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AFFECTIVITY AND TIME: TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGY OF EMBODIED TIME-CONSCIOUSNESS

Abstract. In the article, I develop some ideas introduced by Edmund Husserl concerning time-consciousness and embodiment. However, I do not discuss the Husserlian account of consciousness of time in its full scope. I focus on the main ideas of the phenomenology of time and the problem of bodily sensations and their role in the constitution of consciousness of time. I argue that time-consciousness is primarily constituted in the dynamic experience of bodily feelings.

In the first part, I outline the main ideas of Husserl's early phenomenology of consciousness of time. In the second part, I introduce the phenomenological account of bodily feelings and describe how it evolved in Husserl's philosophy. Next, I discuss the idea of bodily self-affection and the affective-kinaesthetic origin of consciousness' temporal flow. In order to better understand this "pre-phenomenal temporality", I analyse the dynamics of non-intentional, pre-reflective bodily self-affection. In the third part, I try to complement Husserl's account by describing the specific dynamics of bodily experience. In order to do so, I appeal to Daniel Stern's psychological account of dynamic bodily experience, which he calls the "vitality affect". I argue that the best way to understand the pre-phenomenal dynamics of bodily feelings is in terms of the notion of rhythm.

Keywords: phenomenology, time-consciousness, embodiment, affectivity

1. The Static Form of Time-Consciousness in Husserl's Early Phenomenology

The main theme of Husserl's early writings on consciousness of time is the formal aspect of the constitution of time-consciousness and temporal objects. In short, Husserl's aim is to describe the universal (transcendental) form of consciousness' temporal flow. As is well known, in order to explain the perception of temporal objects, Husserl introduces the concepts of retention and protention (Hua X; Husserl, 1991). A simple model of the early Husserl's account of time-consciousness is the following: retention—primal

impression—protention. A primal impression (*Urimpression*) is the sensual core of the “now” phase. However, this core is not self-sufficient; it cannot be isolated from the stream. A primal impression may only appear together with a retentional-protentional “halo”: it is always intertwined with the retentions of previous already-past phases and the protentional anticipations of the not-yet present phases of the stream. These three aspects of actual perception should be considered together; they co-constitute the threefold structure of time-consciousness. One of Husserl’s great achievements is his discovery that the consciousness of the present, the “now”-awareness, is not a single moment but, in virtue of retentions and protentions, extends into the near past and future. The temporal span of consciousness determines its “field of presence”. This statement has great importance for the whole project of Husserlian phenomenology. Generally speaking, without retentions and protentions, no coherent perception would be possible: we would perceive the world in disconnected durationless slices.

As Husserl emphasizes, retention is not a form of memory. Husserl calls retention a “primary recollection” and distinguishes it from secondary recollection, which is based on acts of memory. Retention is considered to be a function of consciousness, which prolongs the object’s “original presence”, whereas recollection is always an act of re-presentation and thus the recollected object includes modifications. The temporally enduring object, as retained and anticipated in protention, presents itself “in the flesh” (*leibhaftig*); it is given in an “original presentation”, despite the fact that some of its constitutive parts are already past or not yet present in objective time.

However, in order to ground the “field of original presence”, Husserl goes one step further. In his lectures from 1905, he asserts:

Indeed, on the whole, one might dare to assert that the temporal field always has the same extension. It moves, as it were, over the perceived and freshly remembered motion and its objective time in the same way as the visual field moves over objective space. (Husserl, 1991, p. 32)

Thus, Husserl suggests—although he does not elaborate on this—that the form of the consciousness of the present is static. The “temporal field” or the “duration-block” always has the same length. In other words, the reach of retentions and protentions, which constitutes the extension of the “now”, is fixed. This may seem true if we consider bodily passive experience limited to one modality, as Husserl does in *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, for instance when he analyses the perception of a melody. For Husserl, listening to music is, surprisingly, a disembodied action focused on one modality—the sound. He does not mention how the

melody affects him, whether it is joyful or melancholic, whether he is sitting or perhaps dancing, whether he is alone or in company. All of these aspects seem crucial to the experience of a melody's duration. Surely, the experience of music is different when we are seated compared to when we are dancing. Bodily activity affects how we retain and anticipate the melody. The next closely related issue is how the melody affects us emotionally and thus bodily, as all emotions are embedded in the body. For instance, the melody might calm me down (e.g., stabilized breathing and heartbeat, relaxed muscles, etc.), or it might make me nostalgic (e.g., heaviness in the chest, breathing deeply, crying). Husserl does not consider these issues; he does not investigate how the duration of objects is experienced bodily or how our bodily feelings endure. This leads to the question of the temporal mode of bodily sensations, and how they temporalize the flow of reflective consciousness. If bodily sensations can affect the stream of consciousness then how do they change the account of the consciousness' static temporal field?

2. The Lived Body and Dynamic (Self-)Affection

It may seem that, for Husserl, the relation between sensations and consciousness is unidirectional. Specifically, only consciousness shapes, or “animates”, the mute sensual content. As is well known, in *Ideas I*, Husserl develops the scheme of noesis-noema and considers sensations, the “hyletic stratum”, in opposition to intentional form. Thus, *hyle*, although necessary for intentional apprehension, is reduced to mere “formless stuff” (Hua III; Husserl, 1983, pp. 203–207).

Likewise the sensuous pleasure, pain and tickle sensations, and so forth, and no doubt also sensuous moments belonging to the sphere of “drives”. We find such concrete really immanent Data as components in more inclusive concrete mental processes which are intensive as wholes; and, more particularly, we find those sensuous moments overlaid by a stratum which, as it were, “animates”, which *bestows sense* (or essentially involves a bestowing of sense)—a stratum by which precisely the concrete intensive mental process arises from the *sensuous, which has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality*. (Husserl, 1983, p. 203)

However, in *Ideas II*, bodily sensations become crucial in the context of the constitution of the lived body (*Leib*). Husserl distinguishes bodily sensations (feelings), such as pain or warmth, from perceptual impressions,

such as sounds and colours (he calls the former *Empfindnisse*; the latter *Empfindungen*). Husserl emphasizes in this context the importance of kinaesthetic feelings both in the process of the constitution of the lived body and in the perception of external objects. He asserts that, as related to movement, kinaesthetic feelings are motivationally correlated with perceptual data. They create an if-then system, in which a perceived object's adumbration (*Abschattung*) refers to the horizon of possible adumbrations perceivable by virtue of the subject's motoric capacities. In each and every case of perception, sensual data is always correlated with the position of my body and my motoric profile. Therefore, Husserl recognizes the lived body as a zero-point (*Nullpunkt*) of spatial orientation. In reference to the lived body, the directions of left-right and up-down, as well as categories such as "far" and "near", are established (Husserl, 1989, pp. 165–166). Husserl is aware that the zero-point is not a static structure—the body is moving, and thus the spatial orientation, like the perception, is constantly changing.

Perception is always, so to speak, profiled to the actual bodily position of the *ego*. Therefore the kinaesthetically felt body, the lived body, is, metaphorically speaking, the other side of the perceived object's adumbration. This correlation may be described as interdependence between perceptual hetero-affection and kinaesthetic self-affection (Zahavi, 1999, p. 122). Perceptual hetero-affection is always correlated with bodily self-experience in movement (e.g., the perception of a moving object that I chase in an attempt to keep it in my visual field is correlated with proprioceptive self-affection). However, for Husserl kinaesthetic feelings are not, so to speak, the prototype of this reciprocal relation between the embodied self-experience and hetero-affection; between the body and the world. Husserl primarily discusses the twofold nature of the lived body in tactile experience. The touching hand is also the hand that is being touched, and thus the body manifests itself both as the material thing (*Körper*) and as the lived body (*Leib*). The structure of touch is reversible, however it includes an implicit incoherence; tactile awareness cannot take both positions simultaneously. These two sides of affection, although necessarily interrelated, cannot ever coincide at the same time. The same goes for perceptual hetero-affection (perceptual impressions) and emotional and kinaesthetic response. They are always correlated yet differentiated in time. This relation constitutes the dynamic tension between two aspects of subjectivity. Let's consider these aspects closer.

Perception as an activity directed towards an object presupposes a subjectivity given to itself passively (preceding conscious intentional activity)

in an affective and non-intentional manner. Thus, the lived body, which for Husserl, as we have seen, is constituted in virtue of tactile sensations in the broad sense (including pain and warmth) and in kinaesthesia, manifests itself not as an object but as a dynamic field of feelings, as the affective background which makes possible perceptual manifestation of an object. However, the duality in the structure of bodily experience does not imply a dualistic ontology. It only reveals two basic aspects or modes of presentation: first, a non-intentional mode of bodily self-givenness, and second, the intentional presentation of an object. Therefore, the former, that is the lived body, can be described as a pre-reflective, non-intentional, non-thematic bodily self-awareness (Zahavi, 1998, 1999).

In *Ideas II*, Husserl also discusses a specific kind of bodily feeling, specifically those feelings which refer to the whole body. He writes:

In the case of the solipsistic subject we have the distinctive field of touch in co-presence with the appearing Bodily surface and, in union with that, the field of warmth; in second place we have the indeterminate localization of the common feelings (the spiritual ones as well) and, further, the localization of the interior of the Body, mediated by the localization of the field of touch. For example, I “feel my heart”. When I press the surface of the Body “around the heart”, I discover, so to say, this “heart sensation”, and it may become stronger and somewhat modified (Husserl, 1989, pp. 173–174).

This passage is interesting for several reasons. If I understand Husserl correctly, he introduces a new kind of bodily feelings, which he names common feelings (*Gemeingefühle*) because they are common to all organs and limbs and thus cannot be “localized” in one part of the body, say, in the hand. To put it differently, these feelings pervade the whole body; they are a total feeling of one’s bodily disposition, for instance hunger, thirst or tiredness. These feelings emerge from various bodily sensations but cannot be reduced to any of them. For example, tiredness is not a state of my trembling muscles, although it emerges from them. It is a general disposition of my body, and as such manifests itself in my experience as a holistic sensorimotor form (*Gestalt*) of my behaviour—my movements are slower, less precise, the objects I perceived earlier as localized “near” are now “too far”, the other, with whom I was interacting, now moves “too fast” etc.

However, Husserl has difficulty in recognizing the importance of his discovery of “common feelings”, partially due to the primacy of the sense of touch. We have already seen that he uses tactuality in a very broad sense. Now we see that even the experience of heartbeat is, for Husserl, accessible only as mediated by touch. Therefore, Husserl does not discover

the specific mode of manifestation of the internal, visceral feelings. Heart-beat, as well as breath and feelings related to digestion, have their own mode of self-presentation. In phenomenological reflection, heartbeat is not an experience of heart muscle, the same as breath is not the experience of lungs, they are feelings which “fill” my body. In a unique sense, they define my body neither as a collection of organs, nor as an object, but as *the dynamic spatiality of feeling*. These feelings create an irreducible bodily background to experience. Therefore visceral feelings may be considered as constitutive for the lived body. Furthermore, this “pre-objective spatiality” (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 34), or, as Helena de Preester (2007) puts it, the “in-depth body” is not something static. On the contrary, the spatiality of visceral feelings is necessarily changing, spreading out, it builds the “internal” tension, and thus it is a self-affection. The experience of pre-objective affective spatiality indicates a “pre-immanent” temporality, a pre-phenomenal dynamic.

Especially interesting is the fact that both kinaesthetic and tactile sensations have their specific spatial, as well as temporal mode of self-manifestation; they have “localization” and quasi-extension. However, as Husserl notices, this differs from the localization and extension of material things. It seems that this remark is a natural consequence of Husserl’s distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*. If we accept that one’s own body as subjectively experienced differs from the same body perceived externally, then it follows that the temporal duration and extension of the “internal” experience of the body is essentially different from the experience of material things. The sensation of touch and pain or the feeling of movement are “localized” in my body, however not in the same manner as the object of perception is localized and extends in front of me. Therefore Husserl describes the spatial mode of bodily feelings as an expansion or spreading out (*Ausbreitung*), and recognizes it as constitutive for the experience of the lived body (*Leib*) as a “bearer of sensations” (Husserl, 1989, pp. 157–159). It is important to notice that the “spreading out” of bodily feelings is a spatial as well as temporal phenomenon. In other words, bodily feelings have their own specific quasi-temporal dynamics.

To sum up, we have seen that the concept of *hyle* as “formless stuff” was already inadequate in the constitution of the lived body. Bodily feelings considered as self-affection, while not thematized in reflection, are nevertheless meaningful. In other words, they motivate the embodied subject to active response (both motoric and emotional) as well as to perceptual apprehensions of the impression. The hyletic foundation of consciousness manifests itself as a pre-reflective, dynamic field of the lived body.

There is ample evidence that Husserl finally changed his account of *hyletic* foundations of subjectivity. According to Toine Kortooms, Husserl definitively rejects his earlier understanding of *hyle* as “formless stuff” in his later manuscripts on time written between 1929 and 1934 (the C-manuscripts), where he considers the hyletic foundation of the living present (see Kortooms, 2002, pp. 237–243). The living, flowing present is being “constituted” by a hyletic (passive, non-egoic) affection and an egoic (active) response directed towards the affection. Thus, as Kortooms states, the apprehension and apprehension–content structure has to be replaced by the dyad of the active ego and passively present “material” non-ego. However, the hyletic non-ego is not mere formless stuff anymore, it is already formed passively into a unity (Kortooms, 2002, pp. 239–240). It seems that the unity of affection may be understood as a coherent form (*Gestalt*) of affection and correlated bodily form of response (affective reaction, bodily position, movement, etc.).

On the other hand, according to Ludwig Landgrebe, passive constitution, which in general may be understood as the synthesis preceding the active (acting) *ego*, is a process of primordial creation, which, in its deepest dimension, is the process of temporalization (Landgrebe, 1981). As Landgrebe writes, “the functions of corporeality belong to the functions of the passive pre-constitution and together with it to ‘transcendental subjectivity’” (Landgrebe, p. 56), and then: “without impressions there are no time-constituting accomplishments and without kinaesthesen there are no impressions” (Landgrebe, p. 59). Similar interpretations have been proposed by Natalie Depraz (2000) and Dan Zahavi (1998, 1999).

It is disputable whether we can describe the bodily self-affection as temporal, or whether we should call it, as Husserl sometimes does, a “prephenomenal temporality”. Regardless, bodily affectivity involves internal dynamics. But how should we understand it? What endures if there are no intentional objects? How can we describe the bodily pre-reflective temporality? It seems that the duration without enduring is the non-intentionally self-presenting affection, it is the duration of the self-feeling, or, to put it differently, the experience of the “how” of the feeling’s presentation. In the Husserlian analysis of the lived body constitution, it becomes clear that the lived body is passively constituted as the dynamic field of sensations. The non-intentional self-manifestation of bodily feelings is spatiotemporal, but in a very specific sense. Feelings spread out, pervade, pulsate, or fade down; their duration is filled with immanent change and internal tension. I will try to elaborate this issue further by describing the incarnated proto-temporality using the category of rhythm.

3. Rhythmical Proto-Temporality and the Dynamics of Experience

One of the results of Husserl's early investigations into the nature of time-consciousness was the discovery of the double flow of the consciousness of time (Hua X). Prior to the immanent flow of reflective consciousness Husserl discovered a deeper level of the self-constituting and self-presenting absolute flow, which now can be recognized as involving affective-kinaesthetic self-affection. It seems therefore that the embodied subject exists in two, to some extent parallel, but always interwoven, temporal modes: first, the pre-reflective, pre-objective and non-intentional flow of affectivity; second, the retentional-protentional flow of intentional consciousness with its enduring objects. This raises the question of how we can describe these "pre-temporal" dynamics of the primal, non-objectified flow and their relation to immanent time.

3.1. The Dynamics of Experience

Although Husserl ultimately recognized the importance of bodily affectivity for the process of consciousness temporalization, he did not analyse the issue of affective dynamics in detail. To complement Husserl's account and understand this phenomenon from a different point of view, we may refer to the work of developmental psychologist and psychotherapist Daniel Stern and his notion of "vitality affect" (Stern, 2004, 2010). Naturally, we should be careful in comparing Husserl's transcendental approach and Stern's psychotherapy and empirical research, since they are situated in different conceptual frameworks and are guided by different methodologies. However, my aim is not to replace Husserl's approach with a more empirical one, neither I am going to translate his transcendental insights into contemporary psychological language; my aim is more modest. In his research, Stern described the phenomenon of experiential dynamics. In his psychotherapeutic practice, Stern (2004) used quasi-phenomenological interviews, encouraging patients to describe their experience, especially its dynamics. The analysis of the dynamics of interaction between mother and infant was also crucial in Stern's developmental studies (1985; see also Trevarthen, 1979). I refer to his research and concepts such as "vitality affects" and rhythm, in order to complement Husserl's account and describe the dynamics of bodily feelings and the temporal quality of experience.

According to Stern, vitality affects "are the felt experience of force—in movement—with a temporal contour, and a sense of aliveness, of going somewhere. They do not belong to any particular content. They are more form than content. They concern the 'How', the manner, and the style, not the 'What' or the 'Why'" (Stern, 2010, p. 8). Vitality affects manifest them-

selves in different modalities as the manner of modification of an experience, that is, they are “the subjectively experienced shifts in the internal states” (Stern, 2004, p. 64), such as surging, bursting, fading away, exploding, etc. (Stern, 2004). Vitality affects are, so to speak, the experience of the experience’s dynamic form. As Stern claims, vitality affects are amodal, they are distinct from the content they shape. Thus, the vital dynamics may be experienced in movement, understood very broadly by Stern, as well as in one’s own feelings, emotions, and acts of consciousness as the very “temporal contour” of the experience.

Although the concept of vitality affects may seem unclear, we can characterize it in the most general sense as the temporal form of the kinaesthetic experience. One’s own, as well as others’, movements, gestures, and respiration, etc., always bear a certain temporal “how” (slow, fast, rapid, etc.). In other words, movements have their melodic, or more accurately, rhythmic order. The same dynamics can also be experienced in bodily feelings, such as pain or pleasure. Pain is rarely a constant and unchanging sensation; on the contrary, we can experience it as exploding, pulsing, and fading away. It gets weaker before bursting out again more vividly. This all indicates that the “painful space” of my body, the feeling’s “spreading out”, has a specific dynamics and thus a quasi-temporality. It has an internal rhythm, which affects my thoughts and movements, in virtue of which they may become slower, or lose their precision and coherence. We find something similar with the holistic or “common feelings”, such as hunger, thirst, and tiredness. Their intensity changes in time, and the dynamics of the change are felt, affecting the whole sensorimotor profile (*Gestalt*). In the experience of strong hunger the feeling of “emptiness in my stomach” spreads out, it transforms into a holistic feeling which affects my movements—they became urgent, less precise and coherent. Hunger shapes not only my movement but my thoughts as well. My thinking is becoming disturbed by the urgent need. The hunger that was tacitly present at the beginning now becomes more and more present as a general tendency of my awareness.

What follows from this analysis is that the dynamics of various bodily feelings interfere and create a unique unity, a general tonality of the present experience. Stern uses this idea to explain the experience of the present moment:

These temporally contoured feelings could be associated with affects, movements, streams of thought, sensations, and any and all activity, mental or physical. Several time-shapes could be progressing simultaneously. Rather than view these different time-shapes as unrelated to each other, we see them as polyphonic and polyrhythmic. (Stern, 2004, p. 36)

Interestingly, what follows from the idea of polyrhythmic constitution of the present moment is the concept of the polyrhythmic body. On the one hand, the body produces rhythms, such as breathing, heartbeat, hunger-satiety, emotions, and movement, and projects them onto our surroundings. On the other hand, we are bodily synchronized with external rhythms such as the other's bodily movements and emotions, natural rhythms (e.g., day-night, seasons of the year), and cultural rhythms (e.g., working time). Thus, like the lived body in Husserl's work, the polyrhythmic body is never isolated from its rhythmically affecting environment. Moreover, the concept of the polyrhythmic body shows that the body is naturally polycentric. In the harmonious attunement of bodily rhythms, there is no one particular, centrally governing rhythm; different body parts, organs, limbs etc. produce rhythms which interfere with one another, constituting the harmonic structure of the "now".

However, the affective-kinaesthetic dynamics of experience cannot be reduced to the momentary "now". As I argued following Husserl, the present should not be understood as a single moment; rather it extends into the near past and future. Bodily experience does not have any breaks or empty moments; the dynamics of the experience are rhythmical yet continuous. Therefore, bodily feelings have to be retained in consciousness, though not as enduring objects. On the other hand, it may happen that the "affective background" suddenly changes as a result of an emotional reaction. Thus it seems that the affective present is "swerved" into the near future as well as into the near past. This function may be called "affective anticipation" or "affective openness". In fact, according to Francisco Varela, affects are necessary to understand the Husserlian concept of protention. Varela claims that protention should not be understood as symmetrical to retention (see Varela, 1999, p. 296); on the contrary, protentional intentionality is characterized by a necessary openness and unclarity, which will be accomplished when the object becomes present. Furthermore, the character of the openness is related to the "emotional tone", which accompanies anticipation. In other words, the anticipation itself, the unclear expectation of what is going to happen as well as the accomplished fulfilment motivate a specific affective reaction, which is primarily experienced in viscera. For example, one can react with fear when an event has suddenly been interrupted or with relief when a terrifying anticipation of the future has not been fulfilled. Affective anticipation, however, is not the same as object-directed anticipation. On this level the intentional, reflective awareness has not emerged yet. Indeed, affective anticipation is an original, passively constituted reaction to the not-yet-present together with its horizon of possi-

bilities. In short, the future announces itself primarily in my body through visceral feelings, and then it becomes a reflective, intentional apprehension of a present object.

4. Conclusion

Bodily, visceral, and kinaesthetic feelings, which are essentially dynamic, form the primal temporal streaming. They manifest themselves as qualitative dynamics of bodily experiences, as the feeling of being alive—“vitality affect” (Stern, 2004, 2010). A manifold of bodily feelings constitutes the background of the experienced, lived present, which is extended into the near past and future; however, not as an enduring temporal object. Therefore, the feelings constitute the extension of the present, in which the ego may establish the intentional realm of presence where objects may appear. The nature of the affective and kinaesthetic background is polyrhythmic. The bundle of bodily rhythms fills the experience of the present and determines its form. The dynamic form of the living present constituted by bodily feelings is not the static and abstract “temporal field” moving over the hyletic ground, as Husserl put it in his early writings, it is the pre-reflective lived, rhythmical temporality which shapes the flow of reflective consciousness. The span of the present is dynamic, it is unceasingly changing, it fluctuates in accordance with hyletic self-affectation.

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