

Husserl's lived present and Heidegger's temporality of projects: a psychopathological perspective

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Husserl's phenomenology, with its methodological valences, drew attention to the problem of "lived time" from the perspective of the "living perceptual present." Heidegger's elaboration in *Sein und Zeit* focused on the existence—ec-sistence of Dasein—projected into the future. Both approaches involve and provoke psychopathology.

1. *Husserl's perceptive lived present and the first wave of phenomenological psychopathology*

Husserl's phenomenology opened new horizons for the speculative study of "lived time" by the conscious man (Gelan 2015; Schnell 2007). The topic of temporality was on the daily agenda during the first half of the 20th century, as indicated in the titles of Bergson's *L'Evolution creatrice* and Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Husserl, even if he criticized the psychologizing movement (of an experimentalist orientation) that manifested itself around neo-Kantianism, was not blind to the speculative perspective of psychology, in the continuity of the tradition stretching from Aristotle to Kant, passing through scholasticism and Anglo-Saxon empiricism. Beginning with the 19th century, Husserl took over Brentano's intentionality, which he "radicalized" toward a transcendental subjectivity. (It should not be ignored that philosophers were constantly preoccupied with and made efforts to decipher the constitutive structures of the philosophizing being long before this was explicitly formulated by Kant and especially Heidegger.)

Husserl's phenomenological analyses use a *set* of conceptual instances that were not present in the philosophy of antiquity, gradually establishing

themselves in modern thinking: self, consciousness, subjectivity, monad, perception, object (objectivity), apperception, transcendentality, apriorism, intentionality, and so on. (So, from the time of the Presocratic thinkers until the late Neoplatonists, the Husserlian discourse would have been simply impossible and incomprehensible; a historical aspect that is ignored by his reflections and those of his commentators.) In a way, Husserl is placed in the chain of modern thinkers who, like Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Kant, speculated about the knowledge of the world by a man endowed with a reflexive-subjective-consciousness, which relates to a word-object. But, adopting the concept of phenomenology—which Kant and Hegel had commented on—Husserl audaciously backed a monadologically inspired egology, a “transcendental subjectivity”. This was shaped through a “noetico-noematic-intentionality” elaborated in such a way that it dissolves the rigidity of the relationship between a conscious subject, on the one hand, and an external-corporeal-spatial-object, on the other. The intentionality of the transcendental ego is now considered constitutive, the intentional-noetic aim is sending toward a noematic-pole-of-meaning. The noematic pole encompasses all things that it is possible to target in a human world, from physical objects to numbers and values to supernatural beings, events, and symbols. Phenomenal consciousness, filled with the signifying data of the things thus targeted, would have as its first task to describe this instance toward which it advances meaningfully.

This approach obviously undermines that background of spatiality that the subject-object polarization between Descartes and Kant supported; and cultivates, together with Husserl, the temporality of a “living present”, which is organized around perception.

A second quasi-revolutionary movement initiated by Husserl was in his audacity to place the cogitative experiences of the transcendental ego he had in mind in the background of any living, conscious person, more precisely, as a potential, which could be released methodically through a “phenomenological (eidetic) reduction”. Once placed in such an individual area—of the “monadic” type—the transcendental ego also has to be constituted. And this constitution highlights the dimensions and layers of Husserl’s noetico-noematic-intentionality, through which the things of the world and the incorporated alter-egos can be targeted.

This process of constitution turns out to be central to Husserl’s approach, in the dimension of the “lived present”. Temporality is thus placed at the very base of the constitution of the most basic process of consciousness, the perceptive one. This, in its significant structuring, supposes a permanent framing of the immediate noetico-noematic perceptual current—including sensory one—through a retention of the path already travelled by the perceptual process; and by an anticipatory intention, which aims at and is ordered by the meaning of the intended perception. The significant form that is at the center of the

noematic instance targeted by perception is actually a coherent whole (made up of parts and released on a background), which is built through the processualism of the lived present. This way—the “temporality” of the present—appears as a constitutive structural support not only for perception but for consciousness itself. All effective structures of intentional consciousness must have this temporal background of their constitution, within the lived present.

The perception invoked by Husserl is, therefore, an active one consisting of a perceptive act. Husserl seems to regard any intentional process as similar to a performative act. The commentators also note that this Husserlian constitutive process of the “living perceptive present” has something characteristic of the inaugural founding acts. It should also be noted—a fact that will be revealed with the establishment of inter-corporeal intersubjectivity—that any subject who perceives “something” finally perceives himself continuously. Therefore, his intentionality emerges from the same personalistic background. Although Husserl does not develop the theme of continuous self-perception, it results indirectly from the remark that differentiates the retention and the protention, from voluntary recall of a memory and representative anticipation of an event. Finally, the perceptive act is flanked on one side by the transcendental ego and on the other by the “horizon of the world”.

However, Husserl's elaboration regarding the constitutive temporal dimension of the lived present does not mark a complete break from tradition. If it is clearly distinguished from Aristotle's analysis in *Physics*—regarding the “now” of the almost ephemeral present between a “before” and an “after” in the physical world—we must not forget Augustine's placement of the issue of time in the interiority of the human soul. After the European Renaissance—once the problem of the subjectivity of consciousness that opposes the objectivity of the external world had developed—the cogitative instance of consciousness was constantly referred to as the temporality of the “internal sense”. Kant's thinking continued this tradition (Heidegger 1953), before Hegel launched the theme of an evolutionary becoming (of the spirit through consciousness). Husserl remains partially within the parameters of this tradition.

By placing the transcendental ego in the middle of the “world of life”, Husserl's phenomenology became an important piece of the puzzle of the new methodologies launched at the beginning of the 20th century, in the perspective of the development of the “human sciences.” The hermeneutical movement, also part of this direction, during the second half of the 20th century, articulated itself with phenomenology, the philosophy of language acts, and neo-psychoanalysis (Ricoeur 2007). Ever since Husserl's time, phenomenology has supported not only existentialist and personological philosophical elaborations (Heidegger, Scheler, Jaspers), but also research in psychology, sociology, and history. Phenomenological psychopathology, asserted since Husserl's time, also moves in this direction. This had a special status because

the psychopathological process was considered a “natural experiment”, factually highlighting infrastructural aspects of the conscious psyche, that is, those parts that were normally only involved in the phenomenality of experiences. Blankenburg commented on the fact that the psychopathological process can reveal even the structural speculative philosophizing dimension of the psyche, as in the case of schizophrenics. Therefore, phenomenological psychopathology has become a kind of challenge for the analytical approaches of phenomenology (Blankenburg 1978; Tattossian 1979; Broome *et al.* 2012).

In psychopathology, the first major evidence of the distortion of lived temporality came to light during the 20th century through the condition of melancholic depression, in which the subject—according to the phenomenological point of view—“exits present time”: the person is no longer interested in anything surrounding him/her, refuses intersubjective contact and engagement in situational problems; the subject cannot conceive a future, relying on fragments of a guilty past. At the opposite pole of depression is the manic state, which consists of a euphoric expansive disinhibition. Binswanger’s phenomenological analyses emphasized that in the midst of a manic episode, subjects maintain a merely ephemeral contact with a hedonic present, therefore completely ignoring the past and being captured by an all-possible future (“like a spirited dancer who only touches the ground by leaps”) (Binswanger 1960). Another hypostasis of temporality experienced in psychopathology was noted by Viktor Emil von Gebattel regarding obsessionality. In this state, the patient is engulfed by a revolving time, without past and future, repeatedly spinning in a sterile circle, with continuous checks (Gebattel 1950).

In the same period, the psychopathologist Minkowski (1966) commented—predominantly from a Bergsonian perspective—on the overall disturbance in psychopathology of a spatio-temporality specific to the human psyche, in the context of a distortion of interpersonal relationships, by the disturbance of “contact-affectivity” with others. However, he also explicitly invoked the temporal polarization between a lived present and a background of biographical time (duration), again with reference to Bergson. Finally, another intervention of note from this period was that of Tellenbach concerning the “*typus melancholic*” (Tellenbach 1961). The author, who invokes Heidegger, draws attention to the “situational context” in which the “lived present” of a person is placed. A person is now viewed not only from the perspective of a vital being—who exists between birth and death—but also from a biographical perspective, which shapes the identity’s duration.

By the end of this first period of the phenomenological approach of psychopathology, the psychiatrist Henri Ey (1983) had developed a model of human-specific psychism based on two temporal axes: a) a diachronic one, containing the biographical duration and moral consciousness; and b) a synchronous actuality of the “field of consciousness”. His synthesis invokes

the legacy of Jaspers, Scheler, clinical psychopathology, psychoanalysis, and the psycho-neurology of his time.

From that point on, psychopathology developed an interest in “inter-corporeal intersubjectivity”, as developed by Merleau-Ponty (1999)—following in the footsteps of Husserl—which had faded by the end of the 20th century. Along with the advancements in the psychology of the cognitivist doctrine supported by the philosophy of mind, a second wave of neo-phenomenology developed. This development ignored the intentional, reflective, and significant “self.” This approach centered on the self and allowed an easier collaboration of neo-phenomenological psychopathology with the evolutionary approach in human sciences and the neurosciences. In the new scientific-philosophical atmosphere from the beginning of the third millennium—which integrated into psychology the perspective of informational computing and the doctrine of performative languages—a series of new concepts of temporality emerged in psychopathological phenomenology. These new concepts were taken up from Heidegger's perspective: “situation”, “together-existence” (*Mitsein*), and “project”.

2. *The temporality of projects, after Heidegger*

Heidegger's phenomenological work emphasized a different aspect of time than Husserl's “living present” of perception—namely the future, which is involved in the existential project. The specificity of Heidegger's Dasein—a (human) being for which philosophizing is possible—is the permanent openness and anchorage in the future that only exists through the projecting of projects. The analysis of Dasein that Heidegger undertakes in *Being and Time* (2003) reveals a set of parameters, which the author labels as “transcendental existentials”, accepted “a priori” as structuring his constitution of being. They are organized in a generic structure, by the basic existential of the “fact of being-in-the-world” (*in-der-Welt-sein*). These “a priori existentials” are the following: the Open (Being-in-the-open, in Liiceanu's translation), the Situation, the Project, the Existence-together (*Mitsein*), the Authenticity (about the impersonal *das Man*), the Revealing the truth (like Aletheia-bringing to light, in “illumination”). In relation to these existentials, the World (*Welt*) is considered an original constitutive instance, correlative to Dasein. And in the second period of Heidegger's thinking, after the *Kehre*, the World will be flanked by Language (language was considered as the “host of being”—Gadamer).

From the outset, Heidegger refused the transposition of the analytic of Dasein into the language of philosophical psychology. However, the transposition inevitably occurred, along with the evolution of Husserl's phenomenology, which from the beginning accepted a methodological condition in the

perspective of a special psychology—a psychology which progressively related to cognitivism and philosophy of mind. Heidegger's position was otherwise ambiguous because the parameters of Dasein's analysis are placed halfway between the "individuation" of a real person, who feels his uniqueness by the fact that the experiences are felt as "his own" (*meines*), and the generic framework of a socio-historical human collective (the Dasein of a historical cultural nation, such as Greece in antiquity). Most of the existentials in *Being and Time* refer de facto to the analysis of the existence of a human person (= Person); the meaning we adopt through an explicit forcing of his official heritage.

For the following comment, the expression of (human) Person will be used (by convention) for Dasein. I will briefly comment on some aspects of Heideggerian existentialists to reveal the originality of the temporal dimension—of this Person/Dasein—anchored in the future of ec-istence through projects—a vision that overcomes and subsumes the problem of the "living (perceptive) present" that Husserl had commented on.

In Heidegger's analysis, reporting to the present time is subsumed under the Situation, i.e., current situational reporting, but understood as a generic, principled formula (see Tellenbach 1965). In fact, the Person relates to current community-cultural event situations from a certain point of view, which may vary over time. Then, the Person feels that his current placement in a situation is significantly connected with other (personal) situations, some preceding it, others following it. Moreover, the Person understands (or, in any case, presupposes) that he is simultaneously involved in several problematic situations that occur concomitantly. The existence in the situation is only a moment—that of anchoring in the present—of his engagement in the project (Project); with this, the identity background of the Person (duration) is also involved (which was commented on by Ey).

Heidegger's Dasein constantly feels in the background of the situations he experiences, his basic condition of a finite being, thrown into the world, existing between his birth and his death, shaped by the quasi-existential Being-for-death (*Sein-zum-Tote*). Through this perspective, the Dasein (and the Person) constantly feels its own uniqueness.

The (psycho-anthropological) person has secured this identity background behind his situational existence, through the duration of his biographical existence, which synthetically integrates his life episodes, experienced in various situations. But the biographical perspective involves inevitably the community narrative logos: "the Language". The life story can be told by oneself in various situational conjectures: it can be written as a biography and published by others; it can be invoked by those who judge or comment on the Person, etc.

The temporality of the narrative that is involved in the structure of the identity duration (of Dasein, of the Person), however, also functions as a cultural (anthropological) environment, supporting mythologies, histories, epics, fairy

tales, fictional narratives, characterizing accounts, etc. In this narrative universe, the Person appears as a character that conforms to a special temporality and causality, that of the narrative universe. In addition, this process is similar to solving theoretical problems (including logical and mathematical ones). Thus, an instance of the “Theoretics” is part of the dimension of the Person, supported by the various valences of the logos.

Before arriving at the existential Project, a short stop is also required at the Heideggerian existential of together-existing (*Mitsein*), which also underwent an extensive psycho-anthropological development in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, even starting from Husserl, the theme of inter-corporeal intersubjectivity was developed. According to Merleau-Ponty, it gained a great weight in psycho-phenomenology and was taken over by cognitivism in these past decades. Through the detailed study of social cognition in the first years of life—when the attachment relationship also develops—it was possible to identify the competence of “mentalization”, which crystallizes approximately at the age of 3: The child understands that other people who are perceived through their body have a mind like theirs (embodied). This mind helps others think just as the child does, and, as a consequence, he can guess just by looking at his intentions and evaluations in the current perceived situation (Baron-Cohen *et al.* 2013).

Long before the mentioned phenomenological and cognitivist approach, psychoanalysis intuited the fact that the small child “introjects” into his psyche images of his parents in scenarios of their relationship with him and to each other. This intuition gained factual support after the development of attachment theory (Bowlby), which demonstrated that the image of the person of attachment is taken over in the child’s mind—in the case of the “internal working model”. Consequently, the child “carries with him the secure image of the mother wherever he goes.” The infantile attachment model has also been generalized for adult intimate relationships, thus supporting the interpretation of dual, intimate relationships in which two close people resonate with each other within lived events.

These directions of older and more recent psychology must be considered when analyzing the parameters of a person experiencing temporality. Lived time is not only structured through the perspective of “current living perception” and the situations in which a person is involved—against the background of the duration of one’s biographical identity. Lived time is constantly interwoven with the temporality of the person of attachment, with the instance of the narrative and theoretical logos, with the common official time.

After the comments above, which could be considered prolegomena, one could move on to the approach of temporality centered on the existential Project (“to exist by projecting into the future”). This sends us from the beginning to the future, understood as hope and commitment to an attainable goal. In the first half of the 20th century, many people sought a predictable and

better terrestrial future, partly in the tradition of Enlightenment utopias and partly through the new horizons being opened up by scientific discoveries. People were encouraged to “take their fate into their own hands” and to build a responsible existence with meaning and purpose. There was also much interest in the efficient organization of performative action in various sectors, even in emerging sciences such as cybernetics or praxeology.

In this context, psychopathology illuminates various aberrations regarding the insufficiently coordinated deliberation and action of the over-elaborated and hyper-verified, of the impulsive who is lacking elaboration and control, or, of the maniac’s sense of omnipotence about the future, etc. This field is interesting and could be debated. However, on the whole, it seems that at present, at the supra-individual level, long-term plans are no longer supported with the same confidence as 50 years ago. Nevertheless, “projects” and the future remain a key part of the person’s structure (of Dasein). This is also an aspect of temporality! A new theme for a new phenomenological psychopathology as reflected by Stanghellini (2019).

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