



Ultimately, then, in what does the temporality of consciousness consist? [...] Merleau-Ponty (in *PP*, 477 [417]) borrows the schema below from Husserl (*TC*, §10), where the horizontal line represents the series of nows, the oblique lines the profiles of these same nows viewed from a later now, and the vertical lines the successive profiles of the same now.

“Time is not a line, but a network of intentionalities.” When I slide from *A* to *B*, I keep hold of *A* throughout *A'* and beyond. We might say that the problem has only been pushed back a step: since it amounts to explaining the units of the flux of experiences, we must here establish the vertical unity of *A'* with *A*, then of *A''* with *A'* and *A*, etc. The question of the unity of *B* with *A* is replaced by that of the unity of *A'* with *A*. This is where Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl and Heidegger, established a fundamental distinction concerning our problem of the historian’s consciousness: in the *purposive* memory and the *voluntary* evocation of a distant past, there is a place for the syntheses of identification which allow me, for example, to connect *this* joy to its time of provenance, that is, to localize it. But this intellectual operation, performed by the historian, itself presupposes a natural and primordial unity by which it is *A* itself that I reach in *A'*. It might be said that *A* is altered in *A'*, and that memory transforms its object—a rather banal proposition in psychology. To which Husserl responds that this scepticism, lying at the base of historicism, undercuts itself as scepticism, since alteration implies *that in some way we know the thing altered*—that is, *A* itself. Thus there is a *passive synthesis* of *A* with its perspectival shadings—it being understood that this term does not explain the temporal unity, but allows us at least to pose the problem correctly.

We must still note that when *B* becomes *C*, *B* also becomes *B'*, and that simultaneously *A*, already fallen into *A'*, falls into *A''*. In other words, my time moves as a whole. What is to come, which I grasp at first only through opaque shadings, comes to pass in person for me: *C*₂ ‘descends’ into *C*₁, then gives itself in *C* within my field of presence, and even as I meditate on this presence *C* traces itself for my as ‘no longer’, as my presence is in *D*. Yet if this totality is given all at once, that implies that *there is no genuine problem of a unification of the series of experiences, after the fact.*