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Husserl and Gurwitsch on Horizontal Intentionality: The Gurwitsch Memorial Lecture 2018

In Memory of Lester E. Embree

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Abstract

Gurwitsch is *the* philosopher of consciousness par excellence. This paper presents a systematic exposition of Aron Gurwitsch's main contribution to phenomenology, namely his theory of the 'field of consciousness' with its a priori structure of theme, thematic field, margin (halo and horizon). I present Gurwitsch as an orthodox defender of Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, albeit one who rejected Husserl's reduction to the transcendental ego and Husserl's overt idealism. He maintained with Husserl the priority of consciousness as the source of all meaning and validity but he rejected Husserl's transcendental idealism in favour of a 'levels of existence' approach. Gurwitsch's project was to show the continuity between Gestalt psychology (stripped of its naturalism) and Husserlian eidetics. I explain his concepts of theme, thematic field, margin and horizon as a consistent development of Husserlian thought. I conclude by claiming that neither Gurwitsch nor Husserl fully appreciate how the horizons of an entity can support radical novelty and the application of entirely new contexts.

Keywords

phenomenology – Gestalt – field – margin – horizon – Gurwitsch – Husserl

* "The Gurwitsch Memorial Lecture 2018" delivered to the Society for Phenomenology Existential Philosophy.

1 Introduction: Gurwitsch as a Husserlian Descriptive Phenomenologist

It is a great honor and privilege to be invited to deliver the annual Gurwitsch Memorial lecture for 2018, a series sponsored by CARP since 1981, based on a bequest by Ms. Alice Gurwitsch, the philosopher's widow.¹ This invitation has afforded me the welcome opportunity to read Gurwitsch's work in more detail over the past year.² I am supremely conscious of the fact that there are present in this audience senior philosophers, such as Bill McKenna, who studied directly with Gurwitsch at the New School, but there are many more for whom he is just a name, so I plan to offer a systematic exposition of Gurwitsch's main contribution to phenomenology in this lecture.

Gurwitsch was a singular genius. He is perhaps best known for his theory of the 'field of consciousness' as well as his account of the perceptual noema made famous by Hubert L. Dreyfus (1972) and Dagfinn Føllesdal (1990), and I myself had thought of him primarily as a phenomenological psychologist, and indeed someone who directly inspired Merleau-Ponty, but I had not appreciated how much he was a passionate interpreter and orthodox defender of the mission of Husserl's phenomenology including his accounts of the foundations of logic and mathematics as well as his formal and material ontologies. Basing his interpretation primarily on the limited published texts of Husserl available to him,³ he was able, already in his doctoral dissertation of

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- 1 This paper was originally delivered as the Aron Gurwitsch Memorial Lecture at the 57th Meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Penn State, PA, on Friday 19th October 2018. I am grateful to William McKenna, Tom Nenon, Dan Dahlstrom, James Morley, John Drummond, Marina McCoy, Sebastian Luft, and other members of the audience for their comments. The inaugural Gurwitsch lecture was given by Thomas Seebohm. Subsequent Gurwitsch lecturers have included: Maurice Natanson, Robert Sokolowski, Dagfinn Føllesdal, Hubert L. Dreyfus, Walter Biemel, and David Carr, among many others (See <https://phenomenology-carp.org/about-carp/honors-awards/gurwitsch/> for a full list). For further information on the life of Aron Gurwitsch, see Zaner, 1979, 141–152. I am grateful to Richard Zaner for the biographical details as presented in his Gurwitsch Memorial Lecture, 'The Phenomenon of Vulnerability in Clinical Encounters: Aron Gurwitsch's Understanding of Context and Moral Experience', SPEP, Salt Lake City, October 21, 2005.
 - 2 I am conscious of the fact that I omitted a chapter on Aron Gurwitsch in my *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York & London: Routledge, 2000) and this essay is partly intended to remedy this regrettable omission.
 - 3 Gurwitsch was self-taught in phenomenology. He read Husserl's texts published in his lifetime—*Logical Investigations*, *Ideas I*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and *Méditations Cartésiennes*,—and later, in the 1940s, *Experience and Judgment*. In the 1950s, Gurwitsch read Husserl's *Crisis of European Sciences* (Husserl 1954) and *Ideas II* (Husserl 1952), in the Husserliana volumes edited by his friends Walter and Marly Biemel. Later he read the *Lectures on Time Consciousness*, Husserliana x (Husserl 1962).

1928, to identify the structure of theme, thematic field, margin and horizon in consciousness. Due to the disruption of his life as an emigré, the articulation of these insights took many years culminating in the appearance of *Field of Consciousness*.⁴

What makes Gurwitsch unique, in my view, is his intimate and accurate appreciation of Husserlian phenomenology welded to his first-hand expert knowledge of Gestalt psychology (although Gurwitsch believed, as he put it in *Field of Consciousness* (Gurwitsch 2010), that as a natural science, the “explanatory phase of empirical and even Gestalt psychology had no relevance for phenomenology,” (p. 166)). For Gurwitsch (2010), Gestalt psychology (e.g. Köhler) agrees with Husserlian phenomenology concerning the role of psychology—once stripped of its naturalistic assumptions (p. 164).

Like Husserl, Gurwitsch sought to “work at the foundations.”⁵ Moreover, Gurwitsch (2010) very much saw himself as *doing* phenomenology rather than theorizing *about* phenomenology: “My point of view is that of the phenomenologist at work, not of an observer of a methodology from without” (p. vii). Like Merleau-Ponty, whom he personally influenced greatly, he had a unique capacity to identify salient themes in Husserl that had not been sufficiently noticed by his followers, especially horizon-intentionality, as we shall see. Furthermore, he remained a descriptive phenomenologist throughout his career, and even remonstrated with Marvin Farber about the latter’s turn against Husserlian phenomenology and complained about the direction the journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* was going in under Farber’s editorship (Grathoff, 1989, p. 146).

Throughout his life, Gurwitsch was also reading about contemporary mathematics (he was a mathematics professor for much of his time at Brandeis and Harvard), logic—Russell, Whitehead, etc.—as well as scientific psychology, and he really made an effort to develop a Husserlian approach to the foundations of logic. He was puzzled by sentences such as ‘the sum of 3 angles of a triangle is equal to the color red’. With Husserl, he believed these were ‘senseless’ (*sinnlos*) and not simply false. Gurwitsch’s favorite example is working through a mathematical or logical problem. The proposition we are focusing on is our theme but it points towards another one. A chain of arguments and implications becomes visible. The theme unfolds in a ‘meaning-field’ (Gurwitsch, 2010, p. 317).

4 Gurwitsch’s *Field of Consciousness* was first published as *Théorie du champ de la conscience* in the French translation of Michel Butor (1957), a French writer who studied philosophy under Gaston Bachelard. The French publication was reviewed by Maurice Natanson, *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 68, No. 4 (Oct., 1959), pp. 536–538, and by Ludwig Landgrebe in *Philosophische Rundschau* Vol. 8, No. 4 (1960), pp. 289–307.

5 A remark from Husserl to Gurwitsch, quoted by J. Claude Evans (Evans & Stufflebeam, 1997, p. vii).

Interestingly, Gurwitsch says, commenting on Husserl that technically there is no unified ‘mathematical attitude’ as such (Gurwitsch, 2009, p. 232). Different mathematical problems have different themes, fields and horizons. Different mathematical problems have their own specific themes and fields. There is no specifically mathematical ‘field’ as such to be traversed.

Aron Gurwitsch (1901–1973) was born in Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania, into a well-off Jewish family. His father was a lumber trader, but, within a few years (1905–1906) of his birth, the family had to relocate to Danzig (then in Germany up to 1919, later an independent principality, now Gdansk, in Poland) to avoid the pogroms sweeping Lithuania.⁶ As a Russian citizen residing in Germany, Gurwitsch was classified as an enemy alien during World War I (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 41). Gurwitsch entered the University of Berlin in 1919, where he took classes in philosophy and psychology under Carl Stumpf. On the recommendation of Stumpf, after two years in Berlin, Aron Gurwitsch travelled to attend Edmund Husserl’s lectures at the University of Freiburg in 1920 and 1921 (possibly 1922 also), but, as a stateless person, he could not register for a degree there (Schuhmann, 1977, pp. 237 and 264). Gurwitsch later wrote in his Introduction to *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* about the impact of his encounter with Husserl:

It was the style of Husserl’s philosophizing, painstaking analytical work on concrete problems and phenomena rather than the opening up of large vistas, that made the young student take the decision to devote his life and work to the continuation and expansion of Husserl’s phenomenology—in a word, to remain a disciple forever, faithful to Husserl’s spirit and general orientation, but at the same time prepared to depart from particular theories if compelled to do so by the nature of the problems and the logic of the theoretical situation.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 42

Gurwitsch was deeply committed to the methodology of descriptive, eidetic phenomenology. His starting point, like Husserl’s, was the noetic-noematic structure of intentionality. As he writes in his 1940 essay “On the Intentionality of Consciousness”: “Consciousness is to be defined as its bearing reference to a sphere of sense, so that to experience an act is the same thing as to actualize a sense” (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 155).

Furthermore, Gurwitsch insists with Husserl that intentionality is not a “natural property of consciousness” since consciousness is radically distinct

⁶ Aron’s father’s business also collapsed and he also ended up in New York where he was reunited with Aron (Grathoff, 1989, p. xx).

from nature (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 124). Thus, in his review of Husserl's *Crisis*, Gurwitsch writes about the essential correlation involved in intentionality: "... the correlation between an object and the multiplicity of its modes of presentation is dominated by a priori laws; it is throughout a matter of essential necessity" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 485).

Following Husserl, Gurwitsch thinks consciousness has primacy as the only way of access to 'sense and being'. Already, in 1932, when still in Germany, he reviewed the *Nachwort* to Husserl's *Ideas* (Gurwitsch, 2010b, pp. 119–127) and quotes affirmingly the idea that consciousness has absolute priority. Two years, in his 1934 article, 'The Place of Psychology in the System of Sciences', written in Paris, he writes that "consciousness is the general medium of constitution ... Nothing can exist or have validity unless we experience it. The claim to objectivity and validity contains a reference to the realm of consciousness, to certain processes of constitution" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 76). As he puts it later in *Field of Consciousness*, consciousness is a unique and privileged realm, "prior to every domain, including the perceptual world" (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 159). Consciousness has unique priority because it is the "medium of access to whatever exists and is valid" (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 160).

Gurwitsch was, however, not especially interested in the transcendental idealism of Husserl, although, already in early essays, he maintains that the phenomenological reduction makes no claims about what exists ("the existential thesis")—either realist or idealist—but instead clarifies the *sense* of existence (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p.121). He therefore regarded the 'idealism' as simply the claim that consciousness has priority. He was never comfortable with Husserl's later prioritization of the transcendental ego. Gurwitsch maintained, in agreement with his dialogue partner Alfred Schutz, the possibility of doing phenomenology within the epoché and the reduction (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 158ff) but without adopting explicitly the transcendental ego. From early on, but especially in his 1941 essay, 'A Non-Egological Conception of Consciousness', first published in Farber's *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (Gurwitsch 1941, pp. 325–338; reprinted Gurwitsch, 2010b, pp. 318–334), Gurwitsch noted that Husserl has an egological conception of consciousness, whereas, he himself, already in his 1929 *Phenomenology of Thematics and of the Pure Ego*, said he favored the approach of the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, "which did not admit an ego different from the empirical one" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 319), over what is later found in *Ideas* I (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 238). For Gurwitsch, as he puts it in 1941, the phenomenological reduction reveals "transcendental consciousness as an a-personal and pre-personal field" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 325).

Gurwitsch accepted the procedures of the suspension of the natural attitude and the reduction. The "ambiguous nature of consciousness", as he put it,

both directedness and object, demands the phenomenological reduction (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 166). Indeed Gurwitsch says: “To perform the phenomenological reduction appears imperative for radical philosophical clarification” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 159). It is the essential reference of objects to acts of consciousness that motivates the reduction (ibid.). He writes: “By the phenomenological reduction, the integration of consciousness into the real world is severed” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 160).

In *Field of Consciousness*, Gurwitsch says that “the program of phenomenology” is “to account for objects as they really are in terms of objects taken for what they are experienced as” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 225). He writes:

Thus the preeminent task of philosophy may be defined as accounting for objects of every type and kind and for every conceivable sense of objectivity in terms of subjectivity, that is, acts of consciousness having experiential and presentational function with respect to these objects.

GURWITSCH, 2010c, p. 159

Phenomenology is furthermore an eidetic science, and eidetic structures are independent of “factual matters and actual experience” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 183). Gurwitsch praises Husserl for recognizing the “a priori of consciousness” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 191); however, he is reluctant to admit the transcendental ego. Furthermore, no matters of fact, no empirical discoveries, can change eidetic discoveries.⁷ Gurwitsch, furthermore, agrees with Gaston Berger in seeing all phenomenological issues as connected with “meaning and signification” (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 177).

2 Gurwitsch: The Philosopher of Consciousness *Par Excellence*

Gurwitsch is above all “a philosopher of consciousness”, as J. N. Mohanty put it (1994). Gurwitsch claims there is no world without consciousness; to attempt to understand the world one must understand consciousness. Gurwitsch writes that “consciousness is the subject matter of phenomenology and even its exclusive subject matter,” but it is consciousness considered under its “presentational function” (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 131). All consciousness is temporal but its inner temporal flow, which Husserl had prioritized, is not itself on its own sufficient to account for the unity of consciousness. Rather, consciousness is a many-part dynamic flowing *whole*, a ‘field’ (*Feld, champ*),

⁷ Shaun Gallagher has recently challenged Gurwitsch’s claim (Gallagher 2004; Gallagher 2005).

which has a remarkable intrinsic unity and a complex, a priori eidetic structure that Gurwitsch will describe.

Consciousness is united into complexes that succeed each other, by the complexes themselves and not by any supervening ego: "What is meant by ego is nothing apart from this united complex", and "[it] derives its unity and its coherence from the very acts that enter into it and constitute it; and it is nothing other than the organized totality of these act" (Gurwitsch, 1941, p. 325). Gurwitsch writes: "The unity of consciousness in no way depends upon the ego; conversely, the latter is rendered possible by the former" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 324). By *Ideas I*, Husserl is positing a pure ego that is not attached to any particular act, but all acts flow from it. Moreover, this ego is not bracketed in the reduction. It is, quoting Husserl's *Ideas I* § 57, a "*sui generis*—not-constituted transcendence—a *transcendence in immanence*" (Husserl 2014, p. 105; Husserl 1977, p. 110). In his 1941 essay Gurwitsch presents Sartre's account in his 'Transcendence of the Ego' approvingly (Sartre 1936/7; 1957). Gurwitsch, therefore, says there is no place in phenomenological doctrine for the 'transcendental ego' (Gurwitsch, 1941, p. 328). Conscious acts are aware of themselves and hence an ego arises. The ego for Gurwitsch is a synthetic unity of dispositions and actions.

The issue of the relation of the thing as it appears to the real thing is the transcendental problem of constitution (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 165), something raised in phenomenology but not Gestalt theory, Gurwitsch claims. Gurwitsch's focus in *Field of Consciousness* is almost entirely on the phenomenology of perception but he is also interested in cognitive performances such as working on a mathematical problem. He recognizes the "open infinity of the perceptual process," the many-sidedness of the given perceptual object, and even defends Husserl's conception of the object as a Kantian 'idea' (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 206).

Husserl (1913) emphasises more and more, from *Ideas I*⁸ onwards that consciousness must be approached in its 'purity', in pure 'immanence', as a self-enclosed domain with everything contingent and all assumptions drawn from the actual, 'transcendent' world removed:

... consciousness considered in its "*purity*" must be held to be a *self-contained complex of being* [*als ein für sich geschlossener Seinszusammenhang*] a complex of *absolute being* [*als ein Zusammenhang absoluten Seins*] into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip ...

Ideas I § 49, p. 90; HUA III/1 93

8 Hereafter '*Ideas I*' followed by page number of English translation and Husserliana volume and page number.

Consciousness is an unified 'complex' (*Zusammenhang, Komplex*), a seamless living stream involving a web of interrelated emotional and affective states, including desires, feelings, moods, and so on. Acts and attitudes are founded on one another, interpenetrate and modify one another. It is not enough, therefore, to isolate the elements, the alphabet or 'ABC' of consciousness with its grammar and syntax. The interlocking interconnection of *Erlebnisse*, with its different layers or 'strata' that 'interpenetrate or intersaturate' each other (*sie durchdringen sich oder durchtränken sich*, Husserl 1973, p. 75), must also be mapped and understood. The 'connections of consciousness' (*Bewusstseinsverknüpfungen* Husserl 1965, p. 252) must be documented and clarified (and, ultimately, justified or validated). Intentional life takes many forms, which must be identified, described, classified, with their intentional contents, objects, 'modes of givenness', and 'modes of validation' (*Geltungsmodi*).

3 Gestalt Psychology as the Original Source of Gurwitsch's Conception of Consciousness

Mitchell G. Ash (1995), in *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture (1890–1967)*, speaks of the attempt to 'advance holistic thought' within the natural sciences at the end of the 19th century, especially in the so called 'Berlin School' of Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka. Elsewhere, in Leipzig, Felix Krueger spoke of holistic psychology (Ash, 1995, p. x).

At more or less the same time, in the late 19th century, a number of philosophers and psychologists—including Brentano, Stumpf, Dilthey, James, Bergson and McTaggart—all began to pay attention to the nature of consciousness, its peculiar temporal flow and its overwhelming unity across its successive phases. According to Franz Brentano in his *Descriptive Psychology* lectures (1887–1891), consciousness is an organic but complex unity (Brentano 1985; Brentano 1995).⁹ Brentano writes: "Nevertheless, it [human consciousness] is undoubted composed of many parts, some of which, like seeing-hearing, are mutually separable, others [of which], like the seeing and the noticing of what is seen, are at least one-sidedly separable" (Brentano, 1995, p. 16).

Parts and wholes were discussed by Brentano, Stumpf and Husserl. A distinction is made between independent parts (which can function as wholes in

9 William James, Henri Bergson, and Wilhelm Dilthey viewed consciousness similarly in this respect. Dilthey himself was also influenced by Stumpf. Dilthey's essay on psychology is important for rejecting the parallels with physics. Not causation but motivation is the key to the life of spirit, something taken up by Husserl in *Ideas II*.

themselves) and dependent, separable parts—that cannot exist in isolation, e.g. color and extension. Gurwitsch saw that those part/whole analyses were close to what Gestaltists talked about. Gurwitsch combines this part/whole accounts with the figure/ground approach of Gestalt. Gurwitsch writes in his article, “The Place of Psychology in the System of the Sciences”, published in French in 1934:

Gestalt theory does not recognize “parts” at all in the traditional sense of elements which, whether they are combined with one another or are taken in isolation, retain their identity. One should rather speak of *moments* of the whole. Such moments are entirely determined by the total structure of the whole of which they are moments; they are what they are only at the place they occupy within this structure, a place assigned to them by its specific nature.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 70

The term ‘moment’ is also used by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* to mean a one-sidedly dependent part. An important step forward for Gestalt was the realization that people perceive not just objects but also *relations*. Mental acts such as noticing, grasping, are important ways of apprehending relations (Ash, 1995, p. 37).

Gurwitsch studied with the leaders of Gestalt psychology, including the famous Gestalt psychologists, Adhemar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein, at the University of Frankfurt (1922 to 1928), who were involved in an institute studying brain injuries. It was in a lecture by Gelb¹⁰ on the constancy hypothesis that he saw its critique as akin to the phenomenological reduction (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 43) and Gurwitsch later said to Schutz, in a letter of Sept. 4th 1951, that this influenced Merleau-Ponty (Grathoff, 1989, p. 143). Köhler was the original critic of the constancy hypothesis—the claim there is a direct relation between the local stimulus and the conscious experience of sensation. Already in 1934, Gurwitsch is critical of the manner Köhler and others model psychology on physics. He writes that psychology has not made great progress in understanding the specifically human:

Among these data are to be included not merely the so-called secondary qualities and the “subjective” impressions par excellence such as pleasure

10 It was Gelb who introduced Gurwitsch to Wertheimer at the time he was writing his doctorate. Wertheimer was sympathetic with Gurwitsch’s effort to combine Gestalt with phenomenology (Grathoff, 1989, pp. 107–108).

and pain, or emotional states such as joy, suffering, and other passions; of equal, if not still greater, importance is the very fact that the ambient world in which we live carries the imprint of humanity: it is a human world.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 72

Gurwitsch is emphatic that psychology must deal with this ‘ambient world’. Later, Gurwitsch complained that “Köhler was always and is increasingly interested in the physics of the brain” (Grathoff, 1989, p. 143), and that Koffka increasingly employed the language of behaviourism.

Köhler had disputed Helmholtz’s assumption that sensations are strictly determined by physical stimuli (Ash, 1995, p. 9). This became known as the rejection of the ‘constancy hypothesis’ (The assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between local peripheral stimulation and the perceptual experience). Gurwitsch thought the rejection of the constancy hypothesis had much wider significance and was equivalent to a kind of phenomenological reduction. Once psychology dismisses the constancy hypothesis and with it, the presumption of physics as the underlying science, true descriptive psychology of our encounter with the perceptual world can begin. As Gurwitsch puts it decisively in *Field of Consciousness*:

Gestalt theory, we submit, deals with perceptual noemata as defined by Husserl, namely, with thing-phenomena in the above sense. Descriptive Gestalt theoretical analyses prove to be noematic analyses which have phenomenological validity. Because the dismissal of the constancy-hypothesis may be regarded as a phenomenological reduction, though merely in incipient or germinal form, the descriptive concepts and results of Gestalt theory may acquire phenomenological significance.

GURWITSCH, 2010c, p. 164

Already in his 1928 PhD dissertation, *Phänomenologie der Thematik und des reinen Ich* (Gurwitsch 1929), submitted to the University of Göttingen, supervised by Moritz Geiger, Gurwitsch was relating phenomenology to Gestalt (Gurwitsch, 1966; Gurwitsch, 2010b, pp. 119–137). The subtitle is ‘*Studien über Beziehungen von Gestalttheorie und Phänomenologie*’ [Studies on the Relation between Gestalt Theory and Phenomenology]. He wrote later: “There we sought to render certain views of Gestalt theory fruitful for the phenomenological analysis” (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 164). The focus is the eidetic phenomenology of Husserl’s *Ideas I*, and Gurwitsch (2010b) writes that “the problems of constitutive phenomenology form the everpresent horizon of our analyses, yet

solely the horizon and never the field” (p. 194). The main distinction between field and horizon is already operative in this text.

Gurwitsch (2010b) thought he could show that Gestalt theory provided support for, and—as he puts it in *Phenomenology of Thematics*—can be “incorporated into” Husserlian constitutive phenomenology, even though he was not particularly interested in the details of the Gestalt experiments and empirical discoveries (p. 200). The key Gestalt terms were ‘whole’, ‘field’, and ‘system’ (Ash, 1995 p. 11). Gurwitsch is the direct inheritor of this tradition of holism. Gurwitsch in particular, influenced by Gestalt, proposed consciousness as a structured ‘field’ (or ‘*champ*’), German *Feld*. ‘Field’ is a metaphor already found in Koffka, William James, and Husserl. Thus, for example, Husserl speaks of the ‘field of perception (*Wahrnehmungsfeld*) in *Ideas I* § 27, Husserl 1977, p. 56; p. 57 (cf § 84, Husserl 1977, p. 189) and *Erinnerungsfelder* (Husserl 1977, p. 52). He speaks in *Ideas I* of the ‘field of intuition’ (*Anschaufungsfeld*) (Husserl 1977, p. 62, p. 79, p. 84), the ‘field of regard’ (*Blickfeld*), ‘sensory fields’ (*Sinnesfelder*) and ‘fields of sensory data’ (*Felder der Empfindungsdaten*, (Husserl 1977, p. 75), and so on.

Gurwitsch references James and Husserl, but also draws on the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin’s discussion of figure and ground as found in his *Visuell wahrgenommene Figuren* (Rubin, 1921; Pind, 2013). In this work Rubin already distinguished between ‘topic’ and its context or ‘world’. Gurwitsch himself invokes the metaphor of an ‘electrostatic field’ whose ‘whose details cannot be accounted for unless it be by reference to the global structure of the field to which they belong’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 70). Merleau-Ponty also employs the concept of field, for example, in his chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception* entitled ‘the phenomenal field’ (Arvidson, 2006, p. 9). For Merleau-Ponty, for instance, attention creates for itself a ‘field’ than can be surveyed.

Gurwitsch gives an interesting and informed introduction to Gestalt in his *Field of Consciousness*.¹¹ Gestalt was a concept of ‘form’ introduced from aesthetics by Ernst Mach and Christian Von Ehrenfels, who had already spoken about ‘Gestalt qualities’ (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 55). In 1914, Wertheimer introduced notion of *Prägnanz*—structures move towards the best or simplest possible arrangement. Perception is seen as dynamic and self-organising. Köhler even maintained that inanimate nature contained Gestalt structure, and in 1924, he expanded Gestalt to biology. For his part, from the time of his dissertation, Gurwitsch was developing a notion of ‘relevancy’—things that are true have

11 Gurwitsch acknowledges that he is drawing on two books in English: Köhler’s *Gestalt Psychology. An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology* (1947) and Koffka’s *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935).

to have some relevance to each other (2010b, p. 299). Unfortunately, Gurwitsch never defined relevance, but Jeff Yoshimi says: “The basic intuition is that data in a field are relevant to one another if they are experienced as being somehow connected or associated with one another” (Yoshimi, 2004, p. 122).

Interestingly, Gurwitsch criticizes Husserl’s one-sided description of Gestalt psychology as continuing an atomism of psychic data in the tradition of Locke (2010b, p. 125). He felt that Husserl simply did not ‘get’ Gestalt psychology. Gestalt theorists held the primacy of perception over sensation; and saw the subject as involved in, rather than separated from, the world (Ash, 1995, p. 2). All of this is mirrored in phenomenology.

Like Husserl, who also opposed an atomistic account of sensory conscious experience, Gurwitsch was against the idea of a stream of sensations which are ordered by non-sensory processes. There must be an inherent organization within the sensory field itself. However, Gurwitsch rejected Husserl’s account of hyletic data (as explicated in *Ideas 1*) as a non-intentional stratum of sensory experience first introduced in *Ideas 1*. Husserl speaks of them as ‘formless stuff’. For Gurwitsch, Husserl is wrong to think of hyletic data as lacking an organisational principle in themselves. Gurwitsch challenges Husserl’s claim that time is the sole internal organising principle of experience. Gurwitsch writes in his dissertation *Phenomenology of Thematics and of the Pure Ego*:

A separation between *hyle* and *morphe* is not even abstractively possible, for disregarding *morphe* and concentrating upon *hyle* alone entails a change in what is given. [...] Hyletic reflection as reflection on the *hyle alone* is thus not reflection in the proper sense. It is athematic modification.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 284¹²

There is an inner organisation in the field of consciousness both on the noetic and the noematic sides.

4 Gurwitsch’s Original Contribution: Theme and Field

Consciousness is an interrelated structural field and its structural organization is an inherent objective feature of consciousness. Gurwitsch (2010c) calls it, following James, a “totality of co-present data” (p. 2), multiple elements unified

12 Husserl’s account in *Passive Synthesis* (Husserl 1988; 2001) does give these data an inherent organisation. Gurwitsch did not know *Passive Synthesis* but he was familiar with Husserl’s *Experience and Judgment* § 16 which defines hyletic data as being organized.

into a single conscious state. Since Kant, philosophers had been trying to understand the flow of consciousness as a synthesis of a manifold, 'a manifold of elements joined together according to rules' (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 316). Already in 1937, Gurwitsch invokes Husserl's notion of consciousness as a structured 'manifold': "But it is an altogether different matter with the soul, which is nothing but what Husserl calls a 'definite' *Mannigfaltigkeit* ["a 'definite' manifold"]" (Gurwitsch is citing *Ideas* I, p. 132; Hua III/1 135).

The field of consciousness, according to Gurwitsch, is always structured with a 'focus' or 'theme' (of varying width) of attention surrounded by a structured periphery of inattentive contents. As the field evolves, its contents change their status, sometimes smoothly, sometimes abruptly. Already in 1934, Gurwitsch (2010b) acknowledges that not all transitions move through intermediate stages; they can be 'discontinuous' and abrupt (p. 71). Nevertheless, a certain continuity is provided by the 'margin', where time-consciousness operates in the background, barely perceived.

Perception always has a 'focal' or determinate dimension surrounded by zones of indeterminacy which may be tightened but can never be eliminated:

The perceptual process is thus a process of gradual determination. At any phase of the process, that given in the privileged mode of actual sense-perception forms a certain nucleus surrounded by a broad zone of indeterminate references. In the course of the perceptual process, the zone of indeterminateness may be progressively narrowed. Still, it can never be eliminated altogether.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 207

In his 1928 dissertation, Gurwitsch (2010b) says that it is his goal to supplement phenomenology "with the help of Gestalt-theoretical theses" (p. 195).¹³ The starting point is the intentional noetic-noematic structure of consciousness. He immediately distinguishes between the object as given and the 'potential field of perception' (quoting *Ideas* I § 84, p. 162; Hua III/1 169). Husserl's text speaks of a 'background' of actualizations and also of "inactualities that constitute a 'field of freedom'", quoting Husserl (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 197). Husserl speaks of attention as a 'grasp' of a theme, which can then be 'released' back into the thematic field (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 254). Almost all of Gurwitsch's later ideas can be found in this passage in his dissertation which is an exposition of *Ideas* I § 84! Gurwitsch (2010b) wants to explicate this attention in detail (criticizing the metaphor of shining a light) and especially

13 Following his dissertation, Gurwitsch spent six months working as assistant to Moritz Geiger.

the role of the ego in this attending (p. 199). Gurwitsch, then, criticized the spotlight account of attention already in 1929.

On completion of his doctorate in 1928, Gurwitsch immediately sent a copy to Husserl, who read it in December 1928 (Schuhmann 1977, p. 355). Gurwitsch visited shortly afterwards. The following year, in February 1929, Gurwitsch attended the famous Davos debate between Cassirer and Heidegger and met Alexandre Koyré there, with whom he would later roundezyous in France (Parker, 2018; Gurwitsch, 1974).¹⁴

Having eventually been made a German citizen, Gurwitsch stayed in Germany to write his Habilitation, a phenomenological clarification of Max Weber entitled *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt* (*Human Encounters in the Social World*), to be submitted to the faculty of philosophy at Berlin University (Gurwitsch, 1976/1979). The manuscript was completed in 1931, but the National Socialist *Machtergreifung*, or seizure of power, in January 1933 made it legally impossible for Gurwitsch, a Jew, to continue in the university. The ministry cancelled his fellowship. Gurwitsch's last visit to Husserl was in late July and early August of 1932 (Schuhmann 1977, p. 414). On 1st April 1933, he emigrated with his wife Alice to Paris in 1933, as stateless persons without passports, where he met again with Alexandre Koyré. He also knew Lévy-Bruhl (and indeed he explained Husserl's 1935 letter to him, see Schuhmann 1977, p. 459) and had spoken French since a child.

Husserl connected him with Alfred Schutz whose *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt: Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie*¹⁵ had just appeared (Gurwitsch 2010a, p. 47). Husserl had written to Gurwitsch: "There is a young man in Vienna who spends his days at the bank and is a phenomenologist by night" (Grathoff, 1989, p. xv). Schutz records that it was Husserl who recommended Schutz look Gurwitsch up on his visit to Paris on bank business in 1935 (*ibid.*).¹⁶ Schutz and Gurwitsch shared an attitude to descriptive

14 Koyré recognized that Husserl was not a historian but he admired the way Husserl subjected Galilean science to a critique.

15 Alfred Schutz, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932; reprinted Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert as *Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967; London: Heinemann, 1972).

16 I am grateful to Richard Zaner (Gurwitsch 2010c p. xvi) for this reference. As Schutz wrote to Kurt Riezler, Dean of the Graduate Faculty of the New School, on November 12, 1948, "It was Edmund Husserl who urged me in 1935 to meet during my forthcoming trip to Paris Dr. Gurwitsch, whom he considered to be one of his most promising students. I was immediately fascinated by his personality, his erudition and the originality of his philosophical thought. Since then I have had the privilege to follow the development of his work. I read great parts of his forthcoming book [i.e. *Field of Consciousness*] and am

phenomenology that departed from Husserl's transcendental idealism. Thus, in a 1950 letter to Schutz, Gurwitsch talks about the desirability of a 'phenomenology in the natural attitude': "The world of the natural attitude is a social world, a world of living-with-one-another and action" (Grathoff, 1989, p. 121).

The appearance of Schutz's book possibly deterred Gurwitsch from publishing his own Habilitation essay in social phenomenology, and it remained unpublished until after his death. It is significant for its integration of Heideggerian-inspired discussion of 'das Man' with social ontology of the more Weberian variety. Already in *Human Encounters in the Social World*, Gurwitsch speaks of 'horizons', inspired by Scheler's concept of *Milieu*. He speaks of the reference of utensils to the 'utensil-totality' (Gurwitsch, 1979, p. 96). Utensils point beyond themselves to a horizon of entities and situations that fit it—'in the horizons that are co-included, something like a world of fellow human beings is found' (ibid.).

In Paris, with the aid of a fund to support emigrants, Gurwitsch gave several lecture series at the Institut d'Histoire des Sciences et des Techniques at the Sorbonne from 1933 to 1937. As he later wrote to Schutz in 1948: "The *Méditations Cartésiennes* notwithstanding, Husserl was almost unknown in France" (Grathoff, 1989, p. 104). Gurwitsch attracted a keen audience including the young Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The two became friends, having been introduced to each other in the home of Gabriel Marcel in the Autumn of 1933 when Merleau-Ponty asked him if by any chance he was the author of *Phänomenologie der Thematik und des reinen Ich*. Merleau-Ponty was studying perception and came to learn of the work of Gelb and Goldstein through Gurwitsch. (Embree, 1997; Pintos, 2007). Gurwitsch later reported that Merleau-Ponty attended all his lectures at the Sorbonne (Embree, 1962).

5 Gurwitsch as 'God Father' to Merleau-Ponty

Gurwitsch, as is evident from his exchanges with Schutz, was always proud of the influence he exerted on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Maria Luiz-Pintos has shown that Merleau-Ponty's second 'Projet' draft of 1934 already draws on Gurwitsch (Pintos, 2007). Their influence was mutual. Merleau-Ponty assisted Gurwitsch on the French version of Gurwitsch's 1936 essay, 'Quelques aspects et quelques développements de la psychologie de la

deeply convinced that his theory of the field of consciousness is one of the few genuine achievements in the realm of phenomenological philosophy which continues Husserl's work" (Grathoff, 1989, p. 106).

forme', later translated by Richard Zaner as 'Some Aspects and Developments of Gestalt Psychology' (Gurwitsch, 2010b, pp. 1–62).¹⁷ While in Paris, Gurwitsch also wrote an article on Husserlian phenomenology, 'Quelques principes fondamentaux de la phénoménologie constitutive', for *Recherches philosophiques* (1937), translated as 'Some Fundamental Principles of Constitutive Phenomenology' (Gurwitsch, 2010a, pp. 307–330).¹⁸ This article was based primarily on Husserl's *Ideas* I. There Gurwitsch writes:

Each object, whatever its nature—a mere reiform thing, object of use, object of value, work of art, historical fact, social institution, etc.—becomes accessible to us only by means of certain acts of consciousness which we are experiencing or can experience.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 308

An object is a correlate of consciousness but it is independent of that conscious act's temporal structure and duration. An object must have a nature to present in some acts rather than others and the acts themselves converge to 'produce a global consciousness of the object and to constitute the object for what it is' (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 311).

It was not until 1946 that Gurwitsch read Merleau-Ponty's *Structure of Behavior* (Grathoff, 1989, pp. 88–89). He wrote to Schutz on 15th December, 1946, from Harvard:

I have checked Merleau-Ponty's *Structure du Comportement* out of the library. It seems to be a very competent work. I took a look at his sections dealing with Goldstein's work. He has used a great deal that I have said about that in print as well as in lectures. That I could have to some extent stimulated such a study makes me happy and sad simultaneously.

GRATHOFF, 1989, p. 88

17 A. Gurwitsch, "Quelques aspects et quelques développements de la psychologie de la forme," In *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* XXIII, (1936), 413–70; trans. Richard Zaner, "Some Aspects and Developments of Gestalt Theory," in *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Gurwitsch 2010b, pp. 1–62).

18 Aron Gurwitsch, "Quelques principes fondamentaux de la phénoménologie constitutive," *Recherches philosophiques*, v (1937). Proofs were produced but the journal suspended publication before the essay could appear. A revised version of the English translation was included in Gurwitsch, 1974, pp. 190–209.

In 1947 he read Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and said to Gurwitsch 'my influence in a sense was the godfather' (Grathoff, 1989, p. 93). He wrote to Schutz in August 1947:

I hear an enormous amount from my lectures in the book. He has learned a lot from me and taken over a great deal. Not only in details, where he has carried many things further. I doubt that he would have had the idea of interpreting the psycho-pathological material phenomenologically without my influence. My reaction to the reading is a mixture of pleasure and melancholy.

GRATHOFF, 1989, p. 94

Gurwitsch felt Merleau-Ponty had over emphasised the body. As he wrote to Schutz in 1948:

And the whole displacement of consciousness to the body in Sartre and also in Merleau-Ponty seems to me to turn things upside down. The correct question is of course: what does consciousness of my body look like?

GRATHOFF, 1989, p. 101

In 1950, Gurwitsch wrote a penetrating review of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* for Marvin Farber's *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1950). In this review, he presents Merleau-Ponty as bracketing completely the scientific account of the world as part of the overall 'prejudice of the world' (*le préjugé du monde objectif*) which must be overcome. Instead, the world of perception as to be described in all its 'vagueness, indeterminateness, incompleteness, and openness' (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 487). Subsequently in his review of the Colin Smith translation of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, Gurwitsch clarifies what the prejudice is: "the prejudice consists in taking for granted and taking as a matter of course the idea of the objective, exactly determined, or, at least, determinable universe" (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 492). As Gurwitsch puts it:

The perceiving subject is no acosmic, neutral, and merely contemplating spectator before whose eyes and mind the world (and whatever it contains, including his own ego) is unfolded and unraveled in full transparency.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 488

Rather the subject is *engagé*; “He is *at the world*” (*être au monde*), as Gurwitsch likes to translate this phrase (*ibid.*).¹⁹ As Gurwitsch (2010a) explains: “This is meant to capture ‘directedness, projection, access, opening oneself up, and the like” (p. 496).

Incidentally, for those interested in Hubert L. Dreyfus, Gurwitsch (2010a) already in this review uses Gibsonian terms, e.g. ‘solicitation’: “Out of the world, there arise appeals and solicitations to the subject” (p. 488). Gurwitsch goes on to say: “All perceptual consciousness is supported and pervaded by an inexplicit, unformulated, and silent reliance on the familiarity of the world”. Gurwitsch (2010a) sees how much Merleau-Ponty explicates the taken-for-granted nature of consciousness: “Throughout this book, Merleau-Ponty insists upon *pre-thetic, pre-thematic, pre-explicit* consciousness, and he sets it forth in all phenomena related to perception” (p. 490). The body is neither mechanism nor consciousness. The perceptual or phenomenal body is the opposite of the body of science. As Gurwitsch put it:

The life of the organic body yields the prototype of what Merleau-Ponty calls existence: projection into situations, solicitations and responses to solicitations, orientation within a structured and organized field, and realization of intentions.

Gurwitsch clarifies in his review of the Colin Smith translation (which he criticises translation in many different places, e.g. particularly is upset that ‘reflection’ is rendered as ‘introspection’):²⁰

... the body in question is not the organism in the sense of biological science but, on the contrary, the phenomenal body, the body with which

19 Gurwitsch likes the notion of *encounter* and hence he likes to translate ‘à’ not as ‘in’ but as ‘at’: *être au monde, présence au monde, à l’espace*, and so forth, are best translated not by “in,” but by using “at.”

20 Gurwitsch criticizes Colin Smith’s use of ‘introspection’ in his translation of Merleau-Ponty because it gives rise to the impression that phenomenological statements are first-person reports on personal experiences, as though phenomenology were concerned with a domain of interiority. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Gurwitsch goes on to explain what phenomenology truly means: “Phenomenology does not deal with events occurring in a sphere of interiority; on the contrary, it concerns itself with things, objects, and situations as they present themselves, are meant and intended, and are taken in full concreteness with all the components and constituents of sense, signification, and significance which they exhibit as theirs” (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 496).

I live, which I experience as mine, which defines my situation within and my point of view upon the world.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 493

Furthermore, the perceptual body is an interlacing system of competencies—a ‘synergetic system’:

Since the body as a whole forms a synergetic system, the qualities mediated by the several sense organs (i.e., visual, auditory, tactile, and other) imply, symbolize, and modify each other.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 489

Nevertheless, Gurwitsch recognises a certain idealism in Merleau-Ponty: “Merleau-Ponty goes as far as maintaining that the unity of the perceived thing is founded upon the unity of the body” (ibid.). As Gurwitsch writes in the second part of “The Last Work of Husserl” (1957):

To be sure, the motions of my body and its organs, e.g., my hand, take place in space. However, my hand’s being at my command and disposal, the acting and functioning of the kinaesthesia [*das waltende Tun der Kinasthese*] is not itself a motion in space. It is only indirectly localized, insofar as my hand in which the *kinaesthesia* is incorporated, occupies a position in space. Quite in general, Husserl maintains, if souls are localized in space-time [*Raumzeitlichkeit*] as the universal form of the *Lebenswelt*, they are so indirectly only. They merely partake of spatio-temporal localization, by virtue of their being embodied. Embodiment is originally experienced by every one of us in and through his inhabiting his body and, within certain limits, having it at his free disposal.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 492

More generally, Gurwitsch takes issue with Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Husserl’s constitutive phenomenology. He writes:

We cannot, however, endorse the objections (which Merleau-Ponty derives from the mentioned emphasis) against the idea of constitutive phenomenology, since the very idea seems to him to rest upon the conception of consciousness as fully transparent, as thoroughly explicit and thematizing.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 490

Gurwitsch realizes this is an exaggerated one-sided distortion of what Husserl is actually doing.

According to Gurwitsch's Preface, dated New York, 15 November 1962, to *The Field of Consciousness*, the manuscript of *The Field* was completed in 1953, before Husserl's *Crisis* appeared in its Husserliana VI edition, edited by Walter Biemel (Husserl 1954) and also before Husserliana X (Husserl 1962). In the late 1950s, however, after the French publication of *Field of Consciousness*, Gurwitsch published two long and penetrating articles on Husserl's *Crisis*, entitled "The Last Work of Edmund Husserl" in 1956 and 1957 in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (reprinted in Gurwitsch 2010b).²¹ These articles were written at Brandeis University. Gurwitsch refers to these two essays as 'reports' and they are admirably clear and to the point. As is evident from his correspondence with Schutz, he was very excited about Husserl's later analyses of the life-world. He already recognized the significance of discussing Lucian Lévy-Bruhl as well as the worlds of animals (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 130).

In the first of this two-part essay, "The Last Work of Husserl," Gurwitsch summarizes approvingly Husserl's approach to history and philosophy as having an inner teleology—a hidden unity. He cites Husserl's "concealed unity of intentional interiority [*verborgene Einheit intentionaler Innerlichkeit*]" and that "we not only possess a historical heritage but are historical beings throughout [*durch und durch ... historisch-geistig Gewordene*]" (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 453). He also describes people living in traditional 'environments' (*Umwelten*) which they cannot overcome. Gurwitsch writes:

As long as the pre-theoretical attitude prevails, all activities not only take place within the *Umwelt* and are oriented by the accepted traditional conceptions, but they are also pursued for the sake of living and finding one's way within the *Umwelt*. All activities, including those of cognitive or speculative nature, are motivated by, and essentially related to, practical human interests.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 454–55

Western culture has the idea a 'humanity of infinite tasks' (*Menschentum unendlicher Aufgaben*). Gurwitsch summarizes very well the sense of harmony that exists in the life world:

21 A. Gurwitsch, "The Last Work of Edmund Husserl," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 16, No. 3. (Mar., 1956), pp. 380–399; and *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 17, No. 3. (Mar., 1957), pp. 370–398. Reprinted in Gurwitsch (2010b), pp. 447–502.

As given in common every day experience, the *Lebenswelt* not only extends into an indefinitely open spatio-temporal horizon, but it also exhibits causality of a certain style. Changes do not occur at random but with typical uniformity. Variations in some respect are regularly accompanied or followed by variations in another respect. In all variation and change the world presents an invariant general style of variation and change.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 460

In the second essay, Gurwitsch talks explicitly of the life-world as a horizon for all action and cognition:

Living in the world means taking it for granted as the universal all-encompassing horizon which comprises all that passes for reality, within which we pursue all our activities, into which fall the objectives of all our interests, the goals of all our actions, etc. Taking the world for granted does not, however, purport explicit disclosure of its character as universal horizon.

CW II, p. 479

Let us now turn to Gurwitsch's main work, *The Field of Consciousness*.

6 Gurwitsch's *The Field of Consciousness* (*Théorie du champ de la conscience*, 1957)

The history of *Field of Consciousness* is complex.²² The text had a long evolution beginning in 1942 with different parts being planned, and parts also being dropped (Grathoff, 1989, p. 134). An early draft was written in French in Paris in the 1930s and posthumously published as *Esquisse de la phénoménologie constitutive*. A draft in English was completed while Gurwitsch was at Harvard, and the "Harvard manuscript" is still in Harvard's archives. Seemingly Gurwitsch offered the manuscript to Harvard University Press in 1950, who rejected it (Grathoff, 1989, p. xxvii). On October 9th, 1950, Aron Gurwitsch wrote to his friend Alfred Schutz that, except for some minor revisions and corrections of

22 The French translation appeared first as *Théorie du champ de la conscience* in Paris in 1957; the English version in 1964 as Volume Two in the Duquesne Studies Psychological Series (the first volume was Stephan Strasser's *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences*). The German translation by Werner Frölich, *Das Bewusstseinsfeld*, did not appear until 1975, after Gurwitsch's death.

the English, “the monster—nearly 700 pages” was finished and would soon go to the translator, Michel Butor, and to the publisher in France (Grathoff, 1989, p. 120). Gurwitsch sent each chapter to Schutz and endlessly revised it. In the end, Schutz saw it as a fine creation comparable to Husserl’s *Experience and Judgment* (Grathoff, 1989, p. 153).

In a letter to Schutz, Gurwitsch says that the *Field* is “four books in one” (Grathoff, 1989, p. 120). Part One is ‘a complete historical-theoretical foundation of Gestalt theory’ which is ‘not unoriginal’ focusing specifically on the phenomenon of ‘Gestalt coherence’ (Grathoff, 1989, p. 121). This is followed by a long discussion of phenomenology. Part of the book is influenced by Schutz’s account of multiple realities. Gurwitsch took the view that consciousness always has a sense ‘of reality’ (*von der Realität*). There are, for Gurwitsch, what he calls ‘three orders of existence’—what is experienced in the stream of consciousness (phenomenal time), embodied existence, and what he calls ‘the perceptual world’ (Embree says this is the cultural world). I will not be able to discuss this interesting theory about levels of existence further here as I want to focus on Gurwitsch’s discussion of context, margins and horizons to which I now turn.

7 Theme, Thematic Field, and Margin

Gurwitsch’s claim is that there are 3 ‘organisational forms’ or ‘domains’ in every consciousness: theme, thematic field, and margin. The theme is the centre of consciousness—its focal point. Consciousness is always focused on something. There can be unity across different forms of noetic attending. There are rule-bound processes of transformation of the theme. Not every theme can undergo every type of transformation. Furthermore, different possibilities for transformation are pre-delineated by the theme.

Gurwitsch (2010b) already proposed this triadic structure in his PhD dissertation, *Phenomenology of Thematics* (1929), where he is concerned exclusively with ‘what is present to consciousness’ (p. 204). Here he says that ‘theme’ is another word for the intentional object (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 201)—the object of perception, doubting, thinking, etc. The ‘theme’ is the object as it is perceived—the transcendent tree in the garden and not the ‘sense’ tree (*ibid.*). This is theme in the natural attitude, but in phenomenology the transcendent world is bracketed, and we are concerned with theme in terms of its noema—‘theme-noema’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 202). It is the concept of the object in the ‘how of its determinations’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 203). This includes

‘the materially determinate’ components that are not currently in view, e.g. whether the hidden side is rough or smooth, etc. The unseen back of the box is *somehow* a surface, *somehow* colored, shaped etc. (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 205). Furthermore, we do not perceive the object as an aggregate of properties but as a unity:

Every field of consciousness comprises three domains or, so to speak, extends in three dimensions. First, the theme: that with which the subject is dealing, which at the given moment occupies the “focus” of his attention, engrosses his mind, and upon which his mental activity concentrates. Secondly, the thematic field which we define as the totality of facts, copresent with the theme, which are experienced as having material relevancy or pertinence to the theme. In the third place, the margin comprises facts which are merely copresent with the theme, but have no material relevancy to it.

GURWITSCH 2010c, p. 53; see also p. 4²³

He speaks of the ‘organization in consciousness’ as a structured field. He distinguishes between the central theme and the thematic field (which is connected in terms of ‘relevancy’). The theme has a ‘positional index’—it always appears in some context or other. It can remain the same in different contexts.

The placement of the theme in a thematic field, as separate from the purely marginal copresent facts, is a most general structure observed on every plane of mental activity.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 167

The theme is the focus of our attention—it is two-sided consisting of a noetic and noematic element. But the theme is always embedded in a *thematic field* or context and emerges from it. A theme can be given only as placed in a thematic field wherein it is located at the center (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 167). The theme has a consolidating unity; it tends to cluster in the centre of our attention. From this point of view it has what Gestaltists call ‘coherency’ (*Gestaltkohärenz*)—a functional significance of the parts for the whole, as in a musical melody:

23 Gurwitsch uses the word ‘domains’ very frequently in *The Field of Consciousness*. Sometimes he also talks of three domains of ‘existence’—when he means three domains of experienced objectivity—myself, my perceptual world. He planned a book called *Les trois domaines du reel*.

“On account of this mutuality, each constituent realizes at its place or locus the Gestalt-contexture to which it belongs. In each of its notes the melody is present as a whole” (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 403). The theme is often interrupted by a distracting item from the margin. We never stop attending thematically, according to Gurwitsch, but this attending also moves from one theme to the other and there are ‘transitional phases’.

Gurwitsch, in his 1929 dissertation, like Husserl, uses the example of looking at an object moving closer to, or further away from, an inkwell. The notion of distance here is ‘phenomenal’ not actual—‘nearer to’ or ‘further from’ are ‘phenomenal qualities’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 219). There are ‘material relations’ (*sächliche Bezüge*) between inkwell, pen and paper. These are parts that are connected to the theme—but there are other aspects of the context that are not connected ‘materially’. A thing is always perceived in an ‘environment’. As Gurwitsch (2010b) writes: ‘It is impossible to perceive a thing without environment’ (p. 220). Furthermore, in a way that is reminiscent of Heidegger, Gurwitsch (2010b) says that “thinking about something is never a stupid staring at it” (p. 222). The theme is not an isolated point but is embedded in a context. Furthermore, the independence of the theme from its field is not absolute (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 231).

There is an invariance of the theme—its ‘noematic What’—through the variations (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 252). On the other hand, there are cases, where the theme itself is changed—as when a colored object placed on a different colored background undergoes a color change due to the laws of ‘color contrast’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 253). Gurwitsch identifies 5 types of ‘thematic modification’ where the theme remains constant—enlargement, contraction, elucidation, obscuration and context replacement (Arvidson, 2006, p. 58). In his dissertation, *Phenomenology of Thematics*, he initially introduces enlargement and elucidation together. Enlargement is when new items appear that add to the theme—these could occur in the context of memory for example (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 247). The perceptual field in which the thing is situated broadens. Narrowing means that the theme “loses its connecting links, the variety of its material relations is reduced” (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 248). Modifications might include broadening to the history of the event or thing—or the thing appears ‘under the perspective of my life history’ (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 248). Elucidation is clearing of an obscurity in the thematic context. Obscurity is not total but has various shadings: “There is always obscurity somewhere in the field” (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 249). Clarity, too, is never total. Much of this phenomenological description is simply developing Husserl’s remarks in *Ideas I*.

8 Thematic Context or Field

A theme is always given ‘within a thematic field’ which is a set of items that are not specifically attended to, but which accompany the theme as relevant to it (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 224). This is an invariant of consciousness (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 313). The thematic context is all that is in consciousness *relevant to* the theme. This is the sphere of the ‘cogiven’ which itself needs further analysis (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 221). It is not a unitary domain. The unity of this context is *unity by relevancy* or what William James called ‘affinity’ (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 302). Broadly speaking the issue, Gurwitsch says, is our *experience of context* (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 304).

The theme always refers to items other than itself that are relevant to it. This field is a network of mutually implicating relations. The context nearer the theme is experienced as more important than the items further out from the interest. But the context always has to have some relevance. I can think of a thing, the usefulness of the thing etc. (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 225). A *shift of attitude* changes the thematic field and leads from thematic field to another (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 314).

The thematic context, however, is not immediately in view. There is a pointing-toward by the theme to its context—and the theme appears as emerging with and from its context:

The *appearance of a theme* must be described as *emergence from a field* in which the theme is located occupying the center so that the field forms a background with respect to the theme. The theme carries a field along with it so as not to appear and be present to consciousness except as being in, and pointing to, the field.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 311

When I watch a character in a play, the character is surrounded by events that occur around him or her—a whole ‘world’ (Gurwitsch, 2010c, p. 313).

According to Gurwitsch, while we are primarily aware of the theme, we also have a lesser, implicit awareness of the field; Gurwitsch (2010c) says that we grasp it in a “rather implicit, indistinct, dim, and penumbral manner” (p. 1). As Gurwitsch underscores:

We have repeatedly stated the relationship of the pointing reference between the theme and the thematic field need not necessarily be completely articulate and distinct. It may be dim and penumbral with little or

no differentiation of structure. Relations between the theme and items of the thematic field may be more or less indiscriminate and somehow nebulous and obscure.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 327

For Gurwitsch—deeply influenced by James—a thought is oriented towards its goal but may be carried along by a context (of ideas, propositions, words, images) which seem not particularly relevant or distinct. He says: “[N]o thematic field is entirely unaffected by indistinctness” (Gurwitsch, 20010C, p. 329). Gurwitsch (2010C) praises James for being the first to call attention to indeterminate states of mind and to advocate “the reinstatement of the vague to its proper place in our mental life” (p. 330). Gurwitsch writes about theme and background:

When one reflects, as one is walking down the street, on some scientific theorem or other, the theorem, constituting as it does the theme with which one’s thought is concerned, never presents itself alone, but appears against a background. This background can be comprised of premises from which the theorem in question derives, or of the consequences following from it, or the subject may think over the theorem in question by taking into consideration its possible applications. Or, again, the theorem would present itself as occupying a certain place in a more encompassing theoretical context for which it has a well-defined signification.

GURWITSCH, 2010A, p. 165

Background here is not the life-world but the specific context in which the mathematical problem is presenting itself. This is also present:

In continuing his stroll, the subject, however engrossed he may be in his reflections, does not lose sight of the objective of his walk; he sees the street, the houses lined along it, the human beings passing by; he hears the noise made by the cars, etc., without paying heed to it. He feels, as well, the passing of phenomenal time: he is immediately cognizant, though only globally and vaguely, that his reflections have lingered already for quite a long time; he anticipates their impending interruption, and so on.

GURWITSCH, 2010A, p. 166

The facts here have no connection with the theme, but this extra context may act as an ‘enrichment of the theme and its context’: “If such an

enrichment is produced, the facts responsible for that would obviously come from this group of copresent facts” (Gurwitsch, 2010a, p. 166). This second group of fact is on the fringes of the theme and its background. Also whether or not someone remembers these facts is irrelevant—that they constitute an enrichment doesn’t mean they have to be remembered as such.

9 The Margin of Consciousness

The margin is external to the contextual relevancy and is present in consciousness as irrelevant. There is always an accompanying marginal content—it cannot be dispensed with. Data in the margin are irrelevant to the theme yet they necessarily accompany it. In the ‘margin’ is everything else in our conscious experience, including our embodiment, our moods, emotions, accompanying fantasy images, and so on (Arvidson, 2006, p. 2). The margin itself is structured in layers. It is marked out by co-presence and irrelevancy.

A combination of mutual irrelevancy and mere co-presence is the essential feature of the relationship between margin and theme or between margin and thematic field (Sass, 2004, p.62). Marginal consciousness contains potential themes with their potential thematic fields. There are degrees of relevance and irrelevance. The margin is made up of these 3 domains—the streaming of time consciousness, embodied experience and the ‘world’. For Gurwitsch, the temporal structure which is essential to every act of consciousness is included in the inner awareness which we have of the act, although not so distinctly and explicitly as reflection might bring out. There is a unity of acts in phenomenal time but the object is distinct from this unity of acts (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 310–11). The temporal flow itself belongs in the margin rather than the field.

Gurwitsch, furthermore, distinguishes between ‘halo’ and ‘horizon’ but does not always maintain this distinction (Gurwitsch, 2010b, p. 296). The halo is a certain sector that is always presented within the horizon of the order of existence as a whole. He writes:

Among the components of the halo must be mentioned all the data the awareness of which is expressed in the “transformation laws” established in phenomenology—that is to say, in propositions of the form: to every mental state of such and such a kind corresponds a different mental state of such and such a determinate kind.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 296

Halo is inner and horizon is outer, according to Arvidson's interpretation (Arvidson, 2005, p. 8). Thus Gurwitsch can write in the chapter on 'The Thematic Field', about James' concept of fringes:

"Affinity" may exist between that which at the moment engrosses our mind, upon which our mental activity concentrates (the theme, as we shall call it henceforth) on the one hand and, on the other, words, phrases, images, and representations which happen to pass before our mind. Every topic or theme is surrounded by fringes, a halo of relations, references, and pointings of which we have only an inarticulate and vague awareness. To the extent to which the phrases, images, and ideas passing before our mind have a place in that system or halo of fringes, they are experienced as relevant to the theme.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 302

In *Field of Consciousness*, Gurwitsch defines 'fringes' as follows in the work of James:

Fringes, on the other hand, pertain, according to McGilvary, to incomplete relational complexes. Attaching to a term which is given in present experience, a fringe, by definition, points to some object which is altogether absent from present experience; it terminates in a gap void of content, void even of "objects but dimly perceived."

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 301

For Gurwitsch, 'In truth, fringes are as much consubstantial parts of the "object cognized" as substantive qualities are' (CW II, p. 458). Writing in his 1929 dissertation, Gurwitsch gives the example of hearing a distracting noise when engaged in reflection:

If, moreover, while engrossed in the same reflection, one hears a noise without being diverted from the reflection, that noise would be only a concomitant of the latter, being perceived simultaneously with it. When the noise has ceased, it is still retained in immediate memory, until it is forgotten. But, no matter how it is given, the noise never comes to form part of the thematic field; it remains a purely copresent fact and is a concern for marginal consciousness.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 167

He continues:

The thematic field never appears endowed with perfect closure (fragmentation) and articulation, that is to say, as a context of facts set off distinctly and plainly from each other. It always contains some indeterminateness and a sort of indefiniteness that surrounds its elements, erases the contours thereof, and thus renders them undefined and indistinct. That indefiniteness may spread more or less over the thematic field, until, in extreme cases, it fills it up in its entirety.

GURWITSCH, 2010a, p. 169

Furthermore, Gurwitsch (2010a) states that the "... indefiniteness is never absolute to the point that every difference among extremely vague and indeterminate thematic fields would be abolished" (p. 169).

10 Gurwitsch and Husserl on Horizon

Let us move now to the notion of horizon in Husserl as a source for Gurwitsch. As we have seen William James talks about 'focus', 'fringes' and 'margins' of experience. In his later works, Husserl uses a much more expansive notion of intentionality according to which consciousness is not just intentionally directed at things in the world, but also co-constitutes unending and unlimited horizons of intentional implication and, indeed, the entire worldly context, including not just actualities but the range of potentialities and possibilities in which such intentional objects are apprehended and made meaningful.

In *Field of Consciousness*, Gurwitsch also rightly acknowledges Husserl's use of the term 'horizon' and gives two references for Husserl's discussion of horizon: Helmut Kuhn (Farber 1940) and Ludwig Landgrebe (1940). Gurwitsch explains horizon as a generalization of the distinction between figure and ground in Gestalt:

Let us start from the fundamental distinction between figure and ground, as advanced in Gestalt theory. The generalization of this distinction yields the notion of "horizon." Being interested in this sheet of paper, I deal with it, I choose it as my perceptual theme. However, I perceive the sheet of paper as situated on the table; I thus perceive it on a background. Furthermore, the table is located in this room, this room in the Sorbonne,

the Sorbonne in Paris, Paris in France. References to other things which can be perceived spread out in all directions originating in the theme of our present perception. The system of such references (which can be more or less vague, imprecise, and indeterminate) constitutes the consciousness which we have of the world. Every perceived object appears in an horizon which extends or can be extended to infinity. This confers on the object the sense of its mundanity.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 188

Without horizon there is no sense of world—world is for Husserl, the ‘horizon of horizons’. Gurwitsch (2010c) also claims that our sense of familiarity with the world—he invokes Merleau-Ponty—is a kind of horizon consciousness (p. 372). Gurwitsch (2010c) thinks Landgrebe’s discussion of the ‘world-phenomenon’ is closer to his own account of thematic field (p. 359 n.149). Kuhn’s account is very close to Gurwitsch.²⁴ Kuhn writes:

“Horizon” is but another name for the totality of organized serial potentialities involved in the object as noema, that is, as the intended object of an “intentional” act. The “ray of consciousness” illuminates a small central sphere, the sensuous substratum immediately given to our visual, auditory, olfactory, or tactual perception. Around this focus there is a halo of potential perceptions shading off the meaning of the focal center. Nucleus and horizon together compose the percept or, more generally speaking, the “object in mind.”

KUHN, 1940, p. 112

Furthermore, Kuhn (1940) discusses internal and external horizons, temporal horizons and states: “The horizon induces the investigator to travel from the center through continuous lines of connection to peripheral regions” (p. 115).

Kuhn speaks of traveling towards the horizon and back towards the central focus (as Gurwitsch also does). Kuhn writes that horizon includes:

... the notion of “that which lies beyond the immediately given” on the one hand, to that of the inherent potentialities on the other. The light

24 Helmut Kuhn (1899–1991) was a fellow Jewish philosopher, who wrote on aesthetics and who had to leave Germany in 1937. Kuhn got a job at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, but returned to Germany to teach in Munich after the war and was one of the founders of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Phänomenologie* in 1969. Hans-Georg Gadamer wrote his obituary.

of explication illuminating the horizon will necessarily stream back to the center and shed a fresh clarity over the initial aspect of the thing perceived. The broader the context in which I see an object, the more concrete will be its appearance.

KUHN, 1941, p. 116

Kuhn concludes:

Both acts and intended objects are also abstract when taken as self-contained wholes detached from the network of actual experience. The meaning of the object as well as the truth of the intending act can only be ascertained by the elucidation of its horizons in continuous chains of explications.

KUHN, 1941, p. 117

Already in *Ideas I*, Husserl proposed a new kind of 'horizon-intentionality'. As Saulius Geniusas makes clear, Husserl found the concept of horizon in William James' *Principles of Psychology* (Geniusas, 2012, p. 41) James used the concept, as Gurwitsch says, to overcome the narrowness of empiricist account of impressions that excluded the experience of *relations* (Gurwitsch, 1985, pp. 320–321). Consciousness consists of transitive states united by temporality. James talks explicitly about our consciousness having horizons that expand and narrow. James (1950) writes: "When very fresh, our minds carry an immense horizon with them ... And in states of extreme brain-fog the horizon is narrowed almost to the passing word" (p. 256).

Husserl claimed, in *Ideas I* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, that he had been inspired by William James to develop an interest in a whole new kind of intentionality, namely 'horizon-intentionality' (*Horizont-Intentionalität*). Husserl moves beyond his earlier concerns about the specific features of intentional objects to consider the non-objectual intentionality of horizons, fringes, and ultimately of the life-world that is 'always already there' but not in the form of objects.

Husserl's first discussion in print of the concept of horizon occurs in *Ideas I* where he talks about the world as the 'collective horizon of possible investigations' (§ 1). For Husserl, objects are not perceived in isolation but against a *background* (*Hintergrund*) and in the midst of a 'surrounding world' (*Umwelt*) of other objects and also of other living bodies which are also other persons, animals, and so on (*Ideas II* § 51). Husserl introduced the concept of 'horizon' as "what is co-given" but not genuinely' in *Ideas I* § 44 (Husserl 2014: 77). He uses a variety of terms: *Horizont, Hof, Hintergrund*. In *Ideas I* § 83, he says in §83,

“‘horizon’ has here the same value as did the terms ‘halo’ and ‘background’” (*Ideas I*, p. 160; Hua III/1 186). He says, ‘Every experience influences the (bright or dim) halo of further experiences’ (*Ideas I* § 83, p. 161). Yet elsewhere he distinguishes between background and horizon in discussing the presence of the natural world at the background to mathematical thinking: “The world is a background for my act of consciousness, but it is no horizon into which the arithmetical world fits it” (*Ideas I* § 28, p. 51; Hua III/1 60). Horizons are always there:

A horizon of determinable indeterminacy always remains in principle, regardless of how much progress we make experientially, regardless of how large the continua of current perceptions of the same thing that we have run through are.

Ideas I § 44, p. 78; HUA III/1 81

Husserl mentions that he lacked an adequate account of horizon-consciousness in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and horizon is given explicit treatment in *Experience and Judgment* § 33 where he speaks of “the horizon of typical pre-acquaintance in which every object is pre-given.” (Husserl 1973a, p. 150). Husserl sees horizons as responsible for our experiences of familiarity and strangeness. This is clear in the *Amsterdam Lectures* (Husserl 1997) where Husserl describes the noema of a house in a house-perception as opening onto an infinite horizon of other possible profiles of the house. Husserl raises the question of how we can be conscious of this horizon of undisclosed possible perspectives which belong to the house:

The question immediately arises as to how come it is evident that this pointing-ahead belongs to the phenomenon-in-consciousness? How come this horizon-consciousness refers us in fact to further actually unexperienced traits of the same <phenomenon>? Certainly this is already an interpretation which goes beyond the moment of experiencing, which we have called the *horizon-consciousness*, which is, indeed, as is easily determined, completely non-intuitive and thus in and of itself empty.

HUSSERL, 1997, p. 226; HUA IX 317

Later Husserl widens scope of intentionality to cover the whole domain of conscious life including its possibilities and potentialities, its ‘actional’ and ‘inactional’ elements. Husserl writes in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* § 94:

“... nothing exists for me otherwise than by virtue of the *actual and potential performance of my own consciousness* [*Bewusstseinsleistung*]” (Husserl 1969, p. 234).

According to Husserl, every lived experience bears with a set of unique essential possibilities that go to make up what he calls the ‘horizon’ of the experience. These horizons are not just empty possibilities, but rather are ‘intentionally pre-delineated in respect of content’ (Husserl 1960, § 19, p. 44; Hua I 82), that is, they are ‘pre-delineated potentialities’ (Hua I 82). There is a ‘horizon of references’ built in to the experience itself, he writes in *Active and Passive Syntheses Lectures* (Husserl 2001; Husserl 1988):

... everything that genuinely appears is an appearing thing only by virtue of being intertwined and permeated with an intentional empty horizon, that is, by virtue of being surrounded by a halo of emptiness with respect to appearance. It is an emptiness that is not a nothingness, but an emptiness to be filled out; it is a determinable indeterminacy.

HUSSERL 2001, p. 42; HUA XI 5–6

In fact, Husserl states as the fundamental law of consciousness that each act of consciousness is interwoven an infinite number of other possible acts (within a single consciousness—but also opening to other consciousnesses. This Husserl implicitly has notions of ‘field’ and ‘margin’. Indeed, Husserl remarks in his *Intersubjectivity*, Husserliana Volume XIV, that “*the fundamental theory of horizons must be carefully developed*” (Husserl 1973b, p. 150).

In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl distinguishes between implicit and explicit intentionality, the latter being called ‘horizon intentionality’. Husserl writes:

Every experience has its own horizon; every experience has its core of actual and determinate cognition, its own content of immediate determinations which give themselves; but beyond this core of determinate quiddity, of the truly given as “itself-there,” it has its own horizon.

HUSSERL 1973a, p. 32

Every object has an infinite number of horizons that can be developed systematically. These horizons are prefigured possibilities that belong to the thing-noema itself and allow for the possible noetic modes of access to it. Husserl speaks of a *Spielraum* provided by the horizon that invites further explication. For Husserl, *inner horizons* consist of the set of anticipations and prefigurations

that I have already in mind as I approach the object (Husserl 2001, p. 43; Hua XI 7; see also *Cartesian Meditations* § 9, Husserl 1960, p. 23).

Gurwitsch makes use of Husserl's distinction between 'inner' and 'outer horizon'. He writes—drawing upon *Experience and Judgment*:

Following Husserl, we use the term “outer horizon” to denote the perceptual context enlarged beyond the perceptual field in the narrower and proper sense. The outer horizon comprises things at the moment not actually perceived but referred to as perceivable.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 359

Gurwitsch (2010c) writes: “Delineation and specification along certain general lines of items otherwise indistinct and indefinite, is a descriptive characteristic of horizontal consciousness in general” (p. 330).

In his essay, “The Last Work of Husserl”, Gurwitsch explicates his understanding of Husserl's distinction between inner and outer horizons:

To be sure, the perceptual field is not the world; yet it is experienced as a segment of the world. The outer horizon points and refers beyond itself; these pointing references convey our permanent awareness of the world as the universe of possible objects of perception.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 483

In *Field of Consciousness*, Gurwitsch gives an example of a mathematical theorem pointing to other theorems:

Suppose we just demonstrated a mathematical theorem and consider it as our theme. It points and refers not only to the premises from which it has just been deduced but also beyond to further theorems and axioms which, however, are not clearly discriminated from one another. Rather they form a diffuse horizon around both the theme and the more articulated region of the thematic field.

GURWITSCH, 2010C, p. 358

Gurwitsch (2010c) distinguishes different kinds of indeterminacy: “The indeterminateness of the thematic field has a different sense than the indeterminateness of the inner horizon” (p. 363). This indeterminateness is not just difference of degree—it is difference in kind.

Horizons account for familiarity, as Husserl says in *Experience and Judgment*. Or, as he puts it in *Ideas*: “Everything unfamiliar is the horizon of something

familiar" (*Ideas* I § 63, Dahlstrom, p., 116). Furthermore, both Husserl and James saw temporality as unintelligible without horizontality. Husserl speaks of temporal horizontality in *Ideas* I § 82 (past, present, future as horizons)—every experience has its 'horizon of the before' (*Ideas* I, p. 158) and 'horizon of the afterward' (p. 158). There is also a horizon of the now in every experience (*Ideas* I, p. 159), what he calls 'one originary horizon of the pure ego, its entire originary now-of-consciousness' (*Ideas* I § 83, p. 159). Husserl argued that while each mental episode has beginning and end the stream itself can have no beginning and end:

[Consciousness is] integrated in an endless continuum of durations—a replete [*erfüllt*] continuum. It necessarily has a horizon-of-time, infinitely replete on all sides. That means at the same time that it belongs to one infinite "stream of experience." Just as each individual experience (e.g., an experience of joy) begins, so it can end, and thus bring its duration to a close. But the stream of experience cannot begin and end.

Ideas I § 81, p. 157

Roberto Walton, in a previous Gurwitsch lecture, has argued that Gurwitsch gives the notions of horizon as a mix of actuality and potentiality more force than does Husserl but nevertheless it is present in Husserl (2003). Walton compares Husserl's descriptions of latency and patency with Gurwitsch's analyses of field-potentialities and margin-potentialities. I actually think that despite difference in terminology, Gurwitsch is simply explicating Husserl. Saulius Geniusas has a three-fold account of horizon:

I suggested that (1) the horizon delimits each and every phenomenon, that (2) as a limit, the horizon is versatile and unsurpassable, and that (3) being correlated with our concrete whereabouts, the horizon is relative to our concrete situation and in this sense it is irreducible subjective.

GENIUSAS, 2012, p. 27

Helmut Kuhn speaks of an outer horizon which are the other objects surrounding the book. Gurwitsch (2010b) likewise speaks of an "outer horizon which comprises things not perceived at the moment, though able to be perceived" (p. 188). Kuhn (1941) thinks that "the outer and the inner horizon are inextricably interwoven with the temporal horizon" (p. 113). My own sense is that Gurwitsch and Husserl have not fully clarified the different kinds of horizontality. I believe 'outer' horizon must have a degree of openness to allow the genuinely new to emerge. An object has to be capable of being placed in an

entirely new context. Consider, for example, a book. A book's inner horizon includes the fact that it can be read, was printed by a publishing house, is about Aron Gurwitsch, and so on. But it belongs to its 'outer horizon' so that it can be used by me as a door stop to prop open my door, or I can use it as fuel in a fireplace. This outer horizon is not related *thematically* to the object's noema as such. It is, of course, part of the set of possibilities subtended by the book being a heavy physical object or being something combustible.

Or consider another example, borrowed from Jerry Fodor. Suppose screwdrivers one day are no longer used to turn screws but rather are universally used to open paint tins. This horizon is of course in one sense an 'inner' horizon belonging to the tool's distinctive functional features. But *seeing-as* is required. The screwdriver's functional possibility to be employed as a level has to be recognized. Somehow it is the entity's *horizontality* that allows this to occur. Husserl is aware of the very temporal nature of horizons, but perhaps he does not appreciate sufficiently how entities have to have a degree of horizontal openness to the future—to be inserted into completely new contents that do not exist at present. Surely this concept of 'external' horizon needs more exploration?

11 Conclusion

Gurwitsch spent most of his life as an emigré, first in Germany, then in France and finally in the USA. Only for a brief period in Paris (when he lectured at the Sorbonne) at the end of his life (1959 to 1973), when he taught at the New School for Social Science, was he actually a philosophy professor. Mostly he taught mathematics (at Harvard and Brandeis). In 1958–1959, Gurwitsch was invited by Ludwig Landgrebe to be Guest Professor in Köln on a Fulbright. While there he was invited to a position in the university of Berlin but refused (Biemel, 1995, p. 338). In 1969, the Husserl Archive at the New School was established in Schutz's memory, with Gurwitsch serving as chairman of its board of directors. He died in 1973.

As we have seen, Gurwitsch's account of thematic fields, horizons, margins, and halos derives from William James, Gestalt psychology, and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Completing Husserl, Gurwitsch develops much more formal rules about the essences of thematic objects, their fields, and margins—distinguishing different dimensions of context. Both Husserl and Gurwitsch came more and more to appreciate consciousness of the 'world-horizon', and it is Gurwitsch who primarily points to its role in the appreciation of familiarity of the world as it harmoniously appears in 'unanimity'

(*Einstimmigkeit*). Gurwitsch grasped very early on the importance of non-objectifiable phenomena such as horizons and margins.

But Gurwitsch has very little to say about the differences between inner and outer horizons and how new contexts can come to apply to things. He rarely speaks of history in terms of horizontality, unlike both Heidegger and Gadamer, who utilise horizon in this respect, compare Gadamer's 'overlapping' of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*). In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer explains a horizon, for instance, as 'not a rigid boundary, but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further' (Gadamer, 1989, p. 245). Nevertheless, it was Gurwitsch's genius to have identified the common threads in James and Husserl and to have systematically delineated the margins, haloes and horizons of consciousness.

It is unfair to suggest, as some have done, that Gurwitsch was more or less plagiarized by Merleau-Ponty. Certainly, Merleau-Ponty drew heavily from Gurwitsch's lectures in his two main publications, *Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*. But French publications of that period are not properly referenced, often do not contain indexes, and have rudimentary bibliographies, if at all. Merleau-Ponty and Gurwitsch were friends, and after the war, it was Merleau-Ponty who was the better known figure in Europe and in the USA. Gurwitsch was in contrast relatively unknown.

I would like to end by applying to Gurwitsch what he himself felt about himself as a philosopher who was not recognized in Europe or in America. He wrote in his review of Husserl's *Crisis*:

The goal of the philosopher who has devoted himself to the theoretical life is to attain *episteme*, that is absolute truths valid always and for everybody, regardless of the situation in which one might find oneself, independently of any practical purposes and needs, irrespective of the community to which one belongs.

GURWITSCH, 2010b, p. 455

I think that fittingly summarizes Gurwitsch's role as a philosopher.

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