

Verbs, Times and Objects¹

“Thus there is no one big mystery with regard to seeing, although little puzzles remain as to *observing*, *watching*, and so forth. One could point out, for example, that while they are activities, they sometimes have—and this is true more of *observing* than *watching*—an accomplishment sense: it takes some time to observe the passage of Venus across the sun or to watch an ant carrying home a dead fly. There are obvious parallels between the concepts of seeing and hearing and those of watching and listening, and so on. Thus we could continue this kind of investigation, but without any specific problem it would become tedious and idle.” (Vendler (1967), p.120)

I am writing in the 60th year since the first publication of Zeno Vendler’s celebrated paper ‘Verbs and Times’, and a half-century after the publication of the canonical version of the text in the 1967 collection of Vendler papers titled *Linguistics in Philosophy*. In his paper, Vendler articulates a distinction between four verb types, a distinction that has its source in their temporal characteristics (their ‘temporal schemas’), and he sets this distinction to work on families of epistemic, cognitive and perceptual verbs. Though the paper is one of the recognized classics of 20th century analytic philosophy, it is not straightforward to identify the source of the paper’s enduring influence and significance. The interest of the paper does not stem from the fact that Vendler introduced an entirely novel typology of verbs, nor that he was wholly original in applying such distinctions to epistemic, cognitive and perceptual verb constructions. Vendler’s verb typology, and his discussions of the applications of verbs across a range of cases largely inherit the structure, and much of the substance, of the discussion in Gilbert Ryle (1949) and (1954).² Neither does the importance of the paper reside merely in the kinds of criticisms that Vendler offers of Ryle’s view of perceptual verbs. Those criticisms result in a modification rather than an outright rejection of Ryle’s view, and they raise more questions than they answer. It is true that the upshot of Vendler’s discussion of the temporal characteristics of verb forms is a catholic attitude towards perceptual verb forms that is original in the literature. But this

¹ Acknowledgements suppressed for blind review

² For related discussion see also Sibley (1955).

feature of the paper does not seem to have occasioned much discussion. So it is unlikely that this in itself is the source of the influence and appeal of the work either.

Rather, at least so I suggest, what distinguishes Vendler's discussion is that it allowed questions about the relation between the temporal characteristics of perceptual verbs and their grammatical objects to be seen clearly for the first time, and suggested the possibility that these questions might have systematic answers. What is more, it provided some concepts and theoretical tools for exploring what such systematic answers might look like. In focussing questions of these kinds, Vendler's discussion wasn't so much a contribution to research on an existing question within semantics or linguistics as it was the generation of a subject-matter for a new field within the developing discipline of formal semantics.³ In addition, these questions, and the distinctions between temporal characteristics of verbs and their objects that he develops in his paper, set the agenda for subsequent research in the philosophy of mind and action that addressed questions about the temporal aspects of mind and the temporal characteristics of the objects of mind.⁴ In this paper, I attempt to show what explanatory work the ideas he develops there are still capable of doing in the philosophy of mind.

In this paper, I want to use Vendler's discussion, and the apparatus he provides, to explore some questions about the relation between the temporal characteristics of perceptual states and occurrences and their objects. Reflection on these questions will allow us to connect up some features of Vendler's discussion with contemporary research in the philosophy of perception. An overarching aim of the paper is to use ideas from Vendler's work to draw attention to the relative neglect of a certain category of perceptual object in discussions of the temporal characteristics of perceptual states and occurrences. Here I make the beginnings of the case for why this neglect is significant for issues about the temporal characteristics of perception.

³ For work in formal semantics that is shaped by Vendler's verb typology and the research questions it focuses, see Dowty (1977), (1979), Taylor (1977), (1985), Bach (1986), Verkuyl (1993), (1999) and Rothstein (2004). Mourelatos (1978) includes influential criticisms of Vendler (1967) and attempts to develop an ontology of process that nevertheless develops many ideas from his work.

⁴ For work in the philosophy of mind and action that includes discussion of Vendler (1967), and exploits an ontology that develops Vendler's discussion see Steward (1997), Thompson (2008), AUTHOR, Soteriou (2013), and Hornsby (2012).

In section one I spell out Vendler's verb typology and outline the way that he applies that typology to notions of perception and the perceptual. Section two introduces some observations that Vendler makes during the course of the paper that suggests that there is a 'match' or 'coincidence' between temporal characteristics of perceptual verbs and their objects. This section goes on to focus some specific questions about the existence and nature of such 'temporal matching'. In section three, I present one simple proposal about how to answer these questions. Section four provides an argument that this proposal fails because it does not accommodate some temporal properties of the objects of perception associated with their apparent 'endurance' over intervals of time. Section five presents an approach to answering these questions that reflects some ideas developed in Ian Phillips (2010), (2014a) and (2014b). In section six I argue that this approach also faces difficulties accommodating the apparent endurance of objects. In section 7, I close with some speculative suggestions about how some of the questions identified in section two ought to be answered.

First, an assumption. Vendler's temporal distinctions are primarily formulated as distinctions between kinds of 'terms' or 'verbs' with respect to their temporal features. But as well as talking about episodic verbs and their features, Vendler also uses those verbs in talking directly about kinds of episodes and their features. So, he characterizes "watches" as an "activity-verb" and seems to take this to allow us to characterize watching as an activity. This assumption, and the pattern of expression that manifests it, runs right through the Vendler paper that is the target of discussion here, and right through all of those papers of his that are collected together in the 1967 volume *Linguistics in Philosophy*.

This raises delicate questions about philosophical methodology. Addressing those questions would take us too far from the substance of what I want to discuss.⁵ In what follows, I will present Vendler's account as one centred on terms and verb types. But I will also talk directly about mental states or events and their temporal features. I will assume that Vendler's enquiry can be thought of as a broadly 'conceptual' enquiry, and not merely as narrowly focussed on things that are contingent features of the English

⁵ For some of Vendler's own reflections on these issues of method, see Vendler (1967), essay 1. For discussion of philosophical method in Cook Wilson and Austin that is relevant to these issues see Longworth (forthcoming).

language. What is at issue is how we think of, conceive of, or otherwise represent the temporal characteristics of various aspects of mind and their interrelations, and indeed, how we conceive of temporal characteristics of the world in general. It is how we think of, or conceive of, the temporal characteristics of such things, I will assume, that is manifested in claims about temporal language and about the distinctions that can be drawn within temporal language. In an enquiry of this kind we can talk directly about mental states or events and their temporal features. But this should be taken to be talk about mental states or events according to some particular way of thinking about them or according to some particular conception of them.

1. Vendler's verb typology and the varieties of the perceptual

In the first part of 'Verbs and Times' a fourfold distinction between verb types is offered, between 'activity' (or 'process') verbs, 'accomplishment' verbs, 'achievement' verbs, and 'state' verbs. The typology is built up in a few steps. First, Vendler says that there is a basic distinction between those verbs that accept what he calls 'continuous tenses' and those that do not. Vendler (1967) says that the question "What are you doing?" can be answered by "I am walking" or "I am drawing" but not "I am knowing" or "I am believing". "Knowing" and "believing" are examples of state verbs. They single out states, which are things that may obtain over time but do not go on in time or occur in time. By contrast, he says "I am walking" and "I am drawing" appear to single out "processes going on in time, that is, roughly, that they consist of successive phases following one another in time". (1967, 99). Another manifestation of this is that in the case of walking one can ask of someone: "How long have you been walking for?" but not "How long have you been knowing for?"

With respect to the category of verbs that admit of continuous tenses—those that can be given in answer to the question: "What are you doing?"—there is a distinction between "activity terms" and "accomplishment terms." Accomplishments (e.g. "walking to the shops", "running a mile") are kinds of process that proceed to a set terminal point at which they cease and which function as a criterion of success of completion for the accomplishment. Activities (e.g. "walking", "running") are processes that lack such points. In the vocabulary of the work in linguistics that has developed these ideas, vocabulary that reflects the ancient origins of the distinction, the notion of activity is the

notion of atelic process, the notion of accomplishment the notion of telic process, with the notion of telicity signifying the idea of an achievement that is a criterion of success or fulfilment for the process that unfolds. The difference between activities and accomplishments seems to be reflected in a range of differences in the temporal behaviour of the relevant notions. If someone stops walking (which is atelic process) then it follows that they have walked, but if someone stops walking to the shops (telic process) it does not follow that they have walked to the shops. Accomplishments take time, and they can properly be said to finish. Activities go on for periods of time. But they do not take time. And they cannot properly be said to finish. Vendler (1967) also says that “activity terms” are homogeneous in a way that accomplishments are not. In case I write a letter in an hour, I did not write a letter in any sub-interval of that hour. But if I was running for an hour, then I ran during every sub-interval of that hour.

The category of those verbs that do not admit of continuous tenses admits of a further distinction, between those verbs that may indicate relations to intervals of time and those that are notions of instantaneous occurrences. “State terms” single out what may obtain for intervals of time. “Achievement” terms (e.g. “reach the summit”, “cross the finish line”, “stopping running”) however, are used to predicate instantaneous occurrence, what occurs but does not occur over intervals of time. Apparent uses of achievement terms in continuous or progressive constructions (e.g. “the train was stopping for about a quarter of a mile”, “they were reaching the summit over the course of three hours”) can be recast as accomplishment terms that pick out telic processes (a train braking to a standstill, mountaineers making the final push for the summit) in which achievements function as telic points.

In the later parts of the paper, Vendler shows how these distinctions between verb types can be put to work to help us to get a clearer sense of the temporal characteristics of cognitive and perceptual notions. It is perception and perceptual verbs that we’ll focus on here. The background to this part of the paper is again the discussion offered by Gilbert Ryle, in chapters 5 and 7 of the *Concept of Mind* and in chapter 7 of *Dilemmas*. In these discussions, Ryle argues that it is a mistake to ask what kind of state or process perception or seeing is, and whether it is physical or psychological. He says that seeing isn’t any kind of state or process at all. Ryle says that we should think of perception or ‘sees’ as a kind of success verb, to be understood by analogy with such verbs as ‘find’ or ‘win’, and

contrasted with ‘search’ or ‘task’ verbs such as hunt or look for. Seeing, like finding and winning, are occurrences, but they do not take any time at all. They are instantaneous events. ‘Sees’ is a perceptual ‘achievement-verb’.

Vendler agrees with Ryle (1949) and (1953) in so far as he thinks that some of our talk about perception is talk of a perceptual achievement. When we talk in terms of “spotting”, “noticing” and “recognizing” we are talking in terms of an event or an occurrence, but that lacks temporal duration. We can’t ask “How long did you notice that for?” or “How long did you spot that bird for for?” So these kinds of uses reveal a perceptual achievement, which he calls the notion of “seeing as spotting”.

But Vendler thinks it is a mistake to think that perception and specifically ‘sees’ is only the notion of an achievement. For example, he notes (1967, p.113) that a perfectly suitable answer to the question: “How long did you see the killer?” is “Oh, I am quite tall, I saw him all the time he was in the courtroom. I was watching him”. In this completely standard kind of exchange, “see” doesn’t pick out an achievement, or something that exists only at an instant, but something that is in existence over an interval of time. So then, if there is a notion of seeing or of perception, according to which seeing is not instantaneous, should we take that notion to be that of a state, which can obtain over an interval, or some kind of process or accomplishment? Here Vendler argues by elimination. “Seeing” as it is understood in such sentences, cannot be a process verb or an accomplishment verb, because it can’t occur in what he calls ‘the continuous tense’. Vendler (1967) claims that: “I am seeing such and such” can never be an answer to the question: “What are you doing?” It follows that the notion of seeing manifest in such talk is the notion of a state, rather than an achievement, activity or accomplishment.

Even if “seeing” or “perceiving” are not process or accomplishment verbs, there are notions of perceptual processes or activities. One of the distinctive and interesting features of Vendler’s paper is the attention he pays to notions that have gone by and large neglected in the literature in philosophy of mind. In this category fall such notions as ‘watching’, ‘looking at’, ‘observing’, ‘scrutinizing’, ‘looking for’ and ‘watching out for’.⁶ Watching or looking at things are things that one can be said to be doing, that is, they take

⁶ For discussion of perceptual activities such as watching and looking see O’Shaughnessy (2000), AUTHOR, Soteriou (2013) and Kalderon (2017).

the continuous tense by Vendler's lights. So they can be distinguished both from perceptual states and achievements. As in the broader category of processes, we seem to be able to distinguish a class of verbs that are verbs of 'perceptual activity', and have the atelic form characteristic of activity according to Vendler's account, and a class of 'perceptual accomplishment' verbs. While we think that watching or looking at things can go on for periods of time rather than take time, and do not have a telic point or achievement at which they aim, we might contrast this with such activities as looking for something or watching out for something, both of which are directed at visual achievements of a certain kind.

So, the conclusion of the application of Vendler's verb typology to perceptual verbs is not that our conceptions of perception and the perceptual instantiates a single temporal category. We can distinguish different relations to time across different perceptual constructions and thus differentiate between various perceptual categories. The question: "Into what temporal category does the perceptual fall?" should be rejected as it stands.

2. Some Questions about Verbs and Times

As I have presented it so far, what Vendler offers in his paper is a verb typology that refines and elaborates Ryle's distinctions between 'dispositions' and 'occurrences', and between 'tasks' and 'achievements', and applies these distinctions to perception in a way that involves rejecting Ryle's idea that perception cannot be a state. But the discussion in Vendler (1967) has a place in the development of research in formal semantics and linguistics that Ryle's work does not. Why is that? Here is a suggestion. In the course of the discussion over the last few pages of the paper, Vendler makes a number of observations that suggest that where we have a perceptual verb phrase in which a perceptual verb takes some grammatical object, there is an intimate connection between the temporal properties of the verb and the temporal properties of its object.⁷ For example, he says:

⁷ Though Ryle (1949) discusses verbs with grammatical objects—for example, at (1949: 130-147)—he never spots that there are questions that can be raised about the relation between the temporal characteristics of the whole verb phrase and the verb object.

“If one tells us that he saw *Carmen* last night, he means that he saw all four acts of *Carmen*. Besides, he might say that it took three hours to see *Carmen*. Perhaps one might even answer the question *What are you doing?* by *I am seeing Carmen on TV.*” (1967, 119-120)

First off, it is worth noting that it is not clear that this opening claim about what it means to say one saw *Carmen* last night reflects some quite general truth about the perception of occurrences over time. I might tell you that I saw the Trooping of the Colour without, it seems to me, implying that I saw every successive part of it. Nevertheless, it is plausible that contexts in which we talk about seeing artistic performances characteristically involve a commitment to the idea that we have seen each temporal part of the performance. In any case, let’s assume that this implication holds in the present case. What is of particular interest here, I think, is something else. The object of the construction: “I am seeing *Carmen* on TV” is, it seems, an accomplishment, the performing of *Carmen*. It is something that can be going on in time, but which takes time. If for whatever reason the singers on stage stop performing *Carmen* it does not follow that they have performed it (in the way that it follows from the fact that they stop singing that they have sung). But so also does “seeing”, in this construction, seem to be an accomplishment notion. As Vendler notes, in this sense of “see” one might say that it took one three hours to see *Carmen* (as one might say that it took one an hour to write a letter). So, in this case, the temporal category of the verb object and the complex verb phrase seem to coincide.

A little later, he writes:

“One could point out that while (observing, watching) are activities, they sometimes have—and this is true more of *observing* than of *watching*—an accomplishment sense: it takes some time to observe the passage of Venus across the sun or to watch an ant carrying home a dead fly.” (1967, 120)

An ant carrying home a dead fly is an accomplishment. If an ant stops carrying home a dead fly (for whatever reason) then it does not follow that it has carried home a dead fly. But so also is one’s watching of the ant carrying home a dead fly an accomplishment. If one stops watching the ant carrying home a dead fly it does not follow that one has watched the ant carry home a dead fly (though it does follow that the ant has been carrying

home a dead fly and one has been watching an ant carrying home a dead fly). Again, the temporal category of the object of the verb is shared by the complex verb construction.

Earlier in the paper, Vendler has noted the difficulty of making good sense of the following expressions:

- (1) *I spotted him cross the street
- (2) *I spotted him run

With the previous remarks in mind, one might observe that a feature of these sentences is the difficulty of seeing them as cases in which the temporal category of the verb object is shared by the whole verb phrase. ‘Crossing the street’ and ‘run’ are process terms (the first an ‘accomplishment term’ and the second an ‘activity term’). Were this category to be shared by the verb phrase, then that phrase as a whole would be an activity or an accomplishment. But it is hard to make sense of it as either. That would require us to be able to make sense of ‘spotting’ as something that goes on in time. But we can’t. Spotting something is an instantaneous occurrence. So perhaps the difficulty of making good sense of these expressions is a manifestation of the fact that in complex perceptual verb phrases the temporal characteristics of the verb object and the verb phrase are shared.

It is hard to resist the thought that what examples like these show is that there is, at least in certain cases, some kind of match between the temporal properties of verbs and the temporal properties of their objects. And it is hard to resist the thought that there is something systematic at work here, the identification of which would illuminate temporal properties of verbs. It was precisely this intuition, I suggest, that prompted a generation of researchers in the infant discipline of formal semantics to turn their attentions towards attempts to understand the relationships between temporal properties of verb objects and verb phrases.⁸ For a reader who is struck by the profound insight and interest of these observations, Vendler’s apparently casual attitude to them, as evidenced in our opening epigram, is extraordinary.

⁸ For a contribution to these questions, as well as an overview of post-Vendler developments in the formal semantics of verb aspect grounded in a discussion of features of the framework suggested in his paper, see Rothstein (2004).

In any case, to ensure that our continued investigations are neither tedious nor idle, let us identify two questions to focus our discussion:

Q1. In verb phrases involving a perceptual verb and a grammatical object, is there sharing of temporal properties of the complex perceptual verb and the verb object? If so, which properties, precisely, are shared? In less ‘linguistic’ form, we might ask, where some perceptual state or occurrence has an object, is there coincidence in the temporal properties of the states or occurrences and their objects? If so, which temporal properties are shared?

Q2. If there is sharing of such temporal properties, what, if anything, is the significance of this? What does it show?

With respect to Q2 one might note that there are different possibilities here. One possibility is that even if there is sharing of certain temporal properties of verb phrases and their objects, it shows nothing. It is accidental. Another thought is that this sharing of features is explained by some third factor that explains the temporal characteristics of both. A different thought again is that the temporal properties of the verb object are in some way explained by the temporal properties of the verb. And yet another possibility is that the temporal properties of the verb phrase are in some way determined by or explained by the temporal properties of the verb object.

3. A Simple Proposal

Here is one suggestion about how to answer these questions. With respect to Q1, what the observations identified from Vendler’s paper show is that there is a quite general coincidence of the Vendler verb categories to which the verb object and the complex verb phrase belong. And with respect to Q2, what this shows is the explanatory priority of the temporal properties of verb objects in determining the temporal categories of the complex verb phrases to which they contribute. Complex verb phrases fall into the Vendler categories that they do because their grammatical objects fall into those categories. Both of these ideas need further substantiation and explanation.

Following up the kinds of observations that Vendler makes, one might support such an answer to Q1 by drawing attention to further cases of match between the relevant temporal characteristics of verb objects and verbs. Take:

(3) Isaac saw Beatrice cross the finish line

(4) Isaac saw Beatrice start running

In (3) the object is an instantaneous occurrence, and so, it seems, is the 'seeing'. It does not make sense to ask Isaac how long it took him to see Beatrice cross the finish line. In (4), Beatrice starting to run is an achievement, an instantaneous event that is the onset of her running. Isaac's visual perception of that achievement is also an achievement. It did not take him time to watch her start to run. Sentences (3) and (4) are examples in which 'seeing' is an achievement ('seeing in the spotting sense', as Vendler put it) and so are its objects. In this context, the following sentences are interesting:

(5) Isaac watched Beatrice cross the finish line

(6) Isaac watched Beatrice start running

In the primary sense in which we have been encountering them, crossing the finish line and starting running are durationless achievements. But we don't naturally read or hear the verb objects in (5) or (6) as instantaneous occurrences. We ordinarily seem to understand the verb object of (5) as Beatrice running the some few yards up to her breaking of the tape, and then a few yards or so beyond. And again in (6) we think that what Isaac watched was some stretch of running that Beatrice was engaged in, which are the first phases of her run. Our way of understanding these sentences supports the idea that there is a match between the temporal features of the verb objects and the verbs.

Then consider the following:

(7) Lily watched Isaac running

(8) Lily watched Isaac running to the end of the garden

We have come across sentences like (8) in Vendler's paper. The object is accomplishment and so is the verb phrase. (7) is a contrasting, atelic construction. Running is something that someone can be doing, but it does not proceed towards a point of termination. It can stop, but it cannot finish and it does not take time. And if someone stops running, then they have run. Lily's watching of Isaac running appears to inherit each of these features of the verb object. Watching him running is something Lily can be doing. It can stop, but it cannot finish and it doesn't take time. If she stops watching him running then she has watched him run.

Also, take:

(9) Isaac saw the colour of the flowers

Ignoring tense for simplicity, the thought here is that the verb object in (9) is a state, a particular chromatic state of the flowers: the flowers' *being yellow*, for example. This state is something that can exist over an interval or for an interval. That is what differentiates it from an achievement. But it does not go on in time, or go on for a period of time. That is what differentiates it from an activity or an accomplishment. But these features are also, it might be suggested, inherited by the verb, by "saw" as it is understood here. Here, it may be said, 'seeing the colour of the flowers' is not something that Isaac does or which goes on in or for a time. It is the state *being visually aware of* such and such. *Being visually aware of* is not something that anyone can do, let alone get half way through doing. Though it can obtain over an interval of time it is not something that goes on in or for such an interval.

So, it might be said, in the case of perceptual verbs, there is some linguistic evidence in favour of the view that the Vendler verb classification of grammatical objects match up with the category of the verb phrase.

One might support the simple proposal about Q2 by arguing in the following way. Setting aside that the sharing of temporal properties is just an accidental quirk of language, or of the relation of perceptual states to the environment, the only genuine alternative to the view that the Vendler verb category into which the verb objects falls determines the verb

category of the complex verb phrase is to take it that the coincidence of these temporal properties is explained by the temporal properties of the verb that the verb phrase contains. But the temporal properties of the verb phrase cannot be what determines the temporal properties of the complex. For independently of their having the verb object that they do, those verbs don't have any determinate place in the Vendler verb classification. Suppose we were to ask: "Are the temporal characteristics of a complex perceptual verb phrase involving 'watching' determined by the temporal characteristics of the verb 'to watch', or by what grammatical category 'watching' falls into?" Then one might observe in response that what (7) and (8) reveal is that watching is itself neither activity nor accomplishment. Again, what we have noticed about cases involving 'seeing' is that in some complexes, 'seeing' is evidently functioning as an achievement verb (as in (3) "Isaac saw Beatrice cross the finish line") and in others, as a state verb ((9) "Isaac saw the colour of the flowers"). Here the temporal properties of the verb 'to see' are clearly being made determinate by temporal properties of the verb object.

4. Problems for the Simple Proposal

But there are reasons for resisting the idea that it is an entirely general truth about complex perceptual verb phrases that those verbs and their objects always share their verb category, and that the properties of the complex verb phrase are to be explained in terms of temporal properties of the objects. Though, as we have noted, there are clearly examples of the apparent sharing of Vendler verb categories between complex perceptual verb phrases and their objects, there are also puzzling cases. Consider:

(10) Tom spotted the peregrine

(11) Beatrice looked at the oleander bush

(12) Beatrice watched the frog

(13) Isaac was visually aware of the palm tree

In each of these cases, the grammatical object of the verb is a singular noun phrase that refers to a concrete, material particular. In each of these cases the objects are central

exemplars of Aristotelian primary substances, things that are bounded, countable, material particulars that belong to kinds that determine principles of activity for those things. A commitment to the idea that the temporal category of the object of the verb matches the temporal category of the verb seems to require that we take the verb in these cases to have temporal features that reflect the distinctive temporal characteristics of such objects, of the peregrine, oleander bush, frog and palm.

But none of the verb types (or references of verb types) that Vendler identifies is a good candidate for possessing those temporal characteristics that primary substances manifestly possess in experience. An achievement is not something that has the temporal characteristics of a peregrine falcon. A peregrine is not something that occurs, and its existence is not instantaneous or durationless. Peregrines exist over intervals of time, of some non-zero duration, no matter how short that interval is. So in (10) there can't be a match between manifest temporal properties of the object and the achievement. In turn, it is difficult to see how (11) and (12) can be cases in which the temporal characteristics of the verb types coincide with those of the verb object. Concrete material objects like an oleander bush are not things that anyone or anything can be said to be doing, or which go on over intervals of time. And in (13), a palm tree is an Aristotelian primary substance. It is not a state or condition of anything. States or conditions exist by obtaining or being instantiated at times and over intervals of time. But a palm tree doesn't exist by obtaining or being instantiated at times and over intervals of time. A further relevant difference here between the temporal characteristics of a palm tree and *being visually aware of a palm tree* is that palm trees seem to exist over time in such a way that they are capable of growth, movement and change of intrinsic properties over time. But it is difficult, on the face of it, to make sense of a state such as *being visually aware of a palm tree* as growing or developing. Of course, an object's state may change, when it melts and so goes from solid to liquid. But this is not for a state such as *being solid*, to change. It is for solidity to have been replaced by the state of *being liquid*.

One way to preserve the claim about matching in the face of these worries would be to dispute the relevant idea about the temporal characteristics of primary substances. For example, if one took the substances that are objects of perceptual verbs to be processes, then the fact that watching is a process would not be problematic for the object determination approach. But apart from involving a counterintuitive and revisionary

metaphysics of substance, such a strategy will not explain how such objects can be the objects of perceptual verbs that fall in temporal categories other than that of process. So let me set this idea aside.

A different way of responding might be to suggest an analysis in which the surface form of expressions such as (10)-(13) is misleading, and that we should see the logical form of these expressions as containing a place to be filled, perhaps in the context of use, by material that picks out something that does have, in each case, the same temporal characteristics as the verb expression. So perhaps when we say that we spotted an object we can reconstruct from the context that what was spotted was an instantaneous occurrence involving the object. Or perhaps if one is visually aware of an object, one is really aware of some state or condition of that object. Then again, if one is watching an object, say, then what one watches is some process or activity in which the object is engaged. Some remarks of Vendler's in his paper 'Facts and Events' might suggest a version of this thought about watching or observing. He says:

"Fires and blizzards, unlike tables, crystals, or cows, can occur, begin, and end, can be sudden or prolonged, can be watched and observed—they are, in a word, events and not objects." (1967, 141). A few passages before this, Vendler has been reflecting on such perceptual activity sentences such as "I watched the execution of the criminal" and "I observed the passage of Venus".⁹ Vendler elsewhere is happy to talk about watching or observing objects. So, might the view here be that to watch or observe an object is never merely to watch an object simpliciter but to watch some event or process in which that object is engaged? Crowther (2009) pursues a similar thought. There it is suggested that watching an object ought to be understood as watching *what an object is doing*, where to watch what an object is doing is to agentially maintain perceptual contact with an object with the aim of being in a position to answer the question "What is it doing?". Given this view of watching, and given the view from Vendler's paper that activities or accomplishments are things 'that can be given in answer to the question: "What are you (is it) doing?"' then it seems that for someone to watch something over time implies that they are perceptually aware of activity or process in which the object is engaged over time. For even if the object is doing nothing, and in watching it, one can see that it is doing nothing,

⁹ Vendler (1967), p.138.

“It is doing nothing” is nevertheless an answer to the question “What is that object doing?” Might this approach not serve as a model for analysis of the rest of the sentences that are apparently troubling for the matching view?

One response to this thought is to put pressure on the idea that the notion of what can be an answer to the question “What are you (is it) doing?” is sufficient to determine a notion of activity or process. For one might think that such a question invites the hearer to identify how some object is exercising its capacities for activity, or how it is active. It is true that an object might be exercising capacities for activity over an interval of time, in agentially staying still. Staying still over time can be an activity. But it is not necessarily the case that answering such a question with “The object is doing nothing” is to identify such active preservations of static position. One might simply be saying that the object is totally inactive; that there is nothing it is doing. And it seems odd to understand such uses of an expression as picking out activity or process.

A second response would be that even if watching an object always involves awareness of activities or processes in which an object is engaged, it does not follow that this kind of strategy will work to preserve temporal matching across the other instances of perceptual occurrences. Crowther (2009) suggests that there is a difference between the structure of watching and looking.¹⁰ While watching an object can be understood as watching what an object is doing, the activity of looking does not seem to be individuated in terms of a goal that involves reference to activities and process in which the object is engaged. One can, of course, look at what an object is doing. But to look at an object is not necessarily to look at what it is doing. What seems to distinguish looking from watching, according to the ordinary conception of it, is that to look at an object is to actively maintain perceptual contact with that object with the aim of being able to answer such questions as “What shape is it?”, or “What colour is it?”, questions that have the general form “What state/condition is it in?” If this is correct, then it may be true that the grammatical object of looking is not merely a singular term picking out an Aristotelian primary substance. But this would not be enough to preserve the simple proposal. For the further objects are states the object is in, not activities that go on over time. Though these suggestions about

¹⁰ See in particular (2009), 23-5.

looking are not intended to be conclusive, they are enough to raise doubts about the capacity to generalize from what may be true of watching.

There is a more general problem with the idea that the current difficulty with the simple proposal can be negotiated by finding material implicit in (10)-(13) that matches the temporal properties of the relevant perceptual state or occurrence. Take watching an object that is an Aristotelian primary substance. In watching such an object, it isn't just the case that what is watched is in fact an object, and in fact occupies time in the way that such objects do. In watching an object, that object characteristically seems to a subject to occupy time in a way that is distinctive of objects, rather than events or processes. Such objects of watching are manifestly objects over time, rather than events or processes. We could put this by saying that such objects seem to endure over intervals of time.

But now, even if it were conceded that all watching of objects was the watching of objects which were visibly engaged in activity, or that all states of visual awareness of objects are cases of awareness of objects that are visibly in certain states or conditions, those objects nevertheless, for all that, also seem to endure over time, rather than seem to obtain, or seem to go on in an atelic way, or seem to unfold towards a terminal point, or seem to occur at an instant. However, the simple proposal requires that there is a match between the temporal properties of the object and the temporal properties of the perceptual state or occurrence. But even granting a broadening of temporal properties to include the manifestly enduring, there now remains an unanswered question about how this temporal feature of such objects of perceptual verbs can plausibly be thought to temporally match anything in those verb phrases, or in those perceptual states, processes, accomplishments or achievements that those verb phrases pick out.

5. The Naïve View and the 'Inheritance Principle'

Ian Phillips (2010), (2014a) and (2014b) argues for what he calls a 'naïve view' of the relation between the temporal properties of experience and the temporal properties of the object of experience. The key idea of the naïve view of the temporal properties of experience is that particular categories of temporal properties of experience are determined by the temporal properties—or, at least, by the apparent temporal properties—of the objects of experience. Phillips (2014a) writes:

‘According to the naïve view, when all goes well, your stream of consciousness inherits the temporal structure of the events that are its contents. You “take in” the temporal structure of the events you witness in witnessing them. As a result, the temporal structure of experiences matches the temporal structure of its objects. In cases of illusion, it is as if this is so. Thus, in every case, the temporal structure of experience matches the temporal structure of the objects of experience.’ (2014a, 139).

This naïve view suggests a different approach to answering our questions. Before briefly elaborating and explaining these ideas, a few basic features of the orientation of Phillips’s discussion deserve emphasis. The first is that his discussion specifically concerns the temporal properties of *experience*. Most contemporary debate in the philosophy of perception has been focussed on the nature of perceptual experience.¹¹ But the word ‘experience’ does not occur once in the course of Vendler (1967), and our introduction to the Vendler verb typology here has been given entirely independent of that notion.¹² I will assume that experience consists of phenomenally conscious events or processes that constitute a subject’s stream of consciousness over time. If we are to connect up the naïve view of the temporal properties of experience with the questions as we have asked them, we will need to be sensitive to the particular commitments involved in approaching these questions in terms of the temporal properties of experience. A second assumption is that in so far as they are relevant to the questions at issue here, temporal properties of experience, for Phillips, are ‘manifest’ temporal properties of experience.¹³ Manifest temporal properties of experience are those we are capable of discovering in first-person introspective reflection on the character of our experience. For example, while it may be a temporal property of an experience that it is causally sustained by various neurophysiological occurrences that have distinctive temporal characteristics, that is not a manifest temporal property of experience. And a third assumption is that introspective reflection on experience is at least capable of providing us with knowledge about the nature of its manifest temporal properties.¹⁴ I will follow Phillips in adopting these assumptions. It is also worth emphasis that Phillips’s discussion is not pitched at the

¹¹ See for example the essays collected in Nanay (2010), and in Gendler and Hawthorne (2006).

¹² I will take up questions about the relation between the notion of experience and the Vendler verb categories elsewhere. For discussion relevant to these issues see Soteriou (2018).

¹³ Phillips (2014a), p.143-44.

¹⁴ See Phillips (2010), section 4, and Phillips (2009) for further discussion.

properties of verbs and their objects. Against the background of the assumptions I spelled out at the outset, however, I will continue to talk in terms of perceptual verbs and grammatical objects, but also to disquote.

The core argument in discussion in Phillips (2014a) and (2014b) is an explanation and defence of what Phillips calls ‘the inheritance principle’. According to this principle, experience inherits those temporal properties which are possessed—or which appear to be possessed—by the objects of experience. Crucially, what counts as a ‘temporal property’ for the purposes of the defence of the inheritance principle are such properties as simultaneity, succession, order and duration. So the specific claim that a defender of the inheritance principle argues for is that the apparent simultaneity, succession, order and duration in the objects of experience is inherited by, and so determines, the duration and temporal order of the experience itself.

Phillips argues that this principle is supported by introspective reflection on the manifest temporal properties of experience. He makes two claims about the properties of experience that he associates with the idea that experience is ‘transparent’ with respect to its temporal properties.¹⁵ The first is that attempts to reflect on what experience is like, and what its manifest temporal properties are like, proceed through reflection on the manifest temporal properties of the objects of experience. I can discern through reflection what temporal properties experience has. But I do so by reflecting on what the objects of such experience are like. Further, in many cases, when we reflect on what our experience is like over an interval of time, and so attend to the objects of such experiences, what we find is that those objects are things which have temporal extension.¹⁶ For example, if one attends to someone’s walking, one finds that one can’t attend to their walking without attending to some phase of walking that goes on over an interval. The second claim is that “(I)t seems to us that our experience itself unfolds alongside, and in step with, the temporal phenomena that we find ourselves attending to in reflecting on our experience.” (2014b: 132) If I reflect on what it is like for me to watch someone walking across the garden, for

¹⁵ For the source of discussion of the transparency of experience see Moore (1903). Soteriou (2013) chapter 5 is an important discussion of the transparency of experience with respect to specific temporal properties that frames a number of ideas that Phillips develops in his recent discussions. The relation between Phillips’ and Soteriou’s discussions of temporal transparency, though, is not straightforward and I make no commitments about it here.

¹⁶ Phillips (2014b), p.132.

example, it seems that my experience unfolds successively over that interval of time, and my grasp of the successive unfolding of the experience of the walking over that interval is determined by my awareness of a successively unfolding walk over that interval of time. It also seems that the time at which I am now watching someone walking is simultaneous with the time at which they are walking. Phillips claims that it is the second of these claims and the ideas it draws on, specifically, that provides the key support for inheritance.

The suggestion may now be that it is in terms of these ideas about the temporal properties of experience and its objects that we can best make sense of those interesting observations that Vendler makes during the course of the last few pages of his paper that focused our questions here. Take the case of watching an ant carrying a dead fly back home. Watching an ant is a phenomenally conscious occurrence in the stream of consciousness, so it is an instance of experience. But the watching, and the object of the watching match with respect to duration succession, order, and temporal location. If the ant's journey appeared to have lasted for just a few moments, for example, then so one's experience went on for a few moments. Further, it seems to one as if the order of the experience was determined by the order of the events or phases of the journey witnessed. If the ant seemed to one to run along the length of a short twig before disappearing into its nest, then one's experience of the ant negotiating the twig occurred before one's experience of it disappearing into its nest. In addition, the experience seems to go on over time in a way that involves a succession of temporal phases. But these temporal phases are 'transparent' to the apparent succession of temporal phases that the ant's journey involves: running from one end of the twig to the other, dismounting, running along the ground and disappearing into the hole. Finally, it might be noted that at any time during that experience, there is a match between the temporal location of the objects of the experience and the experience. At any time during the watching the of ant carrying home a dead fly, the part of the journey that is experienced appears to be simultaneous with the time at which one experiences it.

The case of 'seeing *Carmen*', it might be suggested, ought to be approached in the same way. Insofar as one saw a performance of *Carmen* over an interval of time, then some experience or experiences went on in the perceiver over that interval, for example, the watching of a performance of *Carmen*. The watching of the performance seems to unfold successively, temporal part by temporal part, as the performance watched unfolds successively, temporal part by part, and each temporal part of the watching seems to be

‘transparent’ to the temporal part of the performance watched, so that the temporal part of one’s watching of the singing seems to be simultaneous with the singing seen and heard on stage. This does not imply that seeing is identical to the activity of watching. The ‘seeing’ in ‘seeing *Carmen*’ is most naturally understood as a state of visual awareness (only with a ‘peculiar accomplishment sense’ as Vendler notes)¹⁷. Nevertheless the temporal properties of the states of perceptual awareness involved in seeing *Carmen* seem to be inherited from the temporal properties of the objects of such awareness. Suppose we take it that to see a performance of *Carmen* is to be visually aware of a performance of *Carmen* over an interval of time. Then over that interval, a succession of perceptual states obtain and a succession of changes between such perceptual states occurs. One is aware of the entrance of the flower sellers before one is aware of the performance of the opening Habanera but after the entrance of Jose. And this temporal order is determined by the apparent temporal order of those events as they unfold on stage; the entrance of the flower sellers appearing to come before the performance of Carmen’s first number which itself seems to come before the entrance of Jose.

Cases of perceptual achievements, it might be said, also manifest this transparency with respect to temporal duration and order. If one sees Beatrice start to move, then one’s sight of the onset of her movement does not appear to take any time at all, being instantaneous. And this, according to the present proposal, is to be explained in terms of the fact that the temporal extension of the seeing is inherited from the apparent temporal extension of her beginning to move. But what such examples also reveal is the dependence of such instantaneous perceptual achievements on events and processes with temporal duration. It is not possible for one to simply have seen Beatrice starting to move without the occurrence of perceptual experience of Beatrice moving over an interval of time. And the temporal properties of such experience of movement are inherited from the properties of its objects. When one reflects on what it is like for one to see Beatrice start to move one’s awareness proceeds through reflection on the events which are the objects of the experience. And when we reflect, what we find is that what one is aware of cannot be merely an instantaneous event of the onset of movement, but must include some stretch of Beatrice’s movement that has temporal duration. It is only in witnessing some phase of movement that one can be aware of the onset of movement at some point in time.

¹⁷ See Soteriou (2013) chapter 5 for a discussion of the perception of movement that provides a route to understanding the idea of a stative with such a ‘peculiar accomplishment sense’.

From the current perspective, then, the answer to Q1 is that temporal properties such as temporal duration, temporal order, successiveness and simultaneity are shared between perceptual states, perceptual occurrences and their objects. The answer to Q2 is that what this reveals is the truth of the ‘inheritance principle’. Those temporal properties of experience are determined by the apparent temporal properties of the objects of experience.

6. Problems with Inheritance

Critics have objected that the inheritance principle involves a conflation of properties of act and properties of content.¹⁸ There are also questions about whether the inheritance principle is consistent with various phenomena that emerge in the empirical literature, for example, the ‘postdictive’ phenomena discussed by Dennett and Kinsbourne (1992).¹⁹ The assumptions that Phillips makes about the role of introspection in investigating the temporal properties of experience might be questioned. I am sympathetic to the responses that Phillips (2010), (2014a) and (2014b) develops to these objections.

Here I want only to note that our discussion in section 4 ought to generate worries for the idea that the naïve view of the temporal properties of experience, as it has been set out here, can provide a complete answer to our questions 1 and 2. And the reason for this is that there is no straightforward way to accommodate the manifest endurance of objects—Aristotelian primary substances, such as individual human beings, palm trees, peregrine falcons—within that approach, at least as it has been presented here.

While such objects, as they are encountered in watching and looking, apparently have temporal duration—they appear to exist over non-instantaneous intervals of time—it is hard to make sense of their seeming to possess the other temporal properties that have been the focus of attention here. Suppose one watches a cat walking across the overgrown lawn. Unlike his movement across the lawn, the cat does not seem to unfold successively,

¹⁸ See for example Prosser (2016).

¹⁹ See also Watzl (2013) for the objection that the inheritance principle cannot explain the motion silencing effects investigated by Suchow and Alvarez (2011).

temporal part by temporal part, as one's experience unfolds temporal part by temporal part across that interval of time. Also, while we can locate the onset of the cat's walk, and temporal parts of the cat's walk, as before or after one another, we can't locate what is manifestly the cat before or after anything else. Those entities which are manifest to one in perceptual experience as primary substances cannot be ordered in terms of such temporal locations, even if movements or events involving those objects, may be. And so also, it seems, we should be sceptical of the idea that over an interval of time over which the cat is seen, it seems to us as if the temporal location of the temporal part of our experience of the cat is simultaneous with the temporal location of a temporal part of the cat. It is the cat itself that is manifest to us in perceptual experience as that experience occurs in time. And it is the cat itself that is manifest to us as that experience unfolds successively, temporal part by temporal part, over that interval.

If this is correct, the naïve view and the inheritance principle does not seem to be able to provide a complete answer to questions 1 and 2. The primary substances that come to visual attention manifestly possess temporal properties—they are manifestly present in their entirety at any time and so manifestly do not exist successively, temporal part by temporal part over the interval of time they are seen—that the perceptual experience of such things manifestly lacks. For experience exists successively, temporal part by temporal part, over an interval of time, and itself can be ordered in terms of before and after relations. Furthermore, the perceptual states that obtain during that interval, and the transitions between those states, can be ordered in terms of succession and temporal precedence in a way that their manifestly enduring objects cannot. Were the inheritance principle correct as an answer to Q1 and Q2 then the experience would exist over an interval of time as a non-successive unity, lacking temporal parts, but being present in its entirety over any interval of time during which it existed. But experience does not have such temporal properties. It is manifestly an unfolding event or process. Therefore, the inheritance principle cannot provide us with an answer to our questions.

One who wanted to defend the idea that the inheritance principle could deliver an answer to questions 1 and 2 might attempt to develop different responses to this worry. Though I do not have the space here to explore each response in detail, or provide conclusive responses, these responses do not seem particularly plausible or attractive.

(a) One strategy would be to deny that experience, such as watching or looking at an object, unfolds or occurs over an interval of time as a succession, with temporal part following temporal part, or to deny that the perceptual states that obtain over the interval time that an object is watched or looked at constitute a temporal succession, with those states obtaining before and after one another in time. But the idea that watching something, for example watching an ant carrying a dead fly home, and the perceptual states that obtain during the period of time in virtue of such watching, manifestly exist in their entirety at the same time, as a non-successive unity, is implausible, insofar as it can even be understood. When we consider how our experience occupies time from the standpoint of introspective reflection, that is manifestly not how such experience exists over time.

(b) A different idea would be to deny that objects such as human beings, palm trees and peregrines seem to exist over intervals of time in a non-successive way, and deny that they seem to be present in their entirety over the interval of time that they appear. If it is not the case that objects apparently endure over intervals of time, then the inheritance principle may be true, consistently with experience unfolding successively, temporal part by temporal part, over an interval.

But this proposal—that objects strike us in experience as occupying time in the way that the four-dimensionalist about objects takes them to—is hard to reconcile with how the world strikes us from the perspective of the experiencing subject. Our perceptual experience presents us with things which are manifestly events or processes which go on in time, successively, over intervals of time, and things which are manifestly not, such things as the objects which are the agents or subjects of those events or processes which go on in time, temporal part following temporal part. What is more, this difference in the way that constituents of our environment exist across periods of time is itself manifest to us when we reflect on the objects of our experience and how they strike us. This manifest difference is itself something that gives content to what is distinctive of the way that events and processes, on the one hand, and objects on the other, exist across intervals of time. For, at least in many of the central cases, it is hard to make sense of understanding the way that events or process strike us as unfolding across intervals of time independently of understanding that they seem to strike us as the doings or sufferings of things which manifestly endure over the interval of time such activities or processes go on. And so also

does it seem difficult to square the idea that an object which is watched over an interval, could manifestly endure, static, over that interval, but which couldn't apparently begin to change shape, colour or location, at any time during that interval, for example.

(c) A further possible response might be to dispute that the notion of endurance over time that figures in the idea of seeming or manifest endurance is sufficiently well-understood. If the notion of endurance is not sufficiently well-understood then the force of the worries articulated here is blunted. But a theme of much discussion in the recent literature is that there is not a satisfactory notion of endurance that is fit for purpose as a way to frame meaningful and non-trivial disputes about material persistence over time.²⁰

This line of thought raises interesting questions that take us beyond what can be discussed here. In advance of a lengthier discussion, what can be said is that the success of the arguments against the current suggestion does not turn on having access to a satisfactory way of formulating the notion of endurance, and of endurantism. The core of the worry for the present proposal about how to answer Q1 and Q2 is that objects such as palm trees and peregrines manifestly relate to intervals of time in a way that perceptual occurrences and states do not. But to establish this it is sufficient to note that such primary substances strike us over intervals of time as manifestly non-occurrent over those intervals of time, and as not capable of being temporally located as 'before' or 'after'. Perceptual experience such as watching or looking at an object over an interval of time clearly occurs over an interval. It is true that perceptual states, such as being visually aware of a palm tree or a peregrine falcon, over an interval, do not occur. But these states are capable of being ordered in terms of before and after. For example, it might be that Isaac saw the entrance of Carmen after he saw the entrance of the soldiers. But Isaac himself can't be before Beatrice, or after Lily.

With these responses spelled out, I emphasize that to reject the idea that the naïve view of the temporal properties of experience, and the inheritance principle, is capable of providing an answer to questions 1 and 2 is not in itself to reject the naïve view and the inheritance principle. One thought here is that the inheritance principle as it figures in

²⁰ For discussion of these issues see Hofweber and Velleman (2011), Fine (2006/2008), Crisp and Smith (2005), Mackinnon (2002), Donnelly (2011). I will discuss the bearing of questions about the temporal characteristics of activities and processes on questions about the persistence of substance over time and debates about the nature of endurantism in more detail elsewhere.

Phillips's discussions is best understood as a claim about the temporal properties of the experience of events or processes, rather than a claim about the temporal properties of any objects of experience whatsoever. In a number of places in his recent work, Phillips talks in a way that suggests that the objects of experience that are particularly relevant to his discussion are events or processes. For instance, he writes: "The most natural answer to the question of the relation between the temporal structure of experience and the temporal structure of the objects of experience is that our experience inherits the temporal structure of the events which are its contents. The temporal structure of the world imposes itself on our stream of consciousness." (2014: 142)

But if it is true that we can understand the scope of the inheritance principle to be restricted in this way, it should also be noted that very often in the literature on the temporal properties of experience, it appears to be simply assumed that the only relevant temporal properties of experience are those it possesses in virtue of being experiences of events or processes. For example, Geoffrey Lee (2014: 149) writes: "A *temporal experience* is an experience that presents to its subject states of affairs that manifestly involve duration and change over time, such as the temporal order of sounds, the velocity of moving objects, or the duration of a brief flash of light in the visual field".²¹

This assumption should be seen as unnecessarily restrictive. The perceptual experience of what is manifestly an object over an interval of time is no less a temporal phenomenon than is experiencing some process in which that object is involved.

7. Conclusion

I have identified some questions that seem to emerge from significant observations made during the course of discussion in Vendler (1967). I have identified two distinct ideas about how to answer these questions, and then provided reasons to think that these approaches cannot be correct as they stand. The reasons in each case follow from attention to the way that objects characteristically appear to occupy intervals of time.

²¹ Similarly, Dainton (2014), p.101 suggests that 'temporal experience' is to be understood simply as 'experience of change and succession'. Pelczar (2010) suggests that questions about the temporal properties of experience are questions about the temporal properties of experiences of change.

How then might we make progress on questions 1 and 2? My view is that it is worth exploring further the idea that, in some cases at least, there are forms of matching between the temporal properties of perceptual activities, states, accomplishments and achievements, the explanation of which runs in the other direction from that discussed during the course of this paper. That would be to hold that the temporal properties of objects of experience, where these are understood as the apparent or manifest temporal properties of apparently presented objects, might be explained in terms of the manifest temporal properties of certain aspects of mind, or at least, in terms of certain apparent temporal features of conscious subjects.

This is a larger project for further research. But I close the discussion here with a few thoughts that might move the discussion in this direction. Begin with a question: in all this talk about the temporal properties of verb objects and verb phrases, where has the verb *subject* gone? In setting up the discussion of temporal properties in the way that we have been, are we closing off the possibility that verb *subjects* have manifest temporal characteristics that play a role in determining various temporal properties of complete states of affairs in which subjects perceive objects or occurrences over intervals? In the disquoted idiom, the suggestion is that attention to the manifest temporal properties of subjects of experience might illuminate some of the temporal characteristics of perceptual activities, accomplishments, states and achievements.

I have been arguing that there does not seem to be a match between the manifest temporal properties of objects and the temporal properties of perceptual activities such as watching an object. But there does appear to be a case of matching in the vicinity. When one is awake, attentive, and engaged in some such perceptual activity as watching an object, there are various matches between the temporal properties of oneself, as one is aware of oneself, and the manifest temporal properties of the object one watches, at least when that object is presented as occupying time in the characteristic way that objects do. For example, one is aware of oneself as existing over an interval of time, as being capable of atelic activity over that time, as not temporally limited by the starts and stops of such activity. But that, at least so it seems, is also how objects seem to one, when one is aware of them as enduring. In addition, one is also aware of oneself, in wakeful, attentive, consciousness as possessed of an immediate past and an immediate future and so as

inhabiting the ‘now’ or as inhabiting ‘the present’. Though we have discussed various problems arising from the way that manifestly enduring objects relate to time, such objects, when they are encountered in perceptual experience, seem to one to inhabit the very same ‘now’ or ‘present’ which one seems to inhabit oneself, at the time one has the experience.²² Here there is a match between oneself and the objects or temporal parts of processes one experiences with respect to their being located in the present.²³

But there are reasons to doubt that these features of the way that one is aware of oneself as occupying time when one has experience of objects can be accounted for, or at least wholly accounted for, by the apparent temporal properties of objects of perceptual activity or of visual perception. On the face of it, the relevant manifest temporal aspects of oneself can persist even in conditions of complete bodily quiescence and the failure of perception to make attentive contact with objects in the perceptible environment. In such circumstances, one seems to inhabit the present, though one is not perceptually aware of any objects and properties independent of oneself as inhabiting the present. Whether these suggestions can be substantiated, and what exactly they reveal about the respects in which the manifest temporal properties of oneself are basic is a matter for further research.

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²² See Soteriou (2013) chapter 5 for further discussion of these ideas.

²³ The significance of attitudes towards oneself over time as a source of intuitions about endurance is a theme of J. David Velleman (2006). In his first Amherst Lecture, Velleman’s aim is not merely to trace intuitions about endurance to this source, but to diagnose a confusion at the core of this intuition. A fuller exploration of the thoughts about endurance I suggest here, and in the paragraphs below, would need to engage with these arguments. But these issues go beyond what I aim to discuss here.

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