

Reinach's Phenomenology of Foreboding/Foreseeing (2015)

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In my half sleep I heard the talk of men resting during a pause from artillery firing. A young officer had fallen the day before; briefly before the ride (left), from which he never returned, he had, as he otherwise never did, given his fellow (officer) his trunk key, put his classified documents in order and written a farewell letter. He had therefore a foreboding of his own death. This story is tied to others. One was remarkably out of sorts and funereal before the grenade struck him; another one had his will and testament made; it is reported of many that they had said directly before their deaths that they would no longer be alive the following day. None of the infantryman doubted it, that there is (such a thing as) foreboding that lets us foreknow the future with certainty.

A young staff sergeant breaks into the conversation. I hear him, how he – a bit condescendingly – argues, how little it had to do with cases of foreboding. Certainly everyone assumes before a dangerous mission that perhaps or probably he will die. If this supposition comes true (fulfills itself), then its result is mysteriously foreboding; supposing it doesn't fulfill itself, then nobody remembers it. No, there are no forebodings; only reasonable calculations are possible that acknowledge themselves with more or less probability. The young staff sergeant becomes all the more scientific, and all the more quieter it becomes around him: foreboding are matters/things of dispositions (moods). If I am sad or ill-tempered, the world appears darker to me, and misfortune seems (to me) impending. Perhaps such a misfortune really occurs. Then the number of mysterious forebodings is increased by one. Or it does not occur, then nobody talks about the affair. The realization of gloomy dispositions are particularly frequent in wars, whom should that surprise? For this reason, the numerous "forebodings" in this time, therefore there are also a large number of such forebodings before (the battle of) Verdun or at the Somme (river in France) than at any quiet period on the front. It is sad enough that in our time one still believes in such things. Who could dispute these words thrown out with the strength of higher education and reasonable intelligence (enlightenment)? Concerned silence quieted the infantryman. And probably it lasted for a full minute before their spokesperson begins a new story of a cousin,

who not only spoke of but also wrote of his own death. But that response to the preceding conversation is not sufficient as a scientific claim. Shrugging, the young sergeant turns away.

However, in me a world ascends, for a long time, long immersed in anything but the suffocating activity of the soldier in war. What are proper forebodings/foresights? That they are justified in themselves was just now denied. And the contradiction has increased to the claim that there would be no forebodings. Now this was certainly quite an unscientific mistake on the part of the scientific staff sergeant: to put into question the proper essence of a thing, whose essence he precisely acknowledges through the fact that he negates its own inner truth and that he tries to explain genetically its frequent occurrence. But we do not discredit him for that which is found often enough in still more scientific people than him.

Whether foreboding/foreseeing carries justice or truth in itself, I do not have the means to say; it is impossible to say before I know what the proper essence of foreboding/foreseeing is. I do not know it yet. However, already the desire of the phenomenologist is awakened in me, to single out a structure from the fullness of the appearance, to seize it, to submerge oneself in it, what so far only acknowledged in the meaning of the word, henceforth it is to achieve intuitively the essence itself.

I.

That every foreseeing as such necessarily requires a related content – the “foreseen” as such –, so far stretched is the boundary of its possible contents here. Not only, for example, temporally but even future forebodings can refer to something. Within a scientific investigation a foreseeing of the result can rise up within me; here something forms apparently timeless (atemporal) – a more or less determinate proposition (Satz) or state of affairs (Sachverhalt) – the related content of a foreseeing. But not this foreseeing content, it being also identical with the content of a judgment or an apprehension, but rather the foreseeing as such – not the noematic, but the “noetic” side, to which Husserl speaks about, presents the real problem. If we avail ourselves of the division, in itself quite limited but sufficient for our purposes, of the psychic world (seelischen Welt) into “spheres of feeling – willing and thinking”, then, since the foreseeing is certainly no volition, one will only be able

to be undecided as to whether it could be taken as a feeling in such claims. Indeed it appears to have good sense to speak of felt foresights, of the aspect of being felt of any foreseeing. All the same, it is readily apparent that foreseeing - for example of a future event - is no feeling like joy or sorrow, no set of ego states (no state of being of the I), not in one way or another being a condition of the ego (the I). Nevertheless the foreseeing adds something new to the total wealth of knowledge - in the broadest sense of knowledge spoken -; the subject here appears to grasp by means of foreseeing, correctly or incorrectly remains to be seen, something from the river of future events, which was previously not accessible to him prior. What is meant by the words "aspect of being felt of the foreseeing" cannot be clarified until a more in-depth analysis occurs. Already here, however, we are allowed to include foreseeing, like everything that allows certain states of affairs to appear to the subject as subsisting now or in the future or in general, in the domain of knowledge and therefore of thought, in the sense of that threefold division. What clearly stands out from foreboding is the horror of future fortunes, which as a feeling springs from this farsighted grasp, as does all aspirations and reluctance, willing and not willing, which is rooted in this feeling and knowledge (Wissen).

Certainly "knowledge" (Wissen) is taken here in the widest sense; in a narrow and proper sense one can contrast foresight and knowledge against each other. So, after this first superficial orientation, closer determinations are vital. In this sphere, we make the fundamental and far-reaching distinction between grounding and grounded structures. I have already pursued knowledge in the narrower sense in an earlier work (Munich Philosophical Treatises, *On the Negative Judgment*). Let us take knowledge (as cognition; Erkennen) in the stricter sense as the act in which a state of affairs comes to givenness for us, in which it illuminates for us and the corresponding proposition is understood by us, then the conviction that develops for us on the ground of this understanding distinguishes itself in all clarity from the state of affairs. We designate the first as knowledge (Erkennen), the second as judgment (in one of the many possible meanings of this term). Without further analysis both contrast one another clearly enough, if one considers that the case of cognition (Erkennen) concerns a temporally punctual act, which cannot endure any more or less, whereas we can live with a conviction for any length of time, and that furthermore a set of

convictions can be maintained in ourselves without grounding themselves in an act of cognition or at any time having been grounded. From this point there is no doubt that we have to account for the grounding structures it has, not the grounded ones – i.e., those which by their essence are open to a grounding. Through foreboding/foresight we grasp – or rather we believe that we grasp – something that was previously concealed. And a conviction can also be grounded in the foreboding, which in strength and inner certainty itself need be in no way inferior to the conviction based upon knowledge (Erkennen). From the foreboding of immanent death arises the certain conviction of having to die soon.

As knowledge (Erkennen) and foresight/foreboding stand on equal rank in this relation, the task of identifying fundamental differences between the two becomes all the more urgent.