

The Hodgsonian account of temporal experience

H.K. Andersen
Simon Fraser University
handerse@sfu.ca

I. Introduction

Shadworth Hollway Hodgson may have been the first philosopher to develop an account of the temporal structure of experience and to explicitly relate the temporal characteristics of consciousness to the body and brain. His account of temporal experience is historically significant in its own right. His development of what is essentially a form of phenomenological analysis both predates and influenced that of Husserl (Andersen and Grush 2009). Hodgson's views were deeply influential on William James, who widely cites him in *The Principles of Psychology*. His work is also philosophically significant in that he offers something genuinely new with respect to contemporary philosophical discussions of time consciousness and its relationship to the brain. His work is rich territory to mine for insights to be applied to contemporary issues related to experience, temporality, and especially neurophenomenology.

Hodgson's trailblazing work involves analysis of the present moment in experience as the keystone element in a much larger project concerning experience, consciousness, knowledge, and action. While Hodgson's views on the character of the present moment in experience are distinctive, they are only the first part of a massive project in philosophical thought. His four volume lifework, *Metaphysic of Experience*, lays out a sophisticated and complete system for philosophy, in terms of its proposed scope of inquiry, its method for analysis, its orientation towards its subject matter, and the substantive views of experience and knowledge that emerge from this method. It is intended to unify and complete projects started by Kant and the British Empiricists but which remained, according to Hodgson, unfinished. Space restrictions prevent a full exploration of Hodgson's idiosyncratic notions of experience, knowledge, and consciousness. My focus will be on laying out the key features of Hodgson's account of the experience of the present moment that stands as a potential alternative to that of Husserl's well-known account. My synopsis is intended to pull out philosophically useful

material that can be applied to contemporary discussions, in particular to neurophenomenology.

I'll begin with a brief overview of the motivation for Hodgson's work, in terms of its relationship to early modern rationalism, empiricism, and idealism, since that motivates much of his proto-phenomenological method. Then, I'll discuss a series of key ideas that are distinctive to Hodgson's account of temporal experience, and compare some of these features to Husserl's account.

II. Motivating his methodology

Hodgson wants to answer the question of how we have knowledge of the world and how such knowledge is related to experience. While this is a common enough theme, his take on it is unique: experience *is* what is present, and the totality of what is, *is* experience, in a metaphysically fundamental way. His emphasis on the present moment as central to empiricism is novel in this historical discussion. The unification of rationalist, empiricist, and idealist thought that he purports to offer turns completely on the temporal character of experience.

He opens his discussion of experience with a long discussion of philosophical methodology. How ought we to proceed in using philosophical inquiry to get genuine knowledge? He identifies each of empiricism, rationalism, and idealism as having gotten something right in its philosophical methodology, while also going astray in various regards.

Empiricism is right to emphasize that experience must be the ultimate source of knowledge. Thinkers like Hume, however, took common sense experience as providing the materials from which knowledge could be drawn. But, according to Hodgson, this presupposed certain common sense assumptions, such as the positing of an objective existence outside of consciousness. Instead, we have to *establish* such a claim, not assume it a priori, and in order to establish it we must take a subjective orientation, as Hodgson calls it, as the basis for philosophical investigation, not an objective one like common sense offers. Rationalism, such as that offered in Descartes' *Meditations*, has the correct subjective orientation. But thinkers like Descartes found errors in the common sense understanding of the world and spuriously assumed that experience must always

err. Idealists have come closer but still failed to understand the full extent of the relationship between knowledge and experience by introducing noumena.

The result Hodgson reaches is a view of philosophy as reasoning based on experience that is an early version of phenomenology of consciousness, and in particular, of the present moment in experience as all that is genuinely available for analysis. The proper approach to philosophical analysis focuses on what Hodgson calls the empirical present moment.

...whatever we are actually experiencing is always the content of a present moment of experience, which may be called the empirical present, in order to distinguish it from an abstract mathematical moment of time, which, like a mathematical point of space, has in itself no content at all. We have no actual experience which is not included in the content of the empirical present moment... The term *actual* expresses the reality of the present content, when and while it is present in consciousness. (ME, p. 35)

What is actually real must be actually in experience, and everything that has ever been real has been so because it was a present moment in experience. The core of the real just is the contents of current consciousness, and whatever else can be shown to exist based on those current and changing contents of consciousness.

After detailed preparations for the analysis, the actual empirical moment Hodgson considers is given in a single sentence. “Let me suppose, then, that I am seated writing in my study, and that some one in the room strikes the note C on a pianoforte behind me. The sound enters the field of consciousness, and takes its place there as part of the content of my immediate experience” (ME, p. 46). While Hodgson eventually adds to his scenario – another note, D, follows after C – he relies on little experiential material in order to perform the analysis. He brackets all questions of history and genesis, as he puts it, in order to consider the contents of experience free of questions about what brought about or sustains those parts of experience.

Hodgson claims that analysis of this single moment enables it to highlight universal and genuinely “metaphysic” features of that experience. He draws a parallel with geometry: “First, however, I must remark that the instance now examined, and every part of it, which may be examined separately, may be considered as a representative case, standing for all empirical present moments of experience, or for their parts; just as a

triangle drawn on paper stands as a representative for all possible triangles...” (ME, pp. 43-44). His method should be verifiable by the readers’ putting themselves into the same scenario. “It is an analysis, not an argument; and its proof lies in accuracy of observation, not in cogency of inference” (ME, p. 46).

Hodgson’s analysis is intended to have the double feature of illustrating how the method of analysis is supposed to proceed, while also beginning the task of coming up with the actual results of such an analysis. His analysis asks, of what do we actually gain knowledge through experience once we succeed in avoiding undue assumptions? The effect of the analysis is less like building an edifice, adding one utterly sure foundational block at a time, than it is like starting with a massive block of common-sense experience and cutting away portions of it, the unjustified assumptions, to reveal the genuine content and structure of experience in the present.

III. Key features of a Hodgsonian account of temporal experience

This section lays out key elements of Hodgson’s view, drawing both from the method for performing the analysis and the results of that analysis. It is helpful to see how all these features contribute to the overall coherence of his account before each element is elaborated in the following two sections. Hodgson is refining a view of the empiric present moment that he originally introduced in *Time and Space* (1868), which was the first time the experienced present was clearly defined as extending over some relevant duration.

1) Experience only is the present, and the present is experience. Experience and the present moment of experience are metaphysically coeval, and can be used interchangeably. Temporal experience of the present is not a special species of experience; all experience is fundamentally temporal and always *is* the present.

2) The ultimate structure of experience is process-contents. The processual aspects of time cannot be fundamentally separated from their contents. There is no content-free structure of the present moment or flow to bare time, nor is timeless or atemporal content genuinely possible.

3) There is a threshold in experience, above which process-contents abruptly appear and then away from which they flow. The genesis and sustaining conditions of our experience should be bracketed at first, but are already contained in the succession of process-contents in experience by dint of this threshold. By standing at the edge of the threshold, watching the ever-new process-contents rise above it, the analysis moves past the bracketing by revealing in conscious experience that which is outside of and gives rise to conscious experience.

4) The way process-contents fade from immediacy into the past is called retention. There are no fixed boundaries to retention as process-contents trail off to memory proper. Process-contents may enter experience together but leave the present differentially.

5) The frontal character of experience involves process-contents continually rising above the threshold, retaining their ordering as they flow away from that threshold. It is how experience can serve as the basis for all knowledge.

6) All experience is reflective in character. No matter how thinly one slices experience in analyzing it, the result is always reflective of other parts of experience. Process-contents are in experience as soon as they cross the threshold, but must be slightly past the threshold to be part of reflective experience. This means that experience that is fully reflectively available is always just past the leading edge of the threshold.

7) The present moves in two distinguishable ways, depending on the perspective from which it is considered. One perspective considers the threshold and the present just after the threshold, such that process-contents move through the present and into the past. The other perspective follows a given process-content as it rises above the threshold, is reflectively full in experience, and fades into retention, where the present moment moves forward from that process-content into the future.

8) There are two temporal arrows, with opposing directionalities. One is the order of real conditions in the world, including brain conditions, that points from past to future. The other is the order of knowledge, which points from the present as most surely known, towards the past, as content is progressively less surely known. These two arrows yield the same ordering of events but in reverse. They are united at the threshold in experience.

IV. The empirical present in experience

This section will explain points 1 through 4 from the previous section. These points jointly elaborate what Hodgson calls the empirical present moment.

(1) The central tenet of his new empiricism is point 1, that experience and the present moment are the same.

Not only, therefore, is an empirical present moment the only thing which it is possible to analyse as it actually occurs, but it is the only thing which ever exists as an immediate experience of ours. When we say that experience consists of a succession of empirical present moments, we are expressing an inference drawn from the content of the empirical moment actually present at the time of speaking... Indeed it is only from the analysis of an empirical present, that the meaning of the term *present*, as distinguished from past or future, can itself be ascertained. (ME, pp. 35-36)

There is a tendency in contemporary discussions to treat temporal experience as a particular subspecies of experience, individuated by its object of awareness. There is visual experience, for instance, and experience of the present moment, which could be compared as each a subspecies of some more generic notion of experience. On the Hodgsonian view given here, though, experience just is temporal experience, or put another way, just is the present moment. There is no non-temporal experience, either as atemporal content or as contentless structure into which temporal content could be placed.

(2) Experience is inextricably temporal, and, as we see in point 2, he places Time and Feeling, process and content respectively, as the fundamental units of experience.

The lowest conceivable empirical moment of experience contains both time and feeling, and the lowest empirical moment in experience as it actually comes to us contains both sequence in time and difference in feeling. ... We see, then, that time and feeling together are experience. They are elements of experience in inseparable relation with each other; and this is at once the simplest and most general of all the facts of experience, upon which the general conception of Relation is founded. (ME, pp. 64-65)

He uses the term of art 'process-contents' to refer to experience and its contents in a way that indicates that we can distinguish in analysis between experience as temporally structured and experience as contentful, but also that these are two facets of one underlying unity, separable *only* in analysis.

Experience in its simplest form, and in the simplest possible instance of it, is both process and content; and it should be expressly noted, that, according to the analysis here given, duration is common to both aspects of it, common to it both as a process and as content; the duration element in every content being that which adds its aspect as a process to its aspect as a content. (ME, 61-62)

Process-contents as a term reminds the reader that there is no non-temporal content, and there is no content-free process of experience.

In several places he relies on an analogy between the process-contents of experience and the intertwined parts of a rope. "The common-sense experience or empirical present analyzed is, as it were, a transverse section or segment, taken out of what may be figured as a stream of consciousness consisting of many various currents, or a cable consisting of variously coloured strands, variously intertwined" (ME, p. 41).

While process-contents can be distinguished by their content as they exist together in a given empirical moment, such content still figures in that moment holistically. This does not mean, he says, that the contents in consciousness lie next to one another separately, in the way that parts of a rope sit next to one another and each comprise some percentage of the total volume of the rope in any section.

We have now to analyse this same experience as a process, or in other words, the *fact that* the experience takes place... Its experience is an event in time having duration. One and the same duration of time is an element in the content of the experience analysed, in the one way of taking it, and is the foundation of the other way of taking it, namely, as a process of experiencing... But, as it is, the process-content analysed is experienced as a distinct but unsevered portion of a larger

process, which is partly simultaneous and partly antecedent. It is, as it were, the end-portion of a thread, in a rope consisting of many threads. (ME, p. 54).

Hodgson uses this underlying unity of experience as process-contents as a kind of epistemic lever by which to close any gap between what genuinely exists in reality and that which can be the content of experience. He will ultimately pronounce the content of experience and what exists as same in extent, differing only in the aspect under which we consider them.

(3) The notion of process-contents rejects the idea that there is a fixed structure of the present in experience, through which content then flows. This is often how Husserl's tripartite account of time consciousness is understood (see Brough chapter in this volume, and section VI below). Hodgson argues that, just like there is no rope without the strands that are woven together, there is no bare present to be filled by separate content.

Consequently we are compelled by the facts of perception to conceive, that the duration of every content of consciousness, simple or complex, passes away into memory along with its content, and is no fixed form or measure, filled by a fleeting content, which for a brief moment, the empirical present, is arrested and retained therein; or in other words, is no form or measure, existing separably from, or prior to, its content, feeling, and into which feelings must be brought in order to their being perceived. Duration and content are inseparable, arising together in consciousness, and together passing away into memory. (ME, pp. 133-134)

Hodgson started his analysis by bracketing the possible causes or conditions for experience, in order to analyze experience without assumptions about how it came to be. Quite early on in his analysis, however, he returns to those ideas that he earlier bracketed, such as the existence of an external world. Knowledge of the existence of a world external to experience cannot be assumed prior to analyzing experience, he emphasized, but very little analysis is required to show that such knowledge is already contained in experience. The process-contents arise freshly in an ongoing fountain, and they rise, he notes, above some threshold. The threshold just is that which marks the boundary of experience that is crossed by new process-contents. Consciousness, here taken to be equivalent to experience, includes within it the notion of that which is external to consciousness. Thus Hodgson recognizes the existence of the world that is external to

consciousness, but not as a posit or assumption. It is uncovered as already contained in and justified with surety by the very notion of consciousness.

The supposition of a reality which is not consciousness is thus introduced by the figurative expression, a *threshold* of consciousness, which is an image drawn from space, involving the ideas, (1) of a boundary between consciousness and non-consciousness, and, (2) that the appearance of consciousness above the boundary line is in some way due to something real in the region of non-consciousness below the boundary... A state or process which is both consciousness and non-consciousness, as a supposed state of consciousness below the threshold must be, is impossible. The term *consciousness* in its widest sense implicitly contains *above the threshold* as part of its own meaning. (ME, pp. 55-56)

The existence of a threshold in the present moment, such that the crossing of this threshold just is a process-content coming into the empirical present moment, is sufficient to take us back out of the bracketing. It establishes the first clear and assumption-free evidence in experience for something external to experience, namely, what will eventually be shown to be the external world.

In consequence of real conditions that lie below the threshold of consciousness ... states of consciousness appear above the threshold, and from the instant of arising recede into the past, since their contents have duration, and the ever-arising new content is that portion of the whole which is nearest in time to the ever advancing present instant, which is the instant of origin of every successively arising empirical portion or content. (ME, p. 66)

‘Real conditioning’, another term of art, refers to the processes on which experience depends. He insists that real conditioning is not what had, at that point, traditionally gone under the name of causality. Nor is his view that consciousness supervenes on physical processes: the relationship between consciousness and real conditions is not the same as supervenience, even though it is suggestively similar. He also hasn’t yet reached the place in the analysis where we could call the real conditions that are external to consciousness “physical” without making an illegitimate assumption. But he is progressively showing how broad metaphysical conclusions can be derived from this simplest of empirical present moments under analysis. Hodgson spends a substantial portion of volume 2 of ME on real conditioning as key to understanding the relationship between natural science and philosophy.

(4) The term 'retention' is introduced to characterize the portion of the empirical present moment that leads to the past. The threshold forms the leading edge towards the future, but what is the character of the trailing edge? Hodgson says that there is no determinate boundary for the empirical present moment, such that new content pushes the old out beyond the threshold of the past, nor do the contents of consciousness fade in synchrony through retention into what he calls memory proper. This is not merely the weak claim that, when comparing distinct empirical present moments, they have different durations. Hodgson is making the stronger claim that even for a given empirical present moment, there is no definitive boundary to where it ends. The present itself is comprised of different contents in an intriguing way, such that two contents in consciousness at the same time might each leave retention and become part of memory proper at two different instants. A knock at the door and a C note played on a piano might both occur simultaneously, yet leave consciousness differently, such that a single empirical present moment might be identified where the knock is already in memory while the tone lingers in retention.

Any content during that time of its remaining in consciousness belongs to what I have called an empirical present moment. Some content the empirical present moment must always have, since otherwise it would not be a moment of experience at all. But inasmuch as different contents have different durations, and many different contents may be simultaneously present in consciousness, at least for some part of their durations, it follows that consciousness or experience does not occur in portions of uniform or fixed duration... The concrete content of consciousness consists of many different strains or features, not all beginning or ceasing together; so that, while we must always speak generally of the whole content, whatever it may be, as composing an empirical present moment, it is impossible to lay down any fixed duration applicable to the whole, as that in which its limit consists. (ME, pp. 36-37).

Retention is the way in which process-contents that are just past linger in the empirical present moment somewhat before fully leaving the empirical present. "Now retention, or memory in its lowest terms, is a character which certainly cannot be said to be discriminated, or perceived as such, in the experience, though it is actually involved in perceived element of duration." (ME, p.59)

Retention is distinguished from memory proper because the process-contents in retention are still part of the present, and are part of it with a just-past character. This gives us a sense of how the empirical present moment is structured, even while recognizing that it can be identified as a separate structure only in analysis. The leading or forward edge is sharp; it is the threshold across which new process-contents continually flow. Newer process-contents displace those just prior to them, while retaining the order in which they crossed the threshold as they move through the empirical present. The trailing edge is ragged and changing, because process-contents that crossed the threshold together may yet leave retention at different instants.

V. Two motions of the present, two directions of time

Point 5, the fontal character of knowledge and the way in which process-contents maintain their ordering as they pass through and out of consciousness, is crucial for any knowledge based on experience. There must be genuine content arising above the threshold to provide substantive knowledge, but in addition, it must remain in the order in which it first crossed the threshold for those contents to undergird knowledge. Without both of these two features, knowledge would be impossible. The first was well-discussed before Hodgson but the role of the second had not yet been appreciated.

Consider the very first appearance of content above the threshold. A given new process-content appears above the threshold, which means it enters the front edge of the empirical present moment. It comes from not-consciousness, which is just part of saying that it carries no mark of having been formed by, influenced by, constructed by, or otherwise merely dependent on pure consciousness itself. Hodgson calls this the fontal character of experience. It is helpful to think of the threshold like a line above which bubbles a spring or fountain of process-contents. The source is hidden from view, but there is clearly something that wells above the threshold itself. One can imagine Hodgson and Hume together considering this very threshold as new content emerges so ongoingly and yet so substantively, both marveling that new contents just keeps coming, even though the future out of which it comes is utterly opaque, and that it somehow does constitute into meaningful experience once it has crossed that threshold into experience.

Hume might focus more on the way in which we cannot, from this present, say anything utterly sure about what *will* appear in the future; but Hodgson is focused on the present contents and how they do just keep appearing.

This threshold provides the ordering of process-contents by lining them up, as it were, as they go over. This ordering in turns gives us the coherence of events at longer time scales than can fit into an empirical present moment.

A present instant of consciousness defined merely by its place in time is always present; a present instant of consciousness defined as the beginning of a particular content of consciousness recedes along with that particular content into the past. Accordingly, as each new content arises and recedes into the past, it retains, or tends to retain, in the fading vista, the same place in the sequence, in which it originally arose. (ME, pp. 66-67)

(6) Experience that is fully across the threshold becomes reflective. Hodgson relies on a conception of reflection to flesh out the character of the central part of the empirical present moment, that which is after the leading edge of the threshold and before the trailing edge of retention. Process-contents cannot be apprehended in the very instant at which they appear, but instead must be separated from the threshold above which they rise by at least some small margin in order for the content to be fully in experience. There must be space in which to reflect on the content, according to Hodgson, and that space means that there is some new as-yet-unreflected content between it and the very edge of the threshold. The empirical present moment is comprised of immediate reflection, in the sense of looking back upon, the just-past contents that have now already crossed the threshold but have not yet faded into the past. Reflection thus metaphorically positions the subject performing the analysis at the threshold itself, looking towards retention, able to 'see' process-contents after they have risen fully above the threshold.

(7) This vantage point from which the empirical present is considered highlights two distinguishable directions in which the present can be said to be moving. One is the movement of a process-content through consciousness, if we track it from the instant it appears above the threshold till the last of its contents have faded from retention. The other is the movement of the present that goes forward as the crest of wave of the ongoing fountain of new process-contents.

... Even in the simplest case of perception, a single sound for instance, the moment of its appearing above the threshold of consciousness is also the moment of its beginning to recede into the past, so as to take its place in the panorama of empirical experience. One and the same process-content begins and continues for a time in consciousness, seeming, to us who think about it, to bear the present moment along with it as it advances, and so constituting what may be most properly called the empirical present; while at the same time since it is consciousness, and consciousness involves memory in the sense of retention, the mathematically present instance, at which we imagine ourselves, or any percipient, to be placed, when perceiving an empirical present, is always an instant of retrospection upon the consciousness process of that which that empirical present consists. We thus have an apparent movement in two opposite directions at once, involved in one and the same process of consciousness, and that in all cases. (ME, pp. 84-85)

(8) Each of these directions of motions is associated with an arrow of time, or an ordering of process-contents. One ordering is given by real conditions in the objective world, an ordering of contents in terms of chains of causally linked events in a world that is external to experience. That direction moves into the future from the present. The second ordering is given by the order in which process-contents cross the threshold and retreat into the past. The arrow points from present towards the past, an ordering of process-contents in terms of their distance from the vantage of the threshold. Closer process-contents are more sure than those in the far past. The order of *real conditions* is from past to the present as pushing into the future, with the tip of the arrow at the threshold. The order of *knowledge* is from the present to the past, with the tail of the arrow at the threshold.

To a Subject, therefore, standing at that rudimentary stage, both the receding order of the process-contents (in which it is seen at any present moment, and seen in retrospect), and the advancing order (in which it seems to bear the present moment along with it), are as yet one and the same; the former being what he will afterward call the order of knowledge (*cognoscendi*), and the latter the order of existence of real genesis and history (*existendi*)... This union of differences (implicit to him but explicit to us) which are really present in one and the same process, though recognized only at a later stage, is only possible because the process is one of consciousness; which, being both a knowing and an existent, has the psychological moment of its real genesis (or appearance above the threshold) coincident with the moment of reflective perception, in which it is a part of knowing. (ME, pp. 85-86)

The instant of crossing the threshold is, in the order of real conditioning, or, of events in the external world including the cerebral activity sustaining consciousness, the forward edge that pushes from the past into the future as chains of events unfurl. That very same threshold is the moment of present in experience, where Hodgson imagines the percipient to be viewing the ordering of process-contents facing towards the past, such that the most new contents are the first, or closest, in order of knowledge. Considering the order of real events, the present moment is moving along from the past towards the future.

Considering the order of process-contents in experience, the present moment is unfurling from the present towards the past. The directions meet at the present.

...consciousness as an existent, or what is the same thing, as the consciousness of a real Subject or Percipient, is always moving forwards, with the rest of the real existents, in the order of real genesis and history, and always consists, as a knowing, in reflection upon itself, that is, upon its own past contents, from every successive present moment actually reached in that forward movement, this reflective perception constituting what we call the order of knowledge. (ME, p. 91)

This offers an exciting unification of the Subject as an experiencing knower with the Subject as a real part of the existing world, along with all the non-knowing parts of that world. The empirical present gets pushed along a timeline towards the future along with other events, while also facing backwards to reflect on what has just transpired. These two directions of motion provide the means to integrate our subjective experience with the genuine existence of an objective world of which we are also a part.

VI. Comparison with Husserl

Husserl is good counterpoint for a comparison with Hodgson on the experience of the present moment. Contemporary discussions of the experience of time largely draw on Husserl, especially for projects like neurophenomenology (e.g. Varela 1999; Thompson, Lutz, and Cosmelli 2005; Lutz and Thompson 2003). Hodgson's work strikingly prefigures many key parts of Husserl, both in methodology and in the details about the character of temporal experience. Yet they also differ in stark and surprising ways. Most notably, Hodgson moves from a phenomenological bracketing of the external world and

what causes our experience, to connect our experience to what he calls neuronal processes. While there isn't space for detailed discussion here, Hodgson offers an early neurophenomenological account that is surprisingly detailed given that it dates from the late 19th century.

Readers unfamiliar with Husserl's phenomenology of inner time consciousness can find more in the chapter by Brough, this volume. Briefly, Husserl offers a tripartite fixed structure of the present moment, through which contents flow. The forward-directed edge is called protention, the central part is called primal impression, and the trailing edge is called retention. Hodgson's version is similar with respect to retention, but differs markedly in several ways: his notions of threshold and reflection in the empirical present do not correspond in any neat way to protention and primal impression; and Hodgson rejects a fixed structure of the present through which content flows, emphasizing the inseparable character of process-contents.

With respect to method, Hodgson's bracketing of the questions of real conditions and genesis may differ in small details from the phenomenological approach of Husserl, but only in small details. Husserl brackets the external world, setting those questions aside and not returning to them. Yet Hodgson moves past the bracketing and re-introduces the world outside of experience, even the brain processes that sustain experience, in a very non-Husserlian way. This makes his account more amenable to direct application in neurophenomenology than Husserl's. Hodgson's threshold is explicitly tied to neuronal activity, even though the precise nature of that activity is not specified. His method of connecting underlying brain activity and events in the external world to the ongoing content of experience arguably makes Hodgson the original neurophenomenologist.

In addition to similarities in methodology, both thinkers offer a very similar notion of retention as a way of characterizing just-past contents of experience that are not yet in memory. In both cases, the phenomenon of retention is illuminated by contrasting it with memory proper, which requires recollection to bring the contents back into current experience. That they use such similar terminology to mark this phenomenon is also remarkable.

There are a number of such commonalities between their works that may stem from genuinely direct influence. The question of whether Husserl was familiar with the work of Hodgson was first raised by Spicker (1973). Spicker provides a very detailed comparison of several main points of comparison between Husserl and Hodgson, noting repeatedly that Hodgson anticipates Husserl in numerous ways. Spicker offers a timeline by which to track a multitude of possible pathways from Hodgson to Husserl. Some of these are indirect, where Hodgson's influence on Husserl was filtered through the lens of William James's writings (see also Andersen 2014). Some were more direct, where Husserl had access to and clearly read at least of Hodgson's work. Scholars at the Husserl archives continue to translate Husserl's dense shorthand into German, such that potentially decisive evidence about specific passages of Hodgson's that Husserl drew on, or which he read during the critical time period during which he was writing his lecture notes developing his own account of time consciousness, may be forthcoming in yet-untranslated material.

Even with these commonalities in their views, both thinkers still diverge on central ideas. A major point of difference lies in the present as a structure. Husserl is often taken to provide a structure for the present moment in experience, through which content continuously flows (e.g. Dainton 2006). Hodgson straightforwardly rejects this idea. Once one gets to this fundamental metaphysical level of analysis for experience, there are only process-contents, which cannot have their duration or place in the present moment separated from their content. The present moment itself has no fixed permanent structure, nor a fixed duration, because it lacks a fixed or unified trailing edge in retention.

There are also clear differences between Hodgson's notions of threshold and reflection, and Husserl's protention and primal impression. The phenomenon of protention cannot find a space in Hodgson. It would require current process-contents to shape or influence those about to cross or just crossing the threshold, a possibility for which Hodgson does not allow. The threshold is a stark boundary, and the way process-contents just keep coming over the threshold does not correspond to protention in Husserl's sense.

The Husserlian phenomenon of primal impression is also awkward to translate into Hodgson's view. Husserl has no equivalent to the threshold. The primal impression might be best understood as process-contents that are crossing or have only just barely crossed the threshold, such that it is not yet in reflective consciousness. But the primal impression already has its content in a certain way, but Hodgsonian content just crossing the threshold is not yet reflected in experience. One might think that when a process-content has crossed the threshold of consciousness fully, such that it is now reflected in experience, it would be equivalent to the primal impression. But this would misconstrue Hodgson's emphasis on the way in which different process-contents traverse the present moment in experience, namely, that they can do so differentially.

Husserl's work has been the almost exclusive focus for neurophenomenologists. Part of what is potentially so useful about a Hodgsonian account of neurophenomenology is the place his thought occupies in the overall canon of philosophy. Hodgson is, I would argue, the last of the classic British Empiricists, and explicitly situates his own work as the conclusion of a trajectory of thought that begins in the early modern period. Husserl's work, while worthwhile, is harder to incorporate directly into much of the existing philosophical discussion of knowledge, experience, and scientifically informed philosophy of mind (see, for instance, Smith 2013 for concerns about neurophenomenology from the phenomenological perspective). Husserl struck out on a new path with his development of phenomenology, one that was followed up by thinkers like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but which involved fewer direct discussions with the philosophical literature growing under the twentieth century tradition of analytic philosophy. Accordingly, most authors working to bring together time consciousness and brain processes draw only on Husserl's work, and draw only on the first portions of his work, offering the tripartite structure as sufficient for their purposes. Hodgson's work offers an account of the empirical present moment that is recognizably phenomenological in many regards, but also begins to draw connections to neuronal processes, and which is clearly situated in a philosophical tradition stemming back to the early modern period and continuing through the 20th century.

VII. Conclusion

Hodgson developed a novel philosophical method and account of the fundamentally temporal character of experience that differs in significant ways from any other existing account of temporal experience (even, arguably, from any other account of experience broadly construed). His work is both historically significant, and philosophically useful in contemporary discussions. Hodgson's *Metaphysic of Experience* comes just at the close of a long-standing British tradition of a certain style of empiricist thought. It also stands just before the beginning of a new distinctive style of British empiricism that emerged with Russell, Whitehead, and others. It is likely that Hodgson's work is part of the tradition being rejected by these new empiricists, who are sometimes characterized by contrast with the phenomenological tradition in terms of the analytic-continental divide. Hodgson's work straddles these two traditions before the split by standing at the culmination of the earlier trajectory of British empiricism. The Hodgsonian account of temporal experience offers a new version of phenomenology that is the completion of a familiar form of British Empiricism, explicitly developed in responses to figures such as Descartes, Hume, and Kant. While Hodgson had an enormous influence in late 19th century English philosophy, his voice is rarely heard today, and is ripe for re-evaluation and re-incorporation. His *Metaphysic of Experience* is a treasure trove of philosophical insights for application to numerous contemporary discussions.

Acknowledgements: Much thanks to Endre Begby and Kathleen Creel for discussions of and feedback on this work, and to Ian Phillips for helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks also to the SFU 2015 Philosophy of Time seminar for their discussions on Hodgson's work. I am grateful for the opportunity to live and work on unceded Coast Salish territories.

References:

- Andersen, H. and Grush, R., (2009) A brief history of time-consciousness: historical precursors to James and Husserl. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 47(2), pp.277-307.
- Andersen, H., 2014. The Development of the 'Specious Present' and James' Views on Temporal Experience. *Subjective Time: the philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience of temporality*, ed. Lloyd and Arstila, pp.25-42.
- Dainton, B., 2006. *Stream of consciousness: Unity and continuity in conscious experience*. Taylor & Francis.
- Hodgson, S.H., (1898) *The Metaphysic of Experience* 4 vols. Longmans, Green.
- Hodgson, S.H., (1878) *Philosophy of Reflection* 2 vols. Longmans, Green.
- James, W., (1950) *The Principles of Psychology*. 2 vols. New York: Henry Holt and Co. Reprint.
- Lutz, A. and Thompson, E., (2003). Neurophenomenology integrating subjective experience and brain dynamics in the neuroscience of consciousness. *Journal of consciousness studies*, 10(9-10), pp.31-52.
- Smith, D. W. (Winter 2013) "Phenomenology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, E. N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/phenomenology/>.
- Spicker, S.F., 1973. The fundamental constituents of consciousness: Process-contents and the Erlebnisstrom. *Man and World*, 6(1), pp.26-43.
- Thompson, E., Lutz, A., and Cosmelli, D. (2005) Neurophenomenology: An introduction for neurophilosophers, In A. Brook & K. Akins (eds.), *Cognition and the Brain: The Philosophy and Neuroscience Movement*. Cambridge University Press, 40-97.
- Varela, F. J., (1999) Present-time consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6(2-3), pp.111-140.