

DOI: 10.26319/3916

Matthew Z. Donnelly
Department of Philosophy
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Syntheses Solution: Untangling Bergson's and Husserl's Temporal Ontologies

Abstract:

It seems uncontroversial that persons have a particular ontology, and a temporal ontology at that. Yet attempting to “unpack” the intimate relation between the being of a person and time often leaves one frustrated and perplexed. Both Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson are explicitly concerned with the manner in which persons experience and understand time primitively. Both are concerned with taking our understanding of time away from the mere motions of a clock or the days of a calendar, and examining how time and temporality are given to persons (Husserl), and lived-through by persons (Bergson). This paper demonstrates that, taken together as mutually supporting, Bergson's and Husserl's writings on time are able more clearly to express primordial structures of time itself and temporal experience. Applying the insights of Husserl's analysis of passive syntheses to Bergson's idea of temporal duration advances the project of personal, temporal, ontology.

Keywords:

Bergson, Husserl, Ontology, Passive Synthesis, Persons, Phenomenology, Time

A clear point of commensurability between continental and process traditions is the study of time. Seeking points of commensurability between these two traditions is critical to establishing a pluralistic, inclusive, concept of the person¹ as an ontologically significant philosophical topic. Among thinkers in these traditions, few have had insights into time as profound as those of Bergson and Husserl. These authors penned two of the most explicit

1) Comprehensive analysis of the relation between “persons” and “selves” – in either a Bergsonian or Husserlian sense—must be set aside for the purposes of this essay. Such relationships are, of course, of great interests to both personalists and phenomenologists.

treatments of the human experience of time in *Fin de Siecle* – Bergson's *Time and Free Will* (1888), and Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893–1917). Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Active and Passive Synthesis* (1920–1926) is also among the most significant works on the topic composed in this period.² The connection between the two thinkers is not, however, merely that of similar times, locations, and cultures – both are also explicitly concerned with the manner in which persons experience and understand time primitively. Both are concerned with moving our understanding of time away from the mere motions of a clock or the days of a calendar, and examining how time and temporality are given to persons (Husserl), and lived-through by persons (Bergson). As Joaquin Xirau writes, “The one passes from the ideal to the concrete real, while the other goes from the concrete real to the abstract ideal.”³ Their work, when given proper explication, can function as an aspect of a temporal-ontological foundation for one's concept of person. Yet both thinkers' writings on time leave many readers perplexed. The feeling of being perplexed is an indication of the difficulty of the subject matter – the ontology of time – itself. I will demonstrate that, taken together as mutually supporting, and as addressing the problem of primitive personal time, Bergson's and Husserl's writings on time are able more clearly to express primordial structures of time and temporal experience than either's writing can express alone.⁴ To this end, this paper aims to apply analysis of Husserl's passive synthesis to the problematic unity of Bergson's descriptions of intensive durations. In Xirau's terms, this paper aims to apply Husserlian analysis to Bergson's “concrete real.” By establishing a unity among plural intensive durations – “concrete realities” – without resorting to spatializing time, this paper will serve to locate our concept of primitive consciousness, and thereby our idea of persons, in an ontologically qualitative, pre-spatial way of being.

The Difficulty in Bergson's *Time and Free Will*

Among the most fruitful conceptual tools found in Bergson's *Time and Free Will* is the idea of intensive duration⁵ – that is, time and temporality taken as immeasurable and non-spatial.⁶ Bergson gives a physiological example of the fact of intensive duration, writing:

In short, when the movement of my finger along a surface of a line provides me with a series of sensations of different qualities, one of two things happens: either I picture these sensations to myself as in duration only, and in that case they succeed one another in such a way that I cannot at a given moment perceive a number of them as simultaneous and yet distinct; or else I make out an order of succession, in that case I display the faculty not only of perceiving a succession of elements,

2) The volume known as the Bernau Manuscripts (Husserliana XXXIII) is, arguably, another significant work on time and time-consciousness. Dan Zahavi's “Time and Consciousness in the Bernau Manuscripts” gives some illumination of the virtues, and problems, of the Bernau Manuscripts. Dan Zahavi, “Time and Consciousness in the Bernau Manuscripts,” *Husserl Studies* 20 (2004): 99–118.

3) Joaquin Xirau, “Crisis: Husserl and Bergson,” *The Personalist* 27, no. 3. (1946): 271.

4) My project in this paper is similar to that advanced by Xirau in “Crisis: Husserl and Bergson” *The Personalist* 27 no. 3. (1946): 269–284. Xirau describes both Husserl and Bergson in opposition to deficient positivism. In the course of their argument, Xirau advances the uncontroversial point that, for both philosophers “Consciousness is transcendence, transcendence within immanence.” (271) My project is to open this rather dense point of commensurability for further discussion, especially as it pertains to our ontological understanding of persons.

5) This version of intensity is ontological. It is related to, but not coextensive with, the concept of purely logical intension.

6) Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1913/1889), 106.

but also of setting them out in line after having distinguished them: in a word, I already possess the idea of space. Hence the idea of a reversible series in duration, or even simply of a certain order of succession in time, itself implies the representation of space, and cannot be used to define it.⁷

In the former case, the duration is *intensive* precisely because, as with logical intension, it is given wholly by its properties or, in Bergson's terms, "qualities." Yet, since this duration comes about prior to being expressed in language – i.e., prior to a person announcing "I feel quality *x*" – it is more than linguistic or logical intension.⁸ Rather, it is *ontological intension* because the whole of the duration – the duration *qua* duration – is given as being quality. Additionally, as Lawler notes, duration is "a plane of immanence."⁹ Though duration may be both intensive and immanent, it is also, as Pete A.Y. Gunter notes, variable: "It is our nature ... to exist at different levels of duration, to experience with varying intensity, and participate variably in the world we inhabit."¹⁰ Intensities, though immanent and ontologically singular when taken individually, manifest in the lives of persons with remarkable diversity. This diversity, however, should not be mistaken for spatial diversity. The spatialized magnitudes in Bergson's second example, contrariwise, are *ontologically extensive* insofar as their being are given as instances defined by mutual externality within a range of terms available only within an extensive – i.e., spatial – context.

Intensive magnitude is one species of duration. Intensive duration, given in intensive magnitudes such as the duration of a given physiological sensation, is the ground of change and difference. It is such a ground apart from the particulars of any given experience without being given over to space and extension. As Bergson's example in the previous paragraph demonstrates, qualitative (intensive) duration is primitive because it does not require a prior representation – space, in the case of the second part of his example. Xirau describes the relation between immediate, intensive duration and experience: "The immediate is not eternal thought, but temporal transition, process, change, modification, duration. Things endure. Such is the fundamental experience."¹¹ Insofar as such a duration is self-giving – ontologically intensive – without the need for prior representation(s), and insofar as it is (undeniably) empirical, the ontological intensity gives itself at the root of experience. Since as it requires no grounding representation such intensive duration grounds subsequent representations, and experiences, of difference. Some, such as Roman Ingarden, have written that accepting a broadly Bergsonian view of the changing world commits one to the position that "the whole process of change in the world is timeless or instantaneous."¹² Of course, such objections secretly presuppose extensive, spatialized time. While more

7) Ibid., 102.

8) See also: Leonard Lawler, "An Introduction to Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics*," in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael R. Kelly, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 36–37.

9) Ibid., 34.

10) Pete A.Y. Gunter, "A Criticism of Sartre's Concept of Time," in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael R. Kelly, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 142.

11) Xirau, "Crisis: Husserl and Bergson," 273.

12) Roman Ingarden, *Time and Modes of Being*, trans. Helen R. Michejda, (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1960/1964), 67. Ingarden's discussion of the temporal status of events (Ingarden, 102-107) is more compatible with a Bergsonian view. Ingarden's arguments do, also, become more compatible with Bergson's as Ingarden clarifies and fulfills his metaphysical description in the latter portions of *Time and Modes of Being*. Nonetheless, by reifying reality into various metaphysical modes at points in his argument, perhaps Ingarden breaks with the overall Bergsonian project (while, arguably, remaining faithful to Husserl's project). See also, Ingarden's "Intuition und Intellekt bei Henri Bergson: Darstellung und Versuch einer Kritik," *Jahrbuch für Philosophic und Phenomenologische Forschung*, V (Halle, 1922), 285-461. The text was written as Ingarden's dissertation for Husserl, who after reading it was reported to say: "It is as if I were Bergson" or perhaps "as if Bergson were I." I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer for Eidos for drawing my attention to the complexities of the relation between the ontologies of time in Husserl, Ingarden and Bergson.

germane to the current topic, however, such objections also mistake the singularity of given intensities for an imperial, all-consuming singularity. Without single, and singular qualities – intensities – one cannot experience any plurality of difference in logical or ontological extension.¹³

Such intensities are often, sometimes over-reductively, described as qualitative by authors not familiar with Bergson's particular, technical use of the term "quality," as demonstrated earlier in this section. Such non-Bergsonian description is over-reductive because intensities are not mere qualities in the mundane sense of the term – intensities have an ontology and self-asserting being whereas mere qualities require substances, or some other, more primitive, ontological structure as their ground(s). Intensities, including intensive magnitudes, contrariwise, are their own grounding ontological structure. As such, when described as qualitative, these intensities are fundamental – they are as self-grounding as any ontological structure or aspect of the world may be. Intensive magnitudes, for Bergson, are immeasurable.¹⁴ The other species of duration is "extensive and measurable."¹⁵ This second species is what is often named "clock-time." Clock-time takes the press of time given in qualitative change and translates it into a spatial or ersatz-spatial medium.

Prior to describing the relations among the extensive and the qualitative phenomena, however, one must describe the relations found on either "side," respectively. Various intensities interpenetrate and form the pre-cognitive (but not pre-conscious) ground of time. "Feelings," in time, when divorced from external objects with which they are often conjoined, seem to ebb and flow through one's personal consciousness of them – their "edges," to borrow a spatial metaphor, are indistinct no matter how fine an examination to which they are subjected.

Lived, intensive durations occur at the root of consciousness – they are, for Bergson, "a property of sensation."¹⁶ One might read this description, then, as expressing such sensed durations as, I would say, "sensibility" (a potentiality) given over to lived actuality. The successive intensities at this root of experience "correspond" to the inner states of the "person" (again, in Bergson's sense).¹⁷ Bergson resorts to metaphor and spatial example to describe the pre-cognitive interpenetration of qualitative durations.¹⁸ In the same manner as colors in a rainbow fade into one another, so, too, do different experiences in one's perception of qualitative duration.¹⁹ No plurality of qualitative durations, however, are compresent – each experience is its own intensity. Qualitative changes in intensity are, accordingly, often translated into "magnitudes" (perhaps problematically) because language, as an extensive medium, is "ill-suited" for managing intensive shifts in quality.²⁰ This translation belies the primordial synthetic interpenetration of qualities, favoring the quantitative pole of objects and objectification. Describing the process of such interpenetration without resorting to metaphor is the challenge facing many philosophers of time, and one with which I will grapple in the remainder of this paper.

13) This point is similar to, but not identical with, Peircean "firstness." Like Peircean firstness, singularities may, perhaps, be taken as basic, or primitive forms. If this is the case, perhaps temporal singularities are paramount among such forms. (I express thanks to the anonymous reviewer for *Eidos* for raising this point). To adjudicate such a possibility, however, one would have to undertake a more comprehensive formal analysis than is possible in the current effort.

14) Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 3.

15) *Ibid.*

16) *Ibid.*, 7.

17) *Ibid.*, 18.

18) Describing consciousness as having a "root" is also resorting to spatial metaphor. One should not take the cumbersome spatiality of language to be reflective of consciousness having a secret ontological spatiality. Perhaps using inherently spatialized language to describe time is "metaphorical." I leave that discussion, however, to a different effort.

19) *Ibid.*, 66.

20) *Ibid.*, 13.

The interpenetration of (fundamental) durational quality, accordingly, works in parallel to the conjunction of discretely articulated terms. A synthesis occurs in the region of the qualitative. The synthesis occurs both ontologically and phenomenologically prior to conjunction or aggregation in the extensive, quantitative realm – prior to the heaping-together of terms defined by mutual externality. Bergson recognizes the obvious difficulty in thinking “of duration in its original purity.”²¹ One is always tempted to return to the operation of spatialization because, as Bergson notes, “we do not endure alone, external objects, it seems, endure as we do.”²² Such spatialization leads to the tendency to view time not as a qualitative, plural structure, given through the experience of intensive magnitudes, but rather as “a homogeneous medium.”²³ Because one does not endure alone, even in a primordial sense – let alone in interpersonal, historically-saturated, advanced plurality – Bergson’s description runs against the abstracted phenomenal experience of what one takes to be primitive space. The increases, and presumably decreases, of intensive magnitudes, as grounded in “qualitative progress and increasing complexity,” are “indistinctly perceived.”²⁴ One has little recourse but to “borrow” the tools of space and apply them to the description of time.²⁵ However, Bergson is acutely aware of the need to avoid “representing duration symbolically.”²⁶ This appropriation of spatial tools in the form of language and symbol is among the most notable ways that recourse to mundane spatialization obscures the interpenetrative aspects of lived duration.

There is, similarly, an intimate relation between intensity and the person.²⁷ The relation, of course, is initially unclear because of the type difference between the extensive and the intensive.²⁸ This difficulty—coming to terms with the relation between an embodied, and therefore spatial person, and the intensity at the root of such personalities and cognition—haunts any project of explicating lived duration as something generalizable and pervasive. This conflict is amplified by Bergson’s observation that language in general, and, of particular note, the linguistic expression of intensity, is itself “virtually extended.”²⁹ Unfortunately, Bergson’s tight translation of pure intensity, including temporal duration, into extensive language gives little purchase for thinkers interested in the “interior” ontology of temporal duration itself. The difficulty in translating interior personal temporal ontology into external, mediated meaning reaches its apex in the chapter “Real Duration” in *Time and Free Will*. In that chapter, Bergson writes,

In a word, our ego comes in contact with the external world at its surface; our successive sensations, although dissolving into one another, retain something of the mutual externality which belongs to their objective causes; and thus our superficial psychic life comes to be pictured without any great effort as set out in a homogeneous medium. But the symbolical character of such a picture becomes more striking as we advance further into the depths of consciousness: the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a self whose states and changes permeate one another and undergo deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another in order to set them out in space.³⁰

21) *Ibid.*, 106.

22) *Ibid.*, 107.

23) *Ibid.*

24) *Ibid.*, 26.

25) *Ibid.*, 91.

26) *Ibid.*, 104.

27) *Ibid.*, 26.

28) *Ibid.*, 63.

29) *Ibid.*, 4.

30) *Ibid.*, 125.

Thus, we see that the symbolical stands in contrast to the intensive, but is nonetheless subject to conscious, pre-linguistic appropriation. How, one must ask, does one express the progress of time from one lived duration to another – from one “blaze” of the “deep-seated self” to the quality of decision in the same self – when those qualitatively different intensive durations confoundingly interpenetrate one another? This question is further complicated when one notes that Bergson explicitly names duration as a mental synthesis.³¹ Even if one grants Leonard Lawler’s potentially over-spatialized description of duration as “a succession of states, each one of which announces what comes after it and contains what precedes it”³² the process of transition from one “state” to another remains opaque. How is one to give an inescapable, personal, synthetic process over to “symbol” when the synthesis in question is, itself, the very ground of a primitive ontological structure i.e., duration? It is this primitive structure that unifies successive, qualitative qualities as duration. Yet, because these qualities are not themselves homogeneous, the unified duration resists stasis and instantaneous expression. Even within a given, unified real duration, qualities “heat and blaze up,” in the same way as the “deep-seated self.” The “deep-seated self” and the unity of real duration are so intimately connected in temporal becoming that one must look to Bergson’s description of the process itself. However, his tight, almost singular description of this process leaves one wanting. In order to find some measure of satisfaction, perhaps one must look to thinkers other than Bergson. The most promising among such thinkers is Edmund Husserl.

Husserl’s Attempts at Temporal Ontology

Though Husserl’s *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* is the most-often cited work in his philosophy of time, its descriptions are (primarily) static, and operate in the static phenomenological mode of Husserl’s earlier work. That is, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* implicitly prioritizes already-measured (spatial) time. This static nature of this earlier phenomenology is captured toward the beginning in that text, when he makes it clear that the region of study is not “the actual world,” or “world time,” but rather “the temporal character of the objects of perception, memory, and expectation.”³³ Perception, memory, and expectation are already given over to a tri-partite measure of time—present, past, and future. This division, as given contemporaneously in this analysis, has already seeped into cognition.

Husserl’s genetic phenomenology, on the contrary, offers vocabulary to cope with the difficulties encountered when attempting to express Bergson’s theory of intensive, lived duration. Husserl noticed the fundamentality of genetic phenomenology. According to Steinbock, for Husserl in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, static analysis is abstract, whereas genetic phenomenology is “more concrete.”³⁴ Charles W. Harvey describes the genetic phenomenological method, writing that the genetic method brings “a gradual developmental and contextual constitution that can be described.”³⁵ Another of Harvey’s formulations clarifies the difference: “To give this meaning or object static analysis we trace connections

31) Ibid., 120.

32) Lawler, “An Introduction to Bergson’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*,” 28.

33) Edmund Husserl, *On The Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, trans. John Barnett Brough, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 4–5.

34) Anthony J. Steinbock, “Translator’s Introduction”, in Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), xxxi.

35) Charles Harvey, “Husserl’s Phenomenology and Possible Worlds Semantics: A Reexamination,” in: *Husserl Studies* 3. (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 196. Though the topic of Harvey’s paper is Husserl’s relation to possible worlds semantics, his description of method is not particular to that topic. Also, see the appendix on method in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. (Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 624–648.)

among the present worlds that contribute to its contemporary use-sense, while to provide a genetic analysis we incorporate a tense operator or historical-temporal dimension into our analysis.³⁶ The saturation of context, processual description, and the “historical-temporal dimension” within a given phenomenological inquiry are what make genetic phenomenology “more concrete” – it is closer to lived experience itself. By taking phenomenology as lived and the phenomenologist as living, genetic phenomenology does not shirk the responsibility imposed by a changing, temporal world. Therefore, the more effective text than *Time Consciousness* from which to borrow vocabulary is the more-recently translated *Analysis*, since it addresses temporal phenomenology in a genetic, processual manner.

Toward the beginning of the *Analysis*, Husserl notes uncontroversially that “human thinking” is, in its most examined form, linguistic.³⁷ One cannot deny the utility of language to personal and social life. Human thinking is also a “spiritual formation” that is “objectlike” and possesses “objectivity.”³⁸ Husserl describes thinking as “each lived-experience which, during the act of speaking, belongs to the primary function of the expression, precisely to the function of expressing something; thus, it is that lived-experience in which the sense to be expressed is constituted in consciousness; this is thinking, be it a judging or a wishing, willing, questioning, supposing.”³⁹ Even the practical “horizon” in which activity and thinking is unfinished makes use of an “equivocal” interior/exterior transition, where the exterior aspect is already linguistic.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, there is at least some aspect of the human “psychic life” that cannot be expressed in language.⁴¹ The similarities between Husserl and Bergson in how they construct their problematic are clear. They share a problematic similar enough that one might graft the vocabulary and analysis of one (Husserl) onto the roots of another (Bergson), in the way that one grafts a fruitful vine onto a hardy, resilient root.

Husserl’s emphasis on qualitative interpenetration – i.e., plurality – underlying the passive/active affective synthesis (necessary for any egoic determination) is of particular note. The identity of a perceived object resists the continuous flowing-away into mere, empty signification, while also grounding the modification of temporal consciousness of the same object.⁴² Objects are not, for a given perceiving person, mere symbols of a point in reified time and space. Instead, a passive synthesis supplying “material” for egoic determination “goes on”⁴³ at an underlying, primitive level of generality. Were objects mere coordinates in a reified spatiotemporal coordinate system, they would flow away into the whole of the coordinate system. Yet perceived objects – i.e., objects given to a perceiving person – resist being reduced to such reified points. A ball, for instance, resists being reduced to the description of the space it occupies at a given (reified) point in time. Such a “point in time,” of course and following Bergson, would be already-spatialized time. That already-spatialized time is the very empty signification that perceived objects resist. In so resisting, the identity of the perceived object, it seems, establishes the “now-point” of purportedly objective time. Yet Husserl would later observe that the perceived

36) Ibid., 203. Harvey describes these methods as they relate to Husserl and possible-worlds semantics. Though the region of study was different, his general descriptions of the various types of phenomenological method are nonetheless germane.

37) Ibid., 9.

38) Ibid., 11.

39) Ibid., 15.

40) Ibid., 12.

41) Ibid., 13. This (“ex-pressed”) is the construction used by Steinbock’s translation, and, despite its varied uses in contemporary philosophy, I find that it adequately captures the extensional nature of human language as it relates to the intensive “psychic” life.

42) This flowing-away should not be confused with the temporal flow Husserl describes in the second meditation. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1950/1988), 39. The flow Husserl describes in the second meditation is precisely, explicitly temporal. The “flowing away into mere, empty signification” noted above might well be named spatial flow.

43) Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 78-79.

object is grasped in intentionality by persons over time. And notably, when another object enters into the perceptual context in which the first was perceived, the second object “receives the entire epistemic prefiguring from the earlier one.”⁴⁴ Of course, the plurality of these things are given in particular experience.⁴⁵ Additional intentional objects (things) apparently, retain their particularity while also entering the synthetic flow of the previously given object or object-like formation. The flow of object formation presents a virtually, ever-present, qualitative substrate upon which conscious, but not necessarily cognitive, activity is grounded and by which conscious activity operates.

Insofar as qualitative determination is given as a “substrate” for egoic activity, it is given as a “harmonizing unity” of “subject and determination.”⁴⁶ The qualitative plurality given as subject and determination(s) is itself the pre-cognitive harmonic unity underlying pre-spatial experiences of intensive duration. Husserl is clear in describing the ubiquity of these synthetic processes in *Cartesian Meditations*, naming “a universal constitutive synthesis in which all syntheses function together as a definitely ordered manner and in which therefore all actual and possible objectivities . . . and correlatively all actual and possible modes of consciousness of them, are embraced.”⁴⁷ With this ubiquity in mind, and because Husserl's phenomenology does not confine synthesis only to temporal determination but also extends it to spatial determination, Husserl's phenomenology provides the framework in which to address the primordial overlapping of space and time.

Thus, by first describing the almost prohibitively entangled synthetic experiential processes involved in both spatial and temporal qualitative determination, appropriation of Husserl's phenomenology offers a method for subsequently disentangling the very same primordial phenomenal experience. The Husserlian passive synthesis—as described in this section—and accompanying determination(s) and genetic determination-analysis, include the internal reciprocity at play in (negative) identification of any dynamic, intensive duration. Though Husserl does not name the components of passive synthesis as either heterogeneous or as being themselves purely intensive, readers of both Bergson and Husserl should do so. By beginning with Husserl's analysis and vocabulary, one may advance beyond his phenomenology, and begin to untangle the problems presented in the first section.⁴⁸

44) Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 47.

45) “The living S that is still fresh, still exercising an affection, coincides with the property that has been drawn from it. But then we do not have a unity of knowledge, then the S is not characterized as the substrate of a determination for the ego, and the determination itself is not characterized as a determination. Should this be the case, then the identification must be one that is actively carried out, it must be an act running through the thematic unity of both terms, an act that we can describe the following way: The S as theme initially undergoes a general examination that is lacking any determination. An affecting moment α , which is passively ‘enclosed in S,’ now penetrates to the active ego. But this ego is abidingly interested in S; as such it ‘concentrates’ its interest that is, its S-interest in α . The fullness of givenness of the S is enriched in the grasping; but this takes place because it itself is given to consciousness as S only in its particularity. The concentration on the particularity therefore fulfills and enriches the interest in S.” Ibid., 295.

46) Ibid., 298.

47) Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 54.

48) How is one to give an inescapable, personal, synthetic process over to “symbol” when the synthesis in question is, itself, the very ground of a primitive ontological structure i.e., duration? . . . Even within a given, unified real duration, qualities “heat and blaze up,” in the same way as the “deep-seated self.” The “deep-seated self” and the unity of real duration are so intimately connected in temporal becoming that one must look to Bergson's description of the process itself. However, his tight, almost singular description of this process leaves one wanting.

Synthesis as the Solution

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson remarks that even though “deep-seated psychic states” are qualitatively plural, they are not plural in respect to their mutual externality. Rather, they are among qualitatively defined “moments of a life-story.”⁴⁹ If deep-seated psychic states are indeed the moments of a life “story,” what, then, is the principle of unity among the letters and words of this story? Husserl, in this case, provides insight into the science – the grammar – of these letters and words, and into their relation to the life they express.

The ego is the center of living duration – indeed it is “the center of life and lived-experiencing” – for Husserl.⁵⁰ The ego, then, is the engine of the process of living duration. The ego “can be manifest” in lived-experiences “as their outward radiating or inward radiating point, and yet not in them as a part or a piece.”⁵¹ The ego, though closely associated with persons,⁵² is also an active trans-spatial process. For the ego to navigate space it need not occupy only an embodied person,⁵³ and it must play a role more primitive than derivative space. The ego, therefore, lives in the very root of cognition – i.e., unavoidably compresent with lived duration. The Husserlian ego is that by which the person is brought back to, and (metaphorically) radiated outward from, duration. It is the personal life in and among the moments of Bergson’s story.⁵⁴

These moments, contra spatialized notions of cause and effect, determine one another so tightly that they “will indefinitely approach the relation of identity, as a curve approaches its asymptote.”⁵⁵ This is precisely the aspect of identity’s resistance – mentioned earlier – that contributes to the synthetic process at the root of living time. By simultaneously pulling moments toward itself, pure identity establishes the quasi-causal relations among moments. By resisting their culmination in identity – leaping from the curve to the asymptote – the resistance of identity conditions fundamental synthesis. This process lives while still retaining a dynamic ontology – the push/pull of resistant identity as asymptote. Nonetheless, primordial phenomenal experience is such that evident causality invites stasis in the form of spatializing time. This spatialization is a product of understanding – an egoic activity. Early in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson explicitly states that one transitions qualitative experience to quantitative experience. Indeed, the transition (or translation), is natural, and provides an important premise in Bergson’s explication.⁵⁶ Husserl’s analysis provides a thorough parsing of the apparent “schism” between sense and understanding. In this manner, Husserl provides a “smoother” transition by way of a less-dichotomous description. As Steinbock notes, “Husserl’s analyses of ‘passive synthesis’ challenge the schism between the sensibility and the understanding by describing intentionality as the interplay of

49) Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 200.

50) Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 17.

51) Ibid.

52) In all conceivable theories of persons that include “ego,” or in all theories of the ego that include the concept of “person.”

53) This is the transcendental aspect of Husserl’s phenomenology—the ego is not “locked-in” to the purely-object body. For more on the transcendental ego in Husserl’s phenomenology, see: Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 66, 104, 136-137. For more on Husserl’s idea of an embodied ego (or “person”) see: Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 118. For an introductory discussion of the development of Husserl’s idea of the ego over the course of his career, see Izchack Miller, *Husserl, Perception and Temporal Awareness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1984), 189–195.

54) Space prevents me from giving a full treatment of the multifaceted relationship between the Husserlian ego and Bergson’s “self.” For an accessible gloss, see the preliminary portion of: Roland Breeur, “Bergson’s and Sartre’s Account of the Self in Relation to the Transcendental Ego,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 9, no. 2 (2001): 177–198.

55) Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 207.

56) Ibid., 51.

intention and fulfillment as they both pertain to the perceptual and the cognitive spheres of experience.”⁵⁷ The implicitly created world of extensive time (and space), is then seen as grounded upon the passive, pre-egoic activity of the person.⁵⁸

Husserl's phenomenology – especially as found in *Synthesis*, but also *Cartesian Meditations* – offers vocabulary that retains the recursive, processual intensity of lived duration while, with mere concessions to the spatialization inherent in language and conceptual thinking, disentangling the relations among the various phenomena in primordial temporal experience. The “fundamental shape of consciousness that we call perception,” for Husserl, includes “the variable manifold experiences, aspects necessarily belonging to every phase of perception, but combined in the continuity of perceiving through a peculiar synthesis, a kind of ‘coinciding,’ a kind of synthesis insofar as through it the phenomenally distinguished and possibly completely distinguished aspects form a unity in the evident consciousness of the same object.”⁵⁹ Husserl's choice of the term “coinciding” is particularly useful relative to Bergson's intensive, qualitative multiplicity. On this account, the synthesis of perception brings together, in the same instance (the resistant identity), the objectlike formations (i.e. resistant identities) given in time as durational moments. Xirau describes this process of the givenness of spatio-temporal existence as “...rather than clear idea or understanding intuition, a pre-conscious experience of pure temporality as it emerges from the abyss and returns to the same depths.”⁶⁰ Following earlier portions of this paper, one ought to replace Xirau's term “pre-conscious” with “pre-cognitive.” With such a modification, Xirau effectively captures the effects of Husserl's passive synthesis on spatialized reality. But what is the result when understanding of the synthesis is applied to the “abyss” itself? One might readily object that Husserl's synthesis cannot be brought to bear on the overlapping qualitative multiplicity at the root of Bergson's concept of real duration. Nonetheless, it is Bergson himself, throughout *Time and Free Will* who asserts that unity is achieved out of plurality. As noted earlier, the aim of this paper is to provide a way in which unity might be achieved out of temporal plurality without resorting to the derivative concept of spatialized – i.e., extensive – time. To do so, one must look, again, to a phenomenological relation.

The primary relation in phenomenological, and therefore temporal, synthesis is “intention and fulfillment.”⁶¹ In this relationship, “The empty pointing ahead acquires its corresponding fullness.”⁶² The examples Husserl gives for such a process are “approaching or walking around an object, or . . . eye movement.” The anticipation, as it were, of what is to be given to vision – by way of coming closer to an object, or by turning one's eye toward it – is empty in its orientation. Though one might anticipate, at a reified level, what will occur when one turns one's vision toward an object, in the actual givenness of the object – rather than its probable or potential givenness grasped at the reified, cognitive level of generality – remains empty. This “pointing ahead” is only given fullness – i.e., the object of perception, whatever it might be, in concreteness – in actuality. Intentional pointing ahead, then, only opens itself to temporal synthesis by way of an openness to empty possibility. The relationship at play in “intention and fulfillment” is seen to be a process of the concretization of a fulfilled, actual intention from open, empty possibility given to the ego. Though, as Husserl notes, this process “corresponds to the more or less rich prefigured possibilities,” it is also given to a nature of “determinable indetermi-

57) Steinbock, “Translator's Introduction”, in Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, xl.

58) This is not the pernicious spatialization against which Bergson forcefully argues.

59) Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 37.

60) Xirau, “Crisis: Husserl and Bergson,” 282.

61) Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 48.

62) *Ibid.*

nacy.”⁶³ The transition from determinable indeterminacy to fulfillment gives “a primordial-impression,” due to the emergence of “a moment of primordial originality.”⁶⁴ The original moment, then, is a process whereby open possibility is unified in synthesis with a fulfilled intention.

One does not “leap” from pure duration to intellectual, cognitive space; one enacts a primitive passive synthesis conditioning the transition from pure, intensive, duration to the lived, dimensional, context of “space and time.” On the temporal relation between reified, spatialized everyday cognition and the intensive, fundamental experience, Xirau writes:

Therein nothingness and its presence fuse with the experience in which are given care, preoccupation, anguish. In this basic experience is to be found the cause of all else. It is the being that gives reality to Being, the fundamental experience, the ontological reason of all reality.

Upon this abyss, dark and opaque as it is, rise all the realities of the world, all the values of culture, all the ideals of life. The “eternity” of its essential structure...is only the appearance of reality, a gleam thrown on a screen flung across a vacuum, a screen without depth, a specter, a hallucination. Human life clings to it and survives the flood that threatens it. It has somewhat the function of a life-saver. This life-saver, however, does not rest upon the swollen bosom of the sea. It is itself a projection of the abyss that seeks to reclaim it.⁶⁵

Whether fundamental experience is an “abyss” is a contentious point. As the various examples of self-giving, ontological intensive duration demonstrate, however, fundamental experience is nothing if not opaque. And as Xirau notes, the “life-saver” of spatialized objectification is a projection of just such opacities. It is in this context – the pre-spatial synthesis of lived duration – that one must look for any authentically non-derivative ontology of persons. One must look for a primitive ontology of persons within the opacity of intensive duration.

The “simultaneous” fulfillment of “reciprocal intentions,” then, is the ground of temporal unity.⁶⁶ Husserl describes the fulfillment of such “reciprocal intentions” as the result of points in the “appearance” of a given spatiotemporal structure revealing themselves as moments of an overall spatial form⁶⁷ Also, by way of momentary apperception, such reciprocal intentions and points in a given structure reveal themselves as moments of an overall temporal form. This unity is subsequently taken as a process of “dynamic displacement, enrichment, and impoverishment.”⁶⁸ An object, on this account, is “never finished.”⁶⁹ A moment of qualitative, intensive duration is similarly never finished. The relations among interpenetrative durational moments, is passively with and within this very same objectification. In a purely intensive context – the kind the Bergsonian analysis of section 1 described – the emptiness of open consciousness is given as negation. This negative, empty givenness is so empty because intensive givenness is purely, ontologically, positive. Intensities, even in the pre-spatial context, tempt consciousness – and therefore the person – to look toward that which is not. Intensities invite difference,

63) Ibid.

64) Ibid.

65) Xirau, “Crisis: Husserl and Bergson”, 282-283. Xirau offers this piece of ontological prose after a discussion of what might be named, in a perhaps hasty appropriation of the Heideggerian term “being-toward-death.” Since being-toward-death is nothing if not a temporal phenomenon and experience, it is no great leap to extend Xirau’s observation to personal temporality in general.

66) Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, 50.

67) Ibid..

68) Ibid.

69) Ibid.

and such difference opens the way for Husserl's passive synthesis. The troubling interpenetration of actual shifts from one qualitative (intensive) duration to another, with Husserl's passive synthetic process in mind, becomes far less of a problem. The radical departure from Husserl is that the perpetually unfinished object is a person's time as time itself, and, as this time objectifies itself in synthetic, processual self-giving. This personal time, or perhaps better, personal temporality, is both original and perpetually self-giving. The living person, on this account, is not a mere coordination of spatiotemporal phenomena in a space-time coordinate system – the living person is not merely another object that flows away. One could say that persons are not orphans of either Newton or Einstein. Rather, the living person – replete with ego, embodiment, and consciousness, but not reducible to any of those aspects – is, primordially, a synthesis of empty and full intentions, of qualitative, intensive durations. It is only after such passive syntheses of intensive durations occur that the person can live both unity and plurality. And, at an academic level of interest, Husserl's syntheses are the solution to the problem of Bergson's near-prohibitively tight, knotted description of lived duration. Once the problem of unity and plurality is ameliorated without recourse to spatialized time, a richer understanding of persons-as-temporal emerges. One might examine the opaque abyss without recourse to the life-saver flung out from its depths.

Bibliography:

- Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Translated by Frank Lubecki Pogson. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1913/1889.
- Breur, Roland. "Bergson's and Sartre's Account of the Self in Relation to the Transcendental Ego." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 9, no. 2. (2001): 177–198.
- Gunter, Pete A.Y. "A Criticism of Sartre's Concept of Time." In *Bergson and Phenomenology*, edited by Michael R. Kelly. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Harvey, Charles "Husserl's Phenomenology and Possible Worlds Semantics: A Reexamination." *Husserl Studies* 3. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, (1986): 191–207.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001.
- *Cartesian Meditations*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1950/1988.
- *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. Translated by John Barnett Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991.
- Ingarden, Roman. "Intuition und Intellekt bei Henri Bergson: Darstellung und Versuch einer Kritik." *Jahrbuch für Philosophic und phdnomenologische Forschung*, V. Halle (1922): 285–461.
- *Time and Modes of Being*. Translated by Helen R. Michejda. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1960/1964.
- Lawler, Leonard. "An Introduction to Bergson's 'Introduction to Metaphysics,'" in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, edited by Michael R. Kelly. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Miller, Izchack. *Husserl, Perception and Temporal Awareness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1984.
- Steinbock, Anthony J. "Translator's Introduction." In Edmund Husserl, *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses*. Translated by. Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001.
- Xirau, Joaquin. "Crisis: Husserl and Bergson." *The Personalist* 27, no. 3. (1946): 269–284.
- Zahavi, Dan. "Time and Consciousness in the Bernau Manuscripts." *Husserl Studies* 20 (2004): 99–118.