

TIME AND THE ONE AND THE MANY

(IN HUSSERL'S BERNAUER MANUSCRIPTS ON TIME CONSCIOUSNESS)

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To raise the issue of time is to confront a vivid instance of the relation of the one and the many. Even in ordinary prephilosophical living, if we think about time at all, we at least think of it as a unity playing host to infinitely many objects and events. Edmund Husserl accepts this ordinary assumption about time, but—whether in the early texts published in *Husserliana X*, in the *Bernaer Manuscripts* from 1917/1918,¹ or in later unpublished texts—he is concerned with more than simply time. His focus is on *time-consciousness*, which brings before us time as presented to consciousness and consciousness as presenting time, and not only time but temporal objects and even itself as a process. This focus on the consciousness of time, embracing both the time of which we are conscious and the consciousness of it, uncovers a rich and layered array of one/many relationships. Indeed, it is reasonable to claim that Husserl's phenomenology of temporality is precisely the investigation of the interplay of the one and the many within levels and among levels of time and time-consciousness. The aim of this essay is to examine several of the ways in which such interplays appear in the *Bernaer Manuscripts*.

Time, Temporal Objects, and the Unity of Time

I will start with time itself, the time that is the object of time-consciousness. Husserl speaks of many times: immanent time, phenomenological time, transcendent time, the time of phantasy. Whether these various times in some sense form one time is an important question to which I will turn later. But however one answers it, Husserl holds

that any time is a unity with infinitely many successive points or positions. Time as a unity is a continuum of many time points. This does not mean that Husserl thinks that we can be conscious of time or of its successive points by themselves, in isolation from any content. On the contrary, we are always conscious of objects in time. "A time point is the time point of an individual filling this time point" (181). What can we say, then, about the time in which we experience temporal objects? Objects are temporal objects because they fill time. Each point of time is filled with some phase of an object or event, of a bird in flight, for example, or of the act of seeing the bird in flight. In that sense, both time and each of its points are *forms* (160). Hence time points and the object points filling them are not identical; they differ as form and content. This displays itself in the fact that one time point can accommodate many different objects. It is this distinction between time point and the different objects that fill it that accounts for simultaneity. I can hear a melody playing on the radio, look at the illustrations in the magazine in front of me, and feel a soft breeze coming through the window—all at the same time. On the other hand, there cannot be several time points at once. Time points are not contents in time and hence are not "at a time," as objects and their phases are. Time points are the one time in its manyness. Hence time points, unlike object points, are never simultaneous. They are what makes the simultaneity and succession of temporal objects possible. They are the times at which an object or event can be.

When we are conscious of temporal objects, of course, we are not just aware of isolated temporal points, each filled with a dol-

lop of objective content. We experience enduring objects, as when we contemplate a picture or listen to a piece of music or watch a baseball game. To be an individual object constituted in time means to endure in time. The individual object “becomes constituted point by point as filled temporal duration” (322). An object’s duration is part of time; it is the amount of time the object lasts, the continuum of time points the object fills (121). “The duration itself and the temporal extension are the same” (134). For this reason, Husserl writes, “every property endures; (but) the duration itself does not endure: *ex definitione*” (306).

Husserl claims that there are many points in the one time. Are there also many durations? One is tempted to say that there are as many durations as there are enduring temporal objects. “A duration is a temporal extent with individually determined temporal positions” (321). The duration of a given temporal object depends on how many successive time points the object occupies. Hence durations can be longer or shorter. Husserl writes about lamenting the long duration of the World War, for example, which he noted was a “still living duration” (135), that is, still growing. Objects, then, may have different durations in terms of length, one lasting longer than another. However, just as one time point can accommodate many different objects and still maintain its unity—that is, not be shattered into as many time points as there are object points embraced within it—so too the durations of two or more objects that consist of the same stretch of time will coincide (112) or be identical. In most cases, of course, objects share the same extent of time only in part, and their durations coincide only up to a point. The symphony was being heard before the spell of coughing broke out in the middle of the first movement, and it continued to be heard after the coughing eventually ceased. In the case of objects that are simultaneous at least in part, their durations will coincide with respect to the time points they share, but not otherwise. Despite

all of this, however, it can certainly be said that our usual focus is on the object that fills the time, and in that sense we can speak of different durations. If the objects begin and end and endure across entirely different extents of time, then they are not only objectively distinct but temporally distinct as well. They occupy different stretches of time. This raises two further, and related, issues: One involves the “adhesion” of the object to the time it fills. The other refers to the sense in which there is a single time to which every object of whatever sort belongs.

As for the adhesion, Husserl holds that there are two senses in which the object adheres to time. First, one may regard the duration of an object as an object’s own time. This way of considering the duration would focus on the time “internal” to the object and would not concern itself with the object’s location in relation to other objects in the larger context of a single time. Every appearing temporal object, Husserl writes, “has in itself a phenomenal time, that is, a time given in the intentional objectivity as such” (352). This time is “the temporal extent as essential form of the individual in question, which, for its part, has an identical objectivity as a temporal object, as existing in its time” (135). The temporal phases belonging to the object’s duration are fixed (321). The pleasant dinner I had last Friday lasted for a definite period of time, neither more nor less, and now its duration is fixed forever. I cannot pry an object loose from its duration and expand it or contract it. I can only wish that the dinner had lasted longer, but that changes nothing.

The enduring temporal object, of course, does not actually exist outside the context of a single time. The object with its “own” time, its filled temporal extent, fits into the one time. “All temporal objects are embedded in time” (316), and each object through its duration, the particular temporal form belonging to it, occupies a concrete portion of that time. Objects having the form of time “are ordered according to their temporal posi-

tions in the fixed system of positions in the one time” (339). This is the second sense in which the object adheres to time. Each object with its “own” time has its definite, unalterable location in the one time. This is not to say that many other objects cannot share that one time or even the same specific location; it is to say that the particular object adheres to the time in which it appears as *its* time (181). “No event,” Husserl writes, “can leap out of its temporal position or its determinate temporal extent. They belong to its essence” (134). The binding of an object to the time it occupies is not accidental; together with the object’s duration, it defines the object temporally and makes possible its identification as a particular individual. In the absence of this bond to time, the object would be an ideal object, which is precisely an object that is not glued to any particular temporal location as its own (312).

I have spoken of the temporal object belonging to time. But is there only one time, or are there many times? In fact, Husserl speaks of more than one time, and even refers to “the problem of many times” (132). Consider a sampling from the Bernauer Manuscripts: there is transcendent time, which can be transcendent solipsistic time or intersubjective time (91); there is natural time (described as “objective”) (184); there is the time of historical events (134); there is immanent time (91), or, as Husserl also calls it, “phenomenological” time (120, e.g.) or “transcendental ‘subjective’ time” (184); and there is phantasy time in contrast to actual time (354). To be sure, even if each of these times differs from the others, then everything said to this point should still be true of whatever enduring temporal objects and events fall into any one of them. But does Husserl really hold the view that there are irreducibly many times and that we are naive to think there is only one time?

The textual evidence is mixed. With respect to the relation between transcendent time embracing the objects of perception,

such as trams going down Beacon Street or the moon over Boston Harbor, and the immanent time of the acts of perception and hyletic data, Husserl writes at one point: “The external perceptions belong just as little in the temporal series of the perceived things as the immanent perceptions belong to the temporal series of the immanently perceived things” (118, note 1). On the other hand, he also refers to the “identity that occurs when I identify act and object with respect to their times” (354). And in the lectures on time from 1905, he claims that “the time of the perception and the time of the perceived are identically the same,” though he also observes in the Bernauer texts that objects in nature can continue to endure when they are not given, while the items in immanent time, acts and hyletic data, cannot (317, note 1). Elsewhere in the Bernauer Manuscripts, he asks whether it might not be the case that the apparently multiple times “are one time, or, respectively, that all individuals belong to one ‘world’ with a single essential form of time” in which everything would stand in temporal relation to everything else. He replies that, “naturally, there must be some truth in this,” but then goes on to suggest that the phenomenological reduction may precipitate many times: transcendent time, immanent time, and so on (132, 133). He also refers to an “absolute time” (330) and a “universal time” (146), but then writes in a note that he is not claiming that “the universal time is a form for all temporal objects whatsoever,” and “leaves (it) open whether different fundamental categories of objects have different universal times as forms” (146, note 1).

However, if the texts themselves fail to settle the issue of whether time is one or many, other considerations may. First, there are different kinds of temporal objects and events: for example, those in the transcendent or natural world, such as thunderstorms and umbrellas; historical events, such as the Peloponnesian War; and the immanent acts

of consciousness directed toward umbrellas and wars. Husserl's distinction between transcendent, historical, and immanent times may be seen as a way of preserving these differences in kind among objects and bringing them to the fore. It may also be a way of accounting for the quite different concerns one can have in approaching each "kind" of time. The historian may be interested in precise dating or in establishing the boundaries of an "age" or "era," while the physicist may be concerned only with precise measurement. But these differences in kind among temporal objects and the different concerns we can have about them do not rule out the possibility that the times to which they belong would have in common the same basic temporal form, the same continuum of time points.

On a deeper level, Husserl's distinction between different times may be seen as an attempt to avoid confusing different dimensions of phenomenal being. A perceived transcendent object and the immanent act perceiving it belong to different dimensions or "worlds"—the former to the constituted world "external" to consciousness, the latter to the immanent realm of consciousness itself. The distinction between transcendent (objective, natural) time and immanent (transcendental "subjective" time) is a way of confirming and preserving that dimensional difference, which is fundamental to the constitution of temporal objects. But again, this does not mean that these dimensionally different worlds could not share the same temporal features.

Finally, if denying the dimensional difference between consciousness and its transcendent objects would make nonsense out of the intentional life of consciousness, denying that there is ultimately only one time would have equally unfortunate consequences. Husserl speaks of the "combining form of time" (331), and one meaning that phrase may be taken to have is that time links both temporal objects within a dimension and temporal objects belonging to different

dimensions. An act and its object can be said to be simultaneous, and thus to occupy the same point of time, without denying their dimensional difference. It is the one time as a combining form that lets us speak of an "identity that occurs when I identify act and object with respect to their times" (354). Hence act and object may belong to different dimensions, but this is no bar to saying that they are simultaneous and thus occupy the same point of time. To say anything else would be odd indeed. But simultaneity is only one temporal relationship. Husserl often observes that in memory, for example, the act of remembering is now while its object is past. An awareness of this difference must be there if one is to experience memory at all, but that awareness depends on there being one time—though not one time point—shared by the present act and its past object. In the absence of a common time, memory (and also expectation and perception) would not be possible. There are good Husserlian reasons, then, to think that there is one time that accounts for the formal unity, in terms of points and extents, among the "many" times Husserl mentions. Despite his occasional caveats, there does seem to be a "universal time."

It is interesting to note that there is an exception to this rule. Phantasy time, while having many of the marks of time, resists inclusion in one time. The centaur that I imagine has its own temporal duration with its time points, and in that sense is a temporal object with its own time or "quasi-temporal form" (354), and yet "it is not in any time" (327). Whether the phantasy object is merely imagined or is a publicly available work of fiction, what it lacks is "the absolute temporal location, the 'actual' time. . . . A time is indeed presented, even intuitively presented, but it is a time without actual and genuine place or position" (328). This means that it makes no sense to ask whether the object of one phantasy is before or after the object of another. "The centaur that I am now imagining and a hippopotamus that I

imagined earlier have no temporal relation to one another” (350). It does make sense to ask whether one act of phantasy is before or after another act, for the acts of phantasy are actual and like all actualities have their fixed places in the one time. But since the objects of phantasy are not actual, they do not fit into the universal time. Phantasy times remain irreducibly plural: There are as many imagined times as there are phantasies, hence infinitely many (358). The most that we can say is that, against the background of the one time that refuses to accommodate them, the many phantasy times appear as quasi-times, “as-if” times.

In this section of this essay I have examined various aspects of time from the perspective of the one and the many. The Bernauer Manuscripts, however, are not just about the time of which we are conscious; they are also about the consciousness of time. Husserl addresses the consciousness of time from two related directions: first, the temporal ways of appearing in which time and temporal objects present themselves; second, the moments and phases of consciousness that display time and temporal objects in those ways of appearing. In the next section, I will look at the modes of temporal appearance. In the final section, I will discuss the moments of the flow of time consciousness that make possible the appearance of temporal objects in those modes. In both cases, I will again explore the phenomena in terms of the relationship of the one and the many.

The Temporal Modes of Appearance

We have been considering what Husserl at one point refers to as “time in itself”: time as an “objective form” (181) with its fixed and inflexible order of points and the individual objects filling them. Husserl makes some strong statements about this time and its objects: “The essence of the individual is bound to this form and contains nothing of ‘now, past, future,’” he writes. “Time in itself

is not present, and was not, and will not be” (181). Neither time nor any time point is “in itself ‘now.’ The time point in itself has not been and is not coming to be” (181). Hence, contrary to what is commonly said, and even sometimes said in phenomenology, “time and its objects do not flow; they are, and the ‘are’ is fixed [*starr*, which can also be translated as “rigid,” “unmoving,” or “inflexible”]. The temporal flow [*Zeitfluss*] is not the flow of time [*der Fluss der Zeit*]” (182). Husserl notes that there is something scandalous about these formulations (183, note 1), and asks rhetorically: “But do not objects arise and pass away in time? Does not water flow? Do not birds fly?” (182). These are apt questions, given what Husserl says. It may indeed appear that he holds that nothing happens in time: that there are no events, no changes, no beginnings and endings, that waters do not flow and birds do not fly. Most people would rightly be suspicious about such a position.

Husserl, however, does not deny that things happen in time. He certainly accepts that there are temporal objects, and temporal objects are precisely happenings in time. But these happenings do not, considered in themselves, flow. It is tempting to think that temporal objects must flow because they are changing objects, but it is wrong to assume that temporal objects are necessarily changing objects. As we have seen, what characterizes temporal objects, considered in themselves, is that they have a certain extension or duration. Within that duration, they can certainly change, but they can equally well remain constant. In either case, there is a temporal object. So birds do fly, and their flying is an event in time, but this simply means that when a bird flies “a definite temporal extent is objectively filled in such and such a way” (182). The Great Wall of China, unchanging and immobile, will fill a temporal extent too.

Time, then, is fixed, yet Husserl no more denies that flow is characteristic of our expe-

rience of time than he denies that things happen in time. As he wrote in a text dating from 1911: "Time is fixed, and yet time flows."³ The element of flow in time consciousness, however, does not derive from time in itself but from the intentional relation of time to the experiencing subject, from time as it is for me: "Time with its objects exists in itself and yet also for me. All that exists temporally is related to my actual now" (194). Phenomenology is concerned with time as it presents itself in time consciousness, and time presents itself as a fixed form with temporal objects in unmoving locations, but it also presents itself in flowing modes of appearance. A temporal object, Husserl writes, "necessarily has a relation of givenness to a cognizing subject and to every possible subject: The temporal object is (given) in different modes to the cognizing subject: It is not only in its time, but it 'is presently occurring,' or it has occurred, or . . . it will occur" (182).

Hence, while the temporal flow may not be the flow of time, it is the flow of "the manners of givenness of time and of its objects" (182),⁴ that is, of now, past, and future. These are the perpetually changing modes in which time and temporal objects appear in time's relationship to the subject. "With respect to its points," then, "time has an order in itself, with the two counter-directions of earlier in time—later in time. Past and future, however, are entirely different concepts; they are related to modes of temporal givenness in the stream" (146). The bird in flight is an example of an objective duration with relations of earlier and later or before and after, and Husserl urges us to be careful not to confuse "change in objective time (such as the bird's flight) with the 'flow' of the modes of givenness in which everything temporal 'appears' for the subject. The appearing of a change is a continuous 'flow,' but the objective change is a fixed being, a fixed extent of time" (183).

The flowing temporal modes, it is worth stressing, are not themselves time points.

Now, past, and future are not successive points in time, nor do they form, collectively, an extent of time. They are the ways in which time points and durations appear. The now is not a second content in addition to a time point and its filling. It is, Husserl says, an intentional characteristic (128). As an illustration of what this means, consider the case of admiring a rose. The rose may be said to endure, but not to flow. Its enduring, however, reveals itself through the ever-changing temporal modes. The duration of the rose is not, of course, measured by the duration of my act of perceiving it. The act endures as long as I look at the rose. The rose at its peak endures until it begins to wilt and shed its petals. This event, the wilting of the rose, happens to the rose. If I am aware of it, I will be aware of it in temporal modes; but these modes will not be parts of the rose's duration. If they were, then I would never be aware of the duration because the actual now, for example, would be a part of that duration, and hence that part could never elapse and be given as past. Things can happen and endure and come to an end in objective time precisely because they do not flow in the sense in which their modes of temporal givenness do.

Hence, despite their difference, time and the flow of the modes of temporal givenness are intimately connected. We can be conscious of time only in the flow of temporal modes. "Time *is* the form of identical objectivity," Husserl writes, "which necessarily becomes constituted in the orientation form of the present, past, future" (36). Or: "The consciousness of time is the consciousness of the succession of points, each of which can only be intended as actual now or as a now that has been or is future" (36). Thus the time point or the duration with its content is identically the same no matter what the temporal mode in which it is given, but if it is to be given at all, it must be given in temporal modes. In our consciousness of time, "we always, or, rather, necessarily have two kinds of things: the being itself and the changing ...

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modes of givenness of this objective being” (183). But since there is no givenness without the modes, these “two kinds of things” are irrevocably locked together in our experience.

We have said that the temporal modes flow. What does that involve, and why can we not say that the events in time flow?

When a temporal object appears to consciousness, to “the stream constituting the temporal object” in the sense of bringing it to appearance, “there is consciousness of the time points of the object in the noematic forms ‘now,’ ‘just past,’ ‘just coming’” (142). “Just past” and “just coming,” Husserl tells us, “are not one form but the universal title for a continuum of forms.” So at any moment of consciousness, there is only one now, but past and future as modes are many; they form a continuum. Thus I will be conscious of only one phase of the bird’s flight as now, but—assuming that the bird has been airborne for a time—I will be conscious of the earlier phases of its flight in varying modes of the past and of later phases in varying modes of the future. With the next moment of time consciousness, all of these modes will change. There will be a new phase of the bird’s flight in a new now, and the earlier phases will appear as still further past. Hence there will be many constantly changing modes of the past and many modes of the future for each time point, though only one mode of the now; and each of the many modes of past or future will be unique in terms of its distance from the actual now. The flow of modes will continue not only as long as the bird’s flight continues, but as long as consciousness lasts.

Among the temporal modes, the now holds a privileged position. It is the primal form, the primal present of a time point (130). Only in the now does a time point and its content become actual for consciousness. As such, it is the “‘original or ground form,’ in relation to which all other forms are ‘modifications’” (142). The now itself is an un-

modified mode of appearing; it is not the modification of any other mode even if it is called now in relation to past and future. It is perpetually the original mode of what is new—of new time points with new contents. Husserl calls it a source-point of new temporal positions and their contents (297), for it is the mode in which what is new first presents itself, a cornucopia of new things, an arena in which things first manifest themselves as actual for a subject. But since what is presented as now becomes past in the next moment of consciousness, and then further and further past with each succeeding moment, Husserl also refers to the now as a source-point for an infinite continuum of the past (293). In relation to the now, past and future are always forms of modification. Thus: “‘just past’ means much the same as just past now, ‘coming’ means a coming now, or rather: the object of which one is conscious as past or as coming is characterized as having been now or as coming to be now. In the forms as noematic forms of sense lies the sense now, but contained as ‘modified.’ Modified: what is past is not now, ‘no longer’ now, *past now*” (142–43). These modifications flow continuously. What was presented as now is presented as just past when a new point of time with its filling is presented as now, and what had been presented as just past is presented as still further past. In the midst of this flow, the actual now stands as the point of orientation for all the other modes: it is in terms of its distance from the actual now that something is said to be more or less past (236). “The modifications are, according to their proper sense, continuously and gradually increasing or decreasing” in relation to the zero-point or null-point of the now, the limit of modifications. The now “pure and simple” is “the absolute now, the noematic form of the absolute present, the form of the original present” (143).

The modified, oriented character of the flowing temporal modes explains why the bird’s flight could not be said to flow. It

makes no sense to speak of the later phases of the flight as modified or as modifications of the bird's initial movement. The phases of the bird's flight simply are, even if they succeed one another; succession in itself does not involve modification. On the other hand, the modes through which the phases are presented are continuously modified, which is why they can present the phase-by-phase sequence of the flight.

A final point often stressed by Husserl with respect to the flow of temporal modes is that it is through the flow that an identical temporal object presents itself as identical. We experience something as the same because it presents itself as the same through and across many temporal modes—initially as to come, then as now, and then in varying degrees of the past (36). In this connection, Husserl seems to hold that an enduring object is not truly constituted as an identical temporal unity while it is still “living” and actually forming itself. It finally becomes itself in the process of flowing away (sinking into the past). In this sense, givenness in the original mode of the now is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the givenness of the temporal object or duration. “The objective time point is a unity of a continuous manifold, and something similar is true of the objective temporal extent.” As long as the duration is still in the process of becoming, one does not have the full objectivity of the full duration. “The whole duration becomes constituted as an objectivated temporal extent in the sinking into the past of the whole duration that has come into being” (137). Note here that durations do come into being. Hence a duration is given in full and complete objectivity as an extent of time only when something has been fully constituted and one can, so to speak, look back on it as it fades away. 9/11 as an event with its own duration did not become 9/11 until after 9/11. While the events were unfolding on September 11, 2001, there were certainly things happening and being given in a process of becoming in temporal modes—as

now, just past, and as future. But there was not yet a completed event in time, though we did have parts of what would become the total event, and they, of course, had their times. Only after several days did the event emerge in its full objectivity. Only then did we have a determinate temporal object with its fixed location in time that will never change, an identity to which one returns again and again in the consciousness of time.

The Flow of Time Consciousness

Temporal objects are presented in the flow of their modes of appearance through time consciousness. But just as there is nothing simple about the manners of temporal givenness, there is nothing simple about time consciousness. About ten years before writing the Bernauer texts, Husserl differentiated three levels of constitution involved in the consciousness of time. The first of these is not itself a form of time consciousness but a level of temporal objects: “the things of empirical experience in objective time.”⁵ Birds flying, horses galloping, houses seen, and wars fought would fall on this level. The objects on the first level are not parts of consciousness in any sense; they are neither acts nor immanent hyletic contents. They are precisely transcendent to consciousness, and their time is transcendent time, if one chooses to discriminate among times in terms of the kinds of objects that fall into them.

The many objects and events on the first level, each with its own duration and each fitting into the one time, appear in changing temporal modes. They are brought to appearance as temporal objects by time-constituting experiences (*Erlebnisse*) occupying the second level. Here would fall acts of perception presenting their objects as present and in person, acts of memory intending their objects as past, acts of expectation aiming at objects as future. The latter are explicitly time-constituting acts, but any act whatsoever would also fall into this

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“preempirical”⁶ or “immanent” time: acts of judgment, for example. Immanent hyletic contents, such as tones, would also find their place there. Such data, though they are not acts, would, like acts, be “immanent unities in preempirical time”⁷ or, as Husserl frequently calls acts and contents, “immanent temporal objects.” Hyletic data, whatever one thinks of them, play a significant role in Husserl’s analyses of time consciousness from the first decade of the twentieth century and in the Bernauer manuscripts from 1917/1918.

Whatever falls on this second level of time-constitution—whether acts or hyletic data—belongs to consciousness itself as a real (*reell*) part or moment. It is also a constituted temporal object or unity, which means that it is experienced in flowing temporal modes. The perception of the house, then, is just as much a temporal object as the house perceived. It has its duration, and the duration fits into time, which in this case Husserl calls immanent time or “transcendental-‘subjective’” time. This time is immanent or subjective because it is a time of consciousness, not of transcendent objects. And it is transcendental because the acts it embraces are intentional or constituting, presenting objects in temporal modes.

If the acts in immanent time are constituted temporal unities, it is reasonable to ask what constitutes them, and it is also reasonable to assume that the answer would be some form of time consciousness. Husserl here points to a third and final level of constitution: “the absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness.”⁸ Husserl remarked early in the last century that time consciousness poses the most important and the most difficult of all phenomenological problems,⁹ and surely it is hard to imagine anything more difficult to understand than what Husserl means by the absolute flow and how it is connected to the level of constituted immanent acts and contents. There are, as one would expect, conflicting interpretations of the

flow and its status, and I will allude to them shortly.

The three levels that we have outlined are found in texts Husserl wrote around 1907 to 1909 as well as in texts from 1911, all collected in *Husserliana X*. Do they also appear in the Bernauer manuscripts? I think they do, despite some differences in language (the phrase “the absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness” does not seem to be used in the manuscripts, for example). Let me marshal some textual evidence for this claim. In discussing the perception of an external object, Husserl distinguishes three essentially necessary levels: “the ‘external’ object, the immanent object of the first level (that is, I take it, of the first level of consciousness), (and) the primally constituting process of what is immanent” (191). In another text he writes that “immanent temporal objectivity is itself constituted and refers us back to the internal consciousness and its primal process” (122). He claims in a similar vein that through the reduction one can go back to the level of immanent being with its form of immanent time, but from there “regress still further . . . to the original consciousness constituting immanent temporal objectivity” (281). In still another text, he links the three levels: There is “the primal living [*Urlebenis*] in which the experience [*Erlebnis*]-manifold belonging to phenomenological time, the continuous multiplicity of temporal events coexisting and following one another phenomenologically, become constituted; then in turn in these multiplicities unities belonging to an objectivity ‘transcendent to consciousness’ can be constituted as unities of spatial things, of animal being, and so on” (268). Finally, suggesting a distinction within consciousness between two levels, one constituted and the other constituting, Husserl claims that “inwardness” (*Innerlichkeit*) can refer to the immanent contents, but also to the consciousness constituting them (281). Texts such as these pro-

vide strong evidence that Husserl stays with the distinctions he reached in his earlier reflections on time consciousness. They do not, of course, settle questions about how the three levels, and particularly the two allegedly within consciousness itself, are related.

Before turning to those issues, however, it might be useful to point to a few fairly uncontroversial things that one can say about the flow. First, it belongs to, or, better, is a dimension of, consciousness. Husserl intends to distinguish the flow in some sense from the level of immanent acts and contents, which also belong to consciousness. It is the final level of time consciousness, the ground of all other constitution: Husserl describes the eidetic structure “of the time-constituting consciousness as . . . the first and deepest law of the genesis of consciousness and at the same time of genesis as the original constitution of objectivities” (281). There is no further consciousness beyond it. Furthermore, the absolute flow or “the originally constituting stream of life” (286)—a synonym for the flow—offers a complex example of the interweaving of the one and the many. The flow itself is a continuum (151), a single continuous flow with many phases, one of which will be actual while others will have elapsed or not yet be actual. Each of these phases, itself a unity, is “consciousness of” in three fundamental ways: as primal presentation (or primal impression), it is the consciousness of something as now; as protention, it experiences what is yet to come in the mode of the future; and as retention, it is the consciousness of what is just past in varying degrees (14, 39). Just as there is only one now as mode of appearance, so there is only moment of primal presentation in each phase of the flow, which experiences in immediate presence everything that is immanent. And just as there are multiple modes of the past and the future, so there are, correlatively, multiple retentions and protentions. In fact, each phase of the flow embraces a continuum of retentions and

protentions (154) by virtue of which the flow is conscious of a temporal object in its duration: as now and, in varying degrees, as past and to come. But what does it mean to say that continua of retentional and protentional moments belong to each phase of the flow along with the primal impression? In one sense, it simply means that each successive phase of the flow is aware of one point of the object as now and of several points as more or less past and more or less future. But from the perspective of constitution, what does it mean? Husserl suggests that how one answers this question about the constitution of the intentionality belonging to each phase will determine whether one faces the problem of an infinite regress, which would make nonsense of any claim for an absolute and final level of consciousness.

Husserl expends a considerable amount of energy and space in the Bernauer Manuscripts on the issue of the infinite regress, particularly in the texts arranged in Part III. He revisits and is perhaps again enticed by an interpretation of time consciousness that he tried and rejected ten years earlier. This view, which we cannot treat in detail here, interprets time consciousness, that is, the primal presentation, retention, and protention belonging to each phase, as constituted through the animation of sensuous contents by apprehensions, both really contained within the phase of consciousness. On this reading, each phase of the flow would be filled with a continuum of contents and a continuum of, say, retentional apprehensions, which, in apprehending the contents, would make us aware of past phases of whatever temporal unity we are experiencing. Each successive phase of consciousness would have a new set of contents and apprehensions. When he criticized this interpretation of the flow some ten years earlier, Husserl offered a number of compelling arguments that do not reappear in the Bernauer texts. In those texts, he focuses chiefly on the claim that the schema or “model of content and apprehension,” which was originally of-

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ferred as an account of transcendent perception, would inevitably turn the flow's consciousness of immanent temporal objects, acts and hyletic data, into an objectivating consciousness on the order of perception and reflection (248). Indeed, when Husserl discusses the interpretation of the absolute flow in terms of the schema in the Bernauer Manuscripts, he uses the term "immanent perception" with great frequency. On this reading of retentive, impressional, and protentive consciousness, a regress is unavoidable. If the absolute consciousness of immanent unities on the first level of consciousness, among which would be transcendent perceptions, memories, and so on, were a matter of immanent perception, it too would be a temporal object and would require constitution by a still deeper level of consciousness, and so on to infinity. This would mean that the absolute flow and its phases would be temporal and belong to time, even have their own time, and so too would every deeper phase in the regress. The problem with the infinite regress, from the perspective of the one and the many, is that it gives us too many: too many levels of consciousness, too many times, too many items crammed into each momentary phase of the flow of consciousness—and no unity in which the many might finally find a home or source.

It is not clear to me whether Husserl was seriously tempted by the schematic model of constitution at some point in the writing of the Bernauer Manuscripts, as he was at the beginning of the century. It is clear, however, that he ultimately rejects the model, and in rejecting it thinks that he can defend the notion of an ultimate flow of consciousness that truly is ultimate. His argument is two-pronged. First, the consciousness the absolute flow possesses is not perceptual or reflective, not a matter of grasping, turning toward, or apprehending (245). It is not an act that would itself have to be constituted in another time consciousness. Rather—and this

is the second aspect of his argument—it is a "flow of constituting experiencing" that takes its course whether or not it is grasped in reflection or immanent perception (262). This means that the absolute flow is not itself time or an enduring object in time, as an act or content would be. "The last 'time' actually to be called time is the 'immanent time,' behind which, however, there still lies the time-constituting flow and the succession belonging to it" (179). When we reach this primal process, Husserl insists, "we surely have a radical distinction. The primal process is a process, but no longer constituted in the same way as the objects belonging to immanent time" (122).

The description in the Bernauer Manuscripts of the unique way in which the flow is constituted conforms to Husserl's account in the earlier texts on time consciousness. Although it is presented in a less elaborate form, the core elements are there. Thus the flow is said to constitute its own unity: "The phases of the process form a continuous succession, which does not become constituted in a new process, but has in itself the marvelous property of being at the same time the consciousness of the process" (117). This occurs through what Husserl called the "double intentionality of consciousness" in his earlier analyses, and which recurs, if not by that precise name, in the Bernauer Manuscripts. "The stream of consciousness is a stream of twofold intentions" (41), he writes. "Consciousness is not merely consciousness of things, consciousness of its 'primary' object, but also 'internal' consciousness, consciousness of itself and its intentional process" (41–42). Through retention and protention, each phase of the flow is conscious of earlier and later phases of itself, thus constituting the nonobjectivating awareness of itself in its unity and of the diversity of acts and contents in immanent time (47–48). In terms of the Bernauer Manuscripts the schema has been replaced by "the most remarkable intentionality of

‘modifications’” (174–75). What this means concretely is that the continuum of retentions belonging to any phase of the flow is a purely intentional continuum. That is, the moment of retention belonging to a given phase is the consciousness of the elapsed phase of the flow with its presentational, protentional, and retentional moments, and through the latter of the phase preceding it, and so on as long as retention lasts.

A final consideration. Even if Husserl has found a way to escape the infinite regress, has he made a compelling case for distinguishing two levels within consciousness itself? Is it not paradoxical to claim that a rift inhabits consciousness? Would not one level do? First, it is important to keep in mind that Husserl does not offer two separable “pieces” of consciousness but a single consciousness with two distinct dimensions. I think a defense of this dimensional distinction can be mounted by observing that we

are regularly conscious of several events at once (37, 121). The duality in consciousness then accounts for the diversity in unity of our conscious life, for the fact that I can walk down a flight of stairs from my office, hear sounds from a music practice room, think of a problem in the Bernauer Manuscripts, worry about finishing my paper, look forward to dinner, and do all of these things at once without my consciousness being reduced to mind dust. The flow keeps me together, lets me be the same consciousness maintaining its unity throughout the many acts that make up the mosaic of my conscious life. Thanks to the “originally constituting stream of life,” I can be both one and many.

ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, references in brackets in the text will be to Edmund Husserl, *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein (1917/18)*, Husserliana Band XXXIII, ed. Rudolf Bernet und Dieter Lohmar (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).
2. Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)*, Husserliana Band X, ed. Rudolf Boehm (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 72. English translation: *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, translated by John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), p. 74.
3. Husserliana X, p. 64; translation, p. 67.
4. “Time as the enclosing form of the objective temporal extent is fixed and does not flow; but the now flows, and the temporal modalities flow, and to each time point and to each temporal extent and to the whole time necessarily belong modalities that pertain to these objective temporalities in themselves” (p. 136).
5. Husserliana X, p. 73; translation, p. 77.
6. Husserliana X, pp. 73, 373; translation, pp. 77, 384.
7. Husserliana X, p. 73; translation, p. 77.
8. Husserliana X, p. 73; translation, p. 77.
9. Husserliana X, pp. 276, 334; translation, pp. 286, 346.

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