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IS THE FULFILLMENT ASPECT OF PROTENTION
UNIQUE, NECESSARY, AND HUSSERLIAN?

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Neal DeRoo has made a three-fold claim in several of his recent publications and presented papers.¹ He has argued that Husserl, in his later works, completed a complex theory of temporal structure that makes protention unique (not had by retention), necessary to the constitution of the double-intentionality of inner-time consciousness, and only poorly understood in contemporary phenomenology. In other words, protention is not being given its due in our understanding of Husserl's original theory. Too much is being done with retention.

DeRoo has suggested that protention, as formulated by Husserl in the last two stages of the development of his thinking on time-consciousness, involves fulfillment in two distinct modes: clarifying and confirming. These two modes are demonstrably unique and necessary to the consciousness of internal time. Therefore, he argues, protention is not merely a future-directed version of retention.

DeRoo's own analysis depends upon the work of Toine Kortooms who has isolated three stages in the development of Husserl's theory. Kortooms' investigation into the newly published manuscripts of Husserl is itself rather new. DeRoo's analysis is, thus, a very early critique of an analysis that is new itself. While some have begun to respond to Kortooms' work, no other scholar has yet responded to DeRoo. The task of this paper, therefore, is a much-needed analysis of DeRoo's three-fold claim.

To perform this analysis, I will need to briefly review the structures of the final stages of Husserl's theory. After this, I will be able to directly address the first and second claims being made by DeRoo: that protention is unique and necessary. The third claim, that contemporary understanding of Husserl is inadequate, will remain beyond the reach of this paper.

¹ Neal DeRoo, "A Positive Account of Protention and its Implications for Internal Time-Consciousness," in *Epistemology, Archaeology, Ethics: Current Investigations of Husserl's Corpus*, eds. Pol Vandevelde and Sebastian Luft (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010). See also, "The Future Matters: Protention as more than Inverse Retention," *Bulletin d'Analyse Phénoménologique* IV 7 (2008). See also, "Protention as More Than Inverse Retention," a paper presented at the Husserl Circle conference, 26 June 2008, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.

Stages in Husserl's Theory of Time Consciousness

Toine Kortooms provides much insight to the stages of Husserl's development in a recent book that takes into account the newly available L-manuscripts.² He divides Husserl's many formulations of time consciousness into three major stages. The first stage begins with Husserl's book *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and To a Phenomenological Philosophy*, which includes concepts from his earlier lectures in 1904-1905. Between the first and second stages is a twelve year gap. Husserl did not attempt to work on the problem again until 1917. The second stage involves the L-manuscripts, which are research manuscripts (personal notes) written during 1917-1918. These are almost entirely devoted to time consciousness. The third and final stage involves the C-manuscripts which were written during the late 1920s and early 1930s.³ Within this development, Kortooms confirms that protention was given little treatment before the third and final model within the second stage. It is with this third model Husserl begins to treat protention in earnest.⁴

The L-manuscripts, however, have not been studied extensively, being unavailable in the Husserl Archives for many years. They have only recently been published in the *Husserliana* series.⁵ Kortooms' careful exegesis and analysis is the first comprehensive project involving these manuscripts. Most of the studies on Husserl's theories that were done before this were focused either upon the stage-1 texts (published in *Husserliana X*) or the stage-3 texts (C-manuscripts).⁶

² Toine Kortooms, *Phenomenology of Time: Edmund Husserl's Analysis of Time-Consciousness* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002). The L-manuscripts are sometimes also referred to as the Bernau manuscripts.

³ Ibid., XI-XIII.

⁴ Ibid., XVII, 112. Kortooms indicates that this extensive treatment begins in text number 11 in the L-manuscripts.

⁵ *Husserliana XXXIII*. R. Bernet and D. Lohmar Hrsg. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001. All citations and translations from *Husserliana* are taken from Kortooms or DeRoo.

⁶ Lanei M. Rodemeyer, "Book Review: *Phenomenology of Time* by Toine Kortooms," *Husserl Studies* 21:3

Husserl engages in a deeper analysis of protention late in stage 2 in order to solve a problem that arose earlier in stage 1. In order to avoid an infinite regress of consciousnesses that are constituted by higher-order consciousnesses, he believed that some level of consciousness must be able to constitute itself. Thus, in addition to intending temporal objects, it must also be able to intend itself; it must be able to possess a double-intentionality. Stage 1 had identified the problem and began to solve it.⁷ In this early stage Husserl raised doubts that retention could accomplish this task. He had theorized that retentions must contain expectation-intentions that connect to the present when they are fulfilled (*erfüllt / Erfüllung*). Thus, fulfillment is the connection that binds retentions to the living present, and they do this by means of protentions.⁸ Not only does this focus on fulfillment coincide with Husserl's realization of the problem in stage 1, but it also coincides with Husserl's solution in the L-manuscripts.⁹ Despite the fact that Husserl had suggested that retention was doubly-intentional in his stage-1 writings, this was later corrected in stage 2.¹⁰ Protention was not given much treatment in stage 1 despite these indications that Husserl realized then that there was a need for its special qualities.¹¹

Both DeRoo and Kortooms agree that the role of fulfillment in Husserl's formulation of protention and time consciousness should be given much more attention. Development in this concept through these stages can also be seen in the various diagrams that Husserl and others have produced. The standard diagram of Husserl's earlier stages (Fig. 1)¹² is two-dimensional and focuses primarily upon retention. Often, protention is added to such diagrams but without

(2005): 249. See also, Kortooms, 109.

⁷ *Husserliana X*, 378-9.

⁸ DeRoo, "A Positive Account," 105. See also, *Husserliana X*, 52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹² All figures are located in this paper's appendix. Figures 1-3 are made by myself based on diagrams in Kortooms. Figure 4 is my own diagram of DeRoo's verbal description. I believe this to be the very first diagram of these specific elements within Husserl's final theory.

much discussion. Kortooms has crafted two additional diagrams that reflect the new aspects of the theory that were added by the third model of the second stage (Figs. 2 and 3), namely the protentional and retentional horizons and the additional dimension of fulfillment. Kortooms has claimed that this additional dimension (Fig. 3) is necessary to fully appreciate the way that Husserl's third model in stage 2 operates.¹³

Husserl's Final Theory of Time Consciousness

Husserl's work on the third model of stage 2 is not abandoned as he moves to stage 3. It is placed differently within the larger theory, but the third model is retained. This model involves the self-constitution and double-intentionality of primal consciousness. While he was first working on this model, 1917-1918, Husserl believed that these problems were isolated and that they could be resolved independently. He later changed that view but retained the third model of the second stage by integrating it into his final model of time consciousness.¹⁴ The constitution of consciousness involves elements, like protention, that are pre-egoic, passive, and instinctual.¹⁵ While the ego is involved in temporal consciousness, it still requires a basis itself that is pre-egoic. The ego is not a self-supporting activity. The third model of stage 2 provides this basis despite not specifically being formulated for that purpose originally. Therefore, the work in this middle period, found in the L-manuscripts, remains a valid part of Husserl's third and final theory.¹⁶

This leaves us with a complex picture of the self-constituting, pre-egoic structure of temporal consciousness, which is the living present that underlies both consciousness of the

¹³ Kortooms, 167-8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 115, 259-260.

¹⁵ Ibid., 256.

¹⁶ Ibid., 269-70.

self's own temporality as well as the self's awareness of temporal objects in immanent time. This structure is the basis for subsequent levels of the temporal structure. It is this inner-most level that contains the temporal flow of consciousness that is distinct from and necessary for the appearing of all other levels of temporal consciousness. This level provides the noetic structures that allow the other levels to appear; it is the condition of the possibility of these other levels.¹⁷

This deepest and most fundamental level of temporal structure is itself constituted by three elements: protention, the primal impression, and retention. Yet these three come together to form an indivisible whole, the living present, which is the full and immediate temporal experience that is had at each particular moment of consciousness. This means that retention, the primal impression, and protention are constitutive of acts of consciousness, so they are prior to full-fledged consciousness.

Diagrammatically, these three work together to form a continuum that is “perpendicular” to the axis of the succession of temporal objects in immanent time (as in fig. 1). It is *as if* it formed a new continuum along a new axis. Of course, these spatial references must be taken in their appropriate phenomenological senses. It is not the case that these “dimensions” are spatial, but the spatial metaphor is used to provide some sense of the independence of one set of acts versus another set of acts despite their “points” of interaction.

The dynamic interaction between retention and protention may have led Husserl to finally do away with the primal impression, (the now-point). Though he continued to use the term, some scholars think that he reduced the primal impression to the interplay of protention and retention. The now just *is* the fulfillment of protention and the past is the retention of this fulfillment.¹⁸

¹⁷ Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133. See also, Kortooms, 259.

¹⁸ Lanei Rodemeyer, “Developments in the Theory of Time-Consciousness: An Analysis of Protention,” in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, ed. Donn Welton (Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 2003), 131; 150n.11.

Protentions are ever being fulfilled, and fulfillments are ever being transformed into retentions.¹⁹

Despite this elimination of the now-point in strict terms, Husserl had subsequently found that it was economical to refer to the most recent, fulfilled protentions as primal impressions.²⁰

The relationship between retention and protention is the main object of analysis in the third model of Husserl's second stage and it is the locus of DeRoo's three claims. Retentions retain entire living presents that have elapsed. Thus, they contain fulfilled protentions. Each new arrival of a retained, fulfilled protention puts pressure on the previous one. They stack up, but not to infinity. Each new arrival works to evacuate the previous ones that have come before it. More recent members obscure those that came before them and gradually force them into absence.

They pile up into a point of maximum obscurity, or maximal evacuation (Fig. 2).²¹

Protentions are not, however, merely counterparts of retention that point in the opposite direction. Each is related intimately with the other in such a way that each intention has a protentional and a retentional aspect.²² Every moment is the fulfillment of a previous protention. This connects the two moments together. The most recent retention is also directed toward its fulfillment in the future. Thus, each retention has a protentional aspect within itself. DeRoo calls this an implicit protention.²³ This future-directed aspect of every retention entails that it is also a fulfillment. Protention, therefore, is a fulfilling aspect that is implicit within each retention.²⁴

These elements form a complete whole. Protention is thus the fulfillment that is the future-directed aspect of each retention. It is the connection that ties multiple retentions together as well as tying them to the future. Additionally, as a fulfilling consciousness, this protentional-

Kortooms does not seem to agree with this conclusion, see Kortooms, 112-113.

¹⁹ Kortooms, 255, 257; 168.

²⁰ DeRoo, "The Future Matters," 12.

²¹ Kortooms, 169-173.

²² *Husserliana XXXIII*, 21-25.

²³ DeRoo, "A Positive Account," 106.

²⁴ *Husserliana X*, 52.

retentional act contains itself. By this means, it is conscious of its own activity.²⁵ This coincidence also allows consciousness to contain its own temporal flow without the need of a more fundamental act of consciousness to account for it.²⁶ This means that Husserl was able to do away with the need for an infinite regress *only* by means of the fulfilling function that is peculiar to protention.

There are two kinds of fulfillment as Husserl describes it in his second stage: general fulfillment and particular fulfillment.²⁷ General fulfillment involves the future-directed aspect of retentions. That is, each momentary phase of consciousness has a protentional and a retentional aspect. The self-constitution of the formal structure of absolute consciousness is performed by means of general fulfillment.²⁸ Thus, general fulfillment directs consciousness toward itself.

Particular fulfillment introduces another dimension within the structure of internal-time consciousness that is directed at temporal *objects*. It involves the degree of filling and evacuating of immanent temporal objects. Temporal objects are first protended and then become fulfilled in retentions. These retentions begin to gradually fade away as they obscure one another. This produces a process of gradual filling toward a maximum extent, the culmination point, and then a gradual evacuating toward a limit.²⁹ Filling grows out of the protentional horizon and empties toward the retentional horizon (Fig. 3).

The variation in degree of filling that is in play with particular fulfillment distinguishes protentions and retentions from the protentional and retentional aspects that all momentary phases of consciousness possess. The distinction between general and particular fulfillment, then, helps to clarify a confusing double meaning that arises with the terms “protention” and

²⁵ Kortooms, 162.

²⁶ *Husserliana XXXIII*, 27, 191. See also, DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 106-107.

²⁷ *Husserliana XXXIII*, 30.

²⁸ Kortooms, 159, 164.

²⁹ *Husserliana XXXIII*, 30. See also, Kortooms, 159, 165-173.

“retention.”³⁰ Whereas general fulfillment dealt with the formal structure of how absolute consciousness is constituted, particular fulfillment deals with immanent temporal objects. General fulfillment is a dynamic yet stable structure, but particular fulfillment is marked by a gradual occurrence.³¹

Figures 3 and 4 show how the extra dimension of particular fulfillment may be pictured as a folded version of the standard diagram from stage 1. This new elevation into the third dimension represents the degree of filling. It also creates two faces on a metaphorical hillock. The inclining face represents protention and filling and the declining face represents retention and evacuation. Between these faces is the edge that represents the point of maximum particular fulfillment at each phase. It is at this edge that both faces, or streams, intersect. At this edge one is at the limit of both continua (protentional and retentional) at which a consciousness has maximal nearness and minimal distance in terms of the presence of temporal objects.³²

Fulfillment is what happens to protentions. Protentions are fulfilled. According to DeRoo, this fulfillment comes in two stages, or modes, of bringing to intuition: clarifying and confirming. DeRoo contends that these two modes are both unique to protention and that they are also necessary for the constitution of double-intentionality at this fundamental level of consciousness.³³ Husserl makes use of these modes, but the terms that he uses varies. The clarifying mode is also called the picturing mode and the confirming mode is also called the fulfilling mode.³⁴

Protention strives; it reaches out into the void. This striving is looking for something to grasp. Once something is grasped, this striving is fulfilled. The clarifying mode of this process is

³⁰ *Husserliana XXXIII*, 33.

³¹ Kortooms, 164-165. See also, *Husserliana XXXIII*, 30, 33.

³² Kortooms, 167-168. See also, *Husserliana XXXIII*, 39.

³³ DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 102-103.

³⁴ *Husserliana XI*, 77.

a pre-picturing of the object, a seeking to picture. Clarifying opens up a space for the object to occupy. It is an indeterminate, general expectation. Yet, it is also an elimination of some of the possible forms that the object could take. Thus, clarification is the beginning of a coming-into-focus, functioning, perhaps, in the way that a lens does.³⁵ It is a narrowing of the field of possibilities. It is a filling of some of the emptiness of an object that is in the very first stages of being intended. It is the preparation of the first hand-hold that can later be grasped by a confirming intuition.³⁶ The confirming mode (also called the fulfilling-confirming mode) is that which takes hold of what was just made graspable by the clarifying mode. As Husserl describes it, “the merely expected object is identified with the actually arriving object, as fulfilling the expectation.”³⁷ The clarifying mode, thus, opens up a space that the confirming mode begins to fill. The confirming mode makes specific what the clarifying mode had characterized only generally.

It is important to understand that what is being clarified and confirmed are not perceptions. Protentions do not pretend perceptions. Protentions and retentions are what work together to form consciousness, and, thus, to perceive. Individually, they are not consciousnesses of temporal objects. So, retention does not retain a consciousness since it is a prerequisite of consciousness of an object.³⁸ Instead protentions pretend retentions. Conversely, retentions retain protentions. It is difficult to say what is pretended and retained as far as their contents are concerned. They are formal entities that have often been called “consciousnesses” but which are, at the same time, not the same as the product of this process. It seems best to call them proto-

³⁵ Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 228-232. It may be the case that Sokolowski’s new perceptual paradigm of lensing can be used to better understand how the clarifying mode of fulfillments works in absolute consciousness. However, I am aware that lensing is not currently developed in such a way that it can be easily applied within absolute consciousness.

³⁶ DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 110. See also, *Husserliana XI*, 79.

³⁷ *Husserliana XI*, 79. See also, DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 111.

³⁸ DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 114.

consciousnesses (my term) or impressions. Each new retention is not only a proto-consciousness that is the fulfillment of what was previously protended, but it is also a proto-consciousness of its being the retention of what came before. This means that retentions contain previous protentions as now fulfilled. And, this fulfilling process also produces the future-directedness that is the protention of the next phase.³⁹

DeRoo does not indicate how exactly clarifying and confirming work with the two kinds of fulfillment. Given the above description, it seems to me that the process must work within particular fulfillment (Fig. 4). Each impression is directed toward a temporal object that is gradually filling. This is initiated by the clarifying mode and completed by the confirming mode. At completion, the proto-consciousness reaches the culmination point.

It will be helpful to review figures 3 and 4 as I summarize all of the above. At the most fundamental level of consciousness there is a structure of proto-conscious acts that operate in two distinct dimensions. This structure delivers both consciousness of internal time and consciousness of immanent temporal objects. Two kinds of fulfillment are involved: general and particular. General fulfillment involves the protentional and retentional character of all proto-conscious acts (like a future-directed orientation) producing the stable dynamism of self-consciousness. Particular fulfillment involves the gradual filling from the protentional horizon toward the culmination point, and a gradual evacuating into the retentional horizon (an absolute positional characteristic that impressions have). That which is filled and evacuated is the presence/absence of immanent temporal objects. Protention, in particular fulfillment, involves two modes: clarifying and confirming. Clarifying is the initial opening of the space that will later be filled or confirmed. Confirming is the completion of the process that fills the space that was just opened. Clarifying and confirming constitute protention in its particular-fulfillment

³⁹ Ibid., 107.

sense. These two modes of fulfillment are the connection that links phases of consciousness together. Operating along two axes, this connectedness gathers both the consciousness of internal time and the consciousness of temporal objects into a whole. This whole is self-constituting, which eliminates the need to propose a higher level of consciousness to account for it.

DeRoo's Claim That Protention Is Unique

All the above provides ample background to discuss DeRoo's proposal. He begins by suggesting that protention is primarily characterized as a striving toward what is not yet available. It is a form of reaching out. And, it is like this *inherently*. DeRoo argues that this striving character is *intrinsically* different from retention. He writes, "This 'striving' character . . . belongs intrinsically to protention, and protention alone: while retention may acquire this striving character, it does not intrinsically possess it."⁴⁰ The only competitor that protention has in this respect is retention. There is no other element yet proposed within absolute consciousness that is a contender. To show that protention is unique, DeRoo need only show that it is distinct from retention.

DeRoo notes that retention can emulate the striving character of protention when it reaches out to the past. This is a significant potential defeater to the claim of uniqueness. To meet this objection, DeRoo first admits that consciousness can involve a looking to the past, but in doing so, something other than retention is involved.⁴¹ Husserl argued that we must "clearly differentiate between the direction of the egoic regard, and the direction in perception itself that already takes place prior to the apprehending regard."⁴² In other words, once the ego is involved,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 109.

⁴¹ Ibid., 109

⁴² *Husseriana XI*, 71, 80. See also, DeRoo, "A Positive Account," 109.

we have already left retention and are engaged in recollection. DeRoo concludes, “To be directed to the past, then, is to be remembering, not retaining.”⁴³

Moreover, argues DeRoo, retention is not directed at all. Whereas protention is inherently directed toward the future, retention has no corollary directedness, neither to the past nor to the future. While it contains a protention as fulfilled, it is not fulfilled itself. Nor does it reach out for a fulfillment. It merely exists as an act of holding on to what has just been fulfilled.

Additionally, retention cannot possess the clarifying and confirming modes of fulfillment except insofar as it contains fulfilled protentions within itself. However, as contained and fulfilled, these two modes are already completed. *Clarifying* is the act of starting, and *confirming* is the act of completing the fulfillment. Thus, each mode is active within a process. They are the two constituents of the fulfilling act. Clearly, only protention can possess these two *as* activities. Retention can possess them only as already completed. Another way to describe this aspect of protention is to call it open. Unlike retention, protention is always striving forward and is never complete as protention.⁴⁴ Husserl was unable to provide double-intentionality by means of retention alone.⁴⁵ He even concluded that retention possesses no intentionality at all let alone double-intentionality.⁴⁶ Thus, protention is unique in that it is capable of providing intentionality. It alone possesses the two necessary modes of bringing to intuition.

DeRoo’s Claim That Protention Is Necessary

The above argument for the uniqueness of the two modes of protention is tied closely to the argument that it is necessary. As we have already seen, protention has properties that make

⁴³ DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 110.

⁴⁴ *Husserliana X*, 297. See also, DeRoo, “The Future Matters,” 16.

⁴⁵ *Husserliana X*, 52. See also, DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 105.

⁴⁶ *Husserliana XI*, 77.

double-intentionality, even intentionality itself, possible. Thus, if uniqueness is accepted, it must be acknowledged also that protention is necessary for intentionality and double-intentionality.

DeRoo argues that protention is unique in its directedness, its striving character. This character, in turn, is necessary both for tying together all of the phases of consciousness into a whole and for producing double-intentionality by means of general fulfillment.

However, a potential defeater looms here as well, it seems that retention and protention are *both* necessary for fulfillment.⁴⁷ Perhaps, then, they share fulfillment in some way. If so, then protention is no more necessary than retention. But, here we have merely an interdependency of parts within a whole. It is true that absolute consciousness requires both protention and retention in order to function. It is true that fulfillment is at the center of this process. And, it is true that both are necessary for fulfillment. However, it is not the case that retention possesses fulfillment inherently. Protention includes fulfillment within itself, retention receives fulfillment already completed. Therefore, even though both are necessary for fulfillment to occur, protention has priority.

Furthermore, as a function that moves consciousness out of the present into new frontiers, protention is that which opens up the dimension of possibility. This dimension is necessary for the detection of objects as they move from absence to presence.⁴⁸ Thus, protention makes possible the gradual filling that is characteristic of particular fulfillment. Retention could not function in this way, thus protention is necessary for the perception of immanent temporal objects.

⁴⁷ *Husserliana XXXIII*.

⁴⁸ DeRoo, “A Positive Account,” 110.

Conclusions

Kortooms' work has helped phenomenology to move one step back toward an authentic Husserlian view of time-consciousness by carefully distinguishing the development of Husserl's thought. He has also brought fulfillment back into view as a prominent part of Husserl's final theory. Kortoom's work has enabled DeRoo to make his three claims.

DeRoo has made a very good case for the uniqueness and the necessity of protention by means of his description of the clarifying and confirming modes of fulfillment. Thus, I conclude that his first and second claims are correct. The third claim, that he is rectifying a common misunderstanding of Husserl's original theory, however, is more difficult to verify.

DeRoo's project is intended to fit with Kortoom's analysis as a deeper revelation of Husserl's original theory. I take Kortooms' work to have successfully uncovered an authentically husserlian theory from among the various stages of development, but it remains to be seen whether or not DeRoo's additional claims are also authentic. Though DeRoo cites Husserl convincingly, verification of these citations and a search for contradictory passages would require an extensive analysis of Husserl's texts. Perhaps this could be pursued in a future research project or dissertation.

In any case, DeRoo's first two claims imply that the clarifying and confirming modes of fulfillment are philosophically defensible. I concur with this final claim. This means that, if DeRoo's work is not authentically husserlian, then DeRoo's conclusions represent a new advance within phenomenology. Therefore, I conclude not only that these modes of fulfillment are consistent with the form of Husserl's theory, but that they would add meaningfully to the theory even if they were not authentically husserlian.

(The appendix is a separate file. See the attached file “page15-appendix-diagrams.PDF”)

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