

Time, or the mediation of the now: on Dan Zahavi’s “irrelational” account of self-temporalization

Matthew Coate¹ 

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Abstract On Dan Zahavi’s Husserlian account of the subject, the self-temporalization of subjectivity presupposes what he calls an “immediate impressional self-manifestation.” It follows from this view that self-awareness is an inherent power of the one who will be subject, rather than a product of sociality introduced into life from without. In this paper, I argue against Zahavi’s position by going over the development of Husserl’s account of time-consciousness, examining the positions Husserl takes and the reasons that he comes to these positions. Once we reach Husserl’s ultimate account, it becomes evident that Zahavi’s position is untenable.

Keywords Temporality · Self-consciousness · Phenomenology · Nonconsciousness · Sensation · The “now”

Dan Zahavi argues that “the flowing self-manifestation of consciousness... does not merely concern the elapsing phases, but *takes its point of departure* in an immediate impressional self-manifestation.”¹ This entails that:

1. A conscious life’s consciousness of itself is not produced through its retentive (nor apparently, its protentive) grasp of itself, but rather, is “intrinsic”² to the current experience.
And yet:
2. If this life’s “flowing self-manifestation” or time-constituting consciousness of itself *is* indeed “intrinsic” to each and every one of its moments and in no way

¹ Zahavi (2003, p. 173). Emphasis added.

² Zahavi (2005, p. 205).

✉ Matthew Coate
mcoate@kent.edu

¹ Department of Philosophy, Kent State University, P.O. Box 5190, Kent, OH 44242-0001, USA

comes to a moment of experiencing from without, then it becomes difficult to imagine that consciousness might emerge from nonconscious experience in some way, and exceedingly difficult to imagine that there could be anything like conflict in this emergence—or put otherwise, that a moment of consciousness, and in particular, its “now” moment, would get dragged into self-consciousness against its will, as it were. And more than all else, we would thus need to insist that self-consciousness could not be brought to a life from without *that very life* itself, as if a mere “product of socialization” that might, in Zahavi’s words, emerge “for contingent reasons” only.³ As a result of this, various accounts of the unconscious would be rendered untenable, and Zahavi thinks we can “avoid the aporetic consequences suggested by some deconstructive readings.”⁴ This is to say that, on the level of primordial self-temporalization, there would be “an operatively functioning accomplishing that is in fact solitary,” as Zahavi insists, or a power that belongs to conscious life unaided; here, he continues, “we are not dependent upon *others*.”⁵

In this paper, I’ll argue against Zahavi’s ostensibly Husserlian position, beginning with an attack, in §1 of my essay, against the first of the above claims: “The flowing self-manifestation of consciousness,” we’ll see, does *not* “take its point of departure in an immediate impressional self-manifestation.” After this, I’ll then argue in §2 against the second part of Zahavi’s stance—a position, once again, which otherwise seems to follow immediately from the first claim. In order to accomplish my task, I’ll offer an encapsulated version of the historical development of Husserl’s own account of time-consciousness, examining the positions that Husserl takes and, most importantly, the reasons that he comes to these positions. In the process, it will become evident that the Zahavian position is unsustainable—particularly when we reach Husserl’s discovery of the mediated phenomenon of *self-fulfillment*, by which, as we’ll see below, Husserl is at long last able to resolve the paradoxes that plague his earlier accounts of time-consciousness.

Husserl’s writings on time-consciousness span the better part of four decades, and there is obviously far more to be said about them than a single essay could ever deliver. Rather than attempting the impossible,⁶ then, I’ll focus on the development, not of Husserl’s account of time-consciousness per se, but of only a *single theme* from this: that of the manifestation of the “*now*.” As my introduction has explained, after all, the basic point at issue in the first part of this essay will be Zahavi’s understanding of this phenomenon; I’ll therefore only deal with other issues in Husserl’s account of time-consciousness insofar as my main theme requires it. Before beginning, also, I should note that I’m not interested here in Husserl

³ Zahavi (2001, p. 204).

⁴ Zahavi (2004, p. 114). Here, Zahavi is specifically referring to the “aporetic consequences” of such readings for our understanding of time-consciousness, but as we’ll see later on, it’s clear that he links these consequences to “aporetic” positions on subjectivity per se. For the time being, see, e.g., Zahavi (2001, p. 204).

⁵ Zahavi (2001, p. 84). Emphasis altered.

⁶ It would take a book, at least, to do *that* (and for this, I’d point the reader to Toine Kortooms’s excellent *Phenomenology of Time*, from which my account draws extensively).

interpretation for its own sake, but only as a resource to help clarify “the things themselves.” I ask the reader to keep this in mind, for in what follows, it will probably become fairly clear that I don’t believe Zahavi interprets Husserl’s account of time-constitution accurately—a belief that is not only my own, since John Brough, for one, claims that Zahavi’s reading “may not always be a snug fit for Husserl’s texts,”⁷ and Toine Kortooms writes that “Zahavi... gives an interpretation of Husserl’s doctrine of absolute time-consciousness that diverges from the prevalent picture.”⁸ Nevertheless, this matter—i.e., fidelity to Husserl—is ultimately beside the point, for getting Husserl right on this score is not necessarily equivalent to getting the phenomenon of *temporalization* right, and it is the latter, again, that is my *real* concern in §1.

It’s well known, in any event, that according to Husserl, time-consciousness and self-consciousness are essentially linked—a connection that forms a basic theme for a number of Zahavi’s works, in fact. In Husserl’s *first* accounts of time-consciousness, however, self-consciousness does not appear to be a theme at all. Certainly, we find no argumentation in Husserl’s early texts that *explicitly* advances a necessary connection between these two phenomena, at least. And there is much to make us believe that he saw *no* such connection at all at the time: for in *Logical Investigations II*, to take one example, Husserl claims that “we must leave theories [of the necessity of what he calls “inner perception”] on one side, so long, that is, as the need to assume the unbroken activity of inner perception cannot be phenomenologically demonstrated”⁹—a claim that Husserl could never have made about our “perception” of *time*.¹⁰

So how *does* Husserl conceive of time-consciousness in his earliest works on the matter? In his lecture notes from the winter semester of 1904–1905, Husserl’s main intuition is that an enduring event or temporal object can only be made manifest by a conscious act that endures in time *itself*; no instantaneous consciousness, if such a thing is possible, could ever “give” us time.¹¹ So the question then becomes: How do conscious *acts* endure? In these lectures, Husserl attempts to account for their enduring with his notion of “fusion:”¹² moments of experiencing merge with one another on both sides, so to speak, so that the “contents” of the stream of

⁷ Brough (2011, p. 32).

⁸ Kortooms (2002, p. 89).

⁹ Husserl (2001b, p. 87). John B. Brough makes a mistake similar to the error that, as we’ll see, Zahavi makes, when he claims that mere experiencing or *Erleben*, for Husserl, is already for its own part a sort of pre-reflective self-awareness (see, for instance: Brough, 2011, p. 28, and especially, 1972, p. 304). Of course, Husserl’s “absolute time-consciousness” account does end up *resulting* in this position, as we’ll see below (p. 19 of this essay). But as we’ll also soon see, this was not always Husserl’s position (which is why early on, Husserl claimed that “there is no difference between the experienced or conscious content and the experience itself. What is sensed is, e.g., no different than sensation” (Husserl 2001b, p. 352), nor will it be the position at which Husserl ultimately arrives, in that his final account leaves room for nonconscious experiencing (ibid., p. 15–19).

¹⁰ For reasons that we’ll examine, Zahavi interprets this claim differently than I have, but for the time being, we’ll assume that Husserl’s words here are straightforward enough.

¹¹ Husserl (1991, p. 233). This is a point he also makes in earlier works on time, as well as other manuscripts from about the same period (see, for instance, ibid., p. 195–198).

¹² Ibid. (p. 234).

consciousness (i.e., the experiencing “in” it, or the “parts” of the streaming life itself) are never anything like isolated instants. Because of this enduring, Husserl argues, an apprehension coming to “animate” the streaming contents can thus manifest time, or put otherwise, can seize upon a temporally enduring object thereby made manifest as such by them.¹³

But the question can be pushed back further still: What is fusion; what in fact makes possible the temporal “width” of experiencing? In these early lectures, Husserl doesn’t examine this matter at all. He does use the term “primary memory” in *apparent* reference to the problem, and yet although similarities between this notion and Husserl’s later notion of “retention” might cause us to conflate the two, they are *not* the same: for unlike retention (and its complement, “protention”), primary memory here is no *self*-apprehension, but rather, is an apprehension of the just-passed moments of the enduring *object* of consciousness, or maybe better, of whatever event it is in which the enduring object is involved.¹⁴ In truth, then, the only apprehensions mentioned in Husserl’s early account of temporality are those that “depart” from the temporally extended contents of consciousness and “terminate” in the temporally enduring object thereby constituted. The moments of conscious life, in their serial flowing, do not seem to be apprehended *as such* on this view, or at least, not in straightforward perception; thus, it seems that Husserl simply does not connect self-awareness to time-constitution, nor pose the former as a necessary element of all consciousness, in this early account at all.

Before I move on to Husserl’s subsequent—and as we’ll discover, increasingly more adequate—analyses of temporalization, I should consider an objection that Zahavi would likely make at this point: namely, that the absence of any talk about self-apprehension in connection with time-consciousness must count as an *advantage*, and not disadvantage, of Husserl’s early account. But why would Zahavi think so, when he himself clearly links self-consciousness and time-consciousness? In a word: because of his insistence that “*pre-reflective*” self-consciousness, which we’ll soon discover to be inseparable from primordial time-constitution, is a wholly “*non-objectivating*” sort of awareness, which leads Zahavi to take issue as soon as any talk of apprehension emerges in Husserl’s account of the phenomenon.¹⁵ Zahavi, that is, believes that this consciousness must be a non-apprehending or “irrelational” one,¹⁶ for reasons we’ll go over shortly—as opposed to all other forms of consciousness, which have to be considered “relational,”¹⁷ insofar as they bring to manifestation something *exterior* to the act itself, even if only a different aspect of the selfsame (as in self-reflection). However: Although there can be no doubt that the consciousness at issue cannot be objectivating in any *usual* sense, Zahavi nevertheless seems to go too far when he rails against *all*

¹³ Ibid. (p. 235–239).

¹⁴ Ibid. (p. 37). Husserl writes here, for instance, that “the primary memory of the tones that, as it were, I have just heard... *fuse* with the apprehension of the tone that is now appearing [my emphasis].” I deal with retention and protention as self-apprehension just below.

¹⁵ Zahavi (2004, p. 111).

¹⁶ Zahavi (2003, p. 168).

¹⁷ Ibid. (p. 164).

“relational” accounts of it, for consciousness *is* consciousness-*of*, after all—or so Husserl always claimed—and is thus, in this sense, a *relation*; otherwise, nothing appears and we are not talking about a consciousness. And yet without wanting to dispute the principle that all consciousness is intentional, Zahavi finds himself forced to deny that it must be “relational” without qualification, because as we’ll see just below, the refusal to allow for anything like an irrelational or wholly non-apprehending self-consciousness, specifically in the form of an “immediate impressional self-manifestation” at the heart of time-constitution, appears to lead to an insoluble dilemma, and thus, seems impossible to maintain. This, admittedly, may make Zahavi’s account seem quite convincing.

What, then, of this apparently insoluble dilemma that, I’m claiming, motivates Zahavi’s position? To understand it, we’ll have to turn to some of Husserl’s subsequent accounts of time-consciousness. Unlike his earlier work on the topic, Husserl’s ensuing (and once again, increasingly more accurate) accounts of temporality *do* explicitly link time-consciousness with self-consciousness: I’ve already noted that the phenomenon he calls retention (and further, protention) amounts to an apprehension of the passed-by (and to-come) moments of experiencing *as such*. Husserl reaches what is probably his most well-known version of this sort of account—his account of “absolute time-consciousness”—through a number of stages; perhaps the two most prominent of these are expressed, firstly, in Husserl’s lecture notes from the summer semester of 1909,¹⁸ and secondly, in his Bernauer manuscripts from 1917–1918. Before the 1909 lectures, Husserl had already coined the term “absolute consciousness,”¹⁹ but by 1909, he comes to conceive of this consciousness as being composed of a peculiar “double-intentionality” that involves what Husserl will sometimes call a “transversal [*Quer-*]” and “longitudinal [*Längs-*]” intentionality.²⁰ These are self-apprehensions pure and simple, no doubt, although not objectivating in any usual sense, or at least, so Husserl claims.²¹ But why did Husserl come to believe that some sort of self-apprehension is required for time-consciousness *at all* (a view that first seems to

¹⁸ The manuscripts that Husserl writes from this time until at least 1911 (see, for instance: Husserl 1991, p. 130–137, as well as fn #20) and possibly later, also advance this position. However, in 1917–1918, as we’ll see below, Husserl substantially alters this account.

¹⁹ See, for instance: Husserl (1984, p. 246). In this essay, I use the term to describe Husserl’s “doubled” accounts of self-temporalization, i.e., those involving *two double-intentionalities*, as in Kortooms (2002). Husserl’s 1907 account is thus not an “absolute consciousness” view.

²⁰ Husserl (1991, p. 391–392). This reference is to Husserl’s Text no. 54, which expands upon the account presented in Text no. 39—a text that, as Bernet has discovered (ibid., p. xlv), is from Husserl’s 1909 lectures, thus allowing us to ascertain that the development of Husserl’s account of time-consciousness here at issue began at that time. In any event, the position is well-established by 1911 (as Text no 54, which is from 1911, makes clear).

Incidentally, for the term *Längs* in “*Längsintentionalität*,” I use the word “longitudinal” and not John Brough’s “horizontal”—not only because the former is more literal, but also because the term better fits with Husserl’s time-diagrams in *Husserliana Band X* (1991) and XXXIII (2001c), since there, *Längsintentionalität* is indicated by the diagram’s *vertical* lines. (Perhaps this last point is ironic, since the diagrams of my own design that I provide in this paper are rotated 90° from Husserl’s—a disadvantage, maybe, although for what it’s worth, I think that this makes them easier to read for my purposes here.).

²¹ Husserl (1991, p. 381–382).

emerge, in fact, in his lectures of the winter semester of 1906–1907²²)? What was wrong with his earlier view? There are in fact many problems with it, but all center around one main issue: namely, that the passed-by moments of consciousness must be apprehended *as such*, if, “through them”—via a sort of “double intentionality,” that is then to say—the past “phases” of a temporally enduring *object* are to be grasped *as past* “phases” themselves, and the objective duration is to become manifest. The same must go for anticipated moments to-come, etc. Were there no such self-apprehension, no manner in which a conscious life grasped its *own* temporal streaming or “temporalized” *itself*, but merely a “fused” enduring experience or preserved continuum of content, there would be no motivation whatsoever for the apprehension of objective time or duration by the experience.²³

By Husserl’s 1909 lectures, however, his account has become much more complicated than this would apparently imply, for the double-intentionality of time-consciousness on which Husserl focuses his attention in these lectures is not that by which an enduring transcendent object or event, or the objective time of its enduring, is constituted or made manifest. To be clear, the constitution of “objective time” does, as I’ve just noted, involve a sort of double-intentionality, but that is not the double-intentionality that Husserl means to indicate with his notion of transversal- and longitudinal-intentionality.²⁴ We can understand this *other* double-intentionality, rather, as a “splitting” of the above double-intentionality’s “inner” apprehension, i.e., of *self*-temporalization; along with it, the whole notion of the self likewise becomes divided.²⁵ This point is sometimes confused: for after all, isn’t transversal-intentionality supposed to grasp an *object*, unlike its longitudinal correlate?²⁶ In a qualified sense, yes; but transversal-intentionality, on this account, is understood to grasp, not an object in the usual sense (e.g., a transcendent thing), but rather, an “*immanent* object” in “immanent” or “subjective” time,

²² I address this somewhat in fn #19 above. But see, for instance: *ibid.*, (p. 312), from a text written possibly as early as 1907.

²³ *Ibid.* (p. 306–308, 331–337). See also: Rodemeyer (2006, p. 23–26) and Kortooms (2002, p. 83–84).

²⁴ Compare, for instance, the double-intentionality described below (made up of longitudinal- and transverse-intentionality), with the one Husserl describes in (1991, p. 312–313), whose two connected intentionalities constitute “immanent temporalities” and “*objective* time,” rather than the *Urstrom* and “immanent temporalities.” That Husserl perhaps *already* leans towards developing the latter position, however, is hinted at when he writes: “that *every experience* possesses *intentions directed towards its context* is certain, and this belongs to its constitution as a *temporal unity*. But I am in doubt about how this should be understood and whether full clarity prevails here in every respect.”

²⁵ Husserl insists, of course, that these two levels or aspects of consciousness are necessarily connected despite their being distinct: he thus writes, e.g., that “two inseparably united intentionalities, requiring one another like two sides of the same thing, are interwoven with each other in the one, unique flow of consciousness” (*ibid.*, p. 393). As Brough points out, however (Brough 2011, p. 31), Husserl later speaks of a “radical demarcation” (Husserl 2001c, p. 122) in this respect—although surely, Husserl overstates his position a little bit in such passages, probably simply to stress the point he is trying to make.

²⁶ Incidentally, Zahavi argues that this isn’t what Husserl meant in his 1909 lectures—although he concedes not only that this is the most common interpretation of them, but also that, in his L-Manuscripts, Husserl eventually reached the position I’m describing anyways (Zahavi 2004, p. 100). Now the fact that Husserl *appears* to advance this position in 1909, and then definitely *does* later on, surely indicates it was his 1909 position also. Nonetheless, as I indicate on p. 2 above, such worries are ultimately irrelevant to my purposes in this paper.

which is to say, an enduring experience or conscious act apprehended *as such*.²⁷ Husserl writes, then, that “by virtue of one of the intentionalities”—namely, that of the “transversal” sort—“immanent time becomes constituted;”²⁸ transversal-intentionality, as an element of time-consciousness, must thus be understood as the constituting correlate of our streaming or enduring conscious acts or experiences, making them manifest *as* streaming or enduring acts or experiences. On this account, however, longitudinal-intentionality *also* grasps the “self,” albeit in a different sense: It apprehends something like the “streaming” phases of *this very consciousness* or “activity” of transversal-intentionality, in order to constitute the enduring “immanent objects” through them;²⁹ Husserl writes, therefore, that “in the other intentionality, it is the quasi-temporal arrangement of the phases of the *flow* that becomes constituted.”³⁰

In a very real sense, then, the account has been doubled: “Behind” the acts of what is now merely an “empirical ego”—which, constituted or made manifest in their streaming or “subjective” enduring, can thus constitute the objective duration of transcendent things within the world—we find an *Urstrom* or “*primal-stream*” of consciousness, which in some sense temporalizes *itself* (“longitudinally”) so that it can constitute, “transversally,” these acts of the empirical ego—again, conscious experiences in the usual sense—or make *them* its enduring, immanent, “objects.” The account of longitudinal- and transversal-intentionality that Husserl offers at this time is thus meant to clarify the nature of the two “levels” of consciousness that he had ostensibly discovered when, earlier (ca. 1907), he “distinguished the different levels of constitution in their essential structure:”

1. The things of empirical experience in objective time...;
2. the constituting multiplicities of appearance belonging to different levels, the immanent unities in pre-empirical [or what Husserl elsewhere calls “immanent”] time;
3. the absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness.³¹

What Husserl comes to believe in the period we are now discussing is that each of these levels, or the objects “on” them, are made manifest by the intentional directedness emerging from the immediately “deeper” level—with the exception of the “deepest” level, that of absolute time-consciousness, which must then be intended by *itself*. The subject, or the streaming life of subjectivity, is thus given in two different ways, “immanently” and “absolutely,” by means of two different intentionalities; hence, the strange “doubling” of which I speak.

What can we make of this doubling? On the face of it, the whole thing seems flawed at basis, given that, as Zahavi regularly points out,³² it’s hard to make sense

²⁷ Husserl (1991, p. 392–393).

²⁸ Ibid. (p. 393).

²⁹ Ibid. (p. 391–392).

³⁰ Ibid. (p. 393).

³¹ Ibid. (p. 77).

³² Zahavi (2003, p. 166–167).

of the distinction between “transversal-intentionality,” on the one hand—or the consciousness we have of our own streaming conscious experience—and “longitudinal-intentionality,” on the other—or some purported “pure” consciousness of that very consciousness (i.e., of the transversal-intentionality). Yet Husserl seems *forced* to both posit two levels of consciousness *and* claim that both must be temporalized, since once again, our streaming conscious activity must be manifest in its streaming if the objects it brings to appearance are to be manifest as enduring *themselves*, but this apparently requires not only some “deeper” level of consciousness to apprehend our activity *as such*,³³ but also that, by the same token, this “deeper” level be manifest in *its* streaming too (or at least, in its “quasi-temporal arrangement”). Thus, we come to the notion of a *doubly* time-constituting consciousness, or *Urstrom*, “behind” our “empirical” egoic life or streaming acts of consciousness in the usual sense—a position that I hope the following diagram will suffice to illustrate (Fig. 1).³⁴

Husserl ostensibly “bites the bullet” by accepting this doubled account, one which (as Zahavi again notes) has to be seen as at least *prima facie* problematic; but he thereby finds himself faced with a dilemma that, amazingly, poses a greater problem still. On the one hand, that is, Husserl must presuppose, on pain of infinite regress, the notion of an “ultimate consciousness,”³⁵ or put otherwise, a consciousness that is not *itself* made manifest. He sees nothing at first to gainsay this understanding of what he originally called the “*Urimpression*”—the consciousness at the “now-point” of the *Urstrom*—for the reason that:

The flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time... must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing.... [Yet] the phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the *same* flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally cannot be identical with these constituted phases, and of course they are not. What is brought to appearance in the actual momentary phase of the flow of consciousness—specifically, in its series of reproductive [or “retentional”] moments—are the *past* phases of the flow of consciousness.³⁶

If this is so, then although via longitudinal-retention, the “*passed-by*” phases of the *Urstrom* would get apprehended (in order to constitute, again, enduring acts in immanent time through its transversal-intentionality), the *present phase* of the *Urstrom*, or the *Urimpression*, would not come to be apprehended or made manifest as such *itself* until it had actually passed and become retained. In this sense, it could

³³ For just the reason that I noted when, above, I questioned Zahavi’s notion of an “irrelational” self-consciousness.

³⁴ Please note that the layout of this and all subsequent diagrams do not visually represent the *ongoing* dynamic of temporalization, i.e., how the “now” gets “pushed back” and retained as new “nows” come to pass. Doing so is irrelevant for my present purpose, since I’m only interested here in an analysis of the manifestation of the “now” of conscious life, and like Zahavi, I don’t think this happens only after it passes and gets retained.

³⁵ Husserl (1991, p. 394). Emphasis added.

³⁶ Ibid. (p. 393).

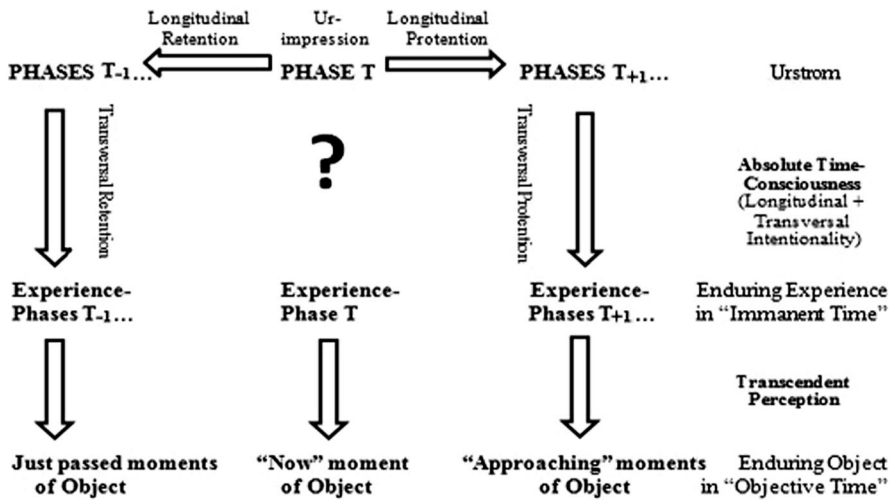


Fig. 1 The questionability of the “*Urimpression*” is examined below

be called “ultimate,” since not intended by anything for its own part, and as such, would head off regress.

And yet on the other hand, however, Husserl is at once forced to deny the *very possibility* of an *Urimpression* that is not consciously apprehended, but which would only become apprehended *nachträglich*, or after the fact.³⁷ After all, that cannot be so for the “now-phase” of the immanent “*content*” of consciousness (i.e., of experience in the usual sense): for in another text from roughly the same period, Husserl writes that

if it [“the beginning phase of an experience that is in the process of becoming constituted”] were intended *only* by retention, then what confers on it the label “now” would remain incomprehensible.... It is just nonsense to talk about an “unconscious” content that would only subsequently [*nachträglich*] become conscious. Consciousness is necessarily *consciousness* in each of its phases. Just as the retentive phase is conscious of the preceding phase without making it into an object, so too the primal datum is already intended—specifically, in the original form of the “now.”³⁸

Husserl’s deliberations on time-consciousness, that is, have convinced him of the need for a temporalizing apprehension of *every* phase of an “immanent” conscious experience, including, crucially, of the “now” phase: for otherwise, as Husserl indicates, nothing would ever be given to consciousness of its own activity as “now” at all (and as a result, nothing of a “worldly” object would ever be given as “right now” *either*), which is, surely, an absurd claim; and furthermore, a phase of experience could hardly be given through retention as “now-passed” anyways if it

³⁷ A point Zahavi often makes (for example: Zahavi 1999, p. 70–71), and that greatly helps to motivate his position, as we will see below.

³⁸ Husserl (1991, p. 123).

were never given consciously as “now” in the first place. We can thus see how much Husserl’s opinion changed on these matters in a few short years (for again, he originally did not see the need to connect self-apprehension to time-consciousness at all). And for just this reason, I think, the term *Urimpression* started to become rather intolerable: Husserl speaks instead in these passages of an *Urbewusstsein* (“primal-consciousness”), which he will later call *Urpäsentation* (precisely a presentation—transversal—of the now-phase of experience as such).³⁹ However, Husserl is thus left in a quandary, since by the *very same reasoning*, he will soon be led (in 1917–1918) to conclude that the *Urpäsentation* must then be intended as “now” *itself*: Husserl thus asks “what about the present being of the primal-process..., is this consciousness not again present, does this not require a further consciousness of presence etc.?”⁴⁰ For the *Urpäsentation* itself to be manifest as “now,” that is, there would then have to be yet another consciousness “behind” it, an *Urstrom* behind the *Urstrom* constituting *it* in its “nowness,” and then so on again to infinity—which would obviously be impossible. It is for just this reason that Zahavi proposes an irrelational or “immediate impressional self-manifestation” at the heart of temporalizing self-consciousness, writing that “if we are to avoid an infinite regress, this primitive prereflective self-awareness cannot be due to a secondary act or reflex.”⁴¹ And despite the seemingly problematic nature of an “irrelational” consciousness, we should *have* to concur—or unless some other solution could be found for this dilemma (Fig. 2).

This allows us to understand what is, at least at first glance, deeply appealing about Zahavi’s position. In his 1999 book, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, Zahavi begins to advance his account of temporalization by arguing that “the clarification of inner time-consciousness is more fundamental than the clarification of different types of objectivating acts,” which leads to the claim that “the decisive problem is then to clarify the relation between the absolute flow..., on the one hand, and the constituted act, on the other.”⁴² After then admitting that he does not believe “Husserl ever managed to achieve complete clarity on this issue,” Zahavi concedes, further, that there are not only multiple interpretations of Husserl’s account of it, but that an interpretation like the one I’ve just outlined is the “established view.”⁴³ Yet both because of the problem of *regress* as well as the difficulty in *even making sense* of the distinction between absolute and immanent time-consciousness, Zahavi argues that such a view *cannot* be accepted as an adequate account of the phenomenon of temporalization (whether or not we end up accepting it as *Husserl’s* account from this period is a different matter). Instead, Zahavi goes on, we *ought* to conclude, not that an act “is brought to givenness by something other than itself,

³⁹ Husserl (2001c, p. 3).

⁴⁰ Ibid. (p. 224).

⁴¹ Zahavi (2004, p. 104).

⁴² Zahavi (1999, p. 69).

⁴³ Ibid. (We will see, though (below, p. 17–18 and 20–21), that the “established view” cannot be an accurate recounting of Husserl’s thought on temporality if it does not recognize the major alterations in Husserl’s position later on, in the early ’30 s).

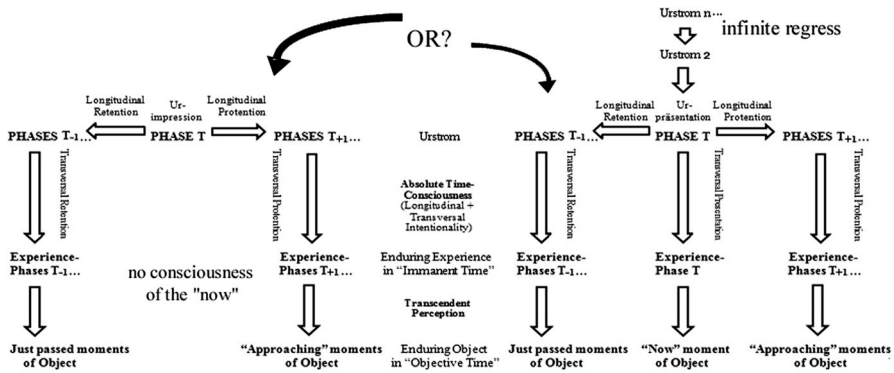


Fig. 2 The dilemma facing Husserl's account of "absolute time-consciousness"

namely by inner time-consciousness,"⁴⁴ but rather that, "apart from being intentional, the act is also characterized by its 'inner consciousness,'... a pervasive dimension of self-manifestation."⁴⁵ But then, for the reasons we've discovered, Zahavi concludes that "this self-givenness... takes its point of departure in an immediate impressional self-manifestation"⁴⁶ or the "now's" irrelational self-appearance.

It should be obvious that the dilemma which apparently arises for Husserl's account—infinite regress, or else no consciousness of the "now"—does not arise for Zahavi's version of it. At the same time, his account has no need for a problematic "doubling" of self-temporalization (i.e., for any second level of time-constituting consciousness, "behind" the stream of consciousness itself), for as Zahavi argues, "if it is acknowledged that such a type of [irrelational] self-awareness exists, one might reasonably ask why it should... not already be a feature of the act itself."⁴⁷ On his account, that is, the level of "empirical ego" or "immanent time" drops out, or at least, is nowhere to be found in straightforward perception; it is only constituted, Zahavi argues, in expressly self-reflective acts.

This should give us enough of Zahavi's account to go on; but before we move on, let us note, once again, the kind of *reductio ad absurdum* that is ultimately supposed to justify Zahavi's view. To put it summarily: The "now" moment of consciousness *must* be manifest *as such*, but since its self-manifestation cannot be "relational," or articulable into apprehension and that-which-is-apprehended, without apparently leading to infinite regress, it seems that there must be a consciousness here that simply is *not "relational" at all*. This then leads to the Zahavian position that I illustrate below (Fig. 3):

The fact that the dilemma that would cripple Husserl's account does not arise for Zahavi's version of it, and that Zahavi can avoid any problematic "doubling" of

⁴⁴ Ibid. (p. 70).

⁴⁵ Ibid. (p. 71–72).

⁴⁶ Ibid. (p. 87). This is precisely the same in substance as the claim I quoted to begin this essay (Zahavi 2003, p. 173).

⁴⁷ Zahavi (1999, p. 70).

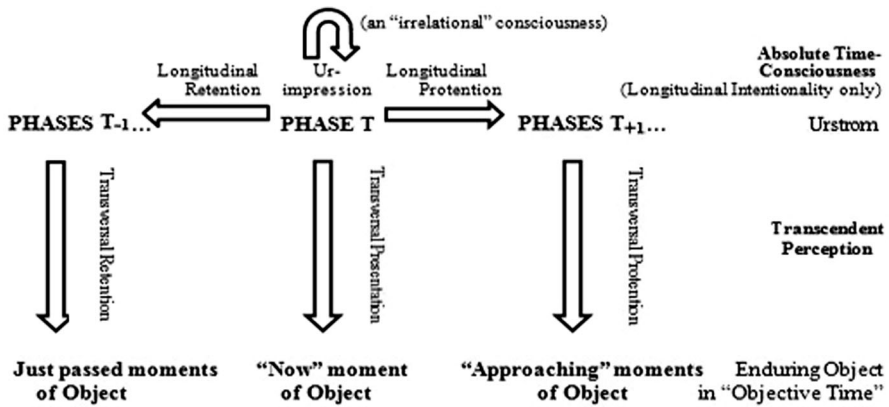


Fig. 3 The circular arrow that I must use to symbolize "impressional" consciousness is, sadly, a poor symbol for it, since this supposedly involves nothing like an apprehension or any "ray" of consciousness

consciousness also, can surely be seen as support for the Zahavian position, i.e., that the "flowing self-manifestation of consciousness" *does* involve an immediate, irrelational self-consciousness, which Zahavi takes to be Husserl's *Urimpression*. In place of the problems that this would solve, however, new difficulties emerge: for how are we to understand an "irrelational" consciousness? This ought to be described, I think, before we can even consider accepting Zahavi's resolution, since the very idea seems ad hoc. What would an irrelational consciousness actually be like, a consciousness which is somehow "of" the self, and yet without being "of" anything at all, since "irrelational?" Zahavi does not quite seem to realize the strangeness of the claim, and sadly, offers little in the way of any independent reasoning—or better, phenomenological description—in order to remove its ad hoc appearance. At *most*, so far as I can tell, Zahavi tries to do so by pointing out that "there is necessarily something 'it is like' for a subject to undergo an experience,"⁴⁸ a matter he then connects with his notion of an "impressional" self-consciousness. Yet the claim is very vague, and because of this, as we'll discover later, Zahavi thereby only seems to conflate self-consciousness with a wholly different phenomenon (namely, sensing). But even leaving aside such worries for the time being, there are more difficulties yet for Zahavi's position: for were Zahavi correct in claiming that the manifestation of the present phase of consciousness *is* irrelational, it should then be a mystery not only why this consciousness *must* be connected inextricably with *time*-constitution—but even, in fact, how it *could* be. Zahavi contends that "impressional self-manifestation stretches to include the retentionally given,"⁴⁹ but this only makes the difficulty here more apparent: for how could an "irrelational" self-manifestation—already, again, a potentially vacuous concept on its own—"stretch" to "include the retentionally given," as Zahavi says it would, when the retentionally given, at least, must be given via

⁴⁸ Zahavi (2005, p. 15).

⁴⁹ Zahavi (2003, p. 173).

apprehension: which is to say, “*relationally?*” Can an irrelational consciousness “stretch to include” a relational one, that is, given that “stretch” implies being connected in a continuum, but between impression and retention *we would then have a difference in kind?*⁵⁰ Or will Zahavi instead be forced to conclude (as he seems to want to *deny*, by admitting that retention and protention are “ecstatic”⁵¹) that retention and protention are “irrelational” *as well?* An “irrelational” consciousness of the just-passed moments of experiencing, etc., *sans* apprehension—as if by speaking of the “*of,*” again, what we mean is not precisely something like an apprehending “*relation?*” And how, were we able to understand self-retention as being “irrelational enough” to allow for the required “stretch” or continuum with a proposed irrelational impressional self-manifestation—assuming that Zahavi’s account *could* be fleshed out on this point without simply leading to contradiction—would this not then simply return us to the problem Husserl faced in his earlier accounts of time-constitution, before he had connected the latter with self-apprehension: namely, that *without* apprehension of the just-passed moments of experiencing, there is no motivation for any constitution of the enduring of transcendent objects? For wasn’t the whole problem with mere fusion that it *lacked* the “*relationality?*” that worries Zahavi so? The difficulties multiply themselves, and although we cannot say without further ado that there is no possible consistent response to them, nowhere, so far as I know, does Zahavi even address these issues, let alone resolve them to satisfaction.⁵²

I will not dwell on the possibilities of a Zahavian response to the questions I’ve just raised (although I should point out that the problem of continuity between the manifestation of the “now” and “retained” moments of consciousness is one that will surely prove fatal to the Zahavian position currently at issue if it cannot be adequately resolved on his account). What is crucial *here*, instead, is to recognize that Husserl’s further development of the notion of “absolute time-consciousness” in his 1917–1918 Bernauer manuscripts is *also* able to avoid the dilemma that troubled his earlier (ca. 1909) account, but without involving any of the difficulties (and apparent self-contradictions, even) of the Zahavian position. Revisiting his

⁵⁰ This difficulty is somewhat akin to one of Husserl’s great worries in many of his absolute time-consciousness texts—whether or not the retentionally and protentionally given content is inherent—since a continuum comprising inherent and non-inherent contents seems impossible. See, for example: Husserl (2001c, p. 220).

⁵¹ “Inner time-consciousness... is an ecstatic unity of presencing (primal impression) and absencing (retention-protention),” Zahavi writes (Zahavi 2003, p. 82).

⁵² Zahavi does recognize, although without meaning to contradict his account of an “impressional” or “irrelational self-awareness,” that “we consequently end up with the insight that pre-reflective self-awareness must be conceived not as a static self-identity but as a dynamic and differentiated openness to alterity” (Zahavi 1998, p. 221)—differentiation, of course, implying relation or apprehension. Thus, when Zahavi follows up this recognition with a critique of Manfred Frank’s competing “irrelational” account, claiming that Frank is unable “to explain how this completely irrelationally self-present subjectivity can simultaneously be in possession of an inner temporal articulation” (*ibid.*, p. 222) we can be excused for wondering if the same can be said for Zahavi’s account of an only “partially” irrelational self-manifestation.

account of time-consciousness in these manuscripts, Husserl still takes himself to be dealing with the “longitudinal-intentionality” of the *Urstrom*, and yet he now focuses more intently upon the phenomenon of *protention* (or as Husserl sometimes says, “projection”⁵³). But by recognizing that consciousness always “protains” itself, however, Husserl is able to recognize that, through its retention, it must retain itself precisely as *having-“protained”* itself, a protention (or self-anticipating, as it were) which is continuously *fulfilled* just so long as conscious life continues (Fig. 4):⁵⁴

Husserl thus writes that each arising moment of consciousness:

comes “welcome,” or each retentive momentary continuum maintains a protention into what follows.... Genetically speaking: if again and again, continuously, new core-data arise, so the old do not merely sink down retentionally, but rather, “shoot up” a protentional consciousness, which the new primal-data comes to meet and... fulfills.⁵⁵

As before, Husserl takes the “current” phase of the primal-stream to retain and protain phases of that same stream or flow, but he now also understands it to make itself manifest as the primal-stream’s “now,” so that it can serve as *Urpräsentation*, precisely insofar as it fulfills its earlier self-protention (or the “futural self-intending” of its previous phases, which for their own part, thereby get retained as so fulfilled). In this way, regress is averted without problematic recourse to an unmanifest consciousness (or a “now” moment of conscious experiencing that would not be given as such, again)⁵⁶—but *also*, without recourse to any irrelational consciousness.

This development, obviously, runs totally contrary to Zahavi’s advanced position; we might wonder, then, if he has an answer to it. And in fact, Zahavi does address this Bernauer development, but only to dismiss it out of hand, for all intents and purposes, with the following justification given for this alone:

Is it wise to attempt to understand self-constitution in terms of fulfillment? Fulfillment is a relational process. It is a relation between something that fulfills and something that is fulfilled.... Even if that which fulfills and that which is fulfilled turns out to be the same, we are still dealing with a dyadic structure, and the question is whether such a structure will enable us to understand *self*-constitution. Husserl explicitly argued [in Hua X, Zahavi says] that the retentive modification presupposes an impressional (primary,

⁵³ Husserl (2001c, p. 38). All of the translations of this text that follow are mine.

⁵⁴ Ibid. (p. 27).

⁵⁵ Ibid. (p. 20). As I parenthetically indicate in my explication of this passage, it is not, to be precise, that as the so-called new core-data arises, it arises retaining a past experience that “just so happens” to have protained it; rather, what Husserl discovers here is that the new core-data actually does retain the prior experience only *because* it fulfills the prior experience’s protention as it arises, or put otherwise, because the conscious life of which it is a part had, in its earlier experience, already protained it or was awaiting what was to-come of itself. Husserl thus writes that retention of earlier experiences is “*eo ipso* given with... fulfillment,” which “bears in itself retention of the preceding:” see, e.g., *ibid.*, (p. 25).

⁵⁶ This point strikes the editors of the Bernauer Manuscripts as especially important in the text: see *ibid.*, (p. xlii).

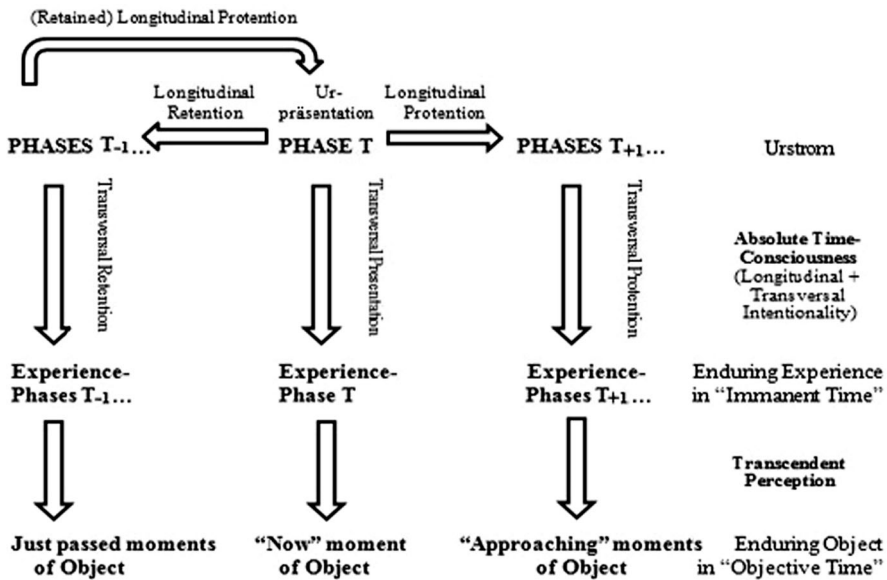


Fig. 4 The development in Husserl's Bernauer account

original, and immediate) self-awareness not only because consciousness is as such self-given, but also because retention of an unconscious content is impossible (Hua X/119). This notion of impressional self-awareness seems required if one is to avoid the aporetic consequences suggested by some deconstructive readings: Initially, consciousness is unconscious, and it only gains self-awareness *nachträglich* through the retentive modification.⁵⁷

What can we make of this response? At face value, it simply seems to beg the question, since it appears that the very problem that Husserl hopes to resolve with the development of his account in Bernau is to establish precisely how what he called *Urimpression* before truly *can* be *Urräsentation*, or can present the current moment of experiencing *as* the "now" of the selfsame streaming consciousness, without this leading to regress. Husserl, that is, strives in these manuscripts to describe "such a structure" precisely *in order to* "enable us to understand self-constitution," something that, for the reasons we saw above, he had come to see his earlier account did not adequately accomplish. *Does* Husserl's account in Bernau, then, allow us to understand how the current moment of experiencing can be manifest as such, and yet without this committing us to an infinite regress? Zahavi's response gives us no reason to see why not, although at face value, Husserl's development seems to be successful on both fronts, for on the one hand, the

⁵⁷ Zahavi (2004, p. 113–114). Prior to this objection, Zahavi also objects to Husserl's continued adherence to a "two-level" account of consciousness in his Bernauer manuscripts. We'll see below, however (p. 17–18), that the development at issue finally allows Husserl to jettison the two-level model, so this objection can be discarded.

problem of regress certainly does not arise on such an account, while on the other, it would seem that the fulfillment of passed, and now retained, self-protentions should in fact continually come to pass as a conscious life's consciousness of its own "now" just as Husserl claims. It is not as though in Bernau, Husserl conceded that the "now" is not given, and merely replaced its givenness with that of a retained moment of consciousness that had "aimed" at it, since—as Zahavi, who recounts Husserl's Bernauer development quite accurately, well knows⁵⁸—Husserl's whole idea here is that it's in the continual *fulfillment* of this prior "self-aiming" that the "now" of conscious life is given. Given that this is so, however, Zahavi's response seems to simply amount to a bald assertion of his own opposed position—or unless there is an argument here well hidden between the lines.⁵⁹ (Of course, Zahavi's own resolution doubtlessly *would* offer an alternative way out of the dilemma, but for the reasons I touched upon above, it doesn't seem a route that Husserl himself would have wanted to take).

Now the principle of charity does compel us to find an argument in Zahavi's response, if at all possible. Perhaps we can find one in the passage at issue, then, if we focus more on Zahavi's assertion that the self-givenness of consciousness presupposes "an impressional (primary, original, and immediate) self-awareness;" for with this, Zahavi can be understood to infer that Husserl's Bernauer development has to deny that the "now" comes to consciousness as such *at all* precisely because the resulting account denies self-temporalization its "immediacy." After all, Husserl's claim here is that, as a consciousness that comes to pass through the fulfillment of a retained self-protention, the *Urpäsentation* is a "mediated" consciousness!⁶⁰ But to draw this conclusion, if this is what Zahavi does do, would only be to equivocate on the basis of two different senses of the word "immediate," a clear fallacy: for it simply does not follow that, since mediated in this way, the consciousness at issue would be unable to present what is "*immediate*" in the sense of making the "now" moment of consciousness manifest *as* "now." Of course, it isn't really clear that Zahavi *does* equivocate in this way; and yet if we assume that he doesn't, it becomes difficult, once again, to find an argument against Husserl's position here at all.⁶¹

We are thus left with two opposed but "internally" successful solutions to the same dilemma: How, then, can we determine which of the two accounts represents self-temporalization accurately? We saw above that Zahavi's account has something ad hoc about it, and yet Husserl, conversely, has independent reasons for maintaining that conscious life has the form of a "mediated-immediacy," becoming

⁵⁸ Zahavi (2004, p. 113).

⁵⁹ This is quite unfortunate, I think, for surely no one today has done more to bring the problem of the now's manifestation to light than has Zahavi; and yet when he comes across an account of this that appears to resolve many of the problems facing other accounts of temporalization that rightly worry him, but *without* posing an irrelational consciousness, Zahavi does not seem interested in following it up.

⁶⁰ Husserl (2001c, p. 62).

⁶¹ Or rather, to find a non-question begging one (since *prima facie*, once again, Zahavi seems to argue in the passage I've quoted that self-fulfillment cannot possibly account for a conscious life's consciousness of its own "now" given that only an irrelational consciousness could do that—the latter being problematic premise).

manifest to itself in its current moment through the continual fulfillment of its earlier self-protentions. At face value, perhaps, Husserl's solution might rather look like a bit of ad hoc reasoning also, a mere "construction" or convenient work-around if you will. But in fact, any phenomenological analysis *whatsoever*, carried on far enough, should ultimately lead us to affirm Husserl's development, i.e., that conscious life comes to itself by fulfilling its passing-by, and now retained, self-protaining: since as Husserl finally realizes, intentionality always involves a sort of *striving*, and constitutes sense in any given case only insofar as this striving has been fulfilled in some way, but with this development in Bernau we come upon what Husserl will call the "general" form of *all* fulfillment.⁶² Thus, to take one example, we find (e.g., in the genetic descriptions of perception presented in Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*) that the act of perception takes place as a continually developing unity from out of an interwoven series of act-moments, and that a current sense-experience comes to pass as one such moment of perceptual awareness, or of our consciousness of some transcendent, "worldly" being with which we find ourselves engaged, only insofar as it comes to pass as the concordant, or at times somewhat discordant, fulfillment of prior perceptual anticipations originating in the earlier moments of the course of the same experiencing.⁶³ But such fulfillment, once more, presupposes a life's having-been "aiming" in *general*, or put otherwise, its having-been "futurally-directed" or protaining experiences to-come, whose fulfillment precisely results in the particular consciousness that thus comes to pass. So even had Husserl *not* had to propose this mediated-immediacy in order to safeguard his account of self-temporalization against infinite regress, he would have come face-to-face with the "phenomenon" anyways at some point.⁶⁴ And we may remember too, in this regard, that it isn't only *Husserl* who finds evidence for the position: In Heidegger's work on temporality, for instance, we read that "since the Dasein always comes-toward-itself from out of a possibility of itself, it therewith also always comes-back-to what it has been,"⁶⁵ which gets at this same formal structure of self-temporalization as a mediated "general fulfillment."

This development in Husserl's account, in any event, leads to a decisive move in the "C-Manuscripts," Husserl's final work on time-consciousness: namely, the notion of "absolute time-consciousness," and everything that is problematic with this doubled-account, is *dropped*. The entire reasoning behind this doubling, we saw, was to have, "behind" our enduring conscious acts or experiences, a consciousness to constitute them *as such*. Now that Husserl has discovered how a stream of experiencing can be self-constituting in a *strict* sense, however, another "level" of consciousness "behind" that of the streaming empirical ego appears

⁶² Ibid. (p. 29).

⁶³ Husserl (2001a, p. 39–62). See also: e.g., Husserl (2006, p. 208–209).

⁶⁴ Since intentional activity always comes to pass as a sort of striving for fulfillment, in fact, we can reasonably assert that the "mediated-immediacy" this presupposes is the most fundamental of all phenomenological facts.

⁶⁵ Heidegger (1988, p. 266).

totally superfluous; instead, the “egoic” streaming conscious life must simply be understood to temporalize itself in the intricate fashion attributed in Bernau to its “absolute” double.⁶⁶ This evidently fits the phenomenological facts much better, for longitudinal-intentionality always appeared chimerical (Zahavi is right to insist this). But then, if Husserl no longer needs to “bite” this particular “bullet,” which he is able to avoid in a different way than Zahavi, he is thus able to eliminate *everything* that appeared problematic about his earlier account—the “doubled” account of consciousness, as well as the dilemma in which this thereby placed it, involving the threat of infinite regress—but without taking on Zahavi’s ad hoc amendment. Instead, Husserl has recourse only to a position that he must insist upon anyways for independent reasons: one backed by all the phenomenological evidence, and not simply reached through a highly speculative *reductio*.

With this, we see that Zahavi’s first claim is totally undone: The “now” moment of conscious life is manifest as such, given to itself as something like the “current” phase of the streaming and on the horizon of this developing totality, *not* as if purely from its own “powers.” This consciousness, rather, is mediated or comes to the moment from *without*: i.e., through its relation to the *other moments* of this life, in particular, *vis-à-vis* the retained moment of experiencing that has been awaiting it as the coming of the selfsame. Thus, the “flowing self-manifestation of consciousness” does *not* “take its departure” from the now-moment’s self-awareness; it is rather the self-protention of the streaming conscious life that again and again “awakens”⁶⁷ each emerging experience, or brings it to consciousness as what is current in the unfolding life.

What, then, about the other half of the Zahavian position: a second claim, once again, which would apparently have followed quite simply from the first? Were we forced to accept the first part of Zahavi’s position, that is—that there is some “irrelational” self-awareness inherent in the now-phase of experiencing, from which self-temporalization “takes its departure”—then as we saw above in the introduction to this essay, we would have to accept also that the self-presence of conscious life could not come from without any given moment of experiencing, let alone, be “forced upon” it; and thus *ultimately*, that it could not come to a life from without that very life *itself*—for example, through something like a more primordial sociality or, as Zahavi says, “concrete encounter with the other.”⁶⁸ That is to say, the “linguistic–pragmatic” and “deconstructive” positions Zahavi opposes

⁶⁶ For instance: “the activity of the ego is protentionally directed, into the future, immediately and in complicated projections with future acts to be performed. Now fulfillment has come to pass, thus the ‘earlier’ act authentically fulfills itself, although it is now still living in the mode of holding-on [or retaining]” (Husserl 2006, p. 268). All translations of this text are mine See also: Kortooms (2002, p. 259–260, 262, and 268).

⁶⁷ The notion of “wakening” is a crucial one in Husserl’s C-Manuscripts. This leads to questions of the nature of the “non-egoic” experiences that, continually, get “woken” or brought to consciousness, precisely by the self-protentional “striving” that “continuously leads to realization,” and thus, “continuously awakens a new striving” (Husserl 2006, p. 350–351; quoted in Kortooms 2002, p. 255–256). I will examine this matter below..

⁶⁸ Zahavi (2001, p. 140). The use of this phrase occurs in Zahavi’s text in the context of a discussion of the work of Sartre, in which Zahavi attempts to demonstrate that on Sartre’s account, just like Zahavi’s own, subjectivity does *not* ultimately depend on such an encounter..

would have no sound footing.⁶⁹ Casting aside the Zahavian position on self-temporalization, however, we are obviously no longer forced to accept this second proposition. Can it be defended otherwise? *Prima facie*, it would certainly seem possible to do so: for after all, Husserl did not arrive at the Zahavian position himself, regarding the purported necessity of an “immediate impressional self-manifestation,” and yet he nonetheless surely *did* hold the same position as Zahavi on this *second* point, irrespective of all the developments in his account of time-constitution.⁷⁰ Might Zahavi be able to “avoid the aporetic consequences suggested by some deconstructive readings” by *other means*, then? Or rather, could it be instead that Zahavi’s hope to affirm this second proposition is in truth out of line with the more satisfactory account of the phenomenon of temporalizing self-constitution that we’ve been able to reach by working through Husserl’s developing thought on the issue? Although it should take a separate work to fully prove the point, in the remainder of this essay I’ll give good reason to believe that it is this latter claim that must be affirmed.

But why must we affirm it? Surely, if self-consciousness comes, in a certain sense, to each moment from without—albeit via other moments within the same streaming conscious life, at least, as part and parcel of that life’s ongoing self-temporalization—then this consciousness must incessantly impose itself, so to speak, upon something like *nonconsciousness*, or upon experiences that could only be counted *as* the experiences of the selfsame conscious life, *as* its own moments, because of the process of temporalization that would keep “gathering them up” *as such*.⁷¹ In this regard, it is imperative to note that Husserl does not entirely do away with the notion of an *Urstrom* in the C-Manuscripts, although he *does* deny it any consciousness or intending: “The stream of experiences,” he writes, “accomplishes no authentic temporalization and is no corresponding performance of consciousness.”⁷² As a mere “hyletic

⁶⁹ Zahavi addresses the “linguistic-pragmatic” position—which he names in the very subtitle of *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity*—in Chapter VII of that work (Zahavi 2001). His dismissals of “deconstructive readings” are generally less in depth.

⁷⁰ Zahavi makes it clear in *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity* that Husserl maintained this position even until works of the ’30 s, despite his regularly evolving views on temporalization and self-constitution. It may be the case, though, that later in his life, his reflections on time-consciousness led him very close to rejecting this position, as in, e.g., Husserl’s B I 21 manuscript (currently unpublished)..

⁷¹ Husserl first recognized something of the sort in Bernau, speaking of the hyletic as “collected”—“*aufgefangen*,” (Husserl 2001c, p. 13)—precisely since he first recognized self-fulfillment there. But as we’ll see below, the point becomes more crucial still in Husserl’s C-Manuscripts.

⁷² Husserl (2002, p. 181). This passage, which I have translated from Husserl’s German, was written as part of Husserl’s C-Manuscripts, but was published in *Husserliana Band XXXIV* prior to the 2006 publication of the other C-Manuscripts. Obviously, here Husserl means “authentic” (“*eigentliche*”) in a literal sense (“actual,” etc.), and not the special Heideggerian one. This is also quoted in Kortooms (2002, p. 264) (he uses “proper” instead of “authentic”).

I should note, also, that Husserl does continue to hold on to the notion of a “second-level” absolute time-consciousness in many of his earlier C-Manuscript texts, although in the later texts he begins to question, and ultimately discard, this notion. From what I can tell, the development fully comes to fruition around July of 1932, when Husserl writes his C 7 manuscript. For more on this manuscript, see my work “‘Yes, the Whole Approach is Questionable, Yes, False:’ Phenomenology and the New Realism,” set to appear in the upcoming special issue of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* on the proceedings of the 2017 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy..

stratum,”⁷³ Husserl comes to believe, the *Urstrom* is a stratum of nonconscious experiencing that does not bear intentionality in itself: a sphere of pure sensation in which sensorial prominences or hyletic unities are simply “built up” or “fused” (we can no longer say constituted in the strict sense).⁷⁴ What motivates the modification of his view? This change in Husserl’s conception of the *Urstrom*, for which we have evidence in the C-Manuscripts, would seem to simply *result*, once we jettison the “absolute” level of time-constitution and relocate the dynamic of self-fulfilling temporalization to streaming “egoic” life: for the arising sense-experiences, which once again, can only come to consciousness as “my now” by fulfilling an earlier protentional-“openness,” thus have to arise, for their *own* part, independently of any conscious accomplishing, leaving the formation of unity in sensing wholly to nonconscious processes. In his *Lectures Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, conversely, Husserl was still working within his Bernauer-era account of absolute time-consciousness, and thus believed he could account for the production of unified sensorial-prominences via the “absolute” level, which then had to be seen, before all else, as the original field of hyletic unification and differentiation.⁷⁵ The problem with this, of course, is that the account, already problematic as a “two-level” theory, thus turned into a sort of “sense-data” theory as well: for through what Husserl called passive intentionality, these unities were thus understood to be *given by consciousness*—even if only an “absolute” consciousness—as enduring unities of experience, “prior” to the further syntheses that could *ultimately* turn them into intentional acts or presentations of transcendent being. However important Husserl’s analyses of the fusion of hyletic unities may be, though (and this cannot be denied), the claim that these unities are intended *as such* by consciousness simply cannot be defended phenomenologically. Sensory experiences are instead *presupposed*, and not constituted, by consciousness—and in fact, they are “there” for us only insofar as they are *part* of our intentional activity precisely because they come to be constituted as the current moment of conscious life by fulfilling its ongoing self-protention, while it is just this synthesis, as I noted above, that continually invests the experience with its intentional directedness; as such, the sensory experience manifest as an experience of consciousness is always manifest as “ego-cogito-cogitatum,” as Husserl often puts it,⁷⁶ or as “my” ongoing engagement with some enduring object thereby made manifest too.⁷⁷ But given this, Husserl’s removal of the formation of hyletic unities from consciousness in his C-Manuscripts must be considered a crucial, and welcome, amendment to his original “genetic” account.

⁷³ (Husserl 2006, p. 183).

⁷⁴ I take this to be the position also of both Kortooms (for example, see: 2002, p. 278–281), and Nam-in Lee (1993, p. 214–221).

⁷⁵ Husserl (2001a, p. 169–195). This is the conclusion of Neil DeRoo, for one, also: see DeRoo (2011, p. 7–9).

⁷⁶ Husserl (1970, p. 170–172).

⁷⁷ Things stand no differently for the presentation of a sensation as an “object” by the peculiar sort of reflective act that focuses on it (which, for what it’s worth, is an act that is rarely ever accomplished anyways, except perhaps by psychologists and visual artists).

So consciousness, Husserl comes to believe, continually wins itself from out of nonconscious experiencing. But how, precisely, does he understand this relation to nonconsciousness? In his C-Manuscripts, Husserl comes to understand the *Urstrom*, not as a “lower level” of consciousness, again, but as a stream of otherwise nonconscious sensing *in which* a streaming life of intentional activity emerges. Accordingly, Husserl begins to refer to the emergent self-temporalization as an “act” and “ego” temporalization,⁷⁸ in order to distinguish it from the formation of “hyletic unities” that makes up the *Urstrom* itself.⁷⁹ For there is admittedly, in the fusing of these unities or of enduring prominences in sensing, something like a “pre-temporalization,” as Husserl sometimes says,⁸⁰ and yet it is no *genuine* temporalization or constitution of any kind, since for their own part, these fusions (and further, the other purely “pre-active” associations that follow on their heels) exhibit no retaining consciousness in the sense of a consciousness of the passed-by experiencing *as* the passing and continual enduring of the selfsame life, and likewise, no protentional consciousness of experiences-to-come with this. Rather, in them—and this is of course a return to Husserl’s original use of the term “fusion”⁸¹—the prominences in sense-experiencing are simply built up in their *actual* endurance, without thereby becoming manifest *as such*.⁸² Doubtless, self-temporalization would be impossible, were sensation itself not always an enduring, or were it some individual and isolated “time-slice.” Rising and falling in intensity, the enduring prominences provide the “material” presupposed by a streaming life conscious of itself as such.⁸³ But this *alone* is not enough; if a streaming sensing life is to be a streaming *conscious* one, constituted for itself in its streaming identity, a “primal identification” of egoic life, as Husserl now puts the matter,⁸⁴ must arise *within* it, or a process of self-protaining, which can make the enduring prominent sensations or built up unities of sensing manifest as the sensory “affections” belonging to this life’s intentional activity, precisely insofar as they come to pass as a further fulfillment of the process. Only thereby does each experience live itself out *as* a moment of the selfsame streaming, once again, or *as* its “now” phase, leading Husserl to write that:

⁷⁸ Husserl (2006, p. 198).

⁷⁹ On the relation to the *Urstrom* of the “act-retention” and “act-protention” of the egoic “act-life” (or *Aktleben*: *ibid.*, 254), or what Husserl will call the “streaming conscious life” (*strömende Bewusstseinsleben*: *ibid.*, p. 123), see, e.g.: *ibid.*, (p. 282ff).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* (p. 269).

⁸¹ *Ibid.* (p. 309).

⁸² For instance, Husserl writes that “the [primal] streaming as such does not temporalize;” rather, via “consciousness-of... my own being as temporally existing,” the “self-temporalization of this life takes place” (*ibid.*, p. 118–119). Or as Kortoos puts it: “one has to assume a hyletic process in the primal stream without the constitution of time yet taking place” (Kortoos 2002, p. 179).

⁸³ Husserl (2006, p. 122).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (p. 149).

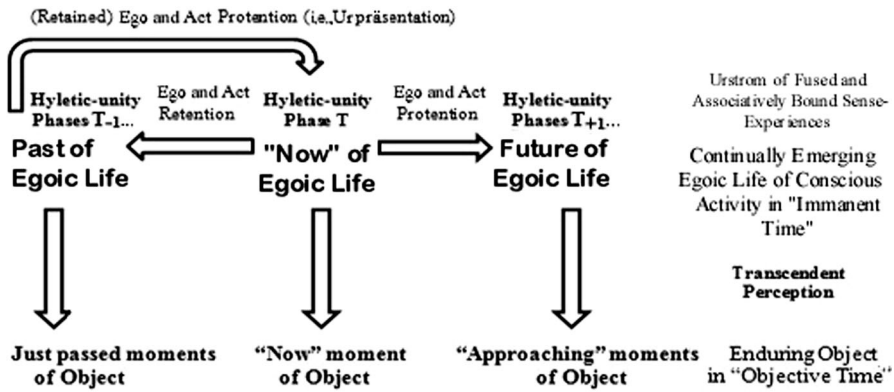


Fig. 5 Husserl’s ultimate account of time-consciousness, as developed in his C-Manuscripts

Going back from the always already constituted ego, which as such presupposes the ego already in function, [there is] thus affection on the pure ego-pole.... This pure ego-pole, thus as mere unity passing through the total life-stream, unity out of passive temporalization, [is] over against the hyle, which in its stratifications, likewise persists. From it, the affection-rays—from the ego, act-rays.... Identical ego with affection- and action-rays as constant stratum in the life-stream, thus, hyletic (ego-alien) stratum and egoic stratum.... Each “experience,” taken concretely, is two-sided, ego-side and side of the ego-alien.⁸⁵

Zahavi himself notices this “two-sidedness,” or what he calls a “reflexive scissiparity”⁸⁶—writing that “pre-reflective self-awareness is characterized by this inner fracture” between “an egoic and a non-egoic dimension”⁸⁷—and yet without concluding much further regarding its ultimate significance. But Husserl continues:

In the totality of the streaming present [there is] a totality of null-affection, the total null: background of the unconscious. Put more clearly... the functioning ego with its acts and all its authentic affections—correlatively the universe of the thematic—is, in the streaming primal present, thus streamingly, constantly “raised up” [*abgehoben*]...., distinguished from the night of the unconscious.⁸⁸

The following diagram can help to illustrate the position reached (Fig. 5):

We just saw that Zahavi does not seem to want to deny the notion of the nonconscious per se.⁸⁹ Yet on Zahavi’s account, in which givenness or self-presence

⁸⁵ Ibid. (p. 183).

⁸⁶ Zahavi (p. 221).

⁸⁷ Zahavi (p. 220).

⁸⁸ Husserl (2006, p. 184–185).

⁸⁹ He writes, further, that “the hyle remains foreign. It is a domain in me which escapes my control. It is a facticity which is passively pre-given without any active participation or contribution by the ego” (Zahavi 1998, p. 214).

is “*intrinsic*” to the moment of experiencing, it appears quite difficult, to say the least, to understand how consciousness might emerge from something like nonconsciousness at all—unlike the account we’ve been able to develop by working through Husserl’s later works on temporalization—and thus, to understand what place the “unconscious” might possibly have in Zahavi’s account. In fact, I think it now becomes apparent that Zahavi is so little able to make room for anything like nonconscious experience in his account, that he simply conflates the immediacy of sensing from which self-awareness *can* emerge with that self-awareness *itself*: or conflates, that is, “hyletic” experiencing, or what we could call pure sentience, with self-temporalization, or the “being-for-itself” of ongoing intentional activity, in which sensory experiences can come to take their place. It is for just this reason that Zahavi believes he can describe self-awareness by simply pointing out, as we saw above, that “there is necessarily something ‘it is like’ for a subject to undergo an experience.” Yet to be self-aware is not simply to *undergo* an experience (or to have there be something “it is like” to undergo it, as Zahavi says somewhat redundantly), but rather, is precisely to be conscious *of* it, i.e., to have a *sense* of the experience undergone or to be related to it *as such*: which is just to say, for it to be manifest as “my own,” the current moment of an ongoing life.⁹⁰ And it is precisely through the mediated-immediacy of a fulfilled self-protention, we’ve discovered, that the experience is brought to consciousness in this way.

Why is this important; what does it have to do with the second Zahavian position at issue in this essay, which insists that the accomplishment of self-temporalization “is in fact *solitary*?” To recognize that self-temporalization “imposes itself” upon something like nonconscious experience (or that, through the protaining that gets fulfilled, it continually brings to consciousness moments of experiencing that arise of their own accord) is certainly not yet to accept that this process must originate from without the experiencing life itself, or that it need come, socially or intersubjectively and perhaps as though through a kind of compulsion or subjection, from others. Yet precisely insofar as it leads us to the question of the *emergence* of this “power” within a stream of nonconscious experiencing, it certainly moves us in this direction. And in this regard, it will be helpful to recall a particular remark that Husserl makes in his lectures on passive synthesis. Via the most basic of these “syntheses,” Husserl claims—syntheses which he will later come to see as that of originally nonconscious experience—an action, or perhaps better, *behavior*, gets stimulated. Husserl thus writes that in:

a constant broad horizon of background lived-experiences to which the ego is not present and “in” which it does not reside [or in a background without

⁹⁰ A great deal turns on this conflation: for once Zahavi makes it, he is then compelled to claim—and in fact, does claim—that sentient life *in general* is self-conscious; according to Zahavi, infant human beings must possess self-conscious subjectivity, as well as all other higher mammals and, evidently, many other types of animals as well (Zahavi 2014, p. 29–30). Zahavi claims this, despite the fact that, as he himself recognizes, empirical evidence seems to indicate the *contrary* (ibid., p. 26–30, 198–202), a difficulty he tries to dissolve by pointing out just how “thin and basic” his notion of self-consciousness actually is (ibid., p. 29–30). Yet an account of self-consciousness as “thin and basic” as Zahavi’s ends up including experiences having *nothing at all* to do with a self or ego, and thus, fails to describe the phenomenon of self-consciousness accurately.

“lived-experiences in the specific sense of wakefulness, lived-experiences of the ego-cogito”]...., tendencies, lived-experiences of drive, may be rooted... which for instance incline away from malcontentment, but the ego is not present there.⁹¹

How is it that such “tendencies” are “rooted” in nonconscious experiencing? For a body to be sensing is already for it to be rearranging itself, adapting itself to its environment: e.g., the unpleasant feeling of something abrasively brushing against one’s legs is already a shuffling away from the contact. Without any apparent need for conscious intervention, sensation is, in Heideggerian terms, “disinhibition,”⁹² whether on the basis of instinct (“nature”) or habit (“second nature”). But to the extent that the experience “rises up” to consciousness, assuming it is to be so risen, it precisely gets lived through *as* a moment of the selfsame life, again, and sense is thereby made of the sensing-experience now “interpreted” or made manifest in this light, so that there is world-constitution—I perceive, e.g., a person bumping into my lower extremities as I sit here on the subway. Over and above the immediacy of a “sensation-behavior circuit,” that is to say, here I am, pre-reflectively conscious of myself as enduringly involved in the world, directed towards this or that persisting being.

Admittedly, as I just noted, Husserl was still laboring under some of the misconceptions of his “absolute time-consciousness” view when he gave his lectures on passive synthesis. When he wrote the words I just quoted from these lectures, then, he thus still imagined that sensation-experiences (or mere “hyletic unities”), even *prior* to the dawning of the “empirical ego” (or when “the ego is not present” yet in them, and thus, no world-constitution either), *nonetheless* are already intended or given consciously, namely, as “transversally” apprehended “immanent objects.” But once we have been able to clarify self-temporalization as a continual “rising up” of conscious experiencing within the nonconsciousness of the hyletic stratum, the full significance of this stratum can be understood: we discover here, in the hyletic “realm,” the affection of a purely sensing life, which for its own part, once more, is already *behavior*, already instinctual or habitual adaptation to an environment, without, at least as of yet, *any* involvement of consciousness whatsoever.⁹³ Lived purely in this way, such experiences, we can thus say, are characterized by a distinctive sort of “captivation”—though this is another specifically Heideggerian way of putting the matter⁹⁴—or put otherwise, are distinguished by a non-self-temporalized total absorption in the immediacy of behavior and its satiation, coming and going as bodily adaptations without being made manifest *as* the current moment of the selfsame streaming life in which they happen to arise (and so, without being given as an engagement with enduring things within the world, which as we’ve seen, self-temporalization alone makes possible).

⁹¹ Husserl (2001a, p. 19).

⁹² Heidegger (1995, p. 255).

⁹³ Which is not necessarily to say that *Husserl* was fully able to grasp the significance of the position that emerges in his C-Manuscript analyses. Nevertheless, this, I believe, is more or less what he means by the “universe of [conscious] ‘inactivity’” (Husserl 2006, p. 183)..

⁹⁴ Heidegger (1995, p. 239).

The investigation of this “realm,” of course, goes beyond phenomenology in the strict sense, and Husserl calls the existence of experiences that are lived *fully* without consciousness—or the “total null”—a phenomenological “hypothesis,”⁹⁵ although it is, evidently enough, a well-founded one *empirically* speaking; for so far as we can tell, sensing life, *qua* sensing, does sometimes go on fine “under the surface” of our own lives without *ever* temporalizing itself, without becoming self-consciousness (which is what Husserl means when he claims in his C-Manuscripts that “not every prominence is affective”⁹⁶), just as it seems to go on entirely for most other animals, and even infant humans. But what we can demonstrate *phenomenologically*, in any event, is that since it possesses its “tendency” already as a “disinhibition” or stimulation of behavior, simply by virtue of its “happening” as mere sense-experience, a moment of living that *is* self-temporalized, and so, lived consciously or as the “now” of the selfsame life, thereby becomes what we will have to call a mediated *behavior*, precisely insofar as the concrete behavior that is instinctually or habitually connected with it is placed at a remove from itself, as it were, so as to be oriented, as if from “without,” by what the life, as a *whole*, is “for.” This is to say that, insofar as it is conscious, a life is no longer always captivated in the immediacy of its behavior, but instead, has its “purposes.” At times, the instinctual or habitual behavior connected to a given sensing-experience is promoted by this guidance and cultivated further; but at times, it is reproached or directed otherwise.

Husserl may have never fully reached this point in his own descriptions of temporalization, yet in his C-Manuscripts, he at least seems to have been moving in the same direction. For it must have been just these considerations that led him to write that:

I bear in my present life my unholy, untrue, contradictory existence, facticity—but also in me, the idea of my true being, my should-be and precisely with it, the ideal capacity of self-criticism, or the critique of this facticity: at each point in time, the capacity and conceivability of another can-do, which would have determined the whole further run of my life otherwise, had I so acted.⁹⁷

But in what direction *does* this move our account? What seems motivated now (*contra* a position that Husserl, in at least his earlier work, too often assumed) is that a self-temporalizing life does not, in the first place, go on “projecting itself” simply so as to *theoretically* understand enduring transcendent being; rather, its self-temporalization is, at the basis of this, the occurrence of a *responsibility* for what it is to-be—or put otherwise, my own being’s being at issue. For to the extent that it is risen up to consciousness through this life’s self-temporalization, the current

⁹⁵ Husserl (2006, p. 309).

⁹⁶ Ibid. (p. 189). Husserl, of course, uses *abgehoben* to indicate an experience’s “rising up” to consciousness, but also uses *Abhebungen* to speak of hyletic “prominences.” Because of the possibility of terminological confusion—which possibly led Husserl astray in his *Lectures Concerning Passive Synthesis*—he thus distinguishes between hyletic and egoic “prominence” in his C-Manuscripts—see for example: *ibid.*, (p. 188–196).

⁹⁷ Ibid. (p. 18).

experience is obligated to be “for” the purposes of that greater life, even though at present these ends may contradict its *immediate* tendency.⁹⁸

Here, then, there is already a sense in which self-conflict is engendered in the temporalization of consciousness: Made manifest, the moment of living can always be given as if “out of step” with the “direction” of the total streaming, given the lived-tendency (stimuli of behavior) that already belongs to it as “mere” sensation-experience. But does this conflict point to something like a conflict or self-diremption of a “deeper” and more general (or perhaps, a more “primordial”) sort, which, coming from *without* a life *itself*, would prefigure or subtend that life’s self-temporalization? That is to say: Is this “being-there” of my own being as something I have to deal with—protentional openness as essentially the form of a life’s self-responsibility, or its concern for what it is to-be—something that is ultimately self-inflicted, a sort of “self-alienation” of sense-experiencing that would arise within an originally nonconscious life totally by its *own* power, as if a life wholly absorbed in the immediacy of its behavior could somehow strike down the absorbedness, the *vanity*, of this all by itself? Or rather, does it come—as Emmanuel Levinas, for one, will insist—from *without* that very life: namely, from the *others*, before whom, in the first place, I am brought to my responsibility? According to Levinas, the true significance of Husserl’s inability to ever ignore the hyletic sphere lies in this; it indicates a schism of sorts, effected within the non-egoic realm of sensibility or enjoyment, that has been produced by another who comes to humble a life and dispossess it of its immediacy by calling the living being made subject to account for itself.⁹⁹ But if we are to accept this, then the second claim implied by the Zahavian position will have to be definitively cast aside: self-temporalization, and so, consciousness per se, would have to be understood as first emerging from sociality, in the sense of being preconditioned by a life’s subjection to accountability before the others.

The themes that I’ve just hinted at, such as Levinas’s notion of the ethical relation, clearly all point beyond the confines of this essay and cannot be investigated in any detail here. Nevertheless, I’d like to point these themes out, because it’s precisely in order to keep open the direction in which they lead our thinking—and so ultimately, in which Husserl’s account of temporality leads our thinking—that I here oppose myself to the Zahavian claims I’ve critiqued. Self-consciousness, according to Zahavi, is “irreducible and fundamental” and cannot be explained “by reducing it to something more basic.”¹⁰⁰ Were we to accept this position, which I believe would simply hide away that which is most significant about the “human condition,” all thinking into the presuppositions of temporalizing

⁹⁸ As I’ve just indicated, Husserl evidently realizes in his C-Manuscripts (as well as other late works) that ultimately, temporalization is a matter of self-responsibility, or of our striving to remain consistent with a “constant total telos,” as Husserl puts it (*ibid.*). See, e.g.: *ibid.*, (p. 17–23—Husserl’s C 2 no. 7 manuscript), and, on the relationship of self-responsibility to the non-reflective constitution of objective being, *ibid.*, (p. 21).

⁹⁹ Levinas (1998, p. 14). DeRoo puts the point well, when he writes that “because the subject is created by the relationship with the Other... the self’s existence is to exist as a promise” (DeRoo 2013, 94).

¹⁰⁰ Zahavi (2003, p. 171).

self-consciousness would be arrested before it began. This work has instead been motivated by a desire to help keep open a future for the phenomenology of time.

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