SPACE, TIME, AND CULTURE
CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

IN COOPERATION WITH
THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH IN PHENOMENOLOGY

Volume 51

Editor:

John J. Drummond, Fordham University

Editorial Board:

Elizabeth A. Behnke
David Carr, Emory University
Stephen Crowell, Rice University
Lester Embree, Florida Atlantic University
J. Claude Evans, Washington University
Burt Hopkins, Seattle University
José Huertas-Jourda, Wilfrid Laurier University
Joseph J. Kockelmans, The Pennsylvania State University
William R. McKenna, Miami University
Algis Mickunas, Ohio University
J. N. Mohanty, Temple University
Tom Nenon, The University of Memphis
Thomas M. Seebohm, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz
Gail Soffer, New School for Social Research, New York
Richard M. Zaner, Vanderbilt University

Scope

The purpose of this series is to foster the development of phenomenological philosophy through creative research. Contemporary issues in philosophy, other disciplines and in culture generally, offer opportunities for the application of phenomenological methods that call for creative responses. Although the work of several generations of thinkers has provided phenomenology with many results with which to approach these challenges, a truly successful response to them will require building on this work with new analyses and methodological innovations.
## Contents

Preface vii

Introduction
Making Chinese Sense of Phenomenology

LAO Sze-kwang 1

1. Time Zones: Phenomenological Reflections on Cultural Time
   
   David CARR 3

2. Krisis: The Power of Sense. Time, History and the Crisis of Western Culture in Husserl’s Phenomenology
   
   Mario RUGGENINI 15

3. The Human Sciences and Historicality: Heidegger and the Self-positioning of the Western Humanistic Tradition
   
   KWAN Tze-wan 31

4. Authentic Historicality
   
   Steven CROWELL 57

5. The Sociological Gaze and its Time Structure—A Sociologist’s Belated Encounter with Merleau-Ponty
   
   LUI Ping-keung 73

6. Toward Revisioning Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic of Suspicion in Other Spaces and Cultures
   
   Purushottama BILIMORIA 89

7. Objectivity and Inter-Cultural Experience
   
   William McKENNA 111

8. Phenomenology of the Consocial Situation: Advancing the Problems
   
   Lester EMBREE 119

9. Intersubjectivity and Phenomenology of the Other: Merleau-Ponty’s Contribution
   
   LAU Kwok-yung 135

10. Personal Givenness and Cultural a prioris
    
    Anthony STEINBOCK 159

11. Lifeworld, Cultural Difference and the Idea of Grounding
    
    YU Chung-chi 177

12. Empathy and Compassion as Experiential Praxis. Confronting Phenomenological Analysis and Buddhist Teachings
    
    Natalie DEPRAZ 189

13. Heng and Temporality of Dao: Laozi and Heidegger
    
    James WANG Qingjie 201
CONTENTS

14. Self-Consciousness (Svasamvittibhaga) and Ego-Consciousness (Manas) in Yogacara Buddhism and in Husserl’s Phenomenology
   NI Liangkang
   219

15. Natural Realism, Anti-reductionism, and Intentionality. The “Phenomenology” of Hilary Putnam.
   Dan ZAHAVI
   235

16. Separation and Connection: Phenomenology of Door and Window
   CHEUNG Chan-fai
   253

Notes on Contributors
   263

Index of Names
   269
Preface

The essays in this volume were originally presented at an extraordinary and fruitful conference held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in November of 2000. The conference was co-sponsored by the Hong Kong Society for Phenomenology, the Department of Philosophy of the Chinese University, and the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology.

The idea of the organizers was to bring together researchers from the Chinese-speaking world and from the West, whose common bond was training in phenomenology, broadly conceived; and to ask these researchers to present their ideas on the spatial and temporal aspects of culture, cultural difference, and cultural interaction. For the participants themselves, probably the most memorable part of the conference was the intense discussion and personal exchange which surrounded the presentation of papers. The collegiality and congeniality of the occasion was made possibly by the beautiful and hospitable environment of the Chinese University itself. Unfortunately, this spontaneous interaction cannot be captured on paper. But it may have influenced the revision of the papers which were ultimately submitted for this volume. In addition to selecting the contributions, the editors have had a hand in their final formulation, at least as far as the language is concerned. Although the official language of the conference was English, only five of the seventeen authors in this volume claim that language as their native tongue.

This points to another salient feature of the conference: in the cultural diversity of its participants’ origins it exemplified the very phenomenon it was examining. They came from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan; from India by way of Australia; from Denmark, France, Italy and the United States. To be sure, as professors and scholars they can hardly claim to be typical of their respective societies, and it can be argued (and was the subject of some discussion) that these days academics the world over make up a new sort of culture of their own. Still, even philosophers do not lose touch with the language and culture of their origins, and most indeed make an effort, perhaps to counteract the abstractness and putative universality of their enterprize.

It must be said as well, as an examination of the contents of this volume will show, that the authors have approached their broad common theme in very diverse ways. Some pursue topics that are of long standing in Western, especially in German and French philosophy, in connection with classic thinkers of the phenomenological tradition; and it will be noticed that the authors of these contributions are Chinese as well as European and American. Some, by contrast, have undertaken explicit comparisons of Western Phenomenology with classical Asian thought; and again these authors are both Eastern and Western. Finally, some have approached some aspect of “Space, Time and Culture” in a systematic
way inspired by the phenomenological method, drawing examples from the everyday life of different cultures. Again, the authors of these contributions are equally diverse in their own origins.

It may be said that phenomenology lends itself to the kind of interaction these papers exemplify. Phenomenology began with Husserl’s attack on psychologism in logic and on related doctrines such as cultural relativism. Just as the objects of consciousness cannot be reduced to the conscious we have of them, so the world of culture is not self-enclosed and sealed off from what is around it. The concept of intentionality stresses that consciousness is not a container but essentially an openness to a world beyond itself; and the world in turn, as phenomenology conceives it, is neither a finite nor an infinite universe but an expanse of overlapping horizons. As such it is always related to a perspective or point of view. Whether as individual or social, human subjectivity has—or perhaps is—its perspective on the world, and each perspective will differ from those of others. But its openness allows for an understanding of other perspectives, an understanding that is not so much given as posed as a project. Thus phenomenology brings to philosophy and to intercultural exchange a unique and valuable array of concepts and methods. In the essays of this volume, we believe, these concepts and methods are put to impressive use.

David CARR
CHEUNG Chan-fai
Introduction

Making Chinese Sense of Phenomenology*

LAO Yung-wei (alias LAO Sze-kwang)
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

I have never regarded myself as a Phenomenologist, therefore I am not going to present a formal paper on any specific topic in this field but only to offer you a simple proposal. As shown by the title of the present paper, my proposal is concerned with the adoption of the phenomenological method for a reformulation of the basic ideas of traditional Chinese philosophy. So far as I know, few Phenomenologists paid attention to Chinese philosophical thinking; and on the other hand, Chinese philosophers usually believe that phenomenology, as a special branch of European philosophy, makes no real sense to the “Chinese Mind.” However, I am pretty sure that the possible relation between the two sides can be seen in a different light.

Apparently, a phenomenological reformulation of Chinese philosophical ideas seems to involve various difficulties. But if we put the whole thing under closer examination, these difficulties would not prove to be so tremendous as they appeared to be. For the sake of simplicity, let me take Confucianism as the representative doctrine of Chinese philosophy, and compare its basic ideas about the human world with the general attitude held by phenomenologists.

Needless to say, here is the problem of how to identify this “general attitude.” To work out a complete solution for this problem would involve numerous methodological and historical arguments which would go far beyond the scope of this short address. What I attempt to do now is only to express my view in a very brief way. I beg to make the following points.

(1) While scholars in different fields claim to use the “phenomenological method” in their studies, this term has never been well defined. When we talk about a “general attitude,” we are also confronted with a similar problem. Phenomenology covers a wide variety of doctrines and they rarely converge. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “body subject” is hardly compatible with

* Opening Address to the International Conference on Phenomenology “Time, Space and Culture” organized by the Department of Philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 21 November 2000.
Husserl’s “transcendental Ego”; Sartre’s theoretical orientation in his theory of Being is quite distinct from the Heideggerian orientation. These obvious facts are in no need of explanation. Then where can we find the general attitude of Phenomenologists? To this question, my answer is: whether we can identify the general phenomenological attitude depends upon how strong our claim is. If we insist upon making a positive complete narrative, we will find it almost impossible to get started. But, if we are satisfied with negative narratives and partial description, then such an attempt is not hopeless. To put it in a more concrete way, I just mean that common features of different phenomenological theories consist rather in their denials than in their assertions about basic philosophical problems. This clue, properly handled, will make it possible for us to talk about the general phenomenological attitude.

(2) Let us take the concept of “world-view” as the focus point for this search. On the one hand, Phenomenologists deny the naturalist view of the world. For them, the presupposition of an independent world as objective reality is not acceptable as a philosophical world-view. Therefore, they do not see the world as a big collection of physical existences. On the other hand, they also deny the theological view of the world. They do not appeal to Divine will and Divine Logos to interpret the world-process. As declared by Heidegger, the phenomenological world-view is necessarily singular. There is only one appropriate world-view which is the panoramic picture of the process of “Being in becoming” or “the way to be” (to borrow a term from Z. Adamczewski). If we go a little bit further, I would say that the phenomenological attitude is to show the world as a disclosing process of Being with the “human world” as its center. Here we find the general phenomenological attitude in a minimum sense. I am aware of the possible controversies involved in this simplified presentation. However, this short paper cannot deal with those problems. Let it suffice. Now, let me turn to the other side.

(3) Although Confucian philosophy is, in its basic character, far different from any European philosophy, the Confucian world-view is still comparable to the phenomenological world-view. Confucians always emphasize the central position of the “human world” in the cosmic process. They deny the mechanistic concept of natural world. They also refuse the concept of personal God. This philosophical attitude has shaped Chinese mentality during many centuries. The result is that both natural sciences and revealed religion never developed in Chinese culture. This constitutes part of the so-called East-West distance. However, if we want to reformulate Chinese philosophical ideas and reduce such distance, I believe that adopting the phenomenological method for this reformulation is an attempt worthwhile and promising. When such efforts become fruitful, we will be able to make Chinese sense of Phenomenology and perhaps, at the same time, to make phenomenological sense of Chinese philosophy.
Time Zones: Phenomenological Reflections on Cultural Time

David CARR
Emory University

In this paper I want to explore the idea of a phenomenology of cultural time. I shall begin with the distinction between lived (or experienced) space and objective space, and with the idea of lived space expanding into cultural space. I shall then consider the possibility of finding parallels in the experience of time. After outlining my idea of the cultural experience of time, I shall explore certain cultural differences based on different experiences of time. I shall conclude with some reflections on the relation between such cultural differences and the contemporary world.

I. Space and Place, Home and Beyond

It was Husserl who introduced us to the distinction between lived space and objective space, a distinction made possible by the phenomenological reduction. Only if we suspend our naïve belief in the reality of objective space, which requires that we explain everything, including our own experience, in its terms, can we recognize and appreciate the distinctive character of experienced space and its difference from and its founding relationship to our concept of objective space. Heidegger carried the investigation a few steps farther, but it was Merleau-Ponty who recognized what Husserl had already seen but Heidegger ignored, namely that lived space is rooted in, and cannot be understood apart from, the lived body. This recognition has widespread implications for phenomenology, as we all know: subjectivity itself must be understood as embodied, and the world is at its most fundamental level an Umwelt: a world of spatial orientation that reveals itself in response to our movements, not just to our perceptual observations.

The phenomenology of lived space, with its emphasis on embodiment, is but one area of investigation that was originally inspired by Husserl and to which many others have made valuable contributions since Husserl’s time,
some closer to and some farther in spirit and style from Husserl’s own work. In more recent times, phenomenologists have looked at space in a broader context. Edward Casey’s books *Getting Back Into Place*¹ and *The Fate of Place*,² and Anthony Steinbock’s *Home and Beyond*,³ are particularly striking examples. The works of these two philosophers are very different in style and content (in spite of the teacher-student relation between the two authors), and I may be doing a disservice to the particular originality of each by bringing them under one heading. But I think it can be said that they both seek to extend the notion of lived space into the intersubjective, social and especially the cultural realms.

Casey’s distinction between space and place, which serves as the conceptual foundation for his wide-ranging work, is introduced by saying that “we don’t live in ‘space’, . . . instead, we live in places.”⁴ Like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty he puts the emphasis on the lived; but it must be noted that the subject here is not I but We. Most phenomenological discussions of lived space, linked as they are to the body, have tended to center on the individual. Many follow Husserl’s practice of speaking in the first person singular. Though he includes a discussion of embodiment, Casey’s work is from the start intersubjective in character. Place is the lived space not primarily of individuals but of groups; subjectivity is still embodied but is also plural. The life that is lived in this context is the life that we live together, and it is in our place that we do this.

Steinbock, whose work is much more closely tied to Husserl’s than Casey’s is, moves right away to the intersubjective dimension of phenomenology, and from there to Husserl’s distinction between *Heimwelt* and *Fremdwelt*. With its focus on the home/alien distinction and on such notions as terrain and territory, Steinbock’s work can be seen primarily, though certainly not only, as a phenomenology of social and cultural space, the lived space that is lived not just by the individual but by the group or community.

II. Lived Space, Lived Time

Husserl also introduced us to the distinction between objective time and lived time. Again, the phenomenological reduction plays a crucial role. Indeed, his bracketing of objective time, in the early lectures on the

---

⁴ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, op. cit., xiii.
phenomenology of internal time-consciousness, is regarded by some scholars as the first more or less explicit formulation of the reduction. Husserl invites us to consider our experience of time, and time as experienced, but again, not in order to contrast it with or explain it by reference to time-as-it-really-is. Rather than simply taking objective time for granted, which would force us to integrate experienced time into it, Husserl’s phenomenology seeks to show how objective time arises out of our experience. Temporal differences and dimensions are first of all elements of our experience, and can be described in terms of our experience. Husserl seeks what he calls the “origin” of time, but what he means by this is not some temporal origin (which would again presuppose objective time), but rather the directly given or originär encounter with time. We often seek to represent time, usually by drawing a line; but in doing so we re-present something that has been presented beforehand in experience. It is this direct encounter with time that Husserl seeks to describe in his lectures. Here we find Husserl the phenomenologist at his most brilliant, introducing some of his most striking concepts, such as the comet-tail, the triad of impression-retention-protention, and the distinction between retention and recollection.

Like his phenomenology of lived space, Husserl’s phenomenology of lived time has prepared the way for a whole new approach to time in 20th century Western philosophy, especially after it was appropriated by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*. French philosophy, especially in Levinas and Ricoeur, has added new dimensions to the phenomenology of time which take us far beyond the investigations of both Husserl and Heidegger, even though it remains indebted to them. What I do not see in this development, however, is the kind of extension of the phenomenology of time which would correspond to the expanded phenomenology of space carried out by Casey and Steinbock. How can we move from lived time to cultural time? In what sense, if any, would such a move be parallel to the phenomenology of cultural space?

Before I move directly to this topic, I will say a few words about the connection between time and space as they are treated phenomenologically. As you know, Husserl initially sought to exclude space from his analysis of time, directing us to ignore the spatiality of sound, for example (the fact that the tone emanates from a violin over there across the room), and treat it as a pure sense datum. Recall too that in these same years, Henri Bergson was warning against the tendency to think of time in spatial terms. But the reader of Husserl’s lectures is struck by the fact that from the very start he depends very heavily on spatial terminology, spatial metaphors, and spatial comparisons to carry out his description. Just as I do not experience pure space but things in space, so I experience time through what he calls “temporal objects,” (melodies and the like). As I hear the melody tone by

---

tone, it is as if I were seeing the same thing from different points of view. Thus the temporal object, like the spatial thing, has its internal horizons as well as its external horizons. In general, the concepts of foreground and background, interpreted temporally rather than spatially, play a large role in Husserl’s lectures, and the foreshortening effect of spatial distance from the observer is said to have its counterpart in the experience of time. Starting from the now rather than the here, there seems to be something like a “temporal field,” comparable to the spatial field, spreading out around me. And Husserl comes up with his famous “diagram of time” which is, of course, a spatial representation.

It should be clear that the space to which Husserl appeals for these comparisons and metaphors is not objective space—which is what Bergson was worried about—but precisely the lived space to which his own phenomenological analyses, in these same years, were devoted. In part this appeal derives from the ordinary language of time, where we constantly use terms like long and short, near and far, distance, segments of time, etc. But there is also a lack of terminology at certain crucial junctures (“for all this,” Husserl writes in frustration at a particularly important point in his manuscript, “we lack names”), which sends him in search of metaphors, something he does with a certain amount of distaste. But above all this mixture attests to the fact that these two dimensions of experience cannot be separated, except abstractly, whereas what we are trying to capture is the precisely the concrete.

The parallelism of lived space and lived time leads us to the very heart of subjectivity itself. Just as the spatial “here” is absolute, representing the “zero-point of orientation” around which all of space arranges itself, no matter where I am, so the “now” is absolute as well, the “place,” as it were, where I am always located, even though the content of the now is always changing. Just as the space of my surroundings extends indefinitely in all directions, so time, with its two-fold horizon, extends indefinitely into the past and the future. Opposed to the here is the there; to the now the then. The present, which is both spatial and temporal, stands out against its background: the absent, in the case of space, the past and future, in the case of time.

III. The Universal Now

If we seek now to extend the phenomenology of lived time from the subjective to the intersubjective and thence to the cultural, we may, like Husserl, expect to find useful parallels with lived space. But at a crucial point the parallel seems to break down.

For Husserl and many of his successors, the phenomenology of space is the entrance gate to alterity and intersubjectivity. Husserl’s attempts to deal

---

6 Ibid., 79.
with the experience of the other subject, in the Fifth Meditation and elsewhere, are firmly grounded in his phenomenology of spatial perception. If the *here* is my permanent and absolute location as a perceiver, the *there* is the location of the other, a place in my environment where, in the strict sense, I can never be. The there-ness of the other both instantiates and symbolizes the otherness of the alter ego: it is the concrete manifestation of the fact that to experience the other is to have before me a subjectivity which is not my own, a point of view on the world which in principle I cannot occupy. Most phenomenologists reject the Levinasian view that this otherness shows us the limits of intentionality and ultimately of phenomenology itself. This view seems based on the mistaken assumption, common throughout the history of epistemology, that in order to experience and know something I have to become that thing, or it has to become me, thus obliterating the distinction between me and the object, or reducing the other to the same. But this is just the mistake that the concept of intentionality is designed to overcome. The irreducible otherness and thereness of the other person is precisely the sense the other person has in my world. That sense does not make the other inaccessible, any more than the appearance of a thing is a barrier, a second thing, standing between me and the thing-in-self. Rather, that sense is my access, which reveals the other to me even if my access is limited.

Those limits are set aside, though they are never completely overcome, where ego and alter constitute a community, however small, however fleeting. Existing not somehow above or apart from, but through the individuals that make them up, communities can be seen as “personalities of a higher order,” as Husserl calls them. Here subjectivity, as conceived phenomenologically, once again demonstrates its flexibility: just as it must be embodied in the context of individual perception, here it becomes plural, and the first-person singular is replaced by the we-subject. But more than that: this we-subject exists in relation to a common world, or rather, common surroundings. It is not merely the subject that becomes plural: remarkably, the here and the there become plural as well. No less absolute for being intersubjective, the *here* is now the place of the community, the territory of our communal life; it is where we live. The *there* now represents not the individual but the communal other. By this means we arrive at the distinction between the homeworld and the alien world. Thus in the intersubjective as in the subjective sphere, space has a dual role: it provides the access to the other even as it reveals the otherness of the other. By setting up the limits between me (or us) and the other, it constitutes the sense the other has for me or us.

But if we look now for something parallel in the sphere of time, a curious disparity seems to open up. Whereas the absolute *here* separates me from you, us from them, the absolute *now* seems not to function in this way. *I* am (*we* are) always here, *you* are always there. *I* am always now, but . . . so are

---

you. There is something odd about saying, in parallel to the “I am here,” “I am now.” We would be more inclined to say “it is now,” and this “it” seems to signal the utter, absolute, impartial universality of time. Time, as we might say, is no respecter of persons; it is not linked to a point of view. The here, we might say, can be shared by the members of a community, but not by everyone. The community must define itself by reference to the others, and likewise the here must define itself by reference to the there. But the now, it seems, is in principle shared, not just by you and me, us and them, but by everybody everywhere, even those who don’t figure at all in the cultural geography of the here and the there.

What are we to make of this apparent disparity? Does it signal a radical difference between time and space, in spite of their interwovenness and in spite of the many parallels we can find between them? Perhaps time is the dimension of human existence that is destined not to divide us, as space does, but to unite us all, to bring home to us our oneness with all mankind. Just think for a moment of all the billions of people we have never seen, in places we will never know, who are nevertheless united with us by this one bond: we are all now, we all share the absolute center of time. One phenomenologist who tried to grapple with the intersubjective dimension of time, Alfred Schutz, found a striking expression for this shared dimension: “we grow older together.” But if time, construed in this way, signals no difference between me and the other, it also seems to have no role in my access to the other. On this view of time, I share the now not only with those near and far, friend and foe, but also with others to whom I have no concrete relation whatsoever, of whose existence I know only by hearsay, who are, for me, little more than an abstract idea.

IV. Time and the Other

Now I want to argue that the discrepancy we have just been discussing between space and time is merely apparent, and that if we accept it our phenomenology of lived time and culture will have taken a wrong turn. The discrepancy, it seems to me, is the result of a mistake that often creeps into phenomenological discussions when we forget the distinction between the lived and the objective. We are misled partly by our ways of speaking, but also by the great strength of the hold that the objective prejudice has on our thinking. We share the absolute and universal now with everyone and everything in the universe in the same sense that we share universal and objective space with everyone and everything. That is something we know, but it not something we experience. In the case of space, that is a sense of

---

sharing that precisely overlooks the differences that phenomenology is supposed to attend to: difference of perspective, differences of point of view.

What we have to remind ourselves is that the phenomenological *now* is not an abstract point on a scale, whether as one of an endless sequence of numbered *t’s* or as points on the circular face of the clock. These are ways of representing time, not ways of experiencing it. In experience, what is *now* is the event I am actually living through. To repeat what we said before, I experience time by experiencing what Husserl calls “temporal objects,” that is, by participating in events that exist by taking time. Like the paradigmatic melody, to be what they are they must unfold in time, and to experience them I must grasp their unfolding. On Husserl’s analysis, this means that the *now* is given against the background of the *not-now* which is first of all the *just-past*. This is what Husserl calls retention, and no less important, though Husserl does not devote enough attention to it, is the anticipatory grasp which he calls protention. These are the horizons of temporal experience, and together with the present they make up the temporal field. As with space, this field is not an empty array of abstract points but is occupied by events just as the spatial field is inhabited by things. It is through things and events that I experience space and time.

What this means is that my experience of time is a function of the events that I live through, the events, that is, that are meaningful or significant for me. It is these events, not abstract points on a scale, that are ever receding into an indefinite background and make up the horizon of my past. And it is the events that figure in the immediate sphere of protention or anticipation, and not some abstract empty spaces to be filled in, that make up the horizon of my future. For the individual, events can be meaningful or significant such that I not only live through but also remember them—and here we come to Husserl’s distinction between primary and secondary memory or between retention and recollection. Likewise, future events can be of such importance that I explicitly look forward to or dread them, that I plan for them or seek to avoid them. This is the horizon of “secondary expectation” which is somehow a counterpart of recollection. The point of all this is that these primary and secondary horizons of past and future form the complex background against which the “now” stands out and from which it derives its significance. Like a single note in a melody, the present is nothing by itself; it is what it is thanks to its “place” (a spatial metaphor again) in the melody, its role in the unfolding whole of which it is a part.

If we look at our experience of time in this way we begin to see how we might move from subjective to intersubjective time, from individually lived time to socially or culturally lived time. As an individual, I am engaged in a present that is determined by its place among the events, past and future, of my own life. These are its horizons of retention and protention, horizons of memory and expectation. From the individual point of view you and I do indeed occupy different presents, because we lead different lives, because we
have different pasts and futures, and because the present is for each of us a function of the past and future events which frame it. In this sense your “now” is as much a mark of your otherness and differentness from me as is your spatial “there,” because it is a point of view on a different time, a past and future which are different from mine. In that sense it is a temporal point of view which in principle I can never occupy. It opens out, as it were, onto a different field, and just as I cannot have your perceptions, see the world from your vantage point, so I cannot have your memories or your expectations. To do that I would have to be you. But again, from that fact that I cannot be you it does not follow that I cannot know you. Though I cannot have or share your memories, I can know about them and thus about you. Your very sense as other is the sense that gives me access to you.

V. Local Time, East and West

Thanks to this access, you and I can be members of a community, and this gives us a completely different access to time. Just as the here can be shared, so can the now. But in this case it is defined by the events that we live through together. It is in this sense that we can have a shared past and a common future. With regard to the past, instead of speaking of memory we are more likely to speak of history and tradition. As members of a community, individuals participate in a temporality that reaches beyond their own experience, extending into the past before their births and into the future after their deaths. And so it is that the temporal field of subjective lived time opens out onto a larger field of social and cultural lived time. What we do and suffer together, the events we live through and the actions we perform, stand out from and get their sense from the larger cultural horizons of past and future. The time we experience is not universal time, it is our time—local time. That is, it is linked to our place.

Here the spatial duality of the here and the there, as it is extended into the social and cultural spheres, has its counterpart in the temporal differences of past and future. The otherness of an alien culture is at least in part a function of its having a different past and a different future. But this difference, in both space and time, is more than just a factual difference. Different communities, understood as different points of view on the world, also have different ways of construing or structuring space and time generally. One of the many merits of Casey’s work lies in showing different ways of according significance to space—different attitudes toward bodily space, differences between sacred and profane sites, between the settled and the wild, between surrounding nature as habitation or adversary to be tamed, etc. In the same way we can discern different attitudes toward time. Even personal time may differ according to cultures, or indeed the distinction between private and public time. There are shared attitudes toward the speed or slowness of time, and even toward the measurement of time and the
importance of objective time itself. Here I am thinking of attitudes toward punctuality and the meanings of expressions like “a little while” or “a long time” in different cultures. Certain English expressions (and Heidegger has dealt with German equivalents) treat time as a commodity or currency: we spend it, borrow it, save it, lose it, waste it, earn it, gain it. Clearly these suggest rich possibilities for anthropological and sociological empirical research. The best phenomenology can do is indicate broad structural differences.

Clearly time is experienced in the ways we divide it up, the manner in which we structure it in terms of events and the patterns of events. What is our relation to our own past? As we experience the cultural present becoming the cultural past, what is more important, sameness or difference, continuity or change? This is the place to consider the well-worn distinction between cyclical and linear conceptions of time. Time is change; but is change significant or insignificant? Does the present differ from the past or only repeat it, to be itself repeated again in the future? Is cultural life centered in the rituals of commemoration, which suppress difference and elevate the same, or does culture celebrate change? A linear conception of time is often thought of as a narrative or a historical conception, but this can in turn be construed in different ways. Our cultural community can be seen as advancing from its originating foundation toward the fulfillment of a set of ideals in the future, or as a steady decline from a past golden age. Is civilization progressive, somehow inclining toward triumph over adversity, or is it heading downhill toward some ultimate catastrophe?

It is a cliché when speaking of temporality and historicity to associate the linear, narrative or historical conception of time with the West and the Judeo-Christian tradition in particular. By contrast, even the Greek worldview shares the supposedly cyclical form with traditional East and South Asian cultures. Actually, the picture is much more complicated than this. The cycles of nature and the seasons are important in any culture. And consider the cultural importance of the sequence of generations, which is cyclical in the sense that children become parents, who in turn have children, etc. Nor should one think that the cyclical in the West is restricted to the cultural significance of nature. It is certainly possible to find cyclical elements in the Christian and Jewish calendars, not only in the cycle of liturgical seasons but also in the form of ritual commemorations conceived as repetitions of sacred events. Thus cyclical features have traditionally played an important part in the Western structuring of cultural time.

It is true, however, that in the West there is an underlying chronological sequence represented by the reckoning of the Christian era. This was reflected in the ancient tradition of annals and chronicles. Laid over this is the practice of naming eras after the kings, princes and emperors who ruled over them. From this we can distinguish in turn the kind of periodization which
results from explicitly historical reflection, and which results in such terms as middle ages, renaissance, enlightenment, etc.

According to the work of Masayuki Sato, in China as in Japan the system of era names or dynastic periodization, discontinued in China after the 1911 revolution, was in nature not radically different from the era names traditionally used in Europe in connection with annals and chronicles. Both are ways of compartmentalizing or structuring the flow of time with reference to political and social realities. The difference lay in the absence in East Asia of an underlying chronological sequence. Political and social history was not superimposed on chronology but rather on the traditional sexagesimal or sixty year cycles. This means that what lay at the root of temporality was not a linear sequence but a system of recurrent time.

VI. Conclusion: Cultural Time and the Contemporary World

These cultural differences do indeed suggest importantly different ways of construing the passage of time. Several remarks must be made about this brief comparison, however.

First, it should be noted that the Christian era is not merely a chronological reckoning, but is itself an era name derived not from a secular but from a divine ruler. It is true that in many cultures rulers have considered themselves and been considered divine, and their relation to the naming of eras has something to do with their divinity. In this sense the Christian conception conforms to a familiar pattern, even though there are again important differences.

Second, and this is a related question, to what extent do or can these cultural differences survive in the contemporary world? Changes in the last 150 years in commerce, travel, and communication have brought the need for world-wide agreement on time-reckoning, including the idea of the so-called “common era.” This bit of political correctness is designed to cover over the fact that the common standard is in fact the Christian era of the West. This fact was largely forgotten in the West, except perhaps in Rome, in the celebrations of the “millennial” year 2000, and my impression is that many non-Westerners around the world forgot it, too. China, of course, has been officially governed in the 20th century by the Marxist idea of history, that most Western and most 19th century of conceptions. And no discussion of time and culture should overlook the cultural revolution in China, which was in part an attempt to completely deny the significance of the past. This attitude is in sharp contrast to contemporary China, where the antiquity of Chinese culture and language are apparently a matter of great public significance, leading to heated debates about the archeological evidence for

---