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## BRENTANO AND HUSSERL ON SELF-AWARENESS

Since Brentano in *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* reintroduced the notion of *intentionality*, it has often been regarded as a decisive or even defining feature of consciousness. But this focus upon subjectivity's ability to be directed towards and occupied with objects *different* from itself, should not obscure the fact that it has another important, but apparently antithetical feature, namely *self-awareness*. Obviously I can be aware of red roses, fresh coffee, or the 4. Symphony of Brahms, but I can also be aware that these are seen, smelt and heard, that different perceptions are taking place, and furthermore that *I* am the one experiencing them, just as I may be aware that *I* am sad, curious, or tired.

What is self-awareness exactly? To start with, and in contrast to what is frequently taken to be the case not only in psychological literature, but also in much contemporary analytical philosophy of mind, it should be emphasized that it is not only legitimate to speak of self-awareness when I realize that *I* am perceiving a candle, but also when I am aware of my feeling of sorrow, or my burning pain, or my perception of a candle, that is whenever I am acquainted with an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness. It is possible to speak of self-awareness the moment I am no longer simply conscious of a foreign object, but of my experience of the object as well, for in this case my subjectivity reveals itself to me.<sup>1</sup>

To say that consciousness is (or can become) aware of itself is however not in itself an important philosophical insight, it is rather to give name to a number of perplexing problems. Just to mention one coming immediately to mind: if both intentionality and self-awareness are essential features of consciousness, what are their relation? Is self-awareness in reality a special higher-order intentional act, as when I reflect upon my act of perception, intending it and taking it as my intentional object, or is it rather a completely different mode of consciousness? In the latter case, is one then more fundamental than the other? Can the two exist in separation, i.e., are there intentional acts which are unconscious or non-intentional experiences which are self-aware? Are they interdependent or perhaps rather, as has also been suggested, mutually incompatible? Thus, it has occasionally been claimed that if consciousness is truly defined by intentionality, that is by its self-transcending reference to and occupation with something different from itself, then it cannot as well be pervaded by a fundamental self-presence - and vice versa. In Ricoeur's formulation:

On se représente volontiers la réflexion comme une conversion de la conscience qui, d'abord hors de soi, rentre ensuite en soi et suspend son intention centrifuge. On est alors contraint de tenir la conscience tournée vers l'autre comme inconsciente de soi et la conscience de soi comme corrosive de la conscience intentionnelle de l'autre que soi. Ré-flexion serait rétro-spection, ruineuse du pro-jet.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On this account, an experience which I were not self-aware of, would be an experience I were not conscious of, that is, an unconscious experience.

<sup>2</sup> Ricoeur 1950, p.59. As Mohanty has shown, it is possible to find positions within Indian thought, which exactly denies the compatibility between intentionality and self-awareness. Thus, Samkara held that consciousness being essential self-revealing and self-sufficient was unable to entertain an intentional reference to something different

As a first step towards an understanding of self-awareness, it might be useful to point to the contrast between *intentionality*, which is characterized by a *difference* between the subject and the object of experience, and *self-awareness* which implies some form of *identity*. Any convincing theory of self-awareness has to be able to explain this distinction, and the most natural explanation seems to be that consciousness is self-aware, insofar as it has itself rather than anything else as its *object*. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke used the term *reflection* to designate our mind's ability to turn its view inward upon itself, making its own operations the object of its contemplation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, we can describe a theory stating that self-awareness is the result of consciousness directing its 'gaze' at itself, taking itself as its object, and thus becoming aware of itself, as a *reflection theory of self-awareness*.<sup>4</sup>

Although it might at first sight seem obvious that self-awareness is exactly characterized by the subject having itself, rather than anything else, as its object, this approach ultimately generates so severe difficulties, however, that it must be abandoned. In recent years one of the most thorough demonstrations of this fact can be found in the writings of Henrich, Frank, Cramer and Pothast. I will not summarize all of their arguments, but let me briefly spell out the most important one.

The reflection model of self-awareness operates with a duality of moments. No matter whether it comes about by one act taking another act as its object, or one act taking itself as its object, we are dealing with a kind of self-division, and have to *distinguish* the reflecting from the reflected. Of course, the aim of reflection is then to overcome or negate this difference and to posit both moments as identical - otherwise we would not have a case of *self-awareness*. This strategy is however confronted with fundamental problems. Why should the fact of standing in a certain relation to an unconscious higher-order act confer consciousness to the first-order experience? How can an awareness of something *different* generate self-awareness (or vice versa how can the act of perception become *self-aware* by being the object of a different act) and how can the identity of the two relata be certified without presupposing that which it is meant to explain: namely self-awareness.<sup>5</sup> The reflection theory claims that self-awareness is the result of a reflection, that is, that an act of perception in order to become self-aware (and not merely remain *unconscious*), must await its objectivation by a subsequent act of reflection. In order to speak of *self-awareness* it is however not sufficient that the act in question is reflexively thematized and made into an object. It must be grasped as being *identical* with the thematizing act. In order to have *thematic self-awareness* it is not enough that I am *de facto* thinking of myself, I also need to know or realize that it is *myself* that I am aware of. In order

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from itself, whereas the Naiyayika took the exact opposite stance: being in essence directed towards something different from itself, consciousness could not simultaneously be occupied with itself (Mohanty 1972, pp. 37, 165-167).

<sup>3</sup> Locke 1975, pp.107, 127.

<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to find contemporary defenders of some version of this theory. In *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* Armstrong argues that there is a close analogy between perception and self-awareness. A perception is a mental event whose intentional object is a situation in the physical world. Introspection is a mental event whose intentional object is other mental happenings occurring in the *same* mind. It is only by becoming the object of an introspection that a mental state can be conscious. Just as there are many features of our physical environment which we do not perceive, there are many mental states of which we are *unconscious*, namely all those which we do not currently introspect. Just as one must distinguish between the perception and that which is perceived, one must distinguish between the introspection and that which is introspected. A mental state cannot be aware of itself, any more than a man can eat himself up. But of course, the introspection may itself be the object of a further introspective awareness, and so on (Armstrong 1993, pp.323-326). For further examples of the claim that conscious mental activity (in distinction from unconscious mental activity) is the result of a higher-order representing or internal monitoring cf. Lycan 1997, and Rosenthal 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Frank 1984, p.357.

to be a case of self-awareness, it is not sufficient that A is conscious of B, A must be conscious of B as being identical with A. In other words: To count as a case of self-awareness the act of perception must be grasped as being identical with the act of reflection (and since a *numerical identity* is excluded in advance, the identity in question must be that of belonging to the same subject or being part of the same stream of consciousness). This poses a difficulty, however, for how can the act of reflection (which lacks self-awareness) be in a position to realize that the act of perception belongs to the same subjectivity as itself? If it is to encounter something as itself, if it is to recognize or identify something as itself, it needs a prior acquaintance with itself. Self-awareness cannot be the result of the encounter between two unconscious acts. Consequently, the act of reflection must either await a further act of reflection in order to become self-aware, in which case we are confronted with a vicious infinite regress, *or* it must be admitted that it is itself already in a state of self-awareness *prior to reflection*, and that would of course involve us in a circular explanation, presupposing that which was meant to be explained, and implicitly rejecting the thesis of the reflection model of self-awareness: That all self-awareness is brought about by reflection.<sup>6</sup>

In the light of this criticism the attempt to conceive of self-awareness primarily through the model of reflection must be abandoned. We are consequently faced with the task of outlining some viable alternative. If the reflection-theoretical paradigm is useless what other possibilities are there?

Let me turn to Brentano, and to his most famous pupil: Husserl, since both of them, although being mainly known for their theories of intentionality, also made decisive contributions to the clarification of the nature of self-awareness.<sup>7</sup>

## I. Brentano and the psychical phenomena

In connection with his demarcation between psychology and natural science in *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* Brentano introduced a distinction between two different types of phenomena. As he writes, psychology is the science of the *psychical* phenomena, whereas natural science is the science of the *physical* phenomena.<sup>8</sup>

When speaking of the psychical phenomena, Brentano is referring to the psychical acts, that is, to experiences such as perceptions, judgements, recollections, expectations, wishes, beliefs etc. The physical phenomena, on the contrary, are the immediate objects of these acts, say, different colors, figures, sounds and smells etc.<sup>9</sup>

It is in his attempt to provide clear cut criteria for whether something is a psychical phenomenon or not that Brentano gets on to the topics of first *intentionality* and then *self-awareness*. As for the first, Brentano's most famous and most frequently quoted passage runs as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Frank 1991b, pp.428, 529.

<sup>7</sup> Page references to the Husserliana edition are given in the following manner: the first number refers to the volume, the second to the page. When referring to Husserl's unpublished manuscripts the last number always refers to the original shorthanded page. I thank the Director of the Husserl Archive in Leuven, Professor Rudolf Bernet, for permission to quote from Husserl's unpublished manuscripts.

<sup>8</sup> Brentano 1874, pp. 13, 16, 27, 109, 137-140.

<sup>9</sup> Brentano 1874, pp. 111-112.

Jedes psychische Phänomen ist durch das charakterisiert, was die Scholastiker des Mittelalters die intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes genannt haben, und was wir, obwohl mit nicht ganz unzweideutigen Ausdrücken, die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt, die Richtung auf ein Objekt (worunter hier nicht eine Realität zu verstehen ist), oder die immanente Gegenständlichkeit nennen würden. Jedes enthält etwas als Objekt in sich, obwohl nicht jedes in gleicher Weise. In der Vorstellung ist etwas vorgestellt, in dem Urteile ist etwas anerkannt oder verworfen, in der Liebe geliebt, in dem Hasse gehaßt, in dem Begehren begehrt usw.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas all psychical phenomena are in possession of intentionality, this is not true of any physical phenomena, and Brentano can consequently define the psychical phenomenon as the phenomenon which *contains* an intentional object.<sup>11</sup>

As should be obvious, Brentano's description and choice of words is not only somewhat puzzling, it is also rather unfortunate. As Chisholm has later argued, it contains a tension between an *ontological* and a *psychological* thesis.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, Brentano apparently adopts a scholastic terminology and speaks of the object's intentional (in)existence in consciousness. The object of the intention is contained immanently in the psychical act, and the *existential mode* of this object is therefore called intentional. On the other hand, Brentano also claims that the psychical phenomenon is characterized by its *directedness* at or *reference* to an object.<sup>13</sup> Thus we can alternately speak of the intentional (in)existence of the object, and of the intentional directedness of the act. Although these two features are by no means identical, they are nevertheless brought together in Brentano's (early) theory of intentionality, insofar as he claims that consciousness is intentionally directed at an intentionally (in)existing object.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Brentano 1874, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Brentano 1874, pp. 125, 128.

<sup>12</sup> Chisholm 1967, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> Brentano 1874, p.137.

<sup>14</sup> After his so-called 'immanence crisis' (in 1905 - that is, 31 years after the publication of *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*), Brentano quite explicitly distanced himself from the ontological thesis concerning the object's intentional (in)existence and in a letter to Marty from April 17, 1905 he even claims that he has never defended such a view, but that his theory has been consistently misinterpreted by his pupils - including Twardowski and Husserl (Brentano 1962, pp.89-90). Whether Brentano's late self-interpretation is correct is an open question, but it is fairly obvious that his early theory of intentionality is decisively flawed. This claim is further corroborated if one takes a closer look at Brentano's description of the *physical* phenomena. Brentano's distinction between the two classes of phenomena is, as he himself writes, only valid for the world of *appearance* (Brentano 1874, p.109). It is this world - and only this world - which contains physical and psychical phenomena, whereas the real (extramental) world is transphenomenal. In the light of his *sceptical realism* - which somewhat malignant might be characterized as a mixture of lockeanism and vulgarised kantianism -, Brentano accepts the distinction between the phenomenon and the objectively existing, between the intentional and the real mode of existence, and claims that the physical phenomena are mere intramental entities. They only exist insofar as they are intended (*esse est percipi*), and they lack objective existence. Ultimately, they are signs of something real - Brentano mentions molecular oscillations -, and they are produced when our sensory apparatus is influenced causally (Brentano 1874, pp. 13-14, 28, 66-67). Thus, Brentano denies that the object of experience, the physical phenomenon, is a veridical reproduction of its cause, for which reason our perception should not at all be classified as a 'Wahrnehmung' (Brentano 1874, p.128); or as it is formulated even more emphatically: "Es liegt demnach für die Gegenstände der Sinnesempfindung der volle Beweis ihrer Falschheit vor"(Brentano 1874, p.14). "Denn, wie schon gesagt, geben uns die physischen Phänomene der Farbe, des Tones und der Temperatur, sowie auch das der örtlichen Bestimmtheit von den Wirklichkeiten, durch deren Einfluß sie in uns zur Erscheinung kommen, keine

Brentano now continues his analysis by turning to self-awareness, or as he calls it *inner consciousness* (*inneres Bewußtsein*). As we have just seen, Brentano takes consciousness to be characterized by a reference to an object, namely to the object that it is conscious of. But as he then points out, the term ‘conscious’, can be used in a twofold sense. On the one hand, we say of an act that it is conscious, insofar as it is aware of an object. On the other hand, we say of an object that it is conscious, insofar as one is aware of it. All psychical acts are characterized by their being conscious of something. The question is whether they are also conscious in the second sense, that is, whether one is also aware of them, or whether one must deny this and consequently admit the existence of *unconscious* psychical acts.<sup>15</sup>

Brentano examines four different reasons for accepting the existence of an *unconscious* consciousness (that is a consciousness which is intentionally directed towards an object, but which lacks self-awareness), but it is only the last one which is of relevance in this context. It has been claimed that *if* all psychical acts were conscious, that is, themselves something one were aware of, one would be faced with a vicious infinite regress. In order to avoid this, one has to deny the premise and consequently accept unconscious psychical acts. What is the argument? Let us take a simple act as example, for instance the perception [*Vorstellung*] of a tone. If no psychical phenomenon were possible without being itself conscious, that is, the object of a higher-order consciousness, then one would have two different perceptions when perceiving a tone: (1) the perception of a tone, and (2) the perception of the perception of the tone. However, the multiplication would not stop here, since the perception of the perception of the tone would also have to be conscious. Thus, we would also have (3) the perception of the perception of the perception of the tone, and so forth *ad infinitum*. Furthermore, as Brentano points out, this would not be the only problem. If the perception of the tone were really the object of a higher-order perception, it would imply that the tone would be perceived twice. And in the perception of the perception of the perception of the tone, we would have the tone as object thrice, whereas the original perception would be perceived twice, and so forth. Thus, the regress would be of an exceedingly vicious kind, implying in addition to the simple infinite iteration a simultaneous complication of its single members.<sup>16</sup> Since this consequence is absurd, that is, since it is absurd that even as simple an act as the perception of a tone should involve an infinite complex series of psychical acts, one has to close the regress by accepting the existence of unconscious psychical acts, i.e., one must accept the existence of intentional acts which lack self-awareness.<sup>17</sup>

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Vorstellung. Wir können sagen, daß es solche Wirklichkeiten gibt, wir können gewisse relative Bestimmungen von ihnen aussagen; was aber und wie sie an und für sich sind, bleibt uns völlig undenkbar” (Brentano 1874, pp.86-87). Although Husserl’s theory of intentionality was developed against the background of Brentano’s (and Twardowski’s) analyses, it also had the form of an explicit confrontation with and criticism of their theories. A criticism so fundamental that any identification of their theories is absolutely misleading. As Heidegger wrote in 1925: “Man darf also nicht, um die phänomenologische Intentionalität zu widerlegen, einfach *Brentano* kritisieren! Damit gibt man von vornherein das Thema aus der Hand”(Heidegger 1979, p.62). For a detailed presentation of respectively Husserl’s criticism of Brentano, and of the difference between Brentano’s and Thomas Aquinas’ notion of intentionality cf. Zahavi 1992 and Zahavi 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Brentano 1874, pp.142-143.

<sup>16</sup> Brentano 1874, p.171.

<sup>17</sup> Brentano 1874, p.171. This type of reasoning can be found in Ryle, who writes as follows: “[E]ven though the self-intimation supposed to be inherent in any mental state or process is not described as requiring a separate act of attention, or as constituting a separate cognitive operation, still what I am conscious of in a process of inferring, say, is different from what the inferring is an apprehension of. My consciousness is of a process of inferring, but my inferring is, perhaps, of a geometrical conclusion from geometrical premisses. The verbal expression of my

Brentano, however, will not accept this conclusion, since it would imply that the self-awareness which we do after all have originates out of the unconscious, and he consequently has to propose an alternative model of self-awareness, which avoids the regress, and which furthermore avoids being incompatible with the basic facts. As Brentano points out, we need a theory of self-awareness which does not render its certainty and immediate evidence impossible, and this is exactly what happens if we take self-awareness to be an intentional relation between two different intentional acts; that is, this approach makes it impossible to account for the infallibility of self-awareness.<sup>18</sup>

If we examine the phenomena once more, nobody will deny that we are occasionally aware of a psychical act while it happens. While hearing a tone, we can be aware of hearing it. What is the structure of our consciousness in this case? We have a perception of a tone, and an awareness of the perception, and consequently two objects: the tone and its perception. Contrary to the account first offered we do not, however, have two psychical acts! As Brentano points out, the perception of the tone is so intrinsically and intimately united with the awareness of the perception of the tone, that they only constitute one single act, only one single psychical phenomenon. Their apparent separation is merely due to a conceptual differentiation:

In demselben psychischen Phänomen, in welchem der Ton vorgestellt wird, erfassen wir zugleich das psychische Phänomen selbst, und zwar nach seiner doppelten Eigentümlichkeit, insofern es als Inhalt den Ton in sich hat, und insofern es zugleich sich selbst als Inhalt gegenwärtig ist. Wir können den Ton das primäre, das Hören selbst das sekundäre Objekt des Hörens nennen. Denn zeitlich treten sie zwar beide zugleich auf, aber der Natur der Sache nach ist der Ton das frühere. Eine Vorstellung des Tones ohne Vorstellung des Hörens wäre, von vornherein wenigstens, nicht undenkbar; eine Vorstellung des Hörens ohne Vorstellung des Tones dagegen ein offener Widerspruch. Dem Tone erscheint das Hören im eigentlichsten Sinne zugewandt, und indem es dieses ist, scheint es sich selbst nebenbei und als Zugabe mit zu erfassen.<sup>19</sup>

Brentano consequently avoids the regress by claiming that every psychical act is conscious, insofar as it has itself as object. Thus, even as simple an act as the hearing of a tone has a double object, a primary and a secondary. The primary and thematic object is the tone, the secondary and unthematic object is the hearing.<sup>20</sup> It is important to notice, however, that the secondary

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inference might be, 'because this is an equilateral triangle, therefore each angle is 60 degrees', but the verbal expression of what I am conscious of might be 'Here I am deducing such and such from so and so'. But, if so, then it would seem to make sense to ask whether, according to the doctrine, I am not also conscious of being conscious of inferring, that is, in a position to say 'Here I am spotting the fact that here I am deducing such and such from so and so'. And then there would be no stopping-place; there would have to be an infinite number of onion-skins of consciousness embedding any mental state to process whatsoever. If this conclusion is rejected, then it will have to be allowed that some elements in mental processes are not themselves things we can be conscious of, namely those elements which constitute the supposed outermost self-intimations of mental processes; and then 'conscious' could no longer be retained as part of the definition of 'mental'." (Ryle 1949, pp.162-163).

<sup>18</sup> Brentano 1874, p.199.

<sup>19</sup> Brentano 1874, pp.179-180.

<sup>20</sup> This account gets somewhat more complicated the moment Brentano starts applying his distinction between perception, judgment and feeling to self-awareness, ultimately claiming that we have a threefold awareness of the act itself: "Und somit hat jeder, auch der einfachste psychische Akt eine vierfache Seite, von welcher er betrachtet

object of the act although conscious is not thematically observed (*beobachtet*). To observe something thematically is to take it as one's primary object, and for the act to do this with itself is strictly impossible. The tone which we hear is observed, the hearing of the tone not, since it is only by observing the tone, that we are aware of the hearing; only by intending the primary object, that we are aware of the secondary object. Thus, Brentano gives priority to intentionality, describing it as a precondition for self-awareness, rather than the other way around. The outcome of this is that Brentano actually denies the possibility (and not merely the primacy) of a reflective relation between *two* simultaneously existing acts, operating instead with 1) the unthematic self-awareness of a *self-reflexive* act and, 2) with a thematic *retrospective* self-awareness, since we can observe a past act, and take it as our primary object (in this case the present act of retrospection would be our secondary object).<sup>21</sup>

The only remaining question which has to be answered is one which Brentano raises himself. If I hear a tone, I am co-conscious of my hearing, but am I also conscious of this peculiar co-consciousness? Brentano answers the question by saying that his analysis has exactly shown that the awareness of the hearing of the tone coincides with the awareness of this awareness. Thus, the awareness which accompanies the hearing of the tone, is after all an awareness of not only the hearing of the tone, but of the entire psychical act (including itself).<sup>22</sup>

Is this account of self-awareness acceptable? Brentano is certainly right in claiming that our intentional act does not need to await a secondary act of reflection in order to become self-aware. But although his account of how this self-awareness is to be explained avoids the problem confronting the version of the reflection theory which takes reflection to be a relation between two different acts, his own proposal is, as Cramer and Pothast have shown, faced with an equally disastrous problem. An act which has a tone as its primary object is to be conscious by having itself as its secondary object. But if the latter is really to result in self-awareness, it has to comprise the entire act, and not only the part of it which is conscious of the tone. That is, the secondary object of the perception should not merely be the perception of the tone, but the perception which is aware of both the tone and of itself. As I have just quoted: "In demselben psychischen Phänomen, in welchem der Ton vorgestellt wird, erfassen wir zugleich das psychische Phänomen selbst, und zwar nach seiner doppelten Eigentümlichkeit, insofern es als Inhalt den Ton in sich hat, und insofern es zugleich sich selbst als Inhalt gegenwärtig ist." But in this case, self-awareness is interpreted as an awareness of a secondary object, which is already in possession of self-awareness, and as an explanation this circularity will not do.<sup>23</sup>

If it is acknowledged that part of the reason for the failure of the reflection theory is due to its attempt to understand and explain self-awareness through the subject-object model, one might reasonably ask if Brentano's failure was not due to a lack of radicality? Despite his criticism of the reflection theory, he continues to speak of consciousness taking itself as its own object, and thus of self-awareness as a (secondary) object-awareness. However, as Henrich points out, it will not solve the problem simply to speak of consciousness being *per se* furnished with a reflective relation, which does not need to be brought forth by a separate act, for the

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werden kann. Er kann betrachtet werden als Vorstellung seines primären Objektes, wie z.B. der Akt, in welchem ein Ton empfunden wird, als Hören; er kann aber auch betrachtet werden als Vorstellung seiner selbst, als Erkenntnis seiner selbst und als Gefühl seiner selbst."(Brentano 1874, pp.218-219). This aspect of his theory is, however, of no immediate relevance to us.

<sup>21</sup> Brentano 1874, pp.41, 181, Brentano 1928, pp.15, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Brentano 1874, pp.182-183.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Pothast 1971, p.75 and Cramer 1974, p.581. See also Henrich 1970, p.261.

circularity in the concept of such a self-related knowledge is not removed by attributing to it a quality of immediacy.<sup>24</sup> Thus, although Brentano's theory has occasionally been described as a genuine theory of pre-reflective self-awareness, I think it must be realized that it is in fact merely a more unusual version of the reflection theory.

## II. Husserl and the problem of self-manifestation

Let me change the focus and turn to Husserl. Can he provide us with a true alternative to the reflection theory? A not uncommon answer has been no. Thus, Henrich, Frank and Tugendhat all accuse Husserl of defending a reflection theory of self-awareness - of taking object-intentionality as the paradigm of every kind of awareness. As Frank puts it, Husserl's entire investigation of consciousness is based on the tacit assumption that consciousness is conscious of something different from itself. Due to this fixation on *intentionality* Husserl never managed to escape the reflection theory of self-awareness. He persistently operated with a model of self-awareness based upon the subject-object dichotomy, with its entailed *difference* between the intending and the intended, and therefore never discovered the existence of a pre-reflective self-awareness.<sup>25</sup>

This criticism must be rejected, however. The notion of pre-reflective self-awareness is not only to be found in Husserl, he also subjects it to a highly illuminating analysis. It is true that one rarely finds analyses dedicated explicitly and exclusively to the problem of self-awareness in Husserl. But this is by no means because the topic is absent, on the contrary, but rather because Husserl's reflections on this problem are usually integrated into his analysis of a number of related issues, such as the nature of intentionality, space, the body, temporality, attention, intersubjectivity etc. This fact makes any attempt at a more systematic account both challenging and rewarding. Rewarding because Husserl's phenomenological analysis of self-awareness is of a far more detailed, concrete and substantial nature than the more formal considerations to be found in the writings of for instance Frank or Henrich. Challenging because although there is a profound and complex theory of self-awareness to be found in Husserl's writings, it is a theory that will first have to be pieced together, and simply to isolate the relevant elements and avoid getting lost in the adjacent discussions will demand a distinct effort. Since space will not allow me to outline the full scope of Husserl's theory, I will in the following content myself with arguing that Husserl does operate with a notion of a pre-reflective self-awareness, which furthermore avoids the problems inherent in Brentano's theory.

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<sup>24</sup> Henrich 1970, pp.267-268.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Henrich 1966, p. 231, Tugendhat 1979, pp.52-53, and especially Frank 1984, p.300, 1986, pp. 43-45, 1990, pp.53-57, 1991b, pp.530-531, 536. It is somewhat amazing to encounter Frank's Husserl-interpretation. As anyone familiar with Husserl's writings will know, Husserl already in *Logische Untersuchungen* distanced himself from Brentano's characterization of the psychical phenomena as being essential intentional, by claiming that there are experiences which lack intentionality (Hua 19/382). And when Husserl was later to investigate the entire realm of passivity and temporality he also disclosed dimensions of subjectivity not characterized by object-intentionality. Frank's critique is marked by a rather unfortunate tendency to simply presuppose a certain (faulty) interpretation of Husserl's thinking, and every time Frank then encounters passages where Husserl says otherwise, he either misinterprets them or rejects them as being 'aporetical' or 'mystical' (Frank 1990, pp.52-53). - In contrast, one might point out that already Sartre acknowledged that Husserl had decried the pre-reflective being of consciousness (cf. Sartre 1948, p.88).



Before I start, however, it might not be superfluous to spell out why exactly a clarification of the nature of self-awareness is of paramount importance to phenomenology. As Michel Henry has convincingly pointed out, the task of a radical (that is, transcendental) phenomenology is by no means to describe objects as precisely and detailed as possible, nor to investigate the phenomena in all their ontic diversity, but to examine their very manifestation and its condition of possibility.<sup>26</sup> The whole point in executing the epoché and the transcendental reduction is exactly to break loose from the natural attitude which remains spellbound by mundane affairs, and to carry out an unnatural reflection that permits us to analyse something which has always been there but which we have never (systematically) paid attention to, namely *appearance*. When we start examining the appearance we discover that it is characterized by a *dyadic* structure: an appearance is an appearance of something for somebody, and at this point a central question, which both Kant, Husserl and Heidegger fought with, emerges. If it is acknowledged that the manifestation of say penknives and orchards have a dyadic structure, what about transcendental subjectivity itself? Does the condition of possibility for manifestation manifest itself? Can that which conditions all phenomena become a phenomenon itself?<sup>27</sup> And if yes, does its appearance also have a dyadic structure, is it an appearance of something for somebody? The answer to the last question must presumably be negative. If the appearance of subjectivity were dyadic, it would involve us in an infinite regress, insofar as there would always be yet another dative of manifestation. Against this background it is tempting to answer no to the first question as well. If the transcendental condition were to become a phenomenon itself, it would no longer be that which conditions, but something that were itself conditioned. But to deny that transcendental subjectivity manifests itself would be a bitter pill to swallow, since it would once and for all make a phenomenological examination of transcendental subjectivity impossible.

According to Michel Henry, the entire history of Western thought has been dominated by what he calls an *ontological monism*, that is by the assumption that there is only one kind of manifestation, only one kind of phenomenality. Thus, it has been taken for granted that to be given were always to be given as an object. Needless to say, this principle of *ontological monism* has also infiltrated the traditional understanding of self-awareness. Self-awareness has been interpreted as being the product of a reflection or introspection, i.e., the result of an objectifying activity. Thus, it was taken for granted that self-manifestation was simply an unusual type of object-manifestation.<sup>28</sup>

It is this assumption which phenomenology is forced to question. Unless it is able to show that there is in fact a decisive and radical difference between the phenomenality of constituted objects, and the phenomenality of constituting subjectivity, that is, a radical difference between object-manifestation and self-manifestation, its entire project would be threatened.<sup>29</sup>

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But what has Husserl to say on this topic? Let us turn to a simple act of reflection, say a thematic consciousness of a perception of a black billiard ball. According to Husserl this

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<sup>26</sup> Henry 1963, pp.14, 32, 64, 67, 1966, p.5. Cf. Hua 16/141-142.

<sup>27</sup> Henry 1963, pp.36, 50.

<sup>28</sup> Henry 1963, pp. 44, 279, 329, 352, 1966, pp.22-23.

<sup>29</sup> Henry 1963, pp. 47, 52.

reflection is *founded* in a twofold sense. It does not present us with a self-enclosed subjectivity, but with a self-transcending subjectivity directed at an object, and it consequently presupposes the preceding act of object-intentionality.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as an explicit self-awareness it also relies upon a prior pre-reflective self-awareness. To utilize a distinction between perceiving (*Wahrnehmen*) and experiencing (*Erleben*) dating back from the *Logical Investigations*: prior to reflection one perceives the intentional object, but one experiences the intentional act. Although I am not intentionally directed at the act (this only happens in the subsequent reflection, where the act is thematized), it is not unconscious but conscious,<sup>31</sup> that is pre-reflectively self-aware. In Husserl's words:

Das Wort Erlebnis drückt dabei eben dieses Erlebtsein, nämlich Bewussthaben im inneren Bewusstsein aus, wodurch es für das Ich jederzeit vorgegeben ist [...].<sup>32</sup>

[J]edes Erlebnis ist 'Bewußtsein', und Bewußtsein ist Bewußtsein von... Jedes Erlebnis ist aber selbst erlebt, und insofern auch 'bewußt'.<sup>33</sup>

Jeder Akt ist Bewußtsein von etwas, aber jeder Akt ist auch bewußt. Jedes Erlebnis ist 'empfunden', ist immanent 'wahrgenommen' (inneres Bewußtsein), wenn auch natürlich nicht gesetzt, gemeint (wahrnehmen heißt hier nicht meinend-zugewendet-sein und erfassen). [...] Freilich scheint das auf einen unendlichen Regreß zurückzuführen. Denn ist nun nicht wieder das innere Bewußtsein, das Wahrnehmen vom Akt (vom Urteilen, vom äußeren Wahrnehmen, vom Sich-freuen usw.) ein Akt und daher selbst wieder innerlich wahrgenommen usw.? Dagegen ist zu sagen: Jedes 'Erlebnis' im prägnanten Sinn ist innerlich wahrgenommen. Aber das innere Wahrnehmen ist nicht im selben Sinne ein 'Erlebnis'. Es ist nicht selbst wieder innerlich wahrgenommen.<sup>34</sup>

In a moment, I will return to Husserl's use of the term 'perception' when it comes to pre-reflective self-awareness, but it is quite obvious that he has seen the aporetic implications of the reflection theory. The claim that self-awareness only comes about when the act is apprehended by a further act ultimately leads to an infinite regress.<sup>35</sup>

Ultimately, Husserl's description is connected to a general claim concerning the *being* of subjectivity. To be a subject, is to exist for-itself, that is self-aware. Thus, no matter what worldly entities subjectivity might be conscious of and occupied with otherwise, it is also self-aware.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hua 15/78, 8/157.

<sup>31</sup> Hua 3/251, 10/291, 9/29, 3/162, 3/168, 3/349.

<sup>32</sup> Hua 14/45.

<sup>33</sup> Hua 10/291.

<sup>34</sup> Hua 10/126-127.

<sup>35</sup> Hua 3/550, 10/119.

<sup>36</sup> One can find numerous statements to this effect. See for instance Hua 1/81, 4/318, 8/189, 8/412, 8/450, 13/252, 13/462, 14/151, 14/292, 14/353, 14/380, Ms. C 16 81b.

Absolut Seiendes ist seiend in Form eines intentionalen Lebens, das, was immer es sonst in sich bewußt haben mag, zugleich Bewußtsein seiner selbst ist. Eben darum kann es (wie bei tieferen Überlegungen einzusehen ist) wesensmäßig jederzeit auf sich selbst nach allen seinen, ihm abgehobenen Gestalten reflektieren, sich selbst thematisch machen, auf sich selbst bezogene Urteile und Evidenzen erzeugen.<sup>37</sup>

As far as the interpretation of Henrich, Tugendhat and Frank is concerned, it must be acknowledged that Husserl occasionally writes that we do not *perceive* our own subjectivity prior to reflection, but live in a state of self-oblivion and self-forfeiture (*Selbstverlorenheit*). But when he then adds that we only *know* of our acts reflectively, that is, that we only gain *knowledge* of our conscious life through reflection,<sup>38</sup> it becomes clear that he is using the term ‘perception’ to denote a thematic examination. Husserl does not deny the existence of a pre-reflective self-awareness. But he does deny that this self-awareness can provide us with more than awareness. It cannot give us knowledge of subjectivity.

As just mentioned it is, however, also possible to unearth passages where Husserl in fact describes the pervasive pre-reflective self-awareness as a type of *inner perception*,<sup>39</sup> but a closer examination of these texts does not substantiate the claim that Husserl is trying to reduce self-awareness to a type of object-intentionality. 1) On the one hand, Husserl’s terminology is taken from his classical investigation of the hierarchy of foundation existing between different types of acts. In contrast to various kinds of presentiating (*vergegenwärtigende*) acts, such as recollection, fantasy or empathy, perception is characterized by bringing its object to an originary kind of presentation. That which appears in perception is given *leibhaftig*, and it is exactly this feature which Husserl focuses upon in his discussion of pre-reflective self-awareness. This is brought to light in a passage from *Erste Philosophie II*, where Husserl writes that the life of the subject is a life in the form of original self-awareness. He then equates this self-awareness with an *innermost* perception, but adds that it is a perception, not in the sense of being an active self-apprehension, but in the sense of being an *originary* self-appearance.<sup>40</sup> 2) On the other hand, Husserl’s (at times rather misleading) terminology can also be taken as illustration of an often noticed tension in his writings. The tension, namely, between his actual and innovative analysis and the more traditional systematical or methodical reflection accompanying it. It was the latter (representing Husserl’s self-interpretation) that determined the terminology used, but Husserl’s analyses were often more radical than he himself knew of and than his nomenclature suggested.<sup>41</sup> In the passage from *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* quoted above, Husserl speaks alternately of pre-reflective self-awareness as an inner or immanent perception and as an inner consciousness (*inneres Bewußtsein* - one feels the influence from Brentano).<sup>42</sup> As will gradually become clear, Husserl ultimately opts for the latter expression, and much misunderstanding might have been avoided if he had done that from the very start.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hua 17/279-280.

<sup>38</sup> Hua 8/88, 9/306-307.

<sup>39</sup> Hua 8/471, 10/126.

<sup>40</sup> Hua 8/188. Cf. 3/549.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Bernet 1983, p.42.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hua 11/320.

<sup>43</sup> In *Ideen II*, Husserl distinguishes between ‘die immanente Wahrnehmung’ which he equates with reflection,

Our acts are pre-reflectively self-aware, but they are also accessible for reflection. They can be reflected upon and thereby brought to our attention,<sup>44</sup> and an examination of the particular intentional structure of reflection can substantiate the thesis concerning the existence of a pre-reflective self-awareness. As Husserl points out, it is in the nature of reflection to grasp something which was already there prior to the grasping. Reflection is characterized by disclosing, and not by producing its theme:

Sage ich 'ich', so erfasse ich mich in schlichter Reflexion; aber diese Selbsterfahrung ist wie jede Erfahrung, und zunächst jede Wahrnehmung, bloss Hin-mich-richten auf etwas, das schon für mich da ist, schon bewusst ist und nur nicht thematisch erfahren ist, nicht Aufgemerktes.<sup>45</sup>

In a regular intentional act, I am directed at and preoccupied with my intentional object. Whenever I am intentionally directed at objects I am also self-aware. But when I am directed at and occupied with objects I am not thematically conscious of myself. And when I do thematize myself in a reflection, the very act of thematization remains unthematic.<sup>46</sup> When subjectivity functions it is self-aware, but it is not thematically conscious of itself, and it therefore lives in *anonymity*.

Somit haben wir immerfort die Scheidung zwischen dem Ich und *cogito* als fungierendem, aber nicht erfasstem (fungierende Subjektivität), und dem evtl. thematisierten, direkt oder selbsterfassten Ich und seinem *cogito*, oder kurzweg, fungierende Subjektivität und objektive Subjektivität (vergegenständlichte, thematisch erfahrene, vorgestellte, gedachte, prädizierte) sind zu unterscheiden, und, wenn immer ich mich und was immer sonst als Objekt habe, bin ich zugleich notwendig als fungierendes Ich ausserthematisch dabei, mir zugänglich als das durch Reflexion als einer neuen, nun wieder nicht thematischen Aktivität des fungierenden Ich.<sup>47</sup>

But again, how should one understand this notion of an anonymous, unthematic, and tacit self-awareness? Husserl's most explicit reflections can be found in his analysis of *inner time-consciousness*.<sup>48</sup>

After having accounted for the way in which we are able to be conscious of temporal objects, that is, objects with a temporal extension, Husserl turns to the question of how we are able to be aware of the very acts that intend these temporal objects. Our perceptual objects are

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and 'das innere Bewußtsein' which he claims is a non-thematic kind of self-awareness that precedes reflection (Hua 4/118).

<sup>44</sup> Hua 4/248.

<sup>45</sup> Hua 15/492-493.

<sup>46</sup> However, one should not forget that the act of reflection is itself a pre-reflectively self-given act. The reflected act must already be self-aware, since it is the fact of it being already mine, already being given in the first-personal mode of presentation that allows me to reflect upon it. And the act of reflection must also already be pre-reflective self-aware, since it is this that permits it to recognize the reflected act as belonging to the same subjectivity as *itself*.

<sup>47</sup> Hua 14/431. Cf. Hua 14/29, 29/183-184, Ms. C 2 3a.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ms. L I 15 37b.

temporal, but what about our very perceptions of these objects? Are they also subjugated the strict laws of temporal constitution? Are they also temporal unities which arise, endure and perish? Husserl often speaks of the acts themselves as being constituted in the structure primal impression-retention-protention. They are only given, only self-aware, within this framework.<sup>49</sup>

How is this self-awareness to be understood? And how do we avoid an infinite regress? If the duration and unity of a tonal sequence is constituted by consciousness, and if our consciousness of the tonal sequence is itself given with duration and unity, are we then not forced to posit yet another consciousness to account for the givenness of this duration and unity, and so forth *ad infinitum*?<sup>50</sup> On one dominant interpretation, Husserl is supposed to argue in the following way: just as we must distinguish between the constituted dimension in which transcendent objects exist and the constituting dimension that permits them to appear, we must distinguish between the constituted dimension in which the acts exist and the constituting dimension that permits them to appear. The acts are themselves temporal objects existing in subjective time, but they are constituted by a deeper dimension of subjectivity: by the absolute flow of inner time-consciousness.<sup>51</sup> Although it is possible to find passages that seem to support this account, I think it must ultimately be rejected, for both systematic and exegetical reasons. To say that the acts are originally given as *objects* for an inner consciousness, to interpret their primal givenness as an object-manifestation leads us right back into a version of the reflection theory. This account does not explain self-awareness, it merely defers the problem. Obviously one is forced to ask whether inner time-consciousness is itself in possession of self-awareness or not. If it is denied that this consciousness is itself self-aware the regress is indeed halted, but as I have already argued, this account cannot explain why the relation between inner time-consciousness and the act should result in *self-awareness*. If the answer is yes, one must ask how the self-awareness of inner time-consciousness is established. Two possibilities seem open. Either it comes about in the same way in which the act is brought to givenness. In this case we are confronted with an infinite regress. The second possibility is that inner time-consciousness is in possession of an implicit or intrinsic self-manifestation. But if it is acknowledged that such a type of self-awareness exists, one might reasonably ask why it should be reserved to the deepest level of subjectivity, and not already be a feature of the act itself? Furthermore, to claim that the absolute flow of inner time-consciousness is itself self-aware, and to claim that this is something apart from and beyond the givenness of the acts, is to operate with an unnecessary multiplication of self-awareness. Nevertheless, this is exactly the position that Sokolowski and Brough takes Husserl to hold. In their reading, Husserl takes the acts to be *full-blown inner objects* which are immediately given as such, even prior to reflection. Apart from this, however, the flow is also given to itself. Thus, if we examine a reflection on a perception of a black billiard ball, the following should be the case: 1) The black billiard ball is given as a transcendent object, 2) the act of reflection is pre-reflectively given as an inner object, 3) the act of perception is reflectively given as an inner object, and finally 4) the flow for whom all of these objects are given, also reveals itself in a fundamental *shining*. Reflection should consequently present us with a three-fold self-awareness with one transcendent object and two inner objects.<sup>52</sup> That seems too excessive. Not only is the

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<sup>49</sup> Hua 11/233, 11/293, 4/102, EU 205.

<sup>50</sup> Hua 10/80.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Brough 1972, pp.308-309, Sokolowski 1974, pp.156-157.

<sup>52</sup> Sokolowski 1974, pp.154, 156-157, Brough 1972, p.318. Let me stress that I am obviously not accusing neither

distinction between 2) and 4) hard to fathom, but the characterization of 2) also seems misleading. Even if one takes pre-reflective self-awareness to be a ‘marginal form of consciousness’ and consequently distinguishes the pre-reflectively given inner object from the reflectively given inner object by emphasizing that the first is merely a marginal object,<sup>53</sup> this will not solve the problem, and it is a suggestion which Husserl himself explicitly rejects.

Nicht verwechseln darf man das Bewußtsein vom gegenständlichen Hintergrund und das Bewußtsein im Sinn des Erlebtseins. Erlebnisse als solche haben ihr Sein, aber sie sind nicht Gegenstände von Apperzeptionen (wir kämen ja sonst auf einen unendlichen Regreß). Der Hintergrund aber ist uns gegenständlich, er ist es durch den Komplex von apperzeptiven Erlebnissen, die ihn gleichsam konstituieren. Diese Gegenstände sind unbeachtet, im dritten Sinn unbewußt, aber etwas ganz anderes für uns als die bloßen Erlebnisse, z.B. die sie objektivierenden Apperzeptionen und Akterlebnisse selbst. (Das Bloß-Erlebtsein, können wir auch sagen, ist nicht ein Bloß-unbemerkt-Sein oder Unbewußt-Sein im Sinn des Unbemerkt-Seins des gegenständlichen Hintergrunds.) Das attentionale Bewußtseins des Hintergrunds und das Bewußtsein als bloßes Erlebtseins ist ganz zu scheiden.<sup>54</sup>

It is definitely necessary to distinguish between thematic and marginal modes of consciousness. One must dismiss any narrow conception of consciousness which equates it with attention and claims that we are only conscious of that which we pay attention to. But although consciousness is not given thematically prior to reflection, this does not justify the claim that pre-reflective self-awareness is a marginal form of consciousness, that is, that our pre-reflective experiences remain in the background as potential themes in the same way as, say, the hum of the refrigerator. Pre-reflective self-awareness is not a kind of marginal, inattentive, object-consciousness, and prior to reflection, consciousness is not given to itself as a marginal object. The entire analogy is misleading, since it remains stuck in the subject-object model.<sup>55</sup>

I would like to propose a different interpretation. An interpretation which ultimately permits one to link Husserl’s analysis of inner time-consciousness to his differentiations between respectively functioning and thematized subjectivity, and pre-reflective and reflective self-awareness.

To speak phenomenologically of the temporality of consciousness is to speak of the temporal givenness of consciousness. But to speak of the temporal givenness of consciousness is to speak of its temporal self-manifestation. To suggest otherwise is to reify consciousness. Of course, it might be necessary to distinguish different types of self-manifestation, and different types of subjective temporality, but from the outset, it should be realized that

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Sokolowski nor Brough of having overlooked the existence of the notion of pre-reflective self-awareness in Husserl, i.e., of having made the same mistake as Frank, Tugendhat and Henrich. To a certain extent, but only to a certain extent, the difference between my interpretation and Brough’s and Sokolowski’s interpretation might simply be a question of different accentuation and terminology.

<sup>53</sup> Brough 1972, pp.304, 316.

<sup>54</sup> Hua 24/252.

<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to notice that Gurwitsch in his noematically oriented analysis apparently commits this error and consequently claims that the self-awareness which accompanies every act of consciousness is a marginal datum (Gurwitsch 1985, p.4. Cf. 1974, pp.339-340).

Husserl's investigation of inner time-consciousness is nothing apart from an investigation of pre-reflective self-manifestation. Consequently, one should not conceive of the relation between inner time-consciousness and the intentional act as if it were a relation between two radically different dimensions in subjectivity. When Husserl claims that the intentional act is constituted in inner time-consciousness, he is not saying that the act is brought to givenness by some other part of subjectivity. Inner time-consciousness is the pre-reflective self-awareness of the act, and to say that the act is constituted in inner time-consciousness simply means that it is brought to givenness thanks to itself. It is called *inner* consciousness because it belongs *intrinsically* to the very structure of the act itself. To phrase it differently, Husserl's description of the structure of inner time-consciousness, his analysis of the primary-showing-together-with-retention-and-protention (to use Prufer's formulation)<sup>56</sup> is an analysis of the structure of the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our acts and experiences. Thus, Husserl's position is relatively unequivocal. The intentional act is conscious of something different from itself, namely the intentional object. The act is intentional exactly because it permits hetero-manifestation. But the act also manifests itself. The object is given through the act, and if there were no awareness of the act, the object could not appear. Thus, apart from being intentional, the act is also characterized by its 'inner consciousness', or '*Urbewußtsein*', or 'impressional consciousness', to mention three different terms for one and the same.<sup>57</sup> We are not dealing with a particular intentional act, but with a pervasive dimension of self-manifestation, and it is exactly this which precedes and founds reflective self-awareness.<sup>58</sup>

I am not denying that consciousness can appear to itself as an inner temporal object, I am denying that it does so already pre-reflectively. It is only when we reflect that we experience our acts as temporal *objects*. It is only due to a special apprehension, namely when we thematize the acts that they are constituted as enduring objects in subjective time.<sup>59</sup> When we reflect we impose a new temporal form upon our experiences, they are made into subjective objects and posited in or injected into sequential time. When this happens the identity of the act appears across the differences in givenness. If I remember my joy of yesterday, it is the very experience which I had yesterday that I now recall and re-present. The identity of the experience is established across a change in temporal givenness. If I reflect upon my present perception, the perception is given as that which remains identical across the differences in respectively pre-reflective and reflective givenness, i.e., it is given as the *same* as what was previously experienced unthematically. It is only in reflection, where we are confronted with a relation between two different acts, the reflecting and the reflected, that the latter can appear as transcendent (that is, as an object) vis-à-vis the first. On the pre-reflective level, where there is only one experience, it cannot appear as a temporal object, since it cannot appear as transcendent in relation to itself.

We consequently end up with the following schema:

Absolute flow	-	functioning subjectivity	-	pre-reflective self-awareness
Subjective time	-	thematized subjectivity	-	reflective self-awareness

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<sup>56</sup> Prufer 1988, p.201.

<sup>57</sup> Hua 4/118-119, 10/83, 89-90, 119, 126-127, 23/321. Cf. Ms. L I 15 35a-36b.

<sup>58</sup> Hua 17/279-280, 4/118.

<sup>59</sup> For further passages that might support this interpretation cf. Hua 4/104, 10/36, 10/51, 10/112, Ms. C 10 17a, Ms. L I 19 3a-b, Ms. L I 19 10a.

Fortunately, it is not difficult to find passages where Husserl himself seems to favour exactly such an account. In § 37 of *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* Husserl writes that our perceptual act or perceptual consciousness is not in immanent time, is not a constituted temporal unity, but a moment of or a wave in the self-temporalizing flowing experiencing itself.<sup>60</sup> In a later supplementary text in the same volume, he writes:

Also Empfindung, wenn damit das Bewußtsein verstanden wird (nicht das immanente dauernde Rot, Ton etc., also das Empfundene), ebenso Retention, Wiedererinnerung, Wahrnehmung etc. ist unzeitlich, nämlich nichts in der immanenten Zeit.<sup>61</sup>

But whereas Husserl claims that our acts (be it perceptions, recollections, anticipations, imaginations or judgements etc.) qua absolute constituting consciousness reveal themselves but not as immanently given temporal objects, he explicitly writes that the very same acts appear in subjective time with duration and temporal location qua *objects of reflection*.<sup>62</sup> In a manuscript from 1917, one finds the following formulation: “Das letzte Bewußtsein ist nichts anderes als der ursprüngliche Fluss, bevor sich ein reflektierendes Blick darauf richtet,”<sup>63</sup> and in a similar vein Husserl writes that it is necessary to distinguish the reflected pole, which is in time, from the living, functioning pole, which is not in time.<sup>64</sup>

Es ist also zu scheiden: das präphänomenale Sein der Erlebnisse, ihr Sein vor der reflektiven Zuwendung auf sie, und ihr Sein als Phänomen. Durch die aufmerkende Zuwendung und Erfassung bekommt das Erlebnis eine neue Seinsweise, es wird zum ‘unterschiedenen’, ‘herausgehobenen’, und dieses Unterscheiden ist eben nichts anderes als das Erfassen, und Unterschiedenheit nichts anderes als Erfasst-sein, Gegenstand der Zuwendung sein.<sup>65</sup>

Aber meine thematische Erfahrung vom Ich und Bewußtsein ist in ihrer Art selbst Stiftung einer Fortgeltung - eines bleibenden Seins, des Seins des Immanenten.<sup>66</sup>

So far I have been arguing that there are *not* two different types of pre-reflective self-awareness at play: the constituted marginal object-givenness of our acts, and the self-manifestation of the absolute flow. The absolute flow of experiencing simply is the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our experiences. However, to make this point is not to deny that there are good reasons for insisting upon the *difference* between our singular and transitory acts

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<sup>60</sup> Hua 10/75-76. Cf. 29/194, Ms. L I 15 2b.

<sup>61</sup> Hua 10/333-334. Cf. 10/371-372, Ms. C 17 63a, L I 21 5b.

<sup>62</sup> Hua 10/112, 10/285, 10/293, 14/29. Obviously our acts can also be constituted so as to appear in objective time, but this self-objectivation is of an even more founded kind since it is intersubjectively mediated. Cf. the text ‘Konstitution der einheitlichen Zeit und einheitlich-objektiven Welt durch Einfühlung’ in Hua 15/331-336.

<sup>63</sup> Ms. L I 2 16a.

<sup>64</sup> Ms. A V 5 4b-5a.

<sup>65</sup> Hua 10/129.

<sup>66</sup> Ms. C 12 3b.



and the abiding dimension of experiencing, between *die Erlebnisse* and *das Erleben*.<sup>67</sup> In fact there seems to be one excellent reason. After all, it makes perfect sense to say that I had an experience of joy which has now passed. I might even completely forget about it and only recall it much later. But whereas the act can become past and absent, the dimension of self-manifestation that allows for presence and absence, cannot itself become past and absent. Whereas we live through a number of different experiences, our self-awareness remains as an unchanging dimension. It stands - to use a striking image by James - permanent, like the rainbow on the waterfall, with its own quality unchanged by the events that stream through it.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the moment we adopt a diachronous perspective, it becomes not only legitimate but highly appropriate to distinguish the strict singularity of the *lebendige Gegenwart* from the plurality of changing experiences.<sup>69</sup> The latter are - to use a nice formulation by Klawonn - exposed in it.<sup>70</sup>

But again, it would be fundamentally misleading to conceive of this Living Present as an empty or pure field of self-manifestation on which different experiences then subsequently made their entry. The absolute flow has no self-manifestation of its own, but *is* the very self-manifestation of the experiences. Prior to reflection, there is no awareness of inner objects, and there is no distinction between the givenness of the act and the self-manifestation of the flow. Inner time-consciousness is simply the name for the pre-reflective self-awareness of our acts, and this flowing self-awareness is not itself an intentional act, a temporal unity or an immanent object,<sup>71</sup> but a pervasive dimension intrinsic to consciousness. As for the objectified acts they cannot be separated from the flow either, since they are nothing but its own *reflective* self-manifestation. That is, the absolute flow of experiencing and the constituted stream of reflectively thematized acts are not two separate flows, but simply two different manifestations of one and the same. Thus Husserl can write: “Wir sagen, ich bin, der ich bin in meinem Leben. Und dieses Leben ist Erleben, seine reflektiv als einzelne abzuhebenden Bestandstücke heißen rechtmäßig ‘Erlebnisse’, sofern in ihnen irgendetwas erlebt ist.”<sup>72</sup> Through inner time-consciousness one is aware both of the stream of consciousness (pre-reflective self-awareness), of the acts as demarcated temporal objects in subjective time (reflective self-awareness), and of the transcendent objects in objective time (intentional consciousness).

Is it possible to specify the nature of this primary self-manifestation, this absolute experiencing, any further? The terminology used, and the fact that we are confronted with an unthematic, implicit, immediate and passive occurrence, which is by no means initiated, regulated or controlled by the ego, suggests that we are dealing with a type of passive *self-affection*. This interpretation is explicitly confirmed by Husserl, for instance in the manuscript C 10 (1931), where he speaks of self-affection as an essential, pervasive and necessary feature of the functioning ego, and in the manuscript C 16 (1931-33) where he adds that I am ceaselessly (*unaufhörlich*) affected by myself.<sup>73</sup> We are confronted with a type of self-manifestation which lacks the ordinary structure of appearance. There is no distinction between

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<sup>67</sup> Hua 23/326. Cf. 14/46, Ms. L I 1 3a.

<sup>68</sup> James 1890, I. p.630.

<sup>69</sup> Klawonn 1994, p.143, Brough 1972, p.316.

<sup>70</sup> Klawonn 1991, p.77, cf. p.128.

<sup>71</sup> Hua 10/127.

<sup>72</sup> Ms. C 3 26a.

<sup>73</sup> Ms. C 10 3b, Ms. C 10 5a, Ms. C 10 7a, Ms. C 10 9b-10a, Ms. C 16 82a. Cf. Ms. C 16 78a, Ms. A V 5 8a, Ms. C 5 6a, Hua 15/78.

subject and object, nor between the dative and genitive of appearing. On the contrary, it is a kind of self-manifestation, a fundamental *shining*, without which it would be meaningless to speak of the dative of appearance. Nothing can be present *to me* unless I am *self-aware*.<sup>74</sup>

The analysis of the structure of this primary self-manifestation is further elaborated in Husserl's renowned analysis of the double intentionality of the retention, its so-called *Quer-* and *Längsintentionalität* (transverse and longitudinal intentionality). If P(t) is the primal impression of a tone, then P(t) is retained in a retention Rp(t) when a new primal impression appears. As the notation makes clear however, it is not only the conscious tone which is retained, but also the primal impression. Each retention is not only retaining the preceding tone, but also the preceding primal impression. That is, the actual phase of the flow is not only retaining the tone which has just been, but also the elapsing phase of the flow.<sup>75</sup> Whereas the first permits us to experience an enduring temporal object, that is, accounts for the constitution of the identity of the object in a manifold of temporal phases, the latter provides us with temporal self-awareness.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Sokolowski 1974, p.166, Hart 1998.

<sup>75</sup> Brough 1972, p.319.

<sup>76</sup> Husserl alternately speaks of absolute time-constituting consciousness as an unchangeable form of presence (as a *nunc stans*), and as an absolute flux (Hua 16/65. Cf. Hua 10/74, 10/113). Regardless of which description one chooses - and ultimately both are attempts to capture the unique givenness of this dimension - it should be obvious why one must not only avoid speaking of the absolute flow as if it were a temporal object, but also avoid interpreting the flow as a sequence of temporally distinct acts, phases or elements. "Diese strömend lebendige Gegenwart ist nicht das, was wir sonst auch schon transzendental-phänomenologisch als Bewußtseinsstrom oder Erlebnisstrom bezeichneten. Es ist überhaupt kein 'Strom' gemäß dem Bild, als ein eigentlich zeitliches (oder gar zeiträumliches) Ganzes, das in der Einheit einer zeitlichen Extension ein kontinuierlich-sukzessives individuelles Dasein hat (in seinen unterscheidbaren Strecken und Phasen durch diese Zeitformen individuiert). Die strömend lebendige Gegenwart ist 'kontinuierliches' Strömendsein und doch nicht in einem Auseinander-Sein, nicht in raumzeitlicher (welträumlicher), nicht in 'immanent'-zeitlicher Extension Sein; also in keinem Außereinander, das Nacheinander heißt - Nacheinander in dem Sinne eines Stellen-Außereinander in einer eigentlich so zu nennenden Zeit." (Ms. C 3 4a. For further distinctions between 'das Strömen' and 'der Strom' cf. Ms. B III 9 8a, Ms. C 15 3b, Ms. C 17 63b). Inner time-consciousness cannot be temporal in the empirical sense of the word, it cannot be reduced to a succession of mental states. Not only would such a succession not enable us to become conscious of succession. It would also call for yet another consciousness which could be conscious of this succession etc., and we would be unable to avoid an infinite regress. As Husserl writes, it makes no sense to say of the time-constituting phenomena that they are present and that they have endured, that they succeed each other, or are co-present etc. They are in short neither 'present', 'past', nor 'future' in the way empirical objects are (Hua 10/75, 10/333, 10/375-376). Inner time-consciousness is a field of experiencing, a dimension of manifestation, which contains all three temporal dimensions. The structure of this field of experiencing - primal impression-retention-protention - is not temporally extended. The retentions and protentions are not past or future in regard to the primal impression, nor are they simultaneous, as long as 'simultaneity' is used in its ordinary sense. They are 'together' or 'co-actual' with it. Ultimately, the structure of constituting time-consciousness cannot be adequately grasped using temporal concepts derived from that which it constitutes. Thus, in a certain way inner time-consciousness is atemporal (Hua 10/112). But only in the sense that it is not intra-temporal. Time-constituting consciousness is not *in* time, but it is not merely a consciousness *of* time, it is itself a form of temporality (Cf. Kern 1975, pp.40-41, Bernet 1994, p. 197, Merleau-Ponty 1945, p.483, Heidegger 1991, p.192). Temporality constitutes the infrastructure of consciousness. Consciousness is inherently temporal and it is temporal that it is pre-reflectively aware of itself. Thus, although the field of experiencing does neither have a temporal location or extension, and although it does not last and never becomes past, it is not a static supra-temporal principle, but a living pulse (*Lebenspuls*) with a certain temporal density and articulation, and variable width: it might stretch (Hua 10/376, 10/78, 10/112, 10/371, 11/392, 15/28, Ms. C 2 11a, Ms. C 7 14a. Cf. Held 1966, pp.116-117, Larrabee 1994, p.196). In fact, the metaphor of *stretching* might be appropriate not only as a characterisation of the temporal ecstasis, but also as a description of the *Längsintentionalität*, since it avoids the potentially misleading and naturalising talk of the flow as a sequence or succession of changing impressions,

Der Blick kann sich einmal durch die im stetigen Fortgang des Flusses sich ‘deckenden’ Phasen als Intentionalitäten vom Ton richten. Der Blick kann aber auch auf den Fluß, auf eine Strecke des Flusses, auf den Übergang des fließenden Bewußtseins vom Ton-Einsatz zum Ton-Ende gehen. Jede Bewußtseinsabschattung der Art ‘Retention’ hat eine doppelte Intentionalität: einmal die für die Konstitution des immanenten Objekts, des Tones dienende, das ist diejenige, die wir ‘primäre Erinnerung’ an den (soeben empfundenen) Ton nennen, oder deutlicher eben Retention des Tones. Die andere ist die für die Einheit dieser primären Erinnerung im Fluß konstitutive; nämlich die Retention ist in eins damit, daß sie Noch-Bewußtsein, zurückhaltendes, eben Retention ist, Retention der verflössenen Ton-Retention: sie ist in ihrem stetigen Sich-abschatten im Fluß stetige Retention von den stetig vorangegangenen Phasen.<sup>77</sup>

Whereas the flow’s constitution of the duration of its object is called its *Querintentionalität*, the flow’s awareness (of) its own streaming unity is called its *Längsintentionalität*<sup>78</sup> and, although the latter carries the name intentionality, it would be tantamount to a decisive misunderstanding of Husserl’s theory if one were to identify it with a type of object-intentionality.<sup>79</sup> Husserl’s account of the *Längsintentionalität* does not succumb to the lure of the reflection theory, but is in fact an analysis of the pre-reflective self-manifestation of consciousness. It is because consciousness is characterized by this self-manifestation, that it is possible to escape the infinite regress of the reflection theory:

Der Fluß des immanenten zeitkonstituierenden Bewußtseins ist nicht nur, sondern so merkwürdig und doch verständlich geartet ist er, daß in ihm notwendig eine Selbsterscheinung des Flusses bestehen und daher der Fluß selbst notwendig im Fließen erfaßbar sein muß. Die Selbsterscheinung des Flusses fordert nicht einen zweiten Fluß, sondern als Phänomen konstituiert er sich in sich selbst.<sup>80</sup>

These central passages from *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* have not been overlooked by Husserl’s critics. But they have generally been met with two distinct arguments.

According to Cramer, Husserl’s notion of self-appearance merely reproduces the mistakes inherent in Brentano’s account. If one claims that the stream of consciousness is characterized by self-appearance, one must ask what it is that appears when the stream appears to itself. The only answer possible is that the stream appears to itself as a self-appearing stream. Cramer consequently claims that the notion of self-appearance is redundant, and its explication circular.<sup>81</sup>

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slices or phases.

<sup>77</sup> Hua 10/80-81

<sup>78</sup> Hua 10/80-81, 10/379. At one point Husserl speaks of the *Längs-* and *Querintentionalität* as the noetic and noematic-optical temporalization (Ms. B III 9 23a). He also calls them respectively the inner and outer retention (10/118).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Hua 10/333.

<sup>80</sup> Hua 10/83.

<sup>81</sup> Cramer 1974, p. 587.

Whereas a variant of this criticism seemed appropriate when it came to Brentano's theory, since it conceived of self-awareness as a (secondary) object-awareness, I am not convinced of its pertinence when it comes to Husserl. On the one hand, Cramer explicitly identifies Husserl's notion of self-appearance with a kind of 'quasi-perception', but he thereby overlooks the decisive difference between Husserl's and Brentano's accounts. On the other hand, Cramer seems to expect something of a theory of self-awareness which it qua explication of a fundamental phenomenon *sui generis* will ever be prevented from providing. Namely a decomposition of the phenomenon into more basic elements without self-awareness.

The second argument can be found in Frank, who has adopted it from Derrida. If the self-appearance of the stream of consciousness is to be accounted for by means of the notion of *Längsintentionalität* and if this is a kind of retentional modification, there will only be self-awareness of the just-past phase of the stream, the initial phase of consciousness will only become conscious when it is retained. But how does this agree with our conviction that we are in fact aware of our experiences, the moment they occur? And how can we at all be aware of something *as* past, unless we are also aware of something present against which we can contrast it? If self-presence is only constituted in the difference between retention and primal impression, there will be nothing left to explain this difference, or more correctly, there will be nothing left to explain our experience of this difference. It will be a merely postulated difference, with no experiential basis. Thus, self-awareness will ultimately become a product of an unconscious difference.<sup>82</sup> But, to make this claim is basically to face all the problems of the reflection theory once again.

Husserl himself was well aware of these difficulties. He anticipated the line of thought, and although he occasionally seriously considered it,<sup>83</sup> he ultimately and quite explicitly rejected it:

Wie steht es mit der Anfangsphase eines sich konstituierenden Erlebnisses? Kommt sie auch nur aufgrund der Retention zur Gegebenheit, und würde sie 'unbewußt' sein, wenn sich keine Retention daran schlösse? Darauf ist zu sagen: Zum Objekt werden kann die Anfangsphase nur nach ihrem Ablauf auf dem angegebenen Wege, durch Retention und Reflexion (bzw. Reproduktion). Aber wäre sie nur durch die Retention bewußt, so bliebe es unverständlich, was ihr die Auszeichnung als 'Jetzt' verleiht. Sie könnte allenfalls negativ unterschieden werden von ihren Modifikationen als diejenige Phase, die keine voranliegende mehr retentional bewußt macht; aber sie ist ja bewußtseinsmäßig durchaus positiv charakterisiert. Es ist eben ein Unding, von einem

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<sup>82</sup> Frank 1984, pp.307, 314, 321-322, 335.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Hua 10/83. As Bernet has often pointed out, Husserl's description of the relation between primal impression and retention is by no means unequivocal. It contains both a confirmation of and an overcoming of the metaphysics of presence (Bernet 1983, p.18). On the one hand, the retention is interpreted as a derived modification of the primal impression. But on the other hand, Husserl also states that no consciousness is possible which does not entail retentional and protentional horizons, that no now is possible without retentions (Hua 11/337-338), and that the primal impression is only what it is when it is retained (Ms. L I 15 4a. Cf. Ms. L I 16 12a, Ms. L I 15 22a, Hua 11/315). Husserl were clearly wrestling with these issues, and it is undeniable (and perhaps also unavoidable) that he occasionally opted for some highly problematic accounts. Let me mention a few further examples. In *Ideen II* Husserl characterized the retention as an objectifying immanent perception (Hua 4/14), in *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* he designated the *Längsintentionalität* as a *Deckungseinheit* (Hua 10/81), and in the manuscript L I 15 22a he claimed that the *Längsintentionalität* is characterized by its *indirect* nature.

‘unbewußten’ Inhalt zu sprechen, der erst nachträglich bewußt würde. Bewußtsein ist notwendig Bewußtsein in jeder seiner Phasen. Wie die retentionale Phase die voranliegende bewußt hat, ohne sie zum Gegenstand zu machen, so ist auch schon das Urdatum bewußt - und zwar in der eigentümlichen Form des ‘jetzt’ - ohne gegenständlich zu sein.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, Husserl’s analysis is not meant to imply that consciousness only becomes aware of itself through the retention. Husserl explicitly insists that the *retentional* modification presupposes an *impressional* (primary, original and immediate) self-manifestation. Not only because consciousness is as such self-given, but also because a retention of an unconscious content is impossible.<sup>85</sup> The retention retains that which has just appeared, and if nothing appears, there is nothing to retain.<sup>86</sup> Thus, retention presupposes self-awareness. It is this self-awareness which is retentionally modified, when P(t) is transformed into Rp(t): The tone is not only given as having-just-been, but as having-just-been *experienced*.<sup>87</sup>

This clarification allows for a final remark about the relationship between the *impressional* self-manifestation and the *Längsintentionalität*. We are not dealing with two independent and separate types of pre-reflective self-awareness, but with two different descriptions of the same basic phenomenon. As already mentioned, Husserl uses the term *Längsintentionalität* to designate the absolute self-manifestation of consciousness, but this self-giveness does not merely concern the elapsing phases, but takes its point of departure in an immediate impressional self-manifestation. Conversely, this impressional self-manifestation stretches to include the retentionally given. As Husserl writes: “Das impressionale Bewußtsein rechnen wir in dieser Hinsicht so weit, als die noch lebendige Retention reicht.”<sup>88</sup>

Taken in isolation the primal impression is not unconscious, and to suggest that is to succumb to a variant of the reflection theory, but when this is said, it should be immediately added that the primal impression taken in isolation is an abstraction and theoretical limit-case. It is never given alone. The concrete and full structure of the Living Present is primal impression-retention-protection.<sup>89</sup> This is the structure of pre-reflective self-awareness. It is ‘immediately’ given as an ecstatic unity, and is not a gradual, delayed or mediated process of self-unfolding. Pre-reflective self-awareness has an internal differentiation and articulation, an original complexity, but to speak of it as being mediated or delayed is to remain determined by a conception which sees primal impression and retention as two different and separate elements. One has to avoid the idea of an instantaneous non-temporal self-awareness, but one must also stay clear of the notion of a completely fractured time-consciousness which makes both consciousness of the present, and of the unity of the stream unintelligible.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Hua 10/119.

<sup>85</sup> Hua 10/119.

<sup>86</sup> Hua 10/110-111, 10/119, 11/337.

<sup>87</sup> Hua 10/117.

<sup>88</sup> Hua 11/138.

<sup>89</sup> Hua 11/317, 11/378, Ms. C 3 8b, Ms. C 3 76a.

<sup>90</sup> Frank 1990, pp.62-63.

This brief account of Husserl's theory of self-awareness leaves a number of problems untouched: What is the connection between time-consciousness and kinaesthesia, and between intentionality and self-awareness? What is the more precise difference between the temporality of respectively reflective and pre-reflective self-manifestation? How should one understand the notion of self-affection, and what is the relation between transcendental reflection qua thematisation of subjectivity and natural reflection qua mundanisation of subjectivity?<sup>91</sup> All of these topics are treated by Husserl, however, and in contrast to a widespread assumption it is simply not true that he was so taken up by his 'discovery' of object-intentionality, that he never escaped the reflection model, consistently operated with a model of self-manifestation based upon the subject-object dichotomy, and never managed to raise the more fundamental problems concerning the Being of consciousness.

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<sup>91</sup> For further analyses of Husserl's theory of self-awareness, cf. Zahavi 1998a and 1998b. For a full scale presentation and discussion of the theories of self-awareness found in some recent analytical philosophy of mind, in the Heidelberg-school, and in Husserl, cf. my *Self-awareness and Alterity* (forthcoming).

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