**<CT>On believing that time does not flow, but thinking that it seems to**

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**<C-AB> Abstract:** Hoerl and McCormack posit two systems – the temporal updating system and the temporal reasoning system – and suggest that they explain an inherent contradiction in people’s naïve theory of time. We suggest there is no contradiction. Something does, however, require explanation: the tension between certain *sophisticated* beliefs about time, and certain phenomenological states or beliefs about those phenomenological states. The temporal updating mechanism posited by Hoerl and McCormack may contribute to this tension.

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Hoerl and McCormack (H&C) contend that a contradiction in people’s naïve theory of time (Callender 2017), which represents the movement of the now both as being an objective matter, independent of perspective, *and* as being a purely subjective matter, dependent on temporal perspective, can be traced to two mechanisms they posit: the temporal updating and temporal reasoning system Specifically, H&C suppose people believe both that only a single time is objectively now and that whatever time one is at, *that* time is now. H&C propose that the belief in the subjectivity of the now is enabled by our temporal reasoning system, and the contradictory belief in the objectivity of the now originates in the temporal updating system that we share with animals.

Very likely, people do believe that there is an objective moving now and simultaneously think that whatever time they are at, that time is now. However, unlike H&C, we do not think that this means they have an inconsistent representation of the world, as containing a now that is both objective and essentially perspectival. For if, as many have supposed, our naïve representation of time is one in which only one moment exists – the present – then that moment is both objectively now, and whichever moment one is located at, *that* moment is now (because there is only one moment at which to be located). This kind of naïve representation does not involve any inconsistent beliefs about the nature of the now.

We do think that there is a tension between the perspectival view of the now and aspects of mental life. H&C point out that “even Einstein … continued to be troubled by what he called the “problem of the Now.” But it is unlikely that Einstein held the contradictory beliefs relied on by H&C – that the now’s location and movement are both an objective and subjective matter. Instead, we think that after Einstein acquired a *sophisticated* *belief* that there is no objectively moving now, in some sense it still *seemed* to him as though there was an objectively moving now. But this seeming may be different from a belief that there is an objectively moving now.

What is the source of the seeming that the now moves or the inclination to think that it seems to? A common approach is to suppose that there is a phenomenological seeming – an illusion – as of the now moving (Callender 2008; Dainton 2011, p. 405; Hohwy et al. 2015; Ismael 2012; Le Poidevin 2007; Prosser 2012). Such an approach has an advantage over the view that the seeming is just a belief state, for we know that illusory phenomenal states can be difficult (or impossible) to eliminate even in the face of explicit beliefs that they are illusory, unlike beliefs themselves: typically, a belief that P is not difficult to eliminate when one comes to believe not P.

Therefore, the temporal updating system, or something like it (Prosser 2006; Hartle 2005), may generate *phenomenology* as of the now moving, which is resistant to change even in light of a more sophisticated empirically informed belief that the now does not move (a belief that may be possible only because of something like H&C’s other system, the temporal reasoning system). In this view, this phenomenology is resistant to change even when one comes to believe that the now does not move because it is generated by a primitive system that is, at least in part, informationally encapsulated. Its output – the phenomenology as of a moving now – is not altered by explicit beliefs generated by other, higher-level systems. Hence, even when people come to believe that the now does not move, it still seems to them as though it does. In this view, when we say that it seems as though the now moves, this is because we are suffering from a phenomenal illusion. A number of aspects of experience have been highlighted in attempts to explain this illusion, such as our motion phenomenology (Ismael 2012; Le Poidevin 2007, p. 76; Paul 2010), our phenomenology of change (Paul 2010, p. 346), and now H&C’s temporal updating system. We think it noteworthy that H&C’s updating system bears some similarities to the system posted by Hohwy et al. (2015), in the service of explaining why we suffer a phenomenal illusion as of a moving now. However, to us these accounts leave something to be desired, in that it is not clear exactly how motion, change, or other aspects of phenomenology might yield the phenomenology as of a moving now.

Recently it has been suggested that there is not a phenomenal seeming as of the now moving: instead, there is simply a *belief* that there is such a phenomenological seeming (Bardon 2013, p. 95; Braddon-Mitchell 2013; Deng 2017; Hoerl 2014; Miller et al. 2018.) In this view, people have a false belief about the content of their phenomenal states. Change phenomenology, and the temporal updating system posited by H&C, may contribute to a feeling that the now moves, but there may be no specific phenomenological content as of a moving now. Instead, people mistakenly *believe* that their phenomenology is as of a moving now. Miller et al. (2018) discuss a few possibilities for how people may have ended up with false beliefs about their phenomenology. One such possibility is that multiple factors lead us to misdescribe our phenomenology using language of a moving now, and that generates in us the belief that the world seems to contain a moving now. Conceivably, H&C’s temporal updating mechanism may generate a phenomenology that could be mistakenly described as a phenomenology of a moving now.

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