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PHENOMENOLOGY AND TIME:
AN ANALYSIS OF TEMPORALITY
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EXISTENTIA ΜΕΛΕΤΑΙ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ

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*«τί ποτε βούλεσθε σημαίνειν ὁπότεν
»ὄν« φθέγγησθε.»*

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Hye Young Kim

PHENOMENOLOGY AND TIME
AN ANALYSIS OF TEMPORALITY
IN BERGSON, HUSSERL
AND HEIDEGGER



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PHENOMENOLOGY AND TIME
AN ANALYSIS OF TEMPORALITY
IN BERGSON, HUSSERL
AND HEIDEGGER

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A

pparently it was not a coincidence that Martin Heidegger published Edmund Husserl's work on 'phenomenological time' under the title of *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness) in April 1928, shortly after *Sein und Zeit* was unveiled to the world in 1927, which Heidegger dedicated to Husserl. Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of human existence in the structure of ecstatic temporality owes much to Husserl's theory of phenomenology, albeit Heidegger never proactively proclaims this fact. In the introduction of *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie*, Heidegger clarifies that the first half of the book originates from the last part of Husserl's four hour lecture in Göttingen in the winter semester of 1904/05. The last half comes from Husserl's further lectures and supplements up to 1910.¹ Prior to this, in 1896 in Paris, Henri Bergson published one of his most well-known works, *Matière et mémoire* (Matter and Memory). This book consists of four chapters, in which he

¹ Edmund HUSSERL, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), p. 367.

Hochzeitsbild von Martin Heidegger und Elfride Petri
(20. März 1917)

»Wenn künftig Eure gemeinsame Arbeit einem Bezirk gewidmet ist,
wo Zahl und Gewicht das Maß geben, dann gilt es, das andere, höhere,
der ungreifbare Maß des Unermeßlichen und Unermeßbaren ohne Vermes-
senheit in der Acht zu behalten.«

In Martin Heidegger, »Für Mikaela und Friedrich Rebholz
(Zur Hochzeit am 5. Juni 1965 im Malhaus)«,
in GA 16, p. 615.

analyzes the principles and mechanisms of perception and memory in relation to time. There are some obvious connections between Bergson's analysis of memory and time, the phenomenological theories of Husserl and Heidegger on time. Some elements are overlapped and some are excluded from the other. Since the time period of Bergson's academic activity is not far apart from Husserl's, it would be difficult to say that the influence between these two philosophers was flowing only one way. However, the influence of Bergson's philosophy on the successors of phenomenology cannot be denied. In this paper, I am going to uncloak the relation between the time-theories of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger and analyze the influences and the differences.

1
THE SUBJECT OF THE ACT
1.1
CONDUCTOR OF PERCEPTION

First, I will start with an analysis of the subject of time-awareness, which in the case of Bergson is referred to as *perception*, by Husserl as *consciousness* and by Heidegger as *understanding*. The main concern of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* lies in the analysis of how matters are perceived. The title is, however, not 'Matter and Perception,' but rather 'Matter and Memory.' This is the case because, according to Bergson, all perceptions are memory.² The objects of perception are made of matter, and my body exists among objects, some of which act upon it, and some which it influences. This body is a conductor, which receives movements and transmits them to certain motor mechanisms.³ This set-up of the physical body as a conductor of perception is idiosyncratic compared to the phenomenological analysis of Husserl and Heidegger. When the body is placed in the flux of time, it is always situated at the very point where my past expires in a deed.⁴ At this point, consciousness is lived *actively* as the characteristic note of the *present*.⁵ What is not active at this point, therefore, does not belong to consciousness. However, it does not cease to exist, because existence implies, according to Bergson, not only the conscious apprehension as the presentation in consciousness, but also the regular connection that deals with external objects.⁶ On this account, Bergson refers to consciousness not as the synonym of existence, "but only of real

² Cf. Henri BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, transl. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Dover, 2004), p. 194.

³ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 86.

⁴ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 88.

⁵ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 181.

⁶ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 189-190.

action or of immediate efficacy."⁷ At each present moment, consciousness illuminates the immediate part of the past, impending over the future, and seeks and associates with the future.⁸ In the sense that consciousness is an *act* of the present moment, which associates the past with the future, Bergson's concept of consciousness has a thread of connection with Husserl's phenomenological consciousness.

1.2
BEWUSSTSEIN-VON-ETWAS

In the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness by Husserl, consciousness reconstructs the line of the past time with memories, which Husserl refers to as objective time. This *act* of restoration of the past happens at the present moment, and Husserl names this act as *retention*. Consciousness as the subject of retention, however, doesn't refer to the ideal subjectivity which is completely separated from the world, but to consciousness, which is always as *consciousness of something* united with its object. This unification of the subject and object is possible through the *intentional experience*, which is immanently related to *intentional objects*.⁹ In both the theories of Husserl's retention and Bergson's memory, these objects reflect the past, and the reflection of the past is perceived in moment of the present which is the immediate moment of the past on the verge of the future. The act of consciousness is always situated in the present between the past and the future, reconstructing the past time through memories on various levels. In this flow of time, the world as the object constitutes consciousness as the subject and vice versa.

1.3
EXISTENTIAL UNDERSTANDING
OF DASEIN

In the fundamental ontology of Dasein, consciousness is not in the center of discussion. Instead, Heidegger introduces his new interpretation of Dasein. The concept of Dasein has been always present in the history of metaphysics; however, Heidegger uses this terminology with his unique definition.

⁷ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 181.

⁸ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 194.

⁹ Cf. Edmund HUSSERL, *Die Phänomenologische Methode* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), p. 157.

He understands Dasein as the entity who takes its own Being as an issue.¹⁰ In other words, Dasein questions the meaning of its own existence and already understands it in a certain way. Dasein's understanding of its own existence is the essence of its existence itself. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger's Dasein is described neither from a biological nor a psychological perspective. Each Dasein is, according to Heidegger, *each one of us*. We, as human Dasein, understand our own time, which Heidegger refers to as *temporality*, through our existence. Dasein's nature of existence is disclosed as a temporal movement. The place where this movement occurs is the world. This world, however, is not offered as an object of Dasein's understanding, rather, it is, in essence, the basic constitutive element of this entity. Another name for Dasein is Being-in-the-world. Thus, the structure of Being-in-the-world is not merely a combination or unified form of subject and object. Dasein exists in the world *practically*, not only as consciousness, understanding not only matters in the world but *fundamentally* understanding its own temporality.

2
THE PAST
2.1
MEMORY

Next I would like to take a look at how this subject perceives and understands *time*. In everyday life, we distinguish between the momenta of the past, the present and the future. How is time divided into these three momenta and how are they constructed in our understanding? In the theories of Bergson and Husserl, *the past* plays the most significant role in our perception of time.

Bergson asserts that "every perception is already memory,"¹¹ because "*practically we perceive only the past*, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future."¹² However, when we want to go back along the course of the past and discover the known, localized, personal memory-image which is related to the present, we have to draw back from the act to which perception inclines us. The latter would urge us towards the future, but we have to go backwards into the past.¹³ Memory imports the past into the present and it contracts many past moments of duration into a single intuition.¹⁴ Memory is

¹⁰ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), p. 12.
¹¹ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 194.
¹² Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 194.
¹³ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 113.
¹⁴ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 80.

capable of expanding and reflecting upon the object in multiple layers of images.¹⁵ These images are sometimes the details of the object itself, sometimes concomitant details. Therefore, after having rebuilt the perceived object as an independent whole, we reassemble further conditions with the perceived object to form one system.¹⁶ Bergson suggests that this is a picture of the whole memory.¹⁷

In Fig. 1, B', C', D' are the causes of growing depth and they are situated behind the object and virtually given with the object itself. While the circles B, C, D represent a higher expansion of memory, their reflection attains in B', C', D' "deeper strata of reality."¹⁸ The whole memory is created not only through one single object of the past, but with all the other details on many different levels.

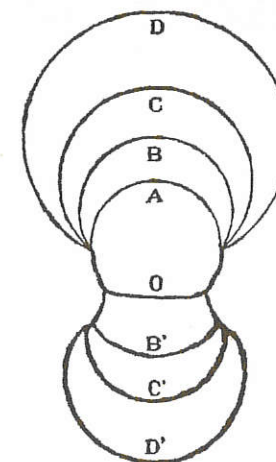


Fig. 1

2.2
RETENTION

In the theory of retention by Husserl, the past time is reconstructed through the continuity of past moments. The act of retention by consciousness constitutes *the series of moments of the present*, whereas the continuity of the past-horizon is embedded in every moment of the present. Husserl's diagram of the past time shows this reconstructed line of time.¹⁹

In Fig. 2, the EE' line, as the continuum of different stages of the past, constitutes each moment of the present on the line of the past time OE. Each moment of the present meets the line EE' on multiple levels. The line EE' manifests the past-horizon and follows every single moment of the present. On each moment of the present, the continuum of different stages of the past (EE') is formulated through the process of retention.

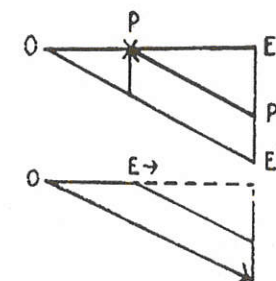


Fig. 2

¹⁵ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 128.
¹⁶ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 128.
¹⁷ [Fig. 1] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 128.
¹⁸ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 128.
¹⁹ [Fig. 2] Husserl, *Zeitbewußtsein*, p. 389.

The series of the present moments OE represents the flow of consciousness as the process of retention. The flow of consciousness is, in other words, the motion of consciousness, which is based on the *act of retention*. In the flow, each moment of the present is a continuous moment between now and the past. "The past and now expel each other. The same way, though, now and the past can be also identical, but only when it lasted between now and the past."²⁰ The present moment in the process of retention does not refer to the moment of the infinite transition from the past to the present, but a "collective form of now"²¹ as a "binding form"²² with the past-horizon, which constitutes the flow of consciousness. The various levels of EE' could be applied to Bergson's description of the expansion and the reflection of memory, i.e. B, C, D and B', C', D' from his picture of the whole memory. How then does Heidegger understand the past time?

2.3 GEWESENHEIT

An interesting point about the temporality of Dasein lies in that, in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger doesn't analyze the past related to the structure of temporality. The past is already given simply as *Gewesenheit*, which means, 'having been there.' Dasein is already thrown there in the world, and the starting point of the temporality is not in some point of the past, but in the present. Instead of reconstructing the past time through memory, Heidegger moves the whole focus to the *act* of the present. What matters more for Dasein in this context, is not the past time, which is absent in the present, but, actually, the future, which was taken for granted as the next moment, which is to come, rather naturally, by both Bergson and Husserl. Because the 'object' of Dasein's understanding is not really any object in the world, but its own time and existence itself. The past time, which can be reflected and restored through the objects, has no place in the system of Dasein's understanding. Let us now have a closer look into the present in all cases of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger and the place of the future in their systems.

²⁰ Husserl, *Zeitbewußtsein*, p. 395.

²¹ Husserl, *Zeitbewußtsein*, p. 431.

²² Husserl, *Zeitbewußtsein*, p. 431.

Whether it's perception as memory or consciousness of something or existential understanding, these acts all happen in the present. Bergson points out that "pure perception bears, by definition, upon *present* objects, and pure recollection is, by hypothesis, the representation of an *absent* object."²³ As Bergson declares, "memory is always present."²⁴ We select the images of memory according to our needs.

In Fig. 3, Bergson shows how memory works visually with a cone SAB.²⁵ This cone is the totality of the recollections accumulated in my memory. The base AB is situated in the past and remains motionless. The summit S indicates at all times my present and moves forward unceasingly. As it moves forward it unceasingly touches the moving plane P, which is my actual representation of the universe.²⁶ And the appeal to which memory responds comes from the summit S as my present.²⁷ It is an interesting point, that not only the present point but also plane P, as the representation of my world, moves. In contrast, the world for Dasein by Heidegger is not a mere representation, and it doesn't move separately from Dasein; rather, it fundamentally constitutes the existence of Dasein and it is Dasein which moves as a Being-in-the-world.

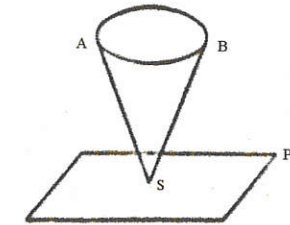


Fig. 3

The process of retention 'happens' in the present, just as every moment of Dasein's existence is a moment of *Gewesenheit*. At the end of the line OE from Husserl's diagram (Fig. 2), E is the present moment where the act of retention actually takes place. This point E is continuously moving towards the future. In the case of Dasein, Dasein is (thrown) in the world and exists moving towards the future. Dasein's temporal movement happens in the present, but the essence of this movement lies in the future because of the future-oriented nature of the structure of Dasein's temporality. In the next paragraph, I am going to explicate this structure of Dasein's temporality and the course of time in the theories of Husserl and Bergson.

²³ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 83.

²⁴ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 128.

²⁵ [Fig. 3] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 197.

²⁶ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 196.

²⁷ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 197.

Dasein exists in the present, constantly running towards the future and coming back to its *Being-in-the-world*, i.e. *thrownness*. That Dasein understands its own Being means that it understands its possibility of not-Being (death). The point of death lies in the future as the most authentic possibility of Being. Because Dasein *cares* about its own existence, Dasein projects itself on the future possibilities of its own Being and comes back to the present point. By doing so, Dasein understands its own Being and this process itself as the process of its existence. As is shown in Fig. 4, Dasein's twofold movement of projecting towards the future and coming back to the present forms a circular movement. The two endpoints are the points of the present and the future.

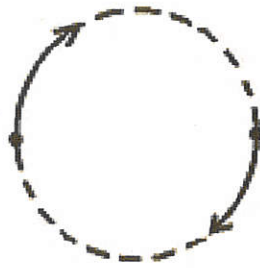


Fig. 4

This process between these two points is always moving and future-oriented, because the point of the present, to which Dasein comes back, to complete the process, is never the same moment of the present, from which Dasein started running towards the future. This point always moves forward towards the future. Therefore, Dasein is, as having been always there in the world, always oriented towards the future. This circular movement towards the future is the very structure of Dasein's temporality. Heidegger refers to this whole process of temporality as *Being-towards-death*, because Dasein exists through this temporal movement towards the end. Within this circular movement, all the details of existence are included. When the structure of Dasein's temporality is applied to Husserl's reconstructed past time, it would likely look similar to the following picture, Fig. 5.

The circular movement, starting from the present moment E, goes backward towards the past, to form the line OE (the past time). Within the circular movement, the multiple levels of memory EE', or the expanded circles with details of memory B,C,D and B', C', D' are melted in, and they reconstruct the line of the past time. Bergson understands the present as "simply *what is being made*,"²⁸ as the indivisible limit which divides the past from the future. Bergson claims that we understand time through extending our thoughts to the series of memories, in time,²⁹ because everything must happen

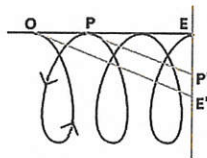


Fig. 5

as an independent memory gathered images as they successively occurred along the course of time.³⁰

At this point, the diagram of the cone SAB (Fig. 3) can be applied to Fig. 5 as shown in the following Fig. 6. The cone SAB is laid horizontally and the point S refers to the point E of Husserl's diagram of time (Fig. 5), which is the point of now, i.e. each moment of the present.

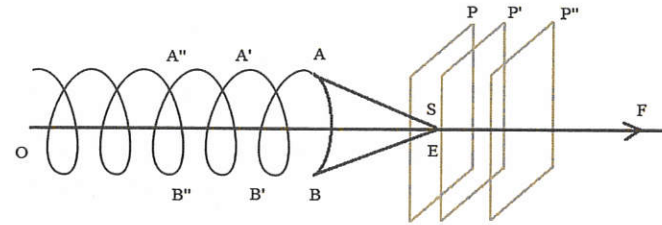


Fig. 6

This point of now as either S or E is placed on plane P, and it is this point that moves on the realm of this plane. The model of this movement can be inferred as the existential movement of Dasein's temporality (Fig. 4), the successional extension of which would be, in the end, shown in the form of spiral as in the Fig. 5 along the line of the points of now ($E_0, E_1, E_2 \dots E_x$).

The inner space created in the middle of the spiral movement forms the base AB from the cone SAB (Fig. 3), which is motionless and represents the reconstructed past, or the base of the past time based on memories. The base AB is created constantly through the spiral movement along the flow of nows, i.e. flux of time. This movement can be referred to as either an existential understanding or the movement of consciousness—either way, this represents the movement of the subject which comprehends, constructs or reconstructs the flux of time. This flux of time is distinguished from Aristotelian concept of time, which denotes the temporal movement of nature, i.e. celestial motion, which generates the natural time as day and night or natural seasons. On the other hand, the flux of time by Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger refers to the process of our epistemological, psychological or existential understanding. I wouldn't call this an 'intellectual' process though, because this understanding of time is more than only a part or a result of our intellectual activities but rather, it constitutes our existence as a *self-understanding* entity.

On the Aristotelian flux of time, the point of now ($\nu\theta\nu$) functions differently from the now point of the flow of time constructed by consciousness. In the context of Aristotelian understanding of time, the point of now works as a measurement point. The points of now function as the principle of division and

²⁸ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 93.

²⁹ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 193.

³⁰ Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 86.

continuity (unity) of time.³¹ But the point of now in Fig. 6 refers to more than a measuring principle of time between the past and the future. The point S (E) has a spatial spectrum. It is there not only as a single dot, but as multiple points and the space between these points. One point S (E) as τόπος (topos) contains spatial room within itself.

In book IV of Aristotle's *Physics*, the Greek equivalence for 'in room' is ἐν τόπῳ. An interesting point lies in that τόπος can carry a three-dimensional implication of room through the movement of time between τοποί. Plane P is based on this movement and is *the world* of the time-spectrum of each now point. This spectrum relates to the spatial and *existentiell*³² world, in which I exist with others, i.e. other entities and things.

The way I relate myself to others constitutes the movements on plane P. Other things or other entities are objects of my vision, of epistemological acknowledgement, or are engaged in my life in a practical way when I utilize them. Heidegger analyzes this relatedness to the things in the world specifically with his idiosyncratic terms as 'present-at-hand' (Vorhandenheit) and 'ready-to-hand' (Zuhandenheit).³³ He also reveals one's relatedness to the world through lingual recognition as λόγος ἀποφαντικός. We can either uncloak (ἀληθεύειν) or cloak (ψεύδασθαι) objects by affirming (κατάφασις) or denying (ἀπόφασις) them.³⁴ But there are also empathic connections between myself and other entities, which Heidegger, nevertheless, doesn't specify in his work *Sein und Zeit*. All this relatedness forms the existential movement of temporality, i.e. our each and every moment of existence. This temporal movement is the base of the spatial world. There are, therefore, countless worlds as $P_0, P_1, P_2 \dots P_x$ of each moment of now.

On a single line of the (re)constructed time, however, the depth and the details of memory cannot be manifested. Therefore, I suggest an alternative picture of conscious, existential time based on the systems of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger. When the movement or the flow of time is presented as the

³¹ Cf. Aristotle. *Physics*, transl. by P. H. Weeksteed and F. M. Cornford. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 219a-222a.

³² In this paper, I apply the term *existential* differently from *existentiell*. *Existential* as *existenzial* and *existentiell* as *existenziell* are distinguished in the sense that *existential* refers to the nature of each human being's existence, i.e. human Dasein takes its own Being as an issue and already understands itself in its own Being. (Cf. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 12). And this self-understanding process is the basic way of existence for Dasein (Grundart des Daseins), meanwhile the world is the *existentiell* condition for Being, and the expression *existentiell* doesn't imply the understanding process of existence by Dasein. Thus only human Dasein, who understands its own Being, can be *existenzial* (*existential*).

³³ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 102 sqq.

³⁴ Cf. Martin HEIDEGGER, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit* (Gesamtausgabe Band 29/30, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), p. 460.

shape of a sphere within three-dimensional space as shown in Fig. 7, the details of memory (understanding) can be contained in the whole system of time.

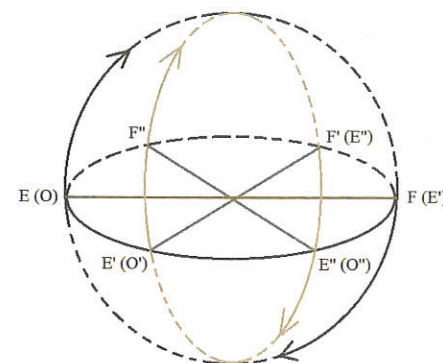


Fig. 7

In this construction, the present point E is never repeated, because E (present) \neq O (past) \neq F (future) and, at the same time, E = O = F. The present moment E, from which it (subject of perception, consciousness and understanding) goes forward towards the future F, was once a moment of the past O. However the past point O was once one point the future and at one point the present to the point which came before the point O. Once it moves from E towards the future F, it comes back to its present, which is not anymore the same *now*, from which (E) it departed. Rather where it comes *back* now is a new now, which is E'.

The point F in the future, towards which it moved from the point E now becomes the present (E'). This new point of now was reached departing from the former present point E, which is now the past O, and from the new now point E' it moves towards the future, which is F'. This point in the future as F' becomes at one point again the present E''. From this present moment E'' it moves towards the future F'' and the point E'' now becomes the past O'' as it leaves the point E'' and reaches the point F''.

This spherical construction of temporal movements opens up space, which allows the world (P) of each moment to be *not* separated from another world of another now moment (P') and another (P'') and so forth, which were originally not separable. Countless movements (E \rightarrow F \rightarrow E' \rightarrow F' \rightarrow E'' \rightarrow ...) starting from each moment of the present constitute the whole complete structure of time without decomposing and reuniting the fractions of memories. The linear structure of time was also after all an imagination of how time could be visualized for us to understand its structure and movement. However, this linear structure of time loses *space*, or rather, the connection

of time to space, due to the linear form. Under the linear structure of time, the separation of time and space is inevitable and this leads to an under-dimensional understanding of time. This is problematic because space is the τόπος of existence.

This three-dimensional understanding of time construction should be differentiated, though, from the natural time generated by celestial movement, applied not only for one individual, but for all of nature, because natural time does not include the processes of 'fore-going' and 'coming-back,' which create the room for memories and perceptions, i.e. understanding for the understanding entities.

5

PHENOMENOLOGY AND TIME

To what extent, then, can this whole time analysis be referred to as phenomenology? The concept of phenomenology, which is a compound of φαινόμενον and λόγος, originates from Aristotle. The noun φαινόμενον is derived from the verb φαίνεσθαι, which means 'showing itself.' Heidegger takes Aristotle's definition of λόγος and characterizes its function as discourse (Rede)³⁵ in terms of 'pointing out.'³⁶ This function is specified as ἀποφαίνεσθαι, which translates as 'having something be seen (φαίνεσθαι) from (ἀπὸ).'³⁷ Through this etymological explication, the core meaning of phenomenology as a method for understanding is exposed: Phenomenology relates to 'revealing itself.' Then what should be revealed to be understood? For Heidegger, phenomenology is a method for understanding Dasein's existence. Husserl refers to phenomenology as "Grundwissenschaft,"³⁸ through which he studied the essence of entities and things. Bergson doesn't specify his philosophical methodology as phenomenology, however, he discloses, as one of the proto-phenomenological forerunners, the core connections of the phenomenological concept of temporality to the wider range of philosophy. In the center of the phenomenological understanding of Being and the world lies the concept of temporality, because everything that exists and can be disclosed to us as a phenomenon exists in time and can be perceived through time. In this sense, all phenomenology is, in effect, phenomenology of time.

³⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 32.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 154.

³⁷ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 154.

³⁸ Husserl, 'Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Buch 1, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie,' in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung 1,1*, 1913, p. 1.

ABSTRACT

In this paper the concept of temporality in the theories of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger is analyzed from a phenomenological perspective. Husserl and Heidegger studied the problems of consciousness and existence in the framework of their analysis of time. Bergson, as one of the proto-phenomenological forerunners, reveals the core connections of the phenomenological concept of temporality to the wider range of philosophy. Based on the time theories of Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger, I suggest a three dimensional system for understanding of time in relation to motion and existence.