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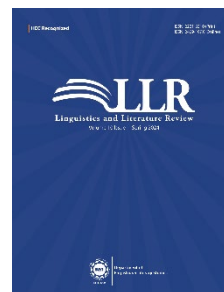
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Exploring Intentionality and Temporality in Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*: A Phenomenological Perspective

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Abstract

This research examines Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* through the phenomenological framework introduced in Edmund Husserl's book *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* which focuses on temporality and intentionality. Lightman's novel, composed of imaginative vignettes, each depicting a unique conception of time, provides a fertile ground for phenomenological analysis. Employing Husserl's notions of lived experience and consciousness, the current study explores how Lightman's narratives extend beyond the scientific domain to probe the subjective human experience of time. The study argues that *Einstein's Dreams* not only reflects Husserl's ideas on temporality - the flow of time as experienced by consciousness - but also embodies his concept of intentionality, the idea that consciousness is always directed towards something. Through qualitative textual analysis, this study highlights how Lightman's portrayal of various temporal dimensions aligns with Husserl's emphasis on the individual's perception of time, rather than an objective measurement. By intertwining scientific imagination with phenomenological philosophy, Lightman transcends the boundaries of traditional science fiction, inviting readers to engage with the deeper existential implications of time and consciousness. This research contributes to a subtle understanding of how literature can illustrate and expand phenomenological concepts, particularly in the intersection with theoretical physics.

Keywords: intentionality, phenomenology, temporality, time consciousness

Introduction

This study focuses on the unique combination of philosophy and literature as articulated in Lightman's novel *Einstein's Dreams*. The study provides a captivating inspection of various ways of experiencing time or temporality

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through a series of ingenious vignettes. Each vignette in the novel presents a world with a contrary concept of time inspired by Einstein's theory of relativity. Hence, the novel signifies how we experience and understand time which is a noteworthy area of study. The branch of philosophy that focuses on investigating human experience from a first-person perspective is known as phenomenology. It underlines the perception of life as we experience it, instead of examining and measuring it objectively.

Temporality and intentionality are important concepts in phenomenology. Temporality is about how we experience time subjectively and intentionality defines the consciousness that is always directed towards something. The above novel was selected due to its interesting approach towards both these notions which provides a unique opportunity to explore phenomenological concepts in literary discourse.

Hence, this inspection of *Einstein's Dreams* proposes to unveil how Lightman's (1993) visionary portrayal of time aligns with the law of phenomenology, improving our insight into temporality and intentionality. The study elaborates on the novel's significance as a work that questions conventional narratives about time and invites readers to delve into a humanistic discipline and existential inspection. This study is grounded in its potentiality to intensify our understanding of human consciousness and experiences through the ingenious narrative of Lightman's novel.

Lightman's novel uniquely bridges literature and philosophy. The early 20th century, marked by Einstein's theories, transformed the understanding of time and space, prompting extensive philosophical and literary exploration. His ideas sparked intense discussions among writers, leading to experimentation with fragmented and non-linear structures in narratives that portray time as a subjective construct (Randall, 1998). Hence, the scientific shift catalyzed literary innovation, illustrating how advancements in one field can reshape narrative approaches in another.

Modernist literature, as seen in Lightman's novel, departs from traditional storytelling. In the early 20th century, phenomenology evolved significantly under Husserl, its founder. He emphasized temporality and subjective experience of time, arguing that our understanding of the world is shaped by personal experience rather than objective reality. His concept of intentionality, which asserts that consciousness is always directed toward something, has had a lasting impact on philosophical thought.

Lightman's passion for the arts and humanities, combined with his theoretical physics background, enabled him to craft a narrative that is both philosophical and literary. The novel's structure consists of vignettes that explore diverse experiences of time, reflecting modernist literary influences, while its content delves into philosophical questions about human experience and temporality. It challenges readers to reevaluate their perception of time and consider how intentionality — our direct consciousness — intersects with our temporal experiences.

This research, by investigating Lightman's work through the lens of phenomenology, not only contributes to literary analysis but also engages with philosophical argumentation. The study analyzes Lightman's work, enlightening how his novel engages with time perception, while presenting an incomparable view on intentionality and temporality. It emphasizes the novel's capability to serve as a medium for investigating complex ideas about time and consciousness. Following research questions have been made in this regard:

1. How does the interconnection between intentionality and temporality provides insight into human consciousness in the context of Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*?
2. How does Lightman's use of various temporal strategies contribute to the thematic and narrative profundity of his novel?

Literature Review

To explore the themes of intentionality and temporality in Lightman's novel, contextualizing them within the wider scope of philosophical and literary discourse is essential. The structure of narration in *Einstein's Dreams* proposes various concepts of time by exploring a series of vignettes, aligning with the tradition of modernist literature. Writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf changed the structures of narration by portraying nonlinear time in subjective ways, as Tobin (1979) discussed in *Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative*. Challenging traditional linear narrative through this approach toward temporality highlights subjectivity and flexibility, akin to time.

The novel's inspection of temporality intersects with the phenomenological conception of time, as proposed by Husserl. As defined in *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Husserl's focal point on 'internal time consciousness' gives a structure for knowing

how individuals experience time subjectively, instead of time being an objective and fixed entity. Lightman's narration echoes this scheme, inviting scholars to visualize time beyond its formal measurement, with its different temporal dimensions.

Augustine's (2008), thoughts on time in his autobiographical work *Confessions* signify one of the most insightful and earliest analysis into the nature of time, human consciousness, and eternity. In *Confessions*, mainly in Book 11, Augustine engages with the conception of time, examining its authenticity, and how it is observed and measured. He contemplates the paradoxes of time considering its existence only inside the human mind and its relation to the eternal unchangeable nature of God. Augustine's philosophical investigation delves into the subjective experience of time, leading to revolutionary insights into temporality and the human condition.

Abbott's (2020) *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* offers a fundamental understanding of how time narration in literature is manipulated, which is crucial for examining Lightman's narrative. Abbott's (2020) distinction between discourse time and story time peculiarly provides the structural analysis of *Einstein's Dreams*, in which the narration bounces in between various temporal aspects. This method of narration coincides with the modernist tradition of taking part in the time narration so that it may reflect the complications of human experience.

Moreover, phenomenological studies, particularly Husserl's proposal on 'internal time consciousness,' emphasizes how individuals subjectively understand and experience time. Merleau-Ponty's (2005) *Phenomenology of Perception* extends the ideas of Husserl, investigating the relation between body, experience, and perception. As emphasized by Merleau-Ponty (2005), the depiction of human nature in experience provides a profound understanding of how the characters in the novel relate to their temporal surroundings. Time, as a mental concept, is experienced through both emotional and physical dimensions.

Additionally, Galison's (2004) *Einstein's Clocks and Poincare's Maps: Empires of Time* contribute to understanding Einstein's theories of relativity, which are shaped by influences from various fields, including the realm of literature. Scientific and historical context is provided by Galison's (2004) work to conduct temporal research on Lightman's novel; it

highlights how the novel extends Einstein's scientific ideas into the domain of human experience and fiction.

Levinas ([1969](#)) critiqued Husserl's approach to phenomenology for its focus on cognitive processes and individual consciousness, emphasizing instead the primacy of the 'Other' in moral philosophy. He argued that encounters with the 'Other' are essential moral events that surpass self-reflection and ontology. This shift marks a move from Husserl's egocentric perspective to a morality-centered phenomenology that highlights the self's definition of the 'Other.'

Schutz ([1967](#)) criticized Husserl's approach to phenomenology for neglecting the social dimensions of human experience. In *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, he introduced the concept of 'life-world,' emphasizing that understanding others is crucial to our lived experience. Schutz's ([1967](#)) work underscores the importance of social relations and the co-development of meaning, challenging Husserl's focus on individual consciousness.

Hoffmann ([1983](#)) highlighted the cultural significance of Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* in making complex scientific concepts accessible to both scientific and general audiences. Through its engaging narrative, the novel educates readers about the philosophical implications of relativity, serving as a bridge between public understanding and theoretical physics. Hoffmann ([1983](#)) argued that this approach fosters a deeper cultural dialogue around science.

Marcuse ([1964](#)), in *One-Dimensional Man*, criticized Husserl's focus on subjective experience, arguing that it neglects the socioeconomic structures shaping consciousness. He called for a phenomenology that integrates political and social awareness, emphasizing the relationship between societal conditions and individual consciousness.

Carroll ([2010](#)) explored the nature of time in Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*, highlighting how its inventive vignettes provide insight into the abstract conception of time in theoretical physics and culture. Carroll ([2010](#)) argued that the novel makes complex scientific ideas relatable to a wider audience, enriching public understanding. This blend of literary design and scientific insight enhances cultural discourse on time, merging human experience with scientific knowledge.

The literature encompassing intentionality, temporality, and phenomenology provides an affluent literary context to investigate the novel *Einstein's Dreams*. The uniqueness of the novel's thematic content and the structure of narration offers an opportunity to contribute and engage with ongoing discourse in literature and philosophy. This research provides a new perspective on the novel through the lens of phenomenology and develops a connection between complicated literary and philosophical ideas.

This existing analysis of Lightman's novel mainly focuses on poetic and scientific explanations. Precisely, there is an absence of a detailed study of how the conceptions of intentionality and temporality, central to phenomenology, are manifested in the structure of narration and the thematic content of the novel. This gap offers an opportunity to investigate how Lightman's representation of time can enrich our understanding of human consciousness from a phenomenological point of view.

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the complex themes of intentionality and temporality in Lightman's novel *Einstein's Dreams* through the lens of Husserl's phenomenological principles, as outlined in his seminal work *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*. The study intends to reread how Lightman's fictional narrative captures Husserlian concepts of time-consciousness and intentionality, thus uniquely exploring these philosophical ideas within a literary framework. Rereading classic literary works from a new theoretical perspective has recently become an interpretive norm (Iqbal, [2022](#)). This approach not only deepens our understanding of the text but also highlights the growing trend of applying philosophical frameworks to literature, enriching the interpretive possibilities of classic works.

This research employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to descriptively analyze the text, focusing on consciousness and time. It aims to reveal how Lightman's fictional world aligns with or diverges from Husserlian phenomenology, particularly regarding temporality and intentionality, while also reflecting on the broader human experience.

Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* profoundly impacted phenomenology by shifting the understanding of time from an objective to a subjective concept. He argued

that our consciousness of time is not merely a reflection of external time but a complex, layered experience shaped within the mind. Challenging the traditional view of time as a series of discrete moments, Husserl presented it as a continuous flow, experienced through the interplay of anticipation, memory, and perception.

For Husserl, the concept of intentionality implies that consciousness is always about something, as if it is directed to situations or objects, even if they are recollected from the past, immediate present, or expected in the future. This led him to explore the structures of consciousness that make this temporal experience possible (Husserl & Brough, [1991](#)). This perspective highlights how consciousness inherently shapes our engagement with time, influencing our understanding of experiences across past, present, and future.

Husserl identified three key modules of time consciousness: primal impression, retention, and protention. The first ‘primal impression’ represents the present moment, while ‘retention’ reflects an immediate connection to the recent past, distinct from conventional memory. ‘Protention’ refers to the expectation of the near future, focusing on emerging possibilities rather than specific anticipations (Husserl & Brough, [1991](#)). These modules offer a foundational framework to understand the fluid, interconnected experience of time within human perception.

Husserl’s phenomenological study distinguishes between the subjective experience of time and the objective measurement of time, which is foundational to his exploration of consciousness. Objective time is measured by clocks and calendars, representing a uniform and external entity that exists independently and not bound by the confines of individual perception (Husserl & Brough, [1991](#)). This distinction underscores the complexity of human experience and highlights the variability in how individuals perceive and relate to time.

Phenomenological perception offers a framework to understand how consciousness shapes individuals’ temporal experiences (Faheem et al., 2023). The application of Husserl’s concepts reveals that narratives construct and reflect time, demonstrating the power of storytelling in shaping our understanding of lived experiences. Seen through this lens, narratives are temporal structures that synthesize time in consciousness, deepening our grasp of the human condition. This perspective encourages

us to view anticipation and memory as fundamental concepts, rather than mere expectations or recollections.

Findings and Discussion

This study explores the themes of temporality and intentionality in Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*. By examining the novel's various temporal realities, it aims to uncover how characters experience and understand time. Drawing primarily on Husserl's concepts of internal time consciousness and intentionality, the study analyzes how Lightman's narrative conveys time's multifaceted nature while capturing the conscious significance of these shifting temporal realms. Additionally, it investigates the connection between creativity, human experience, and time in Lightman's distinctive narrative style.

Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* is celebrated for its study of time through the young Albert Einstein's fictional dreams. These dreams present countless alternate realities where time acts contrarily, which occurred while Einstein was working on his theory of relativity in Bern, Switzerland. Every scenario sheds light on the influence of time on human existence, relationships, and emotions. The success of the novel and its various versions, including an off-Broadway play, highlight its long-lasting relevance and impact.

Before venturing into literature, Lightman was intensely entrenched in the world of astrophysics. With a Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology and positions at Cornell and Harvard, he was an outstanding figure in his field. However, by late 1980s, Lightman began to feel inclined toward writing - an ingenious endeavor he found more pleasing than his scientific research. There were challenges he had to face. Leaving behind an auspicious career in physics, Lightman encountered ambiguity about his new path and the uncertain potential response from both his literary and scientific peers.

Despite initial uncertainties, Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams* achieved critical acclaim for its imaginative portrayal of time. Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* praised its contemplative and whimsical nature, comparing it to the works of Borges and Calvino. The novel's success validated Lightman's choice to pursue writing, showcasing his ability to blend scientific concepts with literary artistry. His scientific background allowed him to explore complex themes such as time, resonating with both

scientific and literary audiences. His interdisciplinary approach is evident in the narrative, where each dream sequence challenges conventional philosophies of time and highlights its subjective nature. Lightman's personal reflections on aging further deepen the narrative, capturing the transitory nature of life and the inevitable changes that come with it.

The New York Times article by Michiko Kakutani underlines the timeless significance of Lightman's novel. The novel's inspection of diverse temporal realities resonates with readers of all ages, encouraging them to contemplate how their conception of time shapes their experiences. The novel's enduring appeal is evident in its numerous translations and editions across 30 languages.

Central to phenomenology is the concept of intentionality, the notion that consciousness is constantly directed towards an object. Husserl theorized that our perceptions, experiences, and thoughts are not passive; rather, they dynamically shape our reality through their directed focus. In Lightman's narrative, intentionality is vividly demonstrated through the different means the characters interrelate with and observe time.

Each vignette in the novel presents a distinct temporal reality, illustrating how characters' consciousness and intentions shape their experiences. For example, in the dream dated "14 April 1905," time is envisioned as a circle, where events endlessly recur. This cyclical temporality influences the characters' perspectives and behaviors; some find comfort in predictability, embracing routine, while others feel trapped by its inevitability, experiencing helplessness and frustration. This contrast highlights how the cyclical nature of time affects characters' psychological states and actions, reflecting broader themes of control, predictability, and existential struggle within the narrative.

In the same way, the dream on "3 May 1905" depicts a world where cause and effect are disconnected. In this realism, the lack of expectable consequences leads to a sense of randomness and disinterest in human interfaces. The characters' intentionality is focused on their immediate experiences rather than long-term goals or plans, as the future is uncertain and detached from the present. This temporal disjuncture forces readers to reassess the significance of intentionality in providing meaning and coherence to their lives.

The lived experience of time or temporality is another essential theme in both phenomenology and Lightman's novel. Husserl's model of internal time consciousness comprises the immediate present experience known as the primal impression, retention which is the memory of the immediate past, and the anticipation of the imminent future, that is, protention. Lightman's novel explores these dimensions of temporality by presenting worlds where these temporal features are manipulated in numerous ways.

The Nows and Laters have one thing in common. With infinite life comes an infinite list of relatives. Grandparents never die, nor do great-grandparents, great-aunts and great-uncles, great-great-aunts, and so on, back through the generations, all alive and offering advice. Sons never escape from the shadows of their fathers. Nor do daughters of their mothers. No one ever comes into his own. (Lightman, [1993](#), p.117)

In the above passage from Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*, the conception of an infinite life encompassing generations offers a captivating scenario to discover how such an existence shapes human perception of time through the lens of phenomenology, mainly concentrating on intentionality and temporality. The fictional reality where "Grandparents never die, nor do great-grandparents, great-aunts and great-uncles, great-great-aunts" and onwards makes an exclusive temporal landscape where the normal human experience of death, life, and its consequential generational changes is overturned.

Akin to Mr. Kotte and Dr. Kudale's ([2024](#)) debate, phenomenology proposes a philosophical framework to explore the depths of literary works by concentrating on the subjective experience and the multifaceted relationship between creative expression and human experience. By creating a phenomenological probe using literary analysis, one can discover the nuanced interaction between the text and the reader's experience.

In a similar strain to Kotte and Kudale ([2024](#)), exploring intentionality and temporality in Lightman's narrative demonstrates how phenomenology can develop our understanding of how literary texts involve readers. Lightman's narrative techniques, which embed the characters' intentions and their temporal experiences within the story's structure, strongly align with phenomenological approaches. These approaches emphasize the depth

of human experience, revealing how literature can articulate complex concepts of time and intentionality.

In this domain, the typical markers of life's stages, the individual's rites of passage that indicate one's evolution through time, that is, babyhood, parenthood, elderhood, and death are lacking. Their absence disturbs the traditional temporal flow experienced by characters that, in reality, use these markers as signaling growth, transition, and reflection. The boundless continuance of life proposes a motionless temporal state where deviations are negligible and the typical human experiences of mortality and aging, which abruptly interrupt our consciousness and sense of self through time, are vague.

From a phenomenological perspective, this adds an intriguing dimension to the consciousness of time. Intentionality, which encompasses temporal objects such as the 'past' and 'future,' is significantly shaped by a character's legacy and the anticipation of non-existence. In Lightman's narrative, the endlessness of life can diminish the directedness and urgency of aspirations and intentions. The weight of eternal ancestry and the ongoing presence of previous generations may result in a diluted sense of individual purpose and a weakened personal narrative arc.

Deprived of the finiteness of life, the inspirations that drive choices and the individual growth that arises from expecting a future that one must make the most of, are profoundly changed. The characters are described as never approaching their own, continuously trapped in the generational and familial loops that define their existence. This might be understood as a kind of phenomenological catastrophe where the flow of temporal experience does not lead to the development of a fully personalized self. Instead, each individual remains part of an unending chain of being, with less uniqueness in their journey through time.

Furthermore, the existence of an immeasurable list of families always presenting advice can be seen as a constant overwhelming inflow of past intentions and morals enforced on the present. This could suppress the growth of personal intentions as the past deeply dictates the present actions and choices. The intentionality of characters in such a world is repeatedly intermingled with and outshined by the intentions of others. Every decision and action is not entirely one's own but remains part of a continuum of

ancestral anticipations and societal standards that never had have and never will have a fatal point.

Intentionality, in this background, is also arbitrated profoundly by familial or communal identity, rather than individual identity. The character's directedness towards future aspirations or goals is constantly about and frequently subsidiary to the family's historical legacy and communal experience. This could lead to a method of existential inertia where new experiences are not really new but are simply extensions or minor dissimilarities of the family's past experiences.

Lightman's fictional scenario, when viewed through a phenomenological lens, reveals a complex interplay of continuity that lacks the catharsis of intentionality and the clarity of individual purpose. The notion of boundless life diminishes the significance of personal milestones and the motivations tied to the awareness of mortality. Instead, it creates a rich tapestry of communal temporal existence that challenges the concepts of personal identity and individuality in the flow of time. This highlights a profound phenomenological analysis of how our understanding of time shapes our sense of identity and future direction.

The article underscores the importance of phenomenology in grasping the fundamental structure of human experiences within literary frameworks. This alignment is evident in Lightman's work. It illustrates how literature not only reflects but also shapes our understanding of time and directed consciousness toward various existential themes. Lightman's narrative invites readers to view time not merely as a chronological progression but also as a qualitative experience that deeply enriches the narrative structure and thematic depth of the literary work.

"What shapes do you see in the clouds, Michele?" asks Einstein.

"I see a goat chasing a man who is frowning"

"You are a practical man, Michele" (p. 147).

Einstein gazes at the clouds but is thinking of his project. He wants to tell Besso about his dreams, but he cannot bring himself to do it.

I think you will succeed with your theory of time," says Besso. "And when you do, we will go fishing and you will explain it to me. When you become famous, you'll remember that you told me first, here in this boat. (Lightman, [1993](#), p. 147)

Einstein laughs, and the clouds rock back and forth with his laughter.

The above paragraph explores the deep connection between the intentional focus of consciousness and temporal experiences through Einstein's internal thoughts and his conversation with Michele. As Dimitriu (2013) notes, the irregularity between retention and protention is shaped by cognitive and emotional responses, such as disappointment and surprise. This framework is reflected in the dynamic, often conflicting relationship between Einstein's future expectations and his past memories.

The passage is set in a peaceful moment with Michele and Einstein gazing at the clouds, yet their observations of what they see are extremely different, demonstrating the foundational phenomenological norm that observation is fundamentally subjective. Michele sees a "goat chasing a man who is frowning," a practical and straightforward understanding of the shapes in the clouds. Einstein, however, is absentminded with his thoughts about his hypothetical work on time, elucidating how individual projects and preoccupations can filter our insights in the present moment.

Husserl's conception of intentionality suggests that our consciousness is constantly directed towards an object, that object could be a physical entity, an idea, or a thought. In this case, Einstein's consciousness is directed towards the clouds, although he is more intensely involved with his thoughts about his theories on time. This splitting concentration highlights the complication of human consciousness as one can be physically present in one moment yet mentally drifting in another.

The conversation subtly captures Husserl's concepts of protention and retention within the temporal experience. While Michele's statement and the image in the clouds anchor in the present, they evoke Einstein's reflections on past discussions and future aspirations. Husserl describes this interplay as a constant interaction of primal impression, retention, and protention. In this context, Einstein's laughter and thoughts about sharing his complete theory with Besso and going fishing are shaped by both the immediate dialogue and his previous experiences and future expectations, influencing his emotional responses and perceptions.

Dimitriu (2013) analyses Rodemeyer's idea of symmetry between retention and protention by arguing that the 'now' certainly has duration and is affected by the past and future. In a similar vein, Einstein's experience as depicted by Lightman also underlines this notion. Einstein's

laughter, while a reaction to the present conversation, is loaded with the weight of prior experiences and the prospect of future revelations. His current experience, his “now” is not a fleeting moment but an idea of convergence where his previous understanding of time and his ambitions for future theories outspread their impact.

Einstein’s struggle to share his dreams with Besso illustrates the temporal nature of his experiences. His hesitancy combines past fears of misunderstanding with future concerns about the outcomes of sharing. This moment reflects the fluidity of consciousness, where past, present, and future shape one’s identity and decisions. As Dimitriu (2013) notes, emotions such as disappointment and surprise, highlight the asymmetry between retention and protention. In Einstein’s case, the potential for Besso’s response influences his hesitation, showing how future emotions can impact present actions.

Besso’s progressive and encouraging statement about Einstein’s future triumphs and their subsequent communal activities bring another layer of temporality to attention. It signifies a future-oriented intentionality, where Besso’s present beliefs and future anticipations exert a shaping impact on his present interfaces and possibly on Einstein’s opinions of his theoretical quests. This expectation of future events is not simply theoretical but dynamically shapes how both individuals are involved in the present, representing Husserl and Brough’s (1991) proclamation that our anticipations of the future are an essential part of our present experiences.

Through this paragraph, Lightman not only depicts the themes of consciousness and time but does so in a way that significantly echoes (Husserl & Brough, 1991), phenomenology, where intentionality and temporality are not abstract concepts but lived realities that explain the human condition. The conversation between Einstein and Michele, set contrary to the background of a simple activity like cloud-watching, becomes a deep exploration of how profoundly consciousness and time are entangled in shaping our understanding and experiences of existence.

Conclusion

This study embarked on a comprehensive exploration of temporality and intentionality within Lightman’s *Einstein’s Dreams*, while embracing a phenomenological perception to probe deeply into these themes. The analysis depicts broadly phenomenological ideologies, predominantly those

explained by Husserl to understand the numerous vignettes and narratives presented in Lightman's novel. Through this lens, the current research reveals the richer, more nuanced layers of human experience as they relate to consciousness and time, as well as the essential intentionality entrenched within human perceptions and interactions with time.

This phenomenological approach to time proposes that our experience and understanding of time is integrally subjective, colored by our current emotional conditions, individual pasts, and future expectations. All individuals experience time exceptionally influenced by personal joys, hopes, and traumas which determine how time is perceived and experienced subjectively. This subjectivity of time challenges the traditional understanding of time as an objective and uniform dimension, signifying instead that time is as diverse as the human experience itself.

To conclude, this study proclaims the importance of phenomenology as an essential tool for extending our understanding of literary texts and enriching our appreciation of their capability to explain and explore the human condition. By focusing on *Einstein's Dreams*, the study illuminates how narrative fiction can profoundly shape and reflect our understanding of existence and time, proposing valuable perceptions that resonate beyond the limitations of literary studies into the wider dominions of everyday life and philosophy. Through this phenomenological investigation, Lightman's work remains an essential text for anyone hoping to understand the complicated ways in which time defines and shapes the human experience.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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