mathematician Max Tegmark once did, “as the underlying structure of the universe” and the human mind emerging “from math, as a self-aware substructure of an extremely complicated mathematical structure”,² still what that leaves us with is yet another example of a detached appraisal, and it is

² Hut, Alford, and Tegmark, “On Math, Matter and Mind”: 2, 8.

not that which we seek in this Argonaut adventure of ours but something that makes itself known before an appraisal of any kind can be made, an exposure at once immediate, yet from the past, even if haphazard and confused. Clearly mathematics and the not-now of its world of calculation are not the means to a present/past visceral meeting ground such as we are proposing. So let's proceed to another avenue of knowledge.

2. History

We need add little of relevance to what we have already said about this branch of knowledge. We have seen from Ricoeur its connection to the present, the fact that it is interpreters of a present time that give meaning and significance to the past. They organize it, arrange it sequentially, and in that way shape its distinction from the immediate present. For this reason, we can say that it appears as self-evident that history, being not about the immediate, appropriately fits as a category of the not-now of extended time. But on the other hand, for that very reason its resources are not up to providing the experiential immediacy of that moment ago we're endeavoring to extract from it. The problem can be summed up by again quoting Capek's words: "If the past were a mere nothingness, the whole distinction between the faithful and false memory, between history and myth would collapse." Exactly. The past is something. The source of history is something. But the problem is history is not in the position of providing that source. It cannot take us there, but only gives us a distanced appraisal. And so, we are forced to move on – this time to a category we can suppose is closer to the lived and experiential.

3. Literature and the arts

On the surface, it would seem that literature and the arts face the same obstacle that history does in attempting to salvage an experiential moment, a moment of the past – namely, its very positioning away from the scene of action, distanced from the original source.

Literature is in essence a writing *about*, so right there we spot the removal from whatever it is that is being described, let alone its medium is in words, sentences, a narrating of events as they purportedly happened – a problem that afflicts knowledge as a whole, it being necessarily non-immediate in its transcription, its very use of words as a representational medium. Furthermore, literature, like history, is necessarily structured by sequentiality in the telling. So on the one hand, we can say this sequentiality qualifies the literary piece as being temporally not-now, but on the other hand it removes as well the possibility of its being an immediate retrieval of a moment ago – that is, the retrieval of an

experience as it was originally lived at the time of its being imprinted into the author's imagination.

In the case of the artwork, the depicted composition on a canvas – at least if considered as representational art –, is for that very reason removed from the direct source, the presentation in real life, and so abstracted from the source of inspiration. Hence, the distancing, as well as the not-now categorization that comes about as a result.

But on the other hand, there are considerations that sway the other way.

For one thing, there is the school of hermeneutics that approaches art as a presentational medium. Abstract and non-figurative works obviously cannot be classified as representational or image-like in what they portray. Beyond that is the contention that the subject matter of art invokes meanings that arise in the art work itself, rather than being representational of anything else. And furthermore, the argument runs that we, the spectators, are in the position of being directly involved by what the art work depicts. The same could be said to apply to the reader of a literary work. In this context one can cite a quotation from Gadamer, in a comment he ascribes to Schleiermacher, to the effect that understanding is “an immediate ‘re-experience’ of the original experience – a divination.”³ Whatever the various ways to interpret such a statement, the very phraseology of “re-experiencing of the original experience” takes us suspiciously close to the nature of our quest – to that original experience of a moment ago. Might it be recaptured in a work of art?

The problem is two-fold. On the one hand, we are looking for a past that authentically happened and yet is retrievable so as to actually happen now. It is difficult to see how literature or art could perform such a feat. Whatever the immediacy of art or fiction, neither purports to actually bring back the past, but only to at most describe it through the medium of words or paint – however vividly this is done. And secondly, there is the interpretive element that is considered to play an integral role in a reader's understanding of literature or a spectator's appreciation of a work of art. In the case of the now's immediacy, or that moment ago's immediacy, there is simply our being there, or its being here, that is key to the happening of the event – the fact of the temporal immediacy of its recovery, regardless of how the content of the experience, its configurative makeup, gets interpreted.

A former classmate of mine who became a famous artist once stated in one of his videos, “Of the interested public, one out of ten get what I'm doing.”

³ Lawrence K. Schmidt, “Alles voraussetzende in der hermeneutik nur sprache: Revisiting Gadamer's Schleiermacher interpretation,” *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology, Vol. 2) (Berlin: Lit. Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2011; London: Transaction Publishers), 278.

By contrast, when once I myself was perusing one of his minimalist works, I remember simply feeling, without the inclusion of apparent mediation or my “getting it” by way of interpretation, the movement of a line in the expression of this work. “Feeling the movement of a line” is how one might translate the experiential immediacy of that moment ago.

4. And science?

One might suppose the problem of retrieval of that moment ago would pose the same obstacle in science as it does in math. We have only to consider the material nature that science studies as a nature defined by its accessibility to mathematical calculation and measure, and from out of that consideration to conclude that no where here, in this visage of the material world that science gives us, is one going to come upon the concreteness of an experience in its immediacy, whether past or present. A comment from Strawson would suggest the same: “[P]hysics has no terms with which to characterize the intrinsic *experiential-qualitative* nature of concrete reality, . . .”⁴ On the other hand, we’ve applied those two appendages to our conceptualization of material nature in our framework: “here and now” and “as-other”. “As-other” brings about a broadened portrayal of nature, a nature that is on the one hand dualistically, though not temporally, distinct from our perspectival selves and the outlook we have of it. And on the other hand, it is a here-and-now nature that includes not just objects with their measurable and configurable data that our mediated ways of recognizing give meaning to, but as well its palpable aspect – the things in their immediacy – which makes them and their nowness thinglike to our perceptions. If one accepts that anything experiential must have, as its temporal equivalent, a here-and-now immediacy, then it becomes evident that the material nature that scientists wake up to and confront, cannot be without lived experience. To quote Strawson again, “[E]xperience is the most certainly known concretely existing general natural phenomenon, and is indeed the first thing any scientist encounters when they try to do science.”⁵

Bearing in mind such considerations, one might deem promising the prospects of finding here in this experiential immediacy of nature – given as well its vast dimensionality of the before and after – that moment ago we are looking for, a

⁴ [italics his] Galen Strawson, “Mind and Being,” 85.

⁵ Strawson, “Mind and Being”, 84. Also, Tallis, *Of Time and Lamentation*: “While ‘now’ seems to elude physics, it is ubiquitous in the lives of physicists doing experiments. It is not (surely!) suggested that physicists are somehow outside of the real universe when they are doing physics. If the physicalist world picture does not allow for the existence of physicists who are making that world picture, there is something amiss with this picture.” (Tallis 2017, 281).

time paradoxically both experientially immediate and yet removed from the immediate present. And yet even so, relentlessly again, it would seem we face a hurdle. Where, one might ask, in this material nature – a material nature here and now –, could one possibly cast one's eyes upon something that is not here and now, a moment ago or quite possibly long gone, as we have posited it? A remote analogy, nonetheless, might suggest a peak into that possibility – namely the stellar event scenario we mentioned earlier. One theory has it that we do indeed see into the past when looking up into the night sky and catching sight of that star. According to one school of thought, what one observes is a phenomenon of the past manifesting its remoteness, its thenness actually perceived in the night sky – even as one presently makes visual contact with it.

But on the other hand that star *is* long ago, so long ago as to be probably extinct, given the knowledge that science provides us from the 3rd person perspective. That knowledge, among other things, takes cognizance of the speed of light, its traveling in the before-and-after of sequential time, the time that takes time. Following that way of interpretation, what one sees – or thinks one is seeing in the past – is actually the effect of immediate sensations of light on the eyes of the observer, out of which the brain constructs images and representations of things such as stars. In other words, the only thing really happening is a present effect, not a seeing into the past. At least, according to this 3rd person appraisal.

Either way, both interpretations prove unsatisfactory for our purposes. The latter focuses on light that immediately strikes the eyes of the observer and, consequent to that, the representations constructed by the brain. Nothing here about an experience from the past. As for the former theory, even if starlight is evidence of seeing into the past, starlight is a far cry from that moment ago that's been on our agenda, with its rapturous or sorrowful intensity we've been seeking to bring back to life. And in any case, the notion of seeing into the past entails a host of unlikely possibilities: that what the star gazer is seeing now is not now, thereby defying the temporal constraint we've talked about, along with infringing on the field of presentness that defines our conscious awareness, the oneness of everything we see. Not to mention the paradox, in this alternative view, of experiencing two alignments, two nows, the one linked up there with that star, the other linked below to one's surroundings.

Stonewalled as we appear to be by the alternative approaches given above, there is yet another lead that may turn out more fruitful in our search for the past. This lead draws its rationale from the possibility that what we are seeking to find – however long ago that may be – manifests nonetheless, and exposes itself, as a presentness, a past experience that is not past at all in that it literally comes across as happening now, even though from a 3rd person appraisal it belongs somewhere or somehow in the past.

Taking on this line of inquiry requires an entirely different approach. The next two chapters will proceed in that way, first by questioning what in fact the loss of someone close to us, considered as a temporal and experiential moment ago, comes to mean from a purely 1st person perspective – from the exclusively 1st person now –, and how a difference here becomes highlighted when that perspective is compared to the temporal direction given by a 3rd person viewpoint. The second of the two chapters will move in a putatively contradictoriness direction, taking up alleged violations of the temporal constraint. Here we scan episodes from genres of writing, endeavoring to find wormholes that contradict the axiomatic temporality distinction between a past in the past and a present in the present.

Chapter 10

Do We Die?

First of all, it is important to make clear the question we are asking, how it pertains to a moment ago, and where the 1st person perspective fits into this inquiry.

The question we are asking here is simply another version of wistful meditation about that moment ago that seems irretrievable. Is that moment inescapably lost? Only in this case the question focuses on a person, let's say a loved one who has just died and thereby, putting it in terms of *nowness*, broken off the immediacy of contact with the living. The question of irretrievability is noted because – obvious as it seems – we seek to verify that that has in fact been the case, this death and its irretrievable loss, or whether an alternative analysis might indicate no such loss, or a loss due to other factors.

Let us point out also how the 1st person approach fits into this question. One would naturally suppose in this case that the 1st person perspective would most obviously pertain to the person lost, the person whose life is wrenched from a loved one in this “moment ago” circumstance of death. Obviously, however, dying is one thing and death in another, and one does not come back from the latter to tell the story, authenticate from the inside – i.e., from that 1st person perspective – what has actually happened, or if non-existence be anything at all. One can authenticate death by measurement standards, such as lack of brain functioning, but this is to use a *knowledge*d 3rd person appraisal – what amounts to inference – rather than the experiential now to not-now as a criterion of death. On the other hand, alleged out-of-body experiences as reported in some instances by recovered comatose patients or those resuscitated from apparently brain dead states may serve as rubric of inside testimony, testimony that counters the common presumption of death as a nonentity, but then the question remains about how reliably they tell us about death itself, the entry into its domain and its presumed *nowness*. And so what we will do in this chapter is adopt the next best alternative to ascertaining, by 1st person means, what is taken to be the perfunctory truism of death and its irretrievability in the language of “a moment ago”, doing so by adopting the 1st person perspective of the witness, the “I” observer who suffers a loss of this kind that transforms, for the observer, the moment-to-moment experiencing of the living into the moment ago of what once was.

The 1st person perspective of the witness is the now perspective. The knowing that comes by this means is immediately conveyed to the observer, immediately experienced by one's being awake to the world. What, then, does such a perspective tell us about death, and how is it different from the distanced appraisal that a 3rd person perspective would give us?

A child needs only a few years to appreciate that a human life does not go on forever. The brevity of life – at least from a 3rd person perspective – has been profoundly imbedded in human awareness since probably humanity's early origins, evidenced by the advent of burial mounds and grave sites. In her chapter "On the Conceptual Origin of Death", Sheets-Johnstone offers this mental reconstruction of how a prehistoric human's first dim presentiments of life's inevitable termination may have come about:

The concept of death is born when the sense of *I too* and the sense of distinctive contrast are heightened in equal measure. With the sense of *I too* I ultimately grasp *my* punctuated existence; with the sense of distinctive contrast, I grasp the inevitability of my death. The concept of death is thus as grounded in my utter likeness to the Other I once knew as it is in my experience of utter contrast to the Other here before me. A radical new understanding is born. This temporal stretch of being that I am is not just animate: it is a life, my life. And this life which is mine and which I am – this more than just animate being – is not a never-ending expanse of being but a punctuated one. In this moment I realize that it is precisely my possibility to be there where the Other is now, but in time. It is in this moment that I grasp both my living temporality and my ultimate end. (Sheets-Johnstone 1990: 228-229)¹

And so we die. Or do we? What exactly is the aspect of time that makes death obvious and the aspect of time that makes it not?

First of all, as her title itself indicates, Sheets-Johnstone is writing about the origin of a conception. That is its focus. The origin of a conception built almost entirely on a foundation of the before and after, or what we have referred to as the not-now of extended time. As the description unfolds, a scene is sketched out in which a presumably primeval human confronts a person who has just died, a person we may suppose to be kin or well acquainted to the narrator. In modern usage, our term "corpse" is applied to such as this lifeless figure which the narrator designates "the Other" and "the Other I once knew". And rather than merely "the Other I once knew", our usage might be more like the cliché "so and so has passed away". In any event, regardless of the wording, the mental deliberations of the depicted witness belong manifestly in the category of the not-now of extended time. The narrator grasps on this occasion the inevitable termination of her own life, a not-now that is not yet but ominous. Underly-

¹ [italics hers] Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "On the Conceptual Origin of Death," *The Roots of Thinking* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1990): 228-229.

ing all of this we detect a conceptual metaphor, not about death itself but about time, time as a moving or passing of events, or of ourselves as moving or passing by events and heading into a future that is in some sense already there awaiting us, a fate we are destined to arrive at sooner or later. "Passage of time" is how we commonly refer to this conception of time, a notion long familiar and still instilled in our thinking today.

Hence it becomes evident that the core of Sheet-Johnstone's ponderings about the conceptual origin of death, as embodied in the narrator's reflections, rides on a certain notion of time, a time that takes time, that changes and passes, and that pertains to what is either no longer or what is not yet, all of which exemplify the not-now status commonly attributed to time. But here is where we move from that not-now conceptualization and trek a different route, approaching the accounting of death and mortality from a different starting point. Instead of resolving the question of "Do we die?" by predefining the answer in terms of the before-and-after, the not yet and no longer, of linear time, let us go instead to a non-sequential notion of time – namely, this present time that comes to our immediate awareness, the time that we are always awake to in an immediate sense. This present time is what gives us this present world, the world that already is before we take the time to measure anything that takes time, for that shift to mediated time necessarily takes us to a perspective of the world that is other than what is at this very moment in our immediate awareness. We have spoken of present time as a precondition in that it makes possible that deliberated aspect of time, the one with linear extensions. This distinction between types of time is brought about by the fact that it is our human position anchored in the now that makes possible the plotting of a time that extends either into the not-now of the past or the not yet of the future. The plotting presupposes the precondition.

Given then the primacy of this starting point of time, this immediate now, the next step is to ask what it tells us about death and its attributed finality.

What it does – this now or present time – is turn the question around. Instead of addressing the question of death and answering by pointing to all the cemeteries, all the others I once knew but have passed away, it addresses the question of immediate change and how it exposes itself, this world at any moment that is different – however slightly – from the way it was a moment before.

Many changes go by unnoticed, changes in ourselves, for example. What alters consists frequently of absences undetected at first or in some cases not until years later – a former acquaintance whose absence is suddenly noticed, a message that accidentally comes to light or a scribbled note or impression about something discovered in house cleaning. And then as well there are those changes imbedded even in conspicuous everyday regularities – a sickness, a delay, unexpected weather conditions. However much our attention focuses on the everyday rhythms – waking in the morning, going to work, sleeping at night –,

the signature of the world at any present time is its difference from yesterday and from our memory of yesterday. One does not step in the same river twice, as the old adage puts it.

Our proposal then is that present time recasts the finality of death into the broadened category of change, what is changed at any one present time. It must be clarified, however, what is meant by this translation into “change” and how we are using that word. We mean specifically those changes which, on the one hand, are final and irrevocable, and which in addition take on the aspect of being already present at hand, a new situation manifested at this or that moment. Let us examine a little more closely these two significations of “change” as they will clarify how and why this recasting comes about when present time becomes the medium of our perspective on the question of death.

On the one hand, we mean by “change” those differences and transitions that are final, like that step into the river at whatever the point in time the current sweeps by. It no more flows backward than I am getting younger or today goes back to yesterday. That finality then is one part of what’s intended by this word “change” when we propose that the medium of present time recasts the question of death into one about change. But there is this other signification that comes about when we speak of “change”. It is captured in the word we have previously used, the word “differences” – that is to say, the differences we see about us in the landscape, the differences that are already there in this or that moment of present time. And here is where the example of death arises.

The threshold of death is crossed but there’s no process in the crossing because, when the aspect of time is restricted to the now, there are no linear extensions outside of the present, no processes that take time. What we have instead is simply a landscape as it already is, a setting new and different, and hence a death the passing of which is a misnomer for what in fact is already past, given a present time perspective – the time that doesn’t take time.

I stop at a railroad crossing. A train speeds by. I catch a glimpse of the inside. A moment of windows and faces. And where does it go, that moment? Does it go anywhere? The flame of the cigarette lighter goes “out”, but in what sense? One’s perfunctory answer to such questions resorts to linear notions of time. The train is still in existence, but later. The extinguished flame – a changed chemistry subsequent to the capped lighter. Or let’s take a lifeless body – signifying in linear terms the passing away from life to some other state, perhaps an afterlife, or an extended time without termination. One discerns this take on linearly explained non-existence even in Damasio’s description of patients who return to consciousness after being in a coma:

They can recall the descent into the nothingness of coma – much as we recall the induction of general anesthesia – and the return to knowingness, but nothing at all is

recalled of the intervening period, which can span weeks or months. It is legitimate to assume, given all the evidence, that little or nothing was in fact going on in the mind in such circumstances.²

We can see how this passage is oriented around linearity. “The descent” is recalled as being something, rather than nothing, because of the time sense implied by it, time as fading yet continuing, a before-and-after sense of time. Likewise, “intervening period”, the spanning of weeks and months, evokes an intended suggestion of linear activity from the outsider perspective, that of the doctor, acclimated to the prioritizing of time as order and sequence. But take away that linearity, limit the notion of time to mere transition, a state without extension, and the presumption is that nothingness is left, meaning the absence of 1st person existence except for the moribund body of the comatose patient, considered from a 3rd person perspective. “Nothingness” or “absence of existence”. In any case what might they mean from a 3rd person perspective? Either notion would seem to be a conception that reduces to an abstraction, like the number zero or a quantum particle’s potential existence prior to observation.³ Taking the 1st person perspective, on the other hand, one finds at least a hint of concrete meaning “nonexistence” might have – namely as an attribute of transition.

In linguistics, as noted earlier, there is this form of change that doesn’t take time but just is, and which goes by the name “incipient” or “aorist”. It usually applies to verb constructions that mark a transition where the sense of duration or process is absent. “He realized”, “She wakes up”, “They discovered”, or “at dawn” are some examples. The sense of non-progressing time, transition that

² Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 95.

³ The intractability of representation (in itself an act of extension in linear time) in the case of death and non-existence is illustrated by Dan Mathewson, who cites on this subject Derrida and Kenneth Burke. (1) Derrida: “It is well known that if there is one word that remains absolutely unassignable or unassigning with respect to its concept and to its thingness, it is the word ‘death.’” Jacques Derrida, *Aporias: Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the Limits of Truth* (trans. Thomas Dutoit) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22. (2) Burke: “To experience Death is, by the same token, to be beyond the terms of our existence here and now.” Kenneth Burke, “Thanatopsis for Critics: A Brief Thesaurus of Death and Dying”, in *Essays in Criticism 2* (1952), 373. Dan Mathewson, *Death and Survival in the Book of Job: Desymbolization and Traumatic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury [T & T Clark International], 2006), 20. The two quotations, taken together, suggest the inscrutability of death as well as the inscrutability of the absence of continuation, and by “continuation” we include that sense of continuation that memory provides in making language communicable by means of connections and references. Mathewson elicits this absence of continuation when he adds: “I am making a special case for death as an empty signifier that can be known only in reference to other signifiers, but as Derrida and others have demonstrated, this is in the nature of all signification.” (21, n. 94).

Having pointed out the above, we are now ready to return to our original question: Does the time that just is, namely present time, give us enough to go on in order to answer the question of whether we die or not? The question is crucial in this respect: For if it turns out that present time fails to do the job, fails to provide an eyewitness answer to the question of death, it would seem that any other aspect of time – a future time, a past time, a time that takes time, a time that is not accessible to the immediacy of the present time of death –, all such aspects of time that partake of representational means, all these must fail as well. Quite obviously, death does not happen in a representational or virtual way. It is only its translation as 3rd person data that appears to do that, situate death along a linear schema of time, as an effect subsequent to a cause. But if all we had to rely on were schemas of this sort and representations in not-now time, there would, of course, be no evidence of actual death. There would be nothing on which to base its conceptualizing in linear terms.

So then, how does the picture change when we turn from the linear to the experiential present, the time that hovers between past and future? Essentially what comes about is the replacing of notions like “passing” and “passing away” and “afterlife”, replacing them with “transition” as we have been applying that term, the transition that does not take time.

What present time does give us, as grist for this question of death, is this *changed* that we have frequently referred to, not a *changed* that is passing from a “what” to a “what” but a *changed* that does not take time. Given that death is a witnessable event, it becomes symptomatic of the world itself in its incessant change, its incessant stimuli of change and transition without which there would be no witnessable present time, and in fact no world we are awake to. Conversely, were there to be no present time, there would be no death, for how could someone die except that it take place in this or that present time? Hence, we can see the vital role present time plays on this question of death, although tradition allots most of death’s explanations and answers to notions of temporality that apply to ongoing time, the time that takes time, rather than to present time.⁴

But does any of what we have just said give us a glimmer of hope for that moment ago that Part 2 of this book has been arduously in search of, the retrieval of that lived past, even of that once living prehistoric corpse depicted at the beginning of this chapter? One commonly supposes, as does Sheets-Johnstone’s stone-age ponderer, that death marks an end to one’s lived existence and experience – irretrievable at least in linear time. But does experience itself – considered in its temporal immediacy – have an end or a beginning?

⁴ Discussed further in this author’s “The ‘After’ in Medieval Afterlife: a Vertical or Horizontal Arrow of Time,” *Thise Stories Beren Witnesse: The Landscape of the Afterlife in Medieval and Post-Medieval Imagination*, ed. Liliana Sikorska (Warsaw: Peter Lang, 2012): 59-62.

What would border the end of experiential reality – non-experiential reality?⁵
And furthermore, should we even be looking for that moment ago “in” the past?

But then, where are we going with this?

⁵ Compare Strawson: There is zero observational evidence for the existence of nonexperiential reality. . . . All there is, is one great big wholly ungrounded wholly question-begging theoretical intuition or conviction. Strawson, “Mind and Being” (2017), 94.

“When his family heard of this they came to take charge of him, saying, ‘He is out of his mind.’”

Mark 3: 21

Chapter 11

Contra-lucidity?

So I happen to be passing in front of St. Luke’s Catholic Church on my way to Denny’s restaurant in Lake Worth, Florida, abruptly stopping literally on impulse in front of the church. I enter just as the priest, Father Andrew, is giving his sermon and speaking the following words:

. . . . It may be helpful to realize that Jesus’ resurrection is not simply the next thing that happened to him. It is not a case of: died on Friday, lay in the tomb Saturday, rose on Sunday. Jesus was not “3 days older” on Easter Sunday. . . .

Coincidence in view of this chapter 11 of the book I had just finished. It begins as follows:

From our discussion of the just now in chapter 5 (sec. 2: “The changed and the mediated”), it can be detected that this “just now” shows itself as a slight misnomer when one considers the fact that the *changed from* (i.e., this “just now”) of a present perception is inextricably tied into the same time frame as the *changed to*, that aspect of the present perception that stands in relief and chiaroscuro like, made so by its differentiation from the just now. What we stressed in that earlier discussion was the fact that the differentiation between these two aspects of oneness was not, in fact, one between the before of what memory records in the after of the present moment. Granted that so much of what is intelligible in our present perceptions – the familiarity of sensory objects, their recognized functions, people’s faces, the very recognized changes in general – is accounted for by memory and what our cognitive faculties bring to the scene, nonetheless when we speak of this instant we are talking about – this instant just now – from a 1st person perspective it’s a before not accounted for by anything in the past, neither accounted for by traces of what our memory represents, but instead is an inherent part of the very presentational moment that one is awake to, that immediacy of time that distinguishes the present perception as present. And so it must be remembered that when we are using the term “just now”, it is intended in the sense

of now as well, even though chapter 8 considered it among the designations of the not-now for the purpose of tracking the moment ago of a lived experience in the past. Consequently, the important implication that arises as a result of this dual existence in the present is this: The just now, along with the now, derives externally. Our judgments, our memory and mental representations, have no role in arbitrating either of these two aspects of the now, which instead come under the mandate of the temporal constraint. However my cognitive faculties help in whatever judgments I make about today's time and the field of view that is now present before me, whatever my memory does in aid of this or fails to do, even in providing a sense of duration or continuity – all that has nothing to do with this dual aspect of nowness we've been speaking about, the discernment of which is based not on cognitive input but on the experience of being awake to the just now and the now. That discernment falls, not into the category of cognitive input, but of mental lucidity and contact with the world.

But now comes a sampling of moment ago scenarios, lived experiences from the past gleaned from a variety of genres, that have grounds to be taken seriously, at least in one respect or another, and that would seem to contest what has just been laid out. In what follows, the temporal constraint gets purportedly trashed, apparent dysfunctioning shows up as purported insight, and a past that captures more than just the "just now" becomes part of the lived present. Might there not be here, if such altered states can be taken seriously, a circuitous path to that moment ago we've been in search of?

We will see immediately that these scenarios about to be described are faced in most instances by problems of corroboration, in particular corroborating witnesses in the present world, and are controversial on other grounds. Furthermore, in the episodes taken from theater we cite only one attestation of time distortion in any real sense. The other two are openly fictitious elements of the plot, included only in giving circumstantial evidence of audience belief systems regarding the possibility of temporal anomalies. And as for our final source of temporal intrusion, while its genre as history is itself the subject of historical debate, it constitutes an episode about time aberration that bears considerable responsibility for having sewn the cultural seeds of Western civilization for its ensuing 2,000 years, however one might want to explain that outcome.

1. Grotowski and the past/present

In the 1960s the Polish theater director Jerzy Grotowski and his Polish Laboratory Theatre were giving performances of the play *Akropolis*. Grotowski was interested in breaking the barrier between stage and audience, and did this by various means – seating the audience on the stage or separate from one another, employing incantatory methods in actors' speech and movements, and by lan-

guage that was not so much communicative as emotive. This is how the British director Peter Brook describes his reactions as spectator to one of the performances:

Now it seems to me that in *Akropolis* by the same sincerity and mastery of deep rhythmic elements, the pulse of life in a concentration camp actually came out in the open, and I had the feeling of something nasty, truly repellent and one that stops speech. . . . Grotowski does something that no film can do. A film also refers to the past. He actually makes the sense of the concentration camp for a moment reappear. And it is there. And you can taste it, sense it, touch it, and feel it. And you can't say that it doesn't exist anymore in this world. . . . There it is again, a group of men make this come about. In that sense it's like a black mass.¹

Has the past actually come back? What does Peter Brook mean by “sense”? Does he mean it literally – a past in the present – or is he intending a metaphor or an effect that merely seemed literal, an impression brought about by the affective and kinesthetic behavior of the actors? Of course we could ask him that question (if alive today), but any answer he might give in the literal direction would still pose the same questions, that of having us determine by his words the authenticity of an event experientially incommunicable and ineffable, namely the immediacy of a past in a present at the time of his attendance. Anything he might say to substantiate that lived past – the incidents, where it happened, recognized personalities, even the smallest details – could theoretically be accounted for by memory – a knowledge remembered about this or that concentration camp read about prior to Brook's attendance at the performance. The one thing, however, that could not be accounted for by either knowledge or memory would be the authenticity of the spectator Brook's *knowing* of that past immediacy by simply being there at the performance, a witnessing of skewed time not unlike the witnessing we are seeking in our quest for that moment ago. A justified belief of that kind would amount to a kind of “the having is the knowing”, as the philosopher Galen Strawson would say, an experiential knowing evinced by one's being confronted by this skewed phenomenon.² Knowledge, as opposed to this know-

¹ Magda Romanska, *The Post-traumatic Theatre of Grotowski and Kantor: History and Holocaust in Akropolis and the Dead Class* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 124.

² Strawson, “Mind and Being”, 95; note also his comment: “As for ‘knowing’: it suggests a distinction between the knowing subject and the thing constituted as object of knowledge by the act of knowing that I also reject as inapplicable to acquaintance-knowledge; perhaps one might better say ‘the knowing is the being.’” Strawson, “Panpsychism? Reply...,” 254.

In contrast to the problem of authenticating phenomenological evidence raised above, in the case of technically brain dead patients who recover and allegedly report details of the operation they underwent while in a brain-dead state, the details they provide would appear more persuasive in substantiating the immediacy of their attested perceptions while in a brain-dead state, since memory would presumably have been inoperative to either recall the

ing, does not help us here to understand or explain it, although knowledge of the fact that others in the audience reacted similarly to Brook would at least lend consensual support to his claim of temporal displacement, supposing his description literally meant just that.

2. Ineffability and intrinsic properties: a debate

The issue underlying all of this, a factor that makes contra-lucidity accounts difficult to assess (and by “contra-lucidity” we mean specifically one’s direct acquaintance with an experiential time that violates the temporal constraint), is how any experience purporting to be ineffable – that is, exposed to a domain of truth that others don’t customarily share – can be convincingly communicated by words. How to verify verbal descriptions in this terrain, if at all? It is a question that has been hotly debated, as represented by Daniel Dennett on the one side and Thomas Nagel on the other, with Richard Rorty serving as arbiter. Dennett writes:

I let Nagel have everything he wants about his own intimate relation to his phenomenology *except* that he has some sort of papal infallibility about it; he can have all the ineffability he wants; what he can’t have (without an argument) is *in principle* ineffability. . . . In objecting to the very idea of an objective standpoint from which to gather and assess phenomenological evidence, Nagel is objecting to neutrality itself.³

We can take it that by “objective standpoint” Dennett is invoking the distanced assessment, the 3rd person non-involved perspective of someone who uses logical discourse to assess the validity of truth claims. Rorty sees a problem with this “neutrality” stand that Dennett takes, a neutrality that presupposes language (and heterophenomenology – Dennett’s method of analysis) can do the trick of resolving issues of experiential describability, qualia being an example:

Notice that if we once admit that there are such things as intrinsic properties, knowledge of which is independent of the language we use, we can no longer think of heterophenomenology as a neutral method. For the hetero-phenomenologist’s privilege of telling you what you were *really* talking about is not compatible with the claim that our knowledge of some things, e.g. of the existence of qualia, is knowledge which cannot be affected by changing the way we talk, abandoning the pictures we have previously used language to sketch. So Dennett’s suggestion that he has found neutral ground on which to argue with Nagel is wrong. By countenancing, or refusing

medical procedure and in any case would have been inoperative during the procedure. (An example of a book on that subject is Marjorie H. Woollacott’s *Infinite Awareness: the Awakening of a Scientific Mind* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

³ [italics his] Dennett, Daniel, “Back from the Drawing Boards,” 211.

to countenance, such knowledge, Nagel and Dennett beg all the questions against each other.⁴

The relevant point in Rorty's overview is that the knowledge that he speaks about – knowledge of intrinsic properties, knowledge of qualia such as colors and sensory features – is precisely what we have designated as “knowing”, a 1st person experiential acquaintance that brings us, for example, in contact with the now and its temporal constraint. What we have distinguished from this knowing is the knowledge that falls within the sphere of Dennett's “objective” standpoint, namely a 3rd person approach that would deem illegitimate the ineffability that Nagel talks about, experiential content that language and discourse analysis would be incapable of describing. So the question we come back to in our temporal probing is how and whether words can convey one's exposure to a temporal anomaly such as suggested in this first spectator episode at a Grotowski performance, or whether its ineffability rules that out? The answer to that question would conceivably have bearing in our case – the likelihood of finding any precedent for that moment ago we're in search of.

However, in this first example we have given of skewed temporality, the problem extends not only to the question about how literal the spectator intended his description, not only as well to the question of the literal happening of what the spectator appeared to verbally allege, but even the historical basis itself. Was there a specific circumstance to begin with – a locatable historical reference point, which allegedly came back to life on stage?

3. The past/present from classical theater

Given these uncertainties, let us try yet another route to the evidence of a recaptured moment. The contra-lucidity episodes picked out in this second try belong as well to the fictional genre of theater and make no pretence of the audience taking anything as historically verifiable from the effects of staging. Instead, the basis for skewed temporality comes about in a different manner. The first of these episodes is taken from the scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where, having witnessed the words and visage of his reincarnated father, Hamlet speaks these lines to Horatio:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 5

– which essentially amounts to “what you and I have just seen, Horatio, is something that can be believed only by being witnessed” – i.e., an ineffability. In this

⁴ Richard Rorty, “Holism, Intrinsicity, Transcendence,” in *Dennett and His Critics: Demystifying Mind*, ed. Bo Dahlbom (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993), 188.

case, however, the circumstances – being scripted in the play – are easily described: The physical manifestation of Hamlet's deceased father, his voice and utterances, the recognition of him by his son and by a second witness, the veracity of the occasion supported by later evidence that the father's allegations turn out to be true, affecting the outcome of the entire play. All this serving as objective evidence of an experience of revelation on Hamlet's part. And yet there is the ineffable component, this contra-lucidity of a present perception that would include what unmistakably belongs to the past – a deceased person – as an inherent feature of an immediacy that is constrained to the now.

The second of the episodes we have selected of a scripted diaphanous past/present comes from ancient Greek theater and can be briefly summarized. It is the scene from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* where the prophet Tiresias confronts Oedipus and informs him of his horrendous past and doomed future. In this case it is the words of the prophet that render Oedipus the captive of a diaphanous past/present and present/future fate that he cannot escape from.

Why then these two incidents? First of all, the episodes provide us with an ineffability that's plotted in the script, unambiguous in that it hinges neither on a spectator's experiential evaluations nor on evidence from a factual source to back up the authenticity of a spectator's impressions. In the first incident, the deceased father of Hamlet is bodily present, as scripted in the play. Furthermore, what the deceased father tells his son is the keystone on which the entire rest of the plot depends. And so how to explain this pivotal role of contra-lucidity in a classical drama with otherwise psychological acuity and character/situational realism as befitting a play in the genre of tragedy? A similar question can be asked of *Oedipus the King* – why the pivotal role of the past/present, future/present powers of Tiresias in determining the plot structure of the entire play that is otherwise convincing on non-contra-lucidity grounds?

The answer one might expect is that in previous times people were more superstitious. Their views were influenced by religious indoctrination and, lacking insights provided by the development of science, they were more susceptible to beliefs in witchcraft and the paranormal. But this explanation simply begs the question about "intrinsic properties" that Rorty talks about. If intrinsicity or "ineffability in principle" is a feature of the world – the big question –, and if skewed time as in these scripted instances belongs in that category, it becomes no longer incongruous to find it being given a pivotal role in a serious drama about worldly events. Of course, such a species of script is rare in today's world – except perhaps as comedy, fantasy, science fiction. There are many back-to-the-future versions of time aberration, but not involving the policies of high government officials living in our familiar world. The reason, in fact, for including these two examples from classical drama is precisely that they were *not* presented as comedy or fantasy. Judging from the two plays' extraordinary success over the centuries, we can assume that the skewed temporal incidents in their

plot structures have not, for audiences in general, undermined the plausibility of the story line, suggesting that while, in terms of audience “knowledge”, such incongruity of time would have been taken as poetic license, in terms of the audience’s “knowing”, on the other hand, the incidents of skewed time would not have been met with incredulity, or at least less so than today. Performed today, a deceased father’s dialogue with his son might pass as a period piece or as a category of metaphysical or psychological drama, but it is hard to find such an example in realistic drama portraying social/political events where skewed temporality is intended to be taken seriously.

In any case what these last two cited scenes from drama have given us is merely a scripted aberration of time, depicting a lived circumstance from the not-now of the past or future that comes back in one form or another to haunt the present. So let us now proceed in search of a better claim to precedents of a returning past by turning from the medium of fiction to instances of knowing that are recorded as non-fiction, namely gospel accounts in the New Testament that encompass a lived immediacy of the past in the immediacy of the present. The question behind this probe: Will it bring us any closer to precedent and plausibility of that lived experience we are in search of, that lived experience of a moment ago?

4. Sensory knowing in New Testament gospel episodes

Though a measure of consensus becomes apparent in comparing these gospel accounts of Christ taken from the New Testament, there are of course numerous questions as to this or any religion’s historical basis, problems in determining records, the sources, and so forth. With the gospel accounts in particular, there arises the problem of accounting for the motif of a bodily resurrection that seemed alien to contemporary thinking at the time of Christ. On the other hand, a recent excavation from that period uncovered a slab tablet with the words “on the third day” and a word possibly decipherable as “live”, phraseology suggesting the motif of resurrection was not all that foreign.⁵ Then there is the more fundamental problem of historical access, limited to the beliefs of the early disciples, and the question of reliable original sources. The puzzle deepens when one seeks to explain the crystallization of followers of Christ’s message, martyrdom, and the subsequent conversion of Rome. These are issues that extend in directions we will not pursue, as our purpose is limited to scrutinizing the temporal cameos themselves.⁶ Our only argument given in defense of taking the

⁵ See article in footnote that follows.

⁶ Such issues are taken up, for example, in Nicholas T. Wright’s *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003): vol. 3: 9, 15, *et al.* Reference to the slab tab-

gospel descriptions as sufficiently plausible for our purposes is the extraordinary impact of the events they describe, and in particular the impact of those cameo scenes of violated temporal constraint about to be discussed. So let us see what we come up with in this exploration of what can be termed the temporally ambiguous in scenes from the New Testament gospels.

The backdrop is Old Testament history, more or less conforming to our notion of linear line – time capable of calculation and measure – with the exception of an eschatological future, a future marked by the coming of the kingdom of God and the end of time in a quantitative and countable sense. Against this backdrop Jesus appears according to scripture, his message as much about his presence as it is his words. To begin with, we'll take up the 2-in-1 cameo of a future/present: a future marked by immediacy that is doctrinally purported to have become present in the embodiment of Christ before his disciples. This is one of the ways that notion comes through, when Jesus says these words:

No one comes to the Father except through me. . . . Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14: 6, 9)

What emerges, at least by implication, is this suggestion of a doppelganger, as we shall call it, a commingling of two experiential nows at once, an eschatological now of that Christ/Father embodiment and the now of that witnessed moment when Christ speaks. Let us pause here to discuss this in more detail.

What first of all should be pointed out is the very concreteness, the physicality of the circumstances wherein the purported bistable apprehension of time is implicitly conveyed. The second part of the message, at least if we are to take it literally, leaves little doubt that the recognition of this doppelganger of time is achieved through the medium of a sensory knowing. What is grasped is what is immediately witnessed, exactly in the same way we have described the channel by which the immediacy of the now comes to be known, and exactly why we have conceived of it as thinglike. How at variance to the significance of this concreteness, and the sensory knowing that comes out of it, was the Greek skeptic's distrust of sensory impressions, as epitomized by Socrates' words:

And . . . the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses) were we not saying that the soul is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders

let is in Ethan Bronner's article "Tablet ignites debate on Messiah and Resurrection"; *The New York Times*, July 6, 2008. [www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/world/middleeast/06stone.html].

and is confused; the world spins around her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change?⁷

But again, contrary to this, a version of this sensory knowing comes through in this gospel account of the deaf mute whose hearing is restored:

And they brought to Him one who was deaf. . . . And He took him aside from the multitude by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva. (Mark 7: 32-33)

Turning back to the above mentioned present/future doppelganger, namely the Father-in-Christ exchange of words, the question of what this entails if taken literally, how it impinges on the time of history, has led to extensive eschatological debate over the centuries. Had the future been realized in the present (the disciples' present time)? Was that the intended message, God's presence and the end of history? A prominent figure in this line of research, N.T. Wright gives this explanation, "This is what early Christian eschatology was all about: not the literal end of the space-time universe but the sense that world history was reaching, or indeed had reached, its single intended climax."⁸

But yet a third aspect comes out of this future/immediacy, Father-in-Christ passage (John 14), and that is the dialogue adds more that would lead us to qualify, in any case, the plausibility of this doppelganger, this bi-temporal witnessing of Christ. When Christ utters the words "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", those words are in response to Philip, one of his disciples, who has just addressed him with the words, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." It is to this appeal that Christ answers according to scripture, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14: 8-9) Hence, though Christ implies a dual embodied identity, the literal intent of his word "seen" is thrown into question since the identity is not apparent, at least not visually, to one of the witnesses. And so it becomes unclear whether the insight as to Jesus' identity is intended to take the form of a knowledge or a knowing – that is to say, a knowledge based on what Jesus lectured about, precepts communicated by words, or an ineffable kind of knowing by direct acquaintance where the witness becomes immediately aware of the figure of a person comprising two time zones. From the added context of Jesus' response – "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?" – the meaning suggests the buildup of an understanding over time rather than anything immediately understood by one's being immediately present to it. Still,

⁷ Plato, *Phaedo* [79], *The Apology, Phaedo and Crito of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett. The Harvard Classics, Vol. 2, part 1 (New York: Bartleby.com, 2001).

⁸ Nicholas T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 22.

there is some uncertainty the other way when Jesus remarks, “Believe me that I am in the Father . . . or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14: 11) In the latter case, the witnessing of healings and miraculous powers would show itself as an immediate understanding brought about in an immediate present time – a seeing is believing –, though the resulting image of the miracle worker, in the minds of the witnesses, could be other than that of a God or Father.

5. Gospel accounts of past/present doppelganger encounters

However inconclusive the above evidence of skewed time, we now come to more substantial ground, again presupposing the narratives to be accurate descriptions of witnessings. Here we take up Resurrection cameo episodes in the gospels where, as depicted, it is evident the sensory knowing encompasses the commingling of nows from two time frames, past and present.

The most explicit of these commingling episodes occurs when Christ tells Thomas:

Reach here your finger, and see my hands, and reach here your hand, and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving but believing. (John 20: 27)

And Thomas responds:

My Lord and My God! (John 20: 28)

And so the question: Is Thomas touching the pre-deceased body of Christ, the wound identifying it as such, which would insinuate that, by being pre-deceased, it could not possibly have been a living presence solely in the present? Or is Thomas touching the body of the person who is presently speaking to him, the present body of the present speaker? If we omit from consideration what is doctrinally referred to as “glorified body”, he appears to be touching both. Hence, the doppelganger, past and present commingled. The same question can be asked of Lazarus rising from the dead – “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11: 43). Which Lazarus is this? Which time zone? – a question equally pertinent to the other post-Resurrection scenes, Christ addressing Mary (John 20: 14-16), or giving evidence of his physicality to fellow travelers (Luke 24: 37-43):

In their panic and fright they thought they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you disturbed? Why do such ideas cross your mind? Look at my hands and my feet; it is really I. Touch me, and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bones as I do.” As he said this he showed them his hands and feet. They were still incredulous for sheer joy and wonder, so he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of cooked fish, which he took and ate in their presence.

Which voice? Which body? And from which time zone? It appears to be from both time zones. We can extend the indications of this doppelganger motif to centuries of its reported manifestation in devotional image veneration. In his book *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg describes the doubling of two time zones in one in the following way: “[J]ust as the god is in the stone, so he is also in the image (of the god). Responses to both classes of object are predicated on the identity of sign and signified, or in the case of images, of the represented with that which it represents. The historical evidence for this identity is abundant. . . .”⁹ So, on the one hand, we have the image that is immediately present to the devotee. On the other hand, we have allegedly coming to life in the image that which the image represents, a devotional figure such as the Virgin Mary – an incursion of the past into the present. To all of this we have applied in this chapter the label “contra-lucidity” because it contradicts the principle of perceptual lucidity that Part 1 of this book has been established on, namely our captivity in, and involuntary adherence to, the immediacy of present time, which we have dubbed the “temporal constraint”. Of course, one can simply dismiss, as a general rule, reported instances of doppelganger and reclassify them as misguided impressions. But that is too swift and simple an explanation. As we shall see shortly, “history”, “knowledge”, “fact” cannot hold up as arbiters of sensory knowing. The temporal schema on which their accreditations are based is determined by linear time, a distancing structure of analysis. Furthermore, given the range and tradition of significance attached to this field of experiential contact (and found in various religious traditions), and the plain meaning of the words in some of these descriptions, it would seem unwarranted to brush aside, as misguided, this record of testimony altogether. And as it is a subject that weighs in on the meaning of the now, we will posit these bi-temporal episodes as worthy of serious consideration and rank them as a second exception (the first being the immediacy of the “just now”) that introduces a contingency into what has previously been stated axiomatically as the now’s temporal constraint.

Let us recapitulate the prototypical descriptive value these witnessings have for the bi-temporal experience we’ve been looking for, that moment ago. What is found here, first of all, is something concrete – a tableau or scene portraying a disciple’s or involved spectator’s knowing by acquaintance, a sensory knowing by virtue of the very flesh-and-blood otherness of what is immediately at hand. Second, this otherness, temporally speaking, shows itself as directly present and meaningful to the viewer. By this, we are not referring to doctrinal knowledge, words of counsel, ideas in the abstract, but rather an image or spectacle that is being brought to one’s sensory attention – and in

⁹ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 77.

particular the aspect of its temporality. Such a cameo, by its very exposure, is the message. By contrast, there is the role of what we, our cognitive faculties, bring to our sense perception – memory, intelligibility, interpretation. As said before, necessarily they play a major role in the recognition of what is being brought to the witness’s attention. But as to the currency of what might qualify as that moment ago – the fact of a witnessed scene’s *experienced* temporality – that aspect we have necessarily plotted externally as part of the otherness of the scene itself. At least as regards the immediate present in general, however the purported ways it is claimed to be manifested, that is not something we invent. It is something we wake up to. If it were not so, as we’ve reiterated throughout, it would spell knowledge’s doom, the latter thereupon consigned to nothing other than a past-to-present brain or evolutionary-manufactured simulation.

6. Implications of the bi-temporal hypothesis

Taking these cited witnessings of bi-temporal immediacy as having necessarily occurred in someone’s present time, and given our discussion in Part 1 in defense of present time as being only present time, only *this* present time, the question that invariably strikes our attention is how to reconcile the bi-temporal experience in the present time of Jesus’ day – assuming its authenticity – with the present time of today. Are they not obviously two different present times, two “nows”, necessarily evoking an unavoidable plurality?

N.T. Wright, in defending the thesis that, as he puts it, the Resurrection poses “at least a historical *problem*”, begins his work on this subject by analyzing meanings of “history” – history as event, as significant event, provable event, writings about events in the past, and what modern historians can say about it. In addressing our question in the paragraph above – the apparent contradiction about nows –, we will go about our answer by likewise starting there, only limiting our focus to the meaning of history in its temporal layout, its spreadsheet of events over time, history in other words as sequence and chronology, as “the not-now of extended time”, the category we assigned it in chapter 9. It will be remembered that what we concluded from our brief perusal of that branch of the non-now – history in a linear sense – was that a search in that direction in the hope of finding in that branch of knowledge a lived moment from the past, or what we dubbed “a moment ago”, was in vain. What was shown there serves in fact to earmark our answer as to why we can speak of one now, even in the face of what obviously seems a stark distinction between the then present time of the witnesses in the gospel accounts and our own present time.

Let us clarify our point here by alluding once again to that time-lag discussion of the star gazed at in the sky in chapter 9. Knowledge tells me it’s extinct, but only on the basis of my and others’ presumed lucidity – that is, on

the basis of a uniformity of immediate time I am aligned with the otherness of that star that I presently see. Without that lucidity, without that shareable experiential contact with the starlight, I cannot even go the next step of gaining knowledge about measured time and that star's existence in that calculated respect. Upon taking that next step, however, what subsequent knowledge informs me of is measured time and measured distances and what I can conclude about the star on that basis. What such knowledge cannot inform me of is the now of that star that I perceive, perceive as other and as directly evident, and which I perceive as uniform in time with the same now of my act of perceiving. The "when" of that perceived star, the "when" of that now, is therefore the question. Pre-extinct? Post-extinct? Knowledge cannot tell us. Precisely this absence of knowledge is how we proceed to go about answering the question of two nows from two different historical eras. And so our answer: Both the now then and the now of the present world are indeterminable and indistinguishable in linear time language, ungraspable in the sequentially discrete language that fact and knowledge – the knowledge of history – provide us with. In a nutshell: such knowledge cannot be the means to track down the now from either era, anymore than it can find the now (or earlier now) of that star that is gazed at.

What we are leading to is this. The doppelganger witnessings alleged in the gospel accounts confront us with a different question. Not – "Do the witnessings qualify as history?" – but rather – "Do the witnessings disqualify history as arbiter?" What answer we give to either, and which question we choose to answer, ultimately rides on which perspective we choose to adopt, namely a 3rd person or 1st person perspective. Evaluating the gospel witnessings in terms of a distanced appraisal and sequential time, there seems no alternative other than to consign the perceptual intermingling of before and after to the category of "historical problem" or perhaps "false impressions". Evaluating the witnessings, on the other hand, on the basis of a 1st person perspective, one discerns the alternative path of a mode of sensory knowing that has no linear dimension to it, no distancing in linear time. History, in that situation, cannot get at this doppelganger witnessing because history cannot get into it. Speaking of them ahistorically, we can say the witnessings are plausibly there – as a sensory knowing – but are plausibly here just as well. Hence, not two "nows", but one. Of course, this does not mean that one's 1st person perspective in today's world can be any more successful than one's 3rd person perspective in penetrating the sensory knowing of witnesses from Christ's era, or for that matter in penetrating the sensory knowing of a trauma victim or spectator of Grotowski's *Acropolis*. What it does mean is that standards of truth become different, simply because a 1st person perspective applied to these witnessings would take its cue from what they purport, their descriptions at face value, rather than screen them through the lens of linear time.

Moreover, in this 1st person respect, the feature of their being reportable only as sensory knowing, rather than coming through as a non-immediate source of knowledge, would not cast a subjective light on them as it would from a 3rd person perspective. Author of *Revelation as History*, Wolfhart Pannenberg points out how the 3rd person perspective does this when he writes, “It is so difficult, in our tradition, to avoid an alternative; either what is conceived by human knowledge is taken as something quite independent from being known, or it is considered to be merely subjective.”¹⁰

So now where does this bring us in our quest for that moment ago? Being other and not lost to linearity, we can say that it nonetheless “subsists” – the word Milic Capek uses when speaking about the past. On the other hand, it can as well be stated, from our previous not-now analysis, that this moment ago veers off from two of the very categories Capek speaks about when he adds the words we have quoted earlier, namely that, “If the past were a mere nothingness, the whole distinction between the faithful and false memory, between history and myth would collapse.”¹¹ The problem is, in this Part 2 of the book, we have looked and yet in neither of those locations did we find that moment ago, that lived immediacy in the past, to be faithful or false – that is, neither in memory nor in history. But then again, even to speak of that lived immediacy as in the past is a misnomer, as shown above, for lived immediacies do not function according to chronologies and sequential time.

And so we arrive at Part 3 of this book, “Nature in the Now”, the final stage of our journey, the final frontier in our search for that moment ago.

¹⁰ Quoted from an exchange with physicist John A. Wheeler, in Richard Q. Elvee, ed., *Mind in Nature*, 29.

¹¹ Milic Capek, “Immediate and Mediate Memory”: 1-2.

Part 3

Nature in the Now

Chapter 12

The “in” Question Anew

We sit by the pool. I have never seen her before. She speaks Finnish, I speak English. No communication in that sense, just two conversation tracks. However, a familiarity in her eyes conveys the impression that this woman, about 50 years old, already knows me, intuits the gist of what I’m saying, how I think about things, so much so that I continue to talk in English, she in Finnish, like it’s a normal conversation. Her male friend – or husband – comes by and sits down. I ask her a question, ask him to translate. He sums up her answer in a word – gibberish. Coherent speech, the Finnish and English she once knew, a relic of the past. She looks too young for Alzheimer’s, I’m thinking. I sit there puzzled. The lucidity of that self/other contact was there. The interaction, spontaneity of the moment, seeming alertness – none of that was absent, however deeply the disease had struck her memory – and most conspicuously had struck the memory of sentence structure. Of course, one could argue that at a later stage of the disease even that would be wiped out – any remnants of lucidity, social interaction, seeming alertness. All a matter of time. But then again, one could look at it in an entirely different way. Which “time” are we speaking about?

There is the linear time by which we calculate distances into the past and future, as if calculation were inherently a part of distances and distances moved into the past and future. Then there is the time that defines our awakened connection to the world, a uniformity of time connecting self and other, and that eludes calculation in the very connecting, such as between two people in conversation by the pool. What we are speaking about in this second instance of temporality is an entwined time that neither moves to the past, nor becomes an “ago”, nor is in relation to any other time that does. It just is. To take this one step further, this connecting uniformity of time between self and other is not so describable as to be strictly “in” relation, or “in” anything at all – spatial or temporal, not even in a linearly extended or timelessly extended universe.

That is what this chapter will argue.

1. An entwined now that was

An entwined now between two people sitting by the pool. Something so fleeting, so immediate, so unextracted from the concrete, that it is impossible I could be writing about it as it occurs. Necessarily it's all in retrospect. In fact, a moment long gone. Where did it go, one wonders. Into the past? A now no longer? A now "ago"? Did it go anywhere? But we have already discussed this in chapter 5. It can't have gone anywhere, given the temporal constraint of its staying put – even in its countenance as a *changed to!* And yet here I am writing about it – this entwined now such as is exemplified in that conversation by the pool – writing about it as if it were something that belonged to the past and "in" time, as if it had gone somewhere in linear time and space. How do we explain this inconsistency?

One, of course, is not at a loss at expressing words to designate its place in the past, such as the very words "an entwined now that was", thereby conveying the suggestion of a non sequitur or a poetic circumlocution of some sort, or perhaps a notion that spins in some metaphorical way with concepts like complementarity in theoretical science or a time-warp plot in science fiction. But what would clearly deprive the expression of any coherent logic at all would be to deem "the entwined now that was" a knowledge claim. It would be as fruitless (and self-contradictory) to attempt to find this entwined now in any of knowledge's not-now repositories, just as it was shown fruitless in chapters 8 and 9 to retrieve that moment ago in such places. The reason is evident in the time-that-takes-time implied by knowledge's very approach, its very records as knowledge, the very words of a text. By abstracting from the concrete, words and records effectuate a distancing from the now, rather than bring the knowledge-seeker close in and so merge (from a 1st person perspective) the witness with the external terrain of the witnessed and immediate. Hence, no "now that was" in these not-now fields of knowledge.

That being so, however, a paradox naturally arises. How is it possible one can proceed to write about the now at all, or about an entwined now that language necessarily thrusts into the past, being made representational, if accessibility to any now is only by way of the instantaneous and immediate? This seeming quandary epitomizes a gap in knowledge that only knowing – the immediacy of awareness as it is taking place – can fill. "Ago" and "was" are linear-based terms, but the "entwined now that was" is, in fact, about a time that – lacking measurable and countable features – is inseparable from any other now. After all, what evidence is there to show to the contrary? Empirical investigation has yet to divulge a delay between immediacies of now time, such as an immediacy of now delay. What one can conclude from this is that *any* time that was, any description of the past, any record, any text – while

necessarily configured as past by the very nature of the medium and mode of construal – they are all platformed on the immediate present time, the now from which, by the distancing mechanism of language, the past becomes identified as past, knowledge becomes implicitly received as that which is configured as distanced from immediacy. I can write about an entwined now that was, such as happened by the pool, but the “happened” performs as an artifact of what is actually happening: my remembering something now and writing about it. Hence, a better way to interpret this “entwined now that was” is not as a knowledge claim but as a recalling that occurs in an immediate setting of knowing.

This brings us back to that distinction which several scholars on the subject have brought out between “knowledge” and “knowing”. Sarah Waterlow, for one, has noted the need of a present time for the constructing and verifying of statements about events, or what comes to be treated as knowledge. But that need she ascribes to “conditions of our knowledge, not to what it is that we claim to know”. Hence, her differentiation between the present-time conditions and knowledge itself. Another commentator on the subject, Jesse Butler, contrasts the “acts of knowing that sustain or originate knowledge” with the knowledge itself, the former being “irrelevant” to the latter.¹ What we have come to see, however, is that – temporally speaking – knowledge is separable only in an abstract and linear sense from acts of knowing and present-time conditions. The past and future that knowledge pertains to are, timewise, linear configurations brought about by the 3rd person distanced appraisal, language, record keeping, and so on. There is no repository out “there” in the past, for example, where the source of knowledge, the experienced times it refers to, is to be found, anymore than there is for an “entwined now” or “an entwined now that was—their past amounting to a verbal artifice.”

And so how does all this pertain to the topic presented in this chapter’s title – the “in” question anew? And how is it that, in view of what’s been said, the meaning of the now’s external designation we gave at the start of the book must now be amplified in such a way as to require a reversal of relation between the two components of our conceptual framework, nature and the now? Instead of the “now in nature”, the relation turns out to be more aptly described as “nature in the now”, the first of the two components taken in the sense of a dimensionally accessible universe, and the latter as signifying a temporality that pervades, and is without any locatability, any relatable attribute whatsoever, in linear time

¹ (1) Sarah Waterlow, “Aristotle’s Now,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34/135 (April 1984), 116; (2) Jesse Butler, “Knowledge and the NOW: What Is the Epistemic Standing of the Present Moment?” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3/10 (2014), 7. Their knowledge/knowing distinctions are discussed further in chapter 4, n. 28.

and space. A useful analogy is come across in the description of the “experience of time” given by Silberstein and Chemero:

The experience of time, for example, is neither in the head (the subject) nor the external world (the object), the experience is fundamentally relational or extended. It is the self-consistency relation between subject and object that allows for the experience of time. This relation or structure is not in anything nor located anywhere.²

Let us proceed to further demonstrate how the now, in our version, eludes linear space and time, doing this by tracking the three elements of our schema of alignment and how they bear and impact on each other.

2. The alignment itself

The first of these elements is the alignment itself, a uniformity of time that linear measurement is predicated on but which itself is inscrutable to measurement. We have variously described this alignment as a connective immediacy, an experiential contact that testifies to awakeness, and as a self/other alignment where time is fused in such a way as to elude measureability, countability, or any notion of determinable and specifiable extension. In essence, all of this comes through first in the word “lucidity”, as we have understood the term – the fact that I am speaking to a present you and not a 3-minute ago you – and second in the meaning of “perception”, perception understood as that which opens a channel of experiential contact to the world-as-other. Casting perception in this way, as outward and exposed to the world-as-other and nature-as-other, gives it a direct realist slant – contingent, however, on how world-as-other and nature-as-other are intended to be understood in this context, the next element in our schema which we come to below. We can see, at any rate, a similarity between this outward perception model espoused here and its version in Ted Honderich’s radical externalism where he distinguishes between a necessary condition in the brain responsible for this perceptual outlet and, on the other hand, what does not come from the brain, that which the outlet puts us in contact with. He notes that this theory of consciousness, as he refers to it, “undercuts the only argument for the irritating possibility that it’s all a kind of dream.” Hence, external perception, in his version as well as ours, is not a condition of the brain that causes but an outlet that the brain enables.³

² Michael Silberstein and Anthony Chemero, “Extending Neutral Monism to the Hard Problem,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22/3-4 (2016), 192.

³ Ted Honderich, “Radical Externalism,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13/7-8 (2006), 8. As he puts it, “According to Radical Externalism, there isn’t a sufficient neural

3. Otherness in the alignment

But now let us turn to the second element of our alignment schema, it being material nature-as-other. A certain ambiguity needs to be addressed about this notion of material nature-as-other, although it would seem obvious that whatever kind of nature sentient beings like ourselves inquire about, it must necessarily display itself as other, or object, in relation to the person doing the inquiring. Nevertheless, the ambiguity emerges in the consequent conception. On the one hand, there is this here and now of a material nature that is close and immediate, such as we have postulated it in chapter 2. And on the other hand, there is the material nature that is linear-based irrespective of otherness, a nature about which scientific advances are made in its comprehensibility, given the distanced appraisal from a 3rd person perspective. Our way of resolving this ambiguity has been, first of all, to show the former as preconditional. The closeness of that 1st person perspective comes before all else. Our percepts in an immediate present time precede the interpretation, the former being the bedrock, the initial data on which the edifice of inferences are built. Secondly, we have noted how knowledge is anchored to the now, as discussed above, the fact that knowledge – while itself about content that is not now – is nowhere except in the now recipients, the immediate time of sensory knowers like ourselves. One finds no other *temporal* location to allocate knowledge, unless by resorting to the linear artifice.

The first characterization, therefore, that can be made about this second component, material nature-as-other, is that in its here-and-now aspect, its basis in immediacy, it provides the necessary condition by which knowledge of nature comes about. In other words, that condition becomes fundamental, a bedrock in any analysis of nature. This bedrock can be described as an ontic or ontological prerequisite of the analysis, "analysis" qualifying as knowledge but only as grounded on the bedrock priority of otherness in the direct experiential encounter. It follows that our percepts, even such as the color blue that we directly perceive as other, are present-to-past – that is to say, already presupposed by any reductive attempt to explain them by past-to-present means, such as by their emerging from complex brain states. The explanation, in other words, begs the question by presuming a cause that is predicated on the effect – this other that we directly perceive. And so it becomes clear in our characterization of this second element, nature's otherness, how the centerpiece of the now enters in. Material nature-as-other is manifested by how things, objects, entities concretize in this or that present time. The you that I see is always the present you, not the you three minutes ago. It is that palpable manifestation which distinguishes

condition for perceptual consciousness – whatever is true of reflective or affective consciousness", 8.

material nature-as-other from conceptions of nature that rest on abstracting and inferential stages from this step 1, the concrete.

This leads to a second consideration about this element of otherness in our schema, which is that with respect to material nature-as-other the past is secondary, an outcome arising from the existence of the present. If it were the other way around, if the present were but a derivative product of the past, there again we would end up with only an illusion of the present, the illusion that one could stand apart from the past-to-present causal chain, and have something we call “knowledge” of it or of anything else. This essentially recaps considerations we have earlier pointed out.

What we shall do here is offer a fruitful way to illustrate this dominance of the present in material nature-as-other by comparing its temporal horizon with a version of aligned otherness proposed by Peter McInerney, it too based on notions of perceptual lucidity and matching time between self and nature.⁴ He describes “perception”, in his take on that word, as a “reaching across” of consciousness, not markedly different from how we have described it as a channel of openness. He points out a problem with a view that holds to the contrary, based on the mechanics of perception, that would explain this reaching across as instead an influx of sensory sensation – that is, as transmission of sensory stimuli onto the lens of the eye or on the eardrum. The problem lies in the failure of this alternate explanation to explain adequately our distancing perception, the fact that we perceive objects as spatially distant.⁵ If vision were simply a matter of stimuli on the retina of the eye, it would seem impossible to distinguish the source of the stimuli from the retinal sensations. Even if one cites cases of blind people who after many years have recovered the ability to see, but with their recovery – at least at first – impeded by absence of perceptual depth, the problem still remains of explaining how the experiential field of spatial depth can come about from surface stimuli on the retina of the eye.

However, an even more pertinent question occurs when McInerney turns from spatial depth to the issue of temporal depth, and whether what one perceives as otherness in nature’s terrain can occur prior or at a different time from that of the present perception of the perceiver. We have in essence already given our attention to this question – our answer based on the temporal constraint –, but at any rate it proves insightful to compare our otherness evaluation in this temporal context with what McInerney has to say on the subject. Leaving aside for a moment his meaning of “time”, he contends – as we do – that “*at any given time* there is a distinct perceptual act-phase that portrays a distinct phase of the world to be present or temporally focal”.⁶ [italics his] We

⁴ Peter McInerney, 187.

⁵ [italics his] McInerney, 230.

⁶ McInerney, 231.

can propose this as a comparable view on the alignment aspect we’ve discussed. He then takes up the question of seeing into the past, such as when someone gazes at a stellar event in the night sky that may have occurred (based on linear time) before the gazer was even born. His discussion here is where there can be seen a divergence in view that highlights how the temporal now of nature-as-other in our conception stands apart by contrast. Addressing this time-lag issue, he offers two alternatives without arguing the case for either one (at least not in the book footnoted below): One possibility would translate the solar event as a “simultaneous” appearance, an explanation amenable to the scientific notion of sensory data stimulating the retinas of our eyes. In that case, we “understand” that the entity is temporally distant, but we do not perceive it as such. Alternatively, it is the distant source itself of the stellar event that we are actually perceiving (seeing into the past).⁷ That word “simultaneous” above – it is in that word that we detect the divergence between his explanations of the stellar event, or of how a perceived past can be interpreted, as compared to the priority of present time we have shown nature’s otherness to have. “Simultaneous” implies the capability of a linear-based determination by which to gauge that two events are concurrent or have co-occurred. Linear-based time, in other words, is the basis for the temporal correspondence he proposes between acts of perception and events in the world. By contrast, our alignment framework gives the immediacy of that stellar event, the immediacy of events in general, a time basis that knowledge – in the form of linear-based determination – has no access to. It (this immediacy) can only be known from a 1st person perspective. The knowledge side of the stellar sightings McInerney puts this way: “We understand that the entities are temporally distant”. That statement in the context of our schema would translate as an inferential determination that reflects an understanding of otherness that is linear-based, which in our schema would be contingent on the otherness that is temporally aligned to the observer and is temporally immediate from the 1st person perspective.

4. The self in this alignment

With this much said about two of the elements of the self/other alignment, let us now move to the remaining component, the self. It is here where the basis can be shown for the “nature in the now” designation and why it is that the now is recalcitrant to any description of its being “in”, in any locality, in anything.

Given this alignment schema as we have portrayed it, the self’s functioning in this temporal setting can be described as a perceptual act by which the present is distinguished from the past, or more precisely the *changed to* is

⁷ McInerney: 187, 225-226, 230-231, 275 n. 19.

exposed as contrast to the *changed from*. What is implied by “perceptual act” in this instance is a fusion of self/other time brought about by the non-linearity of the self’s alignment, understood as taking place from the 1st person perspective. The participant “self” in this perceptual act is necessarily intended to mean the subject of perceptual experience, not the conceptual self.⁸ As for the temporal fusion itself, it can depicted this way: The immediate present time of the perceptual act is, from the 1st person perspective, one and the same for perceiver, perceiving, and object perceived. Any time delay that one claims to detect between perceiver and object (based on distance or the object’s reflected light) falls outside of the immediacy venue and relies on linear knowledge. It is not, in other words, that the 1st person perspective that elicits immediacy is biased by an experiential accounting or a phenomenology that doesn’t paint the picture of reality accurately, but rather that any time delay estimates one calculates or infers derive from the necessity of there being a lucid accounting in the first place, which in fact is what we mean by an experiential accounting.

And so, in line with this experiential accounting, the self is fused in temporal alignment with the otherness of the world, the otherness of material nature. And this, in turn, demonstrates why the now cannot be in anything. This alignment, first of all being non-spatial, is not part here and part there. Its immediacy is of a kind that makes inseparable, time-wise, the concrete world we are awake to and the “we”. Hence, no “in” in this temporal picture. Spatially, linearly, and conceptually, we separate ourselves from the objects we perceive, but nonlinearly there is no “in” location for the now to belong to, neither in us nor in our perceptions. And that accords with how the now has been depicted in these pages – as non-discrete, non-data-oriented, non-divisible, non-multiple, and all pervasive. Even to speak of the now as “in” time – implicit in such expressions as “changing times”, “succession of perceptions”, or “perception of succession” – imposes a linear sequentiality into the picture that changes the subject of what it is we are talking about. The now, as we have seen, comes without a history, without absent nows in abeyance, though we have not ruled out the possibility of a contra-lucidity encounter, nor of the retrieving of that moment ago, which in any case would come in the form of nowness. How we have explained the abstruseness of this uncountable now that is with us all our days and yet cannot be numbered the way days are numbered is by using the analogy of a “quality instance” or “instance acquaintance” – namely, that of an experiential quality such as the color blue that would strike the awareness of someone for the first time, thereby appearing as a totally unique quality that would enable no

⁸ The wording of that distinction between subject and self comes from Alex Seemann, “The Other Person in Joint Attention: A Relational Approach,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17/5-6 (2010), 178.

conceptual means by which to compare this first-time occurrence with anything else. That is how we might describe the perplexity of this one-time now. After all, what comparison can be made between this now and any other, considering this anomaly solely in terms of its instantaneity?

One coda to add here that bears on this comparison between the now and the quality instance is that in the latter case an issue has been raised in philosophical circles as to whether the quality instance – that color blue, for instance – necessitates some sentient being’s awareness of it. Given its designation as a quality, does that define it as an experience that someone necessarily experiences, or can such qualities sustain themselves without experiencers?⁹ However one might speculate in that direction, insofar as the quality analogy pertains to the now the answer is clear. Given the temporal fusion of the self as perceiver with the nowness of external content, given – that is – our 1st person restriction in the case of the now, there is no outside (3rd person) way to determine the now as a non-experiential quality. It is not as if the issue concerned a stimulus/response or cause-and-effect distinction. There is no temporal disjunction between the now apart from the conscious subject’s experienced present perception. The starting point is all at once, not here or there. The “external” now, as we have described it, has been simply intended to mean that it is not a subjectively manufactured impression. Returning to the analogy of a quality instance, we can therefore conclude that insofar as the now is cast in the role of a quality, it cannot be separated from its awareness. But then the follow-up question: What if this quality instance should take the form of another person’s now or an animal’s now that the perceiving self is not aware of? Might not that show the now in the light of a quality instance bearing its own autonomy, irrespective of the perceiver’s awareness? The problem is that we have here intruded a 3rd person countability factor. Separable nows make argumentative sense from a 3rd person perspective, but not from how an understanding of the now, requiring a 1st person perspective, has been discussed throughout this book.

⁹ David Chalmers, for example, takes the position that qualities need not always be instantiated – i.e. experienced – by conscious subjects. “We can certainly make sense of the idea of a red object that is not a subject of experience.” That, however, is to adopt a 3rd person approach which cannot apply in the case of the now. David Chalmers, “Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism,” *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Godehard Bruntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 42. For more on the issue of unexperienced qualities, see note 197.

5. Challenges: now or then?

Let us propose, as our final remarks in this chapter, several challenges to this schema of self/other alignment, the immediacy of which has been shown not to conform to an “in” relation – in particular, an “in” in relation to the space/time coordinates of a universe conceived of in linear terms.

The first challenge comes about in a discussion of temporal temperaments, episodic and diachronic. In his essay “What’s Missing in Episodic Self-Experience?”, Patrick Stokes begins his discussion by taking up the subject of the episodic self, using Galen Strawson – a self-proclaimed episodic – as guide. Stokes points out several time-related features of the episodic personality, such as living close to immediate concerns, the here and now, with the consequence of the episodic individual having a weak sense of identification with the extended history of one’s lifetime self, thereby feeling a weak sense of identification (as opposed to knowledge of that fact) between one’s present self and one’s self in the past. As Strawson puts it, “For me as I am now, the interest (emotional or otherwise) of my personal memories lies in their experiential content considered independently of the fact that what is remembered happened *to me* – i.e. to the me that is now remembering.”¹⁰ That “me that is now remembering” tilts the discussion toward our direction, linking the episodic temperament to the emphasis we have put on the self in its temporal alignment with present world and present nature-as-other. From an episodic perspective there can arise, as Stokes points out, the suspicion that the connection that the diachronic personality claims to experience – namely, a persistence in time that knits past and present into their sense of identity – is an illusion, a fiction: “the *presence* of a persistence that in fact isn’t there.” On the other hand, diachronics contend that feelings of remorse, guilt, and regret are integral to one’s past/present sense of identity. Any absence in that respect would reflect a deficiency in one’s sense of moral responsibility.

And so here the challenge. A now that cannot be past. A present self that cannot be past. And yet the claim of the diachronic that the self’s present identity extends – or at least should extend – to the past. It is, for the diachronic, as if this self that I am now *is* that self living at a now time that *was*. Not simply linearly, conceptually, and cognitively, but as lived experience, an immediacy in the past that one returns to, identifies with. Referring to this as “co-presence”, Stokes recognizes the problem of attesting to such a self-experience, noting that it would amount to “a sense that the phenomenal self I am now *was present* in the past and *will be present* in the future”.¹¹ And so let us see how Stokes seeks

¹⁰ [italics his] Quoted in Patrick Stokes, “What’s Missing in Episodic Self-Experience?” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17/1-2 (2010), 123, and further, 120, 122, 126-127.

¹¹ [italics his] Stokes, 130, 128.

to solve this problem, which will serve as our answer as well to the challenge posed here. Taking his cue in this instance from Kierkegaard, Stokes sees the solution, not in a lived present that entails a lived past, but in a lived present that brings past to the present. One's experience of responsibility is said to reflect this. I become "contemporary" with distant events from my past to the extent that, by my being obligated and affected by them, they steer me morally in my immediate present.¹² Stokes notes Kierkegaard's notion of "contemporaneity" in this context, a notion to be contrasted with our usage of "contemporaneity" (chapter 6), the latter signifying the pervading social milieu of nowness, co-presence in a more literal sense. What comes out of this Kierkegaardian adaptation is, loosely speaking, a recrudescence of the notion "contralucidity", as discussed in the last chapter. On the one hand, one retains – from Stokes's line of thinking – the temporal constraint in our framework that dictates lucid experience to be strictly within the bounds of immediate experience, while at the same time allowing a version of lived experience from the past to penetrate into that experience. Stokes explains this as "not an experience of temporal extension, but a *synchronic* experience of past and present". He adds, "Perhaps what is at issue is our experience of the past *as* past but experientially qualified in some way as if it was present: not so much Me* being present in the past, as the past being present here with Me*" (i.e. "Me*", the mental entity or self I am now, as opposed to "me", the human being).¹³ Drawing as he does on Kierkegaard, it is not coincidental that Stokes brings up a kind of past/present doppelganger from his Kierkegaardian readings that recalls in some respects the gospel accounts cited in the last chapter that depict the dual past/present and future/present Christ. The difference is that the bi-temporal experiential encounters in the Kierkegaardian version, as Stokes alludes to them, involve not the gospel witnesses but people of present times who, by an inwardness and achieved mental outlook, are said to achieve a kind of con-temporaneity with Christ – a leap of faith–, thereby collapsing the temporal distinction (in linear terms) between the immediacy of the witnessings in Christ's day and the immediacy of those in today's world for whom that past is integrated in their sense of time. It is as if that moment ago – or some version of it – could be recovered after all, even after 2,000 years, and thereby made concurrent with one's self/other alignment. We might speak of it as a back-to-the-present scenario.

Another challenge to this self/other alignment, the temporal schema we've advanced, is drawn from the many worlds interpretation of the measurement problem in quantum physics. The challenge in this case targets our notion of the non-multiple now, the now exclusive to the 1st person experiential perspective. Here we will use as our source of debate an article by Feline and Bac-

¹² Stokes, 129-131.

¹³ [*italics his*] Stokes, 128.

ciagaluppi. They discuss how, according to the many minds interpretation, the range of probable outcomes of a quantum measurement necessarily involves not just the consciousness of the observer – the quantum measurer – but as well a scenario of diverse minds and diverse worlds of conscious observers, each an outcome of the various probabilities. The challenge that their article poses is this: Either one ends up with a scenario of diverse nows of diverse conscious observers, a consequence of performing the measurement, or one subscribes to the single mind hypothesis, the mind of the experimenter performing the measurement, but a mind nonetheless with transtemporal connections to a past in the past and a future in the future. Feline and Bacciagaluppi consider the apparent irreconcilability of the two options:

On the other hand, without transtemporal identity of branches there is no hope of making sense of statements like “the probability *I* will register spin-up = c^2 ”, for nothing allows us to identify *me* before the measurement with any *me* existing after the measurement.¹⁴

In other words, in the many worlds interpretation, how can there be the probability that “I” – the me in particular – *will* register, i.e. in the future, if all outcome possibilities, all the registering, will be played out among here-and-now selves in multiple worlds? The challenge given us is on the one hand this suggestion of multiple nows, and on the other hand transtemporal linearity.

First of all, it is to be recalled from our discussion of starlight and stellar spectacles that any knowledge, theoretical or otherwise, temporally constructed in accordance with the not-now of extended time, cannot permeate the nowness that is experientially based – meaning the immediate now of something witnessed by someone in a lucid state –, nor can it determine whether the now of that exclusively 1st person witnessing is experientially past or present or future. It therefore becomes erroneous to conceive of knowledge as applying linear-based tense to the question of now or multiple nows. Doing so contradicts an understanding of “knowledge” as premised on non-immediacy, or in other words on the not-now of extended time. Consequently, the many minds scenario, however legitimate on theoretical (knowledge) grounds, or as a mathematical model, fails to apply, as knowledge, to the now that is experientially known and that consists in the self/other alignment.

Second of all, “transtemporal” misses the boat in terms of order of priority. It is not that there exists in some enclave of nature this spreadsheet of multiple “me’s” extending into the past and future, with the particular me, the conscious experimenter, doing the transtemporal probing in both directions.

¹⁴ [italics theirs] Laura Feline and Guido Bacciagaluppi, “Locality and Mentality in Everett Interpretations: Albert and Loewer’s Many Minds,” *Mind and Matter* 11/2 (2013), 225-226, 229.

Instead, there is that which this edifice of the transtemporal rests on, it being this dimensionless now, which is another way of speaking about the immediacy of one’s experiential contact with the world. The dimensionless now fits neither between a past in the past nor a future in the future, nor into any of the categories of the not-now we’ve discussed except the “just now” which, as we have seen, is now as well. The order of priority, as has previously been shown, is dimensionless being first – this now, or present time, we’re awake to – necessarily preceding the dimensional and divisible. It is not, therefore, that the now, as we’ve thus portrayed it, precludes the notion of selves in dimensional time, or of one’s present self in transtemporal relation to them, but rather that selves, past and future, connote a division of time which is not applicable in the case of the now, it being without number and yet prerequisite for any statement, transtemporal or otherwise. Hence, transtemporal statements with wording such as the above “the probability *I* will” or “identify *me* before the measurement with any *me* existing after” – however much they collide with the many minds interpretation in quantum theory, turn out less incompatible with the now, its designation having nothing to do with measured time. Specifying no dimensional position “in” time, its aspect of temporality nonetheless carries the prerequisite of its being locked in as a condition for statements such as the above or any statements whenever they are made. Not being in time or space, the now turns out even compatible with a speculative multiverse (i.e. multi-spacetimes) consisting of multiple selves – just as long as we distinguish the linear from the nonlinear! It is there; it is there; it is there; and yet there is only one now that is there.

As for our final scenario we take up that poses a seeming challenge to the self/other alignment, this one comes from the seminal distinction made by the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, namely that between core consciousness and extended consciousness.

Damasio describes extended consciousness as a “complex biological phenomenon” that “depends on memory and working memory”. It “provides the organism with an elaborate sense of self – an identity and a person, you or me, no less – and places that person at a point in historical time, richly aware of the lived past and of the anticipated future, and keenly cognizant of the world beside it.”¹⁵ What appears from this description so far is a sketch out similar to that of the transtemporal mind conceived as transcending linear distances, reaching across into the past and future, and even – with memory as an aid – coming into acquaintance with the “lived past”, as if knowledge were capable of assuming the role of sensory knowing, the kind of experiential familiarity that comes with the now’s immediacy and the self/other alignment. Additionally, he speaks of this extended consciousness as a “complex biological phenomenon” which moreover

¹⁵Damasio, *The Feeling...*, 16.

is “built on the foundation of core consciousness”.¹⁶ So let us see what he has to say about the latter. Noting that it too is a biological phenomenon, he gives the following account of core consciousness, namely that it:

provides the organism with a sense of self about one moment – now – and about one place – here. The scope of core consciousness is the here and now. Core consciousness does not illuminate the future, and the only past it vaguely lets us glimpse is that which occurred in the instant just before. There is no elsewhere, there is no before, there is no after. . . . *[I]t is the very evidence, the unvarnished sense of our individual organism in the act of knowing.*¹⁷ [italics his]

And there is this relevant piece too to add to the picture of core consciousness as he describes it:

[a] transient entity, ceaselessly re-created for each and every object with which the brain interacts. . . . Because of the permanent availability of provoking objects, it is continuously generated and thus appears continuous in time.¹⁸

One might take this description as not antithetical to the portrayal of the now as it's been given in these pages. One simply has to frame the phraseology “ceaselessly re-created”, “continuously generated”, and “continuous in time” as a recasting through a 3rd person perspective of the authentic self/other alignment that denies time any of these linear attributes. So then where is the challenge in this case? The challenge comes in the prioritizing that is being given to linear time, implied by the “extended” of extended consciousness, by the intimated deficiency of core consciousness in that it “does not illuminate the future, and the only past it vaguely lets us glimpse is that which occurred in the instant just before”, and by the very contextualizing of the core description in 3rd person terms.

Let us now endeavor to surmount this challenge so as to preserve the priority of the self/other alignment. The way we shall go about this is to reassign the labels. What Damasio labels “extended consciousness” we will treat as core consciousness, meaning that aspect of awareness and perception that derives from brain-based neural functioning and cognitive capabilities that give us the power to divide the world into myriad categories and divisible parts, such as past and future, the days of the week, discrete objects, and so on. As for what Damasio designates “core consciousness”, we shall apply that term to sensory knowing, our lucid contact with the world, the chair and person I see that are not a 3 second ago chair and person I'm seeing but are part of the immediacy of my self/other alignment. In this way we save waking up in the morning from any imputation of its being a cognitive or linguistic artifice. And we save knowledge as well!

¹⁶ Damasio, 17.

¹⁷ Damasio, 16, 125.

¹⁸ Damasio, 17, 175.

Chapter 13

The Nonlinear (i.e. Non-Sequential) Universe vs. Metaphysical Variants

In 2007 Alwyn Scott's book came out, *The Nonlinear Universe: Chaos, Emergence, Life*.¹ The book has as its thesis the limitations of much of accepted science that follows the direction of reasoning from causal past-to-present, regardless of whether the sequence at issue is in the form of deterministic forces that obey general laws, explainable outcomes based on reductionist analyses of trigger components, or more generally the before and after of a rationally accessible universe. Hence, in that book's view, chaos for example is seen as an intrinsic component of nature, emergence as an unpredictable outcome, including the emergence of life itself.

Let us start here with Scott's nonlinear universe and explore in a comparative way how the now's immediacy – the subject of this book – steers its own course on nonlinearity, and in particular how the priority we have given to the present, and its present-to-past directionality, differentiates this nature in the now, as we have postulated it in Part 3, from metaphysical variants, such as panpsychism and Berkeleyan idealism, schemas where our counter-directionality (present-to-past) is an element that plays a role as well.

Scott's nonlinear universe takes us part way, his thesis being that there are nonlinear aspects "in" nature. One might cite, for example, the synchronous patterns of birds in flight. By contrast, how in Part 3 we have plotted this "in" is by applying it not to phenomena in nature but to dimensional nature itself being "in" – that is, dimensional nature as a whole –, its setting "in" the non-sequential (i.e. nonlinear) context of the now. And by this plotting of dimensional nature – its being "in" – we mean most crucially not material nature with the appendage we have given it – material nature here and now –, but rather the otherness of its comprehensibility that gets structured by linear time. What, in other words, turns out unbounded by an "in" is time itself, time

¹ Alwyn Scott, *The Nonlinear Universe: Chaos, Emergence, Life* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2007).

understood nonlinearly and non-sequentially, time as that which we are exposed to by means of our alignment with the world and nature via experiential immediacy.

It will be noticed that throughout this book the tendency has been to avoid the word “consciousness” and instead substitute expressions like “experiential contact”, “awakeness to the world”, “alignment”, and “lucidity”. The primary reason for this emerges from the pivotal distinction, brought out earlier, between the traditional notion of consciousness as cranium enclosed, emanating from a particular cognitive and brain-based substructure, and the notion of the now as endorsed in these pages, a now or present time that originates not from one’s mind or self but externally, or more precisely from without any location at all, being all pervasive and not restricted by spatial or dimensional specifications. If one is to speak of this now insofar as it pertains to consciousness, the most that can be said is that it brings about a conscious awareness on a very fundamental level, namely, experiential contact with the immediate world. Such awareness, to a greater or lesser extent, is evident in all sentient species – rabbits, snakes, birds – otherwise there’d be no communicative possibilities among species. They’d (and we’d) individually all be experiencing our lives in different temporal realities. Something close to solipsism. Consequently, from this brief review and what follows, it will be seen that the self/other alignment schema we have put forth, based on experiential contact, steers clear of many of the hurdles that confront metaphysical schemas that take consciousness or the material world, or both, or some neutral substratum of primal reality, as their starting point or cause for all that comes about as a result, namely the world and nature as we find them to be. For example, issues such as the relationship between consciousness and matter, which of the two derives from the other, and how either emerges and from what prior state or from what fundamental bedrock of reality – such are among the questions that either become non-issues or at least take on a different cast in the setting of this book, where the focus is on the self/other alignment as starting point rather than the givens of either consciousness or physical matter.

1. Differentiating the now’s non-sequential model

Let us now proceed to exemplify further how the schema proposed in this book diverges from others that likewise resonate with primal and metaphysical questions about nature. Our plan by which to go about this will be as follows, namely to show in this order:

- a. How the notion of “beginning” becomes both inapplicable and applicable in our schema, and how this compares with that notion as employed in other conceptions.

- b. How the self/other alignment entails a non-sequential beginning: i.e., a beginning – not beginnings –, contrary to the proverbial notion of succession as an explanatory device, whether of mental or physical events, in other frameworks of nature.
- c. How, according to the self-other alignment in our schema, the linear arises as an outcome of the nonlinear – i.e. non-sequential – starting point, and how this distinguishes from some traditional problems of mind/body dualism.
- d. Given the denial of sequentiality entailed by the now, how it can be maintained, nonetheless, that a past split off from present time (i.e. a “happened” split off from “happens”) is not tantamount to an ontological extinguishing of that past, or its reduction to a mere relic of memory. And how it can be, given the radical 1st person perspective that our schema adopts, that accusations of a relativistic ontology and the now’s cut off from the wider domain of knowledge can be answered.

2. The now that doesn’t begin; the alignment that does

We start with this notion of an absent beginning. The now, as has been discussed, has no beginning earlier than itself. Being traceless, being evidenced only by its immediacy, its beginning is direct encounter. We have characterized it as being “external”; that, however, is not to imply a place of origination, a source. To speak of it as if it did, to ask such questions as, “Where does it come from?” “How did it emerge?” or “When did it happen?”, all such questions insinuate a linear subtext, as if the now’s nonlinearity could somehow be tracked as an event in linear spacetime or as a process evolving over sequential time. So questions of the Big Bang type we eliminate from the start as they do not pertain in our schema. But still, what about one’s brain-based consciousness? Might the now’s origin and operation be, in fact, situated there? – a question which again introduces linearity into the picture in the form of cause/effect, a trigger mechanism that suggests locatability in linear time and a subsequent result in linear time. Our methodology takes one’s lucid state at face value. Being awake to the world tells, in itself, something significant about the world. That tree I see out there. It is no less a tree now than it is a tree. We have only to ask: Is it possible to observe a tree that is not a tree now? By so asking we follow a strain of Berkeleyan idealism. In other words, our very experiential contact, the foundation for all knowledge, gives palpable demonstration that the now pervades whatever we are capable of observing – trees, landscape, the stars. But then there is this difference that separates our schema from the Berkeleyan: The now in our framework is localized neither in one’s sensory impressions nor in the mind or conscious awareness of the individual. Its exposure is not from us but to us, simply by our being awake to the world. Hence, as to origination or beginning, the now

is neither from us nor from a measurement-based nature, in that it has no beginning in (linear) time.

On the other hand, the notion of a beginning does have its place in our temporal schema. It consists in this self/other alignment that fuses, in temporal fashion, the self in its 1st person perspective to the experiential immediacy of whatever field of otherness the self encounters. This notion of a beginning recalls chapter 7, and it would appear to starkly collide with what we have just portrayed as the beginningless now. How then can there be this beginning of time in the self/other alignment when the self/other alignment is itself built upon the foundation of a beginningless now? One would suppose, as a matter of trivial truth, that percepts, aligned as they are by an immediacy of contact with the world, are inextricably multiple, beginning perhaps at birth but from thereon sequential, being an obvious multiplicity of percepts moment by moment, a succession of perceptions. How could it be otherwise? Again, however, we see the insinuation of space/time linearity in the very question, in the very suggestion of sequentiality and “succession of perceptions”. Our way to address this issue of the alignment’s beginning is, first of all, to take into consideration the perspective that is integral with this beginning, and that is the perspective of immediacy that aligns us experientially to the world. This of course is the 1st person perspective, and the knowing that comes by way of it. It marks a “beginning” in several senses of the word.

3. A non-sequential beginning

For one thing, the self’s temporal alignment to the present world stands as precondition, as we have shown. The lucidity that it gives us is prerequisite for cognitive output in all the myriad areas – measured time, inferential reasoning, knowledge in general. If it were brain cells or physiology that came first, if it were they that instigated lucidity, then lucidity would be nothing other than a past-to-present effect of mental mechanisms or sensory organs, and no one would really be awake in the first place. All our communications would be illusory; the temporal connection between self and other would amount to a solipsistic impression, a product of deterministic forces. Of course, from a 3rd person perspective it makes perfect sense to say that there must be a past before the present, but even such a judgment rests on the priority of an alignment if we are to suppose that judgment has any basis in lucidity. Added to this sense of the alignment’s beginning, there is that consideration about the now we have talked about, its being without a past, or in other words without a beginning. The now is the precondition for there being the past in the past. And that provides us, in fact, with another basis for speaking of this self/other connection as a beginning. It is this thinglike now that instills everything with concreteness and immediacy,

without which there can be neither our tangible surroundings nor the tangible evidence of the past we witness in the present. But this “now” comes through to our sensory awareness precisely in the mode of that immediacy, without a past or future. Hence, this alignment comes through only in present time, neither multiple nor sequential in before-and-after linear time. One can apply multiplicity and sequence to it but only conceptually, from a distanced appraisal, as if one were not a part of it. But then we are no longer judging the experiential on its own terms. That key word “experiential”, moreover, leads us to yet a third and final respect by which we can come to understand this self/other alignment as a beginning, namely in the analogy previously made to a quality instance. That exposure of color that colorblind Mary sees for the first time is so unique, unexpected, and different from her previous colorblind experience that Mary has no way of classifying it, or comparing it, or translating it into language compatible with her colorblind experience: It is that example of quality instance that she awakens to for the first time which is exactly how and why the medium of alignment that we awaken to, and are awake to, comes through as a first-time experience, even day after day, moment after moment. After all, what can the now be compared to or classified as? What property does it share with, or what distinguishes it from, anything else, even another now? Any such efforts at type casting or classification presume that which is already there, preexisting before classification, namely the now’s immediacy. It is precisely what precedes which marks out what is utterly incomparable, unrecognizable by comparison, and hence utterly novel and new, just as for Mary it is that exposure to color for the first time.

4. Nonlinear/linear as opposed to mind/body

And so on to the next nonlinear nuance that highlights our schema. It is encapsulated in this question: How does the linear arise from the nonlinear? Or to put it another way: How can the before and after of measured time emerge from the measureless and beginningless now? Here, at the start, a clarification in wording is called for. We can apply the words “derive” and “derivative” to indicate linear time’s subordinate relation to the now, but only in the sense of the former’s contingent role, its coming about in consequence of nonlinear time in the first place, the former being predicated on the latter. This is not, however, to depict the relation as causal, a linear outcome caused, effectuated, or evolving from nonlinearity’s primal role. Similarly, in the cameo description we have given of the now, its being invested with the dyadic aspects of both the “just now” (*changed from*) and the “now” (*changed to*), neither in this context is there an intended suggestion of a causal link, implicating a before and after. Instead, what both aspects of “from” and “to” highlight is the now’s immediacy, holistic and irre-

ducible, and exclusively demonstrated in its 1st person alignment between self and other.²

But still, in our confronting this contra-causal feature of nonlinear time, are we not back to troubling issues comparable to the mind/body problem, how either nonlinear or linear emerges from the other, or if not how they stand with respect to each other as elemental constituents of nature?

In the introduction to this book we referred to the now and not-now as both having primal standing “from which all else follows”, according to the framework we’ve endorsed. On the other hand, from what’s been pointed out above and in previous pages, it’s been emphasized that linear extension – such as the past defined by chronological time – is what comes about as a result of the present and in consequence of there being this self/other alignment. Even, however, with this contingency imposed on the linear past, there appears likewise a contingency imposed on the present as well, the present that from a 3rd person perspective comes about as a result of the past. Simply put, it is as impossible to conceive of the present without the effects (the *present* effects) of the past as it is impossible to conceive of a nowless past, a past without a preconditional present, and in a similar vein just as it is equally impossible to conceive of a nowless – yet physically existing – chair or for that matter a nowless yet physically existing universe. It follows from this that a mutual interdependency must apply on both sides, at least with respect to the concrete manifestations in front of us of both present occurrences and the past we recognize in the present. To that extent the two are equally assignable a primal designation, or metaphysical imprimatur – and we mean by the “two” both time schemas, the nonlinear now and linear time in the various ways we have labeled the latter – “the time that takes time”, “measured time”, “the not-now of extended time”.³

On the other hand, it can be seen as well that the questions our temporal schema provokes are not, for example, about causal processes, or the emerging or

² One might compare this notion to that of “simplicity” as Bhakti Madhava Puri describes it: “The philosophical concept of simplicity is that which is elemental and cannot be reduced to or explained by anything other than itself. For example, thought is thought, being is being. Neither can be explained by anything other than themselves. This infers that the opposite of simple, is not what is complex, but what is compound and can be reduced or explained by its different elements.” Email “Re: [Sadhu Sanga] Why Aristotle May Not Be Considered a Materialist” (Online_Sadhu_Sanga@googlegroups.com) (April 27, 2018).

³ An analogy that comes very close in portraying this interdependency is found in Silberstein and Chemero’s notion of “neutral” in their metaphysics of neutral monism and how it applies to presence: “[T]he subject/object cut is a self-consistency relation, there is only one reality (the field of ‘pure’ experience as James might say). Third, there is no ontic priority of presence over the external world – they are co-fundamental . . . Presence can be thought of as temporality or ‘nowness’ itself; there is nothing phenomenologically more basic than the nowness or presence of experience. Perceiver (subject) and perceived (object) are co-dependent aspects of presence.” (Silberstein and Chemero, 2016, 193)

evolving of the now from the not-now, or the other way around. We have already explained their relation as uncaused, underived, the one from the other, which otherwise would introduce a linear background into the setting, a Paleolithic origin or an evolving in linear time, and then the perplexity would be confronted of how that evolving of the now could come about. That kind of problem is beset by other metaphysical systems – how consciousness emerges from non-consciousness or how life evolved from matter, questions which presuppose a linear background. Whereas in the schema we're advancing, linear time is the very issue in question. And so instead, the issue our schema pertains to is this: Taking into consideration that linear time, and the structure of knowledge based on it, has its own necessary role in present experience – in intelligible present experience –, still the question remains how past *experience* – that moment ago of the source of the past – might be demonstrated as being more than just a mental reformulation, more than just an extraction in the form of communal memory and records that invariably limit themselves to representing and doing so in the abstracted manner of the before and after of extended time. All this premised on there being a presentation of the present to begin with. And why not as well the premise of a presentation – still existing -- of the past, i.e. of the source of the past?

5. The past and linear time: the bedrock they stand on

The task we've yet to accomplish recalls Part 2 of this book, our endeavor at probing the substantivity, the source, of the past, notwithstanding how memory and the past as organized sequentially play an interdependent role with the present. What in essence we are pursuing here is our final attempt at retrieving at least a piece of the not-now's concreteness in the form of that moment ago. And so we start this attempt by re-emphasizing this distinction between the lived past and linear time. That moment ago, we discovered in our previous search, was not to be found in linear time, at least not in our search for it in the not-now of extended time and its designated branches. So where then, if at all (excluding paradigms that violate the temporal constraint) is that source to be found, the concreteness of that not-nowness, and in particular the not-nowness of that moment ago?

Here we come to this fork in the road, and the question of what substantive basis, what ontological standing of the past, is to be come upon by proceeding either way – in either the linear vs. nonlinear direction. It was in chapter 7, “The Notion of a Beginning”, that Ricoeur's differentiation was pointed out, between the lived past and our sequential way of organizing and representing. His description of the present and lived past as “confused, multiform, and unintelligible” connects, temporally speaking, to our description of the now's immediacy (including the immediacy of the lived past) as impenetrable to representa-

tional and structural configuration. And his description of history's research into the past as "an organized vision, established upon chains of causal or teleological relations" steers in another direction, to a past structured by linear time and characterized by sequentiality, as we have described it. What this comes down to is, on the one hand, a conflated past – both a nonlinear past that has never left its state of being immediate –, and on the other hand a linear past made accessible to representation, or as Ricoeur puts it, to "knowledge . . . on the basis of meanings and values." Hence, we see again a picture of how the primal divide – the immediate vs. the not-now of extended time – manifests itself. In any case, the linear time we impose on the past, the selective way we recollect and represent, as well as memory's fallibility and failure to recollect, all this is but one part of the metaphysical problem of the past – namely, what standing, what primal reality, is to be accorded the chronological past in view of the abstracted nature of sequential and extended time. On the other hand, there is that other direction at the fork in the road. It points to the source, which we've encapsulated as that moment ago that appears so irretrievable. The goal here has been to find in its concreteness the very substratum that the past rests on, the past in its immediacy, an immediacy that doesn't go anywhere, not even from the *present*. The problem here, it seems most obvious to point out, is that this immediacy is not the immediacy we are aware of. So how do we gauge its standing?

But then again, could it be that traces of the immediacy of the lived past, indications of it that suggest more than the work of memory and ordered time, might be evidenced even here and now, its immediacy our immediacy?

Here we come back to Capek's question quoted in chapter 2 and left unresolved: "If the future history of the universe pre-exists timelessly (or, as it is fashionable to say, 'tenselessly') in its totality, why is it not already present?"⁴ That mode of inquiry, it turns out, as easily applies to the question we've just raised. We have only to change "future" to "past". It goes then this way: If the lived past doesn't go anywhere, not even from the present, why is it we aren't aware of it? Taking it as indisputable that we aren't, can one even speak of this lived past as immediate and concrete? Concluding that one cannot, does it not follow that this source turns out as much of an abstraction, as much of a representation, as linear time and the structure of knowledge built on it?

We abstained from giving more than a preliminary answer when first raising Capek's question, but there is one we can now give that subsequent pages have prepared us for, and it is this. First of all, if the past (or future) were to have an equal footing in our perceptions, the now or present time would no longer be what we have found it to be, at least as advanced in this book – namely, a precondition, that which constitutes itself as starting point in a present-to-past order of orientation. Instead of waking up to this now and its self/other

⁴ Capek, *The Concepts of Space and Time...*, p. LI.

alignment that connects us to the world and makes knowledge possible, there would – in a temporal omniscience scenario – be only an indiscriminate exposure of past, present, and future confronting the immediacy of one’s perceptual experience. In such circumstances it is hard to see how we’d be awake at all. What would “waking” mean? Aside from that, the very linearity of the past, and the knowledge that’s built on it, depends, as we have seen, on this now and its priority, the fact that it doesn’t come immersed in a triple time frame of past, present and future.

On the other hand, where does this leave the lived past and the immediacy of history’s source if what we are intimating is that there is no evidence of its immediacy, its concrete happening? Where does this leave that moment ago?

The answer that we can conclude with is that there *is* evidence, perhaps not of that particular moment ago we have in mind, but at least of the lived past, and it is found in the present, the immediate present.

I look up at that star. It’s now. It’s immediate. It’s immediacy is what I’m awake to and aware of, being in a state of lucidity that defines my self/other alignment. Science tells me – according to the temporal structure of linear time, according to the before and after – that that star is extinct, long gone eons of years ago. Insofar as that star’s temporality is defined by linear distance from the present, in other words, that star is in the past. And yet its light is present, immediate. Light travels and takes (linear) time; nevertheless, the observer encounters it in its lived, temporally immediate state that knowledge has no access to. So, it would seem here we have evidence of a past, a concrete, experientially immediate past *in the present*, at least in the sensory presentness of the spectator. Paul in France calls Freddy in Texas, both are in time zones 5 or 6 hours apart. Yet here occurs the lived connection of dialogue despite, according to linear time, the difference in time zones, the one 5 or 6 hours in the past relative to the other. Take the twin paradox, the one returning to Earth after a near-light speed voyage in space, the other already old and senile relative to his twin. As immediate as their meeting is, is the immediacy of the concrete manifestation of the past staring each other in the face, as well. Or take the light from objects around us that, according to calculation, takes a scintilla though quantifiable amount of (linear) time to hit the retinas of our eyes. Given that discrepancy, the whole world is testament to a past that is concretized and manifested in its immediacy before our very eyes. Hence, that moment ago, not that moment ago we’ve been looking for, but in any case evidence of a past that doesn’t violate the temporal constraint, a past that is more than its linearity, more than its memory, a past that is present and hasn’t gone away.

“You see what we did in those three years, Heisenberg? Not to exaggerate we turned the world inside out! ... We put man back at the centre of the universe ... Throughout history we keep finding ourselves displaced. We keep exiling ourselves to the periphery of things ... Until we come to the beginning of the twentieth century, and we’re suddenly forced to rise from our knees again.”

Ascribed to Niels Bohr; cited by Raymond Tallis, p. 150

Chapter 14

The Sun also Rises

Defending what he refers to as Husserlian idealism, a panpsychist defender Uwe Meixner explains the importance given to experience in Husserl’s system of self/other construal, portraying it in so many words as that of transparency or “lucidity” (my coinage), or as Meixner puts it: “Husserlian idealism does not contradict the testimony of our senses since it accepts – as *objects of experience* – all objects that our senses present to us, and just as they are presented there.”¹ [italics his] But then he adds the key proviso that the “objects of experience” are intended by Husserl to be understood in a broader temporal context:

My experiences of X at other times, my experience of X with a greater content and temporal extension than my original experience of X, experiences of X had by other manifest subjects – all of these experiences are bound to lead to corrected and, going in the direction of the totality of experience, increasingly objectively correct views of X.²

To what extent an appropriate segment of Husserl’s phenomenology fits this description of how the otherness of the world – or specifically that experience of X – is given to one’s awareness is not the issue of importance here and it is not what draws us to this quotation. Instead, it is the “temporal extension” and its

¹ [italics his] Uwe Meixner, “Idealism and Panpsychism,” *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Godehard Bruntrup and Ludwig Jaskolla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 398.

² Meixner, 398.

context that becomes key to our discussion here. For it is that quoted passage that points *almost in reverse direction* from where our temporal schema proposes the emphasis should be put in determining a correct and corrected version of the experience of object X. It is a case of comparing the subtext given by the nonlinear and immediate as opposed to the image of reality that temporal extension provides us with.

Let us start with a nonlinear and non-sequential profile of experience of X, that experience of X understood in its immediacy. What can we say about its correctness, the veridicality of that experience of object X, even without temporal extension?

The first thing that can be affirmed, drawing on all that we have said so far, is that by the very fact of there being this perception of an external object, even in its immediacy and the immediacy of that self/other contact, there is something instantly correct – namely, the very lucidity implied by this contact in the first place. It means one is in touch with the world now. The identity of the object, features and conditions of the surrounding landscape, they may be mistaken on first impression, but that they are all a part of a present otherness is something that can be immediately and correctly discerned, as swiftly as the realization (on whatever basis) that one is awake to the world, that this is not a dream. The analogy we have adopted by way of illustration is the experience of color that colorblind Mary sees for the first time. It's a totally novel experience. Cognitively untranslatable, the appearance of color for the first time. No means by which to compare it to something else. Yet it's immediately there. It can be seen as a correct assessment of a new now existence without the need for extended time. And yet one might ask, could it not be a hallucination after all, that experience of object X? Indeed it could be, but that changes the scenario. What we were talking about was an experience of object X – i.e., what one is lucidly exposed *to*, not what a malfunction of the mind has induced oneself to believe is there. The source in our case is outward and external if it's to be an experience of object X, and necessarily if it's to be perceived as an object X now. Perhaps, however, we're all mistaken about the possibility of there being an experience of object X. Perhaps you're not really reading this text I've written. You just think you are. Perhaps we don't wake up in the morning. It's all a dream. But then, as we have seen, knowledge itself becomes unsustainable except as an illusion and we end up with self-contradiction. So we avoid that alternative and continue with this experience of object X and see what else about that experience is immediately correct, correct without temporal extension.

What additionally comes through in that experience is that object X, no matter how opaque to our initial efforts of analysis, manifests itself in the temporal format of *changed from* and *changed to*. Quite likely the object X I'm inspecting hasn't itself changed as I look at it, but nevertheless it is part of a total scene that hasn't stopped exhibiting its *nowness*. It hasn't become frozen in time. No doubt

part of the sense of change is my own changing perspectives of the object, my own movements that contribute to this ambience of difference in the scene as a whole, what makes it different from the “moment before” that lacks the *changed to* of the now. Nevertheless, the difference that accounts for the now is not my mind’s doing or yours, as we have contended throughout these pages. It is as much a part of what authenticates the perception of that object X, even without temporal extension into not-nowness, as it is a part of what authenticates the you now, the concrete you, or the concrete scene in front of us, rather than you or the scene at any other time. Take away the *changed from* and *changed to*, take away that and what? The world – that object X included – becomes unfamiliar and untranslatable experientially in a way that no amount of extended time can rectify and give objective credence to. And this leads us to the last consideration about the experience of object X in its immediacy – namely, familiarity. We may be totally unfamiliar with the object itself in terms of how to classify it, what recognizable properties it can be said to have. Nonetheless, it is familiar – strangely enough, it would seem – in being immediately there, a part of a present time we’re awake to, just as if the now had a past, the same old now we had long acquaintance with. Just as if the now had a long history as a then.

So much for the kind of at-once objectivity that the experience of object X gives us, objectivity that comes from the start and not as a product of “the direction of the totality of experience.” Let us compare that with the objectivity that Meixner speaks about, an accrual of accuracy gained by further experiences of X, both by oneself and others over a period of time. Hence, the consensus that comes into play that offsets partiality and subjective misjudgments and, of course, relies on corrections reached by virtue of continued access to object X. And so this principle of repeatability comes into play as well, lending further credence to the veracity of one’s conclusions about the experience of object X.

It amounts to a trivial truth to point out that experiential objectivity of the kind that Meixner talks about, an objectivity attained by experiential extension in time, is what scientific knowledge is founded on. It has given us precisely what science has achieved, what it has taught us about nature. Nevertheless, it is equally evident that the kind of objectivity that comes with successive experiences of object X in linear time holds up only to a degree, since debates about interpretation, which models to use, what questions to ask – may be pertinent and not wholly resolvable, leaving uncertainty for example about the nature of a particular experience of X. Furthermore, there is the issue that comes about in the abstracting from the experience, drawing away from the concreteness of the immediate object X, resulting from our cognitive habit of inquiry, our ways of categorizing, comparing, representing, describing by means of property/feature distinctions, and other ways of delineating and configuring, all predicated on the assumption of an object’s (and our) sequential constancy in linear space and

time. One may legitimately ask how much of that cognitive input from ourselves, and our 3rd person, before-and-after outlook, accurately portrays what is out there, that object X. Constructivists would pose the question, cited by Cooper: “Is an articulable world anything but the ‘product’ or ‘construct’ of human thought and attitude?”³

And so it seems there is a defensible case for limited yet well grounded objectivity at both ends of the timeline: that what we have termed “material nature-as-other” entails both this here and now before linear time even begins and the linear thereafter of extended time. In this bipolarity in its various aspects exhibited by nature itself and ourselves, we see again demonstrated these two archetypes of time we’ve been discussing, the now and the not-now. Having completed with that much of our task, and by way of moving toward this book’s conclusion, let us put this thesis of time, the thesis of this book, to a final test.

According to how it’s been described, the schema we’ve been advancing posits a now that comes neither with a past nor as a plurality but only through the conduit of one’s self/other alignment. The notorious problem this raises or seems to raise, a problem addressed in our discussion on the transtemporal self and elsewhere, is how a spreadsheet of experiences in extended time, each with its own immediacy and each with its experiencer, can combine (or incorporate) into an experience now that is only mine (or yours) and that is only now in the singular. We shall call this our version of the “combination problem”, and here include a statement of the problem as given by Galen Strawson, who addresses the challenge it poses in the context of conflicting schools of metaphysics:

The central idea [of the combination problem] is that a group of distinct experiencings or patches of experientiality, each of which necessarily has its own subject, can’t possibly interact or fuse or co-resonate in such a way as to constitute or generate a single experience with a single subject. Why not? Simply because . . . a plurality of subjects can’t possibly combine to form or generate a single subject.⁴

Experiencer – experiencing – experiencing of object X. The problem in our case begins not with the combination but in what coherent manner such an experienced unit as designated can be *uncombined*?⁵ Can there be an experiencer without the other two components? Or an experience of X without an experiencer and an experiencing? What therefore can be stated at the outset is that the challenge the combination problem poses for the framework of time presented in this book, a framework centered on the self/other alignment, lies in one re-

³ David E. Cooper, *The Measure of Things* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

⁴ Galen Strawson, “Mind and Being...”, 102.

⁵ For more on this, see Strawson’s “What is the Relation Between an Experience, the Subject of an Experience, and the Content of the Experience?”; *Real Materialism and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003/2008).

spect not in the combination but in the conceivability of its being otherwise, having an unraveled state, a piecemeal experiential circumstance other than combination.⁶ In our schema of time, experience and the experiencing of, for example, object X, cannot but come in the format of an alignment that fuses the experiential connection between experience – experiencing – experience of object X. I am an awake experiencer who cannot even exist as such without the other two components, an experiencing and something experienced in the world I'm awake to. Let's take any absent object, object Y. The temporal constraint and my own lucidity make it self-evident that I cannot have an experience of object Y that is not yet there or is no longer there, something I cannot yet, or no longer be, presently aware of; nor can object X be experienced minus an experiencer, some sentient being. What seals then the combination, what makes it unfracturable, is precisely this present time, this now alignment of self/other. Here in this instance we see there is no combination problem, only in the hypothesis of an uncombining.

But what about those *past* experiences, that un-combination of lifetime experiences not riveted to the now, even if at one time they must necessarily have been adjoined to some experiencer and object of experience, call it object X? The answer, from what was said when the question was previously addressed, can be proposed in two ways. First, according to the schema of time brought out in this book, the past is not cut off from the now but positioned in such a way as to be an outcome of there being a present already in existence, the latter bearing a prepositional role in the order of time. Past-to-present sequentiality and the knowledge based on it can be described as predicated on a present-to-past ontic base, the foundation by which such sequentiality and knowledge become attainable.

⁶ On the putatively related issue of a quality's existence apart from one who experiences that quality, we have already pointed out that insofar as a quality instance serves (in the Livingston context, see discussion cited in chapter 4, n. 31) as analogy in understanding how the now is without comparable data, without – that is – type or property characterization by which it can be compared to other nows, such analogy applies only where “quality instance” is intended to mean an experienced quality instance. The now cannot be approached otherwise, given its 1st person restriction and the temporal constraint. Obviously, the word “experience” presupposes the involvement of an experiencer and experienced object implied in the very meaning of the word “experience”. Consequently, on the question of whether there is a now apart from the self/other alignment, I have answered this by attributing the now as external, yet on both sides of that alignment, running as a conduit so to speak, rather than housed in some cranium recess of our mind or brain. To be more informative than what derives from the conduit of one's sensory knowing would require a non-experiential (3rd person) approach by way of knowledge, but knowledge has no access to the now. For more on qualities, and whether the notion of unexperienced qualities comes across as incoherent, or whether there might be qualities not experienced consciously, see, for example, Coleman, “Panpsychism and Neutral Monism”, 249, 274 n.3, and [<https://phenomenalqualities.wordpress.com>].

ble. But then the question arises about the past-to-present order of time and the reality basis of its linear sequencing in enabling configural and cognitive intelligibility out of perceptual content at any present time. Here we meet up with the second part of the answer. On the one hand, indispensable as the linear past-to-present is for any configurable recognition in present time, its distancing that derives from the not-now of extended time is inferential. It is we who do its computing, rather than something we come across in external events themselves. The words of Mach (from chapter 2) remind us that “time [i.e. in the linear sense] is an abstraction”. On the other hand, the now’s foundational role shows up in the consideration that you need the prerequisite of the now – and the immediate world it’s linked to – to do the measuring that goes into measured time, but you don’t need measured time and its linearity to have that prerequisite. But more importantly as pertains to that second meaning of the past, that road that forks the other way – namely the source of the past – it itself does not locate in any linear-based temporal, spatial, or configural distance from the present. How can it? The source of the past is the *lived* past, meaning that it therefore must necessarily be (or “have been” – to throw in misleading tense usage) a lived present. Hence, the misnomer of speaking of (linear) gaps between lived experiences, past or present, is done away with, as it does nothing but introduce a linear resetting of a nonlinear issue.⁷ All this can be summed up with simple observations we have consistently applied throughout this book: There is no history of the now. The now doesn’t go anywhere. Nor does one find it in the past.

And yet, given what we have just said, the uncombination problem even so comes back at us on the rebound in the form of uncombined nows in the present, including those of everyone alive – thus contradicting how, from the 1st person perspective the now has been all along portrayed in the singular, and along with it the singular self/other alignment. We have spoken of this now alignment as a cohesion of experiencer – experiencing – experience of object X. But nonetheless still at large is this daunting plurality, this seemingly infinite immensity of experiencers and their immediately present experiences. I’m not part of your now alignment, nor are you part of mine or everyone else’s. Attempting to solve this plethora of uncombined now alignments by somehow deeming them amalgamated into one – just mine or yours, for example – inevitably tailspins us into solipsism.⁸ The world becomes only my world I’m awake to, or yours. Nobody else’s. So how do we avoid that?

⁷ For a comparison of this treatment of linear-base gaps with how Bergson theorizes how such putative gaps are filled in by memory, see Bergson’s discussion in *Duration and Simultaneity*, 33 (quoted and discussed in chapter 5 (sec. “The changed and the mediated”), and the Bergson quotation is cited in chapter 2, n. 7.

⁸ The problem is similarly posed by Meixner in discussing Husserlian idealism. Meixner, *Idealism and Panpsychism*, 395.

Drawing again on earlier discussion, the answer we find proposed takes cognizance of the modality of 1st person sensory knowing that the self/other alignment gives access to, and of the impenetrability by knowledge's 3rd person means to access this kind of knowing that comes by direct acquaintance. Proceeding inferentially, knowledge applies a different currency of time to the immediate scene, replacing the indivisible with divisibility. But that won't answer the question of nows. Knowledge rides on knowing's sensory grasp which, temporally speaking, consists of an immediacy that comes with being awake to the world. It is the latter which tells our story, an immediacy in the form of a self/other alignment. Furthermore, the story this immediacy of self/other alignment tells is one of con-temporaneity, a world of shared experiences with others where the now amalgamates, fuses into a common immediateness that connects self to otherness and to the others in one's midst. So there is nothing solipsistic in this picture, at least not so far. On the other hand, given that the now is only now, the fact remains there is no experiential immediacy, no experiential now, before it occurs. No connective now to others and to otherness before it occurs. One can, of course, apply 3rd person reasoning, knowledge, and the linearity they are based on to sketch into this connective portrayal further details that come not by way of sensory knowing. That, however, will not answer the question of other nows but only abstract from the scene, from its concreteness where the connective temporality of the now is found. Hence, we are left with only the access route of one's sensory knowing.⁹

Restricted by this 1st person experiential access, one cannot but remonstrate, "Are there not, in fact, these multiple and sequential nows, mine, yours, and all the others? The very question demonstrates the predilection we all have to apply numbers to format reality on a linear basis, to understand 1st person experience in 3rd person terms, and to apply standards of objectivity exclusively to the distanced appraisal, judgments arrived at from a temporally extended vantage point."¹⁰

We see in this the tension, the discordance, between two modalities of time that implicate two profoundly different conceptions of nature. In the one there is the familiarity of the intelligible and the constant, nature made reasonably comprehensible by the before and after. In the other there is the familiarity

⁹ Obviously, as in the case of consciousness and its "something it is like", the experientially nonlinear does not preclude a rendition of it in linear (sentence structure) and representational terms, as exemplified by Chalmers' book, *The Character of Consciousness*, noted earlier.

¹⁰ This is essentially our answer to the plurality-of-the-now issue raised in the introduction, and how our approach to the now (in the singular) differs from that of Barbour, who for example conceives of the now as a kind of structure (Barbour, 53). Cp. Strawson ("Mind and Being", sec. 16, p. 85): "[P]hysics has no terms with which to characterize the intrinsic *experiential-qualitative* nature of concrete reality." [italics his].

of a kind of time common to us and the interpersonal world our senses give us to know, a time the immediacy of which has no before or after, but without which there is no before and after to give nature its intelligibility.

That “almost in reverse” we spoke of earlier, the almost in reverse of our temporal schema’s claim to instant objectivity, in contrast to how temporal extension is generally the standard adhered to as the benchmark for objective findings, defies a long tradition of skepticism toward sensory experience, experience that in its bald appearance and immediacy would have us sometimes misconstrue what is actually there. The bent stick under water, the rainbow, the thunder heard after the lightning, the flat Earth, the coin size of the moon and pigmy size of people at a distance. The visible orbits of sun and moon vs. the invisible orbit sleuthed by reason and deduction to accurately predict the solar eclipse. It is no surprise that, as Husserl puts it, there occurred “the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable – our everyday life-world.”¹¹ One may take as the epitome of that substitution an occasion in history that triggered a spike in that gradual replacing of idealities for the concretely real, brought on by one man in particular. As Richard Tarnas puts it:

In retrospect it is evident that the fundamental intellectual turning point of Western civilization was the Copernican revolution, understood in its largest sense. Nothing so effectively bestowed confidence in the supreme power of human reason. Nothing so emphatically and comprehensively affirmed the superiority of the modern Western mind over all others – all other world views, all other eras, all other cultures, all other modes of cognition. Nothing emancipated the modern self from a cosmos of established pregiven meanings more profoundly or more dramatically. It is impossible to think of the modern mind without the Copernican revolution.¹²

And yet, on any ordinary day when I look up at the sun, it is first and foremost *changed*. It *has* risen a bit. It is now. I may understand, of course, that the sun’s rising is due to the Earth’s orbiting. But that’s apart from the immediacy of that *changed*. Apart from the otherness I see directly. Just as when I look at you, it’s not a “you then” I’m looking at, whatever the fractional time light takes to travel from you to me. Moreover, if it were to happen that I failed to discern that present *changed*, the change in the sun’s position, the change that you discern and that others around me discern in the sky, and instead find myself witnessing a sun then or a you then, the reason would likely not be put

¹¹ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 48-49.

¹² Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006), 27.

down to a feat of discernment but to a profound failure to distinguish what it means to be present, or as our temporal schema would diagnose it, a breakdown in self/other alignment.

It all must begin with the immediate present, the momentary now that connects self and other. All else is contingent on that. And not just the Copernican revolution or any other revolution in our knowledge about nature. Even material nature itself is caught up in this preconditional vise. That, at least, has been the radical 1st person thesis this book has put forth.

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Index

- A Film Unfinished* 99
absent present 99, 109-111
acquaintance (sensory knowing) 18-20, 43, 61, 65, 84, 87-89, 94, 110, 118, 120-122, 133, 157-159, 178, 183, 197, 201
affordance 97
alignment (see self/other alignment)
Alzheimer's 171
Amondawa 36
aorist verbs 93, 151
Archimedian point 53, 83
Aristotle 7, 72, 84, 173, 190
Atmanspacher, Harald 22, 29, 37-38, 42, 71, 112
Augustine, Saint 72-73, 87
Bacciagaluppi, Guido 181-182
Baird, Paul 109-113
Barbour, Julian B. 18, 77, 95, 201
beginingless now 26, 115, 187-188
Bell, John S. (Bell's theorem) 77, 117
Ben-Yani, Hanoch 118
Bergson, Henri 36, 73, 78, 96-97, 132, 140, 200
Berkeleyan idealism 28, 185, 187
bi-temporal hypothesis 166
Bitbol, Michel 43, 48, 106
blink of the instant 96
Bourne, Craig 93, 115-116
Bricklin, Jonathan 7, 24, 39, 95, 122
Brook, Peter 157-158
Brown, Jason 24
Butler, Jesse 11, 84-85, 87, 173
Callender, Craig 47, 79, 117-118
Capek, Milic 34-37, 39-40, 73, 79-80, 96, 105, 129, 141, 168, 192
Caruth, Cathy 17, 135-136
causal closure 81
causal gap 82
Chalmers, David 13, 18-19, 179, 201, 206
changed from 26, 95-96, 98, 102, 106, 125, 130, 133, 155, 177, 189, 196-197
changed to 26, 95-96, 98, 102, 106, 108, 125, 130, 133, 155, 172, 177, 189, 196-197
Chemero, Anthony 73, 173-174, 190-191, 202
Chomsky, Noam 83
Christ and the now 162-168
Coleman, Sam 85, 199
colorblind Mary scenario 86-88, 189, 196
combination problem 139, 198-199, 200
common now 46-47
complete unified theory 82-86
conceptual self 178
Connor, James A. 49
consciousness 16, 19-20, 36, 40, 45-46, 51-52, 56, 61, 78, 94, 111-113, 129, 134, 139-140, 181, 183-184, 186, 191
consensus 46-52, 106-107, 161, 197
construction (and constructivists) 16-17, 23, 34, 47, 58, 60, 62-64, 99, 106-107, 198
con-temporaneity 26, 103-107, 109-111, 113-114, 121, 123, 181, 201
contra-lucidity 27 (and chapter 11)
Cooper, David E. 58, 62, 198
Copenhagen interpretation 117
Copernican revolution 202
co-presence 78-79, 105, 180-181
core consciousness 183-184
Craig, William L. 47, 79, 93, 115-118
Damasio, Antonio 130, 150-151, 183-184
Davies, Paul 34
Dawkins, Richard 84
death 27, 39, 96, 114, 148-152 (chapter 10)
Dennett, Daniel 53, 84, 158-159
Derrida, Jacques 95-96, 151
Deutsch, David 94-95
diachronic 179-180

- direct realist 55, 73, 108, 174
 distanced appraisal 20, 74, 141, 173, 201
 Dogen 12, 74
 doppelgänger witnessings (see Christ and the now)
 dreams 27, 48, 59-60, 62, 89, 121, 133-134
 dual aspect monism 42
 Dummett, Michael 83
 duration 18, 20-21, 36-37, 72-73, 78, 96-97, 132, 140, 151, 156, 200
 During, Elie 78, 105
 dynamical interaction 35
 Einstein, Albert 23, 34, 66-67, 77-78, 100-101, 116-117, 119, 125
 entwined now that was 172-173
 epiphenomenon 45-46, 113
 episodic 74, 179-180
 epistemic entitlement 59
 epoche 95
 escatological now 162
 Everett, Daniel 107-109, 133, 182
 exoeriential liminality 108
 experiential immediacy (of the now) 5, 11, 13-28, 40, 43, 60-62, 65, 67, 69-71, 73, 75-79, 81-89, 92-100, 103-105, 109, 113-114, 120, 122, 124-125, 129-136, 139-143, 147, 152-153, 155, 157, 160-163, 165-166, 168, 172-173, 175, 177-190, 192-193, 196-198, 200-203 (and see chapter 4)
 experiential liminality 108
 extended consciousness 183-184
 falsifiability 47-48
 Favela, Luis 43
 Felline, Laura 181-182
 first-person perspective (or 1st person) 11-12, 15, 17-18, 20, 24-25, 28, 40-45, 47-48, 55, 60-67, 70, 73-74, 79, 88, 97-98, 102-107, 109-113, 116, 118, 120-121, 123-125, 130-131, 134, 136, 145, 147-148, 151, 159, 167, 172, 175, 177-179, 181-182, 187-188, 190, 199-201, 203
 Franck, Georg 11, 37, 51-52, 140
 Freedberg, David 165
 Gadamer, Hans-Georg 142
 Gallagher, Shaun 41-43
 Gibson, James J. 15-16, 96-97
 Glasersfeld, Ernst von 60, 102
 Grotowski, Jerzy 156-157, 167
 Haldane, J.B.S. 83
 Hamlet, 159
 "having is the knowing" 88
 Hawking, Stephen 82-83, 86, 116
 Heidegger, Martin 57, 61, 74
 Heine, Steven 74
 Heisenberg, Werner 69-70, 195
 here and now 23 (see chapter 2)
 Hestevold, H. Scott 72, 101
hic et nunc 29, 35, 37
 higher orders of lucidity (conscious awareness) 85-86
 Hoerl, Christopher 92
 Hoffman, Donald D. 107
 Holbrook, Dwight 77, 85, 152
 holistic datum 20, 25, 73-74, 98
 Honderich, Ted 174
 Hooff, Hans van den 70
 Hopi tense structure 92-93
 Husserl, Edmund 76, 95, 195, 200-202
 immediacy (see experiential immediacy)
 indexicality 16, 43-44, 70, 103
 ineffability 20, 89, 158, 160, 163
 intrinsic properties 158-160
 James, William 20, 24, 39, 73-74, 95, 97-98, 122, 190
 Jesus 28 (see Christ)
 "just now" (or "changed from") 20, 27, 55, 95-96, 98, 108, 125, 130, 155-156, 165, 182, 189, 197
 Katz, Steven T. 89
 Kierkegaard, Soren 76, 180-181
 knowing 29, 83-84, 89, 102, 110, 113, 150, 161, 173, 184, 201
 knowledge 84, 139-145, chapter 9, 161, 167, 173, 180, 183, 201
 Krauss, Rosalind E. 96
 Kress, Gunther 83
 Lakoff, George 36
 Leibniz 18, 29
 Lewis, C.S. 83
 linear time (see not-now time)
 lived past 27, 120-125, 131-132, 134, 136, 140, 152, 157, 180, 183, 191-193, 200
 Livingston, Paul 19-20, 87-88, 199
 Locke, John 64, 92

- lucidity 13, 16-17, 21, 25, 27, 33, 40, 43, 46-47, 55-56, 72-73, 76-77, 85-86, 98, 104-106, 122, 135, 145, 155-161, 163, 165-167, 171, 174, 176, 178, 181, 186, 188, 193, 195-196, 199
 Mach, Ernst 29, 34-37, 200
 many minds interpretation 181, 183
 Marrou, Henri 119
 material nature here and now 34, 38, (and chapter 2), 144, 185
 material nature-as-other 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, (i.e. chapter 3), 65, 67, 80, 175-176, 198
 Mathewson, Dan 151
 matter 71
 McDowell, John 47
 McInerney, Peter 19, 37-38, 78, 176-177
 measured time 24, 26-27, 36-38, 65, 67, 76-78, 87, 104, 114, 140, 166, 183, 188-190, 200
 measuring device 75
 Meixner, Uwe 195, 197, 200-201
 Mellor, D.H. 93, 95
 memory 16-17, 19-20, 24-25, 27, 36, 64, 72, 75, 84-86, 91, 93-98, 100, 122-125, 129-130, 134-137, 141, 150-151, 155-157, 165, 168, 171, 183, 187, 191-193, 200
 mental presence 51-52
 metaphysical 14
 Metrodorus 15
 Metzinger, Thomas 74-75, 91, 94
 Meyenn, Karl von 38
 Miller, Kristie 14
 mindful universe 70
 moment ago (not to be confused with the *changed from* or “just now”; see 130)) 19, 21, 25, 27, 76, 109, 123, 126-127, 129-136, 139-144, 147, 152-153, 155-157, 159, 161, 166, 168, 172, 178, 181, 191-192, 193
 monads 18, 29
 multiverse 71, 183
 Nagel, Thomas 5, 11, 103-104, 158-159
 nature 22-24, 28
 neutral monism 42, 85, 174, 190, 199
 Newton, Isaac 78
 “no historical reality” 119
 nonlinear (i.e. non-sequential) 9, 26-28, 72, 79, 114, 123, 130, 178, 183, 185-187, 189-193, 196, 200-201
 non-sequential model 186, 188
 not-now of knowledge 84, 137, 139 (see chapter 9)
 not-now time 16, 20-22, 27, 73, 84, 95-96, 100, 123, 127, 129-135, 137, 139-143, 145, 147-149, 152, 155, 161, 166, 168, 172, 182, 190-192, 197-198, 200
 nowless 13, 18, 20, 27, 38, 48, 57, 71, 80, 84, 106, 124, 131-133, 147, 190
 nowness (see also experiential immediacy) 15, 22, 27, 33, 37, 40, 45, 48, 56, 69, 75, 97, 113, 132, 181-182, 189-190, 196
 now’s familiarity 7, 14, 17, 25, 52, 85-90, 101, 197
 Nunez, Rafael E. 36
 objective experimental data 43, 48
 objectivity 5, 104 (see chapters 1 and 2)
Oedipus the King 160
 ontological relativism 103
 ontology (and ontological split) 56, 79-80, 100, 102, 123, 187
 Osho 7
 otherness and *via negativa* 15-16, 23, 28, 33, 40, 55-67, 69, 80, 114, 134, 165-166, 174-178, 185, 188, 195-196, 201-202
 Overgaard, Morten 41-43
 Pannenberg, Wolfhart 168
 panpsychism 28, 38, 46, 64, 85, 88, 100, 139, 157, 179, 185, 195, 199-200
 past-to-present 15-16, 23, 33, 81-86, 88, 96, 115, 123, 166, 175-176, 185, 188, 199-200
 Pauli, Wolfgang 29, 37-38, 71
 perceptual systems 15-16
 Petitmengin, Claire 43, 48, 106
 Piraha 107-109, 133
 Plotnitsky, Arkady 35
 Poellner, Peter 48, 76
 pre-deceased body 164
 presence 190-191
 present (i.e. the objectively present moment) 5, 13-14, 18, 24, 34, 48, 50, 69, 102, 197
 present or presentness (see experiential immediacy)
 present-to-past 14-16, 77, 82-83, 96, 119, 124, 126, 175, 185, 199
 presentist 7, 14, 123
 Priest, Stephen 55
 Primas, Hans 38, 71

- property instance 51, 86
Puri, Bhakti M. 190
quality instance 51, 86-87, 93, 178-179, 189, 199
radical externalism 174
Ramsey, Thomas Z. 41-43
Reichenbach, Bruce 116
relational time 174 (see also relational approach 56, 109; relational perspective 110)
repeatability 48-50, 197
representation 17, 33, 60-62, 84-85, 88, 91, 97, 100, 122, 124-125, 141-142, 144, 151-152, 156, 172, 192, 201
representative theory 17, 33, 108
resurrection 27, 155, 161, 164, 166
retro-causation 118
Ricoeur, Paul 22, 72, 99, 115, 118-120, 135, 139-141, 191-192
Robbins, Stephen 61
Rorty, Richard 47, 53, 56, 62, 158-160
Russell, Bertrand 59, 88, 115, 123
Schwindt, Jan-Markus 82
Scott, Alwyn 72, 185
Seager, William (and Seager paradox) 111-113
Seemann, Alex 56, 178
seesaw effect 57, 66, 69
self/other alignment as precondition 23, 46, 60-61, 76-79, 108, 111-114, 121, 132, 174, 177, 179, 181-184, 186-190, 193, 198-201, 202-203
self/other temporal alignment 26, 33, 56, 98, 108-110, 123, 125, 174, 179, 203
sequentiality 14, 19, 141, 178, 187-188, 192, 199 (see also not-now)
Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine 148-149, 152
Silberstein, Michael 73, 173-174, 190-191
Simplicity 190
simultaneity 24, 36, 75, 77-78, 97, 132, 200
Sinha, Chris 36, 48
Skow, Bradford 39-40
Smolin, Lee 44
Smythies, John 17, 33, 108
Socrates 20, 133, 162-163
Sophocles 160
spacetime 22-23, 28, 39-40, 100, 114, 183, 187
Stapp, Henry P. 70, 81-82, 111
star light 144 (see stellar event)
Star Trek 121-122
state-specific science 52
stellar event 27, 46, 77, 105-121, 144, 167, 176-177, 193
Stokes, Patrick 76, 180-181
Strawson, Galen 38, 64, 88-89, 101, 110, 143, 153, 157, 180, 198, 201
subject of perceptual awareness 178
suffering 101
Tallis, Raymond 123, 143, 195
Tarnas, Richard 202
Tart, Charles T. 52
Taylor, Charles 101
Taylor, Jill B. 49, 52, 61-62, 101-102
Tegmark, Max 81, 140
temporal constraint 39, 45, 47-48, 50-51, 56, 61, 64-66, 69-70, 73, 75-76, 98, 105, 108, 121-122, 132, 144-145, 156, 158-159, 162, 165, 172, 181, 191, 193-194, 199
temporal integration device 47
temporal monism 104
temporal starting point 116 (see also chapter 7)
tenselessness 39
thing-like now 13-15, 21-22, 45, 48, 71, 103
third-person perspective (or 3rd person) 15, 18, 28, 40-42, 45, 48, 55, 60-61, 63, 65, 69, 73-75, 79-81, 98, 100, 102-104, 106-107, 111-113, 115, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 130-131, 136, 140, 144-145, 147-148, 151-152, 158-159, 167, 173, 175, 179, 184, 188, 190, 198-200, 201
time that takes time 16, 22, 26, 35, 37, 40, 84, 100, 102, 105-106, 115, 120, 124, 144, 149, 152, 190
timelessness 100
token (vs. type) 82, 86-87, 93, 151
Torrance, Steve 56
traceless now 7, 25, 75-76
transtemporal 182-183, 198
trauma 16-17, 27, 135-136, 151, 157, 167
twin paradox 26, 78-79, 105, 193
umbrella time 100, 103
uncombination problem 200
uniform now 78 (see also self/other temporal alignment)

-
- unmeasurable now 19, 24, 50, 71-75, 150
Varela, Francisco 97
Velmans, Max 17-18
via negativa 50, 59, 62-63
Wandschneider, Dieter 21
warrant 49, 59-60, 63, 106, 165
Waterlow, Sarah 69, 84, 173
Weyl, Herman, 25, 102, 106
Wheeler, John A. 100-101, 116-118, 124
Whitehead, Alfred North 18, 79, 105
Whitehead, Anne 17, 135
Whorf, Benjamin 92-93
Wigner, Eugene 34, 66
witnessings 28, 164, 166-168, 181
Woollacott, Marjorie H. 157
Wright, Nicholas T. 161, 163, 166
xibipiiio 108-109