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# Psyche and Time: The Phenomenology of Time Consciousness

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# PSYCHE AND TIME

## THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF TIME CONSCIOUSNESS

by

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ABSTRACT

Time in its inward form may be able to provide a significance which sustains the human spirit. If this is true, it becmces unnecessary to seek an enduring significance for life in the transcendent.

Western man's attitudes toward time are a composite of religious, historical, and cultural assumptions. The Christian model of time supported man by its emphasis on God's interventions in the world. The scientific model of time left man adrift in an objective world. The ascendancy of the scientific model brought a devaluation of both time and human life.

Bergson, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty all describe a type of duration that sustains the human spirit. Each philosopher, in his own way, believes that consciousness of time forms an essential part of the deepest self of each individual. Within this partnership of psyche and time, the structure of each moment carries its own duration and a deepened dimension.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

A human being perceives reality in a way that is conditioned by his personal and cultural attitudes toward that reality. In other words, one sees what his viewpoint allows him to see. Ingrained assumptions and value judgements act like blinders; they serve to cut off peripheral vision. Nevertheless, as a human one has the freedom to adapt one's perspectives as well as one's values and to choose from a variety of attitudes. Insofar as a man is able to choose that perspective about what is real and what is valuable which will condition his vision, it is important that a variety of choices be available. This is as necessary for one's attitude toward time as it is for any other aspect of man's reality.

This paper begins with a descriptive analysis of the two best-known modern models of time in order to clarify what these familiar models of time imply and to explain what these implications mean in terms of one's orientation to life. Next, three modern philosophical theories of time are described: those of Bergson, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty. Each of these theorists describes time as it relates to human consciousness. Here, the term consciousness means

a reflective awareness of one's own inner self as well as of the outer world.

The focus of this paper is on that aspect of time itself--to be found within each of Bergson's, Husserl's, and Merleau-Ponty's theories of time--which sustains the psyche: man's mind, spirit and soul. This type of time provides an abiding quality, an area of continuity where man may feel some part of himself enduring in spite of time's undeniably destructive force. Within this attitude toward time, a man could feel himself upheld rather than crushed by time. If one were able to accept a sustaining quality in time itself, within time's relationship to human consciousness, then the traditional human method of escape from time, the flight into the transcendent or eternal may prove to be an unnecessarily violent leap from one extreme to the other.

In his story about the Five Ages of Man, Hesoid explained that the earliest or golden age was a time when men lived naturally upon the fruits of the earth. Work was unnecessary and care unknown. No one aged or suffered illness. Death to the men of the golden race was as sleep is to the men of the present. The golden age was timeless. As time progressed through the silver and bronze periods and reached the present degenerate age, however, time's destructive power bore down more and more heavily upon

mankind.[1] To the present race of man, time appears a heavy burden.

The Hebrew tradition, again, began with a story about how the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, come to be expelled from a timeless paradise. A nostalgia for timelessness seems to run through the myths by which Western culture explained its beginnings. Traditionally, the concept of timelessness has been equated with eternity. Because of this identification, timelessness has been considered to belong "outside" or to transcend the world. According to this viewpoint, timelessness is only a legitimate part of human experience after death.

Set in opposition to timelessness in this way, time becomes purely transitory. Since time acts upon everything in the world with irresistible force, man feels himself time's victim. Helplessly, man observes time relentlessly altering and eradicating everything that men value, including the very self of every human being. Because of the way in which time and timelessness have been separated and polarized, with timelessness banished to heaven, men have lost sight of how much of human life is, in fact, experience of timelessness.

Timelessness is a quality of experience, just as is being bound by time. The experience of timelessness does not have to be extraordinary. One encounters timelessness

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[1]Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 1:36.

during life in sleep as well as in mystical states. During ordinary consciousness when one's attention has become so totally engrossed that one feels he has "lost track" of time, what one has experienced is timelessness. Memory, too, is timeless in the sense that something remembered can be recalled at any time. An individual's past is potentially as temporarily limitless as is his future. Continuing with this idea, all the experienced events of life are able to be, at least potentially, co-present.[2] Unity and continuity within the life of an individual are, in this way, based on timelessness.

If one might consider the temporal and the eternal as two totally different levels of one reality, which is time, then one's experience of timelessness during life might mediate or serve as a bridge from the temporal to the eternal. At the very least, timelessness might serve to give men a glimpse of a deeper dimension belonging to life.

Time has always been regarded as a mystery. What is time exactly? How does time remain as it passes away? How does time constantly renew itself? Does time support life or act simply as its destroyer? What are the relationships between past, present, and future? How much of time forms the present? Does time flow from the past toward the future or from the future toward the past? Does time

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[2]Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1960), pp. 54-57.

flow at all? Do we experience time as succession or duration or as a correlation of both? Is time being or becoming? Is time a real thing? Does change come from time or from our minds? Alfred North Whitehead, one of the giants of twentieth century philosophy, once said, "It is impossible to meditate on time and the creative passage of nature without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence."[3]

Historically, the idea of time was expressed by symbols. If we define the term symbol, as did C. G. Jung, to mean the best possible characterization of something that is mostly unknown, a mystery, then these symbols of time may point to some aspect of time's essence.[4] The most important feature common to the best known symbols of time is that these images as gods and goddesses function mainly as representations of psychic energy.[5] This historical association of time with psychic energy provides yet another indication of time's close relationship to the most basic organizing factors of the human mind.

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[3]A. N. Whitehead, Concept of Nature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 73.

[4]C. G. Jung, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, ed. R. F. C. Hull, vol. 6: Psychological Types (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971); Bollingen Paperback, 1976), pp. 474-475.

[5]Marie-Louise Von Franz, Number and Time, trans. Andrea Dykes (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 255.

In developing Jung's thesis Marie-Louise Von Franz gives a number of mythological illustrations. In the Hindu pantheon, for example, Krishna appears as one of the archetypal forms of that energy that creates and destroys the world. Krishna tells the hero, Arjuna, in the Bhagavad-Gita, "Know that I am Time, which causes the world to perish when the time is ripe for it."[6]

The Mithric god, Aion, who originated in Persia, was another representative of this world-creating energy. As time, Aion's chief attribute was to retain his own identity as an example of order admidst and in spite of the constant changes which he caused in the world. Aion was associated with the serpent which periodically transformed and renewed itself by shedding its skin. In Rome, Aion was linked with the god Janus, the patron of opportunity and new beginnings, who had two heads and could see the past and future at one time. In the Gnostic tradition, Aion became identified as the Demiurge who created the universe, time, and becoming.[7]

Another symbol of creative force, the Greek god, Chronus, son of Uranus and mother earth, became confused with chronos or time during the Renaissance. According to the Greek myth, Chronus had dethroned and killed his father, Uranus, by castrating him with a sickle. Chronus

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[6]Ibid., pp. 255-256.

[7]Ibid., pp. 256-258.

then swallowed all of his children as each one was born in order to prevent their killing him in turn. Finally, Zeus, whose mother had fed Chronus a stone instead of her baby, defeated Chronus in war and forced him to disgorge his other children.[8] Chronus was always depicted carrying a sickle. Saturn, the Roman counterpart of Chronus, also carried a sickle.

From the Renaissance on, figures of Classical gods were used as decorative objects. As Classical culture was revived, Roman and Greek myths became familiar to every educated person. Due to the identification of Chronus with chronos, the popular symbol of time evolved into either the old father who devours his children or the old man with the sickle, harvesting life's moments. The figure of old Father Time with his sickle remains a familiar one.

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[8]Graves, The Greek Myths, 1:39-41.

within history is to love and care for men.[1] God's love sustains and supports mankind against time's destructive aspects. In the Christian model of time, earthly, finite time is regarded as opposed to eternity, endless or infinite time. Time and history are considered to be a linear process with a definite beginning, Creation, and ending (the Apocalypse). Men live out their lives in a "middle" period.[2]

According to the theologian Oscar Cullman, the Christian model contains two kinds of time, chronos, a time of waiting, the time of the passage of events or the time in the "middle," and kairos, a specific point in time that is charged with significance. Kairoi are the arbitrary points of divine intervention into the world when God moves to ensure man's salvation. Therefore, a period of time has meaning either as a period of anticipation, or as a moment of actualization, of some divine purpose. Christ's coming into the world to redeem mankind is the most outstanding example of a kairos. Christ

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[1]John L. Russel, s. j., "Time in Christian Thought," The Voices of Time, ed. J. T. Fraser (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 59.

[2]John Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 17.

brought the eternal into the temporal world and, through Christ, man is given the opportunity to escape from time into the timeless.[3]

The direction of time's passage in the Christian model is perceived to be linear, moving from time's beginning toward its end. The Medieval Church, especially, emphasized time's swift passage and, consequently, the brief duration of human life.[4]

Whatever the rate of its unfolding, the most important characteristic of time in the Christian model is that the whole process of time and history proceeds in linear form with divine guidance manifesting itself in "interventions" at uniquely important moments, nudging human life toward the "destiny" of an overall divine purpose.

Benefits to man's status within the Christian view of time are clearly apparent. God's purpose invests time and history as processes with meaning and value. Man lives, both individually and collectively, with dignity and purpose within this divine order. As the possessor of an unchanging, immortal soul, man is enabled to maintain a stable identity. A Christian knows who he is; he is a

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[3]Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time, trans. Floyd W. Filson (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminister Press, 1950), pp. 46-48.

[4]J. T. Fraser, The Voices of Time (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 138.

child of God. Even the terror of death, the inevitable fate that time brings to every man, is modified by hope of salvation and an afterlife.

Salvation, however, depends on the result of Christ's judgement of the individual soul after death. This judgement in turn depends on a man's use or misuse during his life of these times of expectancy and times of disclosure. The notion of judgement brought a moral dimension into the temporal process by conferring an ultimate significance upon the way in which a Christian lives out his allotted span. Joyous eternal life in heaven is restricted to the good; those adjudged irredeemably evil are condemned to endless torment.

A vivid illustration of the consequences of men's moral choices is provides in Dante's Divine Comedy, where sinners suffered on different levels of hell according to the extent of their wickedness and the elect enjoyed that particular sphere of heaven which their goodness had earned. For the faithful, goodness within the temporal world brings a concrete reward in the afterlife.

Liabilities associated with the Christian attitude toward time which tend to undermine man's sense of security are not so obvious as the benefits, but are no less important. The major liability is that time and life on earth, man's lived and living present, lost value in comparison to an ideal, eternal life. In the Christian model of

time, the present became devalued in favor of a remote, other-worldly future.

A second liability was caused by the notion of permanence. Because it was accustomed to the ideal of stability, at least in its social institutions, Christian society of the late Middle Ages, the apogee of the Christian model of time, assumed that tradition ought to form a template for the future. The past was valued because it was familiar and had brought to man the benefit of divine guidance. Change not accompanied by divine sanction was distrusted. New ideas might come from the devil, or worse, might challenge orthodox theology.

As late as 1632, with the publication of his Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems, which supported the Copernican model of the universe, Galileo was arrested by the Inquisition and, cowed by the threat of torture, forced to recant. The Catholic Church had based its dogma on the Ptolemaic system and thus had a vested interest in its preservation.[5] Today, Galileo's story is usually regarded as a foolish attempt on the part of the Church to stop scientific progress but the real lesson to be learned from this story is that people in that era had become used to thinking in terms of the Church's one orthodox, explanatory model of time which was either valid or required replacement by the Church. People had become accustomed to

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[5]A. Wolf, A History of Science, Technology and Philosophy, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 1:35-38.

the idea that one and only one paradigm of the world was true: only the Christian model of time was perceived to be valid. This narrowing of perspective severely limited the possibility of differing temporal orientations.

John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, while ostensibly an account of the soul's spiritual journey, is also a metaphorical description of the Christian model of time. During Christian's journey, time is linear; events follow one another in succession. The goal of the journey, the Heavenly City, parallels the goal of the process of time in the Christian model. Bunyan's hero's journey, like the Christian model of time, had a definite beginning as well as a goal. During his journey, Christian was free to choose his own way but, and this is important, only one path was the correct way to go. Each danger or obstacle which Christian had to overcome represented a kairos. Each time that Christian felt himself defeated, unable to continue his journey, he found by God's aid the inner resources which enabled him to continue. Without divine intervention, Christian would have been lost as were his companions. With God's assistance, Christian was assured salvation.[6]

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[6]John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (New York: P. F. Collier and Sons, 1909), pp. 1-418 passim.

## CHAPTER III

## THE SCIENTIFIC VIEWPOINT

The second of the two most influential models of time in Western culture is the scientific, quantitative model. Time in the scientific model is considered to be objective, time as it is found in the physical world, directed by impersonal forces. This type of time is composed of minute instants that are separated one from the other. As these discrete increments of time proceed in succession, one instant for a brief moment forms the present. As in the Christian model, time in the scientific model is seen as linear and directional, moving from past to future. But unlike time in the Christian model, time in the scientific model is not progressively realizing any goal or purpose.

The concept of scientific time was invented by the ancient Greek philosophers. Aristotle, who regarded time as a type of motion and thus measurable, popularized the notion of quantitative time.[1] The Aristotelian model represented scientific time throughout the Classical and Middle Ages. The Middle Ages saw the zenith of the

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[1]Aristotle, The Student's Oxford Aristotle, ed. and trans. W. D. Ross, Physics (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2:219[a].

Christian model of time. During the Renaissance, the Classical, scientific model began to regain influence. By the end of the seventeenth century, philosophers and scientists had begun to expand and refine Aristotle's model.

Isaac Newton's description of scientific time has influenced the popular notion of what time is right up to the present. Newton's theory of time compared what he called the relative time that men experience to an absolute, mathematical, ideal time that, to Newton, had a real existence. As Newton explained,

> Absolute time and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration, relative, apparent, and common time is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time: such as an hour, a day, a month, a year.[2]

To Newton, absolute time provided the yardstick by which relative or ordinary time could be measured. Real, absolute time was completely abstract and had no content.

Newton's theory of absolute time is believed to have stemmed from two roots. The first source of Newton's idea was theological.[3] To Newton, the duration of absolute

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[2]Isaac Newton, Sir Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His System of the World, Florian Cajori rev. of 1729, trans. Andrew Motte (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p. 6.

[3]Cornelius Benjamin, "Ideas of Time in the History of Philosophy," The Voices of Time, ed. J. T. Fraser (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 18; A. Wolf, A History of Science, Technology and Philosophy, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 2:673.

time symbolized God's eternity, just as the limitlessness of Newton's absolute space symbolized God's infinity.[4] The second source for Newton's concept of absolute time was his work in mathematics. Absolute time was conceived in mathematical terms. The concern of mathematicians, and especially of astronomers, in Newton's day was with the accurate measurement of small units of time.[5] In his work on differential calculus, Newton solved the problem of how to measure as accurately as possible increasingly smaller units of a curve.[6] Because Newton's absolute time is divisible into increasingly tiny, discrete units, it seems logical that Newton's concern with infinitesimals was carried over to his mathematical conception of time.

The ascendancy of the scientific model of time brought two important benefits to Western society. The absolute rigor and precision of this model assures an exactly fixed framework within which causes can strictly precede their effects, and means can be precisely ordered to achieve their ends. Modern technological society which

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[4]Eduard J. Dijksterhuis, The Mechanization of the World Picture, trans. C. Dikshoorn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 487.

[5]A. Wolf, A History of Science, Technology and Philosophy, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 1:54.

[6]Ibid., 1:211.

has raised the standard of living and eased the burden of work for many people was partially accomplished by this concern with precision which is closely related to the scientific model of time.

A second benefit to Western culture associated with the predominance of the scientific model of time is that earthly life and the present regained a value lost to them since the Classical ages. The Christian model of time, while it was preeminent, devalued the present. Within the scientific model of time, man became, although stripped of divine guidance, an active part of the natural world, responsible for his own affairs.[7]

On the other hand, the liabilities to man's status and security linked to the scientific model of time are onerous. Where the Christian model had regarded time as part of God's plan for man's salvation, the scientific model considered time to be an impersonal force. In the Christian model of time, God's love and concern had sustained mankind against time's destructive aspects. Man's attitude toward time became more pessimistic as the scientific model replaced the Christian model because the idea of time became divorced from God's purpose.

Time, regarded as an impersonal force, lacked any inherent personal meaning of the sort contained in the

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[7]Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1960), pp. 67-70.

Christian model. Man lost meaning and purpose along with time. This spiritual insecurity ate away at man's sense of identity. Since the time-series was perceived to be made up of infinitesimally small, discrete units, events occurring within a human life began to be viewed as isolated fragments of experience, devoid of relationship or continuity.[8]

Over the last hundred years, the social value of time has been reduced to a function of the industrial production and consumption that time allowed. Time not only allowed men to produce commodities; time itself became another commodity.[9] "Time is money." All of time's value became merely a possibly-better present. The past was dead, used up. The idea that time is a commodity became so familiar a part of the culture that it began to be applied to personal as well as to social attitudes about time. Personal worth began to be judged by one's ability to either produce or consume industrial products.

While the scientific model of time did allow scope for the technological progress which the Christian model had neglected, under the scientific model, change itself

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[8]Ibid., p. 39; Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time, trans, Elliott Coleman (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 13.

[9]J. T. Fraser, The Voices of Time (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 137; Meyerhoff, Time in Literature, pp. 91:106-111.

became a tyrant. The concept of permanence became superceded by the notion of change as a continuous process. Knowledge and experience painfully gained over the course of a lifetime were made worthless by constant change. As a result of the rigidity of the scientific model's focus on the present which was constantly being transformed, the family, keeper of traditions, lost status at the same time that individual worth was reduced to individual accomplishment.[10]

The attitude that time is a commodity is basically ambivalent. This perspective may be either affirmative or negative in emphasis about time. The viewpoint that regards time as an affirmative factor allows space for human striving and accomplishment. This positive view stresses time's quality of becoming. Time's very transitoriness is, according to this perspective, the medium for creative evolution.[11] This optimistic orientation towards time is associated in Western culture with the popular idea of the "rise of capitalism." Human "progress" is expected to parallel time's progression.

Studies done by Robert Knapp and John Garbutt have shown a distinct correlation between the attitudes of high motivation for achievement, the acute awareness of time's swift passage, and faith in capitalism and the

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[10]Meyerhoff, Time in Literature, pp. 112-114.

[11]Ibid., pp. 67-68.

Protestant work-ethic.[12] People whose attitudes belong to this complex are driven to rush through their lives because they feel that time is precious and must be grasped in order to exploit the opportunity contained in each moment. For this personality-type, time not utilized is "wasted."

Hans Meyerhoff believes that Goethe's character Faust demonstrates this affirmative, achievement-oriented attitude toward time. Meyerhoff describes Faust's wager with Mephistopheles as, in one sense, a test of time based on the numberless creative possibilities found within the span of each human life. The wager tested whether time, for Faust, would remain merely a carrier of potential and thus be "wasted" or would time enable Faust, by means of experience or achievement, to really live his life.[13]

A man who, like Faust, submerges himself in constant activity is, in Meyerhoff's view, using his striving as a means of forgetting that the goal of every human life is death. Ceaseless striving enables this type of individual to live within a permanent present, discounting the past and avoiding the future. Ostensibly, Faustian man works

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[12]Robert H. Knapp and John T. Garbutt, "Time Imagery and the Achievement Motive," Journal of Personality, 26 (1958): 427-434.

[13]Meyerhoff, Time in Literature, p. 70.

toward the future but his real motive is to fill the present so full of activity that he can forget the future.[14]

According to Meyerhoff, Goethe's Faust as a whole represents a counterplay between Faust's optimistic view of time and the nihilistic attitude held by Mephistopheles. From this negative perspective, time appears as man's enemy, a destructive force bringing death. This particular attitude toward time is symbolized by the familiar picture of time's chariot closely followed by skeletal death. According to this viewpoint, the past has no value and leaves no imprint, the present is fleeting, and the future brings death. Time devours all. But even more than death, the real enemy to the man who believes that time is a commodity to be utilized is the idea that time itself might possess some quality other than that of offering scope for new experience. If a moment can linger and endure, then the validity of a life of endless striving is refuted.[15]

Another flaw in the scientific model of time is that there appears to be little relationship between it and the way in which normal human beings inwardly experience time. The objective, scientific view of time may be

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., pp. 67-71.

logically valid, but it seems psychologically false.[16] Mechanistic, scientific time proceeds by arbitrary increments while our inner experience of the passage of time is that of flow. "Time is a river." Not only the flow of time itself but the length and distribution of time's passage within the scientific model differ from man's inner experience. According to the scientific view, time's passage is uniform in length, value, and distribution. Subjective or inwardly experienced time is ordered differently. Inner time is dynamic; length and distribution change according to the relative value that we assign to specific portions of time. This dynamic, inner ordering is especially noticeable in the relationship to one's personal past. As it is being constantly modified by one's mind, memory is ordered by each person's significant associations.[17]

Serious re-emphasis on the difference between the scientific model of time and man's inner experience of time would not be so important except that the scientific model is generally believed by twentieth century man to represent the only valid perspective. All public time where individual, inner time is replaced by collective time is scientific time. The result of this unquestioning

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[16]Ibid., p. 14.

[17]Ibid., pp. 20-26.

faith in the scientific model of time is that inner time is labeled "subjective," meaning that private experience has no value.

The very fact that, traditionally, in Western culture there have been only two widely-accepted models of time, Christian and scientific, is unfortunate because the two theories have evolved into a pair of polarized opposites. This process of polarization between the Christian and scientific models of time may have been aided by the different focus of the two models, one on the state of man's soul and the other on discrete mathematical increments. It is possible that the Christian notion of orthodoxy, which passed over into secular life, that only one explanatory model could possible be true at one time assisted this polarization process. By the end of the eighteenth century, in order to combat the hegemony of the Christian model, proponents of the scientific model had asserted that it was the only valid model. The quarrel between the two models of time became part of the larger disagreement between science and religion. As new ideas of time were developed in philosophy, they tended to follow this polarized pattern and oppose in turn, mainly, the scientific model of time.

## CHAPTER IV

## BERGSON'S THEORY OF TIME

New ideas of what time is and how time affects man--and man affects time--have appeared ever since man began to consider time as an intellectual problem. In the twentieth century, several philosophers have offered new perspectives, especially in the area of the relationship of time to human consciousness.

Henri Bergson formulated his theory of time around the split between the way in which time was conceptualized in the scientific model and the way in which time is experienced within the human psyche. Bergson felt that psychological experience of time was very different from the time represented by the scientific model. According to Bergson's theory, time is directly perceived by intuition, as an "immediate datum of consciousness."[1] By "immediate datum of consciousness," Bergson meant direct sensation as opposed to experience passed through the filter of the intellect.[2] Bergson called the direct,

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[1]Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will: An Essay in the Immediate Data of Consciousness, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1910), p. iii.

[2]Albert William Levi, Philosophy and the Modern World (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1970), pp. 86-87.

inner experience of time "pure duration."[3] This pure duration is completely qualitative, differentiated only according to its intensity. Bergson contrasted this privately experienced time of pure duration to public or scientific time which Bergson described as extensive in range and entirely quantitative in measure.[4]

What Bergson called spatialized time closely resembles time in the scientific model. It is abstract and conceptual as well as quantitative and homogeneous. Bergson described the passage of spatialized time, as perceived by consciousness, as a succession of discrete units symbolized as occurring in a linear series. These successive units, unrelated except by proximity, could be ordered into strict categories of past, present, and future.[5] To Bergson, the most striking aspect of a moment in spatialized or scientific time was the swiftness and finality of its passage. In a letter to William James, quoted by Hans Meyerhoff, Bergson wrote:

> It was the analysis of the notion of time as that enters into mechanics and physics which overturned all my ideas. I saw to my great astonishment that scientific time does not endure. . .that positive science consists essentially in the elimination of duration.[6]

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[3]Bergson, Time and Free Will, p. 91.

[4]Ibid., pp. 98-100.

[5]Ibid., pp. 90; 101.

[6]Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, 1935), 2:625, quoted in Meyerhoff, Time in Literature, p. 10.

Bergson believed that spatialized, scientific time belonged to the reality of the external world while pure duration was an aspect of the most intimate reality of the innermost self of an individual. These two types of time, to Bergson, were mutually exclusive. Scientific time is public where pure duration is private. Scientific time is precise yet impersonal while pure duration is distinct and so completely subjective that to express it in language distorts it into something collective.[7] In scientific time moments are discrete, mutually external while in Bergson's pure duration moments flow in a state of organic fusion. To Bergson, scientific time is quantitative where pure duration is completely qualitative.[8] In Bergson's terms scientific time is homogeneous, it progresses at an even rate, while the rate of time's flow in pure duration is heterogeneous.[9] Spatialized or scientific time has no duration, only simultaneity; in Bergson's view, even succession is something attributed to external reality by consciousness.[10] Scientific time is, to Bergson, an abstract idea while pure duration belongs to concrete experience.[11] Bergson believed that scientific

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[7]Bergson, Time and Free Will, p. 236.

[8]Ibid., p. 104.

[9]Ibid., pp. 90; 228-229; 237.

[10]Ibid., pp. 110; 227.

[11]Ibid., p. 100.

time is static, dead, only given a spurious life by the attention directed toward it by human consciousness while pure duration is a dynamic process, an aspect of consciousness itself.

Within Bergson's pure duration, the multiplicity of conscious states is to be found in a primordial accord, constituting an organic whole.[12] As Bergson explained in Time and Free Will,

> Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from former states.[13]

Within this dynamic fusion of conscious states, succession or flow does occur but not in the strict "before and after" order usually associated with the notion of succession. Passage or flow of time in Bergson's pure duration is more like a mutual penetration or interconnection of the elements of past, present, and future within consciousness.[14] Past and future permeate the present. Because these progressive states of consciousness of time are found in a condition of organic harmony, every attempt by the intellect to separate or to order these states of consciousness operates like a surgeon's knife. Some trauma is inflicted by every surgical operation. Feelings

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[14] Ibid., pp. 101; 133.

and emotions which permeate the fusion of moments in pure duration lose life and color when these moments are severed one from another.[15] What is damaged by the separation or ordering of pure duration is that admixture of past, present, and future, which, along with feeling, intuition, sensation, and the powers of the intellect, gives the mind its unique individuality and forms the complete self. By separation and ordering, a pre-analytical oneness is fractured and something that had been completely private is made public. During the transformation, a unique and distinctive part of the self is lost.

By his attention to the way in which time exists as an intrinsic part of the self in pure duration, Bergson promoted inwardness. Subjective, private experience is valuable in itself whether or not it can be communicated. Concrete experience as it is lived must be private because it is so individual. Without this totally individual and subjective inner parallel to outward life, the individual is reduced to merely a publicly-acceptable facade, the personification of one of Eliot's hollow men.

According to Bergson's theory of time-consciousness, time and the self are mutually dependent. Pure duration provides the sense of continuity so necessary to the inward and totally private experience of self-identity. The

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[15]Ibid., p. 133.

self, of course, provides the consciousness with which to apprehend any experience of time. Memory is the key that unlocks that certain sense of continuous identity to be found within the personal past of every man. In his Rememberance of Things Past, Marcel Proust described how it feels to recreate the past in the present by means of memory within a conscious state of pure duration.

> But let a noise or a scent, once heard or once smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past, real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated and our true self which seemed--had perhaps for long years seemed--to be dead but was not altogether dead, is awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it. A minute freed from the order of time has recreated in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time.[16]

It is vitally important that Bergson treats time as an intimate part of the self. Within Bergson's pure duration time and the self of an individual exist in a primordial and evolving, organic whole. Within pure duration the being and becoming of the self are one. Transition and change are not a threat to pure duration. Its present flows along, constantly unfolding to reveal the future. Since pure duration is an organic, evolving process, change is its food. Memory, too, feeds pure duration. As we saw in Proust's description, to recover the past in

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[16]Marcel Proust, Rememberance of Things Past, 2 vols. trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Random House, 1970), 2:1002.

pure duration is to relive it in the fullest sense. Experience in pure duration is immediate, not second-hand. Every sensation, every emotion felt in our experience between events in the past and our feelings about those events is healed when the past is recovered in pure duration.[17] Life is enriched because the color and taste of our own experience is given back to us.

Bergson believed that pure duration could be apprehended at different levels. In its highest form, pure duration enters the timeless. This timeless aspect of Bergson's pure duration suggests a type of unique reality that formed part, although not a well-known part, of the Christian model of time. Frank Kermode describes this reality, which he attributed to Thomas Aquinas as the time of angels, the aevum. This special reality constituted a duration that was neither wholly temporal nor wholly timeless, yet participated in both. Perpetual without being eternal, the aevum paralleled time; past, present, and future were able to co-exist within the aevum. According to Frank Kermode, secularized into human terms the aevum represented time as man's preserver instead of man's destroyer. The aevum allowed man the sense of participation in a special reality where every moment was enriched with endless perspectives.[18]

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[17]Levi, Philosophy and the Modern World, p. 74.

[18]John Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, pp. 72-74; Poulet, Studies in Human Time, pp. 6-7.

The concepts of Bergson's pure duration and St. Thomas' aevum, both of which describe states of consciousness, coincide at that point of crisis when a man is forced to make a difficult decision. Decision involves a choice among various potentials, among possibilities which may come about at any time. The time when relative viewpoints exert an equal weight, during which a man must weigh his choices, seems endless to subjective consciousness. Frank Kermode believes that this time of choice when,

> The concords of past, present, and future towards which the soul extends itself are out of time, and belong to the duration which was invented for angels. . .[19]

is time suspended in the aevum. A choice once it is made will have consequences in time, but the time before the decision is made when alternatives are still considered participates in timelessness. During this time of choice before a decision is reached, the elements of time within the self, the past, present, and future in the form of memories, perceptions, and expectations, which in Bergson's pure decision co-exist in primal accord are enabled to be co-present in the timelessness of the aevum.[20] Bergson firmly believed that any decision had to take place in a conscious state of pure duration to truly be free.[21] To

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[19]Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 89.

[20]Ibid., p. 72; Meyerhoff, Time in Literature, p. 56.

[21]Bergson, Time and Free Will, p. 221.

Bergson, by taking place in pure duration, the free act, product of a freely arrived at decision, expressed the whole self.[22] As Bergson went on to say,

> We are free when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work.[23]

When Bergson compared time as it appeared in these differing psychological realities--pure duration to be found only within the internal reality of the self and spatialized, scientific time found only in external reality--he formulated yet a third idea of time's passage. When an individual attempts to depict pure duration which is a part of inner reality in terms belonging to external reality, pure duration became spatialized by the language itself and is transformed into what Bergson called, confusingly enough, homogeneous duration or simply duration. The attempt to separate, number, and impose successive order on states of consciousness transforms pure duration into its spatial symbol. To Bergson, the concepts of space and time met here, in this illusion of duration as a homogeneous medium. Bergson called homogeneous duration, the shadow of the self projected onto the external world.[24] As Bergson explained,

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[22]Ibid., pp. 165-166.

[23]Ibid., p. 172.

[24]Ibid., pp. 110; 128.

> Consciousness, goaded by an insatiable desire to separate, substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives the reality only through the symbol. As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self.[25]

Since pure duration, according to Bergson, is an essential component of the innermost self of an individual, the dismembering of pure duration into homogeneous duration is a parallel violation of the self.

Bergson's greatest contribution towards a new attitude about time is his idea that time experienced by consciousness as pure duration is an intimately related part of the self of an individual. In Bergson's concept of pure duration, time and the self exist within consciousness in a primordial, organic state of wholeness. Within this dynamic fusion, past and future expand and enrich the present. Feelings and emotions enhance the significance and value of the moment. Pure duration gives a continuity to the self which strengthens self-identity. The personality is free to develop its unique individuality. In Bergson's view, it was this wholeness of the self, of which pure duration was an essential ingredient, that allowed human freedom of action.

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[25]Ibid., p. 128.

## CHAPTER V

## HUSSERL'S THEORY OF TIME-CONSCIOUSNESS

One source of freedom of action is the freedom to choose from a multiplicity of perspectives. The phenomenological attitude toward time differs from that perspective to be found in most traditional models. Instead of describing a phenomenon such as the flow of time from the traditional viewpoint of an observer who is describing how man experiences time as if standing outside of both time and the subject experiencing time, as Bergson does, the phenomenologist describes time-consciousness from the perspective of his own subjective awareness which is actually perceiving or directly experiencing time. The phenomenologist stands immersed in time's flow.

Phenomenology requires the attempt to see a phenomenon with naive eyes, with eyes freed from the preconceptions which usually condition one's perception of the world. Phenomena are intuitively given to the awareness that is able to receive them without prejudgement.[1] As perceived in and by consciousness, these phenomena are

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[1]Herbert Spiegelburg, The Phenomenological Movement, 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nihoff, 1960), 2:656-657; 659.

given as correlates of consciousness. Once perceived, the phenomena can be analyzed in order to determine their form, structure, and function.[2] Next, these phenomena must be fully described so that description may serve as a guide for future experience with the phenomena.[3]

In phenomenology, the subject's relationship to a phenomenon such as time is "intentional" in a special sense. An intentional relationship is one in which human awareness refers to something. There must be both an act of referring, and a referent. The concept of intentionality removes the traditional relationship of total separation between subject and object. In intentionality, subject and object are linked. As Simone de Beauvoir explains in a review of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's The Phenomenology of Perception,

> One of the immense merits of phenomenology consists in having restored to man the right to an authentic existence by abolishing the opposition between subject and object. It is impossible to define an object while cutting it off from the subject by which and for which it is object. And the subject reveals itself only through the objects in which it engages itself. Such an affirmation merely makes explicit the content of our naive experience.[4]

Edmund Husserl's phenomenological analysis of time-consciousness is concerned with the structure of our

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[2]Ibid., 2:669.

[3]Ibid., 2:672-673.

[4]Simone de Beauvoir, "Les Temps modernes," I (1946), 363 quoted in Spiegelburg, The Phenomenological Movement, 2:512.

impression or perception of a temporal event. One's perception of any temporal event is constituted in Husserl's view, by and through an intuitive act of consciousness.[5] According to Husserl, this conscious perception of a moment is from a perspective of being within the awareness experiencing the temporal impression of the event.

These particular data are not, as Husserl reminds us, time as such. Phenomenologists have no interest in objective time, such as the time found in the natural world or in the scientific model. The time studied by phenomenologists is that time perceived by and through the conscious mind in living experience. This moment of experienced time is what Husserl calls the "primordial temporal field."[6] To Husserl, time is neither pre-existing nor infinite but is the referent which is intended by and connected to our acts of temporal awareness. This time is linked to human awareness of it and cannot stand alone.[7]

According to Husserl, temporal perceptions are constituted so as to contain both the present, in the

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[5]Edmund Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 28.

[6]Ibid., pp. 23-26.

[7]Philip Merlan, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 8 (1947): 42; 52.

form of an experienced now, and the temporal extensions of the present which intend both the past and the future. The past is contained in this temporal impression in the form of what Husserl calls a retention, what might be called a mode of "just having been." The future appears in the temporal perception in the form of a vague and implicit expectation, which Husserl calls a protention.[8] All three are, according to Husserl, primary modes of original givenness and co-exist within the same temporal impression.[9]

Retention keeps an event which has just taken place within our awareness of the present. According to Husserl, a perception of "just having been" remains part of the present mode of a temporal event. However, both time and consciousness do flow and new presents, new nows as it were, are constantly unfolding. As each new present impression unfolds along with its associated retention, the old retention from the last impression is pushed backward and down into the past. Therefore, every apprehension of the present by consciousness, every now, is perceived as the culmination of a chain of retentions. Husserl described this comet tail, these retentions, as ultimately

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[8]Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, pp. 53-54.

[9]Ibid., pp. 58-59; J. Huertas-Jourda, "Structures of the 'Living Present': Husserl and Proust," The Study of Time II, eds. J. T. Fraser and N. Lawrence (New York: Springer Verleg, 1975), p. 168.

fading into the past. Every present implies a whole continuum of retentions.[10]

Protention involves the future in the present. To Husserl, a protention is an expectation contained in and co-existing with the present.[11] This anticipation is fulfilled, still in the present, by an impression.[12] The difference between the future which has not yet become a part of the present and a protention is that a protention is "just about to be" realized. The future itself is a range of possibilities which are not yet realized. Consciousness, in perceiving an impression of a temporal event, shifts from expectation, to that expectation's fulfillment in an impression, and finally, to that impression's "just having been" in a retention.[13]

In Husserl's model of how time is given in awareness, retention is not the same as memory. Memory brings back into the present a whole impression which has moved into the past. Because each impression carries its intentional halo with it, experience of the past by means of

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[10]Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, pp. 50-52; Merlan, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," pp. 26-27.

[11]Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, pp. 58; 81.

[12]Merlan, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," p. 30.

[13]Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, pp. 45-46; 51.

memory cannot be an exact reproduction of the original impression because of changes which have been produced in that impression's protentions and retentions by the passage of time. The expectations in the original impression have been fulfilled and therefore cannot be reproduced in exactly the same way as expectations.[14]

Husserl considered that the remembered past was "presentified," instead of directly perceived. It is "as if" one experiences the moment again. Still, Husserl did not believe that memory is as authentic an experience as is direct perception.[15] According to Husserl, direct or primary perception of the present was self-given in comparison to memory which was a secondary experience.[16]

Succession and duration have two faces in Husserl's model of how time is perceived. Both succession and duration may apply to the inner structure of one temporal impression as well as to several temporal impressions occurring in a series. Each temporal event has its own internal before and after. The reason for this is that, by definition, a perceived temporal event contains both a protention and a retention.[17] If consciousness identifies

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[14]Ibid., p. 76.

[15]Ibid., pp. 59; 67.

[16]Ibid., pp. 63; 82.

[17]Merlan, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," p. 33.

with a protention, in expectation, the impression that fulfills that protention is given "after" the protention. If consciousness identifies with a retention, then a protention and impression have gone "before." In this way, each temporal impression contains its own succession.[18] On the other hand, succession may appear without as well as within the temporal perception. As time and consciousness flow onward together, temporal impressions follow one another in succession as each new now unfolds into the present.

Duration, too, is double-faced. In Husserl's model, duration is a product of identity. Duration within a temporal impression appears as a result of the same experience, such as hearing a note of music, being modified by the three temporal modes, protention, impression, and retention, occurring within one whole impression.[19] Duration may also refer to some categorical identity linking several temporal impressions.

It is important to realize completely that Husserl's temporal modes, protention, impression, and retention describe not objective moments in time but modes of time-consciousness. Time does not extend itself from the present into the past and future; by means of retentions and protentions, man's awareness extends itself into the past and

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, pp. 37-38.

gets ahead of itself into the future. As it is perceived by human awareness, time is given into a unity with consciousness. Time is not within consciousness just as, in this sense, consciousness is not within time. They are correlates. For example, in his article, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," Philip Merlan emphasizes that as a being possessed of self-awareness, I relate to time as it pertains to me. My past is a past which presents itself to my mind now. My future unfolds itself to my mind in a conscious act now as I expect and anticipate it.[20] The result of this subjective view is that my attitude toward my past is that "I am having been" instead of "I have been." My future is where "I am about to have my being." As a consciousness which is really experiencing, directly perceiving time, I have time. My time is unified. Because my time is open to me, each moment gives a sense of its own duration. My life is authentic because I have all of my time, past, present, and future.

Virginia Woolf's novel, Orlando, the fantastic biography of an English lord whose life spanned four centuries and who midway through his life turned into a woman includes several descriptions of what Husserl's living present, enriched by past and future, feels like to the person experiencing it. This is not to suggest that Virginia Woolf

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[20]Merlan, "Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidigger," pp. 36-41.

ever read Husserl. There seems to be no evidence that she ever did.[21] Virginia Woolf's clearest example of the expanded present occurs when Orlando, still a man, sat beneath his favorite oak tree to reflect on life. As Orlando sat thinking,

> . . .the seconds began to round and fill until it seemed as if they would never fall. They filled themselves, moreover, with the strangest variety of objects. For not only did he find himself confronted by problems which have puzzled the wisest of men, such as What is love? What friendship? What truth? but directly he came to think about them, his whole past, which seemed to him of extreme length and variety, rushed into the falling second, swelled it a dozen times its natural size, colored it all the tints of the rainbow and filled it with all the odds and ends in the universe.[22]

In Husserl's terms, each impression of Orlando's reflections on philosophy contains both a retention, that is Orlando's intuition of that philosophical question which Orlando had just been pondering, and a protention, Orlando's expectation of being better prepared to face life's contingencies armed with philosophical enlightenment. Added to these impressions of the present, we have Orlando's remembered or "presentified," as Husserl would have it, impressions from Orlando's past, each impression carrying its own intentional halo. Each moment was expanded in dimension as well as duration within Orlando's

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[21]Harvena Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 38.

[22]Virginia Woolf, Orlando (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948), p. 99.

awareness. As Virginia Woolf explained, these meditations could add as many as twenty-five years to Orlando's life span between breakfast and dinner.[23]

It is true, as Harvena Richter points out, that this passage from Woolf's Orlando could serve equally well to illustrate Bergson's concept of pure duration.[24] This is so because both Bergson and Husserl were concerned with that same awareness of deepened quality and expanded dimension which gives duration to any moment. In human consciousness, this type of abiding moment has a nourishing, sustaining effect. Each moment carries its own confirmation. From this perspective, time serves to support instead of to destroy the value and meaning of human life. It is this particular enduring, sustaining aspect of time which the popular, scientific model of time is lacking.

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[23]Ibid; Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, pp. 38-40; 149-161.

[24]Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, p. 38.

## CHAPTER VI

## MERLEAU-PONTY'S CONCEPT OF TIME

In his Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty speaks of the need for a mediating time, a time that would provide a middle ground between timelessness and the discrete moments found in the scientific model. It is the sterility and narrowness of a strictly objective idea of time that forces the human mind to turn to the timeless for refuge.[1] In Merleau-Ponty's view, an objective viewpoint about time is meaningless from the human perspective because time is a dimension of consciousness itself. Merleau-Ponty believes that time is inseparable from and, indeed, forms a major component of the essence of subjectivity. As, conversely, subjectivity is of the essence of time.[2]

Merleau-Ponty, who is heavily influenced by Husserl, calls time "a network of intentionalities." As Merleau-Ponty explains, the subject's primary experience of time is of a "field of presence," where the past and future

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[1]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 374.

[2]Ibid., p. 410.

appear as "horizons."[3] Still within this perceptual field of presence are the subject's protentions and retentions of the present impression which, according to Merleau-Ponty, serve to anchor the subject to his environment. This intentional network extends out towards but does not touch the temporal fields' horizons of past and future.

Here, as horizons of the field of presence, the past is what is past and the future is what is future to the subjective consciousness at the center of the temporal field. There is no past or future without this subjective awareness of past and future. Past and future have their being in the present and became past and future only in relation to an individual. Past and future are where subjectivity encounters non-being and where non-being comes as close as it is able to being. Being is necessarily always in the present. This is so, according to Merleau-Ponty, because temporality is an ordering factor imposed on the natural world by human awareness. By itself, the time in the natural world exists as a multitude of present moments or nows. Temporal character and successive sequence are attributes of consciousness which the human mind projects onto the world of nature. Since temporality, to Merleau-Ponty, is a consequence of each individual's relationship to things, time itself is not a real process and

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[3]Ibid., pp. 415-417.

does not flow. What each human mind experiences as the flow of time would have to be an existential impression of temporal changes in consciousness.[4]

According to Merleau-Ponty, "Consciousness unfolds time."[5] Time constantly unfolding into consciousness is time constantly passing. What Merleau-Ponty calls "the primary course of time" is this relentless pressure exerted on the present by the future and on the past by the present. The whole temporal process takes place simultaneously in what Merleau-Ponty refers to as a "transitional synthesis." Each "time," past, present, or future, is only one aspect of this overall unfolding.[6]

Past and future are harmonized through the present. This harmony, in Merleau-Ponty's estimation, <u>is</u> time's passage. Merleau-Ponty explains,

> . . .since time in being and passing are synonymous, by becoming past, the event does not cease to be. . . . Time maintains what it has caused to be, at the very time it expels it from being, because the new being was announced by its predecessor as destined to be, and because, for the latter, to become present was the same thing as being destined to pass away.[7]

An individual comes into possession of his time by experiencing it. He has his time because he <u>is</u> the sum of

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[4]Ibid., pp. 411-412.

[5]Ibid., p. 414.

[6]Ibid., pp. 414; 419.

[7]Ibid., p. 420.

his experience. If an event has taken place within one's lifetime, it will always remain true that this event occurred. To Merleau-Ponty, "Existence always carries forward its past."[8] As Merleau-Ponty reminds us, Proust mentioned this same idea when he described human life in the present as the tip of a huge pyramid of past experience.[9] This pyramid tip, one's present, receives its orientation from its coherence with the remainder of the pyramid. Continuity with one's past gives meaning to life.

Merleau-Ponty believes that while Bergson was correct in his emphasis on time's continuity as pure duration, Bergson did so in a way that hopelessly blurs the distinction between past, present, and future. According to Merleau-Ponty, in order to have time at all, past, present, and future must be clearly distinguished. On the other hand, past, present, and future must not be separated. Every present reaffirms that whole past which it replaces and anticipates that entire future that lies before it. Each present overlaps its boundaries towards its past and its future. Merleau-Ponty believes that "to be present is to be always and forever," because what really exists is one single time which is self-producing, maintains itself, and cannot recreate itself as future without its foundations

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[8] Ibid., pp. 392-393.

[9] Ibid., p. 393.

of present and eventual past.[10] The three "times" support one another by making explicit what each separate time only implies. Collectively, past, present, and future express that explosive upsurge which, Merleau-Ponty believes, is subjectivity itself.[11]

The problem of how time is able to generate itself becomes less of a puzzle, from Merleau-Ponty's point of view, when we understand that human consciousness is time-creation. Consciousness, like time, is self-positing.[12] Merleau-Ponty uses Swann's love for Odette in Proust's Rememberance of Things Past to explain this aspect of subjectivity. Swann, according to Merleau-Ponty, did not experience love for Odette which, over time, changed into a jealous obsession. Swann's love for Odette was jealousy from its beginning since its very foundation was the exclusivity of Swann's enjoyment of Odette's company.[13] As subjectivity, both consciousness and time already have as an integral part of their being, already hold every dimension that their history may reveal. It is already all there.

Nevertheless, one does not set out to create time, one lives its creation. In Merleau-Ponty's view, both

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[10] Ibid., pp. 420-422.

[11] Ibid., pp. 425-426.

[12] Ibid., p. 425.

[13] Ibid.

consciousness and time exist as a basis, as something given, for our lives in the world. Neither one constitutes the other.[14] As Merleau-Ponty explains,

> It is of the essence of time to be not only actual time, or time which flows, but also time which is aware of itself, for the explosion or dehiscence of the present towards a future is the archetype of the relationship of self to self, and it shows up an interiority or ipseity. . . . It is through temporality that there can be, without contradiction, ipseity, significance and reason.[15]

Subjectivity, then, is the self in its awareness of itself and this self-awareness, this thrust, generates time as it generates itself. According to Merleau-Ponty, the meaning of a human life in all its inwardness is revealed through this relationship between consciousness and time. As Merleau-Ponty explains, men tend to consider everything that is significant for their momentary concerns as part of their awareness of the present. In Merleau-Ponty's view, consciousness is not satisfied with simply being, it must erupt outward along with time and reveal, simultaneously, self to self, self to world, and the world to the self.[16]

Subjectivity endures in the same way that time endures in Merleau-Ponty's model. Neither time nor

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[14] Ibid., pp. 426-427.

[15] Ibid., p. 426.

[16] Ibid.

consciousness is restricted to the present.[17] In the same way, both time and consciousness are self-succeeding and both are duration.

According to Merleau-Ponty, because past, present, and future support instead of contending with one another and must be inseparable to consciousness, one's living field of presence has a special quality of foreverness. While one usually lives within his awareness of the present, past and future are open to intentional consciousness as possible or former fields of presence. One retains his individual past in the form of what Merleau-Ponty calls an "unbroken chain" of former fields of presence, still available to each individual through his cataloging system of associations. This openness of the temporal fields of past and future is what imparts a sense of timelessness or eternity to subjective consciousness in its field of presence.[18] Consciousness of the present means being a part of the world, therefore,

> It is by communicating with the world that we communicate beyond all doubt with ourselves. We hold time in its entirety, and we are present to ourselves because we are present to the world.[19]

Time itself, as consciousness of the present, provides a sense of the timeless.

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[17] Ibid., p. 424.

[18] Ibid., pp. 422-423; 427.

[19] Ibid., p. 424.

# CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

It would seem that Bergson's, Husserl's, and Merleau-Ponty's concepts of time, however different, share the idea of a sort of time that does provide a sense of support for human life. In his article "Time as Succession and the Problem of Duration," Friedrich Kümmel sets up two criteria for a time that realizes and sustains life. Kümmel's first criterion is that this type of time is only available to living creatures.[1] It would be meaningful only to creatures possessing consciousness. Kümmel's second requirement for a sustaining time is that there must be a correlation or partnership between succession and what Kümmel calls "vital duration."[2] This vital duration according to Kümmel's description, in effect, Bergson's pure duration, is formed by a co-existence of the three "times," past, present, and future, differentiated yet inseparable, much like that relationship between the "times" described by Merleau-Ponty. Since Kümmel believes that

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[1]Friedrich Kümmel, "Time as Succession and the Problem of Duration," The Voices of Time, ed. J. T. Fraser (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 36.

[2]Ibid., pp. 36-37.

succession and duration are opposing processes, their correlation can only be described as the kind of "harmony of opposites" that Heraclitus envisioned.[3]

Perhaps it is time to change one's mental picture of time. If time consists of two dimensions, the temporal and the eternal, then perhaps one's experienced sense of timelessness might function as a bridge between the two. It might be more enlightening, however, to picture time as a continuum with the strictly temporal, time in the scientific model, at one extreme pointing toward Newton's absolute, mathematical time, and timelessness which approaches and points to eternity at the other extreme. In this model, succession would fit in near the temporal side and duration would fall in between succession and timelessness. Bergson's different levels of duration which approach timelessness would fit in well here. Succession and duration would not be polar opposites in this model.

If, in fact, time and timelessness are opposite realities, it seems odd, as Friedrich Kümmel points out, that when time is really acting in support of the psyche, when time's flow has lost its exterior quality and become part of a "latent and sustaining reality," what we experience in consciousness is timelessness.[4] Time best supports

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[3]Ibid., p. 37.

[4]Ibid.

us when we are unconscious of its passage. This peculiar fact might be explained by remembering that Bergson, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty all considered time-consciousness to be an extremely important part of the inner-most self of an individual. Time that is a living, integrated part of the self will support that self best when it is simply lived rather than analyzed.

If this is so, then one must ask, why is it necessary to examine the problem of man's attitude toward time at all? The answer is that since human beings do possess consciousness, men are bound to examine the question of time and evolve some perspective toward it. If one thinks of time only as having a destructive effect on human life, as faith in the scientific model inclines men to do, one sees only one face of the mystery. Time is both sustainer and destroyer, opportunity and its loss, double-faced like the Roman god Janus. If one overlooks the supportive half of time, one's perspective about human life in the world is going to be unnecessarily pessimistic.

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