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A Phenomenology of Waiting

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The discovery of inner time arguably reckons among the most important findings of phenomenology. Seminal thinkers such as Henri Bergson, William James, Edmund Husserl or Martin Heidegger have allocated a central place in their thinking to its analysis. Thus, their theories provided new instruments for the toolbox of the human and social sciences. One of the phenomena that obviously must be explored by going back to the experience of inner time is that of waiting. However, when searching the writings of these thinkers, you won't find a great deal on the issue of waiting. Bergson mentions the time one must wait for sugar to dissolve in a glass of water as an example of *durée*, but he doesn't dwell on the topic. James more or less ignores it altogether while Husserl has a lot more to say on remembrance than on expectation. In Heidegger's writings there are passages that deal explicitly with waiting, yet his primary interest in the existential-ontological dimension prevents him from analyzing waiting as an experience of everyday life.

This state of the art is astonishing and at the same time deplorable, since waiting is a decisive factor when it comes to the temporal structuring of our life-world. It can be argued that it is indeed a fundamental part of the human condition as such. For centuries it has inspired novelists, poets and writers, and over the last decades it has also become an object of research within various scientific disciplines. As a consequence, there is now an overflow of academic definitions of the term waiting which regard the phenomenon from rather different angles and therefore don't have much in common. Referring to this circumstance, in my presentation of last year I identified waiting as a touchstone for phenomenology, since phenomenology, with its method of *epoché*, goes back to the fundamental acts of consciousness and thus claims to discover the *eidōs* of empirically given phenomena. It should therefore also be able to provide a general definition of waiting that may serve as a common basis of different scientific (as well as non-scientific) perspectives on the phenomenon.

Taking one step further, this current paper intends to deliver what has been announced (and initiated) last year and to provide a comprehensive phenomenological description of waiting which on the one hand makes use of classical phenomenological theory and on the other hand tries to connect philosophical reflection with the level of everyday experience. For this purpose, "younger" phenomenologists like Alfred Schutz will be included, but also thinkers from various empirical disciplines like sociology or psychology.