

## CHAPTER 3

### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE LECTURE COURSE FROM WS '04/'05

#### 3.1. *The discovery of absolute consciousness*

##### 3.1.1. Husserl's lecture courses from WS '06/'07 and SS '09

In this chapter, I shall address a few of the developments that occurred in Husserl's thinking on time-consciousness in the years following the lecture course from WS '04/'05.<sup>1</sup> Two considerations have guided my choice of these developments. On the one hand, the developments concerned link up with the analysis of the lecture course from WS '04/'05. On the other hand, they concern issues that are also addressed in the second part of this inquiry, in which the L-manuscripts are discussed. The first development is the one in which Husserl considers time-consciousness to be an absolute consciousness. I shall address it here by means of a number of texts from Husserl's lecture course from WS '06/'07 and his lecture course from the summer semester of 1909 (SS '09).

The first time Husserl speaks of time-consciousness as an absolute consciousness is in his lecture course from WS '06/'07 (Hua XXIV, 246). It is noteworthy that he does not mention absolute consciousness in § 43, dedicated to an analysis of time-consciousness, but in the section that precedes it. In this section, Husserl distinguishes three concepts of consciousness (Hua XXIV, § 42, 243-252). The first concept of consciousness is that of consciousness as experience (*Erlebnis*). In experience, for

1. A number of articles offer a clear overview of this development. These articles examine the texts that have been included in the second part of Hua X: "Supplementary Texts Setting Forth the Development of the Problem." See J. Brough, "The Emergence of an Absolute Consciousness in Husserl's Early Writings on Time-Consciousness," *Man and World*, 5(1972): 298-326, and R. Bernet, "Einleitung," in: E. Husserl, *Texte zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins (1883-1917)* (R. Bernet Hrsg.) Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985, p. XI-LXVII.

example perception, I am conscious of what is being perceived. But how am I conscious of the moments of consciousness of which this perception is constructed? How am I conscious of sensation, and how am I conscious of the perceptual apprehension? I am not conscious of these moments in the same way that I am conscious of what is being perceived. However, a turning of regard is possible in reflection, such that, for example, the sensation may be perceived. But the question remains how I am conscious of the sensation prior to reflection.

Husserl calls the being that requires a reflective turning of regard in order to be perceived a pre-phenomenal being (Hua XXIV, 244), and he calls the consciousness in which this pre-phenomenal being is located primal consciousness (*Urbewußtsein*, Hua XXIV, 245), or absolute consciousness. This primal consciousness has relevance for time-consciousness. This becomes apparent when he explicitly links this primal consciousness with the temporal extension of the different moments of perception that are given in a phenomenological analysis.

Now we perform an eidetic analysis and in doing so we constitute the concept of experience that applies to every *datum* or *dabile* that is extended in phenomenological temporality. We constitute the concept of mere experience as that of primal consciousness in which the *datum* has not yet become objective and yet still is, and in which it has, and evidently must have, its pre-phenomenal being.<sup>2</sup> (Hua XXIV, 245, author's translation)

In § 42 of his lecture course from WS '06/'07, Husserl subsequently distinguishes the concept of consciousness as mere experience from the concept of consciousness as intentional consciousness. Characteristic of the latter concept of consciousness is that it deals with the consciousness of an object. This implies that an apperception or apprehension occurs, which allows something to appear. Finally, the third concept of consciousness Husserl distinguishes is consciousness as taking a position. He also refers to this concept of consciousness as being an act. Consciousness in the last sense cannot exist apart from consciousness in the second sense. Consciousness can only take a position with regard to something that is being presented. This third concept of consciousness has been addressed in the foregoing as the moment of act-quality. Husserl speaks of

2. "Wir vollziehen nun eine Wesensanalyse und konstituieren so den Begriff des Erlebnisses, der jedes in phänomenologischer Zeitlichkeit extendierte *datum* oder *dabile* betrifft, und wir konstituieren den Begriff des bloßen Erlebnisses als des Urbewußtseins, in dem das *datum* noch nicht gegenständlich geworden, aber doch ist, in dem es sein vorphänomenales Sein hat und mit Evidenz haben muß."

taking a position as an “intention in the strict sense” (Hua XXIV, 249). The second concept of consciousness is also characterized by intentionality, a directedness toward something. On the basis of this directedness, through which an object first appears for consciousness, a directedness in the strict sense is possible. This last directedness then comes to express itself in taking a position, for example, in the positing of what is being presented as actually existing.

In his reflections on this third concept of consciousness, Husserl addresses the issue of attention. Attention also signifies a directedness, but this directedness must be distinguished from the directedness that characterizes taking a position. In Husserl’s words, attention is not an act-character, it is not an intention (Hua XXIV, 250). Attention, according to Husserl, is a theme that pertains to the second concept of consciousness. A modal determination of attention belongs to everything that is presented by means of an apprehension. Thus, consciousness may be primarily directed toward what is being presented, but also secondarily, that is, in passing (*nebenbei*). Finally, there is the consciousness of the objective background, the consciousness of what goes unnoticed. Husserl refers to this consciousness as being an unconsciousness (Hua XXIV, 251). He points out that this unconsciousness is not merely a privation. Unconsciousness is not something that robs consciousness in the second sense of the term of its specific character, and in doing so would turn the consciousness of a background into a consciousness in the first sense of the term, into a mere experience. Inattentiveness, which is characteristic of the consciousness of a background, is a mode of attention. At the end of § 42, Husserl explicitly points out yet again that the consciousness of an objective background must not be confused with consciousness in the sense of experience (Hua XXIV, 252). An apprehension that would turn what is experienced into an objective being, whether this being is noticed or not, does not occur in consciousness as experience.

In his lecture course from SS ’09, Husserl speaks about time-consciousness as being absolute consciousness in a section that has been published in part B of Hua X as “Text No. 39.”<sup>3</sup> In this text, Husserl asks what the immanence of an immanent object means (Hua X, 279, CW IV, 289). The example of an immanent object he uses here is once again that of a sensation-tone, a tone that is being sensed, and as such

3. Hua X, p. 269-286, CW IV, p. 279-297. According to the editor of Hua X, this text is part of Husserl’s lecture course from WS ’06/’07. In the meantime, it has been ascertained that this text does not date back to those years but to 1909. See Hua XXIV, p. 492, and Bernet (1985), p. XXXVI.

functions as an apprehension-content in the external perception of a transcendent tone (Hua X, 271, CW IV, 281). In particular, Husserl asks whether the immanence of the immanent object means that consciousness must be understood as a bag in which objects are located. He points out that in the case of external perception, it is indeed evident that perception does not simply consist in having a tone to which an empty gazing (Hua X, 279, CW IV, 289) has been added. However, he adds, the temptation to take such a view in the case of the perception of something immanent is very great. In this text, Husserl will resist this temptation. He does so by examining the way in which an immanent object is given in immanent perception. Husserl points out that the wonder of time-consciousness (Hua X, 280, CW IV, 290) will be disclosed in this contemplation. This wonder concerns the structure of the continuous stream of continua of which the perception of an immanent object consists in a certain sense, namely in the really immanent sense. Nowhere in this stream can the immanent object itself, however, be found. Husserl points out that, in a perceptual phase, not even the corresponding now-phase of the immanent object is contained in the really immanent sense (Hua X, 281, CW IV, 291).

In this text, he comes to the conclusion that the immanent object in its entirety, as well as all of the moments of this object separately, are not really immanently contained in the continuous stream of perceptual phases, but are intentionally encompassed by it (Hua X, 282, CW IV, 292). He points to a distinction between two meanings of immanence and subsequently links this distinction to the notion of absolute consciousness.

And at the same time, we see that this immanence of the identical temporal object, the sound, must surely be distinguished from the immanence of the adumbrations of the sound and the apprehensions of these adumbrations, which make up the consciousness of the givenness of the sound. What is given as unity, and, as we presuppose here, given adequately as individual and consequently temporal being, is not really and immanently given in the final and absolute sense – that is to say, not given as *a component of the absolute consciousness*. *Immanent* can signify the antithesis of *transcendent*, and then the temporal thing, the sound, is immanent; but it can also signify what exists in the sense of the absolute consciousness, and then the sound is not immanent. (Hua X, 283-4, CW IV, 293-4)

Husserl points to yet another specific characteristic of the constitution of an immanent object in absolute time-consciousness. The proposition *esse est percipi* (Hua X, 284, CW IV, 294) is, in a certain sense, valid for

this constitution. The being of the immanent object, in a certain sense, dissolves into its being perceived. It does not dissolve into it in the sense that the object is really immanently contained in the process of perception, in the stream of absolute consciousness. But it does dissolve into it in the sense that both the immanent object and the stream of absolute consciousness cannot exist separate from one another.<sup>4</sup> If a stream of absolute consciousness exists, then there is an immanent temporal object, and if there is such an object, then there is a stream of absolute consciousness. Later, in the L-manuscripts, Husserl will return to this characteristic of the constitution of an immanent object in greater detail. He will then employ this characteristic in his attempt to distinguish the constitution of immanent objects from the constitution of transcendent objects.

### 3.1.2. The development in Husserl's thought on absolute time-consciousness

The above discussion of two texts in which Husserl considers time-consciousness as absolute consciousness shows a clear development. In his lecture course from WS '06/'07, Husserl conceives of absolute consciousness as a consciousness in the first sense of the term that he distinguishes in this lecture course. The stream of absolute consciousness is described in § 42 of Hua XXIV as a mere experiencing of an immanent object. This experiencing is distinguished from consciousness in the second sense of the term because, as Husserl stresses repeatedly, no intentional constitution takes place in this experiencing. No apperception occurs in which contents function as apprehension-contents for an apprehension. However, in the text discussed above from his lecture course from SS '09, Husserl conceives of absolute time-consciousness as an intentional consciousness, as a consciousness that allows something to appear. In doing so, what appears is itself not really immanently contained in the appearance. The development in Husserl's view of time-consciousness as an absolute consciousness becomes apparent when his position in the lecture course from WS '06/'07 is confronted with another passage from his lecture course from SS '09. The passage in question has

4. For the Husserlian meaning of the proposition *esse est percipi*, one may also refer to Hua III/1. There, Husserl explicitly distinguishes his interpretation of this proposition from the meaning it has for George Berkeley. According to Husserl, the *percipi* does not include the *esse* as a real component. See Hua III/1, p. 230, CW II, p. 241.

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