

CHAPTER 5

THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENETIC PHENOMENOLOGY

5.1. *The role of protention in time-consciousness*

5.1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall address a number of developments that can be demonstrated in Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness in the L-manuscripts. Some of these developments link up directly with the exposition of the three models in the previous chapter, but all of them foreshadow the following part of this inquiry, which deals with Husserl's analysis of time in the C-manuscripts. The developments I have in mind concern the role of protention; the structure of the phase of perception in which something is given as present now; the phenomenology of recollection; time as a principle of individuation; and the relation between time and the ego. The first two developments mentioned are linked to the exposition in the previous chapter of this inquiry

All of these developments point forward to the C-manuscripts because they are all considered from the perspective that is dominant in the C-manuscripts, namely the perspective of so-called genetic phenomenology. This perspective may do justice to the renewing character of a number of developments in Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness in the L-manuscripts. The period in which Husserl began to develop his genetic phenomenological approach coincides with the period in which the L-manuscripts were written.¹ As of the year 1917, Husserl develops the notion of genetic phenomenology, which plays a fundamental role in the further development of his thought. Genetic phenomenology func-

1. Cf. R. Bernet and D. Lohmar, "Einleitung der Herausgeber," in: Hua XXXIII, p. XLVI. They emphasize that the transition to a genetic phenomenological line of inquiry already takes place in the L-manuscripts.

tions as a supplement to what, from the introduction of the term “genetic phenomenology” onwards, Husserl calls static phenomenology.

Static phenomenology starts from the assumption of already constituted objects or classes of objects. The constituted object functions as a clue for the phenomenological analysis of the process of constitution. How is the object constituted in consciousness, how can the object come to appear to consciousness? Genetic phenomenology, in contrast, investigates the history of this process of constitution. A process of constitution is not something that stands on its own, but something that has a history. Hence, in genetic phenomenology, attention is paid to the manner in which earlier experiences can have an influence on present experiences. Husserl uses the term “motivation” in this context. Earlier experiences provide a motive for present experiences. The idea that lies at the basis of this, and that is only dealt with in its own right from the perspective of genetic phenomenology, is that the ego is not merely an empty pole of identity, but that the ego also has its own history. Husserl discusses this aspect of genetic phenomenology under the denominator of the acquired habitualities of the ego, and more in general, under the denominator of the development of a personal ego.²

It may seem evident that the analysis of time-consciousness is a genetic phenomenological one. After all, this analysis is by definition concerned with a process of genesis. The object of inquiry is the primal stream, in which primary and secondary temporal objects are constituted. In *Cartesian Meditations*,³ a work he wrote in 1929 and in which he addresses the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology extensively, Husserl qualifies the constitution of internal time-conscious-

2. For a more extensive characterization of the difference between static and genetic phenomenology, see Bernet et al. (1993), chapter 7, p. 195-204, and D. Welton, “Structure and Genesis in Husserl’s Phenomenology,” in: F.A. Elliston & P. McCormick (eds.) *Husserl. Expositions and Appraisals*, Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, p. 54-69. See also D. Welton, *The Origin of Meaning. A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology*, The Hague/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983, especially chapters 5 to 9. In these studies, Welton wants to demonstrate that Husserl develops a specific notion of perceptual sense, which cannot be understood in analogy with the manner in which a meaning arises in a signifying act. The context in which, according to Welton, Husserl develops this specific notion of perceptual sense is that of genetic phenomenology.

3. E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge* (Husserliana Band I, S. Strasser Hrsg.) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963² (1950¹). English translation: E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by D. Cairns, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.

ness as one of the most fundamental genetic problems, and time as the universal form of all egological genesis.⁴ Although the analysis of time-consciousness is by definition that of a genesis, this analysis cannot by definition be called a genetic phenomenological one. The analysis of time-consciousness can be carried out from a static as well as a genetic perspective. I would classify the analyses presented in this inquiry preceding the analysis of the third model of the L-manuscripts as static phenomenological analyses. In all these analyses, the characteristic aspects of a genetic phenomenological approach are lacking. Room for a genetic phenomenological line of inquiry only arises in the development of the third model. Compared to the other two models from the L-manuscripts and also to his analysis in the lecture course from WS '04/'05, the attention Husserl pays to the role of protention in time-consciousness is characteristic of this third model. As has been argued in the previous chapter, in doing so he better is able to do justice to the dynamic aspects of time-consciousness. The starting-point is no longer primal presentation. Consequently, the question how that which has been present is retained is no longer the first question. In the third model, it becomes apparent that primal presentation as such can only occur because it is the fulfillment of a preceding anticipation.

In the following two sections of this chapter, I shall show how aspects of a genetic phenomenological approach emerge in Husserl's analysis of protention and retention in the L-manuscripts. Secondly, I shall elaborate this further by comparing the results of this analysis to what Husserl has to say about protention and retention in Hua XI, a work in which the genetic phenomenological approach is predominant.

5.1.2. The role of protention and retention viewed from the perspective of genetic phenomenology

That the approach to time-consciousness according to the third model takes place in a genetic phenomenological perspective is evidenced by the emphasis Husserl places on the dynamic character of time-consciousness. In a few passages from "Text No. 2," "Text No. 1," and "Appendix I," he explicitly subjects time-consciousness to a genetic phenomenological analysis. The aspect of time-consciousness Husserl elucidates from a genetic phenomenological point of view in "Text No. 2" concerns the coming-about of protentional consciousness. Protentional

4. See *Husserliana* volume I, pp. 169 and 109, translation, pp. 142 and 73.

consciousness emerges out of retentional consciousness. Protention is dependent on retention, because protention only receives a content of its own on the basis of the content of retentional consciousness. Husserl sometimes speaks about the projection of the past into the future, or the projection of retentional consciousness into protentional consciousness (Hua XXXIII, 20).⁵

The further an event progresses, the more it offers in itself for more differentiated protentions, "the style of the past is projected into the future." In general, there is a big difference between retention and protention as far as the determination of the intentional content is concerned. The course of the retentional branches, more in particular the current intentional content of the just occurring retentional branch, affects the protention with respect to the determination of its content and takes part in the predelineation of its sense.⁶ (Hua XXXIII, 38, author's translation)

This attention paid to the influence earlier phases of consciousness have on the determination of phases of consciousness that are directed toward what is to come attests to the genetic phenomenological approach in Husserl's analysis. In "Text No. 1" and "Appendix I," Husserl addresses the genetic perspective on the coming-about of, in particular, protentional consciousness in greater detail. Another characteristic of the genetic phenomenological approach is expressed here, and furthermore, a nuance must be added to the analysis of time-consciousness he carries out in the third model. Husserl, on the one hand, points out that intentionality accrues to every point of consciousness in the primal stream. It is not the case that data that are primally present only subsequently (*nachträglich*, Hua XXXIII, 4)) acquire intentionality on the basis of a retentional modification. From the beginning onwards, primal presentation is an intentional mode of consciousness because, in accordance with the structure of time-consciousness in the third model, it functions as a fulfillment of a preceding protentional intentionality. On the other hand, a genetic point of view teaches that protention only comes to be on the basis of retentional consciousness. In "Appendix I," Husserl speaks of

5. Incidentally, Husserl always uses quotation marks when he speaks about the projection of the past in the future. Whether this means that he is quoting someone, and if so, whom, I do not know.

6. "Je weiter ein Ereignis fortschreitet, umso mehr bietet es in sich selbst für differenziertere Protentionen, 'der Stil der Vergangenheit wird in die Zukunft projiziert'. Im Ganzen ist doch ein großer Unterschied zwischen Retention und Protention, was die Bestimmtheit im intentionalen Gehalt anbelangt. Der Verlauf der retentionalen Zweige bzw. der jeweilige intentionale Gehalt des eben auftretenden retentionalen Zweiges wirkt auf die Protention inhaltsbestimmend ein und zeichnet ihr den Sinn mit vor."

retention as the motivation for protention (Hua XXXIII, 18). He even refers to protention as an inverted retention (Hua XXXIII, 17).

If these two claims are combined, they raise a question concerning the beginning of the process of constitution of time. At the beginning of such a process, retentions of already past phases of the process are lacking. Consequently, protentions are also lacking. This, in turn, means that primally presenting consciousness cannot yet occur either. In the third model, protention is indispensable in the explanation of the possibility of primal presentation. In the light of this state of affairs, the presupposition of a primal succession of hyletic data, which occur and are subject to original modification (Hua XXXIII, 13), is inevitable. One has to assume a hyletic process in the primal stream without the constitution of time yet taking place. Original retentional modifications, on the basis of which protentional directedness subsequently comes to be, occur in this stream. Only once this protentional directedness has been brought about, can an actual process of time-constitution come into action. This process, of course, need not be an attentive, grasping one. Husserl himself raises the question to what extent the initial retentional modification is already a real retentional consciousness, that is, the consciousness of the point of an immanent temporal object that was present just a moment ago. After all, consciousness of presence presupposes a preceding protention, and this protention only comes to be on the basis of the occurrence of the initial retentional modifications.

The obvious question: is retention altogether only an actual retention of an object of a time-point and of an identical point because protention has already created a now, and, with that, has created at the same time something that can be identified in different modes of givenness?⁷ (Hua XXXIII, 14, author's translation)

The third model may describe how the process of time-constitution progresses once it has begun, the genetic point of view, however, sets a new task for the analysis of time-consciousness: to explain how a process of time-constitution can start at all. In view of this task, Husserl once again feels obliged to speak of an unconscious consciousness. The beginning of the hyletic process is in a peculiar sense "unconscious" (Hua XXXIII, 17).

7. "Nahe liegt die Frage: Ist die Retention überhaupt erst wirkliche Retention eines Zeitpunktgegenstandes und identischen Punktes dadurch, dass schon Protention ein Jetzt geschaffen hat und damit zugleich ein auch in verschiedenem Gegebenheitsmodus Identifizierbares?"

Phenomenology of Time

Edmund Husserl's Analysis of Time-Consciousness

Kortooms, T.

2002, XX, 304 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-0121-5