



Recovering the Moment

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Abstract

*What is a moment? While Heidegger considers the moment (*Augenblick*) hermeneutically in the first division of Being and Time, he abandons the thoroughly hermeneutic account in an ecstatic analysis of time in the second. In this paper, I explore the moment in the direction of hermeneutic temporality and finite comprehensibility. I begin by describing how Heidegger's ecstatic analysis by its very nature forecloses the possibility of the average, everyday constitution of the moment. I then attempt a broader recovery of hermeneutic temporality, specifically instantiated in Gadamer's temporality of the festival. In so doing, I hope to re-establish the *Augenblick* as the moment of finite comprehensibility.*

Introduction: The Beginning Moment

What *is* a moment? The answer would seem obvious: A moment, like a second, or an hour, is a measurable period, instance or unit of time. But if a moment is a measurable period or instance of time, how long is it, precisely? A second is exactly 1/60th of a minute, a length determined by the periodicity of the radiation of a caesium-133 atom. A minute is 1/60th of an hour, of which there are 24 in a day, with the day itself determined by the rotation of celestial bodies. What is a moment's objectively-determined span, then? Precisely what makes a moment a moment, in the first place, is that it lacks any objective measurement independent of human experience. But tying a moment's non-duration to the subjectivity of an individual human is tantamount to saying that it has no such measure at all. What, then, is an immeasurable period?

At least in the context of moments as they appear in human experience, I think the answer lies in following Heidegger and, on abandoning the narrow typology of “calendar time”, turning instead to a sense of time as a lived-in phenomenon. Heidegger's solution for a phenomenological temporality, however, is an ecstatic analysis that plunges the human experience of time into

a transcendental quandary. Missing from Heidegger's account of time and temporality is an explanation for what it is like to experience the uncanny feeling where a moment discloses itself to us *as* a moment. What we require, therefore, is a hermeneutic exploration of the moment as it is experienced. By utilizing the practical and practice-oriented phenomenology of Hans-Georg Gadamer, I attempt such an exploration in this paper. The purpose of this paper is to recover the average everyday, lived-in character of the moment.

Method: Gadamer's Phenomenology

Ricoeur (1987) famously notes that the development of phenomenology is heretical. Indeed, the history of phenomenology is the history of deviations from Husserl's original methodology, each adherent claiming to detail and overcome the various theoretical and methodological inconsistencies in Husserl's original enterprise. Heidegger ostensibly overcomes Husserl's erroneous subjectivizing; Sartre the isolation of the transcendental ego, placing the “I” into contact with others. As variability constitutes the historical trajectory of phenomenology, it seems profitable to attest my fealties now, at the outset, such that one need not read the philosophical tea leaves to determine their level of

agreement with my methodology.

In this paper, I follow a lineage of thinking that considers phenomenology's prime directive to be delineating the necessary hermeneutic – that is, expressly interpretative – conditions of human meaningfulness and intelligibility. In this sense, Gadamer is, despite the consternation that often surrounds discussions as to whether his work is phenomenological, perhaps the most phenomenological phenomenologist of all. Despite being a student of both Husserl and (primarily) Heidegger, Gadamer abandons the methodological formalism of phenomenology in favour of a practical and practice-oriented hermeneutical phenomenology of everyday dialogue. Although he presupposes and makes use of Husserlian and Heideggerian concepts such as *Lebenswelt* and horizontality, he largely renounces methodologism in general. Gadamer's phenomenology, according to Dostal (2002), "abjures the absolute, does not have a place for a transcendental ego, does not provide a treatment of philosophical method (*Methodenlehre*) except indirectly, and does not work toward a final foundation (*Letztbegründung*)" (p. 252). Gadamer instead frames phenomenology as a practical and reflective method – as something that shows up as a feature embedded in human experience, rather than a structure imposed on it. The generative and evocative power of this phenomenology derives from its textured portrayals of concrete human phenomena. The concern, here, is tilted towards the seemingly mundane and banal trivialities of everyday human life, over and above philosophical questions concerning indubitable knowledge or the conditions of possibility of phenomenological understanding.

It is precisely this approach that I attempt to emulate in this paper, intending to expose the heuristic worth inhering in the everyday experiences of the moment. In so doing, I adopt the general thrust of Gadamer's phenomenological approach: one of privileging the pursuit of the mundane over the apodictic, while still making use of properly phenomenological tools and concepts where appropriate.

The Moment

The human life is lived in moments: The moment you read this sentence; the moments immediately preceding and following it; the moment of elation in a congratulatory hug, or the moment of grief in a deep loss. In fact, our most basic reflections occur in the seeming discreteness of moments. Try to recall a vivid personal experience. What emerges in your recollection? The visual milieu, the swirling aromas, the emotional current running through your body. What is almost certainly missing – unless time itself is the object of your recollection – is a distinct sense of time's advancement. Perhaps a feeling toward time itself exists in your memory (for instance, that it was slow, or fast), but gaining purchase on its transitive procession is elusive.

Time in our memories seeps and congeals, and so the prismatic clarity of our memories occurs against the background of a temporal stasis. Or, at least, time presents in our memories with an amorphousness at odds with the portrait of time as a transitive phenomenon provided above. While we may conceptualize moments as separate and distinct manifestations of an objective time, our reflections suggest that they are interminably linked. Or perhaps are not separable to begin with?

The moment is fascinating because it is simultaneously nebulous and determinate: it is a literal no-thing, and yet it slips into and shapes our experiences and the language we use to describe them. For example, we do not describe a deep and felt sense of connection with another person as "having a second". Nor do we describe becoming "lost in the hour", or "needing fifteen seconds to myself". Even in instances where we use ostensibly specific measures of time to describe an experience, we seem to gesture to a psychological, rather than temporal, phenomenon: when we "need a second", we really require a break or an emotional wind-down. The time involved in this break is not pre-determined (as a second is) and is only relevant to the extent that it positively shifts our disposition. The vernacular betrays the moment's pride of place, suggesting that it enjoys an experiential privilege in our lives that strict measures of time do not. The etymology of the moment, perhaps, also speaks of this preference: *moment* is the Latin root of *momentum*, that which carries something forward – its essential impetus or impulse. In Medieval philosophy, moment is synonymous with the *sine qua non*, the condition without which something cannot be. What would a human life be without moments? Is a human life comprehensible without them?

Recognizing that the moment is essential to human experience is a partial victory, however. The challenge remains to explicate the moment's phenomenology in a way that renders it conceptually useful. To that end, we return to the question that opens this paper: what is a moment? As a first step along the path, might we consider that the moment is not – at least in the commonly understood (and so, scientific) sense – temporal? Perhaps the moment is rather a signpost to something else; a signification that points to the psychologically relevant function of time, rather than time or temporality itself. Specifically, the moment may be the mechanism for time's most indelible feature: making the world intelligible for us. Here, the moment ceases to be the sharp demarcation of an objective time and instead emerges as a sense in which humans are made aware of their ability for sense.

Heidegger, of course, devotes a substantial portion of *Being and Time* to discussing something like the moment as it is described here. I will want to say, however, that Heidegger's commitment to an ecstatic temporality compels him to view the moment as liminal. In his

pursuit of a foundational ontology conditioned on the *ek-stasis* of the *Augenblick* (Heidegger's term for the moment, and the term I will use to differentiate it from the moment considered here), Heidegger destroys what I think is the deeper hermeneutic and experiential relevance of the moment. Given the potential contamination between Heidegger's *Augenblick* and the moment described here, it is worth briefly considering how Heidegger conceives of the former. Describing the ways in which the moment in this paper differs from Heidegger's *Augenblick* will also advance our answer as to what, precisely, a moment is.

Der Augenblick and the Moment

Prior to the shifting of his focus in the post-war period, time and temporality figure prominently in Heidegger's work. Specifically, Heidegger militates against the "ordinary" or "vulgar" conception of time as an eternal procession, a thing caught up in "dating", or "calendrical time-reckoning" (1927/2010, p. 412). He notes, for example, that "[time is not the] ... vulgar ... succession of constantly 'present' ['vorhanden'] nows that pass away and arrive at the same time" (p. 412). Instead, time for Heidegger is an expressly hermeneutic enterprise; that is, time's function is to *mean* for us. By resisting the entitative characterization of vulgar time as a physico-mathematical property, delineable into discrete and successive units, we instead consider time as a sense that conglomerates these units into a unified field of experience, that is, into temporality. Temporality is here explicitly thematic: *Temporalität* makes timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*), an ontic determination of Dasein, appropriately ontological as "the condition of possibility for the understanding of being and of ontology as such" (1967/1998, p. 228). For Heidegger, time is thus not occurrent, but operant: it "temporalizes" (1925/1992, p. 410).

The "vulgar" or "ordinary" conception of time that temporality temporalizes is a problem for phenomenology, according to Heidegger, because it precludes the effectively interpretative relationship between time and the human Dasein in its infinity. Our very finite confrontation with time is precisely what designates us as human, as finitude constellates the manifold possibilities that fashion a human life as distinctly human. All our temporal engagements distinguish themselves as such because they are backgrounded by the possibility of our non-existence; a notion we instantiate in a broad range of colloquialisms, each of which captures the impermanence of a human life ("here today, gone tomorrow", "time is money", "times flies", "no time like the present", and so on). And so, an eternal conception of time – considering time as a material infinity – is "meaningless" (1925/1992, p. 21) because temporality functions first and most of all for Dasein:

... time temporalizes itself only as long as there are human beings. There is no time in which

there were no human beings, not because there are human beings from all eternity and for all eternity, but because time is not eternity, and time always temporalizes itself only at one time, as human, historical Dasein. (1953/2000, p. 89)

Insofar as I see the human-historical – and so, decidedly hermeneutic – function of time, I also see myself as the for-the-sake-of-which that time operates. In this sketch of time, if there is "no Dasein" there is "no time" (Blattner, 2007, p. 12).

So far, Heidegger's portrait of time aims in the general direction we are pursuing: the moment as a descriptor of time, or something that reveals time's functions to and for us. Unfortunately, Heidegger's hermeneutical analysis of temporality serves an ontological master. To the extent that Heidegger recognizes the essentially hermeneutic constitution of everyday time, he does so only to demonstrate how that everyday time is and must be transcended in what he deems authentic temporality. Heidegger begins cutting against the concept of time as a hermeneutic distillation in §65 of *Being and Time* (1927/2010). It is here that he introduces *Augenblick* as the literal moment-in-time that allows us to transcend our own history and view the authentic and primordial time that is temporality's ontological ground.

Heidegger's pivot from hermeneutics to an ecstatic thesis begins with the primacy Heidegger affords to the not-yet (being-ahead-of-itself) in temporality. The future is "*the primary phenomenon of ... authentic temporality*" (1927/2010, p. 314) because it is where one travels to grasp one's death as "that possibility which is one's ownmost" (p. 294). Even though the Heraclitean nature of death – when it is present, we are not; and when we are present, it is not – prevents us from ever directly experiencing death, we can recognize death's fundamental operation: to individualize and totalize us. Death is not a physiological process, in this sense, but the termination of the manifold of possibilities whose opening characterizes one's life. Hence, if we confront the "possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all" (p. 307), we produce the "resolute existentiell understanding of nullity" (p. 315) as the possibility that is most authentically ours.

Enter the *Augenblick*. In Heidegger's futurally-oriented temporal schema, the *Augenblick* is the *ek-stasis* (Ἐκστασις, "to stand outside oneself") in which we step outside of ourselves as hermeneutically-constituted by the finite, lived-in world of everyday things and render ourselves visible – here Heidegger's perceptual metaphor derives from Kierkegaard's moment-of-insight – on time's (now) infinitely transcendental horizon. "In resoluteness," Heidegger says,

the present is not only brought back from its dispersion in what is taken care of closest at

hand, but is held in the future and having-been. We call the *present* that is held in authentic temporality, and is thus *authentic*, the *Moment* [*Augenblick*]. (1927/2010, p. 338)

Notice the operative term: “brought back.” Where was the present? Bound up in the finite sense of meaning as taking care of everyday things, that is, “ensnared in our everydayness” (Krell, 2015, loc. 570-571). Where is it *brought to*? The transcendental *a priori* temporality of the future.

According to Heidegger, the cost of an “authentic resolute” grasp of our ownmost possibility (our own finality, a phenomenological death) is retroactively destroying the hermeneutic constitution of time as the finite horizon of involvement in everyday things. The reality of an everyday time, acknowledged in our everyday involvements in the world, is here relinquished by virtue of the more originary time: a temporal river, flowing beneath our quotidian time engagements, and reached in the “rupture” (Krell, 1991, loc. 1171) of the *Augenblick*. For Heidegger, the moment’s sole purpose is initiating the transcendence of everyday time into the supposed primordiality (*a priori* temporality) that infrastructures it.

I reject this view of the *Augenblick* for three reasons. The first reason is that this view of the moment is effectively incomprehensible. How does the dismissed, finite, inauthentic “now” in which we live our lives spit out the authentic, infinite temporality whose unity retroactively transforms the inauthentic moment to present us with that supposedly *a priori* authenticity? In other words: how can a fundamentally finite experience of time – as any human experience of time must necessarily be – itself be *a priori* infinite? Derrida launches a critique in this vein in “Ousia and Grammē”, noting that

... perhaps there is no “vulgar concept of time”. The concept of time, in all its aspects, belongs to metaphysics, and it names the domination of presence ... that an other concept of time cannot be opposed to it, since time in general belongs to metaphysical conceptuality. In attempting to produce this other concept, one rapidly would come to see that it is constructed out of other metaphysical or ontotheological predicates. (1972/1982, p. 63)

Although I diverge from Derrida in the possible conceptions of time, he is correct in asserting that Heidegger inevitably and implicitly turns a “metaphysical predicate” to rescue time from what he feels is its dissipation in instrumentality. (Specifically, Heidegger acquiesces to the Kantian schematism of a transcendental temporality.)

The second reason is that Heidegger’s ecstatic conception of the moment – as can be said for his ecstatic analysis of temporality – leaves no room for the other. As Sartre notes in the section on “The Existence of Others” in *Being and Nothingness*, Heidegger’s militant obsession with Dasein’s self-resolution renders both the existence and the alterity of the other inconceivable (1943/1984, p. 334). Heidegger’s Dasein – even with *Mitsein* (being-with) as one of its characteristic modes – is indeed a solitary figure. The moral call to authenticity and resoluteness, after all, is to grasp the ultimate “mineness” of authentic temporality in the *Augenblick*. If Heidegger’s position is that temporality functions first and most of all for me, insofar as I see this function, I also conceal (*verborgen*) all the instances in which moments are not mine alone. And time, for Heidegger, is of course not automatically authentic, and therefore not automatically ours: it must become ours by virtue of active efforts we make toward that end. If we must heed the magnetic obligations that Dasein supposedly makes on its world to become authentic, then we foreclose the possibility of – or render automatically inauthentic, and therefore *less than* – moments or experiences which involve others. This fact hardly corresponds with our everyday experience, where others are always either directly involved or indirectly felt in their absence.

The third reason is that Heidegger’s ecstatic misadventure robs from the moment its experiential relevance. In pursuing a temporal ground for his fundamental ontology, Heidegger leaves us bereft of a phenomenology of what it is like to live through a moment and what the philosophical/phenomenological import of that experience might be. Here Heidegger’s perspicacity and technical wizardry is his fatal flaw: rather than submit his temporality to the indignity of existing within the history of metaphysics, Heidegger pushes time to the synthetic precipice. In his ecstatic portrait, we somehow manifest our sense of time from a non-existent, and unaccounted for, exteriority in the diachronic of pure time. Heidegger’s temporality effectively disassembles time’s appearance in our everyday dealings and reassembles it in an ostensibly more ancient transcendental diachrony. In so doing, Heidegger relentlessly denies the felt sense of time or temporality’s experience. Heidegger gives no quarter for the hermeneutic moment in his ecstatic analysis, because Heidegger gives no quarter for a grounded, quotidian experience of time in his analysis. Summing up this same issue in his own exegesis of the *Augenblick*, Krell calls for a recovery of the *Augenblick* in the “direction of everydayness” (2015, loc. 1181):

[Heidegger’s] reference to the *Augenblick*, while crucial to the issue of the finitude of Dasein, does not serve to illuminate the temporal character of the “moment”. It is perhaps [here] that we witness the ultimate failure – actually the default – of the analysis of ecstatic temporality.

It may be a task for contemporary thinking to recover that analysis, to pursue it in the directions of both everydayness and finite existence. For the metabolism of time confronts Dasein in all its quotidian involvements, all the while it is under way to something insurmountable.

In the following section, I attempt that recovery by expanding on Gadamer's (admittedly limited) thoughts on temporality.

Recovering the Moment

In an important way, the moment stresses the relationship between language and lived experience. When describing sharing or having a moment with another, for example, we tend to be tempted to use words like reciprocity or connection to connote the moment's rough contours. But I suspect that these are insufficiently sharp linguistic tools to capture what occurs when we have a moment, share a moment, become lost in the moment, and so on. These instances of the moment seem not to be, paradoxically, mere expressions or forms of connectedness. The term connect implies an intentional severance, regardless of how and to what degree that severance is overcome; and acknowledging this severance leads us on the path that Heidegger took and that we rejected above. As we now know, Heidegger bridges this disconnection by developing an ecstatic analysis of temporality that re-unifies the severed parts of time into a transcendental *a priori*.

To both describe a moment and conserve its everyday presentation, we require a description of the moment that completes, rather than abdicates, the hermeneutic analysis of time-as-meaning that Heidegger begins in the first division of *Being and Time*. Despite Gadamer's steadfast ambivalence regarding the issue of time and temporality, there is a section in *Truth and Method* (1960/1991), "The Temporality of the Aesthetic", that, perhaps, germinates such a properly hermeneutic reorientation of the moment. In this section, Gadamer affects what I consider a profound break from Heidegger's ecstatic temporality, insofar as the former corresponds with the genuine being (*oúσία*) of temporality to the presence (*παρουσία*) of the spectator who observes being's event in, and only in, the present. As the designated observer, the *theoros* (*θεωρός*) is sent either as a functionary of the city-state to the Panhellenic games, or alternatively to the oracle at Delphi to engage in "sacred spectating" and thus to glean "broader perspective" and transmit this knowledge back to the city (Nightingale, 2004, p. 35). In the sacralised observance of religious *theoria* (*θεωρία*) as, for example, in the Mysteries, Plato sees the contemplative model that he will later formalize in the philosophy of the *Phaedrus*. The *theoros* gazes past earthly contingency to recognize the Form of Being, and, so initiated, travels back to the body incarnate to recollect these forms and "contemplate them through

the practice of philosophy" (Nightingale, 2004, p. 87). As Nightingale notes, the contemplative *theoria* is thus a form of temporal recursion, or repetition: once initiated into the Forms, the practising philosopher "undergoes an abiding and continuous initiation in the present".

In this recurring-present of the religious *theoria* Gadamer recognizes the "highly puzzling temporal structure" (1960/1991, p. 126) of the ritualistically repeated festival: the ritual literally re-presents the original incarnation of the salvific event, not in a mere mimesis, but in its reality. In continuous or indefinite *re-present-ation* – the process (*-άττιο*) of making the present new again (*-re*) – the temporality of the festival casts off the "usual experience of temporal succession" as between "present, memory, and expectation" (p. 126) in a radical presentness. The contemplative *theoria* thus unfolds, in each instance of its repetition, the uninhibited re-creation of a "present time *sui generis*" (p. 127). Hence the theoric gaze circumvents the intentional severance of an ecstatic analysis of temporality with the perpetual recursion of the present back into itself. Gadamer critically defines the continuity of this perpetual present as *not* epiphanic (*επιφάνεια*, *Ἐπιφάνεια*) and therefore *not* ecstatic. The theoric event does not burst forth ecstatically into mere historical projection to show (*επι-φάνεια*, "to make show") "some other future or reality behind it" (p. 129) because the spectator is already "*purely present* to what is *truly real*". The present-ness of the event is thus taken as exhibiting an "autonomous circle of meaning" (p. 129): the spectator's sense of temporality does not need a transcendental analytic to re-connect the present to an original temporality, because she is *really there*, in the absolute sense of the present and *nous*. Gadamer expresses the total hermeneutic envelopment of *theoria* in presence by subtly modulating Heidegger's famous neologism: the spectator is a "being there present (*Dabeisein*)", an engrossed passivity who is not, as in Heidegger's formulation of Dasein, merely "being alongside" in presence, but whose very being is determined by it (p. 129).

Gadamer's formulation can be seen as more than merely emphasizing the locative case over the pronomial. Heidegger's turn to an ecstatic, transcendental analytic of time is, in Gadamer's *theoria*, circumvented in appeal to the absorption of spectation in the event of being (*purely present*, *παρουσία*, to what is *really real*). Unlike Heidegger, Gadamer does not see the purely present moment as needing transcendence, for the festival's literal *re-present-ation* recurs what was already taken as real. Not only is the repetition taken as real, but in its pure difference, the re-presentation, in "being only becoming and return", lodges a "radical sense" of temporality:

Thus its own original essence is to always be something different (even if celebrated in the exact same way). An entity that exists only by always being something different is temporal

in a more radical sense than everything that belongs to history. (1960/1991, p. 126)

The moment itself, even though not an entity, displays exactly this incessant difference in its endless becoming itself. The seeming lack of temporal progression that we established in our recollections above, this temporal amorphousness, derives from the moment's perpetual recursion: the moment seems both to be in time and to lack it, because its constant re-generation expresses the present in its purest form. The moment thus erases the "usual experience of temporal succession of ... present, memory, and expectation" (p. 126) and homologizes the very ecstasies whose transcendence Heidegger demands. In its place, the moment exists only in the instantiated now-ness of re-presentation.

At this juncture, I want to note that, while in "The Temporality of the Aesthetic" Gadamer is speaking about the unique temporality of the festival, I think he provides a pathway to connect theoretical contemplation and our everyday immersion in time. Approximately halfway through the section, Gadamer notes the total passivity of *theoros*: "Theoria is ... not something active but passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees" (1960/1991, p. 127). The reference to pathos is crucial, for it re-collects the primitive dimension of θεωρία in the light of θέα (théā, "sight"), as in, before the contemplative transformation, how the θεωρός *sees* the oracle in the way we *see* someone about a matter of concern to us and are "carried away" in that concern. In the original form of θεωρία, *sacral spectating*, the *theoros* thus heeds the call of pathos not, in the context of the pure contemplatiō which θεωρία later becomes, but rather in the sense of pathos's root verb *páskhō* (πασχω), "to undergo an authentic experience". Here Gadamer recalls something like Kierkegaard's existential pathos:

... pathos is not a matter of words, but of permitting this conception to transform the entire existence of the individual. Aesthetic pathos expresses itself in words, and may in truth indicate that the individual leaves his real self in order to lose himself in the Idea; while existential pathos is present whenever the Idea is brought in relation with the existence of the individual so as to transform it. (Kierkegaard, 1846/1971, p. 347)

The *theoros* answers the call of existential transformation (pathos) authentically, and, in so doing, really "transform[s]" his entire existence in being "wholly with something else" (Gadamer, 1960/1991, p. 127). The spectator thus transforms into one who has "no other distinction or function than to *be there*" (p. 127, emphasis added) and one who fades seamlessly into experience. The pathetic *theoria* is here an absorption, *in toto*, where the immediacy of the moment supersedes

the seeming remoteness of time in the fusion of self-forgetting. The moment's effortless transmission of meaning occurs not in the laboured sterility of speculative contemplation, not as the ego's "subjective self-determination", but rather in that, in "attending" to something, one involuntarily gives "oneself in self-forgetfulness" (p. 128).

In our everyday directedness toward the moments in our lives, do we not always and already find ourselves given over to this kind of self-forgetting and hence also given over to this kind of re-presentative temporality? We do not stand guard over our everyday ties – including, most principally, the ties to our own lives – guiding them from start to completion like a teleological parabola; we effortlessly "know our way around" (*Sichverstehen*) (Gadamer, 1960/1991, p. 261) time by virtue of "observing" (theáomai, "I observe") time's reference to our common-sense world. In this way, the hermeneutic of facticity in which we are all involuntarily involved, in its binding to the moment, eliminates the need to ecstatically transcend an everyday time to grasp time's reality. I take Gadamer to mean something like this when he claims that the "reality of time" emerges

with the historical sense, which is strictly speaking the awareness of epochs, of one's own epoch and, in an even more basic way, of the 'pastness' of an epoch: a stopping place in the constant flow of time, the establishment of a 'block of time' consisting of the simultaneous or contemporaneous. (1977/1986, p. 43)

To be aware of the "pastness" of one's epoch is to be aware of the accumulation of moments in an articulated unity of one's personal history (Mootz & Taylor, 2011, p. 127). A human life, as we have already noted, is lived in, through, and marked out by, moments: the moment you learned to ride a bike, or the moment of your first kiss, or the moment your first child was born. Time's infinity self-congeals into historical moments that constitute our understanding of ourselves as embedded within our authentic experience (πασχω) of them. Our most basic association with time is not awareness of its physico-mathematical properties – its duration, its continuity, its direction – but rather its seemingly static deposition in individual moments that we use to mark out its graduation.

Our average everydayness, for Gadamer, is embedded in moments as they are perpetually established on the horizon of what he calls our "contemporaneity" with an event:

Contemporaneity ... means that in its presentation this particular thing that presents itself to us achieves full presence, however remote its origin may be It consists in holding on to the thing in such a way that it becomes "contemporaneous",

which is to say ... that all mediation is superseded in total presence. (1960/1991, p. 129)

In our recognition of ourselves in the moment, we achieve “full presence” insofar as the moment’s self-re-present-ation, like the temporality of the festival, brings “together two moments that are not concurrent, namely one’s present” (p. 129) and the other objective time instances that are re-presented in our experience. In perpetually establishing the contemporaneous in our experience, in other words, the moment “constitutes the essence of ‘being present’” (p. 129). In the moment, all mediation between the disparate nodules of time that concern Heidegger are superseded in the total presence of the pathic immersion of the experiencer in the present-now.

Even though the trace or whisper of both past and future conspire to imbue the moment with its irrevocable continuity, the present-now is the meeting place for lived time in the “contemporaneous”. Our automatic, involuntary, habitual establishment and recognition of meaning in the contemporaneous is what congregates all the seemingly disparate elements of the world into the nexus of meaningfulness – that is, into the moment. A hermeneutical conception of the moment thus allows the phenomenon of meaning to disclose itself. In this disclosure, the moment is neither a container in which time is measured in terms of the rate of change occurring between things, nor the instance of rupture. The moment, rather, is the practical instant in which one might undertake a phenomenology of time as it turns up in its most quotidian form.

Conclusion: The Last Moment

In an expressly hermeneutic rendition, the moment does not treat the en-worlded, en-vironed, historically-existing person as a nuisance to be overcome and replaced. Instead, the moment is a framework for the presentation of life in all its pre-given untidiness – one in which the “uniqueness, finitude, and historicity [of] human *Dasein* [is] recognized not as an instance of an *eidos*, but rather as itself the most real factor of all” (Gadamer, 1963/2008, p. 135). A moment is a snapshot of a human life that seeks to preserve the irrefutable complexities of the human existence from the destruction of ecstatic temporality. Whereas Heidegger shuns the contemporaneous as the vestige of an inauthentic time, we understand that the perpetual

recursion and repetition of the present moment is already a validity for us in each interpretative, dialogical or meaningful circumstance.

And indeed, our most essential relationship to time – the crystallization of moments – unveils our hermeneutical wedding to the world. Moments disclose that our complexion is one of impose, of trespass, of infringement: we cannot unilaterally direct our sense out there to the world, but must accept the creep of the world into us and anoint that creep as constitutive. In our momentality, we simultaneously experience the contents of the lifeworld and the capacity (being-present-there, in the nexus of meaning) that underwrites the way in which that lifeworld appears to us as already interpretable. The moment is a kind of recognition: a recognition of the singular importance of the human presence to imprint meaning onto an otherwise meaningless world.

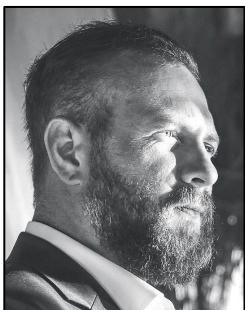
Such a conception links not only with the language we use to describe moments (having, needing, sharing, holding moments) but also the common-sense way these moments appear in the volume of our experience. Think again of the moment you recalled earlier: what stands out is a lightning flash of awareness, the intransigent, unignorable quality of your being there, and there’s intransigent, unignorable quality as being already replete with meaning. Note the effortless, involuntary reception of meaning in this moment; and, more importantly, how the reception of that meaning itself is available as an element of phenomenological investigation. Indeed, the moment becomes *that moment* for us – the one we have, need, share, lose ourselves in, live in, consume – because we subconsciously recognize that the moment reveals us as sensible creatures capable of having it. Recall your preferred moment again; now try to imagine it *without* the overwhelming transmission of meaning that inheres in it. That moment, like the more literal seconds of which your life is constituted, fades into obscurity.

As we make sense of the world, we are reciprocally sense-made – that is, we are shaped and constituted by our ability to encounter an always and already interpretable world. The world is meaningful for us precisely and only because we are in it; and we are meaningful precisely and only because the world is in us. The moment is nothing more than the site on which the meaning-making complementarity of our human life is made transpicuous.

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Kenton Engel is an independent researcher and possesses a Master's degree in Sociology from Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. His academic background is in the sociology of health and qualitative health research generally, most recently attending a PhD Paediatrics programme at the University of Alberta.

Having encountered phenomenology in his senior year of undergraduate studies at Brock University – which provided him with the methodological tools to pursue a research programme focused on the experience of common mental disorders – Kenton is principally interested in applying phenomenological philosophies and techniques in the fields of qualitative health research and ethics. His current research project is a hermeneutic exploration of miscarriage, with an emphasis on the experience indigenous women have of miscarriage and infant death. Upcoming projects include a detailed analysis of the intrinsically phenomenological component of the ethics of qualitative research.

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