

Article

Fore-Giving in Time: A Husserlian Reading of *Genesis*, *Luke*, and *John*

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Abstract: This paper attempts to perform a phenomenology of forgiveness by way of careful analysis of texts on time-consciousness and alterity by Edmund Husserl. It does so in two ways: first, by identifying the manner in which we give time to ourselves as both absolute and concrete subjectivity; and second by identifying the way in which our relation to other persons has an isomorphic, structural similarity with our self-relation as temporality. The final part of the paper engages with three biblical texts—the story of Joseph and his brothers in *Genesis*, where forgiveness is mentioned for the first time—and two short passages in the Gospels of *Luke* and *John*. Ultimately, the paper concludes that forgiveness of self and other occurs as a kind of pre-giving or fore-giving in the sense of opening up new meaning for us all to inhabit.

Keywords: forgiveness; hermeneutics; phenomenology; temporality; Edmund Husserl

1. Introduction

Our moments, our years, our lives pass away. But they seldom *just* pass. It is true that there are moments or whole stretches of our life where we *do not explicitly notice* our time passing, say on a road trip where the toll booth brings us home to the fact that four hours and three hundred miles have been on autopilot. However, much of the time, our moments, years, our lives *matter* to us *insofar as they pass*. Our passing matters to us. It matters emotionally. Thus, in relation to our own passing away, we tend to be aware of our feelings that concern our passing—very often of feelings of nostalgia, resentment, sadness, or disillusionment.

Within the grip of these feelings, we can also work to extend or to assign sense to our passing by speaking. We can speak about our passing in order to codify a recognition of ourselves *in our passing* as vulnerable or defiant—“what could I do?” or “that is just how time works” or “it was her time” (these kind of remarks speak out of our sense of our vulnerability); “I am not just this deed or these measurable moments or this many years” or “I am not ready to let go of it” or “it is never my time” (these speak out of our sense of our defiance).

Our feelings and our speaking of passing away—our making sense of loss—work together to indicate our own a priori connection to time as such. This particular passing away of a trip or a love or a person matters because *time itself* matters to us. And this means, I would argue, following the work of Edmund Husserl, that we are connected to time prior to being immersed in any concrete event.

The recognition of our connection to time as such, we might say, seems not only to indicate an a priori connection to time but also, particularly within the experience of harm or grief or loss, to mark out a conflict. We are connected to time, but we would like *not* to be. We do not want things or people to end as they do. We would like the harm or the grief, as it ends, to hurry up and run its course. Why won't it? Who is responsible for time moving so slowly? Or so quickly? If I am connected to time, if I therefore *am* time, why do I have so little or too much of it?



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The experience of time is thus, in grief or in harm, also the experience of an intimate need to flee from time's structure or to try to hold *someone*—perhaps even *ourselves*—responsible for the passing of our temporality as such. Fleeing, holding responsible, blaming, even resigning—these sound like ethical moves. And they are. Indeed, our passing, the passing of time, is an impetus toward ethical responsibility, toward holding responsible, *for the meaning of temporality itself*. Time is a call to make the meaning of time itself an ethical choice.

In this paper I will argue for the primordially of forgiveness as the appropriate ethical response to the meaning of our temporality. On the one hand, the forgiveness required is a forgiveness of *self*, in our having given time to ourselves as our own project. This self-forgiveness, perhaps as a kind of self-permission, is already visible and under way in the moments that pass without notice or comment—as can the miles on a road trip. On the other hand, the forgiveness required is a forgiveness of other people, the ones who harm us or who pass away and leave us abandoned. This forgiveness will be visible in the attempt to open up new territories of meaning or what I will call *fore-giving*. It is more than the pardoning of harm, as it works to transcend trauma and move toward the to-come.

To make my argument, I will first explore some of the work of Edmund Husserl on time-consciousness in both *Ideas* and *Lectures on Time-Consciousness*. Two of the central points I will highlight in Section 1 are the following: first, his description of the (infinite) base flow or stream in us that forms our internal experience of time, which Husserl calls “absolute subjectivity”; and second, his description of the pairing together in a “double intentionality of retention” of that absolute flow and of the “genuine time” of our concrete, retentive life. Examining these two central points will allow me to argue in Section 2 of this paper that we as “absolute subjectivity” give ourselves time and thus open up for ourselves the possibility of moving beyond resentment, of granting self-forgiveness and of the surpassing of trauma.

After analyzing Husserl's description of time-consciousness and defining self-forgiveness, I will then move into a treatment of the relationship between the experience of memory and the pairing with other people in Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation. Examining this relationship then allows me to claim that time is *for* the relationship with the other person and, ultimately, for the possibility of forgiving them by fore-giving new territories for our more authentic, peaceful lives together.

Finally, I will use Husserl on time-consciousness and alterity to inform my reading of two stories from Scripture—that of Joseph and his brothers in *Genesis* and two accounts of the life of Jesus in the Gospels of John and Luke. In performing this hermeneutics, I will be able to suggest that self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others are, taken together, the essential acts of recognition of our primary responsibility to what is pre-given or fore-given. In sum, I will argue that forgiveness is a project that includes becoming able to pardon *others* by recognizing our own agency in the very experience of time.

2. Husserl on Time-Consciousness

2.1. Time in Ideas 1

In Section 81 of his first volume of *Ideas*, Husserl identifies time as both “something universally belonging to every *single* lived experience but also a necessary form *combining* lived experiences” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis). Time is an experience of ourselves as being unable to escape the passing away of each experience. But it is also an experience of being bound together with ourselves. It is an experience of all of our experiences being bound together as they flow away and as they flow into one another. Time is thus an experience of self-relation *in* our passing.

Let us take each in turn. Time as lived for the phenomenologist is, first and foremost, the experience of “*belonging* to one endless stream” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis) as the horizon into which each lived experience fits and has room to run its course. Time is the “*belonging*,” the embrace of each lived experience, its support, by the field of lived temporality as a whole, a field that is lived in its self-contained, flowing unity.

Metaphorically, perhaps, our time-consciousness is given as a stream. But this metaphor *works* insofar as it identifies the manner in which we grasp the experience of time as a *whole*, a whole that is also *what* we are.

The difficulty comes when we notice the *tension* between the time of *each* lived experience and its relation to the *whole* stream. Indeed, the experience of time as both the duration of this lived experience and its fitting into or showing up upon the horizon of time as a whole—this shows us that the experience of the whole of temporality as our stream of lived experiences *conflicts* with every other lived experience. For, unlike a single lived experience, “the stream of lived experiences *cannot* begin and end” (Husserl 1983, p. 194, my emphasis).¹

The stream “cannot begin or end.” But each experience does. How is that possible?

It is possible, Husserl implies, and *necessary*, because the non-beginning, non-ending stream of temporality is the very horizon or stage on which the individual experiences appear. For the duration of this experience of typing this paper to get its bearings, to begin at all, it must appear against the backdrop of my life as a professor. But that life itself must appear against the backdrop of a stream of lived experience that can neither show that it begins nor ends. My life and the act of writing this paper appear at all thanks to a stream that does not appear in its beginning or ending. The conflict or internal difference is *for* the sake of this experience of writing.

Beginning and ending, duration as such, these appear in a way similar to the unreflected within the reflected. I reflect on what was previously not noticed by me. In doing so, I *both* cannot fully gain the unreflected as it was *prior* to my act of reflection (since I sense it as always already underway before I noticed it) and yet I am *nonetheless* given the experience as lived prior to reflection in the way that I reflect on it, with the proviso that further reflection may shift my understanding of what was at stake.

Similarly, though perhaps from the other direction, the duration of this or that lived experience appears only against that which I am as a whole. I am given the duration of each experience because I also always already am given to myself as a whole stream of all lived experiences in their interrelationships. This stream, as a whole, presents itself as a total being that claims its *priority* over the very issue of the ending and beginning of the things we notice.

Something within one’s experience of temporality, then, something within finitude as the ending and beginning of particular lived experiences and of the life of experience as a whole (since I will die), is *not finite*. Something in the experience of time is the experience of unlimited flow. It does not mark itself out or give itself, this stream of lived experiences, as finite. It gives itself, rather, as that which allows finitude to mark out its own path.

Time, like reflection then, is both an act and a method of drawing forth meaning from experience. Time is that which sustains the relation of the experience to the ego, to other experiences, and to objects.² Again, like reflection, our experience of lived time allows us to see at the edges, on the periphery, that it is our engagement with transcendence within immanence, with the object within our subjectivity, which gives us hope that our dying itself will not necessarily mean the end of consciousness. It gives us this hope because we find that consciousness still functions—and perhaps functions most essentially—within indistinction, within the a priori, on the way to finite meaning. Consciousness finds itself always already entwined with the whole world, with the entire object, with the unlimited, and with the priority of the indistinguished.

Lived time then is a “consciousness-continuum of constant form” (Husserl 1983, p. 195). It is the flowing away that enables continuity. It is the backdrop that allows for the maintenance and seizing upon of meaning that transcends the passing away by working *with the passing away* and *not against it*. To read this *whole* sentence, to hear the *whole* verse of that song, is to let pass what has just come in favor of what is not here yet. To have heard the *last part* of the sentence, the last part of the verse is to recognize that working with the passing away is essential. What came prior in the sentence or the verse was not simply lost but remained embedded in its passing—both in the to-come and in the present as the

constant form. What was prior remained embedded because the field in which it appeared was unending, was prior to beginning and ending, and so was an appropriately supportive form, a suitable and welcoming home.

To listen, to hear is not a mystery—it is the ecstatic character (which may explain Husserl’s almost constant reference to joy) of experience with itself as it is broken open to the transcendent and the alien. The joy in reading and understanding and listening and participating—this is the transcending of oneself and the content and the returning to both in the openness to the to-come. Joy is the mechanism by which temporality can claim mourning and surprise as its two-sided unity.

But what of this stream of lived experiences? In what sense can we say truthfully that each of us can “see” it as the whole that I am? Husserl says in Section 82 of *Ideas* that the stream, as noted earlier, “is an infinite unity” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). From what vantage point, then, can we gain access to this infinite?

As this infinite unity, even if without end, the stream is, however, a whole. For Husserl, it is as a whole, or rather *because* it is a whole, that the stream of time itself *could be experienced*. We are made to seize upon wholes in our perceiving life. We notice things that have boundaries, and we move inward to discriminate their characteristics. And the stream, Husserl says, is a “self-enclosed concatenation of lived experiences [*geschlossenen Erlebniszusammenhang*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). The bounded endless stream is thus “self-contained”, and as such it can offer us its modes of givenness.

However, one might ask the following: how can the endless be contained? It is contained by virtue of being *my* life, the life of *my* Ego: “One pure Ego—one stream of mental processes [*Erlebnissen*] fulfilled with respect to all three dimensions, essentially concatenated in this fulfilling, *summoning itself* in its continuity of content: these are necessary correlates” (Husserl 1983, p. 196, my emphasis). What contains the stream in its endlessness, then, is *my* life as the I of my experiences. The whole “summons itself” to my view by virtue of my internal connection to its “self-enclosure”.

In summoning myself to notice the whole that is the infinite field of my internal temporality, I am more than I take myself to be. Summoned to my absolute life by the epoche and transcendental reduction, I witness the stream, all my temporality as such, in the *manner* in which *my* I accompanies its experiences, lives them, has them. But this does not mean that the stream is simply my reflective act. Rather, the stream, even as my correlate, is responsible for “summoning itself in its continuity of content [*sich in seiner inhaltlichen Kontinuität fordernder Erlebnisstrom*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 196). The stream calls itself into being, demands itself to be continuous, *as the correlate of the Ego*. The Ego thus *must* be temporal, must see itself always in relation to, called by, the self-summoning of time. The experience of the Ego is of necessity to be that which immediately and always is an experience of time.

The correlation of Ego and Stream, however, is such that reflection on the stream can never grasp the stream in its wholeness all at once. *Being* the stream does not immediately free for adequate viewing the exhaustive index of inter-relations between this lived experience and all other lived experiences that are implicated within it: “this whole concatenation is never given or to be given by a single pure regard [*reinen Blick*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 197, top).

Somewhat like we cannot get a direct, lived, exhaustive sense of a city all at once or from one vantage point (even from an airplane), we cannot see the whole of the concatenations of lived experiences from within this or that one. We cannot get to the entire stream of consciousness all at once from within the lived experience we are having. And yet Husserl says we can see it “in the fashion of ‘limitlessness in the progression’” (Husserl 1983, p. 197).

The experience of the stream as such is thus not another lived experience but rather of an idea: “in a certain way . . . we now seize upon the stream of lived experiences as a unity. We do not seize upon it as we do a single lived experience but rather in the manner of an idea in the Kantian sense” (Husserl 1983, p. 197, bottom).

Just as the city unfolds as one walks along the roads of one of its burroughs, and just as the experience of the city is absolutely indubitable as a whole *form* from within this

part of it, and even though this experience of the whole city is grounded in intuition, yet the difference between the givenness of the whole and the givenness of this part is quite different. The progression and the style of the part *gives* the whole or gives us over *toward* the whole, just as the concatenations of Broadway towards Brooklyn more than *suggest—they give* the whole.

Each lived experience then is not self-sufficient. They rather flow into one another and are “in need of supplementation [*ergänzungsbedürftig*]” (Husserl 1983, p. 198).³ The whole thus appears within the belonging together, and in the “need” and its complement the “supplementation” that each further street or neighborhood offers in the unfolding of the city.

My temporality as this whole stream is what is given to me to witness as the very supplement of one experience by another. My temporality is the endless background to my passing away in the recognition of each meaning within each lived experience. The need of each lived experience to turn into the next one gives me all the evidence I need of this.

And yet the gap or the distance, the notion of the “Kantian idea” haunts. We are given the whole of endless time as our very life. We are sustained by it in the midst of this or that finite experience. It calls to us as the correlate of our subjective initiative. And yet we also remain on this side of it. Time as an endless whole is thereby both ours and not ours. It remains our principle, our form, and yet out of our explicit reach. We cannot dominate it.

2.2. Husserl in Lectures on Time-Consciousness

As Husserl says rather enigmatically in his *Lectures*, “we lack names” (Husserl 1991, p. 79) for the subjectivity within us that is responsible for our flow of time as such. We have called time a stream and said that it pairs with our Ego as its correlate. However, there is something more to be said about that Ego, and about that correlation, that cannot, apparently, be given adequate expression.

Certainly at every moment, as we have already said, the past flows away and yet retains the experiences of the now. At every moment, the future is anticipated from within that same now *as* that same now is passing away. The form of the flow, the stability and regularity of the transitions between now, just past, and yet to come—these are constants. However, these constants, this form is not something we discover as transcendent to us. Unlike the rules of the family we are born into or of the department in which we serve, rules which we had no (or very little) say in setting up—unlike these, with respect to the rules and structure temporality as such, *we form* that. We are bound up with time’s stability and regularity. In an important way, we constantly and continuously *form* the form of time.

If in *Ideas* Husserl emphasized the agency of the stream as self-contained, as it summoned itself, even if as a correlate, here in *Lectures* the emphasis is from the opposite direction. Here the stream seems to be even more clearly the activity of the “absolute subject.” So, the fact that we flow—this is clearly our doing. And yet the “we” that we are in the construction and enactment of the flow seems indeterminate and pre-personal: “This flow is something we speak of in conformity with what is constituted but it is not something in objective time. It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be designated metaphorically as flow” (Husserl 1991, p. 79). Fundamental questions of about the correlation of the Ego and of the stream of experience arise here.

How can I be an absolute subjectivity that is both the principle and the object of itself? How can the stream also be a subjectivity that is not exactly an I, that is nothing but an evanescent “metaphor”, that is something I can only “speak of”, and only speak of obliquely, only *as if* it were an object, i.e., as a nonconforming “conformity”? How can I claim to be this author of that absolute work when my lived experience is fundamentally of myself as this particular person, a person who takes a specific emotional and linguistic stance on and within this flow? How can I be responsible for the parameters, the phases, and the transitions of a flow that I have not witnessed myself creating and that exists only in a kind of basic concealment, only as the very taking up of itself as that absolute ground or absolute subjectivity *within and into* the constituted and concrete self?

Though Husserl does not say this explicitly, he indicates that the role of “absolute subjectivity” is only divided into the correlation of Ego and stream from *within* the concrete lived experience of time. In itself, absolute subjectivity is prior to the distinction between Ego and stream.

Our absolute subjectivity is thus prior to distinctions and is something our concrete life calls us toward, as a vocation, as the field in which we play a sport calls forth our actions in a game. Our absolute bubbles up within our concrete, as its very ground and motor, and we pursue it by a radical kind of introspection, perhaps by way of our powerful feelings and utterances about time as such. Because our passing matters to us, we turn inward to ask how it could matter. We then demarcate the absolute and “speak in conformity” with ourselves as constituted, as personal, because something within our concrete lives demands that we locate the place of the flow within, deeper within, ourselves.

Let us begin again. Within internal time-consciousness we notice time as such. We sense the form of time in all of our joy, mourning and declarations. And so our own experience turns us toward the absolute as the heart of ourselves. We speak concretely about the absolute, in terms of metaphor, we speak about it as a correlation between an almost-I and an as-if object, because we cannot speak otherwise about and as the absolute subjects we also are.

If we could speak an absolute language, if we could take a stand on ourselves as that which prepares the way for intentionality as such, then that language would be music or words in a foreign language that we hear only the sonority of. It would be bare passage and self-maintenance through absolute loss. It would be the language of the sphere of ownness, from the *Cartesian Meditations*, which could not be a shared language. The language and the action of the absolute, somewhat as Sartre said towards the end of *Being and Nothingness*, would have to be something between slime and water and could claim us only as a palimpsest claims both its texts.

As such a difficulty and a necessity, the manifestation of absolute subjectivity within its concrete accompaniment offers a resonance. It offers its similarity, though in only a complementary manner, to the way in which the transcendence of the perceived object, under the epoche, is located within our own experience. The chair, the water bottle, the computer are, Husserl says, within our reduced experience and claim transcendence by retaining the ability to “point” outwards, to point outside of consciousness, even though as Husserl has said, consciousness is that out of which nothing can slip. The *pointing* of the object, which one beholds in the moment of *grasping* it is the correlative of the trace of absolute subjectivity within the concrete, temporal person I am.

Complementarily, then, the form of time appears and maintains itself in its difference as absolute, not constituted, i.e., maintains itself as both I and stream, by way of requiring that our constituted, concrete life point *inward*, from the very heart of the concrete, towards the absolute that remains within us by virtue of our self-indication. Absolute subjectivity is thus ours by way of being an always already existing claim to referential self-continuity. It is the I in the stream and the stream in the I.

Absolute subjectivity is the way in and the way home—both reference and continuity—the temporal home and foundation. Because we exist concretely within the distinctions that absolute subjectivity sets up for us, we only *feel it*, and we feel it only as if peripherally, as if at the very heart of the concrete. We feel the absolute and the ultimate self-unity of I and stream, as the supportive form of all the particular events we live.

Absolute subjectivity is thereby also similar to Husserl’s description of pairing in the Fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*—a pairing which claims the other person we experience as an impossible memory, a pairing which itself appears as a foundationless ground, as a form of identity. In both absolute subjectivity and pairing—in both of these—the a priori, the unified subjectivity, founds and flows within all concrete relationships that evince its structure.

All other experiences as mine—beyond a bare, rather empty sphere of ownness—presuppose pairing with the other. Similarly all experiences of time as lived presuppose the

flow of absolute subjectivity by way of its pointing inward toward the home of concrete self-experience. We recognize the work always already accomplished by ourselves as absolute subjectivity by living its inward pointing. In our self-indicating, pointing finger, one might say, is the finger of the divine, of the unlimited, of that which is prior to all distinctions and to which all finite distinctions return. And thus we come home to ourselves by following our own directionality, by having our own motion of pointing carry something larger than our concrete selves.

The kind of co-inhabiting that absolute subjectivity does with our constituted, particular subjectivities, the absolute with the experiential, is something Husserl clarifies in *Lectures* when he talks about the double intentionality of retention. The reason, perhaps, we cannot get a direct view of absolute subjectivity doing its formative work, forming the whole stream, is that it is always on the “other side” of the constituted. Just as we cannot see our own backs without a mirror or without asking someone else to look at them for us, so too the absolute, which creates the ongoing possibility of the whole of our retained, past life, locates itself on the obverse of the experiencing life.

This block to our experience of absolute subjectivity lifts a bit when we consider how we “retain” the past within the present, retain the previously heard notes within the melody, retain the tradition within the evolution of the heritage, as we might if we welcome a new family member who is of a different faith during the familiar holidays. In retention, the pre-reflective holding together of the just past and the now, there is something so fundamental to the continuous having of an experience as the same, as now, that it would seem that our whole stream of lived experiences grows out of that possibility to retain:

We believe, therefore, that the *unity of the flow itself* becomes constituted in the flow of consciousness as a one-dimensional *quasi-temporal* order by virtue of the continuity of retentional modifications and by virtue of the circumstance that these modifications are, continuously, retentions of the retentions that have continuously preceded them. (Husserl 1991, p. 86, my emphasis)

The stream of lived experiences depends on the flux of temporality. The flux of temporality, which is the stream prior to the noticing of the distinctions between subject and object, creates itself through the act of retention.

The stream or flow thus holds on to each moment in its relations with every other moment. We hold the moment and the holding of the moment. The unity of the stream is the holding together of a moment (as if an other) and of the retaining (as if a self). Hence “the unity of the flow itself” is something we do to and for ourselves as if time were both something other than us, a separable moment that we retain, and something that is us, a holding of the holding.

When I try to witness *explicitly* what the appearance of the unity of the flow is, I find that my ray of regard must go in two directions at once—*both* towards the act of retaining everything here in the now as it passes *and* toward the way in which what is new, now, enters into the retention. I cannot in fact be in both places explicitly at once, even though I *exist* both places and *perform* both acts.

This is because there are, Husserl says, “two inseparably united intentionalities, requiring one another *like two sides of one and the same thing* . . . interwoven with each other in the one unique flow of consciousness” (Husserl 1991, p. 87). I zig-zag back and forth from the one to the other. One intentionality is directed toward retaining the stream as such, toward retaining or maintaining the current moment together with everything already past. In this moment, the focus is on holding everything together, retaining the retentions, perhaps like Atlas holding up the heavens. The other embraces the now from *within* that previously fashioned whole, renewing the process of retention by taking for granted the whole and focusing on the one moment the now, perhaps like Odysseus within each adventure as he is attempting to return home.

In one intentionality, one act, “immanent time becomes constituted—an objective time, a genuine time in which there is duration and the alteration of what endures” (Husserl 1991, p. 87). In the second intentionality, “it is the quasi-temporal arrangement of the

phases of the flow that becomes constituted" (Husserl 1991, pp. 87–88). Neither of the intentionalities, neither Atlas nor Odysseus, appears as such. For that which creates the time of this or that experience, and that which creates the flow as flow—is a “prephenomenal, pre-immanent temporality . . . as the form of the time-constituting consciousness and in itself” (Husserl 1991, p. 88). What absolute subjectivity is doing in these two intentionalities, fused together, is what makes all appearing possible, what makes the distinction between transcendence and immanence possible. As “prephenomenal”, the intentionalities can only be traced by virtue of what we witness ourselves doing from one moment of one lived experience to the next, by virtue of the whole we exist each moment. As “pre-immanent”, the intentionalities are neither objective nor subjective, not at all the interplay of noetic and noematic, because the distinction between inside and outside has not even been formulated yet. The self-summoning of the stream of experience is possible because what we are as “absolute subjectivity” is the preparation for distinction by means of a more intimate self-unification.

By identifying ourselves with such non-appearing, inseparably paired intentionalities that are prephenomenal and pre-immanent, we recognize, as absolute subjectivity, that we cannot ever be fully reduced to our lived experience.⁴ Yet we can never *live* within the absolute subjectivity that here announces itself to us, either. We are this absolute subjectivity only insofar as we can trace its syntheses and realize that our finitude has a basis in the unending, infinite self-constituting consciousness of time. That is, whatever is the absolute of time-consciousness is woven into our reflective, experiential life much the same way as, for Merleau-Ponty, the category of color is rooted in the givens. But nevertheless, even given this intimate interweaving, there is some new that offers itself to us through Husserl’s description of absolute subjectivity.

There is something about our temporality that pushes us to see ourselves as not simply finite. We are as if simultaneously finite and infinite. Like Kant’s famous reliance on the as-if within the experience of beauty—a beauty that is *as if* a quality of the object and yet really just a free play of democratically acting faculties of imagination and understanding—the absolute foundation of temporality involves its enactment of the form of our retention as what can be described only as “quasi-temporal.” The flow gives us our time and yet the flow itself is not *itself* temporal. Rather, like beauty, the structure of our temporality, its form, is only *as if* temporal, a play of our absolute, internal, self-referential faculties or intentionalities (toward self and moment)—a play that sets up all temporal experience of objectivity and of subjectivity as such by remaining distinct in its “quasi-temporality.” Time is not fully made of time, then, even if it is nothing else either apart from time.

But unlike the externally perceived object that begins the whole experience of beauty for Kant, our absolute subjectivity, the arranger of our flow, nevertheless appears in some sense, i.e., peripherally or metaphorically and yet indubitably, as existing in its own right for Husserl. Absolute subjectivity exists and exists *as us* because the flow itself *is* its own, we might say, *body*. The flow exists as a kind of metaphor and yet for all that exists as a “self-appearance”: “the flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only exists but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a *self-appearance* of the flow *necessarily* exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing” (Husserl 1991, p. 88, emphasis). The flow is the appearance to itself, and to us as concrete, of the absolute.

We are “remarkable” and “intelligent” in the way we have, behind our backs as it were, constituted temporality for ourselves such that the very structure of time is itself an appearance. It is almost as if we had given the appearance of time to ourselves so as to create the possibility for us to reckon with finitude and infinitude as bound up inseparably. We “must apprehend” the flow because that is the only way for us to see how what is lived reaches back into—and perhaps also toward—what is absolute.

But if the double intentionality of retention is both “pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent”, then how could the flow appear to me at all? How could the flow *necessarily* appear to me?

They are joined, they appear, with the pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent intentionalities, which do *not* appear, Husserl says, by means of an imperfect overlaying:

the constituting and constituted [overlay], and yet naturally they cannot [overlay] in every respect. The phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the same flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally cannot be identical with these constituted phases, nor are they. (Husserl 1991, p. 88)

Absolute and concrete, “constituting and constituted” are joined together, requiring one another, interwoven—and yet there is a gap between them, a distance or a distinction between absolute and concrete.

I can witness the flow, however the witnessing act is achieved, as always already mine. When I do witness it, I am given over to the intentionalities of retention that have made my life appear as such. But I cannot witness these intentionalities actually doing their work. Like workers in a secret factory, they do their work somewhere always out of reach. These intentionalities are “not identical” to the appearance of the retaining and the having of a continuous lived experience of typing this paper. Whatever in me is absolute remains absolute. Whatever in me is a correlation between Ego and stream remains that correlation and retains that distinction.

The fact that we are given temporality as our doing does not mean we can adequately or directly witness ourselves creating it. And this prohibition against direct seizing upon our absolute subjectivity, which might remind one of both the garden of Eden and the garden of Gethsemane, is further what produces the need for self-forgiveness. I have given myself temporality as what I am without allowing myself to claim full awareness of that absolute subject or to gain security as that. This gap between constituting and constituted, between absolute and pure/lived Ego, is the motor of my life. It cannot be otherwise. But that does not mean that this motor has not set us on a path of self-confrontation. Indeed, I would argue that it is in this overlaying that is never total, within this distinction or gap between absolute and Ego that can lie the very possibility of taking a stance on their unity—a stance of resentment, resolute acceptance, even joyful or willing embrace.

3. Forgiveness of Oneself

If both the form and flow of time as such and concrete lived experience belong together as a unity I live, if they are firmly interwoven and yet still separated in terms of their sense and manner of appearance—then I would argue that what it means to accept one’s life as finite, what it means to forgive the passage of time in favor of the meaning it brings to light is always already possible. Acceptance, forgiveness of having to be absolute subjectivity and Ego—this is possible because of their “remarkable” and “intelligent” inter-relation. We are absolute flow. We are Ego, I, who exist within a life of concrete passing away and anticipation. When we see these intertwined, it is possible for us to reckon with our finite selves as created or called forth or founded by our absolute ones.

To say we give ourselves time from our own act as absolute subject—this is not necessarily to deny divinity as the author of our existence. But it is to notice our own participation in our creation. Given Husserl’s descriptions I mentioned previously, I think it makes sense to say that we have *created*, in some pre-reflective, absolute manner, the *facticity of our existence* and *its differentiation* from the power of its flow as such. By seeing that we have an important role in creating ourselves as finite, we can extend to ourselves in advance the kind of generosity and motility needed to choose something other than resentment or grief over our limitations.

At the death of my father, I was grief-stricken. Another phenomenologist I knew, when I said I could not imagine ever being happy again, laughed. He said of course I would. In that moment, I did not like this person or his laughter. But I think what he did was remind me that time passes, that grief learns what it is doing as it moves and flows through and out of us. Essentially, like Husserl, he handed me over to the experience of my own absolute power of forming myself as flow. And in that process, which may have been hobbled by his laugh, I was still to come to terms with my father as a finite being and

with myself as *setting myself up* for just such a tension—the tension between finitude and absolute—that I live as grief. In short, what I learned from this other person’s intervention was that I needed to forgive myself as a co-creator of this meaningful mess that was the loss of my father in order to forgive my father “giving in” to the cancer that killed him.

In light of my own reckoning with my grief then I would like to offer this argument: before we reckon with the deeds or finitude of another, then, I believe we need to see that our structure as the intertwining of absolute and constituted calls out for self-forgiveness first and foremost. I believe we are called to pre-extend to ourselves the acceptance and hospitality that we find in Derrida’s discussion of the gift. For it is not God—or not only God—who has made ourselves vulnerable to harm and to grief. Like the Fifth Cartesian Meditation’s description of the way we have always already transferred sense to the other person in our pairing with them prior to our awareness of the relationship as such, so too, implicit in Husserl’s description of time-consciousness, and in some sense in our own psyche, I believe we find that we have always already, in some sense, *agreed* to the character of our temporality as flow.⁵

To live concretely is to live against the backdrop of the endless stream of experience, of the absolute self-appearing flow. It is to agree to our absolute self-giveness as absolute flow, to our a priori acts of setting up the backdrop of our lives. And thus, as handing time to ourselves as ourselves, we have agreed to the very possibility of moving with our finitude into increasingly sophisticated ways of recognizing meaning. As handing time to ourselves, we can become resolute in a stance of not extending loss, pain, trauma, or guilt beyond its necessary, essential movement. We can become dancers of a movement that is freeing insofar as we can allow the experience of grief to return us toward the absolute responsibility that we bear as a moment of a transcendental whole. We can give ourselves back to ourselves instead of denying ourselves, instead of denying our temporality, in a clash of titanic intentionalities.

An example: I once tried to describe what happens the activity of crying. One central question was this: What is the meaning of the tears that flow from me? After reflecting, it seemed to me that one meaning of tears is the expression of our ignorance. We can cry in order to show we do not know how to deal with our particular situation as a whole. Tears in such a case would also express a desire to learn more, a desire to become more adequate to the situation’s demands while acknowledging one has not yet been so. Tears can call for a re-examination of the relationship between our finitude and the surpassing nature of our involvement in meaning as such.

Now this desire to learn may not be the motivation in all situations in which one cries. We could cry to manipulate others, to change the subject, etc. But if crying *can* express a desire for self-education, I think that crying can be the reminder of both our finitude (I have not yet known) and our absolute (we already know that what we are *is* flow—and this too shall pass if we learn how to let it pass and learn toward what we might aim).

It might matter *how* we cry, too. If we cry in a gut-wrenching way, reduced to collapsing on the floor with loud heavings, as I was when I heard my father die, then we might not allow ourselves to see immediately, in that moment, what the relation is that we bear to the absolute. But if we cry in multiple ways, at reminders or fears of forgetting, we might just see that in all instances of crying we retain an eidetic structure—i.e., we flow in part as a structure of self-relation, as water out of the river of ourselves. In that way, our crying could literally present itself as the metaphor of the stream of lived experience, of our temporality as such. And hence it could be a gift of the divine or the transcendental to the concrete.

If I am responsible, deeply, for my own unpreparedness—if I have given myself over to my own inability to reconcile my absolute and my concrete—then crying can also be an act of self-recognition and self-forgiveness. Like an echo of the flowing out of blood, of the flowing out of life, of the brushing of dirt from one’s sandals, crying can be the very recognition of having given oneself to oneself in advance. Crying can be the possibility of moving into a more adequate space, of flowing toward future adequation.

4. Husserl on Time and Pairing–Forgiveness of Others

Husserl claims, albeit elliptically in the text of the Cartesian Meditations, that the pairing with the other person involved in transcendental intersubjectivity is somewhat like internal time-consciousness: “Somewhat as my memorial past, as a modification of my living present, “transcends” my present, the appresented other being “transcends” my own being . . . ”. In both cases the modification is inherent as a sense—component in the sense itself” (Husserl 2013, p. 115). I would argue that the import of this comparison is more than metaphorical.

In order to remember my past, in order to have a “memorial past”, I must place myself, in the present act of remembering, outside of my present. I must live in the past that I remember as something like a guest, a visitor. To have a “sense” of my past, to remember it, is to live within a “modification” of that past. To remember is not to have the past in the same way as I had the past when it was present. Rather, it is to dwell within the past in a new way, in the way of remembering.

But I can have such a relation to the past, even though I “modify” it within the act of remembering. And that past remains what it is, namely *not* the present experience I have now, not even the act of remembering—the past remains *not* my present and yet *still* mine by way of an inherent difference and similarity with my present. For example, I remember typing the last paragraph. I remember trying to emphasize words from the original quote from Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, but I remember this as if simultaneously from the outside (the act of typing that paragraph is gone) and from the inside (it was my experience and remains so even in the act of typing this new paragraph).

The togetherness of past and present in my experience, the togetherness of memory and present living—these are a very personal deployment of absence (no longer being there) and presence (being there in a new, reflective way). And thus memory is possible as a self-transcending act because I manage to situate absence and presence *within* the sense of my life as such.

This memorial deployment or situating of absence and presence, modification and immediate intuition, is itself possible, as noted above, because of the double intentionality of retention, as Husserl described in the *Lectures*. And, to repeat the salient point, that double intentionality, towards retaining the moment as it passes and toward the retention of the retention, allowed us to see that consciousness as absolute, as pre-phenomenal and pre-immanent retaining and retaining of the act of retaining—this absolute could dwell with the concrete life that I am in the following manner:

the constituting and constituted [overlay], and yet naturally they *cannot* [overlay] in every respect. The phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the same flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally *cannot be identical* with these constituted phases, nor are they. (Husserl 1991, p. 88, my emphasis)

At the heart of my time-consciousness, then, for Husserl, is the awareness that the examination of my self-transcending capacities to remember my past experience leads to an appreciation of how my relation to time itself is embedded within absence and limit. I “cannot” simply identify my absolute self, in which I give myself time as such, in which I give myself my flow, my entire stream of lived experience, with my concrete self. Rather, the identity of those two, absolute and concrete, is always across a gap, across an inability to forge a complete identification. Their difference is, therefore, the *method* and the most important *part* of their unity.

My absolute subjectivity, in its difference from my concrete life, resists a simple dissolution into me. My absolute subjectivity thus transcends itself, we might say, in its double intentionality of retention and in its self-appearance as the totality of the unending stream, *toward* my concrete one. And in that being-toward one another, they dwell together, layered together as a pair, such that to talk about the one is immediately to have to talk about the other.

This overlaying that is not total means that it is the pre-phenomenal, pre-immanent, by departing from view but also by never completely departing, that makes possible

experience as lived by an Ego who has and lives a past within the present by transcending itself towards itself. This arrangement is the very way in which I deploy the mechanics of the total stream and its absolute self-synthesis toward further concrete recognition of my concrete self.

What Husserl means, then, by the comparison of the “memorial past” with the “ap-presented other” in the *Cartesian Meditations*, within the quote with which we began this section, is that temporality as the interweaving of absolute and constituted thus claims a kind of morphological, structural community with my experience of being paired with other persons.⁶ As itself a pairing of that which is fundamentally different from one another, my temporality as such *leans further into* (or we might say is *made for*) the structure of the experience of the other person.

In Husserl’s description of pairing in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, instead of two aspects of my own temporal subjectivity (absolute and concrete) that overlay one another, my entire lived-bodily subjectivity overlays that of the other person.⁷ This is important because, even though the other person lives their body and I live mine, even though there is no (and indeed *can be no*) full identification of the other with me, still we appear as intertwined, as paired.

In one sense, this pairing of subjectivities is not surprising, since all pairing has the same structure—whether we are talking about a pairing of shoes, of trees, of words, or of persons. In each case there is the following:

we find essentially present here and intentional overreaching, coming about genetically (and by essential necessity) as soon as the data that undergo pairing have become prominent and simultaneously intended; we find, more particularly, a living mutual awakening, and an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other. This overlaying can bring a total or partial coincidence . . . As a result of this overlaying, there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense—that is to say an apperception of each according to the sense of the other. (Husserl 2013, pp. 112–13)

However, in another sense, this is quite surprising. For the other person is *alien* to me. Theirs is always, at best, a “partial overlaying” with me. The fact that we understand ourselves to be within “a mutual transfer of sense” that happens before we are aware of it, i.e., “as soon as” we perceive one another—this means that what is alien to me, radically other, is nevertheless bound up with me.

Again, this can only be because the gap or the distance or the difference between us is no impediment to our mattering to one another. It is not the block to our relationship. Rather, our relationship begins as making sense of the difference or gap while also being about what we share—this new sense that arises on the basis of our immediate, perceived togetherness.

We are simply capable of forming meaningful relations at distances: “Every overlapping at a distance, which occurs by associative pairing, is *at the same time* a fusion and therein, so far as incompatibilities do not interfere, an assimilation, an accommodation of the sense of one member to that of the other” (Husserl 2013, p. 118, my emphasis). “Distance” and “fusion”, then, as absolute and concrete or constituting and constituted—these immediately form higher unities together that generate meaning and avenues for phenomenological description.

But this very fact is exactly what necessitates forgiveness. The other person has made a withdrawal, made a “transfer” of sense out of me. And I have made one from them. Our very appearing together, the perception of our bond as citizens, persons out on the same street, reader and author, whatever—this is happening without my explicit control. It is something I bear responsibility for—and yet not only me. The other, too, has gotten me into this mess: I have to navigate *them* in traffic while driving. I have to hear *their* lawnmower when I want quiet. I have to answer the questions of a two-year-old or an elder with Alzheimer’s. As soon as I notice them, their demands begin, our inescapability from each other displays itself.

How can it be that we have already begun to see each other as “distant” and yet “fused”? It seems we can do so, can be paired with what is fundamentally resistant and alien to us, because of the inherent alterity of our time-consciousness, because we have already seen this “overlying” at a distance somewhere before, at least in part.

Even though I am able to identify the absolute subjectivity that gives temporality to itself as *mine*—even though I identify my absolute subjectivity with my concrete one—still there is a significant distance or gap or difference. There is a difference at the heart of my own unity. And this is what animates my own resentment or resistance to limit and facticity and finitude. I am not myself. And yet I am myself as well.

This problematic self-identity, across the layers and the gap between them, is what makes possible a still more *radical formation of meaning* that occurs *without identification*. If I were not capable of uniting myself with myself, at some notable cost or shift, I might add, to my self-awareness—I would be unable to do so with the other person, who is indeed alien. That is why I would argue that our time-consciousness is *made for* experiencing others.

There is a teleology there. What is familiar to us, the “memorial past” and our inhabiting it from here and now, the absolute subjectivity that beats the heartbeat that we take to be our own—this is *for* movement that is alien to us. We move by degrees. From time to other. And the structural, morphological similarity is the key to that.

We inhabit the other’s life, the other’s dreams or emotions or thoughts, as a guest, a visitor. One who always maintains the distance, the fear, the condescension toward the host. And vice versa. We are within each other like memories, especially like memories, when they die. Especially like memories when we miss them.

But this is because the form and substance of time is the project of coming to recognize oneself within the world, as the partners to the alien. We remember (or anticipate) because it is the way we have of dancing toward the other person, of trying to take up what we have lost. And we have *already lost control of the narrative* from the very moment they appear with us.

Time is thus the backwards- and forwards- echoing of the radical alterity of the appearing of the other. And, reciprocally, the other person is the hearkening back or toward the way my absolute subjectivity and my concrete, factual, historical Ego live together. In both cases there is a prior purchase, some pre-existing resonance, within my conscious life. Time and alterity—these are pairings. These are also *paired together as such*. Pairing *pairs*.

We are responsible for the mess of temporality.⁸ We are also responsible for the mess of relations with others. In neither case, can we see exactly how we *chose* to be finite or to be involved so directly or intimately with everyone else we experience. And yet we seem to have no choice. We must forgive or give permission to ourselves to have made (and continue to make) ourselves finite. Even if (and before) we sense our absolution. We must also forgive or give permission to others and ourselves to have made (and continue to make) a “transfer” from each other in order to form a meaningful world and live a meaningful life.

We form the form of relations with others within the structure of our temporality. We echo the relations of time in the structure of our lives with one another. And this intertwining of “double intentionalities” leads to concrete forms that are virtually unlimited—parent, child, sibling, stranger, enemy, lover, acquaintance, friend, etc.—completely given and yet always at a distance, always open to particular revision and resistance. We will never form *the* concrete relation that is the absolute, unchallenged, beatific essence, standard, and excellence of pairing. Just as the democratic play of the faculties in beauty is only a “lingering” for Kant, our best relations are but short durations and affirmations of the possibility of “overlying of each with the sense of the other.”

There will always be harm to forgive. There will always be a reckoning with the a priori that we are, that gave us time and made us transfer. And there will always be a role for us to play in launching ourselves forward on our own and on others’ behalf—toward a structure or a place that will make room for us to be better instigators of pairing together.

5. A Reading of Genesis

This discussion of Husserl's description of time-consciousness and pairing leads to me to suggest that forgiveness is first and foremost an act of pure giving, a pre-giving, a *fore-giving*. As this kind of pure act that would be rooted in the intertwining of absolute and constituted, forgiveness would be the opening up of a new territory or a new possibility *independent* of the situation in which any harm occurred in the first place. This new territory or possibility is a new act of flowing forward by means of retaining the whole. It is a conversation with others, a radical act of creative *interpretation*.

In this interpretative act, just as in the intertwining of our absolute and constituted temporality, we find that we ourselves—not the previous situation, not tradition in a simple sense, not God or *not only* God—are the ones who forgive, who give beforehand. And if one might say that we follow a divine plan forward, if we forgive as God or Jesus taught us, I would argue further that it is largely impossible to say which comes first, God's plan or our interpretative doing, as the act is ours which interprets the primacy of the divine text, the divine plan, the divine act. To illustrate this, let us examine the story of the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers in the book of *Genesis* and the forgiveness that Jesus offers in the Gospels of Luke and John. Afterwards, I will again remind us of the way Husserl has situated us with respect to forgiveness.

Within the book of *Genesis*, there are a number of stories of violence within families: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and his brothers. However, with all this violence against ones supposedly loved within the family, there is little mention of forgiveness.

At the end of *Genesis*, though, in the story of Joseph and his brothers, forgiveness is, perhaps for the first time in the whole book of *Genesis*, explicitly discussed. Let us tell and hear the story again.

After giving Joseph the coat of many colors, Jacob sent Joseph to find his brothers and their flocks. Joseph is naïve. He only knows that he “seeks his brothers”. But when they see him from far off, Joseph's brothers, all but Reuben, wanted to kill him from jealousy. Reuben's refusal led them to throw him into a pit, sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, dip his coat of many colors in blood and allow Jacob to think that Joseph had perished at the hands of a wild animal. When Joseph became a powerful servant of the Pharaoh and the brothers chanced to meet him again when begging for food to feed their families, it would seem that, after initially toying with their emotions, Joseph forgave and was reconciled with them. But this forgiveness is more complicated than it first appears.

When Joseph discloses himself to his brothers for the first time, he asks them to come close to him. And when they have done so, when his eyes can meet theirs and the light of recognition can be kindled, then he says “now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me *before you* to preserve life” (45:5, my emphasis).

Initially, Joseph does not talk at all about forgiveness. In fact throughout the whole story *he* never does. Instead, Joseph tries to get the brothers to undo their own resentment, their own guilt. Forgiveness is not something he thinks he can give by himself, perhaps, or perhaps it would involve something more than an exchange of debt and credit for Joseph.

And yet in his encouragement of his brothers, in his rejection of their anxiety and self-blame, he has done something more important for them—something that sounds to me like forgiveness in its second moment. Joseph has changed the narrative that the brothers are expecting. He tells his brothers that he, Joseph, is *not essentially* the young man they sold into slavery. He has moved beyond the interpretation of himself as the wronged party. By being “sent before you”, Joseph has acted anew. He has cleared a way.

I would argue that, both in becoming powerful and in his interpretation of God sending him before the brothers so as to prepare for this very moment, Joseph has acted poetically, for the sake of all. He has moved into the future and has returned to them as the actor who has received and inaugurated the sending-forth of God. What looked like murder and abandonment returns, in Joseph's interpretation, as restored relations and the

preservation of life. In Joseph's life and in his words, the lives of his brothers are recast beyond guilt towards their unification as a family and as a people.

No merely passive reception of grace on the brothers' part, not even on Joseph's part, could do what Joseph has just done. No mere exchange of debt and credit could do that. Certainly Joseph leaned into what was pre-given, as he says to his brothers that it was "God" who sent him—but Joseph did more than simply respond. He interpreted Pharaoh's dreams to Pharaoh. He charted a new territory, a new home, in a foreign land.

In his telling of this narrative, Joseph has moved beyond the question of whether the brothers remain guilty. In his story, they are not only, are no longer, or perhaps *never were* simply the violent mob they took themselves to be. Rather, Joseph unites them more authentically in a possible endeavor "to preserve life", an endeavor the whole of which was, according to Joseph, sustained and sanctioned by God.

Joseph's act of interpreting his going to Egypt thereby unfolded a whole that had sides that were yet to be seen because it was a whole given, at least in part, by his own initiative. It was a whole completed only within the return. If to himself, if in his interpretation, he was simply following out what God had opened up, that higher power, that source, nevertheless remained *within* and *as* him.

It is true that the author of *Genesis* claims that Potiphar, Joseph's first master, "saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands" (39:3). Still it is Joseph whom Potiphar trusts; it is Joseph whom Potiphar's wife tries to seduce. Likewise, it is true that Joseph asks "Do not interpretations belong to God?"; yet he still says "Please tell them to me" and speaks on behalf of God, gives a unique and compelling account to those who ask (40:8, my emphasis). Finally, it is true that Joseph claims to Pharaoh that it is ultimately God who gives "a favorable answer" (41:16) through Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. But it is Joseph's own act that gives the answer, Joseph's own breath that forms the words.

So Joseph, I am arguing, is offering us an example of the fundamental moment of forgiveness as fore-giving, the pure act of interpretation. And he is doing this without using the word "forgiveness."

Perhaps this is because forgiveness seems to be limited to its use as a kind of legal term, a protection from retaliation. In support of this claim, the word "forgiveness" only surfaces after the death of Jacob, when Joseph's brothers fear that their protection from Joseph's retaliation is gone:

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So they approached Joseph, saying "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, *forgive* the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please *forgive* the crime of the servants of the God of your father. (Coogan 2001, *Genesis* 50:15–17, my emphasis)

What are we to do with this? Certainly, these brothers of Joseph are not entirely trustworthy. They lied to Jacob and said Joseph was dead. So whether or not this command of Jacob's was genuine or not is not clear. But they are clearly afraid of Joseph's position in Egypt. So they cry great tears as they say this plea and offer themselves as slaves.

Joseph simply reminds them of what he has said before. He does not tell them he forgives them. He does not agree that there was a crime. He rejects their framing for a second time. And instead he tells them not to be afraid and asks them

Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones". In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them. (Coogan 2001, *Genesis* 50:19–21)

Again, Joseph is opening the future, redefining what it means to be powerful. Power lies in referring one's own identity to the source of all goodness and wisdom and thereby entering into a time of self-giving and interpretation. Joseph is free to forgive in a radical way, to

transcend the binary choice of pardoning or resenting, because the creativity he has within the following after a futurally-oriented God is an immediate capacity. Joseph is following a call that is intimately bound up with his own disclosive power and action.

Joseph will be the way forward to reconciliation and growth. He will “provide” for the life and growth of the “little ones”. He will inaugurate “kindness” as a way of hearing the “good” of God which is happening “today”, but which is oriented toward the salvation of the whole people in the future. His interpretations are the essential action of God that Joseph is inaugurating in his own manner.

6. A Reading of the Gospels

For the purposes of continuing this meditation on forgiveness being a kind of *fore-giving*, I would like to read the Gospels of Luke and John together, at least in part. In each one there is a kind of unrepeated original contribution related to forgiveness and the way in which it is a *fore-giving*, an opening up of new territory or a new attitude towards the divine and towards one another.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus explicitly asks God to forgive those who are putting him to death. He asks, and in asking, seeks to provide a reason in advance for God granting that forgiveness: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Coogan 2001, Luke 23:34). Reading that verse, we might be compelled to say that Jesus believes these people who are harming him either do not understand or would not intend to harm him if they truly knew who Jesus is. Perhaps we might even contend that Jesus sees ideological systems in place that prevent individual or creative reflection. That is, these people do not understand how their participation in in Jesus’ crucifixion, which they may think is their own communal decision and act, may in fact be required of or called out of them within some other more powerful narrative than their own. That is, maybe Jesus means that they do not understand how their acts or words are functions of their being pawns of a pre-given plan of Rome or of Jerusalem or even of God.

That Jesus gives a reason to God for forgiving the people who are torturing and killing him is very interesting. Jesus could have just asked God to forgive. End of story. But in tying forgiveness to a lack of knowledge, it would almost seem that, like Joseph in relation to his brothers, Jesus believes that there is enough within the givenness of the situation to render their action as non-binding. The real thing is to move beyond this situation, this clash of systems embodied in the torture and ritualized murder of one man, in order to return to the people around him, de-systematize them, and grant both knowledge and possibility.

In the Gospel of John, we do not find an echo of Luke’s narrative. There is no mention of Jesus’ explicit request for forgiveness of those who crucify him. However, we read in John’s Gospel that Jesus talks, before his passion, about how he goes ahead of others in order to prepare a place for them:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house, there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that *I go to prepare a place* for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, *so that where I am, there you may be also*. And *you know the way* to the place where I am going. (Coogan 2001, John 14: 1–4)

This going in advance, this “preparing a place” and then returning to “take you to myself”—this advance action seems to provide a clearing, a shared space. It will disclose itself as beyond grief or guilt. The arrival at this future place is “prepared”, as John writes, for those who believe and love Jesus. Jesus makes an essential, creative act. He is “the way”, as he says in response to Thomas (14:6). Knowing Jesus, following him, means receiving the essential act he is doing as also one’s own path to take. It means responding as if already claimed, by some mutual agreement or transfer, in order to perform a similar, essential act of their own—this “knowing the way” is the disciple’s capacity to strike out ahead on their own in their own future time, too. Knowing Jesus is to live into the act that is required. It is

to put imagination and understanding, interpretation and action in relation to one another. Knowing is immediately seeing that each of them can strike out upon the way. The future that Jesus offers is one that they chart too, for the sake of Joseph's "little ones" who are yet to arrive.

7. Conclusions

The impersonal, absolute subjectivity that appears in itself and to itself as flow is what directs our view to our internal limits. We will die. We will cease to matter to people near and far. We cannot be the people we want to be. We hurt others. We are hurt by others. But we have set all this up.

We are both absolute and constituted. We are paired with others and yet also radically alone. We are intimately responsible and yet never fully self-conscious. We are always at a distance and yet always fused. We exist against our own endless backdrop and yet only appear to ourselves as finite. These are the parameters of finitude, a finitude that is vulnerable to resentment and paralysis while also being open to movement and increasing sophistication and adequacy.

When we see *ourselves* as setting up those parameters of finitude, when we see ourselves as having already agreed to our mutual transfer, we can move *with* our structure as flow and begin to learn how to take a stand on this structure. Having one foot in absolute, one foot in concrete is to be able to see that the passage of time is not an independent, impersonal thing that we can simply and consistently resent or bargain with or enjoy. Rather, we can see time and our relations as *our doing*. By means of our giving ourselves to ourselves, we can see that the finite in us, the finite that we are, uses the increasingly larger whole of our past, which is held together by our *absolution*, to open up the future toward greater community with others who share this same temporal structure with us.

Our resentment or trauma exhausts us. Our grief bores us. Our anger or pain fades. But the absolute structure of time makes that possible. The steady passing away into memory is the mechanism by which we can move on, if we do the work of charting out some new place to dwell with others. And we do that best when we see that we cannot ever have any life at all if that life does not go precisely away.

Today I asked my students to tell us what "power" meant. Where is it? What does it look like? They have trouble, as I think we all do, answering what power is. It is easier to live it, to live into it, to em-power than to grasp it in our hands. Tracing the power of our intentional life is what this phenomenology of Husserl's does. It traces and em-powers. The rest is up to us.

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Notes

- ¹ Dan Zahavi, in "Phenomenology and reflection", comments on the same chapter in Husserl's *Ideas* as I am here. Zahavi notes that *Ideas* has a lacuna, namely that Husserl is talking about the relation between the constituting consciousness and the constituted object and *not* the way the constituting consciousness is itself formed: "as Husserl admits in [section] 81, his preceding discussion of constituting consciousness has not really been a discussion of the truly absolute. Rather, his analysis of constituting act-intentionality is an analysis of something that itself is constituted temporally in a profoundly different manner than the objects of intentionality" (Howell 2015, p. 180). My own choice to move from *Ideas* to *Internal Time* follows the move from constituting to absolute consciousness that Zahavi suggests would resolve the "lacuna". That is, I seek to understand how the experience of the stream or the flux as such can be understood as moving us toward the other person. I thus start from the constituted whole of the stream and work back to the constituting parts.
- ² Paul Ricoeur notes, in his commentary on this section, that "this constitution [of the stream] is the very constitution of the Ego as a form of temporality. This form is the object of eidetic intuition and not only, as Kant holds, a condition of possibility attained by regressive analysis" (Ricoeur 1996, p. 128).
- ³ Marcus Brainard says "supplementations of a lived experience are always regulated by its essence. They prove to be the key to how the stream can be grasped, and in fact by virtue not of their necessity so much as their very possibility: it cannot be grasped after the manner of a concrete lived experience but more as a sense of egoic motility" (Brainard 2002, pp. 129–30).

- 4 Max Schaefer argues similarly: “in regarding the event of absolute consciousness as a form of novelty, the latter is seen not as reality itself, as something perishable therein, but as presenting the very possibilities of reality, as a plastic force that, since it can never itself be given to appearance or intuition, requires that it be approached through a thought that begins ever anew” (Schaefer 2018, p. 983).
- 5 Whitney Howell uses Husserl on passive synthesis to make a similar point about learning: “the subject of perception does not inhabit a world of perceptual meaning that she must continually and actively assent to, but rather one that, for the most part, she has already assented to, one that is already meaningful. In other words, the realization of perceptual meaning—the defining activity of perceptual consciousness—requires the passivity of the perceiving subject: it requires that she has already “lent” herself to the meaningful perceptual world” (Howell 2015, p. 319).
- 6 This contention of mine, however, needs to be careful. As Shaun Gallagher notes in his commentary on time-consciousness in Husserl, “Husserl rejects an isomorphism between the stream of consciousness and the temporal objects and events of which it is conscious. The relations between protention, primal impression and retention are not relations of past-present-future in a way that matches up with a perceived object such as a melody” (Gallagher 2017, p. 92). The isomorphism I propose, however, is not between pre-reflective and reflective syntheses. Both the double intentionality of retention and pairing are pre-reflective or passive syntheses that seem to claim one another.
- 7 For an extended treatment of the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, see my *Layers in Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Costello 2012.)
- 8 James Mensch notes, perhaps in a different manner than I, that the absolute subjectivity that Husserl identifies in *Lectures* is itself responsible for temporality but by virtue of my involvement with “surpassing being”. First Mensch claims that is because of the absolute that time is constituted within me as my responsibility: “I can assert both that time is constituted from me and that I am temporally constituted through the processes that arise in the primal pre-present” (Mensch 2010, p. 169). However, my responsibility is limited for the constitution of time insofar as the “I” that constitutes itself as time is prior to the distinction between one and many: “The pre-individual, pre-egological origin of time is, however, not this individual being, but rather what Husserl calls in another manuscript is “surpassing being” . . . My identity with this pre-individual absolute is a matter of this “surpassing being” (Mensch 2010, p. 169). I identify with the absolute, and thus with time, because what I am behind my Ego is a surpassing being. Perhaps a being who is out of itself within the stream of others and my pairing with them.

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