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## TIME IN THE DREAM

*Thomas Crowther and Matthew Soteriou*

It is a natural thought, testified to in different ways by the contributions to this handbook, that there are philosophically significant connections between experience and temporal awareness. In this chapter, we aim to elucidate aspects of these connections by reflection on the distinctive temporal properties of experience in different states of consciousness. We take it that experiences are those mental occurrences that constitute the stream of consciousness over time. Our focus here is the form of temporal awareness one has in virtue of such occurrences in the stream of consciousness.

The character of any such discussion will clearly be determined by what experience is taken to be. For the purposes of discussion in what follows we assume the following:

- (a) Experience is ‘occurrent’. Experience occupies time by occurring rather than obtaining.<sup>1</sup>
- (b) Experience is phenomenally conscious occurrence. Where experience occurs, there is ‘something it is like’ for the subject of experience, in virtue of experience so occurring.

Two questions about experience and temporal awareness guide discussion in this chapter:

1. What are the distinctive temporal properties of experiences *simpliciter*? What is the distinctive kind of temporal awareness that obtains in virtue of a subject's having any experience at all?
2. Experience occurs in a range of different states of consciousness. What is distinctive of temporal awareness in dreams, by contrast with temporal awareness in the wakeful condition?

The discussion of the temporal properties of experience offered by Brian O'Shaughnessy (2000) is unusual in the literature on temporal awareness in that it directly engages with these questions. What follows here builds answers to these questions that develop ideas we take to be at work in O'Shaughnessy's account.

### **The temporal properties of experience in general**

Let us begin with the first question. We assume that subjects who are asleep and in dreamless sleep do not undergo experience. Therefore, one way to approach the question of what is distinctive of the temporal awareness that characterizes experience is to assess what must be missing, with respect to temporal awareness, in the dreamless sleeper, by contrast with the wakeful experiencer.<sup>2</sup> It is natural to think that one who is dreamlessly asleep lacks a 'temporal point of view', or a 'temporal perspective' in some sense. But what precisely does such lack amount to?

One suggestion is that what is missing by way of such a temporal perspective is that one who is dreamlessly asleep cannot be in psychological states with a temporal representational content, that is, a content that must be specified in temporal terms. This suggestion, though, is clearly false. When one falls asleep, for example, one may have many beliefs with a temporal content, including the belief that the year of Aristotle's death is 322BC. On awakening from dreamless sleep, one does not need to reacquire such a belief. Such beliefs are states that persist throughout the time one was asleep. So it cannot be that what the sleeper who is dreamlessly asleep must lack is a psychological state with any temporal content.

In this example, the temporal content of belief is tenseless. Perhaps what is missing in dreamless sleep is the capacity for belief or representation with any tensed content. But this suggestion does not appear to be correct. For example, one may fall dreamlessly asleep believing that Aristotle died in Chalcis. That is a belief that represents it as true that Aristotle's death occurred some time in the past, and occurred in Chalcis, and is true if and only if Aristotle's death did occur in the past, and in Chalcis. For it to be true that one believes this proposition the following day, at some time after one has woken, does not require that one has reacquired that belief. It can persist across the time that one was in dreamless sleep.

Similarly, dreamless sleepers appear to be capable of belief with representational content that must be characterized in terms of the temporal indexical 'now'. As one falls asleep, for example, one believes that it is now 2016. On waking, one does not need to

reacquire this belief. It persisted as one slept. And so also, falling asleep after lunch, one may believe that it is now Sunday. One's absence of confusion about one's temporal location, on awakening half an hour later, after a period of dreamless sleep, suggests that one's belief that it is now Sunday was available on awakening, and had persisted throughout the interval of time one slept.

But though dreamless sleepers may be capable of belief with a content that includes the notion of 'now' where the referent of 'now' is a relatively long interval of time such as a year, or a day, what does not seem possible is that a dreamless sleeper has a belief about some much shorter interval of time during the period she is dreamlessly asleep as 'now'. This is one part of what O'Shaughnessy suggests in the following:

'If [a dreamless sleeper] fell asleep at 6.00 a.m., and awoke at 6.10 a.m., he cannot at 6.05 a.m. entertain a belief about the instant 6.05 a.m. singled out as 'now'. He can at 6.05 a.m. entertain a belief about 6.05 a.m., but he cannot at 6.05 a.m. entertain a belief about the instant 6.05 a.m. singled out purely as 'now'. And he cannot do so, because he cannot do what an experiencer can do: pick out the present as 'now'; and that because a non-experiencer is not conscious of 'now', nor therefore of a continuity of 'now's, which is to say of 'the passage of time' (...).' (2000: 51)

There are different suggestions here. The first is that those who lack experience are not capable of a temporally indexical mode of awareness of the present moment. The thought seems to be this. Suppose one is expecting an important phone call at 6.05 a.m., but one falls dreamlessly asleep at 6.00 a.m. During the dreamless sleep that

commences, one might retain the belief that at 6.05 a.m. the phone will ring. If one does retain that belief, then when it is 6.05 a.m. one will thereby have a belief that is about the moment that is present, 6.05 a.m. But in so believing, the suggestion goes, one would not have a belief about the present moment *as* 'now'. That requires the believer to be 'conscious of 'now''. The suggestion is that what experience provides by way of temporal awareness is such consciousness of 'the now'. The occurrence of experience constitutes an 'experience of the now' or 'experience of the present moment'. Nothing further at this stage need be assumed about the temporal character of 'the now'. In particular, it need not be assumed that the notion of a 'now' or 'the present moment' must be understood in terms of the notion of the 'mathematical present' or what E.R. Clay (1882: 168) describes pejoratively as the notion of the present 'which philosophy denotes by the name Present', that is, as something that lacks temporal extension at all.<sup>3</sup>

A second idea is that dreamless sleepers are not merely incapable of being aware of present moments as now. They lack a distinctive kind of awareness of time *over* the intervals of time during which they are dreamlessly asleep.

Take the subject who is dreamlessly asleep from 6.00 a.m. to 6.10 a.m. It has been suggested that such a subject is incapable of being aware, at 6.05 a.m., of that moment of time as 'now'. But so also is such a sleeper incapable of successive awareness of moments of time as 'now' during that interval of time, as each of those moments becomes successively present. Compare here the character of the temporal awareness of the wakeful experiencer over that interval of time. A subject who has experience during 6.00 a.m. to 6.10 a.m. has the capacity to be aware of certain shorter sub-intervals of that

period of time as 'now'. But what one who has experience also appears capable of here is successive awareness of sub-intervals of time from 6.00 to 6.10 as 'now' as each becomes present. An experiencer can be aware of the present moment as now at one moment, followed by the awareness of the present moment as now at the next moment, followed by awareness of the present moment as now over the next moment.

This characteristic lack of temporal awareness over an interval of dreamless sleep appears to reflect the ontology of experience, and the way in which experience occupies intervals of time. Experience occupies time by occurring or unfolding 'processively' over an interval.<sup>4</sup> On the processive occupation of an interval of time, O'Shaughnessy (2000) writes:

"[P]rocesses 'go on' or 'continue' occurrently in time, each new instant realizing more of the same as what has gone on so far..." [their mode of persistence over time is] "...temporally repeated sameness..." (2000: 44).

Of the processive constitution of experience, he notes:

"[Y]et even when experience is not changing in type or content, it still changes in another respect: it is constantly *renewed*, a new sector of itself is there and then *taking place*." (2000: 42).<sup>5</sup>

Hence, what it is for experience to occur processively over an interval of time is for there to be a succession of experience-phases over that period of time, with each phase of the succession that comes into existence ‘realizing more of the same’ or ‘renewing’ what has come previously. In turn, the character of the temporal awareness that a subject has over the interval of time is that of renewal. A subject who has experience during a minimal sub-interval is in a position to be aware of the present moment as ‘now’ during that time, and this capacity to be aware of the present moment as ‘now’ is renewed successively as experience unfolds in a succession over time.

However, the idea of successive experience of the present moment of time over an interval of time and the successive temporal awareness of the present as ‘now’ that this makes possible is not sufficient to elucidate the temporal awareness that is characteristic of experience in general. William James ((1950 [1890]): 628) famously remarks that: “A succession of feelings, in and of itself, is not a feeling of succession.”<sup>6</sup> Successive experience (or a succession of experiences) of successive sub-intervals of time over an interval of time is not necessarily experience of change or succession.

But the experience of change or succession in the objects of experience is, at the very least, a near-necessary feature of temporal awareness in wakeful experience. Much of our everyday experience presents us with change and temporal succession in our perceptible environment: leaves visibly stirring in the trees outside the window, fingers visibly moving on the keyboard, and the succession that’s audible in the piece of music one is listening to.



There is some room for debate about whether the experience of change and succession is a necessary feature of experience, whenever experience occurs. Here we note just that there are no very clear cases of experience over an interval in which it is not possible to discern succession or change in the objects of experience over that interval. Even in cases in which experience occurs in conditions of complete darkness, silence and immobility, experiencers in such conditions are characteristically proprioceptive aware of their breathing, and other internal bodily goings on, as well as the occurrence of imaginative processes of different kinds. Such awareness can also be taken to accompany the perceptual awareness of an array of unchanging material objects over an interval of time.<sup>7</sup>

The experience of change and succession that marks much of our experienced life has distinctive temporal characteristics. The objects of such experience are not instantaneous, but have temporal duration. The stirring of the leaves on the tree and the audible succession of the piece of music are things that unfold processively over intervals of time.<sup>8</sup> Not only do the objects of experience unfold processively. In the experience of change and succession that is distinctive of experience, such temporally extended objects of experience are presented to experiencers *as* temporally extended over intervals of time. And finally, and most notably, in cases of experience of change and succession, such as that which is involved in listening to a piece of music that extends over a few minutes, a subject who experiences such change or succession occurring at the present moment of time is characteristically aware, at that moment, of a

temporally extended object of experience as temporally extended over an interval of time which is longer than the present moment.<sup>1</sup>

This suggests that a distinctive feature of experience over an interval is not just that over that time there is successive experience of moments of time but that such successive moments of time are experienced *as* successive. To illustrate, consider our visual experience of concrete material objects. Our visual experience of concrete material objects presents those objects as having spatial parts which are not currently visible (the back surface which faces away from the viewer). There is an analogue of this in our experience of the temporal objects of experience in experience of change and succession.<sup>9</sup> Suppose that over the course of twenty seconds you watch someone walk slowly from one end of the garden to the other. During the final three seconds you experience that person walking the final few paces of his traversal of the garden. That you experience someone as walking the final few paces of a traversal of the garden during those seconds is for the walk to be presented to you during those moments as something which has earlier stages. The respect in which the walk is presented to you during that moment as something that has earlier stages does not involve one's making a judgement that what one sees now has been going earlier. Rather, what goes on during the final three seconds one watches the walk is visually experienced as having earlier parts. This is the minimal respect in which the experience of change and succession appears to involve experience of successive moments of over time *as* successive.

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<sup>1</sup> For interesting characterization of these distinctive temporal characteristics see E. R. Clay (1882), Book I, ch. XIV, sections XCVI- XCIX.

Our purpose here is not to explain why experience in the wakeful condition has such features. But some of the remarks that O'Shaughnessy (2000) makes are useful in clarifying the minimal commitments involved in the idea that in experience one has successive experience of the present moment, and experiences these successive moments as successive. According to O'Shaughnessy (2000) the fact that the objects of experience at an instant in time have temporal duration and can be experienced as having temporal duration shows the role for some kind of basic notion of short-term memory that makes such representation of temporal objects possible. He says that '(T)he present experience must unite with and depend upon past experience. This means that the past must in some sense be 'co-present' with the present, and such a co-presence is a mode of remembering.' (2000: 56). He describes this as a 'developmentally early form of memory' (2000: 56). And in characterizing this, he adds: "What in effect we are concerned with is the tendency on the part of experience and its given objects to unite across time to form determinate wholes. It is not unlike the property of momentum in a moving object." (2000: 56).<sup>10</sup>

The proposals outlined so far are not yet sufficient to characterize the temporal awareness that is distinctive of experience in the wakeful condition. For the temporal objects of experience to be presented as having immediately preceding phases is not for the objects of experience to be presented to one in some tensed way, as having past stages, or as being present. Though the proposals offered so far require the experiencer to stand in certain relations to the past—the suggestion is that the experience of change and succession as temporally extended requires previous phases of experience to determine the present temporal characteristics of the objects of experience—this does not entail that the experiencer must be psychologically oriented to the past, or the

immediate past, in a way that constitutes a ‘tensed temporal perspective’ on the past, in a sense to be presently explained.

This suggests that the proposals outlined so far are not yet sufficient to characterize the temporal awareness that is distinctive of experience in the wakeful condition. For, normally, wakefully conscious experiencers are psychologically oriented to the past in a way that constitutes such a tensed temporal perspective on the past. Most relevantly to our current concerns, they are normally psychologically oriented in this way to their *immediate* past. This is particularly well illustrated in cases of wakeful experience that involves conscious intentional action. Here, a tensed psychological orientation towards what one was doing in one’s immediate past seems to be required for an awareness of what one is doing at the present moment, at least where one experiences that moment *as* present. Suppose one writes a paragraph longhand over a minute. Then it seems that halfway through that minute one must be psychologically oriented to the fact that moments ago one was writing a sentence. In such cases, the absence of an orientation towards what one was doing in one’s immediate past would seem to undermine the idea that one is aware of one’s writing as unfolding in the present. Given that wakefully conscious intentional action brings with it the awareness of what one is doing at the present moment then wakefully conscious intentional action seems to bring with it a tensed temporal orientation to the past.<sup>11</sup>

Cases of wakefully conscious intentional action also illustrate the idea that wakeful experiences normally involve psychological orientation towards the immediate future, in a way that constitutes a tensed temporal orientation to the immediate future. As one

writes longhand over the course of a minute, one characteristically anticipates what one will be doing over the next few seconds, as one writes. When one is halfway through the writing of a paragraph at some moment, one anticipates what is to come. The idea that one fails to have such attitudes that orient one towards one's immediate future, similarly to the case involving one's attitudes to the past, seems to jeopardize the idea that one experiences one's writing a paragraph as present. And given the connections between conscious intentional action and such awareness of what one is doing, this seems to threaten the very idea that one intentionally writes a paragraph over that time. In general, experience in the wakeful condition appears to involve expectations and anticipations about what will occur in one's immediate future. These attitudes appear central to the generation of successful action and to the ongoing management of actions already under way.<sup>12</sup>

One explanation of these features of our experienced life locates the phenomena not in the requirements for intentional action as such but in general features of temporal awareness in wakeful experience. In debates about the nature of time, and the semantics of temporal language, it is a familiar idea that the notion of tensed language and tensed content manifests one basic sense in which a subject has a perspective on time.<sup>13</sup> Setting aside issues about tensed language and thought, what these observations about the psychological orientation to their immediate past and immediate future suggests is that wakefully conscious experiencers occupy a tensed temporal perspective.<sup>14</sup>

For reasons related to earlier discussion, it is clear that some form of tensed perspective is available to the non-experiencer. One may wake up believing that one's fiftieth

birthday lies in the future as well as believing that Aristotle's death occurred in the past. Several things are different about the temporal perspective of the non-experiencer by contrast with that occupied by one who has experience, however. What is not available to the non-experiencer is a tensed temporal perspective the point of origin of which is experience that affords awareness of 'now'. In virtue of the fact that it serves as the point of origin for such a perspective we can think of the wakefully conscious subject's experience as an experienced *present*. The wakefully conscious experiencer is psychologically oriented to the future from an experienced present, and also oriented to the past from an experienced present. Also, unlike the dreamless sleeper, the wakefully conscious experiencer can have 'short-range' as well as 'long-range' attitudes to the past and future. Wakeful experiencers are oriented to their immediate past and future. Those lacking experience are not.

The idea that wakeful experience involves a tensed temporal perspective suggests a number of further ideas about temporal awareness in the condition. First, the idea of such a tensed perspective seems to be one in which the subject's psychological orientation to past, present and future or not at all. It cannot be that subjects have experience in which they are oriented to their immediate past in this way, but do not have an experience of the present moment as present, nor that they experience the present but are not psychologically oriented towards their future. That would undermine the idea that the experience of the present moment was a mode of awareness of the present *as* the present.

These claims about tensed awareness are suggested in different places in O'Shaughnessy's discussion. For example, after reflection on the way that the occurrence of intentional action in experience appears to involve anticipation of the immediate future, he writes:

'[O]ne might easily suppose that the great temporal novelty ushered into being by experience is the 'co-presence' in the experiential instant of *present and future*: orientation to both dimensions of time at each point in experience. However, this would be an error. The great temporal novelty is the irreducible 'co-presence' of the *other two* temporal dimensions in the experiential instant: it is the meeting of the past and/or future in the present.' (2000: 55)

A consequence of this is that:

'Close up the past, wall off the future, and you cover over the present too. For there is simply no such thing as 'the solipsistic fruits of the instant'.' (2000: 62)

The notion of a tensed temporal perspective with an origin in the experienced present might also be taken to support a further kind of claim about the character of the experienced present. The temporal present is what temporally intervenes between past and future. So, it is natural to think that the experienced present, in the context of such proposals about tensed temporal perspective, is the moment which temporally intervenes between the future as the experiencer is psychologically oriented to it, and to the past as

the experiencer is psychologically oriented to it. But the notion of the moment of time that temporally intervenes between the immediate future as one anticipates it, and the immediate past as one remembers it, does not, it seems, determine a notion of the experienced present as the notion of a 'mathematical present' or the present as a moment that lacks temporal extension. If one is writing a paragraph of prose longhand at some moment of time, there is experienced movement that falls between the immediate future one is oriented to in anticipation and the immediate past one is oriented to through memory. But such experienced movement is not durationless. It has temporal extension. So the experienced present that it occupies appears not to be a durationless instant, but an instant understood as a temporally extended interval of time of some short duration.<sup>15</sup>

In this section we have begun developing some suggestions about the temporal properties of experience in general. In summary:

(i) Dreamless sleepers lack awareness of the present moment as 'now' because they lack experience of the present moment.

(ii) Over the intervals of time they are dreamlessly asleep, dreamless sleepers lack successive awareness of successively present moments of time as 'now', because they lack experience over that interval.

(iii) Wakeful experiencers characteristically experience change and succession in the objects of experience. Hence such subjects must experience successively present moments as successive.

(iv) Wakeful experiencers occupy a 'tensed temporal perspective' with a point of origin in the experience of the present moment (which is thereby an 'experienced present').



For these claims to constitute a satisfactory answer to question 1, they must be true of all experiences. But are they? Experience occurs in dreaming. Are these proposals true of experience in the dream? If they are not, how does that impact on our suggestions about question 1? And how should the distinctive temporal properties of experience in the dream, by contrast with those that occur during wakefulness, be explained?

### **The temporal properties of experience in dreaming**

It should be noted at the outset that there are very few philosophical claims about dreams that are entirely free from controversy. Our question about temporal awareness in dreams assumes that dreams are, or involve, conscious experiences that we have during sleep; and that is an assumption that some philosophers have questioned.<sup>16</sup> Even among those who accept the assumption, it is difficult to identify anything like a consensus on the question of the nature and constitution of dreams;<sup>17</sup> and arguably, philosophical disagreement on this topic is exacerbated by the distinctive methodological challenges that are associated with the empirical enterprise of attempting to access, and conduct a scientific study of, the *sleeping* mind.<sup>18</sup> However, while we don't propose to settle here which of the extant accounts of dreaming is correct, our guiding assumption in what follows is that progress can be made in addressing our question about temporal awareness in dreams by drawing out the implications for temporal awareness of different hypotheses about the constitution of dreams. Moreover, we suggest that the exercise of drawing out such implications can, in

turn, help illuminate what is at stake in these disagreements about the constitution of dreams.

Among those philosophers who accept the common sense view that our dreams do involve conscious experiences, one central area of dispute turns on the question of whether it is appropriate to categorise our dream experiences as perceptual experiences that are akin to waking hallucinations. Many of those who deny this, propose instead that our dream experiences should, rather, be regarded as acts of imagination.<sup>19</sup> An associated dispute turns on the question of whether we should regard dreaming and waking states as *constitutively* different.<sup>20</sup> These disagreements are sometimes presented in the philosophical literature in the following terms. Those who propose that our dream experiences are akin to waking hallucinations, as opposed to acts of imagination, deny that dream states and waking states are constitutively different; whereas those who propose that our dream experiences are acts of imagination affirm a constitutive difference.<sup>21</sup>

There are various qualms one might have about this way of characterising what's in dispute about the constitution of dreams. Firstly, given that one can imagine things when one is awake, it isn't clear in what sense one establishes a "constitutive" difference between waking states and dream states by way of the proposal that our dream experiences are acts of imagination. Secondly, it is not clear that it is in any case correct to assume that waking hallucinations do not involve acts of imagination; so the question of whether dream experiences are akin to waking hallucinations, as opposed to acts of imagination, may be thought to be ill-posed. Moreover, matters are further complicated

by the fact that waking hallucinations can occur amidst a syndrome of other features which might together be thought to constitute an altered state of consciousness. Although a subject suffering from such a syndrome may be awake and not asleep, and hence not dreaming, it is not obvious that we should rule out the proposal that there is a *constitutive* difference between her *altered* state of consciousness and the state of consciousness of a subject in the ‘normal’ wakeful condition.

So, for example, J. Allan Hobson (1999) proposes that our dreams are comprised, in part, of the kinds of hallucinations that subjects can have when awake. However, his view accommodates the idea that there are significant differences between dreams and normal waking experience, for he proposes that our dreams are akin to waking psychosis, and in particular, delirium. In making the comparison with delirium, Hobson notes a syndrome of features associated with delirium, which he claims are also present in core, paradigmatic instances of dreaming. As well as visual and motoric hallucination, this syndrome includes disorientation (with respect to persons, places and times), recent memory loss, confabulation, and delusion. Does Hobson’s proposal about the nature and constitution of dreams commit him to the claim that there is no constitutive difference between dream states and ‘normal’ waking states? That question is no more straightforward to answer than is the corresponding question of whether there is a constitutive difference between psychotic episodes of delirium and normal waking experience.

In what follows, we will be suggesting that despite such qualms, the question of whether our dreams are acts of imagination does indeed connect with a substantive disagreement

as to whether dream states and waking states are constitutively different; and that the nature of this disagreement can be clarified by drawing out the implications that the imagination model of dreaming has for an account of the form of temporal awareness which is available to a subject as she dreams.

An account of the constitution of dreams of the sort that Hobson proposes has the resources to accommodate and explain profound effects on the quality of a dreaming subject's temporal awareness – in particular, on the dreamer's diminished ability to orient herself temporally, both with respect to her past and future. However, the variety of degradation in temporal awareness that it envisages does not amount to a form of temporal awareness that is inconsistent with being awake, as the comparison with delirium makes clear.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, there are reasons for thinking that the imagination model of dreaming countenances a form of temporal awareness that is inconsistent with being awake. It therefore suggests a view according to which dream states and waking states are constitutively different in the following special respect. The stream of consciousness of the dreaming subject cannot occur in the wakeful condition, and the stream of consciousness of the awake subject cannot constitute a dream.

The latter claim is one that O'Shaughnessy attempts to argue for. He asserts that "There is no possible world in which the dream is the stream of consciousness of a conscious [i.e. awake] being" (2002: 412). Part of his argument for this assertion rests on the claim that dreaming involves a relation to time that is inconsistent with wakeful consciousness (2000: 92). And his argument for that claim in turn depends on the assumption that our dreams are imaginings. To see how the imagination model of dreaming might lead to the

proposal that dreaming involves a relation to time that is inconsistent with wakeful consciousness, we first need to note some distinctive features of the representation of time in imagination. Those features can be highlighted by considering some comparable features of the representation of space in imagination.

When a subject sensorily imagines a scene, she typically imagines a spatial point of view on objects within the imagined scene. For example, in visualising an array of objects, some objects may be imagined as being to left, and others to the right, *from an imagined point of view*. In saying that the spatial point of view, and not just the array of objects, is itself imagined, we mean the following. The centre of origin of the spatial point of view from which objects are visualised to the left and right is not determined by the actual spatial location and orientation of the subject who is visualising.<sup>23</sup>

For example, suppose you are lying in bed on your back with your head facing toward the ceiling, and suppose that, so situated, you close your eyes and visualise a stormy seascape. You do not thereby imagine the stormy sea as occupying a spatial location relative to your actual location – i.e. somewhere above the spatial location that is actually occupied by your bed. If you happen to move your head as you visualise that scene, you do not thereby imagine a change in the spatial location of the scene you visualise. As you visualise, any change in your actual spatial location is consistent with no change in the imagined spatial location of scene you imagine, and consistent with no change in the spatial location of the origin of the imagined point of view from which aspects of the scene are imagined as being to the left and right.

Suppose that as you visualise this scene, you imagine saying to a companion, ‘we should be able to see the lighthouse from here’. Your imagined use of the indexical ‘here’ does not pick out any spatial location that is relative to the actual spatial location you occupy as you imagine (i.e. your bedroom). Now suppose that you stop visualising a seascape, and instead start visualising a mountain range. In such a case there may be nothing to determine the actual, or represented, spatial relations between these imagined scenes – i.e. the sea and the mountain range. At least not if that question is not settled by your intentions in so imagining.

Corresponding points apply to the temporal perspectives that we imagine when we engage in acts of sensory imagination. For instance, when you visualise a friend walking towards you, there is a respect in which the successive temporal parts of her approach are each imagined as being temporally present – e.g. now she is walking towards the zebra crossing, now she stops at the zebra crossing, now she is crossing the road, and so on. But the temporal location of your act of imagining does not determine a represented temporal location of the event you imagine. That is to say, when you imagine your friend walking towards you, you needn’t thereby be imagining that her approach occurs at the actual time of your act of imagining. You could be imagining a future encounter, or you could be imagining the past encounter you hoped for, and indeed the question of the time of the imagined event could be left entirely open.

Suppose you imagine steeling yourself to make some momentous revelation to your approaching friend, and in doing so you imagine saying to yourself ‘it’s now or never’. That imagined use of a temporal indexical ‘now’ need not pick out the actual time of

your act of imagining. And since the temporal location of your imagined present is not determined by the actual temporal location of your act of imagining, your imagined past needn't be earlier than the actual time of your act of imagining, and your imagined future needn't be later than the actual time of your act of imagining.

Now suppose that you stop imagining your friend walking towards you, and you start imagining a clown cycling on a pier. In such a case there may be nothing to determine the actual, or represented, temporal relations between these imagined events – i.e. your friend's approach and the event of a clown cycling. At least not if that question is not settled by your intentions in so imagining. The temporal location and temporal order of your acts of imagination do not in themselves determine the represented temporal location and temporal order of the events you imagine. In consequence, the temporal location and temporal order of these acts of imagination does not in itself determine the temporal relations between each imagined present.

Given these points, we can note the following. In the case of a subject who is awake and imagining, we can mark a distinction between (a) the imagined temporal perspective that she has on events she imagines, and (b) the actual temporal perspective that she has on her acts of imagination. And we can note that the actual temporal order of her acts of imagining constitutively determines (b), but they need not determine (a). We said that the temporal location and temporal order of a subject's acts of imagining do not in themselves determine the represented temporal location and temporal order of the events she imagines. That is to say, the fact that one act of imagining an event occurs prior to a subsequent act of imagining an event does not in itself determine the represented

temporal order of these imagined events. In consequence, the temporal order of these acts of imagination doesn't in itself determine, at any given time, which of these imagined events is in the imagined past, or the imagined future. So the temporal order of the subject's acts of imagining does not in itself determine the imagined temporal perspective that she has on these imagined events. By contrast, the temporal order of her acts of imagination does determine, at any given time, her actual temporal perspective on those acts. That is to say, it does determine which of these acts of imagining are presented to her actual temporal perspective as present, past or future. In consequence, the awake subject can be aware of what she is now imagining (where 'now' picks out the actual time of the act of imagination), what she has just been imagining, and what she intends to imagine subsequently.

With these points in mind, let us now consider the proposal that our dreams are acts of imagination. The particular version of the imagination model of dreaming we shall consider is this. All of the events that you dream of, including your dreamt actions, judgments, choices, and so on, are imagined events. To dream you are  $\phi$ -ing is to imagining yourself  $\phi$ -ing. But as you dream, you are not in a position to tell that all of these dreamt events and actions are merely imagined. According to this proposal, your dreamt temporal perspective is an imagined temporal perspective. But as you dream, you are not in a position to know that all dreamt events are merely imagined, and so you are not in a position to know that the temporal perspective of your dream is merely imagined. What implications would the truth of this proposal have for a subject's temporal awareness during dreams?



We noted that when you are awake and imagining a clown cycling on a pier, you need not be thereby representing that imagined event as occurring at the actual time of your act of imagining (just as you need not be thereby representing the event to occur at a spatial location specifiable egocentrically relative to the actual spatial location that you occupy when imagining). So if the above imagination model of dreaming is correct, then, likewise, when dreaming such an event, there may be no reason to think that you are thereby representing the dreamt event as occurring at the actual time of your dream (just as there may be no reason to think that the dreamt event is represented as occupying a spatial location that is to be specified egocentrically relative to your actual spatial location – e.g. from the actual spatial location that you occupy in your bedroom when dreaming). If, when awake, you imagine a clown starting a race by shouting ‘now’, there need be no reason to think that your imagined utterance of the indexical ‘now’ picks out the actual time of your act of imagining. So likewise, if you dream you are shouting ‘now’, there may be no reason to think that this dreamt use of the indexical ‘now’ picks out the actual time of your dream.

Let us suppose that any dreamt use of the temporal indexical ‘now’ is an imagined use of that indexical, and let us suppose that as you dream you are not in a position to know that any such use of an indexical is merely imagined. The consequence, we suggest, would be this. When you dream that you are referring to the present, there is no guarantee that you are thereby referring to the time of your dream. So if, while you are dreaming, any use of a temporal indexical is a merely dreamt use of that temporal indexical, then as you dream you aren’t in a position to pick out the temporal location of your dream using the temporal indexical ‘now’. In consequence there is a respect in which you are cut-off from your actual present when you dream. Contrast this with your

situation when you are awake and imagining. When you wakefully imagine, you are able to deploy a temporal indexical that falls outside the scope of your imagining – e.g. *Now* I am imagining a clown shouting ‘now’. In this case the former temporal indexical picks out the actual time of your imagining – your *actual* present – even if the latter does not.

We noted earlier that the actual temporal order of a subject’s acts of imagining doesn’t constitutively determine the imagined temporal perspective that the subject has on events she imagines. So on the hypothesis that our dreams are comprised of acts of imagining, we should likewise expect that the actual temporal order of the acts of imagining that comprise a subject’s dream experience doesn’t constitutively determine the dreamt temporal perspective that the dreaming subject has on dreamt events. The temporal location and temporal order of the subject’s acts of imagining doesn’t in itself determine the represented temporal location and temporal order of the events she thereby dreams of. The fact that one act of imagining occurs prior to a subsequent act of imagining does not in itself determine the represented temporal order of the events she dreams of. In consequence, the temporal order of acts of imagining that comprise her dream experience doesn’t in itself determine, at any given time, which of the events she has dreamt of is in the dreamt past, or the dreamt future. For that reason, the temporal order of the acts of imagining that make up her dream experience doesn’t in itself determine any temporal relations between the dreamt present/past/future at one time, and the dreamt present/past/future at subsequent or earlier times. Indeed the temporal order of these acts of imagining does not in itself determine that these dreamt events can be ordered in a common time.

So a further consequence of the imagination model of dreaming that we can note is this. If, when dreaming, you are not in a position to tell that your dreamt temporal perspective is merely imagined, then the actual temporal order of your dream experience won't be sufficient to constitute an *actual* temporal perspective – i.e. a temporal perspective on your *actual* present, your *actual* past, and your *actual* future. Your ignorance of the fact that your dreamt temporal perspective is merely imagined will result in your failure to access a temporal perspective that isn't your imagined temporal perspective. Which is to say, you will thereby lack a temporal perspective on your *actual* present, past, and future.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, we suggest that if the version of the imagination model of dreaming that we are considering is correct, then your temporal awareness as you dream will be distinctive in the following respects:

(1) As you dream, you cannot refer to your actual present as 'now'. In that respect, when you dream, you are cut off from your actual present – i.e. actual time at which you dream.

(2) When you dream, you do not have access to a temporal perspective on your *actual* past and your *actual* future.

We noted earlier that O'Shaughnessy suggests that dreaming involves a relation to time that is inconsistent with wakeful consciousness; and that his argument for that claim

depends on the assumption that our dreams are imaginings. O'Shaughnessy makes a number of remarks that indicate that he endorses claim (2) above. He claims that "Consciousness [i.e. waking consciousness] necessitates a certain simultaneous orientation towards past, present, and future. Significantly this is absent in the experience of the dream" (2000: 89-90). And he remarks, "[T]he dream present is a sort of Time Island. First in its failure to have internal or constitutive connections with its own past; second in having neither an actively projected nor merely expected future.... Such a relation to time is inconsistent with [wakeful] consciousness." (2000: 92)

However, it seems that O'Shaughnessy doesn't endorse claim (1) above – i.e. the claim that as you dream, you cannot refer to your actual present as 'now'. O'Shaughnessy suggests that dreamers do have a consciousness of a present instant as the instant 'now'. He writes,

“At a certain moment in the dream I became conscious of the presence of my grandfather”, a dream report goes; and if the report is veridical, if that really happened during the night, dream experience at a certain moment was that ‘now grandfather is here’, which singles out an instant of time via the use of ‘now’, implying a consciousness at that time of that instant as ‘now’” (2000: 51)

For the reasons we gave earlier, if the imagination model dreaming is assumed, one might question whether the subject's dreamt use of the temporal indexical 'now' really does succeed in picking out the actual instant of time at which she dreams, or indeed any instant of time at all. Just as one might question whether the dreamt use of the indexical 'here' picks out the actual spatial location of the dreamer, or indeed any spatial location at all.

In any case though, we suggest that if the imagination model of dreaming is correct, and if the imagination model of dreaming implies either claim (2), or both claims (1) and (2), a case can be made for O'Shaughnessy's proposal that our dreams involve a form of temporal awareness that is inconsistent with being awake. This in turn may give grounds for accepting that dream states and waking states are *constitutively* different in the following special respect: the stream of consciousness of the dreaming subject cannot occur in the wakeful condition, and the stream of consciousness of the awake subject cannot constitute a dream.

It should be said that we haven't given any arguments for thinking that the imagination model of dreaming that we have been considering is correct; and we don't have the space here to consider and address the various concerns one might have about its tenability. But we shall make some brief remarks on one possible source of concern, namely the concern that it is incompatible with the existence of so-called lucid dreaming – i.e. dreams in which the dreaming subject seems to be aware that she is dreaming, and seems to be able to exercise some level of control over her dream.<sup>25</sup>

One option for those advocating some version of an imagination model of dreaming is to say that during lucid dreams, the dreaming subject becomes aware that the events she is imagining are not real, and that she may subsequently be able to exercise some level of control over her imaginings. That proposal might grant that during a lucid dream the dreaming subject can have conscious thoughts about her dream that are not merely imagined, and it might also grant that during a lucid dream the dreaming subject can

engage in intentional agential mental acts that are not merely imagined. In granting those points, the advocate of the imagination model might allow that in the case of a lucid dream, the dreaming subject's ability to refer to her actual present as 'now' is reinstated, and so too is her access to a temporal perspective on her actual past and her actual future.

Would that concession mean abandoning the proposal that dreaming involves a relation to time that is inconsistent with wakeful consciousness? It may rather result in the need to qualify the general proposal, to the following: *Non-lucid* dreaming involves a relation to time that is inconsistent with wakeful consciousness. The stream of consciousness of the *non-lucidly* dreaming subject cannot occur in the wakeful condition, and the stream of consciousness of the awake subject cannot constitute a *non-lucid* dream. This qualification may in turn reflect the need to mark distinctions between different states of consciousness during sleep.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter we raised the following question: What are the distinctive temporal properties of experiences simpliciter – i.e. what is the distinctive kind of temporal awareness that obtains in virtue of a subject's having any experience at all? A natural way of answering this question is to seek to identify features of temporal awareness that are common to experience in the wakeful condition, and experience in non-wakeful states of consciousness. So how should this question be answered if the kind of imagination model of non-lucid dreaming that we have been considering is

correct? Here are some temporal features that dream experience shares with experience in the wakeful condition, according to the imagination model of dreaming. (i) Dream experience is ontologically akin to wakeful experience, for dream experience is successive and occupies time processively. (ii) The objects of dream experience have temporal extension and are experienced as such. (iii) Dream experience involves a tensed temporal perspective, and there is a respect in which the origin of this tensed temporal perspective is an ‘experienced present’.

However, according to the imagination model of dreaming, in the case of the non-lucid dream, the experienced present is an *imagined* present – an imagined present that need not pick out the actual time of the occurrence of the dream experience. That is to say, in the case of non-lucid dream experience, the point of origin of the subject’s tensed temporal perspective need not be the actual present moment at which the dream experience occurs. So unlike the wakeful experiencer, the subject of a non-lucid dream may lack awareness of the actual present moment as ‘now’. In consequence, she may lack successive awareness of such successively present moments as ‘now’.

An outcome is that this view of dreaming suggests a respect in which dream experience reproduces, or imitates, the form of temporal awareness that is possessed during wakeful consciousness, *but without instantiating it*. It grants that the dreaming subject dreams that she has the form of temporal awareness that obtains during wakeful consciousness. But, according to this view of dreaming, to dream is to imagine. And to imagine having that distinctive form of temporal awareness isn’t thereby to possess it. What this view of temporal awareness in dreams thereby accommodates is the idea that the dreaming

subject seems, but merely seems, to be wakefully conscious. More specifically, it suggests a view on which the dreaming subject seems to be awake in a way that necessitates not being awake. This is precisely the view of dreaming that O'Shaughnessy recommends. He characterises dream experience as "purely and essentially an as-if [wakeful] consciousness that of necessity is not [wakeful] consciousness" (2002: 428).

Here we have not attempted to offer anything like a defence of this imagination model of dreaming, and there are many questions that can be asked of this view of dreaming that we haven't tried to address. The tenability of the view depends upon the idea that during a non-lucid dream the dreaming subject is not in a position to tell that the events that she dreams of are merely imagined. That hypothesis figured prominently in the suggestion that during a non-lucid dream the dreaming subject is not in a position to know her dreamt temporal perspective is merely imagined, she is not in a position to know that any dreamt use of a temporal indexical is merely imagined, which in turn prevents her from being able to deploy a temporal indexical which is outside the scope of her imagining. An obvious question to ask of that proposal is whether some explanation can be given of this hypothesised epistemic privation.

O'Shaughnessy (2000) suggests an answer. He proposes that the explanation is to be found in the fact that dreamers lack the 'mental activeness' that is a distinguishing and fundamental mark of the wakeful condition.<sup>26</sup> According to O'Shaughnessy, the subject's 'mental will' is not operative when she dreams, and in consequence the dreaming subject lacks the kind of practical self-knowledge that accompanies exercises



of her mental agency – the kind of practical self-knowledge that would disclose to her that she is merely imagining. If O’Shaughnessy is right, then what this suggests is a basic connection between the notion of temporal awareness in the wakeful condition and the obtaining of some form of ‘mental activeness’ in that condition. A development of this suggestion may promise to further illuminate both the notion of temporal awareness and an understanding of the state of wakeful consciousness.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See (O'Shaughnessy 2000: ch. 1; Soteriou 2013: chs. 2 & 6).

<sup>2</sup> This is the method pursued by O'Shaughnessy in (O'Shaughnessy 2000: ch. 1, part 3).

<sup>3</sup> *The Alternative: A Study in Psychology* was originally published anonymously in 1882. The name 'E.R. Clay' is William James's invention (see James (1950[1890]): 609ff) and is the name that has been used in the literature to refer to the author of this work. The author was in fact E. Robert Kelly, a retired Boston cigar manufacturer. See (Andersen 2014: section 2.3) for discussion. In this chapter, we use the name by which the author of this work has been referred to in the literature since James's discussion. Thanks to Ian Phillips for pointing this out.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the distinctive mode of persistence of process and the idea of experience as process see Soteriou (forthcoming) and see Crowther (forthcoming, a) for discussion of contrasts between the persistence of processes and of concrete material objects, and the analogy between process and space-filling stuff.

<sup>5</sup> Granting that experience unfolds over time processively there remain further questions about the relation between experience as *process* and experiential *events*. O'Shaughnessy (2000: 42) says: "[E]xperiences are events (glimpsing, picture-painting) or processes (walking, picture-painting), and each momentary new element of any given experience is a further happening or *occurrence*. (...)" Of the relation between experiential processes and events he writes: "[Process is]... the very stuff of phenomenal matter of events the same in kind as itself." (2000: 44). On this approach, when a process of  $\Phi$ ing (e.g. skidding) terminates, then an event, a  $\Phi$  (e.g. a skid) has occurred. For the development of a temporal ontology along these lines see Crowther (2011).

<sup>6</sup> For development see James ((1950) [1890]), pp.628-9).

<sup>7</sup> For discussion that develops this type of response to the idea that some experiences do not have change or succession as their objects see James ((1950)[1890]: ch. XV, pp. 619- 627); (O'Shaughnessy 2000): ch. 1, section 6, pp. 60- 63). Aspects of this response appear to be anticipated in Aristotle's discussion of time and change at *Physics* IV.11, 219<sup>a</sup>1-219<sup>a</sup>10, and also in (Locke 1975 [1689]: II.XIV, particularly §6 and §16).

<sup>8</sup> Some change or succession is instantaneous (crossing the finishing line, reaching the summit). But one could not experience such change without experiencing temporally extended changes as temporally extended over intervals (running a race, climbing up a mountain). Thanks to Hemdat Lerman for pressing us to clarify this.

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<sup>9</sup> For discussion of this analogy, including some of its limits, see Soteriou (2013: ch. 5, esp. 5.3).

<sup>10</sup> Compare here the discussion in Phillips (2010: §6)

<sup>11</sup> A familiar suggestion is that there is a connection between intentional action and the agent's possession of non-observational and non-inferential knowledge or awareness of what she is doing. Much discussion explores the idea that the guarantee of awareness of action of such kind follows from the role of the agent as the author of her own intentional actions. The source of much contemporary discussion is Anscombe (1957). For further treatments see Velleman (1989), Moran (2001), O'Shaughnessy (2000: chs. 3 & 5), O'Shaughnessy (2008: vol. 2, ch.16), and the essays in Roessler and Eilan (2003).

<sup>12</sup> This appears to hold of the perceptual activities, such as watching and looking, that are a near constant feature of waking experience, as well as of bodily activities such as walking to the kitchen to get a drink. Thanks to Hemdat Lerman for emphasizing this point.

<sup>13</sup> See the essays in Higginbotham (2009), and Ludlow (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Christoph Hoerl (1998 and 2009) offers arguments against a number of different manifestations of the idea that temporal experience is tensed, which should be distinguished from the claims made here. Hoerl (1998) argues that it is not possible to explain our grasp of tensed temporal concepts in terms of temporal experiences. We do not here advance any such claim about our grasp of tensed temporal concepts. Hoerl (2009: §5) argues that it is not the case that parts of the specious present can be presented to the experiencer as past or future. We do not advance such a claim here, and we agree with Hoerl (2009) that this claim is not correct. Hoerl (2009: §5) considers the suggestion that perceptual experience presents one with change and succession as occurring in the present. He suggests it might be thought necessary to take experience of change and succession as occurring in the present in order to explain 'why I act when I do' (Hoerl 2009: 14). On our view, what is problematic with taking experience to lack tensed features is not the timing of action, so much as the very possibility of intentional action. On the view we suggest, the awareness of some moment as present is to be explained in terms of the subject's being simultaneously cognitively oriented to the immediate future and the immediate past. For experience to lack a tensed element is for such simultaneous psychological orientation to be absent. But intentional action surely cannot occur at all if the subject is not so psychologically oriented.

<sup>15</sup> This suggests a point of contact between the present proposal and aspects of the notion of the so-called 'specious present' as it figures in the discussion by E. R. Clay (1882) and James (1950 [1890]). See for example E. R. Clay (1882: Book I, ch. XIV, section CIV), and James ((1950) [1890]: vol.1, chs. XV and XVI). Reasons of space prevent these points of contact being pursued further here.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. see Malcolm (1956 and 1959) and Dennett (1976).

<sup>17</sup> For an introduction to these disputes, see Windt (2016).

<sup>18</sup> For an introduction to the history of sleep research, see Kroker (2007), and Windt ((2015: Chs. 2 and 3).

<sup>19</sup> E.g. see O'Shaughnessy (2002), Sosa (2005 and 2007), Ichikawa (2008 and 2009), and Crowther (forthcoming b). McGinn (2005) argues that dreamt scenes are imagined scenes, but he also holds that dreaming subjects form genuine beliefs (and not merely imagined beliefs) about these scenes as they dream. Windt (2015) argues that dream experience may be *sui generis*, and so we should not assume that dream experience falls into either the category of perceptual experience, or the category of imagination.

<sup>20</sup> The assertion of a constitutive difference between waking states and dream states may be understood as the claim that each of these states of consciousness is comprised of different constituent mental states/events, and/or the claim that these states of consciousness differ in their fundamental natures. Those who make a case for a constitutive difference between dreaming and waking states include O'Shaughnessy (2000), Sosa (2005, 2007), and Crowther (forthcoming b).

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Sosa (2005, 2007) presents his imagination model of dreaming to commit to the claim that waking states and dream states are constitutively different.

<sup>22</sup> In particular, we take it that the variety of degradation in temporal awareness that accompanies delirium in the wakeful condition is not inconsistent with the idea that the subject of delirium experiences successively present moments as successive, and the idea that she occupies a tensed temporal perspective with a point of origin in the experience of the present moment.

<sup>23</sup> Martin (2002) uses such considerations to argue for a thesis about sensory imagination that he labels the 'dependency thesis'. This is the thesis that to sensorily imagine an *F* is to imagine an experience of an *F*. This is a view of sensory imagination that is endorsed by Peacocke (1985) and Vendler (1973). In this chapter we remain neutral on the question of whether the considerations about sensory imagination that we invoke commit one to the dependency thesis. For further discussion of this issue, see Soteriou 2013, ch. 7.

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<sup>24</sup> According to the proposal being considered here, the dreaming subject's failure to access a temporal perspective that isn't her imagined temporal perspective is a consequence of her not being in a position to tell that her dreamt temporal perspective is merely imagined. So what ultimately explains her failure to access a temporal perspective that isn't her imagined temporal perspective will be whatever explains her ignorance of the fact that what she is imagining is merely imagined. We do not have the space here to consider and assess how one might explain such ignorance, but in the final section of the paper we briefly mention O'Shaughnessy's proposal about this. Thanks to Ian Phillips for pressing for clarification on this issue.

<sup>25</sup> For discussion of lucid dreaming, see e.g. LaBerge (2007) and Windt (2015) ch. 3 section 2.

<sup>26</sup> See in particular O'Shaughnessy (2000: ch. 2, sec.7, ch. 2, conclusion, and ch. 5). He says, for example: "Consciousness necessitates a simultaneous orientation towards past, present and future. Significantly this is absent in the experience of the dream.... Why? My suspicion is, that the inactiveness of the mind of the dreamer is a determinant." (2000: 89-90).