Phenomenology, Speculative Realism and the Global Present

Abstract

In this essay, I show that perceptual presentness supports the existence of a global present if we adopt a speculative realist approach to phenomenology. I show how this global present can resist the argument from special relativity. The idea is that the concept of the global present is derived from our perceptual experience of the local present, and I show that special relativity does not undermine this concept; what it undermines instead is that there are specific events or objects that are globally present. The resulting view is a form of phenomenological fragmentalism that is analogous to Kit Fine's ontological fragmentalism.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Speculative Realism, Present, Special Relativity, Fragmentalism

1. Introduction

Within contemporary philosophy of time, there has been a surge in eliminativist theories about the global present. What I mean by the global present here is simply the thesis that there are events from across the universe that are happening simultaneously right now. Such a pushback against the global present has been influenced undoubtedly by the advent of the special theory of relativity which states that spacetime can be foliated in different ways depending on the frame of reference, and, thus, no set of events can be said to be simultaneous in all frames of reference. As a result, we should abandon the concept of the global present, or so goes the argument. Eliminativists then often attempt to explain why we seem to have such a strong and intuitive belief in the global present. For instance, Butterfield (1984) argues for a theory where we in typical environments navigate the world and interact with it with very minimal time lag. So in effect, we consider whatever happens in the spatiotemporal region surrounding us a "local now". The global present is then constructed from putting together all of these local experiential nows. Callender (2008), another eliminativist, approves of Butterfield's theory, and he complements it with experimental results from cognitive neuroscience to explain the mechanism of how we form the belief in the local now in the first place. In other words, eliminativists typically want to go all the way to deny not only the global present but also the local present by saying that the former is excluded by special relativity, and the latter is a mere illusion resulting from the way our brains work.

Similarly, Torrengo and Cassaghi (2023) argue against the thesis that presentness is a property that can be perceived at all. Such a thesis must be distinguished from a view that considers presentness as a property that we project onto the objects and events, as opposed to being properties of these objects and events themselves. In other words, perceptual presentness is understood as a quality of objects and events that we perceive in the same manner as colour, shape, texture and sound are all qualities of

objects and events perceived by us. Thus, the objects and events of perception present themselves to us in a way that makes them experienced as present, or so is the case *if* presentness can be perceived. Torrengo and Cassaghi claim that perceptual presentness ought to be rejected because we have no way of contrasting the supposed presentness of the perceptual experience or the perceived object as opposed to their futurity or pastness.[1] Any object or event that we perceive is exclusively present, so we have no way of contrasting the supposed perceptual present against a perceptual past or future, and, so we ought to eliminate the perceptual present. In other words, there is nothing more to perceiving something as present than simply perceiving it. This in turn blocks an important argument for the existence of the global present. The argument states that the best explanation of why we perceive things as present (or of why we are aware of our experience as present) is the existence of the global present.[2]

We already saw that the main problem facing perceptual presentness was our inability to contrast within our experience the property of presentness from that of pastness or futurity since we cannot experience pastness or futurity. Almäng (2014) argues that adopting Husserl's model of internal time consciousness enables us to make the contrast between presentness and non-presentness. Husserl's model, in a nutshell, states that our temporal experience at any time is a temporal whole called the *living present* which is composed of three inseparable abstract parts: the primal impression, retention, and protention. Retention is the part that 'retains' the living present that has just elapsed. Protention, on the other hand, is the part that "anticipates" the living present that is about to come. Finally, the primal impression is the part that corresponds to the 'now' in the narrow sense.[3] Since these parts are inseparable, we could never experience any of them by itself. That being said, we can still differentiate between them. To make an analogy, when we eat soy sauce we taste both its sourness and sweetness together without being able to taste one without the other, and yet we are still able to contrast the two tastes. To illustrate the model, let us consider Husserl's favourite example.[4] When we are listening to a melody our experience cannot be accounted for by a series of discrete nows. Rather, we experience a retention of the previous note, a

---

[1] Braddon-Mitchell (2004) makes a similar point when he critiques the growing block there of time (GBT). According to that theory, the past and the present exist but the future does not. Braddon-Mitchell then asks how we can be sure that we are indeed experiencing the present rather than the past, and concludes that it is much more probable, according to GBT that we are in the past since there is a vast number of past moments as opposed to only one present moment.

[2] It is important here to note the difference between presentness which is contrasted with pastness and futurity on one hand and presence which is contrasted with absence, on the other. Although presentness and presence undoubtedly share a close connection as Valberg (1992), for example, shows, I will be concerned here with the former rather than the latter. Accordingly, when I use the word 'present' from now on it is presentness that should come to mind rather than presence.

[3] For empirical discussions of the Husserlian model, see Lutz and Thompson (2003), Thompson and Verla (2001), Varela (1999), Wallace and Stevenson (2014) and Wittmann (2011).

[4] Technically, the example originates with Husserl's teacher Franz Brentano and was also used by other students of Brentano like Alexius Meinong and Christian von Ehrenfels.

primal impression of the current note, and a protention of the upcoming note all in one moment. Since the Husserlian living present includes both elements of presentness (primal impression) and non-presentness (retention and protention), we are able to contrast presentness with non-presentness:

Retentional consciousness really contains consciousness of the past of the tone, primary memory of the tone, and must not be divided into sensed tone and apprehension as memory. Just as a phantasy-tone is not a tone but a phantasy of the tone, or just as tone-phantasy and tone-sensation are essentially different things and not by any chance the same thing only differently interpreted or apprehended, so too the tone primarily remembered in intuition is something *fundamentally and essentially* different from the perceived tone; and correlatively, primary memory (retention) of the tone. (Husserl 1991: 34).

As we can see, Husserl emphasises the distinction between the tone experienced as a retention (or primary memory as he sometimes calls it) and the one perceived as a primal impression. He likens this distinction to the one between a fantasy tone that is imagined and a real tone that is actually perceived. This is not to say that retention is like imagination, but only to make the point that a radical distinction exists between primal impression and retention similar to how a radical distinction exists between perception and imagination. Torrengo and Cassaghi (2023) consider this option and concede that the Husserlian model allows us to contrast presentness with non-presentness. However, they then go on to deny that a global present is neither sufficient nor necessary for such an ability to contrast the present since what we are contrasting is the way different parts of the content of our experience are presented to us rather than different properties of the world out there. This is in fact in line with Husserl's own view since he does not think that presentness is a property out there in the world that can be perceived. Rather, according to him, presentness is merely a property of our own consciousness of time made possible by the tripartite model of retention, primal impression and protention. That being said, however, and as we will see next, I do not think that Husserl's own view should be the final word on this issue. In particular, I aim to show how this contrast in our experience between the present and the past and the future can be considered to reflect a contrast in the world rather than only in our experience provided that we extend phenomenology beyond what Husserl intended. Afterwards, I show that by extending phenomenology we can derive the global present from the perceptual and local present. To do so, the account I end up adopting can be considered a phenomenological analogue of Fine's (2005) metaphysical fragmentalism.

2. *From phenomenology to speculative realism*

To determine whether we can rely on phenomenology as a starting point in deriving the global present, we need first to determine whether phenomenology can indeed have a realist reading that extends beyond what's merely given in our experience. Otherwise, one could always retort that whatever contrast we experience between the presentness given in the primal impression and the pastness given in the retention is merely internal and does not correspond to any external properties that we perceive out there.

The debate on whether Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, should be classified as a realist or an idealist is still a contentious one among scholars.[5] This is aided by the fact that Husserl's writings in this regard differ according to the phase of his career under scrutiny, so even people who take clear sides in this debate admit the difficulty of drawing the contours of Husserl's position as it evolves throughout his writings. But regardless of where someone stands in the debate, what I want to argue here, following recent articles, is that phenomenology has realist *possibilities* that can be extended beyond Husserl's own thoughts regarding the issue. Accordingly, phenomenology can thus be considered a starting point for speculative metaphysics that aims to go beyond what is merely given in our experience. For example, Coate (2018: 453-454) recognises that the phenomenological bracketing, or the epoché, aims to suspend every question about the being of the world out there and focus on the experience. Nonetheless, he goes on to say that the epoché allows us to see that our perceptual experience presents us with a unified object that exists and endures independently of perception. More specifically, when we perceive something, we perceive only its side facing us, but since the object is presented to our experience as a unified and enduring object existing out there in the world, we also anticipate the other sides of the object, and, gradually, these anticipations become fulfilled as we perceive the other sides of the object. As a result, this gradual fulfilment "provides us with continuing evidence that the object we perpetually posit is right here as posited, or put otherwise, that our enduring awareness of it is in no way problematic." (Coate 2018: 454).[6] Still, one can still argue that such fulfilled anticipations do not necessarily give us the realism that we want. This is because although these fulfilled anticipations give us evidence for the existence of a unified and enduring object out there in the world, this object is the same intentional object that we perceive. In other words, the book that is given in my experience right now is the *same book* that is out there in the world. There is only one book rather than two, or as Husserl (1970: 595) himself says: "It need only be said to be acknowledged that the intentional object of a presentation is the same as its actual object, and on occasion as its external object, and that it is absurd to distinguish them." While this might sound as realist as it gets on first reading, if we reflect a bit more, then we can understand why some critics have downplayed the realist tendencies in Husserlian phenomenology since it is a particular strain of naïve realism that Husserl claims to subscribe to. It is a realism that considers the object given in the experience identical to the object out there in the world.

Such naïve realism is frequently dismissed by members of the "speculative realist" movement which is a loose movement of philosophers united only by their opposition to correlationism. Correlationism is a concept defined by Meillassoux (2008: 5) as "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other." As such,

---

[5] This is also reflected in the debate on whether Husserl is a disjunctivist or a conjunctivist on perception. See De Rizzo (2025) for a recent overview.

[6] This phenomenon is often called amodal completion. See Nanay (2023) for a recent discussion.

Kant is considered the original correlationist with his denial of our ability to know the D*ing an sich* or the thing-in-itself. Meillassoux further distinguishes between weak correlationism where the thing-in-itself can be thought but not known and strong correlationism where the thing-in-itself can neither be thought nor known. As Röck (2021: 117) suggests, phenomenology is a form of weak correlationism. This is because the phenomenological method grants us that we can think of a thing-in-itself that exists mind-independently but denies that we can know this thing-in-itself. For instance, Harman (2011a: 173), who is one of the foremost voices of speculative realism, "[t]here can be no question that Husserl is an idealist to the core—even in the Logical Investigations— for him it makes no sense to say that there could be realities not observable in principle by consciousness. Nonetheless, Husserl often feels like a realist." Thus, if we can only know what appears in our experience then, it doesn't really matter if my experience gives me a unified and enduring object since this would still count as idealism. This is why, according to Harman (2011b: 20), Husserl is an "object-oriented idealist", and this why is naïve realism ultimately collapses into idealism. But as I have already said before, we don't need to classify Husserl as a realist to accept that his phenomenological method can serve as a starting point for a speculative realist metaphysics. This is especially the case due to the limitations of phenomenology. As Girardi (2017: 340) points out, we need to make a distinction between the object out there in the world and the object as it is given in our experience since phenomenology is preoccupied with the latter and cannot really tell us anything about the former. In other words, our knowledge is forever confined to the thing as it appears in our experience, and, accordingly, we need to move beyond phenomenology if we want to speculate about the thing-in-itself. The phenomenological metaphysics we get as a result is one that "becomes more modest than its traditional forms. It is no longer about first causes or principles of reality. Instead, it is concerned with *absolute facts (Urtataschen)* pertaining to givenness, although not themselves given as such." (Girardi 2017: 343). We can see better the affinity between phenomenology and speculative realism if we turn to the writings of later phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty. To understand Merleau-Ponty's position on realism, James (2018: 1314) gives the example (already suggested by Husserl) of how we perceive a piece of rock. For instance, perceiving the rock as graspable depends on how big or small our hands are, and perceiving it as heavy or light depends on how strong our muscles are. Also, the colour of the rock would vary depending on many factors such as the weather and lighting conditions. But this does not mean that such a role is only exclusive to so-called secondary qualities as opposed to primary qualities that are entirely objective for Merleau-Ponty rejects this distinction between primary and secondary qualities. This is because even so-called primary features like shape depend to some extent on our perception, and this is not to embrace some form of idealism or to deny that the rock exists independently of our perception for "to perceive a thing as independently existent is, in Merleau-Ponty's view, to perceive it as having sides which, though not currently visible, would be visible from some other standpoint- visible to oneself, perhaps, were one to take a step to one's left, or to some other person already standing at that spot."

(James 2018: 1315). What this essentially means is that for Merleau-Ponty, the independent existence of the rock can be gauged *precisely* by the fact that we are able to perceive its features differently through many of our senses if we vary factors like our position, for instance. On the other hand, if what we were observing was a mirage or a hallucination then shifting our position, and rubbing our eyes together might reveal that the object we are seeing does not independently exist. But even here, we see that Merleau-Ponty does not manage to break the correlationist circle. Not even in his later writings, where he (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 226) introduces the concept of "endo-ontology" which refers to the ontology of "being of" rather than "being" and "partaking in" rather "belonging to"(Dalissier 2018: 308). As a result, the endo-ontology that we have is *not* like the ontology of the Cartesian separation paradigm which separates between the subject from the object. Rather, endo-ontology is an ontology of total absorption and encompassment in the world as a whole without placing the observer somehow outside the observed as an alien onlooker. Merleau-Ponty (1968) lays out this intimate relationship of situatedness in the world by comparing the world to our flesh. When our flesh touches something, it is both the toucher and the touched, and so as Bitbol (2020: 10-11) states:

> The role of constituting objectivity, which had been entrusted to the transcendental ego by Husserl, and which had been extended to our own-body by Merleau-Ponty at the time of his Phenomenology of Perception, was further extended to whatever has the status of a flesh by Merleau-Ponty at the time of The Visible and the Unvisible (*sic*). But since the flesh is boundless, since the flesh is the whole world, any division between the constituter of objectivity and the constituted objects is meaningless. Just as the flesh is self-perceiving, the world qua flesh is self-objectifying.

So, even though the later Merleau-Ponty abolishes the Cartesian separation between the subject and the object, he still does not manage to break out of the correlationist circle. This is because the examples he provides while talking about the flesh all involve conscious observers. Not once he talks about the relation between inanimate objects like trees, chairs, atoms, or books for example. In other words, as a result, he is still stuck in the correlationist circle despite overcoming the Cartesian separation. To emphasise, this does not mean that phenomenology should be abandoned, or that it has nothing valuable to add since, as we will see in what comes next, we cannot make sense of the global present without taking phenomenology as a starting point.

3. *The local presentness of events and objects*

Adopting a speculative realist extension of phenomenology can help us get from perceptual presentness to global presentness. We can then take the perceptual present as it appears in our experience as the *standard* by which we conceptualise presentness out there. There is no other way by which we can conceptualise global presentness if not

from our experience.[7] This does not mean, however, that the existence of global presentness depends on our experience in some subjective idealist fashion. To illustrate the difference between existence and conceptualisation, I use an analogy designed by Dolev (2007: 143) where the distance between the Earth and the Moon is fixed and independent of our existence but we still use the metre rod kept in Paris as a standard to measure this distance as three hundred and eighty-five thousand kilometres on average. Without the metre rod (or some alternative standard), we would not be able to conceptualise this distance in any meaningful way even though it would stay the same if we all magically disappeared tomorrow. Therefore, our experience, like the metre rod in Paris, acts as a standard without which we cannot conceptualise the global present.

Let us now attempt to use our perceptual experience as a standard to define presentness. Putatively, for an event to be presented to our experience, it has to be *cotemporal* with that experience. Cotemporality, as utilised by Dolev (2007), refers to when an event overlaps, at least partially, with another event or an experience. It does not matter whether the two events (or event and experience) start at the same moment, end at the same moment, or have the exact same duration. The two events (or event and experience) can share one, more, or none of these properties, and they would still be cotemporal as long as they partially overlap. When an event is cotemporal with experience, it is *locally* present. Local presentness here is understood as an abstraction from experience and not a property of it. Rather, it is a property of events, and it is what we use in our everyday discourse to describe events as present.

Accordingly, the local present might vary in duration depending on the context of the event we are referring to. For example, I can consider both writing this sentence and the maintenance work happening next door as present events since they are both cotemporal with the experience I am having now, and, thus, depending on the context under use, the local present can be anything from a few seconds to months or even years. This also means that a present event may have parts that are past and future. For instance, as I watch the second quarter of a water polo match, the entire match can be considered to be a present event even if the first and third quarters are considered to be past and future respectively. The idea that a long-lived event can be broken down into several short-lived events is not new in the literature. For instance, Merino-Rajme (2022) invokes this idea to explain why some events feel like they take longer than others despite having the same duration.

This definition of present events as ones that are cotemporal with our experience has its limitations, however. For example, when Johannes Kepler first observed the supernova (now known as SN 1604) in October 1604 one could say that this event was present in October 1604 in so far as it was cotemporal with the experience of Kepler (and other people) observing the supernova. However, we know that the supernova occurred at a distance of around twenty thousand light-years away from Earth.

---

[7] This does not mean that we need a mental image of presentness to be able to conceptualise it since we are fully capable of having a perceptual experience without having a corresponding mental image. Also, I am not making here the point that perceptual experience is necessary to conceptualise *all* aspects of reality. Rather, I am making the much more modest point that perceptual experience is necessary to conceptualise presentness.

Therefore, the event actually had occurred twenty thousand years before light waves emitted from it reached us here on Earth, and it would be absurd to consider it a present event in 1604 rather than when it actually happened twenty thousand years prior. To give another example from our daily life, when we watch a live transmission of a sports match on television, we are aware that there is a delay of a few seconds between the match as it unfolds in the stadium and the transmission that we watch. However, such delay is negligible compared to the overall duration of the event, and so we can still consider that the match we are watching on television is a present event. But let us say that during the match another much shorter event takes place. For instance, if one of the players scores a goal but we were not paying attention to the television at that moment, then we would not be able to say that scoring the goal is a present event even if we saw the replay afterwards. The event is no longer present when we perceive and experience it through replay. Therefore, we can use these examples to refine our definition of a present event to become an event that is cotemporal with experience provided that we actually experience the event from our frame of reference before it ends. If the experience rather comes *after* the event ends, such as in the cases of the supernova or the goal replay, then the event is *not* present.[8]

It should be noted that I don't have to personally experience an event to consider it as present. If a shaman in the Amazon is currently drinking ayahuasca hidden from everyone else, then this event is still present if, for anything, it is because it is cotemporal with the shaman's own experience. An immediate question arises here regarding events that are not experienced by anyone like events that are space-like separated from us, and, therefore, cannot be experienced. Would it be right to say that such events were never present since no one experienced them as they happened? Such a verdict sounds highly implausible. Instead, the solution lies in what Dolev (2016: 34) calls "counterfactual experience". If someone could perceive the distant event, then it would have been cotemporal with their experience and, therefore, that someone would have considered such an event as present. Therefore, cotemporality with experience serves as a standard by which we conceptualise the concept of the present, but it is not a condition that must apply to all events to be considered present. Someone *could* have observed the distant event as a present event *if* light travelled at an infinite speed. This is reminiscent of how Husserl (1983: 105) puts it: "The physical thing is a thing belonging to the *surrounding world* even if it be an unseen physical thing, even if it be a really possible, unexperienced but experienceable, or perhaps experienceable, physical thing." So again, what matters is the experiencability or the possibility of being experienced rather than actually being experienced. So, we can only understand the concept of the present through our experience, but once we do, we can abstract away this concept and use it in contexts that do not necessarily involve the events as being experienced by us. The concept of counterfactual experience can be used also to explain how events in the past that were (presumably) not perceived and experienced by any

---

[8] Here I am using the term "event"in the standard way used in the context of special relativity; that is, to mean anything that happens that has a specific time and space in spacetime.

conscious being can still be regarded as having been present. An example of this would be the formation of oceans on Earth billions of years ago.

We already saw that events can have the property of local presentness by being cotemporal with experience. But how are we to understand the local presentness of objects? First, we should note that objects are the prime actors or participants in events and that objectless events and eventless objects are rare according to Casati and Varzi (2008). This intimate relation between the two means that objects, like events, can be locally present but not globally present. Since any object is bound to be a participant in some event and an event can only be locally present in a frame-relative manner, by extension the object can only be locally present relative to the same frame of reference. For example, consider that I am eating a boiled egg for breakfast now. The boiled egg is a participant in an event that is locally present for me, i.e. breakfast. But for another observer in another frame of reference, today's breakfast is not a present event. Therefore, for me, the egg is locally present, but for the other observer it is not. But this looks too quick. I am looking right now at a pencil that is resting on the desk in front of me and a blade of grass that is standing motionless in the garden outside. Both the pencil and the blade of grass are not currently participating in any event. And yet, it is obvious that both of them are locally present to me. One option here would be to deny that the pencil and the blade of grass are not participating in events. Rather, it would be said that they participate in static events as opposed to dynamic ones. Of course, such a construal of events is highly revisionary and untypical, and I see no reason why we should adopt it. I suggest that while participation in events may be a secondary reason why objects appear locally present, it cannot be a sufficient reason.

I suggest instead that to understand the local presentness of objects, we ought to think in terms of their accessibility to perception. The glass I am drinking from now is a present object because I can see it, touch it, and of course drink from it. On the other hand, the glass that I broke in the kitchen last month is not a present object since I cannot see it, touch it, or drink from it. Objects stop being present in a variety of ways. A photo might get shredded or burned. A vase might get broken. A sandwich might get eaten or thrown away and become decomposed. If we treat human beings as objects, then they stop being present when they die, and so on. In all these cases, the objects in question stop being present when they stop being accessible. In some cases, like the ones outlined above, when the objects are present, they are accessible to *both* perception *and* action. In other cases, however, present objects are only accessible to perception. For example, consider a person looking at the star Sirius at night. For such a person, Sirius is a locally present object. The accessibility of Sirius here is only perceptual. I should emphasise that accessibility of perception refers not only to direct perception where we perceive the object itself through our senses, but it also includes indirect perception where we perceive the effects of the object rather than the object itself. For example, the electrons in a beam are present objects to the scientist even if she doesn't perceive them directly. This is because she perceives the effects that the beam makes. The same can be said about the inner layers of Earth which are not accessible to perception themselves but generate seismic waves, which can be detected.

4. *From the local to the global present*

Now we reach the part where the existence of a global present can be derived from the local present. Whereas local presentness is a property of objects and events, global presentness is not a property of any particular events or objects. Rather, it is merely an abstract notion that is derived from the local present, so in other words, derived from our perceptual experience by starting with the phenomenological method and following it with speculative metaphysics. Whenever we conceive of a global present, we conceive of the fact that there are events happening now in all of the cosmos. While we cannot determine which events in particular are globally present since events can only be locally present relative to a specific frame of reference, we can still say that some events must be globally present. It falls down on observers in each frame of reference to identify the specific events that are locally present for them. What this means is that the concept of the global present allows us to conceptualise that there are events in the universe that happen simultaneously. However, it does not tell us which specific events these are, because determining simultaneity requires reference to a specific frame. Therefore, in a way, the global present is like an empty set which can be "filled" by different events according to the frame of reference chosen. For example, the event of writing this sentence is currently locally present in my frame of reference. For another frame of reference, however, it might be locally past or future. So, the relativity of simultaneity entailed by special relativity rules out that any specific event or object can be globally present, but it does not rule out the concept of the global present itself. Our perception of the local presentness of objects and events allows us to conceptualise the global present.

We can see here how this view can be interpreted as having certain similarities to Fine's (2005) fragmentalism. For Fine, which events and objects are globally present can vary between different fragments. Similarly, for me which events and objects are globally present varies between frames of reference. However, there is a major difference between the two approaches. Fine's approach is ontological in the sense that reality itself is fragmented into fragments of incompatible facts, and there is an ontologically privileged global present in each fragment. On the other hand, my approach is strictly phenomenological since I don't admit any ontologically privileged global presents nor fragment reality into fragments of incompatible facts. But if one subscribes to Fine's ontological fragmentalism, then my phenomenological approach can help them indeed by giving a "phenomenological flesh to the ontological bone".[9]

A possible question that one might want to ask at this point is why we should save the global present after all. I hope to have shown that I am not saving the global present because it was never threatened by special relativity in the first place. What special relativity threatens, or rather rules out, is that any specific object or event can be globally present, but the concept itself remains intact. The global present is derived

---

[9] Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting the link between my view and Fine's and also for suggesting this phrase.

from our perceptual experience of presentness, and we can easily conceive the global present. Therefore, I see no reason why we should unnecessarily rule it out. In short, the global present remains as a concept that is derived from our perceptual experience. In a way, the global present can be said to be a "speculative empiricist" concept which Debaise (2009: 87) defines as "empiricism [that] attempts an elucidation of immediate experience based on the construction of a collection of abstractions that do not correspond directly to anything in our experience, but that, like technical tools, allow us to interpret it." In other words, the global present is an empiricist concept because we only arrive at it based on our perceptual experience of the local present, but at the same time it is speculative because it is an abstract tool created by us to make sense of such experience.

5. *References*

ALMÄNG, J.
— 2014, *Tense as a feature of perceptual content*, "The Journal of Philosophy", 111(7): 361–378.

BITBOL, M.
— 2020, *A phenomenological ontology for physics: Merleau-Ponty and QBism*, in H. Wiltsche, P. Berghofer (eds), *Phenomenological Approaches to Physics*, Cham, Springer: 227–242.

BRADDON-MITCHELL, D.
— 2004, *How do we know it is now now?*, "Analysis", 64(3): 199–203.

BUTTERFIELD, J.
— 1984, *Seeing the present*, "Mind", 93(370): 161–176.

CALLENDER, C.
— 2008, *The common now*, "Philosophical Issues", 18: 339–361.

CASATI, R., VARZI, A.
— 2008, *Event concepts*, in T. F. Shipley, J. Zacks (eds), *Understanding Events: From Perception to Action*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 31–54.

COATE, M.
— 2018, *"Yes, the whole approach is questionable, yes, false": Phenomenology and the new realism*, "Journal of Speculative Philosophy", 32(3): 450–461.

DALISSIER, M.
— 2018, *Endo-ontology and the later Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on space-time*, "Studia Phaenomenologica", 18: 303–328.

DEBAISE, D.
— 2009, *The emergence of a speculative empiricism: Whitehead reading Bergson*, in K.

Robinson (ed.), *Deleuze, Whitehead, Bergson: Rhizomatic Connections*, London, Palgrave Macmillan: 77–88.

DE RIZZO, J.
— 2025, *Husserl on perception*, *Husserl Studies*: 1–22.

DOLEV, Y.
— 2007, *Time and Realism: Metaphysical and Antimetaphysical Perspectives*, Cambridge (MA), MIT Press.
— 2016, *Relativity, global tense and phenomenology*, in Y. Dolev, M. Roubach (eds), *Cosmological and Psychological Time*, Cham, Springer International Publishing: 21–40.

FINE, K.
— 2005, *Tense and reality*, in *Modality and Tense: Philosophical Papers*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 261–320.

GIRARDI, L.
— 2017, *Phenomenological metaphysics as a speculative realism*, "Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology", 48(4): 336–349.

HARMAN, G.
— 2011a, *The road to objects*, "Continent", 1(3): 171–179.
— 2011b, *The Quadruple Object*, Ropley, Zero Books.

HUSSERL, E.
— 1970, *Logical Investigations*, Eng. trans. by J. N. Findlay, Vol. II, London, Routledge.
— 1983, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Book I, Eng. trans. by F. Kersten, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
— 1991, *On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, Eng. trans. by J. B. Brough, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

JAMES, S.
— 2018, *Merleau-Ponty and metaphysical realism*, "European Journal of Philosophy", 26(4): 1312–1323.

LUTZ, A., THOMPSON, E.
— 2003, *Neurophenomenology: Integrating subjective experience and brain dynamics in the neuroscience of consciousness*, "Journal of Consciousness Studies", 10(9–10): 31–52.

MERINO-RAJME, C.
— 2022, *The fragmentation of felt time*, "Philosophers' Imprint", 22.

MERLEAU-PONTY, M.
— 1968, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. by A. Lingis, Evanston, Northwestern University Press.

MEILLASSOUX, Q.
— 2008, *After Finitude*, Eng. trans. by R. Brassier, London, Continuum.

NANAY, B.
— 2023, *Mental Imagery: Philosophy, Psychology, Neuroscience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

RÖCK, T.
— 2021, *Dynamic Realism: Uncovering the Reality of Becoming Through Phenomenology and Process Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

THOMPSON, E., VARELA, F. J.
— 2001, *Radical embodiment: Neural dynamics and consciousness*, "Trends in Cognitive Sciences", 5(10): 418–425.

TORRENGO, G., CASSAGHI, D.
— 2023, *The ways of presentness*, "Erkenntnis", 88(7): 2787–2805.

VALBERG, J.
— 1992, *The Puzzle of Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

VARELA, F. J.
— 1999, *The specious present: A neurophenomenology of time consciousness*, in J. Petitot et al. (eds), *Naturalizing Phenomenology*, Stanford, Stanford University Press: 266–314.

WALLACE, M. T., STEVENSON, R. A.
— 2014, *The construct of the "present moment": Multisensory temporal integration and Husserl's living present*, "Frontiers in Psychology", 5: 553.

WITTMANN, M.
— 2011, *Moments in time*, "Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience", 5: 66.