

## Intersubjective Temporality

176

Lanei M. Rodemeyer

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### It's About Time

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Lanei M. Rodemeyer

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"Gemeinschaftswelt der Menschen in mir, dem als Menschen auf  
primordialen Grund konstituierte und somit die erste personale Welt, und die  
alle Wahrheit in sich, in ihren Horizonten befassende. Der Mensch ist der  
Träger der Wahrheit."  
Edmund Husserl.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Späte Texte zur Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934). Die C-Manuskripte. Husserliana Materialien*, vol. VIII, ed. Dieter Lohmar (Dordrecht, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer, 2005), p. 172.

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INTRODUCTION  
(YET ANOTHER INTRODUCTION IN PHENOMENOLOGY)

In both his published and unpublished works, Edmund Husserl, the "father of phenomenology," struggles repeatedly with the relation of the individual subject and intersubjectivity. Since his phenomenology is based upon the temporalizing foundations of the subject, though, he is often accused of solipsism, and his efforts at integrating the subject with an intersubjective existence are registered as falling short of their goal. Important philosophers who use phenomenology as their basis, such as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, furthermore, while implicitly criticizing his limitations, assume the existence of intersubjective foundations without taking up the existence and formation of these foundations themselves.<sup>2</sup> This book addresses the above problematic at several levels: First, it is a careful analysis of Husserl's understanding of inner time-consciousness. I take up each aspect of temporalizing consciousness (i.e., Urimpression, retention, and protention), explaining it in light of Husserl's phenomenology and showing how it functions in the whole of the "living present," i.e., our active, constituting consciousness. These sections of the book are helpful both to the uninitiated student trying to enter the world of Husserl's "inner time-consciousness" and to the experienced Husserl scholar who desires a closer look at Husserl's theory of temporalizing consciousness. Second, as my analyses take us to Husserl's recently published manuscripts, I provide an explanation of Husserl's later considerations of temporalizing consciousness, showing how he developed his earliest conceptions. These sections also turn toward specific terms that run through Husserl's later writings, but which have only sporadically been addressed in the secondary literature (if at all), such as "near" and "far" retention, "affectivity," and "world-time." In

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger argues that Being-with and Dasein-with are fundamental states of being for Dasein, essential to Being-in-the-world, and both imply an intersubjective existence: "By directing our researches towards the phenomenon which is to provide us with an answer to the question of the 'who', we shall be led to certain structures of Dasein which are equiprimordial with Being-in-the-world: *Being-with* and *Dasein-with* [*Mitsein* und *Mitdasein*]." *Sein und Zeit*, p. 114; Macquarrie and Robinson trans., p. 149. Maurice Merleau-Ponty builds his phenomenology of perception on the assumption of a lived-body in an intersubjective world: "The civilization in which I play my part exists for me in a self-evident way in the implements with which it provides itself. [ . . . ] The cultural world is then ambiguous, but it is already present." *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 348.

showing how Husserl makes use of these terms, I create the foundations for my own argument that Husserl's notion of subjective temporalizing consciousness includes a necessary link to intersubjectivity. These sections will be interesting to Husserl scholars and phenomenologists not only because of their analyses of important new terminology, but also because they correspond to certain texts by Husserl that have recently been published or translated<sup>3</sup>. Finally, based on the textual analysis provided in the sections just described, I argue that Husserl's structure of temporalizing consciousness includes an openness that reveals its intersubjective underpinnings. Here I introduce the notion of "intersubjective temporality" as a better way to describe our temporalizing structure--a structure intersubjectively linked and yet living in individual consciousnesses. This term acknowledges the tension in phenomenology, between a pure subjectivity and a situated one, showing that even pure presence exists in an intersubjective context. These sections will be of interest to Husserl scholars, phenomenologists, and, more broadly, anyone concerned with a philosophical link between modern philosophical claims about subjectivity and post-modern moves that "fracture" or dissipate the subject as an ideal center of meaning.

This book is organized as follows: The rest of this introduction presents the difficulties of an analysis that considers both temporalizing consciousness and intersubjectivity together, along with a brief review of Husserl's main and recognized positions in both these areas. Then, in Part One, I focus my discussion on the living present and its impressional core, the Urimpression. After discussing Husserl's development of these two notions, I consider the concept of "world-time" (which Husserl introduced in his later writings) as a possible solution to the question of how the present of inner time-consciousness could be shared by more than one subject. In Part Two, I take up the notion of retention, presenting an analysis of Husserl's early, middle, and later writings on this topic. During these analyses, I introduce both "near" and "far" retention, terms brought up by Husserl himself in his analyses of passive synthesis. These terms, which describe the different functions of retention itself, reveal new ways to answer difficult

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Edmund Husserl, *Späte Texte zur Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934). Die C-Manuskripte. Husserliana Materialien*, vol. VIII, ed. Dieter Lohmar (Dordrecht, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer, 2005); Edmund Husserl, *Die "Bernauer Manuskripte" über das Zeitbewusstsein (1917/18)*, *Husserliana*, vol. XXXIII, ed. Rudolf Bernet and Dieter Lohmar (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001); and Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony Steinbock, ed. Rudolf Bernet (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

questions about memory, especially those memories which remain affective in the present without the activity of recollection, and they help explain how appresentation could participate in my apprehension of another subject. In Part Three, I cover protention, pointing to its function as fundamental to our relation with other subjects. In this discussion, I address Husserl's notions of "affectivity" and "association," showing their reliance upon the function of protention as well as their importance in intersubjective relations. Finally, in Part Four, I review my arguments from each chapter regarding the relation of inner time-consciousness and intersubjectivity, and then I discuss the result of these arguments: a new way to understand inner time-consciousness, called "intersubjective temporality."

It is my hope that the book before you will offer a fundamental and intricate understanding of the functions of inner time-consciousness as conceived by Edmund Husserl, as well as scholarly insight into his later thinking on the topics of temporalizing consciousness and intersubjectivity. Through my argument that Husserl's notion of inner time-consciousness is necessarily linked with intersubjectivity, I do not wish to overthrow current understanding of the structures of consciousness, understood phenomenologically; rather, I would like to reveal that the inner workings of temporalizing consciousness are more complex than we, or even perhaps Husserl himself, believed.

### SUBJECT, OBJECT, INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Phenomenology's main project is an analysis of the relation of subject and object; only thereafter does Husserl question the relation of subject to intersubjectivity--and even that analysis begins in such a way that the other subject is taken as an object. Nevertheless, the foundation of both these relations is "intentionality," the directedness of consciousness toward its "object," toward what it is conscious-*of*. Intentionality, then, is the "focus" of consciousness that turns it unceasingly to its goal, its intended object. When an object appears before consciousness, it is "given," it is "presented," but along with its givenness, it "calls" to consciousness to know it as a whole. This takes place in two ways: First, consciousness apprehends the object *beyond* what is immediately before it, beyond the immediate presentation, i.e., the object is taken as having angles and profiles that are not immediately in view. The presentation, in other words, is embedded with *appresentations* of other possible profiles. Second, the object calls to consciousness in a more

literal sense. Consciousness feels a pull to pay attention to a certain object, and then to learn about it more completely. This is called the *affectivity* of the object, its ability to pull consciousness toward it, to notice it in all of its profiles. Combined with the curiosity consciousness itself possesses and intentionality, affectivity leads to the constitution and learning of objects in a complete sense; it leads to knowledge. But this is elementary for the phenomenologist. An implicit question in the following chapters, though, is: What makes this intentionality possible? The answer lies in a temporalizing consciousness that is able to go *toward* something else, *beyond* the immediate presentation, and that is able to *hold onto* its experiences so that a presentation can be appreciated as presenting a single, whole object. Thus, in the analyses of retention, appresentation, and apperception that are to follow, intentionality will not be a direct topic, but instead we will be addressing its foundations in temporalizing consciousness. The same will apply when we address protention, association, and affectivity, but here the notion of intentionality will come somewhat more directly into focus. Temporalizing consciousness, along with the associated functions of appresentation, apperception, association, and affectivity, is foundational to consciousness' relation to objects--but it is equally foundational in its connection to other subjects.

Husserl's discussion of the relation of the subject to other subjects, while well-known, is less elementary. Husserl's main formal discussion of the phenomenological possibility of intersubjectivity takes place in his *V. Cartesian Meditation*. Therein, he employs two main analogies to argue that the individual subject, after the "primordial" reduction, is able to recognize the existence of another consciousness. Using the primordial reduction to circumscribe the sphere of "my ownness" as well as to identify that which is foreign to this sphere, Husserl claims that the other subject, after the primordial reduction, would appear to me only as a body, intended by my consciousness in the same way as any object--as there "for me." From the point of the appearance of the other's body, he analyzes how, phenomenologically speaking, I could recognize her as another subject.

The first analogy Husserl uses is based on a comparison between my body and the body of the other subject. My own experience of my body includes a link to my consciousness, and this is essential to my living, bodily experience. In other words, all of my experiences of my own body have, as part of that experience, the involvement of my consciousness. When I encounter the body of another, then, I note the similarities between that body there and my body here. Because of our spatial requirements, that when I am here I cannot also be there, and vice versa, I realize that that body over there cannot be part of my body here. I also realize that I cannot control that body

there the same way I control my own. Nevertheless, that body strikes me as so similar to mine in its behavior and gestures that I realize that it must exist in a way similar to my body, i.e., as associated with a consciousness. With this realization, I appresent a consciousness in that body that is similar to, but other than, my own consciousness. I then see that other body there as that of another person or subject. Simply put, my connection between my own body and my consciousness is superimposed upon the other's body, so that I appresent a consciousness as part of the existence of that body, and I do this based on my activity of appresentation and our similarity to each other in our general bodily comportment.

Husserl's second analogy appears not only in the *Cartesian Meditations* but also in his published analyses on intersubjectivity<sup>4</sup> and other published and unpublished manuscripts. In these discussions, Husserl compares my knowledge of other subjects to my knowledge of my own memories. My most absolute experience of myself is my present experience, i.e., when I focus on my present, flowing consciousness. However, I also have recollections, experiences now of past events, and I realize that they belong to me as well. As I am currently remembering something, it is experienced now but *as past*, i.e., it has a modification of "having-been" as I re-live it. In my experience of another subject, Husserl finds a parallel function. In the same way that my recollections are mine but are modified as past, i.e., they are not the same as what is directly present now, the other subject's consciousness is immediately now, but is not the same as my own now-consciousness. In both situations, I am extending my consciousness beyond the moment of being mine-now to a type of re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) that takes the experience to be either not-originarily-now or not-me. In one sense, I exceed my present, reaching into past experiences in order to make some of them present in a modified way; in the other, I reach beyond the present as mine and recognize it as a present belonging to another subject as well as to me. Thus the other subject is taken as a subject, a consciousness, and she is understood on the basis of my

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<sup>4</sup> The parallel between the constitution of my recollections and my empathy of another subject is considered regularly by Husserl, especially in *Husserliana XV*. See also *Husserliana XXIII*, pp. 335 and 431, as well as *Husserliana XV*, pp. 102ff. and 487ff., and, of course, the V. Cartesian Meditation. This is also an important question for Klaus Held; see Held, 1966, pp. 151-6, and "Das Problem der Intersubjektivität und die Idee einer Phänomenologischen Transzendentalphilosophie," pp. 40ff. (in *Perspektiven transzendentalphänomenologischer Forschung, Phaenomenologica*, vol. 49. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972, pp. 3-60).

present consciousness but as not-me through an act of consciousness that essentially exceeds its own boundaries. The function of re-presenting, Husserl argues, is similar in my act of recollection and in my act of empathy, since both take something in my present consciousness, understanding it now, but assigning it specific modifications of either having-been or otherness.

Neither of these analogies is sufficient in itself to solve the problem of solipsism, but Husserl intertwines both of these analogies into each other through a consideration of how I conceive the other subject's "there" from my "here." I perceive the other person "there," but in realizing that his is a different perspective from mine "here," I extend my own orientation and adjust it, apperceiving his perspective as "such as I should be if I were there"<sup>5</sup>. In other words, I consider his position "there" as if it were my "here," even though it cannot be since I am at this "here." This conditional consideration combines both the analogy between my body-consciousness and that of the other subject and the analogy between the other's present consciousness and my own past consciousness. The analogy between my body-consciousness and that of the other subject arises in my attempt to see that "there" as my "here," even though I know it is impossible, because I see that subject as someone like me through this consideration, and because I know that that "there" is a "here" for *someone* who is similar to me. The analogy to my past consciousness comes into play since I recognize the other subject as sharing my present--our present--in a modification similar to my modified experience of past events. Given this, I "re-present" the other subject as another consciousness that constitutes this space and time. The other subject is then taken as another subject, i.e., as an actively conscious subject similar to me, but as one for whom it is impossible to be me. As we will see later, these analogies employ not only the activities of apperception, appresentation, and association, as Husserl explains, but they also rely upon passive synthesis, affectivity, retention, and protention.

Husserl's explanations do respond to the question: How could the subject, understood phenomenologically, recognize other subjects as both subjects and as other? However, they are also open to quite a bit of criticism. For example, with regard to the first analogy, is it not true that my own experience of my own body is very different from my experience of the body of another? For example, I sense my body from inside it, whereas other subjects are encountered externally. How can I ascertain a necessary similarity on this basis? With regard to the second analogy, why would I say that other subjects are experienced similarly to my recollections, when past

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<sup>5</sup> *Husserliana* I, p. 148; Cairns trans., p. 119.



experiences lie dormant in my consciousness until I recall them, and other subjects do nothing of the sort? Husserl even has a tendency to describe my recollections as "sleeping" or "dead," but we would hardly want to ascribe those descriptions to all other subjective consciousness. Finally, in both of these analogies, my recognition of other subjects remains based in my own consciousness. If this is the case, how can we say we have escaped solipsism at all? Can I ever understand the *otherness* of the other, if I can only understand her on the basis of myself?<sup>6</sup>

The key to the question of intersubjectivity lies in an understanding of "empathy." According to these more popularly known descriptions by Husserl, empathy is a sort of reproductive activity on the part of consciousness, one that "produces" an understanding of the other subject on the basis of my experience of myself. While this is an aspect of empathy, one which relies on the reproductive activity of temporalizing consciousness, we will see through further analysis of retention and protention, along with specific statements made by Husserl himself, that empathy has more than one level, and the reproductive aspect is only one of them. In fact, it would seem that, in order to "produce" an understanding of another subject, one must have an experience, or a more primordial understanding, of other subjectivity already implicitly in play. The activities of retention and protention, once sufficiently studied, will reveal a "passive-associative" link with the other, along with a more immediate intersubjective "fusion," that make an *understanding* of intersubjectivity possible. Temporalizing consciousness already includes the constituting activity of the other, as Husserl states on more than one occasion in his manuscripts. Part of the following analyses, therefore, will examine how the different levels of empathy relate with temporalizing consciousness.

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<sup>6</sup> This is a question Levinas takes up, but through an entirely different method and with different goals, so that we could not really call his project phenomenological in the same way as Husserl's. Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*. Trans., Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.

TEMPORALITY<sup>7</sup>

The root of the relation of subject to object, and of subject to other subjects, is temporalizing consciousness. Husserl considered the question of inner time-consciousness to be among the most crucial in the area of phenomenology<sup>8</sup>, primarily because it stands as the foundation of a consciousness that constitutes its world. He also considered this question to be among the most difficult.<sup>9</sup> I agree. This section contains merely a brief overview of the main concepts with regard to Husserl's study of inner time-consciousness that will occupy this entire book. It is not meant to be thorough in any sense.

Husserl's favorite example used in his analyses of time is the perception of a musical tone or set of notes.<sup>10</sup> He chose a musical tone because it could be taken rather easily as a temporal object, abstracted from its being in space. In other words, although listening to music can be a very physical and spatial experience (which Husserl acknowledges), we can also abstract the spatial component out of the experience, and analyze just the experience of the tone in itself. This allows Husserl to examine more directly how an object exists temporally and how we are able to have temporal experiences.

In a phenomenological analysis of the experience of a series of musical notes, we notice several things. The notes pass through perception in an ordered flow--not all at once, nor constantly remaining in present perception; even if the same note is being held for several "moments," its quality changes, or we notice that it is being "held." In addition, these notes influence one another; they are not experienced as a series of individual, independent notes that happen to be played and heard. In other words, the perception of these notes is not simply of each individual note while it is immediately before consciousness. Instead, my experience gives the notes as

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<sup>7</sup> A somewhat different version of this description of Husserl's theory of inner time-consciousness was originally published in my chapter "Applying Time to Feminist Philosophy of the Body," in *Belief, Bodies, and Being*, edited by Deborah Orr, Linda Lopez McAlister, Eileen Kahl and Kathleen Earle (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005). Reprinted by permission of Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> *Husserliana* X, p. 334; Brough trans., p. 346.

<sup>9</sup> *Husserliana* III, 1, p. 162; Kersten trans., p. 193; Gibson trans., p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> Needless to say, Husserl's discussions of time most often turn to an acoustic experience instead of a visual one. Indeed, our own discussion of retention will also rely heavily upon such acoustic examples, whereas our discussion of protention will refer to tactile and corporeal examples. Such examples stand as counters to the accusations that phenomenology bases itself too heavily in the visual sense, although these criticisms are not without foundation.

reflecting each other, playing in relation to one another, creating harmonies, etc. If I did only hear the notes individually, I would have what could be called a constant form of "instant amnesia," always immediately forgetting what just came before.<sup>11</sup> But I actually experience several notes in their different qualities at once: The experience of the last few that have been played is held onto by consciousness, there is an experience of the one being played that is immediately before consciousness, and even the anticipation of the next few notes to come is part of the presencing activity of consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Because of this, I am able to experience the past notes' harmony with the present note, and I can only appreciate the harmony and order of the notes because consciousness experiences *beyond* what is immediately before it. Therefore, Husserl concludes, the presencing activity of consciousness is actually a "phase" (not a "now-point"), which includes experiences of perceptions that have just passed and the anticipation of those possibly to come.<sup>13</sup> In order for this to take place, presencing consciousness includes what is called a *retention* of experiences just-passed<sup>14</sup> and a

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*, especially pp. 80-84 and 128-132, for some fictional considerations of a world without memory and without a future. The novel itself creates the "dreams" Einstein might have had once he realized that time could be very different from our current experience and interpretation of it. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1993.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that what guides our anticipation is not merely a general openness based upon the present moment but more importantly a familiarity with patterns experienced in the past. Thus, when Husserl asks himself how we would know that an unfamiliar musical piece has been cut off in the middle, his response is that an experience with music in general, which teaches us a construction which is similar between different pieces, gives us a general idea of when a piece should end. If it is cut off, we experience a feeling of surprise or disappointment, because we already had an idea of how and when it should end. (*Husserliana* X, pp. 139-40; Brough trans., pp. 143-145) This assumption, of course, is based on Husserl's familiarity with classical European pieces, which follow very specific structures. His anticipation of the next notes while listening to a classical piece from the Chinese Peking opera, for example, would not contain such specifics. He might not even be surprised if the piece came to an early, abrupt halt, as this music would not fit into the structures with which he was familiar.

<sup>13</sup> This is argued and assumed throughout most of Husserl's works on temporality, although his early works do often refer to a "now-point." Cf. especially *Husserliana* X, pp. 167-70; Brough trans., pp. 171-174.

<sup>14</sup> Husserl's earlier writings on temporality refer to retention under a variety of terms, for example he writes: "*Fresh memory*": the consciousness of just-having-been, of just-having-experienced--more precisely, of just-having-perceived--immediately following on the perception." *Husserliana* X, p. 165; trans. John Barnett Brough (*On*

*protention* toward experiences that are just coming.<sup>15</sup> At the "center" of these activities is consciousness of an immediate, originary presence, called the *Urimpression*, or primordial impression.<sup>16</sup>

The living present is the "expanded" consciousness of "presence" that includes the *Urimpression* and the activities of retention and protention. Returning to the example of a musical melody, we would say that the retentive aspect of consciousness is that which "holds on" to the experience of the passing melody as consciousness takes in the experiences of the next coming notes. Retention links consciousness' experiences of what has just passed to its experience of what is immediately present, so that I can understand these experiences as those of a whole (musical) object. We indicated before that, if presentencing consciousness were not to "stretch" beyond what is immediately before it, holding onto experiences of what has just passed, we would not be able to appreciate the harmonies and phrases in a melody, because we would no longer know what we just heard. Another example is when I speak a sentence: If consciousness were unable to hold onto the experience of the first part of my sentence actively as part of its "presentencing," I would never know what I had just said, and thus would be unable to complete my thought.

Protention is also essential to the presentencing activity of consciousness. Through protention, consciousness "looks forward" to the experiences of the next notes in the melody, giving the musical phrase a sense while I am

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*the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, The Netherlands, 1991), pp. 169-70. Cf. also *Husserliana* X, pp. 170 (*soeben-vergangen*); p. 190 (*Eben-gegenwärtig-gewesen-sein*); p. 206; p. 209; p. 211-12; p. 234; pp. 343-4; p. 353. "Primary memory" also refers to retention in Husserl's early works (*Husserliana* X, pp. 166-7; Brough trans., pp. 170-1).

<sup>15</sup> Husserl also uses different terminology for protention in his earlier writings: *Husserliana* X, p. 168, "*Soeben-vorher*"; p. 169, "*Noch-nicht*"; p. 211, "*Soeben-zukünftig*."

<sup>16</sup> The *Urimpression* is actually called *Urempfindung* or *Urempfindungsbewusstsein* in Husserl's earlier works on time (see *Husserliana* X, pp. 324-334 and 368-382; Brough trans. pp. 337-346 and 379-394), but in later works and manuscripts he refers more often to the *Urimpression*, often reserving the word *Empfindung* for reference to hyletic data. Cf. *Ideas II*, Chapter 3 (*Husserliana* IV, pp. 143-161; Rojcewicz and Schuwer trans., pp. 151-169), wherein Husserl chooses the word *Empfindung* for his discussion of *Leib*. *Urimpression*, on the other hand, is defined in the C manuscripts as the kernel of the living present that is both "pure" and in direct relation to the world (*Husserliana Materialien* vol. VIII, p. 27, cited in chapter one, below). Cf. also Klaus Held, *Lebendige Gegenwart: die Frage nach der Seinsweise des transzendentalen Ich bei Edmund Husserl, entwickelt am Leitfaden der Zeitproblematik*, (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 17-24.