

# THE PROBLEM OF SELF-AWARENESS IN ARON GURWITSCH'S PHENOMENOLOGY

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## Abstract

This article analyses Aron Gurwitsch's conception of consciousness without the ego. Gurwitsch criticism of the pure ego reveals that a phenomenological reduction should be understood in a different way – the aim of reduction is not to reveal transcendental ego as the undeniable foundation, but rather to reveal the field of consciousness. On the one hand, when a phenomenological reduction is performed the act of consciousness should be understood only as a correlation between *noema* and *noesis*. A third component of the act as a pure ego which in *Ideas I* is understood as the center or a unifying entity is not allowed. On the other hand, any experience that implies indirect self-experience or thematic activity which is accompanied by a marginal self-awareness should be understood as a consciousness conceiving itself as self-consciousness. Thus marginal consciousness could be understood as a pre-reflective self-experience.

First of all, the criticism of the pure ego is analyzed. The importance of reduction, the notion of reflection and a conception of intentional consciousness are introduced as well. Secondly, the possibility of direct self-experience as an access to understand consciousness in a mode of self-giveness is discussed.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, self-awareness, non-egological consciousness, pure ego, marginal consciousness.

## Introduction

To illustrate the problem we are addressing in this article a short comment on everyday life experience could be useful. Let's pretend, at the moment I am lying in a park and reading a book. An egological theory of consciousness would claim that at that time I am not intentionally directed to the story written and at the same time – not merely aware of the story being read by *me*. Shortly speaking if the experience is given in a first personal mode of presentation to me, it is given as my experience and it is a case of self-awareness. A non-egological theory of consciousness would claim that it is more correct to say – there is an awareness of reading of the story. There is no any reference to the subject of the experience; there is only a stream of consciousness, the awareness which an experience has of itself.

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Aron Gurwitsch discusses the distinction between the egological and non-egological conceptions of consciousness in his writings *Phenomenology of Thematics and the Pure Ego: Studies of the Relation between Gestalt Theory and Phenomenology*. Soon another phenomenologist Jean Paul Sartre published his study *The Transcendence of the Ego* where a similar critique of the pure ego was introduced. Both philosophers criticize the notion of a transcendental subject presented in Edmund Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*. The notion of intentional consciousness presented in early writings *Logical Investigations*, which almost coincides with the one both of critics admits, is a key of understanding this criticism. In his early writings Husserl was concerned with the structure of the act of consciousness as the relation between *noema* and *noesis*. His primary focus was on the intentional consciousness, thus the ego could be understood as nothing more than the unity of consciousness, a real complex of mental states or that is to say, a stream of consciousness itself. However in *Ideas I* the ego is introduced as a unifying function, a central and atemporal entity. The ego somehow faces its mental states and is introduced as related to one another, but they are not identical. In this case a notion of reflection is widely escalated by Gurwitsch and Sartre. The reflection is understood as the roots of the pure ego. However in a later essay *A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness* Gurwitsch criticizes Sartre for not understanding the notion of reflection properly. Namely, this comment on the notion of reflection is the most important for us, because it suggests understanding of the possibility to be self-aware even when the pure ego as a unifying entity is being neglected. It could be stated that Gurwitsch does not abandon the possibility of being self-aware. On the one hand, Gurwitsch's criticism against the conception of pure ego can be related to the detailed explication of the concept of the field of consciousness. On the other hand, after removing a transcendental ego, a question of the subject emerges: what happens with the subject in the concept of non-egological consciousness? How is it possible to be self-aware in a non-egological conception of consciousness?

First of all, the relation between self and consciousness will be introduced by exposing the main arguments that Gurwitsch emphasizes in his critique of the pure ego. The importance of reduction; the notion of reflection and a conception of intentional consciousness will be analyzed as well. Secondly, the possibility of self-awareness will be our primary focus. The possibility of direct self-experience as an access to understand consciousness in a mode of self-giveness will be discussed. Dan Zahavi and Dalius Jonkus suggest a notion of self-experience that does not intersect with a phenomenological understanding of consciousness. Thus our task is to examine the concept of a peripheral (what Gurwitsch calls as a marginal) state of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> We suggest that

<sup>2</sup> It is presented: Gurwitsch A. Marginal Consciousness. In: R.M. Zanner (ed.) *The Collected Works of Aron Gurwitsch, vol. III, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology*. New York, London: Springer, 2010.

the notion of marginal self-awareness could be interpreted in a similar manner as Zahavi and Jonkus offer.

### Criticism of the Pure Ego

In order to understand Husserl's turn of thought from a non-egological consciousness to the concept of the pure ego, first of all the notion of phenomenological reduction will be discussed. By the phenomenological reduction, the distinction between consciousness and the real world is eliminated. Living in a natural attitude which is the attitude of any activity, we simply accept everything as it is. In other words, we are confronted and situated in a world which we call reality whose existence we accept without thematizing it. In order to investigate what we call reality, we keep the attitude, but we bracket its validity. A suspension or neutralization (*epoche*) entails a change toward reality, but should not be considered as abandonment. Thus under the phenomenological reduction the existential belief in reality is bracketed, suspended, acts of consciousness are no longer considered as mundane events, but as experiences of objects, in and through which objects appear and present themselves as they are. Consciousness is no longer regarded as one of the mundane domain among others. What remains then, after the phenomenological reduction has been performed, is not only the field of experiences (*noeses* intentionally correlated with *noemas*), but also a special entity that is not to be bracketed – a pure ego. Hence, an attempt to illustrate the ego as a formal principle into the structure of transcendental consciousness, according to Gurwitsch, will misjudge the character of the stream of consciousness:

«In the *Logische Untersuchungen* the pure ego was identified with the stream of consciousness, but now (in *Ideas I*) their relation becomes a problem. The ego somehow faces its mental states; over against the unceasing flux of experiences it is, as in Natorp's treatise, an invariable identical unity»<sup>3</sup>.

What could be said about this special entity? First of all, under the phenomenological reduction an empirical ego is no longer conceivable. I am no longer a human being among other human beings who lives in a natural world. The belief in a reality is suspended including me as a human or others as human beings. A phenomenon is left as a theme of transcendental phenomenology. The problem arises concerning acts of consciousness through which I experience myself as a mundane human being. Thus Husserl, – Gurwitsch point out, prefers to speak of an ego-pole rather than ego.<sup>4</sup> The ego-pole from which, according to Husserl,

<sup>3</sup> Gurwitsch A. 'Phenomenology of Thematics and of the Pure Ego: Studies of the Relation between Gestalt Theory and Phenomenology'. In: *The Collected Works of Aron Gurwitsch (1901–1973), vol. II, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology*, New York, London: Springer 2009, 313–314.

<sup>4</sup> Gurwitsch A. 'The Last Work of Edmund Husserl'. In: *The Collected Works, vol. II*, op. cit., 486.

all my conscious acts issues and in which all activities, performances, ect. Of my consciousness are centralized, must not be mistaken for a psychological ego or the soul, the person, the *I* in the sense of a mundane human being. He insists on distinguishing the transcendental or especially in *Ideas I*, the pure ego from the mundane ego in any sense of mundane or whatever. The second problem that arises speaking about the notion of the ego-pole concerns a relation between the ego and others as alter egos. On the basis of this inter-subjectivity problematic, the presupposition that every human being contains a transcendental ego seems the only one appropriate. By performing a reduction and disclosing my ego-pole in its transcendental function, the ego is put into a privileged position with respect to which every other ego-pole appears as an *alter ego-pole*. Thus Husserl should be conceived with a notion of transcendental inter-subjectivity, a community of ego-poles to which my own ego-pole also belongs.

*Secondly*, after the reduction is performed a pure ego is left which is entirely situated within the domain of transcendently purified consciousness and yet transcending every particular act belonging to this consciousness (my consciousness). In *Ideas I* the phenomenological analysis reveals the acts as emanating from a source called the «pure ego». The ego is introduced as unifying function that unifies all the mental states into one stream of consciousness, however the pure ego and the stream of mental states are two; they are correlates, necessarily related to one another, but they are not identical. According to Gurwitsch, «intentionality is now conceived as a relation between *ego* and object and no longer as the fundamental essential feature of mental states *qua* acts of consciousness»<sup>5</sup>. An act of consciousness as a correlation between *noema* and *noesis* is modified letting in a third component. This could be done only by interpreting mental states as ego-states and having in mind the ego, the subject of experiencing essentially belonging to the mental states themselves as their necessary «center of reference».

By maintaining that the phenomenological ego, the one that left under the reduction was performed, is accompanying every act of consciousness, this implies that the pure ego is identically the same with regard to all mental states. Being the same for all mental states the relation between the ego and consciousness is problematic. Gurwitsch states that we cannot endorse Husserl's distinction between the «phenomenological ego of the moment» and the «phenomenological ego in extended time». Since by its very nature and sense the phenomenological reduced ego is a context which, beyond the present moment, i. e., the Now, comprises conscious life in its entirety, there can be no question of a «phenomenological ego of the moment»<sup>6</sup>. The distinction between the «phenomenological ego of the time» and «phenomenological ego of the moment» does not deny the ego givenness within the chain with which it is possible to identify the ego in the present moment. On the other hand, this present moment does not confirm that there is something as a

<sup>5</sup> Gurwitsch, *Phenomenology of Thematics and of the Pure Ego*, op. cit., 314.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 309.

«phenomenological ego of the moment», because the ego of the present moment would be something different from that of the time.

Finally, the role ascribed to reflection in the *Ideas* is questionable. That is the field of experiences being considered as a field of free activity for the ego, acts of reflection are interpreted as actualizations of his freedom. Gurwitsch states that the ego's freedom, "its free spontaneity and activity" are essential to the ego; they are its characteristic and the only assignable properties. A phenomenological description of lived consciousness will simply not find any ego, understood as a centre, an agent or a possessor of consciousness. Gurwitsch states:

«By reflection is meant the grasping of an act A by an act B, in order to make the former the object of the latter. The act B, however, in its turn is not grasped by a third act and made its object. Inasmuch as the grasping act B is considered as an experienced mental state regardless of its object, all that has been said about acts experienced on the non-reflective level applies to it. If, then, the grasping act B deals with the ego, it does so not because of its being a conscious act but because of the particular object upon which it bears. Hence the relation of an act to the ego is not necessary, or, rather, it is no more necessary than the relation of an act to some other object. As far as reflective acts are acts like those bearing on objects different from mental states of the experiencing subject, both the former and the latter are on the same footing in not being necessarily connected with the ego. Consciousness has no egological structure; it is not owned by the ego; its acts do not spring from a source or center call the ego»<sup>7</sup>.

«Consciousness is defined by intentionality. It is consciousness of an object on the one hand and an inner awareness of itself on the other hand»<sup>8</sup>, – says Gurwitsch. While being in the park and reading a book, I am conscious of this object (story read) and pre-reflectively self-aware of being conscious of it (reading). But only when I am asked about yesterday, I will take a reflective attitude against the object I was conscious of. That is being aware of the object and trying to know that I am dealing with the object which, I am just perceiving, I experience a second act bearing upon the perception and making it its object. In short, on the level of pre-reflection there is no ego at all. A pre-reflective consciousness has no egological structure. That is when I am reading a book, I have a consciousness of the story described, and a non-positional self-awareness, but I do not have any awareness of the ego. For instance, let's pretend that you will ask me what I was doing yesterday. I would say I was in the park, lying on the grass and reading a book. The moment I was in the park I was involved in a storyline, but after the question was asked, it is the story represented and no longer present, although it is represented as having been present. In a pre-reflective attitude an experienced act is not related to the ego. After the reflection was brought, the story does not disappear, rather we become aware of the fact that

<sup>7</sup> Gurwitsch A. 'A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness'. In: *The Collected Works, vol. II*, op. cit., 324–325.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 325.

specific acts indicating to the story read and those they were actual at specific moment of time and occupy a specific sector within the stream of consciousness. Thus the answer that I was reading a story is a description of the storyline of that book itself and no evidence of a phenomenological ego is found.

Gurwitsch abandons the conception of the pure ego as an enduring center. It is the sum total of whatever acts of experience emerge; it is involved in the stream without losing its identity. Indeed, the ego is a stream itself which is never accomplished or finished, but rather, as Gurwitsch stresses, is involved in a perceptual growth. It cannot be that the ego somehow appears as a real part of intentional act of consciousness, appearing and disappearing with the act itself. In such a case there would be as many *ego* as there are acts of consciousness, and *myself* or «I» would be introduced to a new ego every time I will reflect. What we are left with by the phenomenological reduction is transcendental consciousness as a pre-personal field. Thus the ego, like all other objects, falls under the phenomenological reduction. Neither ego as an exterior principle of individuation, nor a unifying entity is found. When a phenomenological reduction is performed the act of consciousness should be understood only as a correlation between *noema* and *noesis*, and the third component of the act is not allowed. We can state that Gurwitsch's criticism of the pure ego reveals that a phenomenological reduction should be understood in a different way – the aim of reduction is not to reveal transcendental ego as the undeniable foundation, but rather to reveal the field of consciousness i.e. correlations of experience and notional objects as the field of reflections and descriptions. Non-egological consciousness is intentional: every act of consciousness, as a real psychological event is a *noesis*, which is intentionally correlated with *noema*. Gurwitsch's conception of consciousness without the ego should be understood as a unity of intentional acts of consciousness – a stream of consciousness and the pure ego as a stream itself.

### **An Egotic Understanding of Consciousness and Marginal Consciousness**

According to Dan Zahavi, later Husserl is not advocating the concept of a pure ego as the center of any act of the consciousness as in *Ideas I*. This conclusion was reached by assuming three concepts of consciousness that are presented in *Logical Investigations*: (1) the unity of experiences/stream of consciousness (2) Inner consciousness/self-awareness and (3) Intentionality. The third concept was the most important for Husserl. Thus he did not pay sufficient attention to the temporal structure of the stream of consciousness and was mistaken that self-awareness is an unusual notion of intentionality. It had consequences: many interpreters took his self-awareness as directedness of ones objectivating gaze toward the experience. On the contrary, Zahavi makes an interpretation of Husserl's notion of inner consciousness by stating

that Husserl admits two options of self-experience: a reflective and a pre-reflective one.<sup>9</sup>

Consciousness is always self-aware; the only difference is the degree of involvement of self-awareness. In other words, self-awareness cannot be related to the objectivating acts of reflection that is self-awareness also exists in a pre-reflective self-knowledge of consciousness. During the reflection, my Self, self-awareness is treated as merely an object of my consciousness, or inner observation of the self as an object. That is, in our case, Gurwitsch and Sartre, according to Dan Zahavi, understand consciousness as two separate acts, one of which is directed at the perceived object, and the other at the objectivating act of reflection.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, in the egological conception of consciousness any experience involves opportunity of minimal non-objectivating self-consciousness as a priori awareness of own experience preceding any reflection. It is worth mentioning that Zahavi interprets Sartre as the one who later changed his mind.<sup>11</sup> Sartre made this move to distinguish ego and self. Although no ego is left in the conception of intentional consciousness and even no ego exists on the pre-reflective level, consciousness remains personal because consciousness is characterized by a fundamental self-givenness that he called *ipseity*. Any remarks on Gurwitsch's theory are not presented.

A similar interpretation however in a different context is in Dalius Jonkus's presentation "Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: the investigation of the first personal mode" held last year at the conference in Vilnius University.<sup>12</sup> Jonkus interpreted the later Sartre concluding that his conception of self-awareness is not opposite to Husserl's view. Jonkus suggests making a distinction between the egological and egotic understanding of consciousness. In the former, ego is perceived as metaphysically postulated substance or a center that combines different experiences, and the latter recognizes the first-person perspective as the only one capable of disclosing awareness and unity of the intentional experiences. An important feature of the self-experience of consciousness is that the primary self-awareness/self-consciousness is prior to the reflection. Reflections may recognize what was already made conscious in pre-reflective way in experience. This means, that consciousness of the subject's experience can be either active or passive, but it cannot be reduced either to the anonymous consciousness, or to the sub-consciousness. The sub-consciousness as a consciousness determining basis is insufficient, because it supposes an outer connection of consciousness with sub-consciousness. The consciousness should be understood

<sup>9</sup> Zahavi D. 'The Three Concepts of Consciousness in *Logische Untersuchungen*'. In: *Husserl studies*. 18. Netherlands: Kluwer academic publishers, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Zahavi D. *Subjectivity and Selfhood*. Massachusetts: The MIT press, 2006, 99–103

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>12</sup> See also his article *Subjectivity, Self-experience and Anonymity* published in 2013 in the *Journal Problemos*. Some topics related to the theme he discusses also in his book: Jonkus D. *Patirtis ir refleksija. Fenomenologinės filosofijos akiračiai*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2009.

not as a finished object, but as an intention to become conscious. Thus both philosophers advocates a similar interpretation of a self-awareness stating that consciousness realizes itself as a self-consciousness not only having in mind a notion of reflection, but also with a direct self-experience. The notion of reflection is extended to the pre-reflective mode of self-experience by eliminating the distance to the self that occurs after the reflection is performed.

In the essay *A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness* Gurwitsch introduces us to the notion of reflection that could be interpreted in a similar manner as Zahavi and Jonkus does. First of all, Gurwitsch states that in Sartre's theory an act acquires relatedness to the ego through being grasped by the act of reflection. This does mean disclosing a structure which had already existed before the act was grasped. Sartre claims that

«The ego never appears, in fact, except when one is not looking at it. ... (A)t the horizon, the ego appears. It is, therefore, never seen except "out of the corner of the eye". As soon as I turn my gaze toward it and try to reach it without passing through the *Erlebnis* and the state, it vanishes. This is because in trying to apprehend the ego for itself and as a direct object of my consciousness, I fall back onto the unreflected level, and the ego disappears along with the reflective act»<sup>13</sup>.

Reflection, according to Gurwitsch, is understood in an inappropriate way by producing the ego as an object of the consciousness. In other words: «reflection is held by Sartre to super induce a new object and to be over and above the necessary condition of the constitution and existence of this object, viz., the ego»<sup>14</sup>. Gurwitsch asks: How then may reflection, as characterized being disclosing, give a rise to a new object? What is the nature of the object thus given rise to? All of the components of the act are reachable and explicit; none of them is given to rise to by the act of reflection.

«In Sartre's theory, – says Gurwitsch, – which, it seems to me, we must endorse, and an act acquires relatedness to the ego through being grasped. In the very face of Sartre's non-egological conception of consciousness, this does not mean disclosing a structure had already existed before the act was grasped. On the contrary, it amounts to the assertion that the act is brought into relation to an object which had not appear before the act was grasped»<sup>15</sup>.

In other words, reflection should be understood as disclosing, but not producing. By assuming this, Gurwitsch does not admit Sartre's notion of objectivating reflection as a gaze directed at the consciousness, because it treats ego as a product of reflection. Likewise John Locke who used the term reflection to illustrate our minds ability to turn its view

<sup>13</sup> Sartre J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991, 88–89.

<sup>14</sup> Gurwitsch, *A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness*, op. cit., 328.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.



upon itself, making its own operations with the object of its contemplation, in Sartre's case the relation between consciousness and self could be understood only as subject – object model.

*Secondly*, by assuming that reflection should be considered only with a disclosure, Gurwitsch admits that the ego exists neither in the acts of consciousness nor behind these acts, but should be considered as the stream of consciousness itself. It exists in the world as the worldly transcendent existent. When grasped act appears being connected to the ego, the latter presents itself as exceeding this act:

«In fact the ego is connected not only with the act experienced and grasped at the time being but also with other acts, even with an indefinite number of them, and it is in this way that the ego appears. It offers itself as a permanent entity, as continuing to exist, beyond the grasped act which, like all mental states, is substantially perishing. The ego thus appears through rather than in the grasped act»<sup>16</sup>.

Hence, the ego appears in its entirety, but every certain moment it presents itself under a special aspect. Thus the ego exists in the world as a worldly transcendent existent which is never fulfilled and is «involved in a perpetual growth»<sup>17</sup>. There is a difference between me who is reading a book in the park and me who is at the moment writing this sentence. And of course, there is a different me who once was a child and was listening to the story read by his mother or a different me in an anonymous future. In this case, the ego cannot be exactly the same as it was stated in early *Ideas I* either as a unifying entity, or as the center of any act of the consciousness.

Gurwitsch states:

«All mental states are by necessity inserted into the context of consciousness and characterized as *my* mental states. Their belonging to the context of consciousness makes them my experiences in contradistinction to those of other conscious beings. This means nothing else than that if a mental state does not pertain to one context of consciousness, it must necessarily belong to a different one»<sup>18</sup>.

In this sense the pure ego is always accessible/actualizable, but not always accessed/actualized. The necessity to be always possible to actualize is referred to the notion of the stream of consciousness; because the context of consciousness is necessarily formed of all mental states and to all mental states this index «mine» is addressed. Consciousness, according to Gurwitsch, does not need any transcendental principle of unification, because consciousness as such unifies itself. Mental states are always necessarily possible; they appear as *mine* even though I am not conscious of them as such, in this case, when I do not perform the reflection. We can add that the disagreement with Sartre could be interpreted as an agreement with early Husserl (even later Husserl that is

<sup>16</sup> Gurwitsch, *A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness*, op. cit., 328.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Gurwitsch, *Phenomenology of Thematics*, op. cit., 310.

presented in Zahavi analysis) on ego relatedness to the stream of consciousness

Finally, in his later fundamental work *The field of Consciousness* Gurwitsch presents us with the structure of the field which consists of (1) the theme as a reflected object, (2) a thematic field which is formed of functionally related to the theme objects and (3) marginal objects that are briefly analyzed in his study *Marginal Consciousness*. The field of consciousness, – says Gurwitsch, comprises three domains:

«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 co-presents 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 co-presented with the theme, but have no material relevancy to it»<sup>19</sup>.

We are most interested in the margin of the field, because of its major feature for a subject to be pre-reflectively aware of them. This pre-reflective self-experience seems similar to what Zahavi or Jonkus calls to be minimal non-objectivating self-consciousness or a direct self-experience.

In any experience, whatever is our thematic activity, we will be pre-reflectively aware of the position of my body, inner awareness, and perceptual world. If my activities are directed at the experience of my body, the experience of perceptual world or inner awareness of time consciousness will necessarily stay in the margin of my consciousness. Gurwitsch states:

«Perceiving a material thing, listening to a musical note, thinking of a mathematical theorem, etc., we are not only conscious of the thing, the note, the theorem, etc., but are also aware of our perceiving, listening, thinking, etc. Thus every act of consciousness is accompanied by an awareness of itself»<sup>20</sup>.

Our theme is a story read and not the reading. Our theme is that what appears through the act of consciousness and not this act itself or the fact that we are experiencing it. Furthermore, the inner awareness cannot be considered with the notion of reflection. Gurwitsch states: «The inner awareness we have of every experienced act is obviously not derived from reflection. By “reflection” is meant the grasping of one act by another supervening act, so as to make the former the object of the latter»<sup>21</sup>, thus it proves to be in the margin of the field of the consciousness. Speaking about the notion of reflection, it should be mentioned, that marginal data only could be considered with a possibility to be re-

<sup>19</sup> Gurwitsch A. ‘The Field of Consciousness.’ In: *The Collected Works, vol. II*, op. cit., 53.

<sup>20</sup> Gurwitsch, *Marginal Consciousness*, op. cit., 451.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 454.

flected: «every act of consciousness fulfills a condition of its possibly being grasped by an act of reflection»<sup>22</sup>.

Another feature of the act of consciousness is the temporality of the act itself. Acts of consciousness are essentially temporal phenomena. Gurwitsch states that

«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. Every act of consciousness, when actually experienced, grows in time and displays itself in temporal phases. Experiencing an act, we are then aware of it prior to reflection and even without grasping the act at all as a temporal phenomenon, as beginning, enduring and growing, and fading. Our awareness of the temporal development of an act is one and the same with our awareness of its being experienced»<sup>23</sup>.

In short, no matter how we are concentrated on the story we are interested in, we are aware of passing from one theme to another, because of the temporal structure of the act. That is, we are pre-reflectively aware of the activities we were interested in past, or passively aware of waiting for another theme of our future activity.

The experience of every act, whatever its object, carries marginal consciousness of phenomenal time with it. Furthermore, no matter how we are concentrated on the reading, we nevertheless pre-reflectively perceive some objects of our environment and we have some pre-reflective awareness of our body. Let's say I am passively aware of being in the park. Lying on the grass and reading a book. As well as I am passively aware of my past experience, memories, and passively aware of the future expectations, I am passively aware of my bodily position and my body postures as I try to turn pages with my fingers even when I do not reflect the movement of my hand. Either lying on the grass I am passively aware of the park as the place where it is growing, and the park which is situated in a city of that country and so on. To sum up, marginal facts, in their very presenting themselves as marginal, are experienced as potential themes appearing in potential thematic fields that could be reflected only when the act of reflection appear. By stating that marginal consciousness is a pre-reflective self-experience and reflection should be considered only with a disclosure, but not with a production, on the other hand, with a potential thematic consciousness, we can admit that any experience involves opportunity of minimal non-objectivating self-consciousness as a priori awareness of own experience preceding any reflection.

## Conclusion

Gurwitsch's criticism of the pure ego reveals that a phenomenological reduction should be understood in a different way – the aim of reduction is not to reveal transcendental ego as the undeniable foundation,

<sup>22</sup> Gurwitsch, *Marginal Consciousness*, op. cit., 454.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 459.

but rather to reveal the field of consciousness. The ego (a psychological one), like all other objects, falls under the phenomenological reduction. On the one hand, it could be possible to speak about the ego in a sense that all mental states are characterized as *my* mental states. On the other hand, when a phenomenological reduction is performed the act of consciousness should be understood only as a correlation between *noema* and *noesis*. A third component of the act as a pure ego which in *Ideas I* is understood as the center or a unifying entity is not allowed. Gurwitsch's conception of consciousness without the ego should be understood as a unity of intentional acts of consciousness – a stream of consciousness and the ego as a stream itself.

Any experience involves opportunity of minimal non-objectivating self-consciousness as a priori awareness of own experience preceding any reflection, because the marginal consciousness is a pre-reflective self-experience. Reflection should be considered only with a disclosure, thus Gurwitsch does not admit early Sartre's notion of objectivating reflection as a gaze directed at the consciousness, because it treats ego as a product of reflection. On the other hand, marginal data is a potential thematic consciousness. Should we call the conception of a non-egologically understood consciousness which Gurwitsch presents in a number of his writings as an egological or non-egological understanding of consciousness? – it is not a subject matter. The fact that a form of subjectivity as a self-awareness in the first person perspective is possible, and having in mind a non-egological conception of consciousness presented by Gurwitsch, we can draw a conclusion that a description of the marginal data could be understood as an egotic understanding of consciousness. That is experience that implies indirect self-experience or thematic activity accompanied by marginal self-awareness should be understood as consciousness that conceives itself as self-consciousness.