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**Husserl on Emotional Expectations and Emotional Dispositions Toward the Future. A Contribution to Mindfulness Debates on Present Moment Awareness and Emotional Regulation**

**Abstract**

In this chapter, I approach the anticipatory character of experience and the possibility of focusing on the present from the viewpoint of Husserlian phenomenology. I do this by analyzing in particular the emotional dimension of expectations. In the framework of Husserlian phenomenology, the concept of emotional expectation describes a subject´s orientation toward what is coming as an affective tension, that is, an emotional way of “being tensed” toward the future. The general aim of the chapter is thus to explore the possible contributions of Husserl´s analyses of the relation between different temporal phases of consciousness to the debate in the context of mindfulness about the possibility of focusing on the now moment and observing and regulating emotions. First, I will present the concept of emotional expectation and the anticipatory dimension of time-consciousness in Husserl’s phenomenology. This requires clarifying the specific emotional character of expectations, that is, explaining how expectations are to be understood in the emotional sphere, in terms of how they both differ from and intertwine with intellectual expectations. Second, I will provide an overview of the sedimentation of feelings in emotional dispositions and of the “resonance” of feelings. Finally, I will refer to the role of attention in redirecting consciousness to the now, and in the observation of emotions. In this regard, I will argue that, even though every experience involves past, present, and future temporal modes, attention can favor what is given in the now and can intervene in order to observe emotions as they are going on. In general terms, I will try to describe the passive genesis of disposition that predelineates present experience and expectations regarding the future, and also to explore the possibility of actively intervening from the present to reconfigure this passive predelineation

Keywords: Edmund Husserl; Emotions; Time-Consciousness; Attention

**Introduction**

The possibility of focusing on the present is one of the key aspects emphasized in standard characterizations of mindfulness (e.g., Bishop, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). According to this, limiting attention to the present is fundamental to fully experiencing what arises in the field of consciousness without further elaboration. Intrusive negative emotions are one of the main threats to present awareness. In fact, the success of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy has been related to the possibility of regulating one’s emotions (Wheeler, Arnkoff, & Glass, [2017](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/23)). This implies regulating the tendency to anticipate the future, especially, so as to regulate those expectations that push us away from the present in a harmful way. The topic of expectation in the sphere of emotions is relevant in many respects. On the one hand, emotional expectations are involved in single anticipatory emotions, that is, emotions concerning the anticipation of a specific future event. On the other hand, they may also go beyond particular events and configure a general habit of anticipating what the future will bring. In this case, emotional expectations can be understood as dispositions. For that reason, even if we are not expecting something in particular, we could say that there is always at play an emotional horizon of expecting. In this context, the question arises whether emotional dispositions toward the future and emotions in general can be modulated. Research in the field of psychology suggests that emotional regulation, which has been defined as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express their emotions” (Gross, [1998](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/4), p. 275), may be achieved. Even though mindfulness is not considered in itself an emotional management technique (Bishop *et al.*, 2004, p. 231), it has been applied in therapies to reduce emotional distress. Now then, the development of strategies to regulate future-directed negative emotions presupposes a deep understanding of the connection between the temporal phases of consciousness and a fine-grained analysis on the interconnection of the intellectual and emotional dimensions (for instance, on the possibility of attending to emotions as they are ongoing). These topics are not only significant for empirical psychologists but also for philosophers, especially phenomenologists, who are specially interested in the methodological matter of “shifts of attitudes”. As I will show, the analysis of the temporal dimension of emotions has been prominent in classic Husserlian phenomenology. For this reason, although the idea of mindfulness cannot be found in Husserl’s phenomenology, his descriptions can contribute to clarifying some conceptual distinctions underlying mindfulness debates.

Against this background, in what follows I analyze the possibility of focusing on the present and the anticipatory character of experience from the viewpoint of Husserlian phenomenology. I do this by analyzing in particular the emotional dimension of expectations. In the framework of Husserlian phenomenology, emotional expectations (*Gemütserwartungen*) describe a subject´s orientation toward what is coming as an affective tension or pull. The general aim of the chapter is thus to explore the possible contributions of Husserl’s analyses of the relation between different temporal phases of consciousness to the debate in the context of mindfulness about the possibility of focusing on the now moment and observing and regulating emotions. First, I will present the concept of emotional expectation and the anticipatory dimension of time-consciousness in the framework of Husserlian phenomenology. This requires clarifying the specific emotional character of expectations, that is, how are expectations to be understood in the emotional sphere, in terms of how they both differ from and intertwine with intellectual expectations. Second, I will provide an overview of the sedimentation of feelings in emotional dispositions. Finally, I will refer to the possibility of regulating emotional dispositions, by analyzing the role of attention in redirecting consciousness to the now, and in the observation of emotions. In general terms, I will try to briefly describe the passive genesis of disposition that predelineates present experience and expectations, and also to explore the possibility of actively intervening in the present to reconfigure this passive predelineation. Since Husserl’s reflections on the proposed topic are not systematically developed in any one work, in my presentation, I will draw upon texts from different periods and contexts. For his analyses of time-consciousness and attention, I will focus on volumes X, XI, and XXXVIII of *Husserliana*. With respect to his analyses of emotions, I will focus mainly on the lectures published in volumes XXVIII and XXXVII, and on the research manuscripts published in volumes XLIII/2 and XLIII/3.

**Husserl on Emotional Expectations and the Anticipatory Character of Experience**

According to Husserl, all our present experiences incorporate an anticipation of the future, as well as a retention of the recent past. Consciousness in each of its phases“reaches out beyond the now” (1969, p. 234). In the *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Inner Time Consciousness* (1904-05), Husserl describes the triple intentionality involved in time consciousness as follows: the “primal perception” intends what is actually given in the present; the “primary recollection” (or retention) holds what has just passed, and the “primary expectation” (or protention) intends what has not yet appeared; it corresponds to a primordial way of being directed to the future.

The openness of the future represents a special challenge for phenomenological descriptions. The question arises of what kind of giveness corresponds to an intention directed to the future, how does the future present itself to us? Can the consciousness of the future be considered as analogous to the consciousness of the past? It has been pointed out that, compared to the extensive analyses devoted by Husserl to retention, protention has received “minor treatment” (Lohmar, [2002](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/17), p. 154). However, in recent years scholars have developed insights into his overlooked contribution to the analysis of the future dimension of time-consciousness (e.g., De Roo, 2008; Mensch, 1999; Rodemeyer, 2003;Soueltzis, 2021).

Husserl addresses the anticipation of the future on two levels: (a) the original awareness of the future in protentions (*Protentionen*), which is a rigid and passive process, and (b) the expectations (*Erwartungen*) that depend on our past experience, and are “movable” insofar as they depend on the changes of our experiences. Expectations do not have the form of an explicit judgment. In Husserl’s terminology, they are “presentifications” (*Vergegenwärtigungen*) intertwined with presentations such as perceptions, and motivated by them. Husserl describes protention as that which constitutes in an “empty” way what is coming (1969, p. 52). The difference between protentions and expectations concerns the difference between an immediate "empty" awareness of what is coming and a secondary actual presentification. Protentions, as a tendency toward fulfillment, open the present to the future, but they do, as said, in an “empty” way, while expectations “make the future present”, as recollections “make the past present”. Importantly, expectations tend to anticipate the future following the style of the past. As Husserl shows in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis,* what is expected is anticipated“in accordance with what has just been” (1966, p. 186). Moreover, the “force” of expectations can increase “with the number of ‘instances’, that is, with the frequency of what has occurred under similar circumstances” (1966, p. 189). When the fresh experience confirms the expectation, the expectation is fulfilled, otherwise, it is disappointed.

This anticipatory structure of consciousness is inseparable from every experience. Expectations are involved not only when I perceive an aspect of an object and expect the hidden aspects to be the same, but also when I feel joy or sadness, and when I set a practical goal. That is, they are not only involved in mere perception but also in emotional and willing consciousness. This is due to the fact that the structure primal-perception, retention, protention is the purely formal temporal structure of *every* experience. However, expectations are not exactly the same in perception as they are in the case of emotions and practical intentions. If we consider, for example, the anticipation of an emotion like joy, it is difficult to deny that it differs from the anticipation of an aspect of an object, inasmuch as the former involves an enthusiasm and an engagement that in the case of mere perception is mainly absent. In other words, while many perceptual processes *can* be emotionally indifferent, it is difficult to remain indifferent to the anticipation of an emotion or to the setting of a practical goal.

Husserl referred to the specific emotional character of expectations and described how they differ from non-emotional expectations. In the *Notes on the Doctrine of Attention and Interest*, he described emotional expectations as “the emotionally being tensed toward what is coming” (*das gefühlsmässige Gespanntsein auf das Kommende*) (2005, p. 106). Further, in a text recently published in the third volume of the *Studies on the Structure of Consciousness,* he explicitly distinguishes between (1) intellectual expectations (*intellektuelle Erwartungen*)*,* as the simple foreseeing of the future, and (2) emotional expectations (*Gemütserwartungen*). This understanding of expectation as a “tension” (*Spannung*) seems to correspond to a specific emotional form of being oriented toward the future. Husserl describes it as follows:

I expect something, e.g. a disjunction. I don´t know which of the “possibilities” will occur, but “one of them” will occur, I can anticipate that, I “know” that, e.g. in playing dice, and I am just tensed (*gespannt*) towards what will come, about “how it turns out to be”. The tension, this emotional state, finds its release.//But also when I am certain of what will occur, I am eventually anxious. The lover will surely arrive “I cannot wait for it”, which means, I cannot bear at all the sweet agony of expecting, I am in a feverish expectation. The expectation is an “intention” in the special sense of a being-tensed-towards, that is, a tension, and only the second is an emotional expectation. (2021b, p. 387)

According to this text, expectations can be more or less determined; sometimes I only know within certain margins what will occur and sometimes the expectation is more determined: I know exactly what will happen and, nevertheless, I am “tensed” toward. Expectations move in a field of relative determination and indeterminacy and the degree of its affective tension depends on this degree of determination or indeterminacy. The analysis of the role of the indeterminacy of the consciousness of the future in the feeling of anxiety can serve as a concrete example. Anxiety would increase or decrease depending on the uncertainty of the consciousness of the future (on this issue see Micali, [202](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/19)2).

As I understand it, in the framework of Husserl’s phenomenology we can speak of “emotional expectations” in two senses. On the one hand, when the expectation is related to a present emotional experience: a present feeling, valuation, or willing act gives place to an expectation that is emotional because the act at stake belongs to the sphere of *Gemüt*. In Husserl’s terminology, feeling, valuing and willing are “emotional experiences” (*Gemütserlebnisse)*, which belong to the non-theoretical dimension of consciousness. On the other hand, the expectation can be emotionally “colored”,regardless of what kind of act is at stake*.* I can anticipate something perceptually and, on the grounds of the same perceptual intention, an emotional expectation can arise. An example of an emotional expectation based on a perception will make it clear: I see a door and a person behind the door and I anticipate that the door will open and that the person will enter the room. In this case, my expectation is not only “doxical”, because I also *want* the person behind the door to enter the room. Besides the presentification of what will happen, emotionally, my expectation is not oriented toward this purely “objectual” aspect (“door”, “person behind the door”, “person entering”) but to the value of the door opening and the person entering the room. Regarding this aspect, emotional expectations are very close to desires.

Husserl’s reflections on expectations based on emotional and practical intentions show that they are very complex phenomena. For instance, the expectation involved in a willing resolution has the character of an anticipation of the fulfillment of the will: when I resolve to act I expect that every singular phase of the action will be fulfilled. The expectation at play here is not neutral, it is emotional because it is founded on my will. For its part, expectations involved in proper emotional experiences, such as joy or sadness, are interesting because every emotion regarding a future event has *at its base* the belief in the existence of the event. Husserl gives the example of the anticipation of a joy regarding a future trip (1988, p. 107). But this could also apply to negative emotions. For instance, I suffer in the present because I expect suffering to come and I conceive this as inevitable. This is a common phenomenon, especially for people suffering from chronic pain (which can even worsen with the diagnosis of a disease, that leads the person to interpret any corporal change as a warning sign of the imminent and inevitable coming suffering).

To sum up, we can speak of “emotional expectation” (1) in terms of expectations bound to proper emotional experiences: for example, the present joy motivates the expectation of a future joy (2) and in terms of “colored” expectations that accompany every kind of act, as mere perceptions. In both cases, there is no doubt that the emotional character differs from the phenomenon addressed by Husserl in his lectures on time consciousness. But, how exactly do they differ? The analysis of emotional expectations faces Husserl with the question of whether there is a specific phenomenon of expectation in the emotional sphere (2021b, pp. 285-286), and with the broader question of how the complex relationship between the intellectual and emotional dimensions of consciousness should be understood. Without going in depth into Husserl´s complex analyses of these questions, I will only point out some aspects of emotional expectations that can be drawn from his reflections:

One of the main features that comes to the fore when examining the relation between intellectual and emotional expectations is that the latter have an emotional “color”. Husserl uses different expressions to describe the emotional character of an experience: “feeling-color” (*Gefühlsfarbung*), “colored intention” (*tingierte Intention*) and shimmer (*Schimmer*), among others.[[1]](#endnote-2) Husserl’s attempts to explain the “color” of experience go back to even before the *Logical Investigations.* In an early manuscript he writes that “an intellectual state is perhaps never free from emotional coloring and vice versa” (2005, p. 164). According to Husserl, the color of experience is given by an evaluative intention which he calls “valueception” (*Wertnehmung*), which is an emotional act. This *Wertnehmung* constitutes the value of an object and this value is the fundament of the emotion linked to it. In this way, what is evaluative apprehends motivates an emotion that colors the objects. To sum up: the emotional character of the expectation can be understood as a color added to the perceptual grasping of the object by means of an evaluation.

Husserl exploes the possibility of understanding both forms of expectation in a relation of analogy (2021b, p. 284 ff.). The analogy is grounded in the idea that both forms of expectations have the structure intention––fulfillment.[[2]](#endnote-3) Whether I expect something perceptually or emotionally, in both cases my expectation can be fulfilled or disappointed. However, fulfillment is not exactly the same in each case. While perceptual intentions are fulfilled through intuition (in this case, the fulfillment has the form of a confirmation), emotional expectations are only fulfilled when the affective tension is “released” (*entspannt*). In this case, the fulfillment could be described as having the character of satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) (see Scanziani, [2021](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/21), p. 148). This means that the satisfaction of an emotion is independent of the confirmation of the intention of the founding act, as a perception. For instance, if the perception of an object arouses a state of relaxation, perceiving every side of this object does not decrease or increase my relaxation. The intention of the founding act can be confirmed but I still have pleasure, that is, the pleasure is not immediately exhausted when the intention of the founding act is confirmed. Thus, although emotional expectations are founded on doxic intentions in a way that makes them dependent, in other respects they are relatively independent.

Another important feature of emotional expectations is that their affective tension is related to the contents of the experience. In this sense, in order to understand the specific emotional character of expectations we have to move beyond the structural form of time (i.e., the mere fact that primal-impressions are given, retained, and that retentions continuously “sink down”) and consider time *contents*, which are related to the experience of particular objects. As Husserl writes: “Time offers a universal form of ordering and a form of coexistence of immanent data. But form is nothing without content” (1939, p. 76). It is the affective pull of a given content which draws us emotionally into the future. We project not only the chain of retentions but also the contents retained with their particular features. Husserl’s deeper analyses on the drawing power of the contents are found in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis.* There, he analyzes the relation between primal impression, retention and protention with regard to affection. Affection is “the allure given to consciousness, the peculiar pull that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego; it is a pull that is relaxed when the ego turns towards it attentively, and progresses from here, striving toward self-giving intuition” (2001, p. 96). This allure is neither a psychological phenomenon nor a contextless power: the single datum is dependent upon the others for its affective force. The relations between contents are relations of association and motivation. Regarding the temporal flow, Husserl considers that the source of affection lies in the primal impression. In the orientation to the past, retended contents become less and less affective in a steady progress of “fading away”. With regard to the direction of propagation, affection possesses a unitary tendency toward the future. The affective pull is experienced in the present, since it is connected to the primal impression, but its force goes beyond the now, it directs us toward the future with a certain emotional orientation.

**The Emergence of Emotional Dispositions**

Within the framework of Husserl’s phenomenology, emotional expectations are connected to the phenomena of “dispositions” (*Gesinnungen*), “moods” (*Stimmungen*), and, more generally, to the “horizonality” (*Horizonthaftigkeit*) of experience. The husserlian concept of horizon-consciousness refers to the system of implications at play in our experience of the world. One the one hand, there is always an horizon as a stratified background of inactual experience within which every actual experience has its place. On the other, there is an horizon as an anticipation of the sense of the contents given, which has its roots in our habitualities. For this reason, genetically, emotional expectations have their origin in the sedimentation and typification that rules every experience. That is, feeling do not escape from the process of habitualization. As Husserl writes, “also here everything is incorporated to the habitual” (2004, p. 292). Further, as a correlate of the feeling-habituality and the feeling-disposition there is a typification of feelings. Feelings and value characters are incorporated into the habitual experience, in such a way that “from now on we grasp the habitual value-character (*Wertcharakter*) of an object” (2004, p. 293). A “resonance” (*Resonanz*) or “transmission” (*Übertragung*) of a feeling gives place to the configuration of a total “*Gefühlsmilieu*”. Husserl speaks of “habitual feeling orientations” (*habituelle Gefühlsrichtungen*), “habitual emotional properties” (*habituelle Gemütseigenschaften*), and “permanent emotional dispositions” (2004, p. 8).

Husserl´s examples concern positive emotional dispositions that can color our present experiences, for instance, he speaks of a practical confidence that has to accompany human action. Some of the most interesting reflections on this topic can be found in his texts on ethics, where he speaks of a rational belief (*Vernunftglaube*) in the sense of the world and in the meaning of human action as a necessary condition to act rationally (2014, p. 317). But he also refers to “the obscure horizon of senselessness” that threatens human attempts to act rationally (2014, p. 309). In this case, the sense of senselessness can extend and cover everything that is connected to the present experience. The same happens with emotions such as sadness:

To a sad person everything appears in a sad light; but the objects, that appear illuminated in that way, are not the objects of the sadness, at least not the primary. The sad person knows what she is sad about; her feeling is specifically determined through this object. She is not sad about the objects that she now looks at, although she is inclined to recognize in them a displeasure and, in general, something that has the capacity to bring her sadness closer. (2005, p. 176)

Affective “colors” can extend over everything, even over the things that do not have an axiological color by themselves; they somehow “borrow” the color, until it finally becomes an emotional background of the world. We anticipate an “emotional and volitional sense of the world” (Husserl, 2014, p. 241), that has a totalizing character. So, while sometimes emotions may refer to a given content, in some cases, the emotion originally bound to a content is transferred over others through passive association[[3]](#endnote-4). In this vein, Husserl introduces the difference between actual and dispositional contents:

What we call the content of an act is the content that grounds the act, that to which the act is eventually directed. Every joy is directed to something, to the joyfull, to what grounds the joy and that to which it is directed; similarly, every sadness for something (…) every willing something, what one wants, etcetera. But it must be considered that this content of consciousness does not need to be <present> during the whole duration of the act, but might also become a disposition. (2005, p. 176)

Generally considered, Husserl’s analyses comprehend emotional life as a gradual process that goes from the most primary passive levels of affection toward proper emotional acts, which can, in turn, sink into passivity. In this way, there is a backward and forward movement of emotions. Affectivity pre-delineates our experience from the beginning (in this case, we can speak of an emotional background) but also gives place to proper acts which sediment, transfer their color to other experiences through associative synthesis, and become a secondary passivity, a secondary habituality (in this case, we can speak of emotive projection in virtue of sedimentation). Between the two poles of passivity (emotional passivity as primary and emotional passivity as a product of sedimentation) the possibility of activity arises. In the present the attention and the will can intervene.

**Attending to Emotions and Attending to the Present: A Husserlian Contribution to Mindfulness Debates**

Let me briefly return to the dynamic between the temporal phases of consciousness. As mentioned, expectations are based on passive associations that predelineate the future according to the style of the past. In this regard, to a great extent, expectations depend upon recollections. In fact, our everyday experience shows that we are not entirely free to determine what we expect. In many cases, a past experience just invades abruptly the present, regardless of our attempts to leave it behind. Are we then just resigned to the motivational dynamic of the phases of consciousness? Are we prisoners of our habitual dispositions? If the answer were positive, in the case of negative or traumatic past experiences we could not avoid constantly projecting a disturbing emotion into the future. This would not only negatively color our present experience (because the “call” from the past oriented toward the future certainly impacts on the present), but would also prevent us from focusing on the present moment by drawing us away from it, throwing us into a painful future that torments us. Besides its connection with negative past experiences, a situation in which the present is overwhelmed by a negative expectation of the future can be described as follows: on the one hand, in such situation, the consciousness of the future is either excessively determined in its content (I am certain that X will happen) or excessively undetermined (I do not know what will happen in the coming moment and this uncertainty fills me with fear and anxiety). On the other hand, it can be affirmed that in such a situation the future is granted a special relevance. As S. Micali has insightfully observed, in such cases “the future situation is assumed to be more significant and critical than the present one. Otherwise the very *raison d´être* of anxiety would be unjustified, that is, it would not be legitimate to consent to that future situation´s obscuring and occupation of the present” (Micali, 2022, p. 131). This negative horizon that colors our consciousness of the future impacts on our present wellbeing and undermines the possibility of something “new” emerging, an experience that does not hold onto the past and thus project it into the future. The important question then is if there is a way to actively intervene in order to reconfigure the passive dimension of the habitualities that ground and predelineates future activity, that is, if it is possible to influence the future *from the present.* The practice of mindfulness aims precisely at achieving this in our everyday life. As it has been described by J. Kabat-Zinn, “Mindfulness is moment-to-moment awareness (…) It is a systematic approach to developing new kinds of control and wisdom in our lives, based on our inner capacities for relaxation, paying attention, awareness and insight” (1990, p. 2). What is at stake here is the possibility of changing the flow of inner experience itself, in a way that makes it possible to inhabit the present moment with “full awareness”. Bishop *et al.* provide a more specific insight into the procedures involved in the praxis of mindfulness. In their operational definition of mindfulness, they consider two components: “The first component involves *self-regulation of attention*, so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental states in the present moment. The second component involves adopting *a particular orientation toward one´s experiences* in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance” (2004, p. 232). Against this background, I would like to present some aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology that could contribute to answering these questions. These could be understood as covering, *in the particular domain of emotions*, the two axes considered in the abovementioned definition: regulation of attention and particular orientation to the present experience (in this case, emotional experiences).

Concerning the first aspect, it is important to recall that, according to Husserl, the now “is always and essentially a border-point of an extent of time” (1969, p. 72). Any approach to the relation between Husserl’s phenomenology and mindfulness should not overlook the husserlian notion of an “extended present” (the present with its triple intentionality) as one of his main contributions to the analysis of time consciousness. Hence, when we speak of the “present” we should consider the difference between the present as “extended” and the present as “punctual” (as a “border-point” in the *continuum* of time). For Husserl, the temporal phases of consciousness are not punctual and are not a disconnected succession. Every now phase has a halo of retentions and protentions, otherwise the experience of temporal objects could not be explained. In this sense, the now conceived in isolation is an ideal limit. This does not mean that focusing on present moment experience is not possible. Even if *structurally* the data that is given in the now is necessarily followed by a chain of retentions and stretches toward the future in protentions, we can concentrate on the present as the originary instance of giveness. As I understand, Husserl´s main contributions to conceptualizing this possibility comes hand in hand with his understanding of attention as a modification that can favor what is given in the now and turn the now experience clear and distinct.

Making the Now Experience “Patent”: The Reflective Function of Attention

According to Husserl, every experience is an interplay of actuality and potentiality. While some elements come to the foreground in the field of perception, others remain in the background. With its “turning towards” (*Zuwendung*), attention privileges some objects and rejects others. Husserlian phenomenology tries to account for two dimensions that converge in attentive consciousness: its reactive character and its voluntary directionality. In other words, attention can be understood as a reaction to a *stimulus* (in this case, the “turning towards” is passively conditioned) and also as a voluntary orientation of consciousness (if I am interested in something given in the broad field of perception, I can voluntarily make it the object of my intention). In its voluntary form, attention can also operate after a “turning towards” established by a *stimulus:* I can keep my attention grasping the object that stimulated me or I can “let it go”, if I am not interested. Further, attention can make something given in the broader field of“noticing” (*Bemerken*) that has not yet stimulated me, become stimulating. Summing up, attentive consciousness involves both the “stimulation” and “participation” of the ego. As mentioned above, an aspect of attention that can be taken into consideration with regard to the possibility of focusing on the present is the reflective “turning towards” of attention. This reflexive function of attention is a modification that can make an experience a “phenomenon” for the ego without adding a second act. When directed to the now phase of consciousness, reflective attention can make the now become patent as now. As observed, the now moment has its past and future temporal horizons, but reflective attention can focus on the now phase and turn the phase and what is given in it into a “lived experience”. In this respect, Husserl distinguishes the “pre-phenomenal” character of an experience and its “being a phenomenon” for the ego (1969, p. 129; see Scanziani, p. 154). Importantly, this function does not objectify the experience (as proper reflection). It is an act of “bringing out” (*herausheben*) or “segregating”, an original modification by virtue of which I can vividly “live” in the now experience. An experience that previously was just there is now lived as “my” experience, for instance, as my emotion.

The Possibility of Observing Emotions

Intrusive emotions are one of the main threats to present awareness. For this reason, the possibility of observing emotions is one of the underlying issues in mindfulness debates. The methodological questions that arise are how feelings can be at our disposal to be observed, or if they are accessible to self-inspection at all. Are feelings observable as they are happening? Or is it only possible to inspect them retrospectively, in recollection?

Some of Husserl´s earliest reflections on this topic can be found in the already mentioned *Notes on the Doctrine of Attention and Interest.* Husserl analyzes the difference between the situation in which we experience something attending to its emotional “color” and the theoretical consideration of the same object. He refers to emotional and theoretical stances as different kinds of “habits”: “If we are in the habit of the affect, if the torrent of delight, of rage, runs through our soul, then every spiritual experience has a determinate colour, in the same way that the same trees look different in sunlight and clear sky and in the thunderstorm. If we take a theoretical stance then it is a pure part-taking in the things that move us; but specifically the acts are the same, just as in the landscape the trees are trees, only with different colours, with a different illumination” (2005, p. 166). Now then, in spite of their differences, emotional and theoretical dimensions are not merely added one to the other: “an emotional state (…) is rather a fusion, in which both sides penetrate each other and mutually determine their character” (2005, p. 164). This fusion, however, does not undermine the possibility of making the “color” of the object of (theoretical) interest. We can consider (*betrachten*) the color, even if that implies provisionally suspending it: “If I am angry about something, the joining reflection, the meditation, might decrease the anger, I feel it immediately as a contrary force, but the anger is not immediately gone. I still feel very well that the anger continues, although, so to say, in another stage, in another form of being” (2005, p. 164). The outcome of this is that we can “redirect” our interest and orient it to the emotion.

However, this requires detaching ourselves from the emotion, in order to observe it. The remaining question is if it is possible to think about an emotion and feel an emotion at the same time. In the a text on the consciousness of feelings from 1911 (2021a pp. 143–183), we find some clues which help us to answer this question. There, Husserl expresses his reaction to Moritz Geiger’s work on the same topic. Contrary to Geiger, Husserl holds that feelings are not immune to observation. The view that feelings cannot be observed is based on the idea that consciousness cannot focus neutrally on feelings because they “contaminate” the observation in a way that makes it impossible for consciousness to maintain the object orientation (see Averchi 2015, p. 77). According to this, we couldn’t observe the feeling without losing sight of what motivates it. If I focus on my present sadness I will be absorbed by it and I will not be able to analyze it. In short: emotions are elusive when we try to grasp them, and we cannot directly attend to them without losing the possibility of examining them. Challenging this view, Husserl considers that we can be aware of emotions and that we can observe them in such a way that they can possibly gain clarity and distinction, without losing their emotional quality and without “reframing consciousness”. It is important to notice that Husserl is only referring to emotions as joy and sadness, not to experiences such as pain or pleasure, which are for him sensations. In this case, a “shift” in attention can make the emotion move to the foreground. We can still shift and look into the object of the feeling; it is there only in a modified manner. In Husserl’s terms, it is actual but non-thematic. The key for understanding this is that unthematic acts are also included in the actual phase of consciousness, which as said before, is “extended” (includes retentions and protentions). For this reason, we can shift the attention toward them. The discussion between Husserl and Geiger concerns some fundamental issues of phenomenology which are beyond the scope of this chapter. Without going deeper into this, my aim is to show that Husserlian analyses offer important hints as to what being mindful to emotions could possibly mean, whether it is an intellectual observation, a feeling kind of observation or a different attitude which is at stake. A relevant question posed by Husserl is how to differentiate between the focus on an object and the focus on a feeling aroused by an object. As mentioned, Husserl’s answer emphasizes the difference between thematic and unthematic consciousness to describe this shift.

Approval of Emotions: The Possibility of Assessing the “Adequation” of an Emotion with Respect to a Given Situation

Once the function of the observation of emotions is established, we can approve of or disapprove of an emotion as being “adequate” or “inadequate” in a given situation. This is possible because “valueceptions”, which are the fundament of an emotion, can undergo a process of clarification by virtue of which their adequation can be confirmed or not. Just as perceptual intentions can be adequate or inadequate, also valueceptions can be adequate or not. We approve of an emotion if we recognize that a given situation is worth feeling this emotion and the underlying evaluation is justified. Approval involves a normative consciousness in which we move from the subjective consideration of something as, for example, joyful, toward the objective stance in which we confirm that it is worth feeling joy . While sometimes we cannot avoid experiencing an emotion, like sadness, we do not necessarily have to agree with it. We can take a position toward our emotion and ask for its grounding. According to Husserl, the only emotions that should be approved are those which have at their base an evident insight into value, and those are the emotions that we should take responsibility for. This opens the interesting question concerning those valueceptions that are motivated by authority, tradition, or by some standard regarding how we should value a state of affairs (2021a, p. 278). Ultimately, approval is a teleological process, and we can educate ourselves in order to develop the ability to feel on the grounds of evidence and grounded valueceptions. Interestingly, Husserl describes this approval of feelings as a “secondary feeling”, as a feeling directed to a primary feeling (2021a, 262-263). According to this perspective, the correspondence (*Zugehörigkeit*) of a valuation regarding a situation could be primarily *felt.* It is important to take this idea of an emotional position taking into consideration in order to explore the convergence of emotion and intellect in assessing the justification of valuations, and to think of how emotions can be modulated according to cognitive insights.

The Possibility of Regulating the Emergence of Negative Emotional Expectations

As already mentioned, attention can be turned to the now moment and to the emotions that arise in the now. How does this affect the emergence of expectations? According to the mentioned dynamic of sedimentation, emotional expectations can be reinforced by each “instance”. Turning our attention to a particular kind of emotion reinforces repetitive *patterns* or habitualities:Every time I actively attend to an emotion a chain of intentions connected to it -including expectations- is triggered. Although this cannot be found in an explicit form in Husserl’s work, there are descriptive elements to substantiate the claim that by actively privileging a particular kind of emotion in the present, a new dynamic of habitualities can arise, a dynamic that could give way to the emergence of new expectations in the future, and regarding the future. As I understand it, commitment to values is a central moment of this reconfiguration: I must acknowledge the value of an emotion and acknowledge it as (more) positive, approve of it and commit to it, in order to engage in the process of self-reconfiguration. Husserl´s reflections on renewal tend in this direction. The notion of “renewal” means that human beings can regulate their life according to evidence, that they do not have to simply follow blind tendencies, but can act on the basis of their own motivations and insights. A responsible life is able to strive for justification. Renewal involves the possibility of working on and self-shaping not only our cognitive insights but also our emotional dispositions toward the world.[[4]](#endnote-5)

The above-sketched themes refer to some of the conditions for a reconfiguration of passivity from activity: (1) making the present a phenomenon in which we can focus is (2) a condition for observing the emotions that arise in the now, which, in turn, (3) allows us to take a position toward them, that (4) could eventually favor the development of new habitualities. In this way, with the tools offered by Husserlian phenomenology, a possible stratification of levels toward conscious waking experience has been outlined. It was not my aim to argue that phenomenology necessarily involves or is any kind of meditative praxis. Concrete empirical aspects have not yet been taken into account. This “top down” path from the highest levels of active life into the lower levels of passive life is a possibility motivated by how the acts involved are described by Husserl. That is, these are essential possibilities based on the essence of acts, not a necessary matter of a concrete praxis. By analyzing the emotional dimension, I have tried to show that, in the framework of Husserlian phenomenology, although passivity is the necessary condition of activity, activity can reconfigure the passive dimension that pre-delineates present and future activity. In my view, these considerations are not only relevant for debates about mindfulness but also for a fuller understanding of Husserlian phenomenology itself as a philosophy of renewal.

**Concluding Remarks**

I close the chapter with some historical remarks. Since the beginning of the phenomenological movement, the consciousness of emotions and the relation to the future have been important issues. Emotional experiences and the problem of the awareness of emotions have been a topic of debate for first-generation phenomenologists, such as A. Pfänder, M. Geiger, and D. von Hildebrandt. In this respect, the work of M. Scheler, who has deeply explored the stratification of emotions and has even privileged the role of emotions above cognitive reason, must be granted a special place. For its part, in Post-Husserlian phenomenology, the relation to the future and the topic of anticipation have been considered by M. Heidegger, both in *Being and Time* and in his later work, for example, in *The Age of The World Image,* in the latter case in relation to the critique of era of technology. Finally, in the second part of *Totality and Infinity,* “Interiority and Economy”, E. Levinas presented an original approach to the future in relation to the issue of nourishment. These works have influenced 20th century philosophy in many respects, both inside and outside of the phenomenological tradition.[[5]](#endnote-6)

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1. On Husserl’s use of the metaphor of coloration, see Zirión ([2018](../../../D%3A/Santoshi/2023/Aug/Ferrarello_9781032396316/Setup/03_Tool_Converted/Done/Esa/24)). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Husserl hesitates about the justification of this analogy (2021b, p. 285) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. On resonance and passive association, see Husserl, 1966, p. 406). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. It should be mentioned that “renewal” is a concept related to ethical self-improvement. The *telos* of renewal is not personal well-being (although it is not contrary to it) but the development of ethical consciousness and self-responsibility, which is strongly linked to responsibility for the others. Moreover, even if the process of renewal begins with individual self-transformation it does not imply any kind of individualism or self-isolation. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. I would like to thank Andrea Scanziani for his knowledge on Husserl´s phenomenology of attention and to Andrés Osswald for his feedback and for calling to my attention Levinas´ thoughts on the topic of the future. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)