



A Mereological Perspective on Husserl's Account of Time-Consciousness

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Abstract

This paper approaches Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness from a mereological perspective. Taking as inspiration Bergson's idea that pure *durée* is a multiplicity of interpenetration, I will show, from within Husserlian phenomenology, that the absolute flow can indeed be described as a whole of interpenetrating parts. This mereological perspective will inform my re-consideration of the much-discussed issue of Husserl's self-criticism concerning the schema of content and apprehension. It will also reveal a fundamental similarity between Husserl's conception of the absolute flow and Sartre's conception of lived temporality. This paper consists of four sections. Section 2 presents the basic elements of Husserl's mereology. Section 3 introduces the difficulty encountered by Husserl's early account of time that makes use of the schema. I will examine Barry Dainton's criticism of Husserl's theory of time-consciousness against the background of the older debate between Meinong and Stern, a debate that has informed Husserl's own account. Section 4 distinguishes two common (but misguided) criticisms of the schema from Husserl's own self-criticism, which is in turn divided into two steps. It is shown how the second step of this self-criticism implies the interpenetration of the absolute flow and responds to Dainton's criticism. Finally, Sect. 5 concludes with some comparative remarks. I will show how Husserl's notion of absolute flow, as mereologically interpreted, anticipates Sartre's conception of consciousness as self-transcendence, as well as how it accommodates the apparently conflicting mereological intuitions of Aristotle and Bergson.

1 Introduction

Aristotle famously defines time as the “number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after’” (*Phy* 4.11, 219b1). By defining time as a kind of number, Aristotle regards divisibility as essential to time, for motion receives its number (from minds which

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perceive and count) precisely when “nows” are marked off and differentiated from each other (219a25–28). To say that time is essentially divisible by nows individualized/counted by the mind is certainly *not* to say that time is composed of individual nows. Instead, it means that the potentiality of division pertains essentially to motion, and that this very potentiality *is* time. Thus time may be regarded as a hylomorphic compound with motion as its matter and divisibility or countability as its form (Cf. Roark 2011). This form it owes to the activity of percipient minds, without which time cannot exist, “but only that of which time is an attribute,” i.e., motion (*Phy* 4.14, 223a27).

There is, however, another aspect of time, the account of which might stand in tension with this close connection between time and number. This is the aspect of dynamism, of pure flow. Bergson focuses on this aspect of time when he denies that divisibility characterizes the form of *durée*, i.e., time as originally lived by consciousness from within.¹ For him, the flowing character of *durée* is inseparably related to the heterogeneity and interpenetration of its parts. Space, on the other hand, is characterized by the homogeneity and mutual externality of its parts. According to Bergson, the form of divisibility or countability pertains essentially to space but not to *durée*. Whence the famous doctrine that *durée* becomes countable only when it is spatialized, which means, rendered homogeneous and mutual external by being symbolically represented in space (1913, pp. 101, 108, 120).

These philosophical precedents for the mereological approach to time form the background and inspiration for the following discussion of Husserl’s analysis of time-consciousness from a mereological perspective.² In Sect. 2, I will set out the basic elements of Husserl’s mereology and show how Husserl’s notion of interpenetration differs from Bergson’s. Though Husserl does not frequently use mereological terms in his investigations of time-consciousness, such an approach sheds important light on his account. In particular, the mereological approach enables a better understanding of the philosophical significance of Husserl’s critique of the so-called schema of content and apprehension (hereafter referred to as “the Schema”). It will be shown that Husserl’s radical critique of the Schema allows him to break free from the problematic confinement of his analysis to momentary consciousness. Such a confinement has been the target of Barry Dainton’s criticism. In Sect. 3, I will discuss Dainton’s objection that Husserl’s account unduly fragments consciousness by adhering to the so-called “Principle of Simultaneous Awareness”. I will show that Husserl is familiar with this line of objection in the form of Stern’s criticism of

¹ The following represents only Bergson’s early position in *Time and Free Will*.

² One might argue that Bergson’s approach is anti-mereological insofar as he insists on the indivisibility of the *durée*. But the insistence on indivisibility and interpenetration is still taking a position on the problem of part-whole relation and thus in a widened sense adopting a mereological perspective. Besides, there may be reasons to find Bergson’s simple affirmation of interpenetration on the basis of an appeal to intuition insufficient. Such is, for example, Sartre’s assessment. He thinks Bergson’s notion of interpenetration remains at the level of “a figure of rhetoric,” because it fails to show the “source” or “principles” of interpenetration (Sartre 2018, pp. 198–200). Thus, it seems a sound methodological strategy that we do not start from the simple intuition of interpenetration but work towards this intuition in our reflective analysis. This will be my strategy in this paper.

Meinong. Section 4 will then be devoted to the discussion of how Husserl's critique of the Schema transforms his account of time-consciousness. I will distinguish two common but misguided criticisms from Husserl's self-criticism, which can in turn be divided into two steps. While the first step discovers the dimension of absolute consciousness as the dynamic constitution of contents that were previously considered to be really immanent, the second step overcomes the fixation on momentary consciousness in the analysis of the structure of this dynamic constitution. The truly dynamic nature of this constitution is thus revealed, and its mereological structure can be described in terms of interpenetration. Finally, Sect. 5 is a postscript on the philosophical fruitfulness of this mereological interpretation of Husserl's account of time-consciousness. I will first bring out the fundamental similarity between Husserl's conception of absolute flow as mereologically interpreted and Sartre's conception of consciousness as self-transcendence, and then conclude by indicating how Husserl's constitutive approach can accommodate Aristotle's and Bergson's apparently conflicting mereological views of time.

2 Husserl on Fusion and Interpenetration

Consider our auditory experience of listening to the ringing sounds of church bells. Let's consider the sounds without relation to their objective cause, merely as a sonorous stretch of time. When I simply go along with the sounds, I experience a particular auditory rhythm without grasping each sound for itself. The sounds pass continuously into one another, sometimes without clear boundaries between them. This is what Husserl calls a phenomenon of fusion. Contents in fusion give rise to moments of unity (*Einheitsmomente*), which are immediately perceived before the separate perception of the constituent elements as such (Hua XIX/1, p. 237).

Now, despite their intuitive fusion, the sounds have some kind of phenomenal identity of their own. In terms of Husserl's formal ontology, one can say that they are ontologically independent from each other. For Husserl, independence is defined in terms of the possibility of separate presentation. Separation does not mean isolation but the variation of its environing content. Thus, to say that fused elements enjoy a certain kind of ontological independence in relation to each other is to say that with respect to one such element, the variation of its neighbors does not totally destroy its identity. Thus, after having first immersed myself in the sound of the ringing bells, I can take a different attitude and undertake to count the number of the sounds that are now past but still retained in the fresh horizon of the living present. And it is possible, in the attitude of recollective counting, to count *every other* sound, thus changing the immediate "environment" of the sounds. In this way, one and the same sound is given once in immersed experience and another time in recollective counting and with different environing sounds. Though the two manners of givenness do not present the sounds in exactly the same context, the change of context does not destroy a minimal phenomenal identity of the sounds.³ In this sense, we can say with Husserl

³ This distinction between phenomenal fusion and ontological independence is famously rejected by Aron Gurwitsch (2010, pp. 85–90, 111–120, 128–148). For Gurwitsch, the qualitative multiplicity of the sensory field is not only a phenomenon of fusion, but also interpenetrating in the ontological sense. For

that the successive notes of a melody enjoy some kind of ontological independence in relation to each other (Cf. Hua XIX/1, pp. 246–252, 283–288). This can be further clarified by contrast with a case of genuine ontological non-independence, such as the intensity and the timbre of a single sound. The particular intensity and the particular timbre of a sound can, of course, vary independently of each other within a certain range; but as species intensity and timbre are ontologically non-independent from each other, insofar as it is impossible to imagine the one without the other.

On the basis of the notion of ontological non-independence, as just explained, Husserl defines the notion of foundation. A is founded on B iff A is non-independent in relation to B, i.e., we cannot present A without B (Hua XIX/1, pp. 281–282). Interpenetration is then defined in terms of foundation. It is one of the two ways in which contents are foundationally connected to form a whole. When the contents are directly founded on each other so that no supervenient form of unity is needed for the formation of the whole, these contents are said to be interpenetrating. On the other hand, when the contents are independent of each other so that a “real form of connection” is needed for the formation of the whole, these contents are mutually external parts of the whole (Hua XIX/1, p. 282). Interpenetrating parts form a whole which is not a layer above or something more than the parts, whereas mutually external parts constitute a whole which has its own discernable particular form (Hua XIX/1, §22).

Recall that for Bergson the flowing character of *durée* is inseparable from the interpenetration of its parts. I will arrive at the same conclusion in my interpretation of Husserl. I will show that the time-constituting flow is characterized by the interpenetration of its components and that precisely this character accounts for experiential succession.

3 Intentionalism and the Principle of Simultaneous Awareness

Husserl holds fast to the general framework of intentionality in his analysis of time-consciousness. Time-consciousness is intentional, as is consciousness in general, and the names for the specific kinds of intentionality that reveal original past and

Footnote 3 (continued)

him, interpenetration is equivalent to the notion of Gestalt-coherence, defined as “the determining and conditioning of the constituents upon each other” or their “thoroughgoing reciprocity” (p. 131). Gurwitsch’s position relies crucially upon his notion of functional significance, which a constituent enjoys “[b]y virtue of its absorption into the structure and organization of a Gestalt-contexture” (p. 112). For Gurwitsch, the phenomenal identity of a constituent is exhausted by its functional significance thus defined, which means that a constituent owes its identity entirely to the particular Gestalt-contexture to which it belongs. However, as Mulligan (1995, pp. 186–191, 230), Williford (2013, pp. 507–508) and Hopp (2008, pp. 237–239) have argued, the phenomena made famous by the Gestalt Psychologists, such as the Vase-Faces figure of Rubin, do not support the strong conclusion of Gurwitsch. Contrary to what Gurwitsch claims, the partial coincidence of the Vase-Gestalt and the Faces-Gestalt, for example, is the condition of possibility for the experience of their conflict. It is, after all, the same segment that undergoes the change of its functional significance, which means that “its identity is not entirely determined by its place within a Gestalt-contexture” (Hopp 2008, p. 238).

future are retention and protention. One may wonder whether this is a good theoretical decision for a theory of time-consciousness. The widespread way of speaking of time in analogy with a flowing river seems to suggest a different conception. If time is a flow, then it seems to be an absolute flow, one that does not allow of an extra-temporal point of observation. Wherever the observer is located, one is inclined to say, she is *eo ipso* carried along by the flow. If this is the case, how can we do justice to the flowing character of time in terms of intentionality, which seems to reduce the flow to something relative—to a point of observation? Such would be the conviction of extensionalists. In the contemporary discussion of temporal perception, extensionalism is the position that seeks the explanation of our experience of time in the fact that this experience itself unfolds in time (Cf. Dainton 2011; Hoerl 2013). On the other hand, the standpoint of intentionality does not seem to be so easily dispensable if we are aiming at a description of temporal *experience*. It seems even a structural necessity of the situation of (phenomenological) reflection that the temporal flow is given as a flow precisely *in relation to* the subject of reflection. Hence the appeal of intentionalism, which explains our temporal experience in terms of our intentional directedness to not only the present but portions of the past and the future. (Cf. Dainton 2011; Hoerl 2013).

Husserl is familiar with the basic contours of this debate through his knowledge of Stern's criticism of Meinong's theory of time-consciousness (cf. Hua X, pp. 216–234). Meinong's extreme intentionalism is expressed in his negative answer to the question "Can or even must the representation of a distributed object itself be a distributed fact?" (Meinong 1978, p. 184). By "distributedness," Meinong has in mind not "the object's occupying a temporal extension, for it occupies that at any rate," but the fact that "its nature requires a temporal extension in order to unfold" (ibid.). Meinong bases his negative answer to the above question on the following kind of reasoning. At each moment of the duration of a distributed object and its corresponding perception, the perception has as its object a moment of the distributed objects. To represent a distributed object, however, means to represent the whole object in its temporal extension. Such a representation is only possible after the temporal process of the distributed object has come to an end, at the end phase of the corresponding perception, which is undistributed.

For Stern, who is an representative of the extensionalist perspective, Meinong's theory falls victim to "the dogma of the momentariness of a whole of consciousness," the idea that "an ideal cross-section at any given moment in the life of the soul would have to contain every element belonging to that whole of consciousness" (Stern 2005, pp. 321, 313). This dogma requires that all contents requisite for a temporally extended whole must be present simultaneously for the whole to be formed. According to Stern, this formation (representation) of a temporal extension in a moment could be understood in no other way than as a symbolic representation, where the simultaneous contents underlying the representation of time function as temporal signs. To regard every temporal perception as a symbolic representation, however, is a blatant distortion of our experience (Stern 2005, p. 321).

Husserl agrees with Stern's criticism. Like Stern, he also objects to Meinong's concentration of the perception of a temporal whole in an "undistributed" moment. Husserl formulates his criticism in mereological terms. According to Husserl,

Meinong's "undistributed" complete perception of a temporally extended object is in fact only a non-independent part of the whole course of auditory experience that unfolds in pace with the perceived object. To call such a non-independent part the perception of the whole object is to mistake a moment for a piece (Hua X, p. 227). Even while criticizing Meinong, however, Husserl finds a kernel of truth—though distorted by Meinong's own formulation—in his idea of the undistributedness of temporal perception. This is from the way he understands the proposition "[t]he succession of sensations and the sensation of succession are not the same" (Hua X, p. 12).⁴

Both Husserl and Stern endorse this proposition, but their understanding of it is significantly different. This difference shows precisely how Husserl remains an intentionalist (as Meinong is), while Stern is a devoted extensionalist.⁵ For Stern, the temporal succession of sensations/representations is necessary and explanatorily relevant, though insufficient, for the sensation/representation of succession. What is lacking is that the succession of sensations/representations should fall within the window of one presence-time (*Präsenzzeit*). In other words, what explains our experience of succession for Stern (and for extensionalists in general) is the way in which "episodes of perceptual experience themselves unfold over a period of clock time" (Hoerl 2013, p. 375).⁶ Husserl, on the other hand, begins his analysis of time-consciousness with an explicit reduction of objective time. Thus, our temporal perception's unfolding over a limited period of clock time cannot be taken for granted as a starting point for explanation. Instead, experiential succession is for Husserl an accomplishment of the tripartite structure of apprehension (i.e., primal impression, retention and protention), in accordance with his general conception of intentionality in terms of the Schema (at the time of his engagement with the Stern-Meinong debate, i.e., 1905). In fact, despite his criticism of Meinong, he shares with Meinong the assumption that apprehensions must be present simultaneously with the content which they animate in a phase of time-consciousness.⁷

One might wonder whether there is any significant difference between Husserl's own position and Meinong's theory he criticizes. Barry Dainton, for one, criticizes Husserl in much the same way as Husserl criticizes Meinong. According to Dainton, Husserl's account is phenomenologically inaccurate, insofar as it implies that our consciousness would be "choked with the residues of recent experiences" (2000, pp. 156; 2010: 111). More importantly, Dainton claims that Husserl's theory presents a fragmented picture of consciousness, since it fails to do justice to the reality of phenomenal binding (2010, p. 112). This objection comes rather close to Husserl's

⁴ A slightly different version of this proposition results if we substitute "representation" for "sensation." For the present purpose, the difference between these versions is unimportant.

⁵ Meinong is certainly committed to this principle as well, though he does not explicitly frame it this way. As an intentionalist, he understands it in a way similar to Husserl. Cf. Kortooms (2002, p. 41).

⁶ That Stern's notion of presence-time refers to a particular span of clock-time is shown by the fact that he attempts to measure its duration. Though he considers the difficulties of such measurement, the difficulties he considers are of a technical nature. Cf. Stern (2005, pp. 334–349).

⁷ See, for example, the model of double continuum which Husserl develops in connection with his criticism of Meinong in a text entitled "Results of the Stern-Meinong Discussion" (Hua X, pp. 232–234).

complaint that Meinong's theory mistakes a moment for a piece. Given this, one might be surprised that Husserl is so careless as to commit the same mistake he has identified in Meinong. For Dainton, this is no mere carelessness, because he thinks these shortcomings are intrinsic to the intentionalist approach as such, due to its allegiance to the so-called Principle of Simultaneous Awareness (hereafter abbreviated as the PSA). This principle is formulated by Miller, whom Dainton cites, as follows: "An awareness of succession derives from simultaneous features of the structure of that awareness" (Miller 1984, p. 109). Obviously, this is but another expression of what Stern calls the Dogma of Momentariness.

As is clear from the above-mentioned similarity of Husserl's criticism of Meinong and Dainton's criticism of Husserl, what is at issue in intentionalism's alleged commitment to the PSA is precisely the (in)divisibility of original time-consciousness, which is the central intuition behind Bergson's notion of pure *durée*. Husserl's struggle with this issue can be read as a series of reflections on the meaning and validity of the Schema, as well as on the outcome of its rejection or limitation. Let us now turn to this topic.

4 The Schema and the Absolute Flow

Criticisms of the Schema come in different shapes. It is helpful to distinguish two common but misguided criticism of the Schema⁸ from Husserl's own self-criticism.

A famous criticism by Aron Gurwitsch sees the Schema as a version of the "constancy hypothesis" (2010, pp. 85–90, 257–271). The constancy hypothesis Gurwitsch has in mind is not the physiological assumption of an invariant conjunction between physical stimuli and sensory qualities, but an intellectual version of the same according to which sensory qualities remain constant under variation of intentional animation. Persuasive as it seems at first sight, the objection has been found indeterminate and vague (Mulligan 1995, p. 191). If it is only meant to insist that hyle cannot be utterly formless and structureless, it has a good point but does not constitute an objection against Husserl.⁹ If, on the other hand, it upholds a total phenomenal holism of the sensory field, as Gurwitsch seems to do, its claim does not seem to be supported by the phenomenological evidence it adduces (Williford 2013, pp. 507–508; Hopp 2008, pp. 237–239; see note 3 above).

It is also not uncommon to see Husserl's development from static to genetic analysis as a criticism of the Schema. In static analysis, the constitution of meaning is described in terms of the dual structure of content and apprehension, whereas in

⁸ I call these criticisms misguided only insofar as the mistakes they identify are not really committed by Husserl, at least insofar as his mature position is concerned. Both lines of criticism have a philosophical agenda to promote after the Schema has been dealt with. In the first case, this concerns the phenomenon of self-organization of the sensory field. In the second, it is the genesis of meaning. I am certainly *not* saying that these concerns are misguided.

⁹ Already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl writes that the connection between content and apprehension in the case of an intuitive representation is "an essential, internal" connection, as opposed to the "contingent, external" relation in the case of a signitive representation (Hua XIX/2, p. 622).

genetic analysis the appeal to apprehension is supposed to be *replaced* by descriptions in terms of institution, sedimentation and habituation, etc. However, genetic phenomenology is far from replacing static phenomenology; being a development, it rather presupposes the static analysis to provide the guiding thread. Hence, even if the Schema belongs exclusively to static analysis, the development of the genetic perspective implies no rejection of the Schema. If any, it is a critique in the Kantian sense of delimiting its scope of validity.

As far as I can tell, Husserl's self-criticism concerning the Schema does not take any of the above two forms. It has been noted that a genuine rejection of the descriptive appropriateness of the Schema takes place only in the theory of time-consciousness and imagination (Lohmar 2006). When it comes to the analysis of time-consciousness, this self-criticism can be divided in two steps.¹⁰ In the first step, Husserl finds the Schema objectionable because it incorporates a version of "data-sensualism" (Hua XVII, p. 291). "Data-sensualism" must be understood here in a very broad sense, so that it includes not only the "atomism" of classical British empiricism, but even Gestalt Psychology. This surprisingly broad sense of the term is determined by its entirely passive conception of consciousness. By starting with "a theory of sensation," be it conceived atomically or as gestalt, Data-sensualism in the Husserlian sense "construct[s] the life of consciousness out of Data as, so to speak, finished objects" (Hua I, p. 76; Hua XVII, p. 292). Simply put, so-called data-sensualism thinks of consciousness like a bag or an empty stage. Against data-sensualism, Husserl insists that consciousness is a constant process of intentional accomplishment. Now, why is even Schema a version of data-sensualism? Doesn't it start with a duality of data and apprehension? Yes, but still, both are regarded as "finished objects" and as really contained in consciousness "as if in a bag" (Hua X, p. 279). Moreover, the "having" of contents is interpreted in the Schema as a simple undifferentiated gazing on something really inherent (ibid.), instead of as a process of intentional constitution.

Thus, both in the context of Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness and in the context of his analysis of phantasy, we can speak of a genuine repudiation of the Schema when sensation and phantasma are subjected to constitutive analyses. In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl collapses Brentano's distinction between sensation (*Empfindung*) and content of sensation (*Empfindungsinhalt*) because he operates with a version of data-sensualism in the sense defined above (Hua XIX/1, pp. 408n, 774n). Now, as a consequence of the discovery of a deeper level of constitution enabled by the critique of the Schema, this distinction must be re-affirmed (Hua XXIII, p. 267). Sensation (*Empfindung*) is intentional, in the sense that it is constitutive of contents of sensation through syntheses of coinciding. In other words, sensation is

¹⁰ It goes without saying that elements of both steps have long been noted by, e.g., the authors included by Mensch in the "Louvain tradition" of objecting to the Schema (Mensch 2010, p. 66n), and I claim no originality here. Given Mensch's objection to this tradition (2010, pp. 63–70, 86–102), it is perhaps helpful to show once again what exactly is involved in, and what follows from, the criticism of the Schema. This is what I hope to contribute with the distinction between the two steps and the mereological approach.

“nothing but the inner consciousness of contents of sensation,” i.e., its constitution in inner time-consciousness (Hua XXIII, p. 309).

This line of self-criticism disarms Dainton’s objection of “choking contents.” As Gallagher (2003) and Zahavi (2007) have remarked, this objection may cause trouble for an account that posits sense data or hyletic contents as present representatives for times and states in the immediate past. Once this assumption is dropped in line with the criticism of the Schema, however, Husserl’s account is no longer vulnerable to such an objection. What is less clear is whether Husserl’s self-criticism along this line is sufficient to save him from the objection of fragmented consciousness. Since Dainton believes that the commitment to the PSA is the source of the errors of intentionalism, let us take a closer look at this principle. Two different versions of this principle may be distinguished¹¹:

PSA-1: The structures necessary for the perception of succession are simultaneously contained in a momentary consciousness.

PSA-2: A sequence or succession is represented in a momentary consciousness by persisting sensations or memory-images.

Commitment to PSA-2 gives rise to what may be called a sense-data intentionalism, which is the target of Dainton’s criticism of choking contents. With the critique of the Schema discussed above, Husserl discards sense-data intentionalism. PSA-1 is weaker than PSA-2, insofar as endorsement of PSA-2 implies endorsement of PSA-1 but not the other way around. From Dainton’s perspective, however, PSA-1 is also objectionable, for it leads to the fragmentation of consciousness into momentary slices. Is Husserl’s account of time-consciousness after the critique of the Schema committed to PSA-1, and if so, does it have the consequence indicated by Dainton?

One might think that PSA-1 is almost methodologically implied in the very standpoint of intentionalism. Intentionalism explains temporal perception in terms of the intentional directedness to temporal modalities other than the present. It seems to take as its point of departure the assumption that these intentional acts are located in the present. Thus, intentionalism seems to be methodologically committed to describing our experience of time from a point of view that is “frozen” precisely for the purpose of description. Dainton thinks this leads to a fragmentation of the stream of consciousness, because it conceives consciousness as a multitude of a-temporal atoms, each with its solitary specious present.

There is no denying that Husserl’s approach is methodologically oriented toward a momentary crosscut of consciousness (*Momentanbewusstsein*). The complicated structures of nested and intertwining retentions and protentions are usually presented

¹¹ The following formulation is adapted from Gallagher’s distinction between the two versions of Lotzean Assumptions, which are identical with what we are calling the PSA. To be more precise, Gallagher (2003) distinguishes between a strong and a weak version of the PSA, and the two Lotzean Assumptions (LA) are given as specifications of the strong version. For my purposes, I have simplified Gallagher’s threefold distinction into a twofold one, leaving out his LA1 and replacing it with his weak version of the PSA. For the original formulation of the two Lotzean Assumptions and their fate in the theory of James, Broad, Husserl etc., see Gallagher (1998).

by him as structures to be discovered in such a crosscut.¹² Is this methodological orientation necessarily problematic, as Dainton suggests?

In some texts from the Bernau Manuscripts, Husserl has expressed a reservation about his own account that sounds similar to Dainton's objection. In Text No.2, for instance, after a series of extremely rich and fruitful analyses covering topics like the intertwining of retention and protention, the conception of primal impression as edge-consciousness, etc., Husserl wonders whether there has been "an essential gap" in his description. He admits that he has focused exclusively on the structures to be found in momentary crosscuts and has neglected the fact that "*the consciousness of transition* taking place in every moment is something extraordinary and unique [*völlig Einzigartiges*], which is *necessary for the consciousness of stream*" (Hua XXXIII, p. 47; my emphasis).¹³ To present Husserl's uneasiness in sharper relief, it is helpful to distinguish between consciousness of the extended present and consciousness of the flow of the extended present. Husserl is not in doubt about whether his intentional account explains the phenomenon of extended present. Both Dainton's objection of fragmentation and Husserl's uneasiness target the phenomenon of the flow, insofar as this includes something more than the extended present. The resistance of the phenomenon of the flow to intentional description derives from its apparent incompatibility with the methodological fixation on the momentary time-slice. Hence, if a methodological *orientation* towards momentary time-slice is somehow unavoidable, the intentionalist must at least fight against the methodological *fixation* on it, in order to make sense of the flow.

Husserl's analysis is not without resources to shake off its attachment to PSA-1, and thus to avoid fragmentation and to make sense of the flow. These resources can be retrieved from the second step of Husserl's critique of the Schema. In the first step, as we have seen, the conception of contents as "finished objects" that simply populate the "bag" of consciousness is rejected in favor of a conception of their dynamic constitution in the absolute flow. What is left unspecified is how this deepest level of constitution is structured. There remains the temptation to think of it in the manner of the Schema and thus to fragment and to congeal it. Thus, a more profound criticism of the Schema is called for.¹⁴

¹² In the Bernau Manuscripts, these crosscuts go under the name of U_x . See, e.g., Hua XXXIII, pp. 30, 34, 39.

¹³ Cf. Hua XXXIII, pp. 94, 103. Compared with the earlier expression of a similar worry in Hua X, the formulation of this concern in the Bernau manuscripts evinces a deeper level of reflection. When in Hua X Husserl asks "Can a series of coexistent primary contents ever bring a succession to intuition?" and replies that it cannot, he is insisting on the distinction between the absolute flow and constituted time and warning against conceiving the former in terms of the latter (Hua X, pp. 322–323; cf. Brough 1972, pp. 311–312). However, even after one has distinguished the "all at once" (*zugleich*) of "Momentanbewusstsein" from simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) in the usual sense (Hua X, p. 374), there remains the question of the limitation of the methodological orientation towards the "all at once." It is this latter, deeper-lying limitation that is indicated in the cited paragraph from the Bernau manuscripts.

¹⁴ The distinction between the two steps of Husserl's criticism of the Schema is reflected in the historical development of Husserl's thought. This is clear from Rudolf Bernet's chronological ordering of Husserl's manuscripts into four groups. The third group, dated between 1907 and 1909, is characterized, according to Bernet, by both the introduction of absolute consciousness and the application of the Schema to this absolute consciousness. The fourth group, written between September of 1909 and end of 1911, features the criticism of the Schema. I am claiming that the third group is already a criticism of the Schema,

Though the second step of Husserl's criticism of the Schema is first taken between 1909–1911, a more profound level of reflection is reached in the Bernau manuscripts, and it is from these latter that the following discussion draws. From a series of extended reflections on the Schema in texts No.8 and No.9, we can extract a general characterization of the Schema in the broadest possible sense. Husserl notes that the structure of the Schema is paradigmatically displayed in sign-consciousness. When we perceive a material object as a sign and grasp on this basis its signification, we have a clear example of the founded structure of apprehension. Whether or not the perception of the sign precedes the grasp of its signification temporally, it is clear that (1) the latter presupposes but is not reducible to the former and that (2) the former can be given independent of the latter. In other words, we have here a relation of foundation: the grasp of signification is founded on the perception of the sign. Starting from this paradigmatic case and taking into consideration various other less typical instantiations of the Schema, Husserl arrives at the following general formulation: "the talk of apprehension is applicable in every sphere where any kind of objectivity is given beforehand [...] and a founded object-consciousness is grounded on it."¹⁵

Thus, the Schema in the broadest possible sense is characterized by the relative independence of the *hyle* in relation to the *morphe*. Such a structure obtains as long as the *hyle* retains a minimal identity vis-à-vis the variation of the *morphe*, or as long as the *morphe* is conceived as externally added to the *hyle*. As we have noted, it does not require the *hyle* to be totally formless. More importantly, it does not require the *morphe* to be a concrete, self-contained act, such as the perceptual apprehension of a mannequin as a lady. Thus, the position Husserl holds in the third group of texts (from 1907–1909, according to Bernet) of Hua X combines a notion of absolute consciousness with the Schema. On the one hand, the introduction of the notion of absolute consciousness enables Husserl to criticize the "bag-conception" of consciousness and describe the constitution of sensation-contents (Hua X, pp. 279–280). The sensation-contents, such as sensational-tones, are recognized as "unit[ies] in the flow of its time-phases" (Hua X, p. 272). On the other hand, the description of absolute consciousness makes use of the schema, though the *morphe* here is a moment of absolute consciousness and not a concrete act. Each momentary phase of the absolute flow is composed of a "continuity of temporal adumbrations," which is "really immanent in the most genuine sense" (Hua X, p. 275). The continuity of adumbrations and the its animation by the corresponding apprehensions is supposed to constitute the temporal horizon of pastness. This account is still beholden to the Schema because the series of temporal adumbrations enjoy, as really

Footnote 14 (continued)

though a first step of such criticism. Cf. Brough (1972, pp. 311–324). The fourth group constitutes the beginning of the second step of criticism, which is then deepened in the Bernau manuscripts. Thus, I see more continuity between the two works than does Kortooms (2002, pp. 116–117).

¹⁵ „schließlich geht die Rede von Auffassung in alle Sphäre hinein, wo irgendeine Gegenständlichkeit [...] vorliegt, und sich nun ein fundiertes Gegenstandsbewusstsein [...] darauf gründet“ (Hua XXXIII, p. 175).

immanent contents waiting to be animated, relative independence in relation to its corresponding apprehension.

What forms the contrast to the Schema thus understood is the structure of intentional modification (Hua XXXIII, pp. 175–176). From the noetic perspective, intentional modification and animating apprehension both have a dual structure. In modification there are the implicated original and the act of modification, just as in apprehension there are the apprehended content and the act of apprehension. But in intentional modification the implicated original is not given independent of and external to the act of modification, as something really contained in the same momentary phase of consciousness as the act of modification. Instead, it is intentionally implicated in the latter.¹⁶ This difference is most clearly exemplified in the contrast between pure phantasy and picture-consciousness. When we are looking at a renaissance painting of a biblical scene, for example, our intentional consciousness of the depicted biblical story (i.e., the image-subject) is founded upon the givenness of an actually present sensory appearance (i.e., the image-object), which can be given by itself without being apprehended as the depiction of a biblical scene. Husserl's early account of pure phantasy is modeled upon this analysis of picture-consciousness (Cf. Jansen 2005). Thus, if we visualize a fight of centaurs, the apprehension of the imaginary centaurs is supposed to be founded on immanently present phantasmata. Later, Husserl repudiates the application of the Schema in the analysis of phantasy and adopts a conception of phantasy as intentional modification "through and through" (Hua XXIII, Text No. 8). In a vivid imagination of a fight of centaurs, it is *as if* we see the mythical creatures with our mind's eye. This "as if" does not mean that a weaker perception is actually present in consciousness and then apprehended as an imagination. Instead, the quasi-perception as well as hyletic strata (i.e., phantasmata) are intentionally implicated in the present act of phantasy. In principle, one cannot have a quasi-perception or a phantasma except as intentionally implicated in an act of phantasy. The crucial point here is that the implicated original is nowhere to be discovered in the really immanent contents of present consciousness by an act of reflection (Hua XXIII, pp. 265–269, 308–310; Hua XXXIII, p. 176). Note that we are remaining at the level of noetic analysis, and the implicated original is not noematic. In the phantasy of the fight of centaurs, for example, the mythological creatures are the noematic object, but the implicated act of quasi-perception is not. Though belonging to the noetic side, the quasi-perception is nevertheless not really immanent to present consciousness, but kept at a distance, so to speak. Thus, the description of intuitive presentification in terms of intentional modification is the expression of the discovery of an internal "distance" within consciousness itself.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Hua XXXIII, p. 176. The *locus classicus* for the structure of intentional modification is, of course, *Ideas I* (§99, §104, §107, §111, etc.).

¹⁷ See Taguchi (2006, Kapitel 6) for an excellent discussion of the philosophical significance of Husserl's notion of intentional modification. What is especially relevant for our purpose is his critique of the "production model." This model insists one-sidedly on the radical heterogeneity of the constitutive source (*Urmodus*) and the constituted unity (*Modifikate*), such that the former is understood as an "Überinstanz" standing over and above the latter. Taguchi insists, against this production model, on the self-insertion of the constitutive source into the series of the constituted modifications. As a result of this

Of course, retention and protention are not imagination. Imagination, as a form of presentification, leads away from the field of presence, whereas retention and protention are what constitute the field of presence in the first place. Moreover, retention is a continuous modification, meaning that the now continuously sinks into immediate past, whereas presentification is a discrete modification. Nevertheless, in the Bernau manuscripts, Husserl characterizes retention as an intentional modification in order to highlight its fundamental difference from founded apprehension.¹⁸ Retention is a continuous intentional modification constitutive of the original temporal horizon by holding its implicated original at an increasing distance from itself.

This parallelism between time-consciousness and intuitive presentification is worth dwelling upon a little longer. Just as Husserl adopts an image-model before he arrives at the modification-model in his account of intuitive presentification, so we witness a similar vacillation between the image-model and the modification-model in Husserl's account of retention in the Bernau manuscripts (Text No. 3, No.4, Beilage II and III). What is interesting about Husserl's vacillation is that his attraction to the image-model (i.e., the Schema) is motivated by an attention to the sensory or material aspect of time-consciousness, i.e., "a waning of the content, an obscuration toward the zero-point of darkness," which was absent in his earlier time-analysis (Hua 33, p. 71). Husserl is tempted to account for this aspect of "Abklingen," which he distinguishes from retention understood as the formal moving-away of the now (Hua XXXIII, p. 82), as a sort of image-consciousness, "eine Urart von Verbildlichung" (Hua XXXIII, p. 63). In other words, turning his attention to the more concrete aspect of time-consciousness, Husserl at first seeks to explain the intuitiveness of near retention by the postulation of "Abklang" as present and immanent hyletic data (Hua XXXIII, pp. 84–85). However, this attempt is ultimately judged by himself to be misguided; "Abklang," once postulated as present hyletic data, fails to distinguish itself from sensations (Hua XXXIII, pp. 87–89). Thus, Husserl's account of intuitive presentification and the sensory aspect of time-consciousness goes through a similar itinerary: at first the preference for the image-model and the Schema, and then its critique.

The initial attraction to the Schema suggests that the phenomenon of intuitive presence easily lends itself to an account in terms of the Schema, while the subsequent self-criticism is due to the appreciation of the profound sense of absence or distance that internally determines what is intuitively present in both cases. Thus, Husserl comes to the insight that for retention (and protention) as for presentification

Footnote 17 (continued)

conception, Taguchi speaks of the "self-transcendence" of the constitutive source (2006, p. 177). By contrasting the model of intentional modification with the Schema, my analysis highlights a different aspect of intentional modification. There is nevertheless a convergence of result, especially concerning the self-transcendence of the constitutive source. See the comparison with Sartre in Sect. 5.

¹⁸ Cf. Hua XXXIII, pp. 58, 81, 142–150, 175–180, 220, 238–240. This viewpoint is retained in his latest time-analysis. Cf. HuaMat VIII, pp. 6–9, 127–132. This viewpoint is already present in the later text of Hua X, e.g., in Text No. 50 (from 1909), part of which is integrated by Edith Stein into §11 of the lectures. See also Appendix I. Compared to the discussion in the Bernau manuscripts, however, these earlier texts do not present the viewpoint of intentional modification as an alternative to the Schema.

(including remembering, expecting, phantasy, etc.), whatever is intuitively present is present in a distance and this distance is a constitutive accomplishment of intentional modification. There is no actually present hyletic data called temporal adumbration, “Abklang” or phantasma, somehow coexisting with primal impression in the now. Hence, in the case of time-consciousness, the multiplicity of the so-called temporal adumbrations and “Abklang” exist only as intentionally implicated in the unity-engendering intentional modification.¹⁹

Since this multiplicity (the series of retentions) is radically non-independent of the unity they constitute (that which is thus retained), this multiplicity satisfies the definition of interpenetrating parts, which cannot exist apart from each other and independent of the whole they constitute (Hua XIX/1, p. 282). The absolute flow is thus not a “bewildering multiplicity” (Hua X, p. 281) to be unified by a supervenient synthesis; it is rather the generation of multiplicity at once with their unity in the flow.

This conception of the co-generation of unity and multiplicity allows us to speak of an internal overcoming of the PSA in the second step of Husserl’s criticism of the Schema. We have started out with the structure of intentional reaching-out pertaining to a momentary consciousness, which accounts for the extended present of each momentary consciousness. This seems to present a picture of absolute consciousness as a series of momentary atoms, each with a temporal horizon of its own. The problem is then to account for the binding between them and to do justice to the truly dynamic character of the flow. This is achieved by pointing to the interpenetration of these momentary consciousnesses. There is interpenetration because no retention or protention can be “located” within a momentary crosscut.²⁰ Visually

¹⁹ As for primal impression, it may be characterized as “really immanent,” but only in the sense of unmodified givenness (Hua XXXIII, p. 178), which must be distinguished from the proper sense of immanence as absolute self-givenness. As Boehm (1968, pp. 146–163) and Brough (2008) have noted, the notion of immanence (as discussed in *Ideas I*) is ambiguous between the sense of absolute self-givenness and the sense of real containment—an ambiguity Husserl himself acknowledged as such in the 1907 lectures *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Primal impression is immanent in neither of these senses. Not in the first sense, because absolute self-givenness is an accomplishment of evidence, i.e., of intentional constitution (Hua XVII, pp. 289–295), while primal impression is a factual condition of intentional constitution and not itself constituted. Not in the second sense, because primal impressions do not somehow exist “in” consciousness. They are not a succession of unitary data that exist independently of the fabric of intentional modification. Husserl says that “jene Kerndata (die Urempfindungsdaten) nicht einmal sind und daneben, und gar nicht notwendig, von einem dazutretenden Bewusstsein ‚in Funktion genommen‘, als das oder jenes ‚aufgefasst‘ werden” (Hua XXXIII, p. 179). In other words, even here the Schema does not apply. Being lived (*erlebt*) but not perceived, the being of primal impression is entirely absorbed in the contexture of intentional modification into which it enters. Thus, it may well be characterized as the dimension of facticity, in the sense of a non-objective, pre-ontic condition for any constitution. Cf. Sokolowski (1970, pp. 197–201), Kortooms (2002, pp. 192–199), and de Warren (2009, p. 270). As the unmodified hyletic nucleus of the living present, it is the factual condition of any transcendence; as such it is not immanent in any usual sense of the term.

²⁰ This implies that a retention is and is not in a given momentary crosscut. This sounds similar to Graham Priest’s “Spread Principle” in his dialetheian account of time, according to which the non-localizability of temporal instant explains the objective flow of time (2006, pp. 213–220). But there is a significant difference: I am not addressing real time but temporal experience. If my interpretation is committed to some form of dialecticism or dialetheism, it applies only to consciousness, but not to reality as constituted or revealed by consciousness. Sartre is, of course, committed to a dialecticism of consciousness.

represented, a perpendicular cut along the horizontal axis in Husserl's time diagram will not "cut" the diagonal lines representing retentions and protentions into slices.

5 The Absolute Flow and Self-transcendence

The Principle of Simultaneous Awareness can be regarded as a specific symptom of the so-called metaphysics of presence (Heidegger and Derrida). The overcoming of the first is then also a partial overcoming of the second. In this connection, it is interesting to note a striking similarity between Husserl's account of the absolute flow and Sartre's position in the "Temporality" Chapter of *Being and Nothingness*.

As we have seen, the multiplicity of retentions accessible from any living present is not a multiplicity immanently given in the now. It is intentionally implicated. This does not mean that a momentary slice of the absolute flow has many noematic correlates, corresponding to the different degrees of pastness; this is phenomenologically absurd. Rather, the continuous series of intentional implications is a noetic structure that creates an internal distance between consciousness and itself, and this internal distancing explodes the methodological fixation on a momentary slice. Moreover, a series of retentions have their focal point in a unitary time-point; the self-generation of this multiplicity of retentions is at the same time the constitution of this unity. Being a multiplicity of interpenetrating parts, the unity and multiplicity are founded on each other. These descriptions can be summed up by saying that the absolute flow is nothing but a process of constant self-differentiation or self-transcendence with two inseparable aspects: the creation of internal distance and the constitution of immanent temporal unity.

This is, of course, a restatement of Husserl's famous doctrine of the double intentionality of retention. The following may be added to its clarification, especially the enigmatic claim of the inseparability of the two intentionalities, which "require one another like two sides of one and same thing" (Hua X, pp. 381–382). If we direct our gaze to the givenness of unitary time-points through the manifold of retentions, we are following "Querintentionalität" and retracing the constitution of immanent time in absolute flow. If, on the other hand, we reflect on the retentions themselves, not as an already constituted manifold, but as a manifold in the making, we are following the direction of "Längstintentionalität" and observing the self-appearance of the absolute flow. With regard to the inseparability of these two intentionalities, it is important to emphasize that there are *not*, contrary to what Husserl's formulation might be taken to suggest, two distinct unities ("unity of the tone in immanent time" and "unity of the flow of consciousness itself") to be "constituted all at once" (Hua X, p. 378). The unity of the flow itself does not have an identifiable form other than

Footnote 20 (continued)

Husserl the logician is, on the other hand, no friend of dialetheism. What about Husserl the phenomenologist? The law of contradiction, we are told, has its genealogy, its passive genesis (Cf. Hua XI, pp. 103–104). Can we, then, take for granted that this law applies to the absolute flow, which is the deepest level of passive genesis itself?

the constituted immanent time. It bears recalling Husserl's claim that the unification of interpenetrating parts does not call for a peculiar ("eigen") intuitive moment of unity. "Where it makes non-sense to speak of isolation, the problem of overcoming such isolation is likewise nonsensical" (Hua XIX/1, pp. 283–288). Thus, the self-appearance of the absolute flow forms a "unity" without any particular unitary form. Instead of two unities being constituted all at once, there is only one unity (e.g., the unity of the tone in immanent time), which emerges inseparably together with the self-generated multiplicity of retentions and protentions. Following Bernet (1985, p. lvii) and de Warren (2009, pp. 252–253), we can speak of the "self-differentiation of the absolute flow," with its two-fold character of differentiation from itself and differentiation of itself. Or we can use Sartre's formulation: consciousness always exists at a distance from itself.

In fact, the reciprocal foundation of unity and multiplicity such as we have described corresponds exactly to what Sartre calls "quasi-multiplicity." This notion signifies precisely the co-emergence of unity and multiplicity at the heart of consciousness: "If therefore there is no priority, either of unity over multiplicity or of multiplicity over unity, we must conceive of temporality as a unity that multiplies itself" (Sartre 2018, p. 200). Temporality as quasi-multiplicity is "a force that dissolves, but it does so within an act of unification," "the first draft of a dissociation within unity" (ibid.). According to Sartre, such an ontological structure of quasi-multiplicity can only be sustained by something whose mode of being is to exist as itself "outside" itself, i.e., to exist perpetually at a distance from itself, as a lack of being/identity to itself. Because consciousness is at its heart a lack to itself, it exists as a process of perpetual self-transcending, in the world and towards its own possibility. With this ontological move, Sartre takes himself to have gone beyond Husserl's notion of intentionality and appropriated Heidegger's notion of transcendence. Now we have seen that Husserl reached a very similar result with his analysis of time-consciousness. Thus, there is good reason to identify in Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness, especially in his radical critique of the Schema, part of his answer to Heidegger's question of the being of the intentional (Heidegger 1979, pp. 148–157).

As a conclusion, I will go back to the introduction and indicate how Husserl's account of time-consciousness, as mereologically interpreted in this paper, stands in relation to Aristotle's and Bergson's apparently contradicting views of the mereology of time. Husserl's constitutive approach to time has the resources to accommodate the different intuitions concerning the mereology of time represented by Aristotle and Bergson. On the one hand, time is a universal order in which the most different events can be coordinated according the relation of before and after. On the other hand, time is pure succession and flow. From the first perspective, time has the form of divisibility; from the second, interpenetration. Husserl combines the two perspectives with his constitutive approach. Despite the appearance to the contrary, the two perspectives are not incompatible with each other. From a Husserlian perspective, the first is an abstract view of the second. Husserl characterizes the time-constituting consciousness as a two-dimensional multiplicity, meaning that the continuous intentional modification of retentions and the succession of ever-renewing primal impressions are "movements in two directions" (Cf. Hua X, pp. 328–329). In a text from

the Bernau manuscripts, he even represents the absolute flow as a three-dimensional structure, the additional dimension being the continuous intentional modification of protentions, which are no longer considered to unfold in the “plane” formed by the “line” of retentions and the “line” of primal impressions (Hua XXXIII, p. 39). Constituted time, on the other hand, is always a one-dimensional multiplicity, which manifests itself in the “line” of primal impressions. Thus, according to the three-dimensional model of the Bernau Manuscripts, when we live as constituted human beings in the constituted time, we are blind to the constitutive depth of the absolute flow and have in view only an “edge” of the three-dimensional whole. Thus, it is no surprise that the constituted time does not exhibit the interconnection and complexity of the absolute flow, for the interconnection and complexity lie in the hidden dimensions. Therefore, Husserl’s account of time-consciousness, as interpreted here, joins Bergson in affirming the interpenetration of time-consciousness, but disagrees with Bergson in respect of how the interpenetrating relates to the divisible. It is not the case that psychical (or inner) time is interpenetrating and physical (or outer) time divisible, for the first is as constituted a form as the other. Husserl locates the structure of interpenetration at the level of absolute flow. In contrast to that, constituted time, even when immanent, is a one-dimensional divisible order.

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