# *Introduction*

In this book, I explore the account of experience developed by Edmund Husserl and critically modified and transformed by Martin Heidegger. I develop the nature of the relation between our awareness of the world and the temporal structure of our experience as it is articulated by Husserl in his phenomenology and then transformed by Heidegger in his own existential conception of phenomenology. The connection between our capacity to come to terms with our environment, the directedness of our consciousness and behavior at items in our environment, and the temporal character of our experience is an intimate one. It is the merit of both Husserl and Heidegger to have explored this connection to a degree not easy to find elsewhere in the history of philosophy, and at the same time to have developed fundamentally different accounts of how the connection in question is to be understood.

## GENERAL REMARKS

The concept of a private experience ("Erlebnis") provides the methodological starting-point for Husserl's investigation of the different kinds of objects that populate our shared, public and objective world and the structures that allow us to understand that world. Heidegger rejects the notion of a private experience, indeed the very notion of *Erlebnis*, that has its heyday at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century.[1] However, Heidegger continues to give central importance to the other

[1] There is an interesting philosophical history of the term "Erlebnis" in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1989), pp. 60–70. Gadamer follows his former teacher Heidegger in connecting the later nineteenth-century subjectivization of experience in general, and aesthetic experience in particular, to the rise of the notion of "Erlebnis."

German term for experience, *Erfahrung*. This notion of experience lacks the connotation of private, subjective experience that is characteristic of the notion of *Erlebnis*.

Husserl introduces the term "intentionality" to describe the capacity that human beings have to direct themselves at objects. Intentionality consists in our awareness of objects and of the contextual features of our environment involved in any awareness on our part of objects. For Husserl, intentionality is a basic, irreducible, and constitutive feature of consciousness that can never be exhaustively understood in terms of any structural features that are characteristic of natural events. As such, intentionality is for him the key to understanding human experience.

Husserl insists that there are various levels to intentionality. These levels of intentionality make up the different levels of human experience. Intentionality reaches down into the most basic forms of perception. At first, however, Husserl excludes immediate sensory awareness, sensation, from intentionality. Unlike perception, sensation does not involve the experience of objects distinct from the having of a certain experience. However, he eventually argues that intentionality is a feature of all consciousness of time. Since he reasonably assumes that all consciousness involves some consciousness of time, this leads him to maintain that even our most basic sensory awareness, such as our awareness of pleasure and pain, involves a kind of intentionality. Unlike perceptions, these sensations do not even have objects that are logically distinguishable from the having of the sensory experiences themselves. Thus, intentionality is involved in a certain way in what seem to be logically private experiences that cannot be shared by different individuals. But intentionality also extends upwards to the most sophisticated forms of human experience and cultural involvement. For it is because we have the capacity for intentionality that we are able to reason about objects in the world and to communicate with other persons.

While Husserl thinks that one can analyze experience in abstraction from the actual environment in which an individual might find him- or herself, he also emphasizes the importance of the environmental aspect of experience. He maintains that experience is always based on some awareness of an individual's perceptual environment. However, in principle, this perceptual environment is something that is, and can be, privately experienced by each individual. The public, shared environment of a common world is a construct from private

individually experienced environments. Thoughts endowed with abstract meaning are required in order to underwrite the possibility of communication between different private worlds of experience.

Such meanings are themselves independent of individual experience, indeed they are quasi-Platonic objects. They are really abstract types of functional roles, where such functional roles consist in the differential contribution that bearers of meaning such as words and sentences make to the truth or falsity of judgment and inferences. These meanings cannot be understood in isolation from each other, but they are accessible to the individual in a way that involves no recourse to the actual environment in which the individual finds him- or herself. The environment of the individual as it is meant by the individual is the notional environment of the individual. This notional environment, in principle, can be quite different from the individual's actual environment. What the actual environment is, is a matter of the extent to which the world as it is meant by the individual corresponds to the world as it is independently of how it is meant by the individual. This, in turn, depends on the extent to which an individual's beliefs are true.

Husserl treats intentionality as a person's intention to refer to objects that may be either inside or outside of consciousness. For Husserl, it is therefore always an open question as to whether an individual is referring to objects that are outside of his consciousness. It is even possible that all of our beliefs about the external world and about the existence of other minds might turn out to be false. Heidegger claims that thinking of intentionality as allowing even the possibility of a completely private experience is based on a misunderstanding of the self-transcendent nature of intentionality. The mistake arises from failing to see that there cannot be a private experience that is not itself parasitic on public experience of the external world. To avoid this mistake, Heidegger suggests that the notion of intentionality be interpreted in terms of the notion of transcendence. It is then no longer a question of whether our beliefs are about anything in the world at all, but rather a question of whether they are true of what is in the world.

Heidegger argues that we have no intelligible conception of an individual human being who experiences a completely private environment. For the very notion of private experience is logically dependent on the existence of a publicly accessible domain of entities. He maintains that, once one gives up on a conception of

mind that is based on occurrent, in principle private, mental episodes, one will not need to appeal to abstract structures to underwrite communication. To think of communication as something that is underwritten by abstract structures is to misunderstand the very nature of human existence and intentionality. We are able to understand ourselves because to be a human being is to already be in relation to other human beings and other things in a shared world. The possibility of communication is to be understood in terms of the fact that what we initially take to be an independent private sphere of experience is, in fact, parasitic on the social and natural environment in which we form the conception of our own distinctive self.

In exploring the nature of human existence, Heidegger, like Husserl, is centrally concerned with very general structures of human experience. Heidegger argues, as does Husserl, that individual experience is unintelligible when taken in abstraction from such general structures of experience. However, this means something quite different for Heidegger than it does for Husserl. For Husserl, the general structures of experience are a priori, that is, necessary and universal, features of consciousness. For Heidegger, by contrast, general structures of experiences are not universal forms to be instanced in different individual experiences, but rather particular concrete aspects of the manner in which concrete, historical human existence expresses itself. This leads Heidegger to argue, again against Husserl, that general structures of experience are unintelligible when taken in abstraction from the particular experience of an individual human being. Heidegger maintains that the very notion of consciousness with which Husserl works is ultimately an unintelligible abstraction from a human being's interaction with his or her actual environment.

Now Heidegger agrees with Husserl that the most basic and pervasive feature of our intentional relation to the world and entities within the world is the temporal structure of intentionality. Indeed, Heidegger argues that the a priori should be understood in terms of the originating temporal structure of intentionality. However, Heidegger argues that Husserl's idea that all experience has a foundation in private perceptual experience ("Erlebnisse") prevents Husserl from fully understanding and hence from properly explicating and exploiting the temporal structure of experience.

Husserl has an extremely sophisticated model of how past,

present, and future episodes of consciousness might be linked together in a "stream of consciousness." However, from Heidegger's point of view, this analysis has serious flaws to it. First of all, it works with the assumption that the basic stratum of human experience consists of private sensations. And even if one waives worries about the existence of sensations, Heidegger insists that thinking of experience in terms of a series of successively occurrent episodes of experience is a mistake.

In the course of thinking about the nature of time and of our experience of time, Husserl becomes aware of the limitations of any attempt to understand experience in terms of a "stream of consciousness." This leads him to embed our experience of past, present, and future in a tenseless, but nevertheless still, in some sense, temporal account of mental episodes. Husserl also comes to question the primacy of sensation in an understanding of temporal experience, but never succeeds in developing an alternative account.

In some respects, Husserl also begins to see the limitations of the occurrent state conception of human experience. In the course of his work, another conception of mental and physical events begins to emerge. According to this conception of the mental and the physical, mental and physical states are different in that mental states are not subject to strict causal laws, while physical states are subject to such laws. However, mental and physical states have something important in common. They are inherently dispositional. That is, they can only be understood in terms of the way in which persons and physical objects would react to certain circumstances in their environment. For Husserl, this dispositional account of states and properties applies to all "real" things, and thus to minds as well as bodies. However, Husserl stops short of conceiving the basic level of all experience, which for him, is also the basic level of all being, in terms of entities whose nature is defined in terms of a complex of dispositions to interact with the environment. At the most basic level of experience, Husserl sustains a commitment to the idea of a sequence of successively occurrent mental episodes. It is from the vantage-point of this "living present" that Husserl wishes ultimately to reconstruct all of experience.

Heidegger appropriates the complex analysis of the inter-dependence of past, present, and future developed by Husserl on the basis of our experience of tense, while rejecting Husserl's tendency to think of our experience as a stream of successively occurrent

private mental episodes. Heidegger provides an alternative account of temporality that gives up the idea of a "stream of consciousness" or a "stream of time" while still holding on to the primacy of past, present, and future (tense) in our understanding of time.

Heidegger links his alternative conception of temporality with a conception of human experience as a set of abilities to respond to the world that can never be understood purely in terms of occurrent states. In his endeavor to distinguish his position from Husserl's mixed disposition-occurrent state account of experience, Heidegger actually goes to the extreme of denying that there are any occurrent episodes of experience at all. But his analysis is different from the traditional behaviorist analysis of experience. Behaviorists are committed to being able to demonstrate that there is a one-to-one correlation between mental states and behavioral properties. This allows the behaviorist to claim that mental states are nothing but behavioral dispositions. The problem with such behaviorism is that mental states cause behavior by virtue of their connections to other mental states. A person's beliefs, emotions, and desires are all required in order to make sense of that person's behavior. It is thus arguable that the totality of a person's mental states is relevant to how the person would behave relative to any specific situation.

Heidegger accepts a holistic account of behavioral dispositions. Such dispositions are, for him, differential capacities that we have for disclosing the world as a whole. And, unlike behaviorists, he allows for behavior that cannot be observed by other persons. Where the behaviorist demands an exclusively third-personal account of experience in terms of behavior that can be observed by other persons, Heidegger treats the capacities that constitute our experience in essentially first-personal terms. He avoids problems of privacy by thinking of what each of us individually experiences as parasitic not only on what we can do together, but on our whole shared experience of the world. This shared experience of the world is, in turn, grounded in the very general conditions of human existence that make us all experience the world in the same basic ways.

For Heidegger, the essence of being human is a process of coming to terms with the entities in the world. In this process, a human being develops the capacities that it has. These abilities make each human being who he or she is. For it is of the essence of human life that in it the world is disclosed to one or has some truth for one. The

world is disclosed to one on the basis of the general conditions governing human existence. These most general conditions include, but are not exhausted by, moods and the ability spatially and temporally to find one's way about the world. These general conditions, in turn, put us in a position to occupy social roles, to work with tools and to use language as a tool for communication.

Heidegger is sympathetic to the idea that the meaning of expressions in language, and, more generally, the meaning of different forms of human behavior, have to do with the distinctive normative roles that expressions play in language and that forms of behavior play in different communities. However, he is critical of the algorithmic conception of understanding suggested by neo-Kantian interpretations of meaning as function (for instance, Ernst Cassirer's idea that the development of modern science is characterized by the dissolution of substance into functional and relational notions).[2] This rejection of a formal interpretation of function dovetails with Heidegger's rejection of the Platonism that characterizes Husserl's interpretation of functional role as meaning species. In reinterpreting Husserl's notion of meaning as the functional role that expressions, and also other non-linguistic objects and activities, may play in contributing to the truth and hence also the falsity, of inferences and other norm-guided behavior, Heidegger agrees with Husserl that meanings are constituted by the differential contribution that bearers of meaning make to the potential truth of our understanding of the world. But he argues that meaning is constituted in a use that cannot be understood independently of our capacities to respond differentially to our environment.

Heidegger shares Husserl's rejection of a psychologistic theory of meaning, acccording to which what a person means would be determined by the psychological state a person happened to be in.

[2] Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, W. and Marie Swabey trans. (New York: Dover, 1923), pp. 3ff. In the Davos Disputation between Heidegger and Cassirer, Cassirer succinctly summarizes his position: "The being of the old metaphysics was substance, the one substrate. The being in the new metaphysics is in my language no longer the being of a substance, but being that derives from a manifold of functional determinations and meanings. And therein seems to be the essential point of difference of my position relative to Heidegger." The disputation is published as an addendum to M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Richard Taft trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), original in: *Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), p. 294. For convenience, my citations are henceforth from the *Gesamtausgabe* abbreviated as *GA* with volume and page numbers. The pagination of the *GA* is reproduced in the available English translations. The translations are, however, mine throughout the book.

But, since he rejects the standard notion of a psychological state, he disagrees with Husserl that the only alternative to psychologism is Platonism. From Heidegger's standpoint, such Platonism is only necessary if one understands experience itself on the model of psychological states. Rather than thinking of experience in terms of psychological states, Heidegger proposes to think of experience and meaning in terms of the way the world differentially displays itself to different human beings from different standpoints in the world.

## OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

First, in chapter one, I articulate the notion of intentionality and its historical role in providing us with a conception of human experience. Here I emphasize the importance of Aristotle's "psychology" in the development of the notion of intentionality that has now become so central to the philosophy of mind through the influence of Husserl's teacher, Franz Brentano, and those who have been influenced by Husserl and Brentano.

The analysis that Husserl provides of the internal temporal structure of experiences leads him to argue that experiences must be connected together in a transcendental ego that gives those experiences their unity. It also encourages him to argue that there must be a unity in what is experienced that cannot be understood only in terms of a bundle of appearances or senses. The discovery of an intrinsic unity in the subject of experience that is mirrored in the abstract object of experience suggests that an account of the content of experience can be given that completely abstracts from the real psychological content of experience and from any real objects to which one may be referring. Husserl now comes to focus on a "Cartesian" investigation of the content of mental states. Such a "Cartesian" investigation of content requires the possibility of an inquiry into their structure independently of the actual objects to which they apply. Such an investigation, as Husserl understands it, is not a psychological investigation of content (in this respect it seems to dovetail with the intentions of the historical Descartes), but an analysis of the meaning which representational states have that appeals to abstract structures compared by Husserl to Platonic ideas.

Husserl's position is internalist because it is committed to the idea that one can understand experience in a manner that is methodologically solipsistic. One can understand experience in a manner that

abstracts from the existence of other persons and of the external world in general. The possibility of understanding experience in a methodologically solipsistic manner is a result of Husserl's conception of intentionality as something that is to be analyzed in terms of abstract or ideal objects that, in principle, are available to one regardless of whether one has any knowledge of the world or not. This does not mean that Husserl neglects the existence of other minds or the existence of the external world any more than Descartes does. But it does mean that he thinks we must reconstruct the existence of other minds and the external world from the vantage-point of how the existence of the external world modifies individual experience. Such a reconstruction is based on what Husserl calls the transcendence of what we experience immanently in consciousness in the immanence of consciousness.

After developing Husserl's account of the abstract structure of intentionality, and the meaning conferring activities in terms of which individual experiences can be connected together in one shared experience, I turn to the most fundamental structure of experience, and explore the kind of intentionality that is constitutive of any experiences as such. I discuss Husserl's theory of temporality and its role in constituting the most basic level of experience. I show how Husserl discovers a new form of intentionality in the kind of temporal experience involved even in sensations that have no object that is distinct from the having of the experience in question (for instance, a pain). This intentionality connects the present to the past and future.

I argue that Husserl gets into difficulties and is forced to make implausible assumptions about what we can experience because he wants to find a place for punctual experiences in a basically duration-based account of time. At the most fundamental level of intentionality, which Husserl refers to as absolute subjectivity, the successiveness of time-consciousness gives way to what amounts to a tenseless ordering of the episodes of experience according to relations of earlier, later, and simultaneous. One can no longer say that the basic states of intentionality are in time, for they constitute time itself.

I confront Husserl's internalist account of experience with Heidegger's critique. Heidegger signals his rejection of the "Cartesianism" that is explicit in Husserl's philosophical position by emphasizing the transcendence of all experience against Husserl's

idea that all experience is immanent, or rather, as Husserl would say, transcendent in immanence. Husserl claims that all experience is describable in terms that do not require the actual existence of the external world, even though such experience is by and large directed at the external world. Heidegger argues, by contrast, that we cannot even make sense of inner experience (and hence any notion of immanence at all) except by recourse to relations that our experiences have to what is temporally and spatially outside of them. He refers to this transcendence that characterizes our temporal and spatial experience as the ecstatic character of temporality and spatiality.

I then show how Heidegger's reinterpretation of the relation between existence and essence is the basis for a powerful critique of Husserl's internalism. Instead of thinking of the intentional as a relation between ideal, atemporal structures of meaning and their temporal instantiations in experience, Heidegger argues that the whole relation between the ideal and the real must be reinterpreted in light of the proper understanding of human existence which is for it to be its own possibilities or to have the way it exists as its very essence. Heidegger articulates this conception of human existence as constituting the essence of what it is to exist into a conception of intentionality and human experience in general that is no longer based on the idea of mental episodes.

I show how Heidegger develops his own modified non-mentalistic conception of experience and ontology out of the Husserlian account by appropriating key features of Husserl's analysis of abstract reference and truth, while rejecting the Platonism that underlies Husserl's theory of truth and meaning. For Heidegger, human existence as a whole becomes a process of disclosure, but also of hiding things from oneself. Truth, so conceived, is not an abstract atemporal structure with an eternal essence to it, as Husserl conceives it, but something whose very nature can only be understood by living through a life. It is only in living one's life that things and sentences have truth for one. Since truth is understood as the condition for the possibility of the very process that is constitutive of human existence, all aspects of human existence are to be thought of as expressions of the truth that makes human existence what it is. This leads to a holistic conception of truth as what gives intrinsic unity, or authenticity, to one's life.

The conception of truth as disclosure underwrites Heidegger's