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Phenomenology in Relation to the Challenges of Contemporary Art

Editors of the Volume: Monika Murawska and Piotr Schollenberger

CONTENTS

	Introduction	9
	Articles	
Matthew E. Gladden	A Phenomenological "Aesthetics of Isolation" as Environmental Aesthetics for an Era of Ubiquitous Art	11
Magdalena Krasińska	The Convergence of Phenomenology and Semiotics in Georges Didi-Huberman's Aesthetics of the Symptom	27
Edyta Kuzian	Aesthetic Bodily Intentionality in Dance: Developing the Classical Notion of Intentionality	41
REGINA-NINO MION	Husserl's Theory of the Image Applied to Conceptual Art	59
Błażej Mzyk	Moritz Geiger's Postulate of Aesthetics as an Autonomous Science	71
Dena Shottenkirk	Global Grammar	85
GINA ZAVOTA	Rethinking Space in Telepresence Art through Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind"	101
	About the Contributors	115

Introduction

In 1907, Edmund Husserl wrote to Hugo von Hofmannsthal:

The artist who 'observes' the world, in order to gain knowledge of nature and man for his own purposes, relates to it in a similar way as the phenomenologist. [...] When he observes the world, it becomes phenomenon for him, its existence is indifferent, just as to the philosopher (in the critique of reason). The difference is that the artist, unlike the philosopher, doesn't attempt to found the "meaning" of the world-phenomenon and grasp it in concepts, but appropriates it intuitively, in order to gather, out of its plenitude, materials for the creation of aesthetic forms (Husserl 2009, 2).¹

From its very beginnings, phenomenology has carefully treated art and aesthetic phenomena as a special sphere, depicting the fact of the appearance of things, and of the world, within its framework. The aesthetic attitude enables the phenomenal nature of an experience to be captured: 'to be is to appear.' At the same time, since the time of Husserl, phenomenological descriptions, as a result of corrections made by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and many others, began to account for not only objective but also existential and corporal dimensions. The description of 'pure essences' was perhaps not as interesting for artists and viewers of works of art as new ways to characterize aesthetic experience, taking into account the corporeal, affective, temporal, spatial, and cultural dimensions of art. In the work of some contemporary art theorists and artists one can find traces of the revolution represented by the discovery of the phenomenological method, as well as of the evolution through which it passed. Today, in the context of the emergence of new forms of art, such as performance art, installations, and video art, in the face of the changes that have occurred in thinking about architectural form and sculpture, in relation to the new languages of dance and new concepts of listening and responding to music, we are well aware that, following Heidegger, we should reject the notion that art 'belongs in the domain of the pastry chef. Essentially it makes no difference whether the enjoyment of art serves to satisfy the refined taste of connoisseurs and aesthetes or serves for the moral elevation of the mind.' Involvement in the world—which appears

¹ Originally published in: Husserl 1994, 133–136.

to us in many forms and shapes of which artists attempt to make sense—is a common point of reference for contemporary phenomenologists as well as for those who, in contesting certain traditional theoretical assumptions, define themselves as post-phenomenologists.

The artist and the phenomenologist, therefore, turn out to be closely related to each other, for their attitude towards reality is similar: the sense of wonder at the world and, at the same time, selflessness in experiencing it and a particular attention paid to it. For this reason, the paths of phenomenology and art have repeatedly crossed ultimately leading to the 'aesthetic turn' in phenomenology, when the focus of phenomenological studies shifted towards art and art-related questions. The experience of a work of art becomes a paradigm of phenomenological experience, revealing its destructive power and, at the same time, its ephemeral nature. It is the work of art that truly reveals the paradoxical nature of the phenomenological experience as such, constantly oscillating between the weakness of subjectivity faced with what is presented or—as French phenomenologists put it—what is given to it, and its ability to create meaning.

What articles collected in this volume have in common is their authors' belief that phenomenology and its conceptual tools are still perfectly suitable for writing about art. For questions that phenomenology asks about art refer to the excess typical of any work of art, to its unique way of being that verges on the status of subjectivity. Furthermore, phenomenology needs a work of art as much as the work of art needs phenomenology. Hence the aesthetic vertigo of phenomenology: on the one hand, when referring to a work of art, phenomenology reveals its own foundations, which include questions of sensuality, appearance, corporal being in the world, intentionality or inexhaustibility of description; on the other hand, it shows its own limits that are shifted with each new transgression of art, when art becomes conceptual, uses the digital image, transforms into performance or site-specific. At such moments, phenomenologist's doubts about his/her own possibilities, his/her vocation, and even about what he/she sees, prove creative asultimately-they lead to the construction of new tools that allow the description of the discovered phenomena and the manner in which they appear.

Monika Murawska & Piotr Schollenberger

 Husserl Edmund (1994), Husserliana, Dokuemnte, Briefwechsel, Band 7: Wiessenschaftlerkorrespondenz, Dodrecht: Kluwer, pp. 133–136.

^{1.} Husserl Edmund (2009), *Letter to Hofmannsthal*, trans. S. O. Wallenstein, *Site Magazin*, pp. 26–27.

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 of Aesthetics

Matthew E. Gladden*

A Phenomenological "Aesthetics of Isolation" as Environmental Aesthetics for an Era of Ubiquitous Art

Abstract

Here the concept of the human being as a "relatively isolated system" developed in Ingarden's later phenomenology is adapted into an "aesthetics of isolation" that complements conventional environmental aesthetics. Such an aesthetics of isolation is especially relevant, given the growing "aesthetic overload" brought about by ubiquitous computing and new forms of art and aesthetic experience such as those involving virtual reality, interactive online performance art, and artificial creativity.

Keywords

aesthetic overload, isolation, environmental aesthetics, Ingarden, Berleant

Introduction

Our world is filled with billions of desktop and laptop computers, smartphones, tablets, and other networked devices that serve not only as tools for workplace productivity, entertainment, and social interaction but also as portals to the world of art and aesthetic experience. Such technologies offer new ways of accessing previously existing forms of art like classical music, literature, film, and paintings; they also facilitate the development of entirely new forms of art, such as interactive art utilizing augmented or virtual reality, performance art involving the livestreaming of events captured with

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wearable cameras, and collaborative performances involving participants from around the world. Thanks to such technologies, a growing sphere of new and historical human artistic creativity awaits at our fingertips wherever we go. Moreover, ongoing developments in artificial intelligence and robotics mean that the ubiquitous computers that fill our lives do not simply convey artistic products created by human artists; increasingly, such technologies are capable of creating art themselves.

Within this context, Docherty has highlighted the growing phenomenon of "aesthetic overload": in today's world, works of art and opportunities for aesthetic experience surround us everywhere—and yet the effect of this artistic deluge is to impair rather than enhance our ability to enjoy meaningful aesthetic experiences (Docherty 2006, 68). The philosophical implications of this aesthetic overload become more complex when we consider the fact that one of the more prevalent and innovative approaches to contemporary aesthetics—that found in the diverse field of environmental aesthetics—essentially urges us to become more open to our environment and not more closed to it. Seemingly contrasting perspectives are thus offered on the question of whether contemporary human beings should seek to become "more open" or "more selective" in their embrace of aesthetic experience.

In confronting such a reality, it is especially appropriate and useful to ask what insights phenomenology might be able to offer: as a philosophical approach, phenomenology is particularly sensitive to the contents of human sensory, emotional, and intellectual experience, to the nuances of the way in which the world manifests itself to us, and to questions of presence and absence. From a phenomenological perspective, how do we understand the aesthetic overload of the modern world and its relationship to contemporary environmental aesthetics—and what sort of response might we formulate? This text attempts to answer such questions by further exploring a line of thought developed by Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden shortly before his death in 1970: namely, his concept of the human being as a "relatively isolated system" whose involvement with the world is characterized by a complex and selective interplay of openness and closure, of engagement and detachment. Ingarden's concept has enjoyed considerable influence within the fields of systems theory and cybernetics;¹ however, within the field of contemporary philosophical aesthetics, his notion of the human being as a relatively isolated system is not often discussed. In part, this may be due to the fact that his final (and arguably most substantive) exploration

¹ Ingarden's later thought on relatively isolated systems is considered innovative and influential enough that he has been counted among the more significant figures in the history of Polish cybernetics. See Sienkiewicz, Wojtala 1991, 197–199.

of the concept was presented as part of an investigation into the ontological foundations of human responsibility and not in the context of aesthetics. It is not known to what extent, if any, Ingarden might have developed a new phenomenological aesthetics grounded explicitly in his mature concept of the relatively isolated system, had he lived longer.

Here we investigate what such an aesthetics might look like and how it relates to our world's growing aesthetic overload. First, we present an overview of Ingarden's concept of the human being as a relatively isolated system. Second, we show how that concept can be applied to create an aesthetics of artistic creativity, aesthetic experience, and involvement in the world that is explicitly grounded in a phenomenology of isolation. Third, we compare and contrast this phenomenological "aesthetics of isolation" with the contemporary approach to aesthetic experience and engagement with the world offered by environmental aesthetics. We suggest that by highlighting the value of our (partial) isolation from the world, an aesthetics of isolation complements traditional environmental aesthetics and its emphasis on human openness to and oneness with the environment. Indeed, an Ingardenian aesthetics of isolation might be understood as a unique type of environmental aesthetics that can make an especially valuable contribution to the cultivation of meaningful aesthetic experience in an era of ubiquitous artwork.

1. Ingarden's Concept of the Human Being as a Relatively Isolated System

The line of thought that would eventually culminate in Ingarden's mature concept of the human being as a "relatively isolated system" can be found in works as early as *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego*, published in 1937, in which Ingarden develops a notion of the biological organism as a hierarchical structural-functional system and then uses that concept to investigate suggestions (made by Dilthey and others) that literary works bear similarities to biological organisms (see Ingarden 1957, 47–49). Ingarden further elaborated such thought over the next thirty years. His final vision of the human being as a "relatively isolated system" would be presented in his text *Über die Verantwortung: Ihre ontischen Fundamente*, written shortly before his death in 1970 as an exploration of the ontological basis of human freedom and responsibility.²

² In 1968, Ingarden presented a paper on "Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie" at the XIV International Philosophical Congress in Vienna; he later expanded that text into the book *Über die Verantwortung: Ihre ontischen Fundamente*, published in 1970, which

1.1. The Human Unity of Body, Soul, and «I»

In Ingarden's mature model, a human being consists of three parts: (1) a physical body, which is identified with a person's "biological organism" and whose function is to maintain the continued life of the individual and propagation of the species; (2) a soul that is the site of unconscious (or preconscious) sensory experiences, emotional states, and personality; and (3) an «I» that possesses a stream of conscious awareness and is capable of many forms of intentionality, including acts of thought and volition. The «I» serves as the "organizing center" of the soul that "personifies" it and "speaks" in its name (Ingarden 1987, 128, 143–46).

All living organisms possess a body, and many of the more complex types of animals appear to possess a soul; however human beings are the only entities known to possess an intentional «I». Ingarden explicitly excludes any Cartesian dualism from his model: for him, neither the soul nor «I» is a heterogenous entity bolted onto a material body; rather the «I»'s stream of consciousness finds its "ontic foundation" in both the body and the soul (Ingarden 1987, 123, 143). At the same time, neither the soul nor the «I» can be reduced to the physical structures or dynamics of the body. While the exact manner in which the soul and the «I» emerge from the physical biological organism is left unclear, Ingarden's thought appears broadly compatible with the emergentism described in Bertalanffy's General System Theory and more recent frameworks like DeLanda's assemblage theory.³

1.2. Partial Isolation from the Environment and from One's Self

There are two key ways in which such a tripartite human being is "partially isolated." First, the body includes mechanisms that partially isolate the human being from the causal influence of its external environment. Second, there are internal mechanisms that partially isolate the three parts of the human being from one another (Ingarden 1987, 131–134). One might think of these isolating mechanisms (or "isolators") as membranes separating one element or subsystem from another. The fundamental property of such iso-

was translated into Polish as "O odpowiedzialności i jej podstawach ontycznych" ("On responsibility and its ontic foundations"), within a collection of his texts on human nature, *Książeczka o człowieku*. See Ingarden 1987, 169.

³ See von Bertalanffy 1969 and DeLanda 2011, with its investigation of the critical role of gradients and selective "membranes" of various types in the emergence of life, animal intelligence, and human memory, language, and culture.

lators is that they are s e l e c t i v e: they allow certain types of causal influence to pass through them while blocking others. This selectivity has a twofold value: on the one hand, it allows the entity enclosed by such a membrane to successfully receive and assimilate those things existing beyond its boundary (like nutrients, energy, or information) that are necessary for its proper functioning; on the other hand, the entity's inner workings are protected from undesirable external influences and can thus operate in a manner free from distraction or interference (Ingarden 1987, 131–132, 138). It is such isolators that make possible whatever freedom we experience within our conscious intentional «I».

1.3. The Human Body as an Isolator

In any given moment, for example, the cells of the human body are being causally impacted by countless forces and objects arriving from the outside world—from cosmic rays, radio waves, magnetic fields, ultraviolet light, and sound waves to all of the airborne molecules that press against our skin and enter our lungs. The body itself constitutes a physical record of such effects and of the myriad biological processes occurring within its cells at a particular moment. And yet, our being is constructed in such a way that our mind is oblivious to the overwhelming majority of such subatomic- or molecular-level events occurring within the body. In a sense, the body "possesses" such information about itself and the outside world, but it is inaccessible to the soul and the «I»; the body's sensory systems screen out most of those causal influences, partially isolating the mind from its own body and from the outside world (Ingarden 1987, 136–139).

1.4. The Isolation of the «I» from Body and Soul

Similarly, the soul can be said to (unconsciously) "experience" all the sense impressions that it receives from the body, along with its own moods and emotional states. The soul experiences the ambient sounds that we hear in the environment around us; it feels the temperature and unique scent of the air and "knows" the current position of our limbs and our degree of hunger; it is the soul that continually experiences the joy or frustration that characterizes our emotional state. In principle, this information is accessible to the conscious awareness of the «I», and if the «I» makes an intentional effort to ask, "What is my body feeling in this moment? What sort of mood am I in?", suddenly this information begins to become present to its conscious awareness (Ingarden 1987, 144–146). But normally the «I» is oblivious to most of the soul's fleeting sense impressions and emotions; such information is

screened out so that the «I» can focus its attention on its desired matters and make decisions without being overwhelmed and distracted by a sea of irrelevant data (Ingarden 1987, 138–140).

1.5. Examples of Particular Isolating Mechanisms within the Human Being

Ingarden identifies numerous isolating mechanisms at work within the human being. For example, our memory partially isolates the present «I» from the world of its past; only some of our sensory experiences and conscious mental activities become consolidated into long-term memories, and when recalled, those memories are never as vivid or detailed as our current conscious experience (Ingarden 1987, 141–142). We also spend part of each day in a sleeping state in which the body is still being affected by causal influences from the outside world but the intentional «I» is blocked from receiving sense impressions that convey information about those influences (Ingarden 1987, 140–141). The fact that it takes a brief but measurable amount of time for sense data to traverse our nervous system and reach our brain also means that we never truly experience the world as it "now" exists; we are always experiencing the world as it existed a moment ago. Our corporeality thus temporally isolates us from our external environment. For Ingarden, this extends the "freedom" of the «I» by granting the «I» an additional moment in which it can act uninfluenced by events that have already happened in the world (Ingarden 1987, 146–147).

2. (Re)constructing an Ingardenian "Aesthetics of Isolation"

Although Ingarden did not explicitly develop such a phenomenology of isolation into an "aesthetics of isolation," it is possible to find indications of what such an aesthetics might look like. For example, building on Bergson's observations, Ingarden notes that as an instrument for gathering information from the environment, each of our sensory organs ignores the overwhelming majority of effects created within it by forces arriving from the outside world; it isolates the soul and «I» from the information that such influences could potentially yield. Instead, each sensory organ allows only a tiny, specialized selection of processes occurring in the external world to enter and interact with it in a functional way that results in the sensory organ conveying sense data inward toward the conscious core of the human being (Ingarden 1987, 137). In the case of our eyes and ears, it is only electromagnetic radiation and sound waves falling within a certain narrow range of frequency and intensity that are allowed through our body's screens to generate sense impressions for the soul and the «I» (Ingarden 1987, 137–138). One might suppose that when our eyes are "closed" we are sensorily shut off from the world, and when our eyes are "open" we are experiencing the world. But the point emphasized by an aesthetics of isolation is that even when our eyes are "open," they are still closed to the majority of the processes occurring right in front of us in the world and to the information that they could offer.

2.1. The Artistic Product as the Vestiges of Reality That Are Not Blocked Out

In this view, the everyday natural world of our experience—the *Lebenswelt* in which we exercise artistic creativity and enjoy aesthetic experiences—is not the world that positively reveals itself but rather the scant sliver that remains after most of reality has been blocked out and concealed from us. An aesthetics of isolation challenges the notion that understands paintings, sculptures, and architectural works as primarily "positive" constructs built up by adding and assembling components; it calls us to consider the way in which such artistic products are actually the perceptible "residue" that remain after most of reality has been filtered away.

The view of artistic products as the remnants that survive after a process of screening or deletion is not a new one. In Madrigal XII, Michelangelo writes that within the rough block of stone there exists "*Una viva figura, / Che là più crescie u' più la pietra scema*"—or, as Roscoe renders it, "The more the marble wastes / The more the statue grows" (Buonarroti 1900, 36; Fletcher Roscoe 1868, 169). Similarly, in Sonnet XV, Michelangelo suggests that a sculptor cannot form any concept for a sculpture that does not already find its realization hidden within the unhewn block, ready to be revealed by removing portions of the stone.⁴ Within the context of an aesthetics of isolation, one might think of the rough stone block as the fullness of the world's objective reality; the completed statue is what is left for us to experience the natural world of our everyday lives—after our body and soul have screened out most of the world's reality, thereby "sheltering" the «I» from it. Just as there is an infinite variety of statues that might be derived from a single unhewn block of stone, there are countless "worlds" of experience

⁴ "Non ha l' ottimo artista alcun concetto, / Ch' un marmo solo in sè non circonscriva / Col suo soverchio [...]" (Buonarroti 1904, 17).

that might be derived from the single objective reality, depending on which of its causal influences a living being's isolators screen out and which they allow to provide content for the being's conscious awareness.

2.2. The Dynamism of Partial Isolation and the Variety of Aesthetic Experience

Ingarden suggests that human isolating mechanisms are dynamic: they can change over the course of our lifetime as we grow and develop; they can, to some extent, be altered by medical disorders, drugs, spiritual practices or psychological techniques, or acts of will; and they can be overpowered or destroyed by particularly forceful stimuli. In this way, flows of causality and information that were once closed may become open, or vice versa (Ingarden 1987, 144–145). Our artistic creativity and aesthetic experiences can be affected by such changes to our isolating mechanisms; conversely, in principle, artistic productivity and the purposeful cultivation of aesthetic experiences might be used to "stretch" or "narrow" the windows of our isolators and shift their focus, thereby altering the types of sensory and emotional information that we receive within the conscious awareness of our «I». The fact that human beings' isolators vary in strength and selectivity might partly account for the fact that different people can enjoy very different aesthetic experiences of the same artistic product. Similarly, some of the great artists seem to "see" and "hear" and "experience" reality differently than typical human beings: in some cases, that unique way of being in the world might result from atypical sensory, emotional, and intellectual mechanisms that artists possess which reveal aspects of the world from which most people are isolated.

2.3. The Human Being as a Perpetual Architect of Partial Isolation

From among all the arts, there appears to be a particular link between a human being as relatively isolated system and the artistic practice of a r c h it e c t u r e. Pearson and Richards note that thinkers like Heidegger, Merleau--Ponty, Bachelard, Zimmerman, and others have (in different ways) identified our human ability to "dwell" within a space—rather than simply be "located" within it—as something that distinguishes us from other types of living creatures.⁵ An aesthetics of isolation highlights the active, continuous, and essential role that different elements of our being play in constructing

⁵ See Pearson, Richards 1994, 2, and its appraisal of Zimmerman 1985.

such dwelling-places. If we think of architecture as the process by which we "impose a schema on space"⁶ or as the dynamics which "shape spaces, boundaries, and pathways that structure individual behaviors and social acts" (Fisher 2016), then from their first moments, our body, soul, and «I» are inherently "architectural" and "architecting": by their very nature they possess and employ an array of physical, sensory, emotional, and intentional isolators that create boundaries whose structures first segregate "inside" from "outside," "present" from "past," and then allow the carefully regulated passage of information and objects between those spheres.

3. The Aesthetics of Isolation as a Complement and Counterpart to Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics

In surveying contemporary environmental aesthetics, Carlson distinguishes two approaches: (1) "cognitive, conceptual, or narrative positions" which hold that aesthetic appreciation of the environment depends on human beings' possession of some particular "knowledge and information" about nature, such as that which the natural sciences offer; and (2) "non-cognitive, non-conceptual, or ambient approaches" which hold that human beings' aesthetic appreciation of the environment can arise from other dynamics such as "engagement, emotion arousal, or imagination." What both approaches share is a sense that modern aesthetics had come to focus too narrowly on human beings' interaction with artificially constructed works of art like paintings, sculptures, and musical compositions; in doing so, aesthetic thought neglected our ability to derive rich aesthetic experiences from interactions with our broader environment, including with the natural world (Carlson 2016).

3.1. The "Openness" Emphasized by Cognitive Environmental Aesthetics

At the heart of both approaches is a sense that authentic aesthetic experience depends on an openness to one's environment. The more open one becomes, the more opportunities arise for meaningful aesthetic experience. In the case of cognitive approaches, such "openness" includes a basic physical openness of one's sensory organs to those elements of the natural world that are revealing themselves, as well as an intellectual openness to the knowledge that science can provide regarding the complexity and rich-

⁶ See Tuan 1977, 36, and its discussion in Pearson, Richards 1994, 9.

ness of nature; emotional openness is not particularly relevant. Foster notes that such approaches are often oriented toward the "factual" (Foster 1998, 129). Such facts about one's environment are found in accurate sensory perceptions and scientific knowledge; without these, one might enjoy a powerful emotional response to the sight of some landscape, but it will not rise to the level of a full aesthetic experience. From the perspective of an Ingardenian phenomenology of isolation, one might say that such cognitive approaches emphasize the value of widening (and perhaps redirecting) the "windows" through which the isolators of one's body allow selected sense data to reach the soul, the soul allows sense impressions to reach the «I», and the «I» allows sense impressions (and scientific knowledge) to enter its conscious awareness.

3.2. The "Openness" Emphasized by Non-cognitive Environmental Aesthetics

In the case of non-cognitive environmental aesthetics, the positively valued form of "openness" to one's environment is less dependent on one's eagerness to receive certain semantic content and more dependent on a willingness to experience, ponder, and appreciate those emotions spurred by one's immersion in the environment. Foster suggests that the non-cognitive approach calls us to "open ourselves to the immensity of what has been, most of the time and for most of us, elsewhere" (Foster 1998, 133), while Carlson and Berleant suggest that it involves an "open, engaging, and creative mode of appreciation" (Carlson, Berleant 2004, 17). Similarly, Berleant emphasizes the need for openness that involves overcoming "restricted attention" and "the tunnel vision of ordinary life"—in other words, overcoming the action of a human being's internal isolators (Berleant 1999, 15). From the perspective of a phenomenology of isolation, such approaches emphasize the importance of expanding (and perhaps shifting) the openings through which the body's isolators allow certain sense data to reach the soul, the soul allows sense impressions and emotions to reach the «I», and the «I» allows sense impressions and emotions to enter its conscious awareness.

3.3. Berleant and Ingarden: Two Complementary Understandings of the Aesthetic Role of Isolation

We are now in a position to compare and contrast contemporary environmental aesthetics (represented here by Berleant) with an Ingardenian aesthetics of isolation and to identify ways in which they meaningfully challenge and complement one another. Berleant refers explicitly to "isolation" in connection with aesthetic experience: such isolation is a negative that can be overcome by cultivating a greater (emotional) openness to and oneness with the environment. Thus in a discussion of the aesthetic appreciation of gardens, Berleant notes "a separation, both physical and psychological," that "lies between the observer and what is observed." For Berleant, such separation reflects a detrimental "Cartesian dualism of mind and body, of subject and object, a separation whose influence is still powerful." Such a dualistic view—which accepts various kinds of separation and distancing as something necessary or even beneficial—impacts not only our ability to aesthetically appreciate nature but also our relationships with one another: "The social consequences of this ideal are likely to be displacement, isolation, alienation, competition, and conflict" (Berleant 2005, 34).

For Berleant, the concept of "isolation" is also integral to a flawed and outdated Kantian aesthetics that "identifies the art object as separate and distinct from whatever surrounds it, isolated from the rest of life" (Berleant 2005, 4). With the Kantian aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness, "Division, distance, separation, and isolation are equally the order of the art and the order of the experience [...]" (Berleant 2005, 5). Berleant suggests that rather than fostering such "division and alienation," art and aesthetic experience may be used to bring about "reconciliation and harmony" (Berleant 2005, 32). Indeed, Berleant positions isolation as the opposite of both art and love; he writes that "[...] both art and love evoke a sense of shared living, a certain continuity and oneness, an intimacy in which divisions disappear. Love, indeed, is a binding force that melts boundaries" (Berleant 2005, 157).

An Ingardenian aesthetics of isolation, on the other hand, does not simply reject the notion that partial isolation is something "negative"; it argues that partial isolation is something that every human being must possess in order to have the very possibility of enjoying artistic creativity, aesthetic experience, and all forms of free and responsible involvement in the world. It is true that in order to be involved with the world, human beings need a certain "openness" that allows us to understand and manipulate our environment (Ingarden 1987, 123–124). But were it not for the isolators that partially shield us from the world, there would be no portion of the soul or the «I» that is "its own"; we would be swept deterministically to and fro by all the causal influences pouring in from the outside world, and there would be no space in which we could sense, feel, think, decide, or act freely (Ingarden 1987, 127). It is only by blocking out most of the world's realities that our being is able to create such sheltered "inner" spaces within which, for exam-

ple, an artist can develop his or her vision for a new painting or the reader of a novel can patiently nurture his or her own unique interpretation of the work and relish his or her emotional response.

3.4. The Aesthetics of Isolation as Environmental Aesthetics?

There is a sense in which an aesthetics of isolation might even be said to be "more environmental" than typical environmental aesthetics. Namely, both cognitive and non-cognitive approaches to environmental aesthetics view the modern human being as increasingly distanced and disconnected from the natural world, insofar as they focus on the contemporary challenge of creating meaningful aesthetic experience for the emotional soul (in the case of non-cognitive approaches) or the intentional «I» (in the case of cognitive approaches). However, Ingarden reminds us that our physical biological organism—our body—is already and always engaged in a rich, complex array of countless forms of causal interaction and engagement with the entire natural world (Ingarden 1987, 137). Most of the information about the world and its aesthetic qualities that the body receives will never be manifested to the soul or the «I»; it will remain forever hidden within the body. But it nevertheless raises the possibility of aesthetic "experiences" that involve neither sensation, emotion, or intentionality and yet are, in some sense, both "ours" and quite "real."

3.5. The Importance of Partial Isolation in an Age of "Aesthetic Overload"

One might argue that a well-developed aesthetics of isolation becomes increasingly valuable today as a counterbalance to conventional environmental aesthetics, amidst what Docherty (in a discussion of Benjamin and Vattimo) refers to as the "information/aesthetic overload" of the Information Age and its negative impact on our ability to aesthetically appreciate anything (Docherty 2006, 68). The rise of the Internet, mobile computing, streaming video, social media, virtual reality, and related technologies means that our environment is now teeming with countless devices that offer us endless access to downloadable literary works, films, and music; virtual museums; live-streamed performance art; collaborative online concerts; and new forms of interactive fiction and shared virtual worlds. Such devices are not simply tools for mass entertainment; they are transmitters and agents of both "popular" and "high" culture. Moreover, autonomously functioning software is increasingly capable of creating music, paintings, poetry, literature, fashion designs, and other works of art with a degree of ingenuity, emotional and cultural sensitivity, "imaginativeness," and technical skill that approaches that of human artists.⁷ This means that the 15+ billion smartphones, tablets, and other networked devices that fill our world (Nordrum 2016) are not only capable of transmitting works of art created by human artists; the artificial agents embodied in many such devices are also capable of becoming the creators of original works of art—of becoming art-ists—themselves. Increasingly, even a modest smartphone has the potential to craft an endless stream of novel, unique, personalized, and deeply meaningful works of art.

In such a world, the overflowing sea of art becomes inescapable. It is no longer a challenge to f i n d artistic objects or opportunities for aesthetic experience; they find us through the glowing screens that lurk in every corner of our lives. The greater challenge is to i s o l a t e ourselves from most of them, so that each day we might be able to enjoy, say, one true and meaningful aesthetic experience rather than a thousand fragmentary "semiexperiences." An aesthetics of isolation points toward a new type of environmental aesthetics that might help us navigate such a reality.

Conclusion

From a phenomenological perspective, contemporary environmental aesthetics emphasizes the manifold ways in which the world reveals itself to us. An Ingardenian aesthetics of isolation suggests that perhaps a more philosophically interesting dynamic is not the way in which very narrow shards of the world manifest themselves to us and make themselves p r e s e n tbut the way in which the overwhelming majority of reality is actively made a b s e n t—and the essential role that such partial isolation plays in enabling human artistic creativity and aesthetic experience. If conventional environmental aesthetics asks how we can enjoy experiences of greater oneness with the natural world, the aesthetics of isolation asks why it is that we are not a l r e a d y one with such reality to start with; it seeks to understand those mechanisms of our body, soul, and «I» that prevent us from enjoying a single overwhelming aesthetic experience that encompasses the whole of time and space and all of the unglimpsed aesthetic qualities embedded within the universe. Each approach elicits a different set of insights, and if used as

⁷ For ongoing developments in the fields of artificial creativity and robotic art, see, e.g., McCormack, d'Inverno 2012; Besold *et al.* 2014; Herath *et al.* 2016.

complementary tools they enrich our ability to understand those forms of artistic creativity and aesthetic experience that exist today, as well as those that may emerge in the future. In an era in which new forms of art and aesthetic experience reach out to us continually—aided by the proliferation of powerful and ubiquitous new technologies—the ability to both open a n d close ourselves to our environment's countless forms of self-manifestation can be expected to become an ever more important element of the search for meaningful aesthetic experience.

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The Convergence of Phenomenology and Semiotics in Georges Didi-Huberman's Aesthetics of the Symptom¹

Abstract

The goal of this article is to present the aesthetics of the symptom proposed by Georges Didi-Huberman, which in the context of the theory of the image attempts to integrate a phenomenological and semiological description. The article starts with his critique of the discipline of art history as dominated by an effort to make it a science and to widen the range of knowledge about images, whose most striking manifestation the French author finds in Erwin Panofsky's iconological method, which is modelled on the "neo-Kantian" key, i.e., the philosophy of symbolic forms. Didi-Huberman proposes going back to the conclusions drawn from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, where we find, for example, the concept of the aesthetic idea. The impreciseness of experience and impossibility of reducing experience to a concept should, as Didi-Huberman contends, be given due recognition in the history of art, which he justifies with the application of the term "symptom" adapted from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. The symptom undermines the central position of the art historian as a subject of knowledge and opens the theory of the image to lack-of-knowledge. In turn, the aesthetics of the symptom is supposed to encompass both the meaningful and the phenomenal.

Keywords

symptom, aesthetics of the symptom, phenomenology, semiotics, history of art, Georges Didi-Huberman, Erwin Panofsky, Immanuel Kant

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The relationship between sense perception and experience articulated through concepts is a special area of interest of aesthetics. While research in semiotics, for instance with regard to the theory of the image, focuses on an aspect of signs that is already constituted, phenomenological investigations endeavor to capture the very moment of perception in which conceptual form has not yet been set. This sort of dialectic of the aesthetic experience, which assumes a tension between the phenomenal and the conceptual aspect of experience, was—in a way—already expressed in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, although it there acquired a harmonious form of free play of the imagination and the intellect.

The abovementioned tension within aesthetic experience is strongly emphasized in the conception of Georges Didi-Huberman, which he builds with reference to selected Renaissance images and through a critique of his own academic discipline, where the interpretation of painting plays an important part. Drawing attention to the maximum potential of Erwin Panofsky's positivistic history of art and iconological method of interpretation, Didi-Huberman proposes a kind of "regress" back to Kant and, in particular, to his *Critique of Judgment*. The conclusions drawn from this treatise on fine arts and aesthetic experience were, according to Didi-Huberman, temporarily lost by most influential art historians—making a space for historians' hopes for the "scientification" of their discipline that they found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the neo-Kantian trend of the philosophy of symbolic forms.

The resistance to this dominant "scientified" option for the history of art, manifested by Didi-Huberman foremost in his introduction to Confronting Images: *Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, became a point of departure for its author's formulation of his own methodological position, which was relatively general and expressed succinctly but which, I believe, well demonstrates Didi-Huberman's intentions. His position is formulated as the aesthetics of the symptom, whose aim is to integrate two modes of describing a painting: the phenomenological one and the semiotic one. The aim of this article is to present what, in Didi-Huberman's thought, constitutes the basis for the aesthetics of the symptom—namely: 1) the notion of the symptom, located as a counterpart to symbolic function; 2) application of the symptom in conducting a critical study of the history of art as k n o w l e d g e; 3) the two paths of the "development" of the history of art as a science based on neo-Kantian elements. Only preceded by these investigations can the point regarding integration of the phenomenological order with the semiological order be more fully presented, which will return at the end of this text.

The Symptom

The notion of the symptom in Didi-Huberman's thought, although adapted from Freudian psychoanalysis, has no clinical application. It refers to the realm of critique of knowledge. As we read:

It is because he reopened in dazzling fashion the question of the subject—a subject henceforth thought as split or rent, not closed, a subject inept at synthesis, be it transcendental—that Freud was also able to throw open, and just as decisively, the question of knowledge (Didi-Huberman 2005, 6).

In psychiatry, the symptom is "the unpredictable and immediate passage of a body into the aberrant, critical state" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 260) in which gestures lose their clear representational function. In Freudian thought, the symptom includes the works of a hidden structure; it is antithetical and at the same time totally devoid of sense. An example of a symptom is given in an observation of a patient who with one gesture, as a woman, clutches her garments to her body while with another, in the role of a man, is trying to tear it off herself. The simultaneity of these two gestures is characterized by intrinsic contradiction and, according to Freud, represents an attempt at hiding an unconscious fantasy. The symptom is thus characterized by singularity, while at the same time it is an "implementation of a signifying structure" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 261). It does it in such a way however, that its sense cannot be identified as a stable meaning, but at the most as a puzzle or a pointer. The symptom, as a semiological entity, is therefore located between an event and a structure.

What symptom constitutes in the context of the image is explained by the experience of forgetting a dream, as described by psychoanalysis. It is important to note the distinction that Didi-Huberman makes between a pictorial image and a dreamt image. An image, as a work of art is, in a certain sense, a social entity: it is shared and received, as well as understood in a certain way. Being aware and seeing accompany its perception. The aim of a dreamt image, on the contrary, is not to be understood. Dreaming is characterized by isolation, but also, as a consequence, by the power of the gaze. "Paintings are of course not dreams"—says Didi-Huberman—"We see them with open eyes, but this may be what hinders us and makes us miss something in them" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 156). This "something" plays a particularly important role in the experience of a painting: it is situated "in place of an opening and a scission" where eyesight is torn, or rent, between seeing, characteristic of being awake, and watching, characteristic of dream-

ing. "In this rend, then, something is at work that I cannot grasp—or that cannot grasp me wholly, lastingly—because I am not dreaming" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 156). This "something" that escapes me when I am conscious seems related to the pathic experience described by Bernhard Waldenfels, when he writes about

[...] something which provokes sense without being meaningful itself yet still as something by which we are touched, affected, stimulated, surprised and to some extent violated. I call this happening pathos, Widerfahrnis or affect (Waldenfels 2007, 74).

In Didi-Huberman's thought this "something" present in the image can be captured by the paradigm of forgetting a dream, which is not the same as dr e a m i n g. Dreaming, understood as a certain closing of the eves to an image (the image being a work of art), symbolizes the aesthetic theories that Didi-Huberman considers "the most beautiful" and at the same time "the most desperate, too, since they are generally doomed to stalemate or madness" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 157). These kinds of aesthetics turn to mere impression only, to impenetrability of matter and lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, the art historian is characterized by a desire for knowledge. He wakes up "every morning with the sense of a sovereign, but forgotten dream visuality" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 157). The state of forgetting implies the dream's fragmentation directly after waking, it implies its being destined to falling apart. Forgetting, then, is not a lack of memory but a problem of thoughts, a process of recollecting of the substance of the dream. This "something", which is a trace—a set of remains, a signal about forgetting—is the symptom.²

² The relation of the notion of the "trace" to the term *Nachleben* present in Aby Warburg's writings, to which Didi-Huberman refers in his *L'image survivante*, opens many interpretative possibilities when confronted with Derrida's deconstructive figures, as is explored by Andrzej Leśniak in his monographic book dedicated to Didi-Huberman. In it we read: "If we undertake a parallel reading of Didi-Huberman's text and fragments from Derrida, we need to take into consideration the far-reaching consequences of comparing *Nachleben* and *trace*. From the perspective sketched by deconstruction, *Nachleben* would not be only and exclusively a notion describing the (first and foremost time-related) structure of the image and its temporal complexity. This notion would also refer to the manner in which meanings are generated in an image. If an image exists thanks to perdurance, then its every reading and every interpretative attempt has to be constructed with an awareness of the theoretical consequences of applying the figure of the *trace*, that is to say, of ambiguity, of the original suspension between presence and absence" (Leśniak 2010, 204).

Didi-Huberman enriches the description of the symptom by its relation to symbol, and especially to the symbolic function of the image proposed by Ernst Cassirer and adapted to the methodology of art history by Erwin Panofsky. Symbolic form is internally integrated; it displays a "formal integrity" that implies, "in the end, that it is an object of reason, that it has all the characteristics of the Idea, and that it subjects the world of individual phenomena to its transcendental law" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 169). The integrity of the symbolic form, tending toward subordination of a multiplicity of forms to one single idea of reason, is supposed to make it possible to express this function "in terms of knowledge" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 169), which in Didi-Huberman's opinion brings this neo-Kantian formalism closer to metaphysics than to positivism:

That [symbol] had been envisaged from the angle of the primacy of relation over terms and of function over objects (or substance) indicates the importance of the road travelled, the full interest of the project undertaken by Cassirer and then by Panofsky. [...] But Cassirer and then Panofsky were deceived in their belief that, thanks to such a principle, they had definitively gone beyond the traditional givens of metaphysics (Didi-Huberman 2005, 169–170).

The mistake of the formalists, according to Didi-Huberman, lay in reducing relations to the "unity of synthesis," which made their method incomplete and even idealistic.³ This is also the reason why Didi-Huberman finds value not in the symbol's unifying function, which is in the center of Cassirer and Panofsky's conceptual system, but in Freud's meta-psychology of work, where the symptom is that which "breaks up all discursive unity, [...] intrudes upon and smashes the order of the Idea, opens systems and imposes something unthinkable" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 169).

³ An authentic relation—one whose account includes symptoms and does not ignore them or incorporate them into synthesis—resembles in its form a fishing net. Didi-Huberman's description of this relation, which he presents in the context of the symptom, is very plastic: "When we draw the net toward us (toward our desire for knowledge), we cannot help but notice that the sea for its part has withdrawn. It flows everywhere, if flees, although we can still make out a bit of it around the knots of the net, while formless algae signify it before drying out on our shore. We understand, reading Freud, that it is the psychoanalyst's business to recognize that when he draws the net toward him, the essential has still disappeared. The fish are indeed there (figures, details, fantasies such as art historians also love to collect), but the sea that makes them possible has kept its mystery, present only in the damp glow of a few algae stuck to the edges" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 170).

In Panofsky's theory, a symbol contains a certain substance of meaning. In terms of methodology it corresponds with deduction. As Didi-Huberman says, "[t]he deduction opens only to close again," it gives meaning and at the same time it "closes itself to other possible links, to other virtual associations" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 173). The symptom, which is dynamic in nature, is in turn not reducible to a function; it corresponds with the psychoanalytic notion of work, which eventually is also expressed "in a crude material language of the meaning"; but on the other hand, we are dealing here with a "branching out" of associations of sense and visualization of "equivocal knots and the conjugation of symbolic treasure with markers of notmeaning" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 178). Meanwhile, in Panofsky's theory we can find an equation between the symbol and the symptom. To him, symptoms are symbolic forms or allegories present in various works of art, recognized in the third stage of his method, i.e., iconographical interpretation.⁴ Works of art are, in Panofsky's thought, manifestations (symptoms) of a general history of spiritual culture, and the deeper sense of works of art is based on symbolic forms. Didi-Huberman does not deny the symptom and the symbol a common denominator; however, we will not find out how to discover their common sense if we apply the formula of the question "What does the symptom symbolize?" The symbolic dimension of the symptom is indeed not reducible to a simple relation of two elements; it constitutes "an open set of relations between sets of terms that can themselves be opened" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 179). Didi-Huberman says:

[The symptom] symbolizes events that have taken place and also events that have not taken place. It symbolizes each thing and also its contrary [...] And by symbolizing it represents, but it represents in a way that distorts (Didi-Huberman 2005, 179).

That which the symptom informs about does not allow any sort of transcription, because the symptom is a rupture. The symptom "speaks to us of the insistence and return of the singular in the regular [...] of the rupture of equilibrium and of a new equilibrium, an unprecedented equilibrium that soon will break itself again" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 162). For this reason the symptom requires a—specifically hermeneutic in spirit—incessant renewing of interpretation. The theory of art, on the other hand, confronted with the symptom, faces a different task: not distinguishing the symptom from

⁴ Panofsky's method proposes three stages, as follows: a pre-iconographical description, an iconographical analysis, and an iconographical interpretation (Panofsky 1939, 3–17).

the symbol but capturing the moment "in which knowledge of the symbol is traumatized and interrupts itself in the face of the not-knowledge of the symptom," which propels its own rich symbolicity into "an exponential spurt of all the conditions of meaning operative in an image" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 180).

The Symptom and Critique of Knowledge

The humanities also have their own symptom, broadly speaking; and in particular, the history of art, which from the start (from Giorgio Vasari) up until modern iconology has always eliminated what in an image constitutes a trace, a reminiscence, a manifestation of forgetting. The psychoanalytical experience—aided by such notions as deferred action, repetition, deformation, and overworking—is able to equip the methodology of the history of art with critical instruments that will enable a reflection into, as Didi-Huberman says, the very status

[...] of this object of knowledge with regard to which we will henceforth be required to think what we gain in the exercise of our discipline in the face of what we thereby lose: in the face of a more obscure and no less sovereign constraint to not-knowledge (Didi-Huberman 2005, 7).

Meanwhile, art historians have been situating themselves "in a neo-Kantian way" in the center of knowledge created by them, looking for signs and symbols in works of art—without, however, paying attention to the symptom, because "[t]hat would have been to accept the constraint of a notknowledge, and thus to dislodge themselves from a central and advantageous position, the powerful position of the subject who knows" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 161–162). The admission that knowledge is ruptured like the image would lead to a loss of the central, privileged position of the art historian, while at the same time it would allow the neutralization of the "methodological sufficiency" and "closure" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 8) of this discipline.

With regard to this, Didi-Huberman claims that:

[...] [b]ooks on the history of art nonetheless know how to give us the impression of an object truly grasped and reconnoitred in its every aspect, like a past elucidated without remainder. Everything here seems visible, discerned. Exit the uncertainty principle. The whole of the visible here seems read, deciphered in accordance with the self-assured—apodictic—semiology of a medical diagnosis. And all of this makes, it is said,

a science, a science based in the last resort on the certainty that the representation functions unitarily, that it is an accurate mirror or a transparent window, and that on the immediate ('natural') or indeed the transcendental ('symbolic') level, it is able to translate all concepts into images, all images into concepts (Didi-Huberman 2005, 3).

Panofsky's model fits into the iconographic discourse of knowledge, into "the positivist myth of the omni-translatability of images" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 3), about which also Gottfried Boehm writes that "it constitutes only a system of reference for the contents of images and their identification" (Boehm 1978, 445). As Boehm remarks, the obviousness of the assumption about translatability of the image into language, being a basic foundation of the discourse on art, has caused the question about the relation between the image and the word, this fundamental question, to be obscured (Boehm 1978, 447). Even the very fact of "one-directionality" implied by Panofsky's method proves the iconographic model to be insufficient:

If [...], as can be demonstrated based on the example of Panofsky's methodology, interpretation follows the idea of substitution, then a translation from language back to image is in fact impossible—and that, because its iconic thickness has not been translated and can only count on an emphatic call (Boehm 1978, 456).

The problem is, that the essence of images lies not in their preceding the metaphysical distinction between sign and meaning, inside and outside, sensuality and concept, form and content; however, art theory has managed to transfer onto the image a model characteristic of language, namely the "independence of meaning from its sensible manifestation" (Boehm 1978, 449). The source of the problem created by previous methodologies of art history lay in its deep conviction that works of art should be freed from their outer visual dressing so as to uncover their foundation, which is the meaning (contents) of the image. Panofsky's division of the image into separate levels of sense was an example of a denial of the notion that a work of painting was entitled to the right of autonomy—to its own separate language. With regard to this, Boehm poses a rhetorical question: "And what if—once the subsequent layers have been lifted—the image disappears, i.e., dissolves in language? Is the image a puzzle, and only its solution counts?" He then states:

Within the framework of this methodology, the image [...] itself does not create meaning and is not capable of representing its own truths. More precisely, the image 'is' so long as it refers to the sphere of the logos, with which it merges in an interpretation (Boehm 1978, 452–453). The symptom, in turn, seems not to be leading toward *logos*. It is indeed irrational, and because of that it discourages those investigators who cherish positivistic inclinations. Due to the rent and unsettling character of the image, one must, however—as Didi-Huberman claims—at least try to draw critical and methodological consequences from the Freudian study of the symptom, which is characterized by the fact that it "has no vocation as symbolic synthesis or as totalizing interpretation" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 157).

Two Kantian Keys

Didi-Huberman thus writes about Panofsky's inspiration by neo-Kantian theory while discussing the latter's iconological method:

Panofsky turned to Immanuel Kant because the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* had managed to open and reopen the question of knowledge, by defining the play of its limits and its subjective conditions. [...] By grasping the Kantian or neo-Kantian key—via Cassirer—Panofsky opened new doors for his discipline. But no sooner were these doors open than he seems to have securely closed them again, allowing critique only a brief moment of passage: a current of air (Didi-Huberman 2005, 5).

According to Didi-Huberman (and Boehm), the iconological method leads directly from forgetting about the visual dimension of the image, one that does not allow a transcription to the language of concepts. Iconological interpretations are supposed to display a certain "totality," a holistic nature, without leaving space for "the rest." This is how, in Didi-Huberman's view, three engravings by Albrecht Dürer are analyzed.

In his famous work dedicated to Albrecht Dürer, Panofsky interprets three masterpieces produced by Dürer in the span of two years, titled *Knight, Death and Devil; St. Jerome in His Study;* and *Melancolia I*. Although they do not constitute a set, Panofsky noticed in them a unity of content, i.e., an expression in a symbolic form of three different life paths that reflect the scholastic classification of the virtues as moral, theological and intellectual (Panofsky 1955, 151). Thus in the first engraving we find a symbolic representation of a Christian's life in the sphere of human activity, decisions, and deeds; in the second one, a life devoted to religious contemplation; in the third one, the destiny of a secular genius in his earthly life, revolving around the sphere of knowledge, arts and imagination. All three interpretations are very substantial, and they explain in a symbolic way every detail, even the smallest, noticeable in the image. The interpretation of the *Melancolia I* is

the most ample. Panofsky interprets this work as a representation of the destiny of the Renaissance artist, and in fact as a symbolical self-portrait of Dürer himself. Didi-Huberman's doubts regarding the deciphering of the message of the third engraving relate to an (in his view) neglected religious aspect, the symptom. Noting a similarity between the figure of Melancholy and Dürer's image of Christ Man of Sorrows from the frontispiece of the Small Passion (created in 1511), and referring to the relationship between Melancolia I and St. Jerome (both of which were finished in the same year and share a particular mood and a number of complementary oppositions), Didi-Huberman states that in his third engraving Dürer "also articulates a religious paradigm, the imitation-of-Christ paradigm, in which melancholy found a field of application as paradoxical as it was sovereign" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 174). Didi-Huberman also expresses his astonishment that such an accomplished expert on the Renaissance as Panofsky would not have considered the aforementioned context. Didi-Huberman finds an explanation of this fact in the neo-Kantian foundations of iconology, according to which it aims at acquiring "a synthetic unity." If Panofsky had introduced into his interpretation of the Melancolia I the motif of imitatio Christi, it would have resulted in contributing an over-determination, equivocation, and antithetical sense to the analysis; it "would have complicated, and doubtless partly ruined, the clarity of the deductive model that Panofsky ardently wished for." Finally, a reference to this theme would also introduce an anachronistic element in the form of "a medieval symptom into one of the most emblematic works of the entire Renaissance" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 174).

Didi-Huberman says:

The synthesis invoked provides, in effect, a principle of interpretation that, in itself in other words, in its generality—satisfies the mind, without neglecting to explain a great many iconographic details of the engraving. As an interpretation, then, it is strong and persuasive, even incontestable. It provides a comforting feeling of closure, of something settled, of something locked up; it impresses upon us the idea of a definitive advance in Dürer's studies (Didi-Huberman 2005, 171).

To leave no remainder is a sort of suppression of a symptom, a "tyranny of the system." Everything is subordinated to the leading idea, that is, to the "will to synthesis," and hence the presented approach does not permit itself to be subsumed under the symbolic form but belongs to the type "I don't want to know anything about it" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 172).

In view of everything above, it becomes clear why Didi-Huberman writes about Panofsky's introduction to his *Studies in Iconology* that it "unfolds a semiological fable in which we start out from a certainty" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 180). This "tone of certainty" is indeed, as the author of *Confronting Images* proposes, a "Kantian tone": a specific syndrome which, however, Kant might not have acknowledged. And so we read:

[A]n academic discipline anxious to constitute itself as knowledge, and not as normative judgment, should have turned to the Kantism of pure reason rather than to that of the faculty of aesthetic taste. The Kantian tone generally adopted by the history of art perhaps originates in the simple fact that the *Critique of Pure Reason* can seem [...] like a large temple devoted to the profession of a gospel that is the foundation of all true knowledge. [...] [T]he Kantism of pure reason became a necessary way station for all those who sought to reground their discipline, and to redefine "art" as an "object" of knowledge rather than as a subject of academic squabbles (Didi-Huberman 2005, 93).

Here we see the directions in which two ways of (neo-)Kantian discourse on art branch out. The first one—taking as a pointer conclusions resulting from the *Critique of Pure Reason* and orienting itself to the sciences of culture (*Geisteswissenschaften*) (Cassirer 1923)—maintains that man lives surrounded by symbolical forms and that his access to reality is always already mediated. Panofsky refers to this very trend in his original iconological method. The second type of neo-Kantian discourse continues trains of thought developed in the *Critique of Judgment*, among them the one claiming that aesthetic experience (the experience of beauty and, in some interpretations of the third *Critique*, also of art) is not reducible to knowledge and c o n c e p t s, because its nature is undefined. Rüdiger Bubner, in reference to Kant's aesthetics, thus writes about a "non-empirical surplus":

For the sensuously given particular here facilitates an immediate representation of the universal that cannot be divorced from the particular itself [...] Our inability to provide any theoretical explanation actually harbours an aesthetically felt experience of surplus (Bubner 2003, 244).

In view of the above, as Didi-Huberman observes, at the opposite end from the "economy of certainty" an "economy of doubt" is found: an aspect of uncertainty that remains in close relationship to the theory of the symptom (with the surplus, this "something more"). Thus the two Kantian (or neo-Kantian) keys turn out to be two separate modes, one of which is characterized by the desire for knowledge, and the other by the submission to notknowing. The first one is associated by Didi-Huberman with the symbolic form, with the "aspect of certainty" characteristic of the positivist history of art, according to which everything that is visible in an image can be forged into a notion. The other one branches out from *The Critique of Judgment*, by absorbing, as it seems, what Kant wrote about the aesthetic idea:

But, by an aesthetic idea I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e., concept, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible (Kant 1911, 314).

It is worth noting that iconology, according to Didi-Huberman, "pretends to define the conditions of what will be thinkable in a work of art," while "the opening to the symptom gives us access to something like an unthinkable that comes before our very eyes to traverse images" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 183). The fragment of *Critique of Judgment* cited above, and in particular the phrase referring to the image as "inducing much thought," has to be appropriately understood in order to be associated with "openness to the symptom." We are not talking about something that is thinkable and thus able to be named in this or that manner; our objects are, rather, associations of sense that branch out and make it impossible to merge the experience and the concept into one. (On the other hand, in the first *Critique* such a synthesis is constitutive for any experience.)

The two Kantian keys—two modes of description of the image (and hence also of the visual experience)—are, in other words, the semiological key and phenomenological key. Provided that the former one is closer to naming (conforming to the principle of certainty), and the latter one is linked to silence (conforming to the economy of doubt), then it would seem that they are far from being convergent. Didi-Huberman however insists on the necessity of combining both of these orders under the rule of a common idea: the aesthetics of symptom.

The Aesthetics of the Symptom

The symptom is not a univocal term, one that only makes us more open to the nonsensicality of the image. The symptom reveals the paradox and ambiguity of a work of painting in which both the relation of negation and the relation of identity are impossible to support: "the image effectively knows how to represent both the thing and its contrary; it is impervious to contradiction and must always come back to this" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 262). We can follow this in the details of the Renaissance paintings described by DidiHuberman, e.g., in Vermeer's *Lacemaker* and *Girl with a Red Hat*, which are capable of "binding together as they do, paradoxically—but closely—the work of mimesis and that of not-mimesis" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 262).

The aesthetics of the symptom for which Didi-Huberman formulates general guidelines is supposed to give an answer to the problem of what, in the work of art, is signifying and what is unthinkable, as this aesthetics assumes a convergence of these two methods of study: semiotics and phenomenology. He writes:

The concept of symptom is two-faced, being situated precisely on the boundary between two theoretical fields: a phenomenological field and a semiological field. The whole problem of a theory of art lies in the articulation of these two fields (Didi-Huberman 2005, 263).

Siding with one of the parties—the one that only looks at the structure and system of meaning, or the other one, which in an image sees first and foremost an event and an impenetrable matter—is a choice that leads to impoverishment of the description of the image and of the very aesthetic experience, which follows the dialectic of the work of art. As Didi-Huberman writes: "it is more simply to strive to take measure of a work of figurability" and "the relation between the figure and its own 'figuration' is never simple: this relation, this work, is but a skein of paradoxes" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 262). Because of that, if we limit ourselves only to phenomenology we risk "a definitive self-silencing, through effusiveness before that which is beautiful; [...] losing oneself in immanence - in an empathic singularity - of becoming inspired and mute, or indeed stupid." On the other hand, by limiting ourselves to the other order, the semiological one, we risk "talking too much, and silencing everything not strictly within its purview" (Didi-Huberman 2005, 263). In the given distinction of orders, immanence and transcendence battle for primacy over one another, and this is why Didi-Huberman proposes a cross of both modes, when he writes:

So it is necessary to propose a phenomenology, not only of the relation to the visible world as empathic milieu, but of the relation to meaning as structure and specific work (which presupposes a semiology). And thus be able to propose a semiology, not only of symbolic configurations, but also of events, or accidents, or singularities of the pictorial image (which presupposes a phenomenology) (Didi-Huberman 2005, 263–264).⁵

⁵ Martin Seel also expressed his own position with regard to integration of the semiotic and phenomenological theory of the image: "Appearing must be conceived of

The aesthetics of the symptom—the aesthetics of the boundary of two orders—correlates itself with its founding Freudian notion of the symptom. This correlation should augur positively for the aesthetics of the symptom: the durability of the symptom, and its resilience against being engulfed by that which is systematic, originates from, as Freud claims, its "borderline position." In his *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* we read that the contradictory forces that meet in the symptom "become reconciled through the compromise of a symptom development. That is why the symptom is capable of such resistance; it is sustained from both sides" (Freud 1920, 684).

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not as being in opposition to the phenomenal being of objects but merely in opposition to propositionally fixed aspects of this being—that is, in opposition to their being-so, as it is determinable by partial epistemic modes of access" (Seel 2005, 48 and ff).

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Aesthetic Bodily Intentionality in Dance: Developing the Classical Notion of Intentionality

Abstract

In this article, my main strategy is to analyze Merleau-Ponty's use of intentionality in order to do three things: first, I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departures from Husserl's semantic conception of intentionality. Second, I clarify and develop Merleau-Ponty own positive and distinctive account of perception in terms of bodily intentionality. Thirdly, I suggest that Merleau-Pontian account of the bodily intentionality is incomplete because it cannot describe the bodily movement in dance.

Keywords

Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, bodily intentionality, dance, aesthetic bodily intentionality

From Semantic to Bodily Intentionality

It is one of the remarkable features of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to give an account of perceptual consciousness and bodily intentionality. I am interested in examining to what extent Merleau-Ponty phenomenological notion of bodily intentionality can be applied to the body in dance. In this article, I look at the notion of intentionality, which is one of the three major pillars of phenomenology discussed by Merleau-Ponty in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012, henceforth PP). My main strategy is to analyze Merleau-Ponty's use of intentionality in order to do three things. First, I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departure from Husserl's semantic conception of

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I delineate Merleau-Ponty's departure from Husserl's semantic conception of intentionality, from which he claims to draw inspiration. Second, I clarify and develop Merleau-Ponty's own positive and distinctive account of perception in terms of bodily intentionality. Thirdly, I suggest that the Merleau-Pontian account of the bodily intentionality is incomplete because it cannot account for the kind of intentionality exhibited by a dancing body.

The project of *Phenomenology of Perception* is presented here in terms of a shift from the Husserlian view of semantic intentionality as content- or proposition-like, to one centered on non-propositional bodily intentionality. In content-like intentionality, the content of consciousness is understood in terms of propositional statements and concepts. It is a semantic paradigm of intentionality because perception is made intelligible in terms of declarative statements to be understood on a linguistic model. Some forms of bodily intentionality cannot be characterized in terms of propositional content, vet manifest meaningful ways of bodily engagement in the world through intentional entwinement. I distinguish three kinds of bodily movement drawing on Merleau-Ponty's analysis and suggest my own fourth way of classifying bodily movement. Following Merleau-Ponty, there is a task fulfilling bodily movement, like swinging a baseball bat, swimming, or rock climbing. It is an abstract movement in the sense that it requires continual reference to conceptual representation to coordinate one's moves to achieve the desired result. There is a *concrete*, habituated movement of the body that performs skilful activity with the items in the environment, but does not involve reflective thought, like grasping a cup of tea, blowing one's nose. The third type of movement is *reflex*. This movement is a response to a mechanical input, such as ducking before a flying stone. On Merleau-Ponty's account, as we shall see, the first two types of movement exhibit intentionality or world-directedness, while the third, reflex movement, does not. He distinguishes abstract from concrete movement by showing that abstract movements are guided by representations while the skilful coping manifest in concrete movements are not.

I suggest a fourth type of movement, which also exhibits intentionality: *spontaneous movement.*¹ In contrast to both abstract and concrete movements, spontaneous movement neither requires a mental representation nor aims at skilful performance. This movement is found in dancing, children playing, or one's gesturing during a speech.

¹ I call this type of movement an aesthetic bodily intentionality. This form of movement is not discussed by Merleau-Ponty in PP, in my view however, this non-goal oriented movement must be taken into account to give a more complete account of bodily intentionality.

The following three questions guide my inquiry. (1) Does Merleau-Ponty's notion of perceptual consciousness as bodily intentionality fully depart from Husserl's conception of content-like intentionality, *i.e.*, is it free of the semantic paradigm? (2) To what extent does Merleau-Ponty's project of offering a phenomenology of perceptual consciousness succeed in giving a comprehensive account of bodily intentionality? (3) Is Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality rich enough to be applied to an aesthetic kind of movement, as we see in dance?

Merleau-Ponty's most basic difference from Husserl is the status of the natural attitude. For Husserl, the 'natural attitude' is the one we adopt in our everyday, unreflective engagement with the world, such as walking into a familiar room to sit down to read a book. It is the every-day experience, in which we take an object's existence for granted. The natural attitude must be suspended, so that the phenomenologist can sensibly determine the mode or the features of objects given in perception. This determinacy, according to Husserl, requires philosophical reflection on perceptual experience to better reveal how the object is given in experience. This natural attitude must be corrected by the philosophical attitude of reflection in order to see how this object structurally appears in our experience. In this philosophical reflection on the experience of the object itself, Husserl's account of perception, according to Sean Kelly (2004, 74–110, henceforth CMP), is limited to what is positively given: "On Husserl's account, therefore, the hidden features of an object are *indeterminate* in the sense that I have not yet sensibly determined what they are. I may have a certain hypothesis or belief about the shape of the backside of the object, but until I go around to the back and look, I will not have determined it for sure" (CMP, 80).² The indeterminate features, like the hidden third dimension of objects, are unfamiliar and therefore absent, on Husserl's account of perception. The point of the Husserlian suspension of the natural attitude is to get to the "things themselves" as things we can sensibly determine through reduction. In contrast to Husserl, the unfamiliar, which Merleau-Ponty calls the "indeterminate," is positively present: we must recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon (PP, 7). Kelly argues that the indeterminate features for Merleau-Ponty are normative to seeing (CMP, 79). The hidden aspects of objects in perception ought to be there as part of our perceptual experience; the background of things in the perceptual field which is not immediately given is nevertheless positively present in order to see things. While for Husserl the natural attitude stands

² Husserl 1997, 57.

in a way of positively determining the features of objects given in perception, for Merleau-Ponty the natural attitude of familiarity with objects of perception is built upon bodily ways of organizing the unfamiliar. "When I look about freely, in the natural attitude, the parts of the field act upon each other and motivate this enormous moon on the horizon, this measureless size that is nevertheless a size" (PP, 34). The difference between the suspension of the natural attitude of the familiar and of acceptance of the natural attitude towards the unfamiliar is made more explicit in terms of "things themselves."

The problem with Husserl's view of the natural attitude is that suspending the familiar features of objects involves treating them in a determinate manner. On this approach, there is no context in which one can embrace the indeterminacy of perception. Merleau-Ponty's account of perception asserts that the indeterminacy of perceived objects is necessary to our experience of them. The purpose of Husserl's reductions is to "bracket" the alleged familiarity in order to get to the "things themselves." Merleau-Ponty is also attracted to getting to the "things themselves" and describing them in a phenomenological manner; however, in his view, our everyday familiarity with the world is already continually disrupted by the unfamiliar, or what Kelly describes as the "indeterminacy positively present." The challenge of Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenology of perception is to attend to, and clarify, these moments of disruption or indeterminacy in perception, which characterize everyday being-in-the-world. On this alternative conception, our experience of the world is "taken" by our body rather than given conceptually. In this way, I view Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as a phenomenology of experience rather than of thought.

With respect to the notion of intentionality, "which can only be understood through the reduction" (PP, xxxi), Merleau-Ponty considers perceptual consciousness as an alternative to Husserlian, content-like intentionality. For him, perceptual consciousness is grounded in bodily intentionality.³ Bodily intentionality informs us about the way in which consciousness operates and reveals how we are driven by a world of contingency that simultaneously compels us to action. In contrast, for Husserl, intentionality characterizes

³ "[M]y own body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood. Its near presence and its invariable perspective is not a factual necessity, since factual necessity presupposes them: for my window to impose on me a perspective on the church, my body must first impose on me the perspective on the world, and the former necessity can only be a purely physical one because the later necessity is metaphysical"(PP, 93).

mental states of consciousness of things, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. Intentional acts are ways in which we appropriate these states of consciousness and turn them into representations, or content, which render these phenomena intelligible. On Husserl's view, meaning is achieved by relating things, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs to what they stand for. When I see a painting, then my perception is a representation of a painting; when I think of the Pythagorean theorem $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, I think that the square areas inscribed on a triangle's lines *a* and *b* to equal the area of square on the hypotenuse *c*. In the next section, I will present Merleau-Ponty's challenge to Husserlian notion of intentionality as semantic. Merleau-Ponty shows that bodily experiences and experiences of other things are more basic to the semantic intentionality. We are already *au monde*, our bodies are perceptually directed to the world which offers an "inexhaustible reservoir" to perceptual experiences, and this bodily intentionality calls for a more comprehensive account.

Bodily Intentionality

[T]here is a logic of the world that my entire body merges with and through which inter-sensory things become possible. [...] To have a body is to possess a universal arrangement, a schema of all perceptual developments and of all inter-sensory correspondences beyond the segment of the world that we are actually perceiving (PP, 341).

To have an idea of how to jump over the creek is not the same as having the actual experience of jumping. The command "to jump" does not involve a number of steps which need to be considered in order to make a successful jump. The right angle from which to initiate the jump, and the tension in my muscles required to achieve the right height to safely traverse the creek, are only a few steps I can name when my body moves closer and further away as to find the appropriate distance to achieve the right speed to complete the task. This example, among many other bodily engagements in-the-world, shows a kind of bodily preparedness to cope with things that is irreducible to a concept-like approach. There is a linguistic impoverishment in comparison to the body's myriad ways of "merging with the logic of the world." Our body in its special awareness takes care of most of our daily tasks seamlessly, like throwing a letter in a mailbox, tying a shoe, or crossing the street. How does bodily perceptual consciousness cope with things in the environment and other bodies without relying on mental representations? In Merleau-Ponty's view, the body is in communion with the world, and to understand the logic of the world with which my body merges is to understand how perceptual consciousness arises. What is perceptual consciousness?

In the early 1940's, Merleau-Ponty developed the notion of perceptual consciousness, characterized by intentional acts that are not concept-like and yet manifest meaningful bodily movements in coping with the things in the environment or social situations. The study of perceptual consciousness in *Phenomenology of Perception* focuses on considering bodily intentionality as one's way of being-in-the-world, which already takes place before any possible analysis. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes two ways in which we apprehend the objects in perception. One involves an intentional attitude that can be understood in terms of concept-like representations, in which concepts stand for the actual thing, experience, thought, and belief. The second one involves an intentional attitude characterized by bodily preparedness to cope with the object, which he refers to as "motor intentionality"⁴ as the basic manifestation of perceptual consciousness. The point of his analysis of perceptual consciousness is to show that the intentionality which characterizes mental activity, which I refer to here as semantic or conceptlike, is differentiated from the intentionality which is expressed by the body's meaningful movement. On my account, Merleau-Ponty's key challenge to the Husserlian notion of intentionality is that the intentionality manifest in mental processes does not explain bodily preparedness to engage with things in the world. Merleau-Ponty's notion of a motor (or bodily) intentionality is a distinct kind of intentionality, and more fundamental than semantic intentionality. I defend this claim in two ways. (a.) I will begin by considering Merleau-Ponty's discussion of a range of pathological casestudies, which focus on patients who have suffered brain trauma, or had their limbs amputated. (b.) Then using the findings of those studies, I will highlight the main points of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of both intellectualism and empiricism as failing to provide an account of what, according to Merleau-Ponty, are the two central aspects of perceptual consciousness. The first one rejects the traditional notion of perception as passively "given" content, in favour of a notion of perception as actively involving the lived

⁴ I generalize Merleau-Ponty's term of "motor intentionality" under the term of "bodily intentionality". I should note that "motor intentionality" is not the only type of bodily intentionality, for I claim that to expand his analysis I consider an aesthetic model of bodily intentionality. In short, "motor intentionality" is for Merleau-Ponty something like an automated movement, which happens without any reflection on the performed movement to complete a task. An aesthetic model of bodily intentionality looks at the body without ascribing any task to be completed by its movement.

body, which *takes* items of experiences, and organizes them in perception. The second one is what is thereby given *in* the experience of the lived body of the "things themselves."

(a.) Merleau-Ponty uses studies of patients who suffered bodily injuries during War World I to show that bodily movement cannot be classified in the same way we categorize mental experiences, which are representations "about" or "of" something. The perceptual content that results from, or is continuous with, moving one's body around, does not require concept-like representations. How is it that we can move in a meaningful way without concept-like representations?

Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Johan Schneider's case shows how bodily intentionality reveals a non-conceptual preparedness to meaningfully cope with the items in the environment. Schneider was a German soldier who, at the age of 24, suffered damage to the back of his head by a mine splinter that left him unconscious for four days. His visual impairment limited his bodily way of coping with things in the environment. Seventeen years later he recovered from the trauma, and was capable of running a grocery shop and even was elected mayor in his village. The elements of Schneider's recovery from visual agnosia, an impairment in the visual recognition of objects, were essential for Merleau-Ponty to show that the body can act skilfully, independently of reflective thought. Schneider's symptoms of agnosia amounted to his retaining some of the visual functions, like recognizing colours and light, but he partially lost the ability to recognize objects. He could, for instance, copy drawings, but he could not recognize what they represented, unless he traced it with his fingers or imitated with his bodily movement the features of the object. Merleau-Ponty writes,

Through vision alone, Schneider does not recognize any object. His visual givens are nearly formless patches. As for absent objects, he is incapable of forming a visual representation of them. On the other hand, we know that abstract movements become possible for the subject the moment he focuses his eyes upon the limb charged with the task. Thus, what remains of voluntary motoricity depends upon what remains of visual knowledge (PP, 115).

For Merleau-Ponty, the case of Schneider shows how bodily intentionality can organize experience in a meaningful way without concepts. Merleau--Ponty uses Schneider's ability to recognize objects by moving his limbs as a basis for distinguishing two kinds of movement: abstract movement and concrete movement. Abstract movement requires a person to have a spatial sense of the objective world. It is a type of movement that follows a command, such as knocking at the door or pointing with one's finger to one's nose. Abstract movements exhibit a concept-like, or semantic, intentional structure, because in order to execute a series of desired bodily movements so as to achieve a specific goal, we use language. Thought-driven actions like passing a book to a friend who wants to borrow it or walking to a lunch meeting, are actions of the body that stand in a causal relation to conceptlike representations. In order to get to some place you have to have a concept of your destination, and you may at each point in your journey refer to a discrete set of steps. Our every-day bodily way of moving through the social environment depends in a large part on performing the right bodily conduct, which depends on thought driven commands. We use our bodies, or gestures,⁵ to communicate to others that we respect the space taken by their bodies, we trust others, who like us want to protect their vulnerable bodies. The body, in the sense of abstract movement, is a vehicle which we use in order to occupy the common space and exhibit our fundamental "bodily understanding" of social norms. Abstract movement exhibits this understanding when we take care of the personal hygiene of grooming, washing, and following rituals regarding rest and exercise. We also know how to restrain our bodies when being among other bodies, we know not to lean against or walk into them. When performing an abstract movement of knocking at my friend's door, my friend and I understand this gesture as signifying my desire to enter. The abstract movement is thus a non-ha*bituated*⁶ movement since it requires a level of one's reflectivity on one's body as an object, or body image, in order to pursue a task. Every time I want to enter my friend's house, I go through a series of steps, in which I think that I must first cross the street, then turn South, go up a flight of stairs, and knock at the door. Even though the commands do not take care of all the bodily intricate movements which constitute this seemingly simple task, this

⁵ I admit that gestures are difficult to analyze because on the one hand we have gestures, which communicate linguistic content, like I make an angry face because I am angry at you, happy face to show my content, or just smile instead of saying 'thank you'. But there also can be the type of gestures as unique movements, like the unique gesture of a woman to her swimming instructor which begins Milan Kundera's *Immortality*.

⁶ I want to claim that the expert movement is a non-habituated movement because it is an abstract movement, because here I refer to my body as an object, I move it for the sake of swinging this bat, or I move it for the sake to show how Odette/Odile swiftly do their *jetés*. Paradoxically, their movement is never habituated; it can be though if they just do it for the pleasure of just doing that. Where the whole world of reasoning why they are doing it just drops out.

type of movement is abstract because it requires a reflective attitude to be renewed every time we think of the task I want to accomplish with my body. In this sense I take expert movement, not as an automated movement,⁷ which takes place without any self-reflection on one's movement, but as an abstract movement. To perform movement abstractly on an expert level, as a chef chopping onions or a golf player, is to reflectively coordinate one's moving, the chef must guide her movement continuously by thought not to cut her fingers and the golf player must continually think about how to reach the goal of her throw. Abstract movements, as Merleau-Ponty says, are projected on a background that the person creates, which is to say that they are abstract movements because they rely on semantic intentionality as command coordination.

However, the concrete movements are exhibited by what Merleau-Ponty calls "motor intentionality"⁸ to which I broadly refer to here as bodily intentionality. They are intelligible without concept-like representations. In contrast to abstract movement, concrete movement is not to be made sense of in an objective way. In this type of movement, it is the sense of proprioception, the sense for where my body is positioned, rather than thought, that "tells" the body how to move. In concrete movement, I do not need to refer to my body as an objective thing; rather, I am the body that moves. This type of movement I refer to as a *habituated movement* because it does not require reflection in order for a task to be completed, like in skiing, choreographed dancing, or tying a shoe. The body exhibits an organized preparedness (*body-schema*) of how to meaningfully move. Schneider could not coordinate his body through abstract movement; however in concrete movement he had no problems with moving his limbs. For example, when he was asked to

⁷ I am developing this account of abstract movement to involve expert bodily movement, which according to Barbara Montero are misleadingly taken to be automated movements. The expert movements are abstract in so far as they involve reflective commanding of one's own performance. However, there is movement in an expert body when the reflective-commanding mode is not present. This happens when bodily performance is not judged and the body moves freely for the sake of moving, because there is nothing else that it would rather be doing.

⁸ I have been referring so far to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'motor intentionality' as bodily intentionality. This is perhaps not a fair treatment of the aspects of bodily intentionality that Merleau-Ponty focuses on. Bodily intentionality is manifest in both abstract and concrete movements, but only concrete movements in Merleau-Ponty's are the type of 'motor intentionality' "in the absence of which the order remains a dead letter. The patient either conceives the ideal formula for the movement, or else he launches his body into blind attempts to perform it (PP, 113).

touch his nose while blindfolded, he could not find his own nose, whereas when he needed to use a handkerchief to blow his nose, he had no problems finding it. According to Merleau-Ponty, Schneider's ability to perform concrete movement shows that there is a kind of movement that does not depend on semantic intentionality. The failure to perform the abstract movement, fulfilling the instruction to "touch one's nose," shows that some bodily movements cannot be executed by an aid of representation. For a "normal person" Merleau-Ponty says,

[M]ovement has a *background*, and the movement and its background are "moments of a single whole." The background to the movement is not a representation associated or linked externally to the movement itself; it is immanent in the movement, it animates it and guides it along at each moment (PP, 113).

Schneider's case presents a paradox, namely that the background deficiency, the inability to connect bodily movement with abstract, immanent thought, informs us about bodily intentionality just as his concrete movements, which are performed independently from the background, inform us about skilful bodily movement. Bodily intentionality manifested in abstract and concrete movement do not reveal the same preparedness as the body in spontaneous movement. Indeed, evidence has come to light since Merleau--Ponty's phenomenology of perception that not only is concrete movement dissociable from abstract, as in the case of Schneider, who preserved the one but not the other. Concrete movement can be lost, while abstract movement is retained: they are double-dissociable. For instance, Christina from Oliver Sacks' *The Disembodied Lady* (1985) who, after a loss of proprioception, preserved abstract movement and could teach her limbs to move again and accomplish simple movements like walking or tying a shoe.

"Phantom limb" is another example considered by Merleau-Ponty to show that patients who had their limbs amputated do not lose the sense of their bodies as integrated. The phantom limb is experienced by patients who are aware of the loss of their limb but nevertheless feel a sensation of pain, or have awareness of having their phantom limb being positioned awkwardly. A similar phenomenon, as Merleau-Ponty notices, is observed in agnosognostic patients who, unaware of their disability, do not need objective criteria to relate to their bodies as continually integrated. The unity of perception is in the body, rather than given to the body objectively. [T]here is an affective presence and extension of which objective spatiality is neither the sufficient condition, as it is shown in anosognosia, nor even the necessary condition, as is shown by the phantom arm (PP, 150).

These examples are used by Merleau-Ponty to describe *the lived body* as an integrated unity, as *body schema*, rather than an assembly of individually coordinated limbs to which we respond linguistically by commands. Merleau-Ponty says,

Experience reveals, beneath the objective space in which the body eventually finds its place, a primordial spatiality of which objective space is but the envelope and which merges with the very being of the body. As we have seen, to be a body is to be tied to a certain world, and our body is not primarily in space, but is rather of space (PP, 149).

In a broader perspective, Merleau-Ponty's use of the discussion of inability to perform abstract movements and showing that perception is already organized at a bodily level serve to illustrate his critique of intellectualism and empiricism. In particular, as I will now show, their respective accounts of perceptual experience are essentially accounts of the experience of the abstract body to be coordinated by thought or given explanation by the stimuli-response context. The *lived body* is reducible to neither.

My claim is that in order to make sense of the body's movement one must consider *spontaneous movement*, which occurs just for the pleasure or merely for the sake of moving, in gesturing, children at play, or in some forms of dance that draw on the bodily movement, rather than choreographed ideas.

Intellectualism and Empiricism

In Merleau-Ponty's view, both intellectualism and empiricism are insufficient to describe perceptual consciousness because their accounts are respectively too rich and too poor. According to Merleau-Ponty, consciousness for intellectualists only begins to exist by determining an object, and the phantoms of an "internal experience" hence, intellectualism is too rich because it projects unified concepts about things into the perceived world. Empiricists who rely on constancy hypothesis to explain conscious perception suggest that there is an isomorphism between perception and what is perceived. Their view of perceptual consciousness implies that attention "illuminates and clarifies" basic given sensations rather than creating some new form or gestalt. But on his account, the "normal function of attention" is "a process of constitution, not copying" (PP, 9) In this way for Merleau-Ponty, empiricism is too poor because it falls short in explaining how things appear. Both accounts therefore commit "the experience error," which means that what we know to be in things themselves, we immediately take as being in our consciousness of them. "We make perception out of things perceived. And since perceived things themselves are obviously accessible only through perception, we end by understanding neither" (PP, 150). Perception is not made out of the things perceived, it is not a house, which we construct by laying one brick after another, it is an organized experience of the *lived body*. The unity of experience does not result from putting the elements of experience together; neither is it unified by our idea of it.

Showing how intellectualism and empiricism fail to give an account of the perceptual body, *the lived body*, as the "vehicle of perception," reveals how the fundamental program of phenomenology of getting back to the things themselves cannot be satisfied. If the perspective on how things are perceived is confused, then how can we describe what is perceived? Here is an excerpt in which Merleau-Ponty offers his phenomenological account of perceptual consciousness as *the lived body*:

If I am seated at my desk and want to pick up the telephone, the movement of my hand toward the object, the straightening of my torso, and the contraction of my leg muscles envelop each other; I desire a certain result and the tasks divide themselves up among the segments in question, and the possible combination of movements are given in advance as equivalent: I could remain leaning back in my chair provided that I can extend my arm further, I could lean forward, or I could even partly stand up. All of these movements are available to us through their common signification. That is why, in their first attempts at grasping, children do not look at their hand, but at the object. The different segments of the body are only known through their functional value and their coordination is not learned (PP, 150).

Bodily dimensions are not presented by intellectualists or empiricists accounts, because the account of the meaning of bodily movement in the case of intellectualism is performed in terms of abstract movement. As the case of Schneider shows, making sense with one's body moving cannot be reduced to concept-like representations, since concrete movements can be performed independently of them. Bodily habitual⁹ dispositions do not disap-

⁹ Abstract movement is a movement coordinated by thought. This movement is non-habituated because every time I perform it I need to 'command' my body to move in a desired way. This movement characteristic to exhibiting understanding of social norms of not leaning on people on subways, not stepping on someone's foot, and for expert bodily movement. Concrete movement is the movement which is habitual which

pear with the disappearance of thought, as the intellectualist account would suggest. Schneider was still able to find a handkerchief in his pocket to wipe his nose, even thought he could not say what it was that he was doing.

Is Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Bodily Intentionality Sufficient to Grasp the Body in Dance?

Merleau-Ponty's offers a non-reductionist account of bodily intentionality as coping with the environment. The non-reductionist account rests on the descriptive account, in contrast to scientific way of understanding things on the reductionist cause-and effect model of explanation. On the scientific cause-and-effect model, we should be able to understand the genesis of bodily movement by tracing and enumerating the stimuli that go into producing a movement. We know that it is not possible because no increase of the stimuli would capture the motivation for bodily movement, let alone reproduce the same movement again. Merleau-Ponty agrees that the causal explanation occurs when "we build perception out of the things perceived" (PP, 5). We do not add elements of our perception to make it, rather in perceptual consciousness we are confronted with the field outlined by the parameters of experience.

In a reductionist account of scientific causal explanation, we stipulate that, in order to get to New York, we must move from an antecedent point and take several steps to complete the journey. In this way, how we go about getting to New York is explained in terms of all these necessary steps that one must take, and which cause one's arrival in New York. The non-causal descriptive understanding of perception takes perception in its totality of perceptual field of experience. In this sense it is a kind of circular causality, in which I watch the world "watching" me. I do not derive meaning from being in the world; the meaning is already there before I reflectively engage. I refer to Merleau-Ponty's description as *referential*. In order to make sense of perceptual consciousness, he uses descriptions of pathological cases in order to reveal a system of reference by means of which one assess performance or failure to complete a task. In such a way he retains the features of Husserlian phenomenology, which approaches features of experience in a non-causal manner; however, he relies on a quasi-semantic model in which

we perform in order to cross the street or tie a shoe; it does not require thought to be performed. Spontaneous movement is movement of free bodily play of children, impromptu dance, or just moving for the sake of taking joy in moving the body.

to make sense of bodily movement. The dissonance in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is between describing bodily intentionality as essentially genuine openness of perception, and at the same time treating it from a vantage point of defined meaning. Merleau-Ponty suggests in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* that "intentionality can only be understood through the reduction" (PP, xxxi) On the one hand, intentionality for Merleau-Ponty reveals the unity with the world prior to knowledge "through an explicit act of identification, is lived as already accomplished or as already there" (PP, xxxi), and on the other,

Through this enlarged notion of intentionality, phenomenological "understanding" is distinguished from classical "intellection," which is limited to considering "true and immutable natures," and so phenomenology can become a phenomenology of genesis. Whether it is a question of a perceived thing, an historical event, or a doctrine, "to understand" is to grasp the total intention—not merely what these things are for representation, namely, the "properties" of the perceived thing, the myriad of "historical events," and the "ideas" introduced by the doctrine—but rather the unique manner of existing expressed in the properties of the pebble, the glass, or the piece of wax, in all of the events of a revolution, and in all of the thoughts of a philosopher (PP, xxxi).

The paradox of bodily intentionality presented in his work is that at the same time the body's intact and impaired ability to perform tasks as unity with the world prior to reflection but also at the same time is supposed to inform us about its way of giving an account of the unique properties of things.

More importantly, while Merleau-Ponty succeeds in showing that intentionality is fundamentally embodied, he limits the consideration to the bodily intentionality involved in task fulfilment, the one that can give us a teleological account of how bodily intentionality works. But I contend that one must consider what I call an aesthetic model of bodily intentionality, which is intended to help us understand a kind of non-goal-oriented movement that is often encountered in dance. By adding this new category of movement, we can expand the understanding of bodily intentionality in general.

Merleau-Ponty's consideration of dance from a perspective of a concrete skill learning activity, focuses on dance as learned for the sake of habit formation and not about expressive movement. "For example, is it not the case that forming the habit of dancing is discovering, by analysis, the formula of the movement in question, and then reconstructing it on the basis of the ideal outline by the use of previously acquired movements, those of walking and running? But before the formula of the new dance can incorporate certain elements of general motility, it must first have had, as it were, the stamp

of movement set upon it. As has often been said, it is the body which 'catches' (kapiert) and 'comprehends' movement. The acquisition of a habit is indeed the grasping of a significance, but it is the motor grasping of a motor significance. Now what precisely does this mean? A woman may, without any calculation, keep a safe distance between the feather in her hat and things which might break it off. She feels where the feather is just as we feel where our hand is. If I am in the habit of driving a car, I enter a narrow opening and see that I can 'get through' without comparing the width of the opening with that of the wings, just as I go through a doorway without checking the width of the doorway against that of my body (PP, 165). "For example, in learning the habit of a certain dance, do we not find the formula of the movement through analysis and then recompose it, taking this ideal sketch as a guide and drawing upon already acquired movements (such as walking and running)? But in order for the new dance to integrate particular elements of general motoricity, it must first have received, so to speak, a motor consecration. The body, as has often been said "catches" (kapiert) and "understands" the movement." (PP, 143-144).

To enrich Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality, to make sense of the body moving, we must look at the body itself independently of the semantic meaning comprised in action-goal meaning. We must consider a type of movement which is non-goal oriented and yet appears as meaningful, such as the movement in dance. Let me consider a couple of examples from contemporary choreography.

During the Holland Festival 2001, there was a series of dance performances staged by Boris Charmatz, a French contemporary dancer. His choreography experiments with new means of bodily expressions rather than ideas how to construct bodily expressions. In his work, he undermines the basic assumption of classical dance: there are no rules of classical dance applied in his pieces, nor there is any particular story to be told by the moving bodies. His choreography explores the movement of the bodies themselves, and the audience is there to witness how bodies move when placed on an accelerating platform, how do they walk among the audience when stripped bare and vulnerable, or how they find other bodies on stage while lying down covered by a thick fabric.

The distinctiveness of Charmatz's approach to dance is sharply illustrated by a discussion he had with Merce Cunningham, who, then in his eighties, was one of the most iconic choreographers. Their discussion laid the grounds for distinguishing modern and contemporary dance. In his reply to the question how he uses the bodies in his performances, Cunningham said that they are merely tools for staging the choreography; the movements of the body per se were not what inspired his work. Indeed, he even experimented with computer generated movements, which he later on translated into bodily movements onstage. By contrast, Charmatz emphasized that dance must draw from the bodily movements themselves, and there is so much we can create with those unique movements.¹⁰ You can perform walking in so many ways by being attentive to your body, the surface you are walking on, the air that presses against you, or walking while mindful of others. This exchange between Cunningham and Charmatz clarifies the line between modern dance, which breaks away from the standards of classical ballet, but remains faithful to the idea of organizing the body in movement on stage by giving it directives, and contemporary dance, which radically breaks from both standards of rigid training and story driven choreography. Only in this way can contemporary dance be a modernist art. By letting the body move freely, we can contemplate its beauty and not the beauty of other mediums of art that typically accompany dance, such as music, narrative, and musical rhythm. Contemporary dance, to put it in more provocative terms, is the kind of dance that is freeing itself from being choreographed.

In Jodi Melnick's choreography, the expressive meaning of the body in dance is revealed through a series of gestures which in themselves have a rhythmic organization in space and time. Her dance performances are very minimal; they often show the body in movement without accompaniment of music. Her choreographic challenge is to give the body in movement full means of being critically approached from both dancer's and audience perspective. In her piece *Solo, Deluxe Version, One of Sixty Five Thousand Gestures*,¹¹ staged in 2011, she performs solo, almost never moving away from the center of downstage. She mesmerized the audience with performing a series of hundreds of unique gestures to a minimal composition by Hahn Rowe. In doing so, she drew the attention to the body as the medium for aesthetic expression of seemingly ordinary gestures that were made visible as aesthetic.

In contemporary choreographies of Boris Charmatz and Jody Melnick, the use of the body as an artistic medium is not for the sake of storytelling or any other instrumental goal. They use the body in movement as an expressive body. I call this expressive movement the *aesthetic intentionality of the body*, which can only be appreciated without any goals of the moving.

¹⁰ Merce Cunnigham and Boris Charmatz in conversation.

¹¹ The video is no longer available as of November 13, 2014, but her style of movement can be appreciated at: *Business of the Bloom*, 2009.

- (1) In the first section of this paper I showed the trajectory of the understanding of the notion of intentionality as semantic like, understood on a model of language, in the work Husserl, to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intentionality as primarily embodied. The concern of the first section was to establish whether Merleau-Ponty's notion of bodily intentionality is fully liberated from the semantic paradigm, and as my analysis show that Merleau-Ponty is successful in departing from the Husserlian notion of semantic intentionality but is not radical enough. Merleau-Ponty's moves away from the phenomenology of thought to phenomenology of experience, however, still retains the semantic approach to how bodily movement can be understood.
- (2) In the second section I offer an extensive account of Merleau-Ponty's view on bodily intentionality focusing on the case of Schneider, which is used by him to categorize bodily movement. Merleau-Ponty identifies three basic ways of bodily movement (abstract, concrete, and reflex) but views them as primarily goal-oriented actions that can be judged and understood by looking at the result of the bodily movement, or how bodily movement successfully satisfies a goal. I argue in this section that where-as Merleau-Ponty's account of intentionality is radical, however, does not take into account the kind of bodily movement, which is non-goal oriented, it is performed for itself, such as gesturing, children at play or some forms of dance. I call this kind of movement aesthetic bodily intentionality and argue that the notion of what bodily intentionality means must necessarily be expended to include this form of bodily movement.
- (3) In the final section I argued that Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality fails to make sense of the kind of aesthetic movement that is present in some forms of dance. While many dance forms (ritual, classical, modern dance) are goal-oriented actions, dancers must obey the rules of the choreography, train to successfully dance on stage, etc. there is a kind of bodily performance, which is inspired by the bodily movement itself (contemporary forms of dance of Boris Charmatz and Jodi Melnick). That kind of bodily movement is modernist in an aesthetic sense, it is performed for itself and the judger of the movement must be attentive to the bodily performance itself rather than the results of the movement.

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Husserl's Theory of the Image Applied to Conceptual Art

Abstract

Edmund Husserl has famously declared that "Without an image, there is no fine art." The aim of the article is to find out whether conceptual art can be experienced as image as well. It will be shown that Joseph Kosuth's conceptual artwork *One and Three Chairs* (1965) perfectly illustrates Husserl's theory of image consciousness and the concept of "image." Thus, Husserl's theory makes a valuable contribution in understanding conceptual (and contemporary) art.

Keywords

image object, image word, perceptual figment, Husserl, conceptual art

Introduction

Edmund Husserl explains the theory of image consciousness (*Bildbewusst-sein*) in his lecture course from 1904/05.¹ Among other things, he states that "Without an image, there is no fine art" (*Ohne Bild keine bildende Kunst*) (Husserl 2005, 44). In his later manuscripts he specifies the statement by saying that the image does not need to be depictive: "Earlier I believed that it belonged to the essence of fine art to present in an image, and I understood

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¹ "Phantasy and Image Consciousness," the third principal part of the lectures from the Winter Semester 1904/05 on "Principal Parts of the Phenomenology and Theory of Knowledge," published in Husserliana XXIII.

this presenting to be depicting (*als Abbilden*). Looked at more closely, however, this is not correct" (Husserl 2005, 616). Nevertheless, he does not abandon the idea that works of fine art appear to us as images. He even tries to apply this idea to all artworks, including literature and music.² Thus, it is worth examining whether Husserl's theory has some valuable contribution in understanding contemporary art as well. For this, I have chosen a well-known conceptual artwork *One and Thee Chairs* by Joseph Kosuth (see Figure 1).

Before I come to the analysis of Kosuth's artwork, I would like to make some further introductory notes. It should be noted that Husserl does not want to say that all artworks must be images in the sense of pictures, like paintings, photographs, etc. The image is something that appears; also, it does not exist, it is unreal and conflicts with the actual reality (Husserl 2005, 51). As Husserl writes, "the image must be clearly set apart from reality" (Husserl 2005, 44). However, as it will be shown in the course of the article, the image should not be equated with pure appearance either. The image is always about something, either depicting, referring, or presenting in some other ways. We can even say that we have special attitude towards the object when we see it as an image. In other words, we must have image consciousness. This unreal, appearing image is called by different names by Husserl. In this article, I will focus on three of them: the image object (Bildobjekt), image word (Bildwort) and perceptual figment (perzeptives Fiktum). I will also refer to Husserl's concept of memory sign (Erinnerungszeichen), and the distinction between the image (Bild) and the depictive image (Abbild).

In this article I will not examine aesthetic experience of artworks. Mainly because it played no importance for (early) conceptual artists. Joseph Kosuth specifically emphasizes that he makes "the separation between aesthetics and art" (Kosuth 1993, 842). I would only like to point out that for Husserl a work of art is always experienced aesthetically, and that the concept of image plays an important part in his theory of aesthetic experience as well. When we comport ourselves aesthetically in the fine arts, then "we contemplate aesthetically the objectivities exhibiting themselves in an image" (Husserl 2005, 459).

² In Appendix IX, in Husserliana XXIII, he claims that any kind of reproduction or interpretation of Beethoven's sonata by the piano player would be an image which is distinguished from the original sonata "just as Beethoven meant it" (Husserl 2005, 189).

I would also like to answer to a possible objection to my article. Joseph Kosuth clearly demanded that art (and art theory) should move from "appearance" to "conception" (Kosuth 1993, 844). Is it still justified then to talk about appearances and appearing images in analyzing his work? I believe it is. If an artist wants to present or communicate a "concept" to others, and not just to imagine it to himself/herself, he or she must put it in some kind of physical form that necessarily have an appearance. Gregory Currie has made similar point in his article about visual conceptual art. To quote him:

So the work needs, after all, to be seen. There is no paradox in the idea that the viewer is expected to notice the *appearance* of the work and then self-consciously to put it aside, though this may in fact be a difficult thing to do. But doing it involves *seeing* the work. (my italics) (Currie 2007, 35–36).

Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) is composed of three objects: a photograph of a chair, a photostat of a dictionary definition of the word "chair," and the chair. In the following paragraphs, I will examine each of them separately in order to show how they illustrate Husserl's various meanings of the concept of the image.



Figure 1. Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs (1965)

Photograph of a Chair

In Joseph Kosuth's One and Three Chairs, a full-size photograph of a chair is presented. The photograph is a typical example of depiction according to Husserl. In fact, his own frequently used example of depictive image consciousness is a black and white photograph of a child (Husserl 2005, 20). He even explains the theory of depictive image consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) using that example. According to the theory, we can distinguish three objects: 1) the physical image (das physische Bild), e.g., the photograph as a physical thing; 2) the image object (*Bildobjekt*) or the depicting object, e.g., the photographically appearing image child; and 3) the image subject (Bildsujet) or the depicted object, e.g., the real child (Husserl 2005, 20–21). In the same way, we say that the photograph of a chair that hangs on the wall at the MoMA, or some other material device (computer screen) that awakens the appearing image, is the physical image. The appearing image of the chair is the image object, and the real chair that was in front of the camera when the picture was taken is the image subject. In this case, the real chair also stands next to the photograph in the exhibition hall.

When Husserl writes: "Without an image, there is no fine art" (2005, 44) he means the image object.³ He believes that whereas the subject is what is *meant* by the image, the image object is what *genuinely appears* (Husserl 2005, 22). As Husserl writes, "I see the subject in the image object; the latter is what directly and genuinely appears" (2005, 48). The appearing image object is a nothing (*ein Nichts*) (Husserl 2005, 50), however much it appears, and therefore it is in conflict with actual reality. More specifically, Husserl believes that the image object is in conflict with the physical thing (the physical image) and with the image subject.⁴ The first kind of conflict emerges when we understand that what appears to us in image has no continuity with the perceptual world of the physical image. In other words, we understand that the physical image and the image object do not belong to the same "worlds." We cannot sit on the chair that appears in the photograph of the chair, but we could sit on the real chair standing next to the photograph. The latter belongs to the same reality as the photograph as a physical thing.

³ John Brough, for instance, suggests that the physical image should not be called image at all: "It is not itself the image, but it founds the image, serving as its substrate [...]" (Brough 1997, 29–48).

⁴ For a detailed account of various conflicts in image consciousness (including empirical and non-empirical conflicts) see my article "Husserl and Cinematographic Depictive Images: The Conflict between the Actor and the Character" (Mion 2016, 269–293).

Another way to explain the first kind of conflict, the one between the physical thing and the image object, is through the theory of content-apprehension-schema.⁵ According to Husserl, we get sensuous contents while perceiving the picture. These contents are apprehended in two ways: we see a physical image and we see an image object. As Husserl writes, "The same visual sensations are interpreted as points and lines on paper *and* as appearing plastic form" (2005, 48). In normal situation, the image object appearance "triumph" over the physical image appearance.⁶ Thus, the image object appearance has sensuous appearance, but since we do not take it to be real, the image object is only quasi-perceived.⁷ It should be noted, at this point, that the pure sensuous appearance does not make the image object to be a *depictive* image object. Pure appearance is not yet depiction; neither is it an image of something (I come back to this in section 3). To quote Husserl:

The apprehension of experienced sensuous contents—of sensations in the case of the contemplation of a physical image, of phantasms in the case of phantasy imaging—yields the appearing image, the appearing representing image object. With the constitution of this appearance, however, the relation to the image *subject* has not yet become constituted. With a simple apprehension, therefore, we would not yet have any image at all in the proper sense, but at most the object that subsequently functions as an image (Husserl 2005, 24–25).

To become a depictive image, an additional apprehension or a new apprehension-characteristic is needed (Husserl 2005, 31). Only this way we see the subject in the image. The image subject can be a fictional or a real object. We know that the subject of Kosuth's photo is an existing object in the real world, and we also know that the chair depicted in the photograph is the same that stands next to the picture. As Kosuth writes, "Everything you saw when you looked at the object [the chair] had to be the same that you saw in the photograph, so each time the work was exhibited the new installation necessitated a new photograph" (Siegel 1992, 225). Despite the fact that the photo depicts the subject that we can actually see in front of us, next to the photograph, Husserl believes that there is a conflict between how the subject appears in the photograph and how it appears in the real world. For one thing, we can see the real chair from different sides, it can even be sit on (although the museum visitor is expected not to do that), but we cannot see

⁵ Husserl uses it to explain his early theory of (depictive) image consciousness. He abandoned the schema later. See Husserl 2005, 323.

⁶ "The image object *does triumph*, insofar as it comes to appearance" (Husserl 2005, 50).

⁷ Husserl's technical term is *Perzeption*, as opposed to *Wahrnehmung*.

the back side of the depicted chair and we definitely cannot sit on it. Moreover, the photographically appearing colors of the chair are not identical to the perceived colors of the real chair either. This means that, according to Husserl, there is a conflict between "what appears and what is demanded empirically" (Husserl 2005, 171). Or, as John Brough puts it, there is a conflict "between a subject as it appears in an image and the subject as it would or does appear in an actual perception" (Brough 2005, xlviii).

I would also like to point out that the photograph of the chair can function as a pictorial sign. For Husserl a sign is something that "refers to something else via the mediation of a physical, sensible substrate" (Drummond 2007, 190). A pictorial sign has the same threefold structure as depictive image, that is, we can distinguish the image object in it, but it refers to the subject in a different way. According to Husserl, symbolic representation functions as externally representative but images in the proper sense function as internally representative (an example of immanent imagining) (Husserl 2005, 38). A particular type of (pictorial) sign is a memory-sign (*Erinnerungszeichen*) (Husserl 2005, 38), and a typical example of a memory sign is a picture in a museum catalogue that only serves to remind us the artwork we have seen at the exhibition. To quote Husserl:

The Stuttgart publishing house recently issued volumes containing complete series of works by Dürer, Raphael, and so on, in the most minute reproductions. The chief object of these volumes is not to awaken internal imaging and the aesthetic pleasure given with it; their point, instead, is to supply pictorial indices of the works of those great artists. [...] They do still operate pictorially, of course, but they also function as memories: They are supposed to function *associatively* and to reproduce more complete image presentation in memory (2005, 38).

In fact, the picture of the *One and Three Chairs* (Figure 1) printed in this article can also function as a memory sign that refers to the original artwork at the MoMA in New York. The one who has been in New York and seen the work itself, can even say: "I experience the image as a sign for the original, which I have seen at an earlier time" (Husserl 2005, 185).

A picture functions as a sign not only when it refers to the original but also when it reminds us of some other artworks or objects. Everyone familiar with the history of art will probably say that Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* brings to mind Van Gogh's painting of his chair (1888) exhibited at the National Gallery in London.⁸ Based on Kosuth's texts and similar works, we

⁸ Carolyn Wilde also compares these artworks in her article "Matter and Meaning in the Work of Art: Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*" (Wilde 2007, 119–137).

know that he did not want to "reproduce" Van Gogh's painting. Kosuth makes it clear that similarly looking (visually related) objects or images do not necessarily involve any artistic or conceptual relationship (Kosuth 1993, 843). We should also take into account that he made other similar three-part compositions using completely different objects: *One and Three Tables, One and Three Lamps, One and Three Brooms* etc., in which he presented the chosen object together with the dictionary definition and a photograph of it. In this sense, the *One and Three Chairs* is not about a *chair* at all since it could have been any other object presented in a similar way. The chair was not chosen on its aesthetic qualities or any formal properties either. But still, the photograph of the chair in *One and Three Chairs* can, even if only additionally, function as a pictorial sign.

Definition of the Word "Chair"

According to Husserl, words are signs that are similar to depictive images in that they also *represent* something.⁹ The difference is that the image must have some kind of similarity to what is depicted but the sign need not to. A sign can have some likeness to the subject—a pictorial sign (a picture in a museum catalogue) has some likeness to the object referred to (the artwork in the museum)—but a textual sign involves no visual similarity between the visual appearance of the word and what is meant by it or referred to.¹⁰

Another question is whether we also experience *images* in the case of words and written text? This seemed to be an interesting question for Husserl as well. In one of his texts on the theory of art, he asks: "Are the spoken words, the describing words or the words of the persons represented [in poetic works], image words (*Bildworte*)?" (Husserl 2005, 652).¹¹ And based on his writings the answer seems to be affirmative. To quote Husserl:

⁹ Cf "No enrichment of content can make up that by which images, signs, objects of whatever sort that 're-present' something (that are taken as something, that exhibit it, re-present it, depict it, designate it, signify it, and so on) are distinguished from objects that do not re-present something" (Husserl 2005, 125).

¹⁰ Unless a word (or a letter) is used to refer to the same word or letter. For instance, when we write: "A is a letter of the Latin written alphabet". In this case we use the sign A as a sign of the sign A, and despite its representational similarity, we still treat A as a sign. Husserl 2001, 219.

¹¹ "Die gesprochenen Worte, die beschreibenden oder die Worte der dargestellten Personen sind Bildworte?" (Husserl 1980, 541).

The white form stands before me and is accepted as something else. In a manner similar to that in which the word-image (*Wortbild*), the visual and acoustical word-image in its context, stands before me and the significational consciousness (*Bedeutungsbewusstsein*) gives it signification with respect to something else, which can be present (or re-presented) or not. (Since, of course, the image functions here as a depiction (*Abbild*) of another image) (Husserl 2005, 178).

Even more, similar to the threefold depictive consciousness of the photograph of a chair, we can distinguish three objects here: 1) the written words on the photostat, the physical thing, that awakens 2) the word-appearance, that in turn becomes the bearer of a new apprehension, the apprehension of 3) the subject. In this case, the new apprehension is a signitive apprehension, that points "beyond to an object foreign to what appears internally" (Husserl 2005, 37). Husserl explains it in the following way:

It is just as in the reading of a word—"integral," for example—the word is seen but not meant. In addition to the word-appearance (*Worterscheinung*), we have, built on it, a second apprehension (which is not an appearance): The word is taken as a sign; it signifies precisely " \int ". And in the normal usage of the word, we do not mean what we see there, what sensuously appears to us there, but what is symbolized by means of it. The word seems entirely different from some arbitrary sound, from a senseless acoustic or written formation. The latter is not the bearer of a new apprehension. It can be meant, therefore, but cannot be the bearer of an act of meaning referring beyond itself (Husserl 2005, 26).

This word-image has no visual similarities with the real chair (the subject), which is why the word is a sign and not an image (in the narrow sense); and yet still appearing as an "image."

Having said this, I believe that Husserl's theory leaves room for another interpretation, according to which a text is experienced without any signitive function. In this case our sole focus is on the size, color, texture, and other visual appearances of the text. As Martin Seel suggests, Joseph Kosuth's photostats of dictionary entries are experienced exactly this way. We experience the photostat as a picture, "as a composition in black and in white, as the exhibition of virtually an ornament made of letters that loses all substantive meaning in this viewing" (Seel 2005, 125). Because of the way the dictionary entry is presented on the photostat—the enormous enlargement of the text, the impression that the letters are "handmade"—our experience of the written words is *pictorial*. As he writes, "the letter signs acquire a pictorial quality [...] they lose the character of standardized tokens; they acquire a graphical individuality" (Seel 2005, 125).

The Chair

As explained earlier, the photograph of a chair is a depictive image of a real chair. Also, the written definition of the word "chair" can be experienced as appearing image-words. Can the chair as a real perceptual object function as a depictive image as well? In some situations it can. For instance, if someone points to the real chair in *One and Three Chairs* and tells me: "I have a similar chair at home!" In this case, she is comparing the visual appearances of the two chairs—the one at the MoMA and the other one at her home. The chair in the museum reminds her of her own chair at home which means that the chair in the exhibition hall functions as a *memory-sign* (see section 1).

However, to see the real chair as a memory-sign is probably a rare case. This is why I want to suggest another reading of the appearance of the chair: the chair appears as image (*Bild*) but not as depictive image (*Abbild*). This interpretation follows Husserl's later theory of image consciousness in which he comes to the conclusion that not all works of fine art are depictions.¹² He believes that theatrical performance (*Theateraufführung*) is an example of imaging presentation (*bildliche Darstellung*) that does not necessarily involve depictive presentations (*abbildliche Darstellungen*).¹³ When an actor produces an image of a character in a play then the actor's presentation "is not a presentation in the sense in which we say of an image object that an image subject is presented in it" (Husserl 2005, 616). Instead, what appears is a pure *perceptual figment* (*perzeptives Fiktum*) (Husserl 2005, 617) that does not *depict* anything.

This does not mean, however, that the figment is not *about* something. There are various interpretations of how to understand Husserl's later theory. Claudio Rozzoni suggests that the subject is *produced* by the image: "what we see is an image *subject* expressed and *produced* by images differing from the *subject* they are supposed or claim to depict" (Rozzoni 2017, 121); the latter being the case of depiction. John Brough suggests that "images would still have subjects in a more general sense" so that we can still say that they are "about" something (Brough 1997, 44). He even suggests a reading that

¹² Text no 18 part b in Husserl 2005.

¹³ "If Wallenstein or Richard III is presented on stage, depictive presentations are surely involved although the extent to which this depictiveness has an aesthetic function itself is a question we will have to consider. Certainly depictiveness is not the primary concern; rather, it is a matter of imaging in the sense of perceptual phantasy understood as immediate imagination. In the case of a domestic comedy or drama, depiction is obviously omitted [...]" (Husserl 2005, 616).

"the subject of a work of art literally becomes the image-object" (Brough 1997, 33). In my view, the important point is that the "image" in Husserl's later text does not become a pure appearance, and that it is still an image of something.

In the same text about theatrical performances, Husserl explains how we experience the furniture on the stage. He says that the pieces of furniture are "just as much actual pieces of furniture as they are figments in the image world," but they are not images of figments (*Bilder für Fikta*) (Husserl 2005, 619). As Javier Enrique Carreño Cobos puts it, "a chair on stage is not a semblance of another chair" (2013, 156). According to Husserl, actors and objects on stage excite a double perceptual apperception.¹⁴ Because of the apperceptions we can have very different experiences of the same object, depending on the attitude we take. We can see the chair as an actual piece of furniture or as a figment in the image world. The genuinely perceived stock is common for both seeing because even though the figment is not real, it presents itself in the real thing (Husserl 2005, 619). However, the nongenuinely, non-intuitively perceived parts—what is apperceived—are in conflict. Therefore, we can say that the same thing happens as in the case of depiction: the figment and the real thing do not belong to the same worlds. Moreover, we also have a conflict here, although it is a different kind of conflict than in depiction. Cobos has explained it in this way: "Whereas for illusory perceptions and for depictions conflict remains on the level of what is genuinely and directly intuited, in the case of theatrical representation conflict arises on the level of what is 'apperceived'-i.e., the perceptually cointended but not intuitively given, unseen sides of things" (Cobos 2013, 156).

Thus, one possible reading of Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* is to take this artwork as an artistic performance (*Aufführung*) (Husserl 2005, 616) in which the chair (and possibly other objects of the three-part work) is experienced as a part of the artistic performance. The chair is a real chair *and* a chair-figment in the image world.

¹⁴ Apperception is involved in every perceptual experience. For instance, looking at a chair from the front we do not see the back side of the chair. What is genuinely perceived (or intuitively given) then is the front part of the chair and the back part is perceived non-genuinely, non-intuitively. In other words, we *apperceive* or co-perceive the non-genuinely perceived back part of the chair.

Concluding Remarks

In one of his later texts, Husserl writes: "In a certain sense, I can view anything as an 'image'" (2005, 713).¹⁵ To take something as an image is to value its mode of appearance and inhibit all actual belief in the thing's reality (Husserl 2005, 713). Any perceptual object can be experienced as an "image" in this way. However, in this article I have tried to show that to "appear as an image" has a special meaning when it comes to artworks. The image is not a pure appearance extracted from depiction, reference, or other kind of presentation (*aboutness* in general). We must have image consciousness in order to experience artworks as images. I have also tried to show that Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* is an excellent example for explaining Edmund Husserl's theory of image consciousness and the concept of "image." The three objects in Kosuth's artwork illustrate Husserl's usage of the notions of "image object," "image word," and "perceptual figment."¹⁶

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Moritz Geiger's Postulate of Aesthetics as an Autonomous Science

Abstract

Moritz Geiger (1880–1937) in *Phänomenologische Ästhetik* paper postulates aesthetics to become an autonomous science. The new science is intended to analyze aesthetic values and to discover the rules of their regulations. It tends to be separated from aesthetics as the sub-discipline of philosophy (especially under the influence of metaphysics) and aesthetics as a field of applying other sciences (mainly psychology). It may be achieved by the usage of a phenomenological method.

Keywords

Moritz Geiger, phenomenology, aesthetics' autonomy, aesthetic values, methodology

Introduction

Moritz Geiger's philosophy has not received much interest in Poland. Geiger has been mentioned by Roman Ingarden (1970, 20–21; 1974, 13–34), and recently by Filip Borek (2016, 29–43), who has focused on the problem of empathy (*Einfühlung*). Moreover, one can find a translation of a short Diane Perpich's paper which is the only existing Polish text concerning Geiger's aesthetical views (1996, 201–208). It contains mostly a summary of Geiger's book *The Significance of Art: A Phenomenological Approach to Aesthetics*, that is posthumous preparation of his notes from aesthetic field, which he managed to set forth only in part (Perpich 1996, 201). We see therefore, that in our philosophical literature there cannot be found any paper written by the

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Polish author, which examines the aesthetics of this phenomenologist deeply enough. It can be treated as a sufficient reason for writing this paper. What is more, if we consider the influence of phenomenology on contemporary Polish aesthetics its necessity reveals itself as fully justified.

In Geiger's view, the aesthetics that uses phenomenological method is the best way of analyzing aesthetical objects. Hence it should be extracted from aesthetical reflection and established as an autonomous science. This is the exact meaning of the thesis of the author that I want to justify on the basis of Geiger's *Phänomenologische Ästhetik* (1928, 136–158).

The paper was published in the anthology of texts entitled *Zugänge zur Ästhetik* in 1928, when Geiger worked at the University of Göttingen (Spiegelberg 1965, 207) and contains manuscript of the lecture which was delivered at the Second Congress of Aesthetics and Art History (Zweiter Kongress für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft), held in Berlin in 1924 (Dessoir 1925). As opposed to the afore mentioned *The Significance of Art...*, the materials to which were probably gathered after author's emigration to United States, ideas presented in this essay refer to his early European period.

Geiger provides an answer to the contemporary changes in the understanding of art. The ways of beauty and art have diverged. This situation demands appropriate research method, which would be as free as possible from its previous determinants. The solution proposed by Geiger works excellently. It focuses on the pure phenomenological aesthetic experience of givenness that is open to the new forms of artistic expression and innovative aesthetic values. After presenting the historical context and the outline of aesthetic views of the author, I will describe his argumentation in favour of the autonomous phenomenological aesthetics.

Moritz Geiger as a Phenomenologist

It was around 1907 in Göttingen when a group of students started to gather around the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. Among them one could find Roman Ingarden, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand or Hedwig Conrad-Martius. In 1901 Geiger came to Göttingen from Munich, where he was Theodor Lipps' student. The members of this circle conducted their own researches often without Husserl's direct approval, because of their realistic approach to phenomenology, which presupposed objective existence of things and the possibility of reaching their essence, in contrast to Husserl's transcendental idealism, which focused on the analysis of consciousness (Spiegelberg 1965, 169–170).

Geiger was born in 1880 in Frankfurt on Main. He studied law, history of literature, and finally philosophy together with psychology in Munich (Gödel 2015, 16). His scientific interests were very broad, reaching from mathematics, through philosophy of existence and experimental psychology, up to aesthetics. The main topic of his works was the psychological function of art and, unlike in the case of other phenomenologists, scientific optimism, manifesting itself in the affirmation of natural sciences and treating them as ontological models. Husserl himself was changing his attitude to Geiger's philosophy. After the initial approval of his work (mainly thanks to Geiger's analysis of empathy) he claimed, that only a guarter of his philosophy was genuinely phenomenological. Geiger is also mentioned as the first phenomenologist, to have wider contact with American philosophy, which began due to his annual visit at Harvard in 1907, where he met Josiah Royce and William James. In the following years he frequently stayed in the United States. and from 1933 he settled there permanently, because of his dismissal from the University of Göttingen due to Nazi persecutions. He died in 1937 (Spiegelberg 1965, 206-207; Gödel 2015, 16). He wrote Notes on the Elements of Feelings and their Relations (Geiger 1905, 233-288) (Ph. D. dissertation under the supervision of Theodor Lipps), Methodological and Experimental Contributions to the Theory of Quantity (Geiger 1907, 325–522) (the habilitation thesis), *The Consciousness of Feelings* (Geiger 1911a, 125–162) and On the Essence and Meaning of Empathy (Geiger 1911b, 1-45).¹ His manuscripts are kept in Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (Crespo 2015, 375-376, 392).

Phenomenology is a domain of philosophy, that turns to immediate experience as the criterion of truth, bracketing irrelevant circumstances, in order to reach the essence of the analyzed being. As it has already been signaled, Geiger was a representative of Göttingen-Munich phenomenology, the main member of which was Max Scheler. They tried to be faithful to the first phase of Husserl's doctrine, which was characterized by the realistic approach. Geiger dedicated himself mostly to the phenomenology of objects (*Gegenstandsphänomenologie*) which deals with items in the sense of intentional objects. In the subsequent period of his work he also investigated the phenomenology of acts (*Aktphänomenologie*), analyzing, among other things, the relation between phenomenology and psychology or the acts of aesthetic pleasure (Spiegelberg 1965, 209). It is also worth mentioning that he introduced distinction between an act and an object within sensation (Fabiani

¹ See also: Geiger 2015a, 19–31; 2015b, 75–86.

2010, 127). I am going to describe Geiger's general view on aesthetics, on the basis of which I will show his postulate of its autonomization by using the phenomenological method.

Moritz Geiger's Aesthetics

In his research, Geiger represented the aesthetical antinaturalism, standing against the reduction of aesthetic reality to a physico-mental event. Moreover, in reference to aesthetics he claimed that it carried in itself an internal antinomy—it was a science which dealt with general assertions whose subject was simultaneously accessible only thanks to immediate experience. However, this antinomy was possible to overcome (Fabiani 2010). Echoes of this position can also be found in analyzed *Phänomenologische Ästhetik*.

With regard to aesthetic research, Ingarden describes the history of the dispute between two approaches; the objective (focused on a work of art) and the subjective (concerned with experience of the perceiving subject). He then presents Geiger's philosophy as oscillating between those two. In the introduction to Zugänge zur Ästhetik Geiger declares himself to be clearly in favour of the subjective approach, but in the paper discussed above he describes a work of art itself together with aesthetic values, which brings him closer to the objective approach (Ingarden 1970, 20-21). A similar point of view is presented by Algis Mickunas in his paper Moritz Geiger and Aesthetics: "Geiger was not too eager to rush toward the integration of aesthetics of enjoyment as aesthetics of affect, and aesthetics of appreciation as aesthetics of values" (1989, 43). Affects and values appear in this combination as two opposite areas, especially with respect to Scheler's understanding of the latter, namely as beings which exist independently of the subject. Geiger's interests concern particularly what was specified above as aesthetics of values. However, he does not include the problem of appreciation among psychological or metaphysical issues, but he postulates an independent science, that would deal exclusively with aesthetic values (Mickunas 1989, 43-44).

Aesthetic values should not be the object of metaphysical research, for such research demands an arbitrary right to determine what they are, depending on the dominating metaphysical paradigm of reality. Nowadays, because of the commonly favored scientific attitude, reality is reduced to for example light or sound waves. Such tendency extends the range of that, which presents itself as aesthetical, making it easier to name different objects as works of art. That is because, when focused on aesthetics, metaphysical theories postulate particular concept of the presence of truth in works of art. Aesthetic values are thus identified with truth, and aesthetic experience becomes in turn a form of knowledge. It results in specific, even if inaccurate, access of art to reality, depending on the current metaphysical theory e.g. in the Aristotelian view of art as the imitation of the reality, the value of art is as the same time its reference. In this way "the metaphysician becomes the guardian of aesthetic values" (Mickunas 1989, 45). Geiger rejects the metaphysical attitude that connects aesthetic values with the presence of truth because such operation creates problems which cannot be solved without destroying the autonomy of aesthetics. One of them is the exclusion of such art that does not correspond to the current metaphysical system determining aesthetic values. In consequence the function of a work of art is subsidiary to metaphysics, to which it must be adapted. Moreover because of relativism, it becomes difficult to distinguish between aesthetic and non-aesthetic values. We could therefore see that metaphysics should not include the research devoted to aesthetic values (Mickunas 1989, 44-46).

However it is also psychology that is not given the authority to analyze aesthetic values. It postulates their reductive interpretation. In this way, Geiger supports anti-psychologism relying on three arguments. Firstly, psychology treats aesthetic values as expressions of subconscious drives/impulses. In this way aesthetics was incorporated in a wide range of acts of human expressions, at the same time not considered superior to any of them. Secondly, in order to judge the value of a work of art, we are not supposed to reveal the impulses, that have driven the artist to create it. A work of art should be considered in itself, separated from the author's biographical context, though for example the use of offensive language by a given author does not prove, that he or she is also vulgar. The last reason for refuting the psychological interpretation of aesthetics is an argument from the impossibility of evaluating and comparing works of art treated only as expressions of a subject. This is, because every expression always accurately captures psyche and it is hard to say, whether one is better than the other. These three reasons for rejecting psychological interpretation of aesthetic values refer mainly to the artist. Geiger also mentions arguments that concern strictly the spectator of the work of art. They come down to the criticism of the Kantian understanding of the evaluation of the work of art, depending on how they awaken enjoyment in the spectator. The aesthetic value cannot be treated as the product of aesthetic enjoyment, but rather as its source.

I have shown that according to Geiger both metaphysics and psychology are not legitimate sources of the judgement of aesthetic values. The question still remains, which science could become such source? Apart from the negative approach, with which Geiger is not content, he postulates a new science focused on aesthetic values that I will describe in the fourth paragraph of this paper (Mickunas 1989, 48–51).

Geiger does not restrict himself only to the theoretical reflection; his aim is also to show the practical application of the method of phenomenological analysis. He opposes two extreme tendencies of this method, namely analyzing only logical-semantic sphere and resorting to intuition as the source of knowledge, to avoid necessity of correct justification, criticized by the neo-Kantists.

Geiger's starting point is the analysis of meaning of the concept of "aesthetics." It includes not only a specific scientific field, but is a common name for a set of diversified sciences which are specified as aesthetics because of their connection with aesthetic objects (Geiger 1928, 136–137). I admit that formulating such a definition of aesthetics amounts in a way to *petitio principi*, though let us assume that this is just a general presupposition an aesthetic axiom. The author claims, that every kind of aesthetic discipline possesses a different relation to the phenomenological method, which implies a necessity of investigating how the method works in each of them (Geiger 1928, 137). Geiger singles out three sciences functioning under a common name of "aesthetics." These are:

- 1) Aesthetics as an autonomous academic discipline (Einzelwissenschaft),
- 2) Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline,
- 3) Aesthetics as a field of application of other sciences (Geiger 1928, 138).

Distinguishing aesthetics as an autonomous discipline is quite significant, because Geiger puts it on the same level with e.g. biology or physics. In the second point aesthetics is treated only as a sub-discipline of philosophy, exposed to many influences. We can recall here the aforementioned critics of metaphysics that often negatively influences aesthetics and usually conditions it. In the last point of Geiger's schema he suggests the refutation of psychology, as the instance overriding to aesthetics. We can therefore see, that Geiger preferred mostly the first solution, as it established a new aesthetic science, not conditioned by any prejudices.

Aesthetics as an Autonomous Science

Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline for a long time did not see a possibility of becoming a single autonomous science or a field of application of other sciences. Geiger mentions F. W. J. Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel, A. Schopenhauer and K. R. E. von Hartmann as thinkers for whom philosophical nature of aesthetics did not pose any problem. Only after the decline of Hegel's philosophical system, beginning with Gustav Fechner the main role of aesthetic research was assigned to psychology, which contributed to the neglect of its autonomy (Geiger 1928). We see then that at the beginning, aesthetics was a sub-discipline of philosophy. The next stage of its development was defining its place among psychological area. At the moment when Geiger formed his views, aesthetics was generally a dependent discipline, the field of application of particular science—psychology. In such context one should appreciate the innovative postulate of this philosopher, who did not accept existing methodological status of sciences, but recognized that aesthetics needed to manifest itself as one of them.

Let us outline the characteristic of aesthetics as an autonomous science. Every autonomous discipline has a particular moment, thanks to which we could name it as such and not as any other science. For instance, in natural sciences this moment is the connection to the external nature, and in history a "historical happening" (*historische Geschehen*). Such is the function of aesthetic values. They separate aesthetics from other sciences and set its autonomy. Geiger gives an example of such values: beauty, ugly or trivial and objects that could be related to them: poems, musical pieces, paintings, people, buildings, landscapes, gardens or dances. I deliberately mention all categories of beings named by the author, to show the diversity of objects representing aesthetic values (Geiger 1928, 138–139). It is worth noticing, that among the objects of aesthetics as an autonomous science Geiger does not name beauty itself, or ugliness itself, but beautiful or ugly objects.

The issue of the knowledge of values raises certain metaphysical doubts. Does the phenomenological act of getting to know the object by the subject not reach immediately to values, but only to objects that constitute them? Does it mean, that ideas (universals) are not reached through that process and what we merely have are their exemplifications? However, we have to possess the idea of, for instance, beauty to be able to predicate it about an object that it is beautiful. The author himself describes the situation in the following way:

Aesthetic values and anti-values specific modification do not belong to items in such degree, as to be real objects, but only in such, in which they are given as phenomena. It attaches [value or anti-value] to appearing tones of symphony—tones as phenomena—and not through this, that they lay on the air vibrations. The statue possesses aesthetic meaning not as a stone block, but given to the spectator as the person's representation. For aestheticness the fact that actress playing Margaret's role is old and ugly and the glow of fresh youth owes only to characterization, lipstick and reflectors light is totally indifferent—she [aestheticness] reaches to the appearance, not to the reality. The noblest aim of aesthetics as the autonomous science is pointed to making aesthetic value or anti-value lie in the phenomenal state of object, and not in its real state. It [aesthetics] must first research aesthetic objects in respect to their phenomenological state (Geiger 1928, 139–140, trans. mine).

Hence, according to Geiger, aesthetic values and anti-values (Unwert) possess metaphysical status of phenomena. He points out that there does not occur a strong bond between aesthetic values and material fundament of the work of art, but they are shown as representations (*Darstellung*) given to the spectator (Geiger 1928, 139). Such an approach provokes another question concerning the ontological character of aesthetic values. It is difficult to ascribe to them only mental existence, since aesthetic phenomenon arises in contact with the object from which it originates. In some fashion, they must be connected with objects, for instance by being their properties. We therefore see here a certain metaphysical indeterminacy lying within Geiger's theory. In my opinion this was intended. He wants to avoid entanglement in metaphysical speculations that could in some way condition aesthetics, depriving it of its autonomy. However, in this way we stop merely at the level of phenomena. We do not investigate what stands behind them; a dimension which is apparently treated as not epistemologically attractive in the situation of experiencing a work of art. However, we do not need to interpret this postulate as a sign of resignation from metaphysics as such. While it could still study random beings, its goals lie behind the horizon of correct aesthetic analyses. What remains is a doubt whether Geiger's optimism in avoiding metaphysical questions in aesthetics is not too precocious.

Aesthetics as an autonomous science must begin investigating aesthetic objects in their phenomenal nature. In this context, Geiger defies to conception of characterizing aesthetic objects through category of shine, because it endows the phenomenon a reality which it does not possess. For instance, a painted landscape cannot be treated as some "reality" (*Wirkliches*), which then presents itself as unreal, but as one represented (*dargestellte*) landscape (as landscape, that is given as represented). Also through introducing illusions, contradictions and factual unreality the area of phenomena is abandoned (Geiger 1928, 140).

The author explains his theory on the basis of a painting. A significant amount of criticism is levelled against the psychological aesthetics that recognizes painting to be a conglomerate of mental impressions (a painting is not a material artefact, but something that overcrossing it.) The author claims, that this already reveals an attitude to phenomena. However, what is given are not actually impressions, but complete objects, constituting e.g. represented landscapes. Thus, he concludes that a work of art has got a character of phenomenon (Geiger 1928, 140–141).

Geiger signalizes that from an aesthetics as autonomous science one should exclude all methods, which narrow down the aesthetic questions only to experiences. As a result of defining aesthetical issues through the process of experiencing them, it is hard to indicate for example the location of the essence of tragedy. The author mentions a possible answer to the question about the essence of lightning, as the one which consists in evoking scream and fear; and according him is not correct (Geiger 1928, 141–142). In my opinion, it leads us to the reduction of an object to subjective consciousness and its experiences. In aesthetics considered as an autonomous science one must describe the objective reality, to which we possess access and not flee to psychologism. As an example of incorrect, that is psychological, definition of tragedy Geiger mentions Aristotle, while the correct one was to be found by William Shakespeare.²

In the analysis of problems belonging to aesthetics as an autonomous science the author prefers the phenomenological method. As long as empirical and experimental methods are used we are remaining within the area of aesthetics as the field of applying other sciences (in this case psychology.) This kind of aesthetics entails the problem of the work of art which occurs in the artist's and spectator's consciousness. We can see here the radical opposition mounted by the autonomous aesthetics and this, which is only a field of applying other sciences. The autonomous aesthetics, which could be also called phenomenological, analyzes objects and not consciousness. Thus, it is clearly objective (Geiger 1928, 142). In this way we see, that the author is on the way to expose phenomenological aesthetics and its characteristic as the best type of analyzing aesthetical objects.

Both the phenomenological aesthetics and the history of art (*Kunstwissenschaft*) have a common starting point which involves the statement of that, which is objective (a phenomenological object.) However, ways of phe-

² I think, that Max Scheler also gives an appropriate (non-psychological) definition of tragedy, by placing it in the ontological construction of the world. See: Scheler 1981.

nomenological aesthetics and the history of art have diverged. Phenomenology always tries to reach the essence of an object in eidetic analysis. For this purpose, it does not focus so much as for example on Anton Bruckner's symphony or Sandro Botticelli's painting, but on the essence of the given painting or symphony, together with the way of founding aesthetic values in objects. In what way is it possible to overcome the plentitude of things and reach to the common structures and values (Geiger 1928, 143)?

Geiger suggests to reverse the direction assumed by the accepted paradigm of reflection upon art. According to him it follows "from above," which means that it is based on deduction from the general principle. The paradigm meant "imitation" in the case of works of art, and "unity in plurality" in the case of aesthetic values. Instead of that, one should reflect "from below." This enables to extract the essence from plurality of works of art, for example on the basis of tragedies by Sophocles or Shakespeare to capture the essence of "tragedy" itself (Geiger 1928, 143–144).

It turns out however, that such a solution is also not fully satisfying. To recognize tragedy in an object of art we must firstly dispose of the concept of "tragedy." Such an approach leads us directly to a vicious cycle. One should search for such a concept of aesthetics which enables to recognize aesthetic values in the object of art. According to Geiger the phenomenological method solves this problem because neither does it assume dogmatically the general principle or axiom that is later artificially found among objects, nor it induces from the accumulation of objects. The phenomenological method combines these two approaches, because it finds the general principle (the essence) in particular items. It tries to "be close" to phenomena, considering them not in their randomness and particular determination, but in their essential moment. The result is that the phenomenological method of aesthetical analysis does not use either deduction, or induction but intuition, to which one does not require contact with many similar objects, but only with one of them (Geiger 1928, 144–146).

The concept of intuition is nonetheless very problematic. It seems that there is nothing easier than instantaneously and directly experience the essence of a work of art presented to our consciousness, which replaces all research and evidence. The opponents of intuition in aesthetic knowledge propose usually two counter arguments. The first, is the difficulty in correct constitution (*Verfassung*) of experienced object, whereas the second is the problem of bringing together the whole object simultaneously analyzing its parts, which is required to define the essence (Geiger 1928, 146). Geiger claims that phenomenological method overcomes the second difficulty, but correct phenomenological intuition requires much labor and effort of comparative analysis of different phenomena to grasp e.g. the essence of tragedy and that does not conform to the common understanding of intuition. The author also points out that there is a risk of ambiguity and change the meaning of linguistic expressions, which he shows on the example of the term "tragedy," pointing out that in different centuries it stood for different phenomena (Geiger 1928, 147). This is also the evidence for the fact that using the phenomenological method requires the effort to know the history of development of concepts. But is it not against the universality of phenomenological method, which always searches for timeless essences, without the necessity to know the multitude of examples (Geiger 1928, 148)?

We touch here upon an important problem of relation between phenomenology and history. The solution proposed by Geiger is analogical to the explanation, how a triangle that possesses some essence, could occur under different side lengths (Geiger 1928, 148). The author comes to conclusion that this is static understanding of essence which cannot be transposed to a development of e.g. the essence of a tragedy. Instead he postulates a dynamic approach that is characteristic of biological sciences in which in spite of some change like for example growing up of a human, we could ascribe to him or her the same essence. Commenting on this step, Geiger claims that it was softening of Plato's conception of ideas (invariable) by adding the Hegelian spirit (Geiger 1928, 150).

The author also recognizes the danger connected with the long time needed to learn how to use the phenomenological method, which follows from the lack of objective criterions of verification or falsification of achieved results. It is a highly relevant remark, which could be interpolated also to the other areas of phenomenological analysis. It shows, that it is hard to contest results of someone's researches. One should also not become influenced by stereotype imposed by natural sciences, which claim that results of knowledge should be accessible equally to everyone, independently of one's intellectual qualifications (Geiger 1928, 151).

Phenomenological method consists in the tension between the so called aesthetics "from below" (*von unten*) and "from above" (*von oben*). These names, as we have seen, are introduced by Geiger in his paper, on the one hand to signify the aesthetics focused on concrete occurrences of works of art, and on the other on formulating the general principles, like a paradigm of art as imitation. By doing this, just at the starting point, it places in unjustified way, specific system (Geiger 1928, 153–154). Phenomenological method starts with particular and singular beings, where it searches for valuable

moments. Then it recognizes accuracy in repetitiveness of occurrence of aesthetical principles, which create a specific shape. In this way it covers the whole area of aesthetics thanks to a few principles of forming values (*Wertprinzipien*). It stands for the end of possibilities of aesthetics as an autonomous science, because the interpretation of these principles is the work of aesthetics as a philosophical sub-discipline (Geiger 1928, 154–155).

Relations between the aesthetics as philosophical sub-discipline and aesthetics as an autonomous science are analogical to those between natural philosophy to natural sciences. The autonomous aesthetics considers aesthetic objects, values and the world of aesthetic given as phenomena. However, there is also the possibility of philosophical reflection on them as phenomena given to the subject, which is called the problem of constitution (Geiger 1928, 156–157).

Summary

We can treat the whole Geiger's essay as the methodological defense or as the manifest of the aesthetics coming out as a conscious, autonomous science, disclaiming treating it as a field of application of other sciences or philosophical sub-discipline. It is realized by connecting it with the phenomenological method, which is opposed to traditional metaphysics and to psychological research. Aesthetic values and principles regulating them become the object of the aesthetics as an autonomous science. A work of art and aesthetic values possess the character of phenomenon, though Geiger as loyal to the realistic phenomenology and anti-psychological position places objects of aesthetic experience in an objective reality. We reach the aesthetic essence due to demanding preparations, methodologically regulated intuition, which develops from particular experiences of aesthetic values, discovers the structure and value of the aesthetic event (Fabiani 2010, 127). The reflection about these results should be left according Geiger to the philosophical aesthetics, which is the meta-level of an autonomous aesthetics.

At the base of Geiger's views, it can be observed presupposition of differences between phenomenology and philosophy, which he transposes on the field of the aesthetical reflection. Although aesthetics as an autonomous academic discipline demands the right to the most appropriate aesthetical reflection, it does not mean removal of other areas of aesthetics. The aesthetics as philosophical sub-discipline and a field of applying other sciences keep the power, however the range of their influence becomes radically separated. Huge advantages of the individualizing of the aesthetics using phenomenological method can be revealed in relation to the issues of contemporary art, especially its new forms like minimal art, happening or performance. Phenomenology as a science concentrated on the experience, helps to find the essence of new forms of art. It researches them in a dynamic way, without stopping on certain schemes of aesthetic values. Hence it is opened for their new forms. Flexibility and openness of this method on new forms of experience helps to describe nowadays appearing, but not investigated, forms of an artistic expression and aesthetic values. It is allowed by the Geiger's belief, that the art is the special reality, which possesses profound meaning for the human existence (Fabiani 2010, 128).

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Dena Shottenkirk*

Global Grammar

Abstract

I argue that art is a kind of epistemology. It is a way we know the world. But it is not knowing the world in the way that old correspondence theory of empiricism claimed, nor what the rationalists wanted to believe: we cannot simply look at the world or have it conceptually come to us, unbidden, unedited, clear and distinct. There is no a priori "given." Instead, the "world" comes at us with a plethora of data: massive bits of information, some of which is attentional and noticed consciously, some unconsciously, and much not noticed at all. We edit, we select. We do both as a result of being previously told what to notice (e.g., the usual designation of public objects), and as a result of selecting what pragmatically matters to each of us as individuals.

My view gives credence to the epistemic role played by art; I argue that the act of understanding art is an act that allows the viewer to enter the phenomenal experience of the individual artist-through the phenomenal experience's symbolism encapsulated in the artwork—and allows that phenomenal experience to enter the domain of social facts. It is a transfer of knowledge, from a first-person account of being in the world to a thirdperson account. In this, individually experienced qualia (e.g., the artist' experience) become socially constructed concepts (in the process of audience viewing and acceptance), and the non-linguistic experience of the artist is converted into the linguistic practice of the group. We are at a point in history where that is evident. That art is a kind of epistemic experience is evident in contemporary art because we have not only traveled past modernism, with its epistemic notions of progress and objective truth, but past postmodernism and its notions of relativism, and have arrived at a moment in history where the meaning in an artwork is not derived from the movement with which the art has aligned itself, but from the point of the individual artist. It is an experience that has at its fingertips the general rules, the general grammar, of post-modernism's theories and modernism's styles.

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It is a view of art that argues that art is not merely a pleasant leisure activity, not merely a search for beauty, but one of the important ways that we construct and understand our world. Art tells us what to see, how to parse the selected data into useful entities, and thus how to chunk, so to speak, the ontological world. Thus, art doesn't only make a subset of the data legible and meaningful, it also tells how to value that ontology: what to care about, and how to relate that to other things that we care about. It gives us the world we value.

Keywords

Aesthetics, contemporary art, philosophy, relativism, art theory

Intro: How History and Theory Matter to Art

Where we are today with art theory can only be articulated if we have some sense of where we have recently been, and this necessary step is never uncontentious. To pull back, to rise up—the effort of trying to get a clear bird'seye view: this is not easy. History—any kind of history, and this includes art history and the art theory with which it is coupled—is not self-evident and it is not a priori, meant necessarily to be a particular way. Grasping what has come before and putting what is happening now in the lap of what came before, thereby giving it parentage and identity—is an act of will(s). For history is editing. It is the conscious selection of a subset of events that are taken from the complete set of events that occurred; it is a story-line, it is constructed. And that is the result of political battles, fought in the minds of those who have come after. Some things are granted as meaningful and as progenitors to what has come later. Others are deemed to be missed turns, events without consequences—something that ultimately *doesn't matter* because its effects are no longer felt. History is a vicious rear-view mirror, letting some things live on and others not.

My view gives credence to the epistemic role played by art; I argue that the act of understanding art is an act that allows the viewer to enter the phenomenal experience of the individual artist – through the phenomenal experience's symbolism encapsulated in the artwork – and allows that phenomenal experience to enter the domain of social facts. It is a transfer of knowledge, from a first-person account of being in the world to a third-person account. In this, individually experienced qualia (e.g., the artist' experience) become socially constructed concepts (in the process of audience viewing and acceptance), and the non-linguistic experience of the artist is converted into the linguistic practice of the group. We are at a point in history where that is evident. That art is a kind of epistemic experience is evident in contemporary art because we have not only traveled past modernism, with its epistemic notions of progress and objective truth, but past post-modernism and its notions of relativism, and have arrived at a moment in history where the meaning in an artwork is not derived from the movement with which the art has aligned itself, but from the point of the individual artist. The relationship truth has to art in today's contemporary world is clearly a truth that emanates from the individual's experience of the phenomenal world. It is an experience that has at its fingertips the general rules, the general grammar, of post-modernism's theories and modernism's styles.

This paper explains both this theory regarding the epistemic role of art and the historical trajectory. It has three sections, the first two being historical preliminaries for the last: What Art Was (History); What Art Should Be (Theory); What Art Is (Global Grammar). The first section recapitulates a brief history of the twentieth-century/western-world's modernism and post-modernism in order to both give the necessary background for Section III, e.g., contemporary art, and also to explain the notions of truth that were undergirding modernism and then post-modernism. Truth conditions also drive section II (What Art Should be (Theory)), which is an analysis of post-modernism's reliance of theory and philosophy, and an analysis of the general relationship of philosophy to art as well as the relationship of art to philosophy. The final section e.g., What Art Is (Global Grammar), is an argument for the view that today's art is distinct from post-modernism (and is not thus a re-mixing of modernism's styles with the attendant reliance on theory), but is rather governed by a universal grammar that is understood globally. Art is not now about movements; it is now the language of individuals. And viewing art is the epistemic experience of understanding those individual voices. This change is the result of two things: 1) the internet 2) global art fairs and marketing. I analyze how these two things have dissolved the pluralism of post-modernism and given art a more univocal voice and one that allows the voices of individuals as opposed to movements. I explain how this Global Grammar uses theory and philosophy differently than did post-modernism.

What Art Was (History)

Knowledge has played very different roles in the history of modernism, postmodernism, and what some call post-post-modernism but what I'm calling the era of Global Grammar. Modernism's beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century (some would say with Impressionism but I would say with Courbet's realism) were a full-frontal assault on the prettiness of art. This was the first move toward establishing the epistemic role of art as publicly acknowledged role. The easiness of traditional art had linked it to the non-intellectual, but with modernism, art was a means of confrontationally demanding that reality be looked at with the top layer, so to speak, of reality stripped off. Like scientists looking under the superficial layer of matter to see the real microscopic causal connections, modernist art laid bare social and psychological realities. Their message was that the real, *really real*, thing was not the superficiality of a scene, where each object sat contained and cleanly discrete from others. This was the aesthetic behind realism. The respect for individualized objects-for objectness itself-ceased with modernism. Reality was to be found *behind* appearances. What was real was seen when one looked a bit deeper and saw, for example, the shattering, destabilizing light in Monet's work, or the claustrophobia that pigment and color could cause in a Jean--Édouard Vuillard painting where one figure was on the verge of being vacuumed into another, or the underlying geometry of the world as seen in Cezanne that was both rational and disrupted. To the modernists, these visions were an improvement on the old kind of pretty and respectful art; they were a more accurate telling of the world; they were truth.

Progress is not a fact it is an idea, and it was the central engine that underwrote modernism. Hope governed. The belief in the virtue of the new governed the world. And thus, the era's art cannot be seen apart from the ethos of the Industrial revolution or the vast migrations that were to resettle the western world. Life could be better. And each new moment, each new tick on the time line, was an improvement on the one that had come before.

This hope, this line of the graph that went ever upward, was the psychological engine behind the avant-garde. Each few years brought with it a new iteration of the Young Turks, each imbued with the patricidal need to overthrow the previous movement's style. And it was style that was the keystone of modernism: visual styles—whether it be Impressionism, or De Stijl, or the Russian Constructivists, or the German Expressionists, or the Surrealists— were codified and the meaning encoded in their visual form made public. Manifestos were published, and membership in the group movement was clear. Though this is not to say that the modernists relied on theorists or philosophers or even quoted them. Theory, when it did exist, was more often quasi-political in nature or drawn from the quarters of the newly established practice of psychology. Quoting from philosophers and relying on theoretical constructs in order to make even initial sense of the visual object was something that would wait for its conditions of satisfaction in post-modernism. While modernism's history is thought to encompass the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-sixties of the twentieth century, I would draw a line between the first approximately seventy years and the last forty-five, for I would argue that an important divide happened after WWI. If one begins with Courbet's 1850 "A Burial at Ornans" (which seems like a reasonable place to begin modernism), the focus of that work sets out the rulebook for the modernist work to follow: this was Reality. But by the third decade into the twentieth century, I would argue that modernism changed. The focus on the outer became a focus on the inner. In other words, the focus on the objective flipped to a focus on the subjective. And the cause was WWI.

This war, burgeoning within four months from an assassination in Serbia to literally most of the world, thoroughly unnerved the world in ways that are unimaginable to us today. Few people discuss the first war today as it was eclipsed by the much larger losses of WWII (17 million for the first as opposed to 70 million for the second), but, if one is to read them, the shattering that was felt can be easily seen in the recorded accounts. As Max Ernst was quoted as saying in 1919: "Our chief object was to show how completely we were out of joint with all that had led to the war, and all that the war had brought to us" (Seuphor 1957, 79). Or in the words of Tristan Tzara, "Dada was never anything but a protest" (Seuphor 1957, 70). A war without obvious causes, it imploded consciences with its unexplained and pointless loss of life, and was probably the western world's biggest dislocation since the plague of the fourteenth century. This is important for present purposes as the shattering can also be seen in the art. It is a change that is often overlooked. The focus of art after WWI wasn't on the objective world, but on the subjective. Hence, the Dadaists, German Expressionists, the Surrealists, etc. from 1917 on, were all were talking about the psychological costs of lifemeasuring, recording, and taking account of that immaterial world.

This trend magnified itself with Abstract Expressionists after WWII and the migration to America, but I would argue that the Abstract Expressionists were a difference in degree and not kind. Too much has been made of the shift seen by the second world war when the center of the artworld moved to NY. The changes in art after WWII were insignificant compared to the changes after WWI. The art got bigger—thanks to billboards' influence on Willem de Kooning and his influence on others—but the art remained focused on the psychological, the Freudian/Jungian, the inner world of the artist.

But all this changed in the early 60s. Pop Art was a difference in kind. Shepherded by Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, it was the comics of Lichtenstein and the advertising images of Warhol that defined Pop Art as not only art that mirrored the objective world and didn't comment on the inner, but also put an end to the avant-garde, ushering in post-modernism. Pop Art was a reaction against the look-inward tendencies of modernism since the time of WWI; it's viewpoint was anti-Freudian, anti-personal. I would argue that it wasn't primarily an attempt to eradicate the division between low and high art; that was a mere spandrel on the evolutionary path. The main thing selected for was the claim that art merely mirrored (external) reality. It just accidentally happened to be that external reality was largely a commercial (read: low) reality. The real enemies were the claims 1) that artists should delve into themselves and 2) reach for the new truth that would usher in progress. Now, truth was just the mirror. Thus, Pop Art was the cap on the end of the avant-garde; it was the end of the belief in progress.

What Art Should Be (Theory)

And it was the beginning of the role of theory and philosophy in art. Arthur Danto argues both points in *Beyond the Brillo Box*; in regard to the end of modernism he states, "Art was no longer possible in terms of a progressive historical narrative. The narrative had come to an end" (Danto 1992, 9). In regard to the role of theory he states, "[...] it was with reference to an enfranchising theory that they derived their identity as works of art. [...] one had to participate in a conceptual atmosphere, a 'discourse of reasons' [...]" (Danto 1992, 5). Artwork wasn't just available as a visual phenomenon, it was an artifact of a theoretical phenomenon. Pop Art could not be understood if one didn't have some understanding of the theory behind it.

It is shortly after this moment that the rapidly changing practices of postmodernism emerge, and "neo" becomes a designation attached to simultaneously occurring sub-movements, such as minimalism (thought by many to be a neo version of Malevich's work in the early part of the century, though joined with the Platonism found in the abstract contemplation of industrial materiality), conceptual art (thought by many to be a neo version of Dadaism and Duchampian aesthetics), as well as the movements directly identifying themselves as neo including neo-expressionism, or neo-Pop (in the 70s and 80s). The theory of truth underwriting post-modernism was radically opposed to the theory of truth that underwrote modernism. There was a singular truth in modernism, and each generation claimed to have found it. Like science, which is constantly being updated and changed, in art too the old version of truth was thrown away, replaced by a shiny and more truthful version of truth. But post-modernism didn't claim to a universal or univocal truth. It didn't sign on to the notion progress or the notion of universal truth that underwrites progress. For if there is "progress" then that definition of the right way to go, so to speak, is singular/objective/true. But that stopped with post-modernism. Like pluralism in metaphysics, pluralism in art was founded on relativism: many things could be true, it was merely a matter of what's true for you.

But that is not to underestimate to epistemic role for post-modernism; quite the contrary. While modernism had assumed the mantel of declarer of what was real, post-modernism did the same though with the added weight of theory. To reiterate, the art of post-modernism was not as readily understood by the viewer as had been modernism; the added dose of interpretative theory was needed. So, philosophical (or psychological or sociological) theories were enlisted, and even though this plurality of views, *as a plurality*, abdicates claims to universal truth and thus has the downside of merging truth with opinion, it does not though readily abdicate its claim to authority.

This relativism was in the air. Both analytic and continental philosophy of the time also showed preference for relativism, but more directly emanating out of art practice and often thought of as the starting signal for postmodernism was the architect Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, a book that argued for not only the recycling of different styles but also a mixing/ matching of styles, each style dragging with it the baggage from its original avant-garde (or older) sources. Symbolism and meaning was packaged and readily accessible, at least to those who knew the codes. Thus, theory was the keystone to post-modernism, replacing the more simple version of belief in progress and truth that had been the driving force behind modernism. Stasis had replaced progress.

But this is not entirely true as the stasis was in terms of the attainment of truth, not in terms of fashion. What I mean by this is that the truth-bearing function of progress had been thrown over-board—the guarantees of a better future that the avant-garde promised were gone; but the excitement given by the new-ness of fashion was still very much evident. Perhaps even more so. In other words, commerce had stepped in. The newest iteration of post-modernism, whether it was the "bad paintings" of the 80s or the large-

scale media work of the 90s, was each treated with the same excitement as the stylistic innovations of modernism, though without the fervor that greets claims of truth. Claims of cool are different. For coolness can be marketed in ways that truth can't.

Thus, it is important to be clear about the role of theory in postmodernism. To clarify, the term "theory" as applied to post-modernism has to be understood as being a plural term. This is the usage referred to by Danto: a specific art-theory used to explain a specific slice of post-modernism, and thus many different theories in the pluralistic stream of post-modernism. To reiterate the point, there is a theory explaining Pop Art, a theory explaining conceptualism, a theory explaining minimalism, etc. In other words, there was not, even during the theory-laden period of postmodernism, a relationship between the two fields such that certain kinds of art directly reflected certain philosophical perspectives. And of course you wouldn't want it that way, as the art wouldn't be art if it were doggedly following along behind philosophy; it would only be an depiction of the latter and not a thing itself.

That is a point worth taking another look at. The relationship between art and philosophy is somewhat fraught. Philosophy tries to own, as it were, other disciplines while art seeks to plunder for purpose. What I mean is this. Philosophy, as a practice, stands back from a subject and tries to determine the governing principles at work in that discipline. It asks, What makes this discipline what it is? Philosophy, in that way, throws a net over the entire enterprise in the act of trying to understand it. That is why I say it is a kind of ownership; and it is thus the source of the ancient designation of philosophy as "Queen of the Sciences."

Art, on the other hand, takes what it needs. Its relationship to other disciplines and systems of knowledge is extemporaneous and incomplete. It plucks, it steals, it takes a bit out of the whole and uses whatever it wants for the purposes at hand. More of a criminal than a tyrant, art just grabs and runs. In order to talk about what it is to *be in the world*—which is the whole point of art—art has to take from that world. But it has no need of studying and encapsulating the whole of a dialogue. Accuracy is not the goal, nor even a complete rendering of the facts. Because the job of art is to comment on experience, and since experience is always partial, art is always from the point of view of the individual at a particular time. In this, it's doing a different job than philosophy, or at least traditional philosophy. It is not out to encapsulate the whole. It is by its nature the story of an individual paying attention to the world. Art is about making a singular experience into a shared experience.

What can, then, philosophy offer art?

This is where "theory" as a singular term enters the discussion. Art doesn't need philosophy to tell it what to do. It never has, even in the days of post-modernism. Art will always exist, as it is the most essential expression of being human, even more so than language. The latter allows us to name and hence negotiate the possession of objects in the world. But art allows us to see each other's humanity. It is of far greater importance.

What Art Is (Global Grammar)

And so, to ask the question again that was asked above: What does philosophy have to offer art? Stated simply, aesthetics is looking at art and giving an analysis of what happens. If this is thought of in the way I am arguing for, it is an analysis of what happens the moment we look at art: how does perception meet cognition and what is that we are understanding? If this explanation is done right, philosophy will then provide fodder for art; it will give artists a verbal explanation for what it is they already do, it will give them a teleology and an explanation of their already accepted presuppositions. In other words, if philosophy gives a correct picture of what it is that art is doing, then artists will find that correct definitional picture useful and can draw from it. That is what I propose to do in the following.

I argue that art is a kind of epistemology. It is a way we know the world. But it is not knowing the world in the way that old correspondence theory of empiricism claimed, nor what the rationalists wanted to believe: we cannot simply look at the world or have it conceptually come to us, unbidden, unedited, clear and distinct. There is no a priori "given." Instead, the "world" comes at us with a plethora of data: massive bits of information, some of which is attentional and noticed consciously, some unconsciously, and much not noticed at all. We edit, we select. We do both as a result of being previously told what to notice (e.g., the usual designation of public objects), and as a result of selecting what pragmatically matters to each of us as individuals. I notice the smell of chocolate because I care about it. And on the basis of those things we have selected, we construct objects that are named, re-named, made anew.

The world is then "my" world—it is the phenomenal world as it has been edited and recognized by me. But it is not just solipsistic. I recognize objects because others have articulated and named them before and those semantic delineations have been passed to me, which now govern what I semantically recognize. Thus, I see "chair" and not just a lump of beans sewn into a bag, I see "computer server" and not just a mess of wires, etc. Others' subjective experiences have gotten passed along in terms of named entities and they thus were converted to inter-subjective realities. Therefore, we know the world not just through our own individual perceptions, but through the perceptions of others.

Art is an essential way that this fundamental human process of social cognition manifests itself. Art is thus an absolutely essential process. In this, *listening to others* is the most crucial epistemological act a person can do. And art is a form of listening. We pay attention—in that moment of experiencing an artwork—to the subjectivities and perceptions of another. We listen to their viewpoint, their truth, their experience. And we take what is useful, what seems uniquely true and previously unnoticed. We learn. We learn to see an object we'd not seen before and learn to care about that formerly unseen object.

More precisely it is a way we construct objects—e.g., assign properties to entities and thus delineate those entities—in an on-going and never-ending making of reality. Phenomenal reality does not come already "chunked" for us into what we call "reality." What is real, what counts as a social object, is constructed by us through a process of editing the phenomenal world, which, like a sandstorm, comes to us. Thus, much of what exists around us is peripherally noticed by us; much more is noticed not at all. "Experience" is what we call the subset of that sandstorm that we have noticed and named, and that is a reality that we make. It is a reality that artists help us make.



Rachel Whiteread, *(Untitled) Bed* (1991) Museum of Modern Art, New York https://www.moma.org/collection/works/82209

For example, look at Rachel Whiteread's piece entitled "Untitled (Mattress)" from 1991. In this sculpture, what is being pointed to isn't normally what we'd already be calling a thing—e.g., a named thing, antecedently defined. The plaster has four holes in it at approximately the corners of the rectangle, and though they do not go all the way through the plaster they are clearly reminiscent of the four corners of a bedpost. The size is almost right for a mattress, showing the presence of its former owners in the echo of their most vulnerable and intimate moments. Though absence is being point to in the Whiteread piece it is being pointed to in a more philosophically complex way than is immediately evident.

The plaster sculpture, seemingly pointing at first to what is familiar and named e.g., a mattress, is really pointing to something else instead. If one were an uninitiated viewer unfamiliar with Whiteread's work, the perplexity would at this time probably set in: not only does this part not make sense but it's clear that the plaster is too thick to be only the cast of a mattress. This is where the educational function of museum's plaques is useful and it in part reads: "[...] plaster casts of the space beneath an ordinary double bed, with the four round holes demarcating the space once occupied by the bed's legs... inviting us to see what is not there or to notice details that are normally hidden." If one didn't know before, one now knows. This is one of the ways that consensus is built.

It is pointing to what we don't normally name and isolate for view: the space under the mattress; *that* is what the plaster cast is of. Now we are looking at that and thinking of what that means. Whiteread has edited reality for us, pointing to things not normally ontologically delineated as a member set of particulars, things we wouldn't have noticed and named, and telling us to value them. Our world now has an additional constituent entity that it did not have before – the formerly un-named and not thought-of *is now an entity*: the space under the bed is now the-space-under-the-bed—it is *one thing*, united into an entity; it has been circumscribed off from contiguous bits of information and pointed to and named as one unit. Furthermore, and importantly, we are told *how* to view it: more forlorn than even the un-made bed itself, this space records, too, the former inhabitants but records them as ghosts whose physical impact on negative space echoes silently in their absence.

What is happening here is that the artist has taken her perceptual experiences of the world along with their associated subjectively proprietary qualities, what we call "qualia"—those felt experiences that are sometimes referred to as qualities, but just as often referred to as the (non-linguistic) "raw

feels" of lived experience—and converts those experiences into physically instantiated material e.g., art. The experience of the artist is made into the artwork, and the artwork thus encodes and transmits that experience. That is the core of what is called an artist's "practice"—it is an artist's take on the world, the artist's awareness of the world—and it is stored as a procedure. a practice. It is not like quite like semantic naming, and is quite probably not activated in the same part of the brain that stores semantic memories e.g., the medial temporal lobe and midline diencephalic structures, making art more like riding a bike than like naming species of trees (Shottenkirk, Chatterjee 2010, 5–21). Thus, those "raw feels" of the artist are ones known very deeply by the artist, in a way similar to the way one experiences a tooth ache or other ineluctably private moments, and those private subjective moments are converted to a visual language that symbolically recreates some of that feel in the embodied moment the viewer experiences it. The "languages" of color, size, texture, surface, transparency, thickness, fastmoving gestures, geometry, etc., etc., are combined (the math of the possible combinations is dazzling in and of itself!) and gives over to the viewer some sense of the original qualia experienced by the artist.

It is thus that both the making of art and the viewing of art are central ways that we parse reality and are thus constituent parts of our cognitive systems. Perception of the world is not a passive act. We edit the world around us both consciously and non-consciously. The artist chooses a subset of the data, and presents that subset within a particular attitudinal framework that references the embodied experience itself. Art is thus a way of bridging the distance between the knowledge obtained by an individual (e.g., as the individual artist) and the knowledge adopted by a group (e.g., those who view the art). In other words, art is a kind of epistemology— a kind of knowledge acquisition. It is an epistemic practice that allows us to construct a world in the face of a bombardment of vast amounts of sense data, as well as to the associated mental responses to that data. And, as an epistemic experience that maintains our identity as embodied subjects, art is, importantly, one of the main ways we get our bearings in that world; one of the main ways we "cope with" the world.

It is a view of art that argues that art is not merely a pleasant leisure activity, not merely a search for beauty, but one of the important ways that we construct and understand our world. Art tells us what to see, how to parse the selected data into useful entities, and thus how to chunk, so to speak, the ontological world. Much is left out in that process, and all of it is open for valuation—to care or not care about what we choose. Thus, art doesn't only make a sub-set of the data legible and meaningful, it also tells how to value that ontology: what to care about, and how to relate that to other things that we care about. It gives us the world we value.

This is philosophy that gives something to art: it is a view of art that prioritizes the act of the individual artist and makes that act central to our acquisition of knowledge. It is a centralizing of the role of truth in art. But it is not objective truth as was seen in modernism, nor relativized truth as seen in post-modernism. It is truth as we create it, truth that is gained from the fundamental act of listening to one another; truth that is the synthesis of individual perspectives founded in both conscious as well as non-conscious or somatic experience.

This view of aesthetics sees a causal connection between the act of perceiving an artwork and the act of belief formation. The artwork acts to create the object of belief, which can then be viewed as a kind of non-universal abstract object. What Whiteread, for example, is getting us to believe in is the abstract object "the-forlorn-space-under-the-bed". The referent is an abstract object, constructed object: non-a priori, non-eternal, non-platonist. This is not an antecedent reality which is being discovered by us. We make it up as we go along.

This view of aesthetics that I'm proposing is different than the usual view, which is generally the offspring of an idealist philosophy and thus prioritizes the faculty of judgement. In that view (the Kantian, for example) there is an ideal to be attained and what we are doing when we experience an artwork is judging whether the artwork has attained that ideal e.g., is it an instance of beauty? But judging an artwork to succeed or not doesn't seem to be the point; we can judge something as "bad" yet in fact quite still like it or, more commonly, judge something to be "good" and yet not get anything out of it. What we are interested in is, instead, belief: I want to believe *that* point of view. I look at a work of art and experience the artist's point of view: I understand something I didn't before because I understand a point of view I didn't before have access to. When we say "yes" to an artwork what we are saying yes to is belief in that point of view: more precisely, belief in that abstract object which represents that point of view.

Further, I argue that what an artwork means is not isomorphic with the artist's intention. An artist's intention is not fully what we are identifying when we identify what a work of art is about. In every artist's oeuvre there are facets that correctly communicate her intentions whereas other intentions have failed to be encapsulated. This is because the process whereby an artist hones the realization of her intentions is the slowly developed conse-

quence of the back and forth between the artist's audience's critical responses to that artist's work and the artist's acceptance or rejection of those responses. Therefore, when we say "this is what that work is about" that content is the end product of a long process of consensus building and is constituent of the epistemological basis that form public language.

For example, what an Agnes Martin "means" was not there in the first instance of her practice. It took a great deal of time for the artist to hone her message, and that honing was done in response to the audience's reports regarding what was being communicated. Some of the artist's intentions are not realized within the work in a way that is successfully communicated to the audience and so that part is not constituent of the meaning. That's why an artist's early work is often of interest to the art historian but not to the collector. That part is not constituent of the abstract object to which the art (read: mature art) is referring. So, when we say "yes, I like it", what are we saying yes to? What is it that we've agreed to? When we say, for example, that we like Agnes Martin's work we are saying that we like what her art "is about". I am saying I like the content, the point of view, to which her work refers. The work points beyond itself and to the publicly constituted abstract object that is the referent of the artwork. I see her work as evidence of that viewpoint. That is the abstract object.

And now for an explanation of the title: Global Grammar. We are in a different era. We are past the point of post-modernism, with its mixing of styles and its reliance on the notion of a relativized truth. We no longer need the group—e.g., the movement—to define the workings of the theory. And artists don't feel the need to align themselves with a particular movement. Movements are a thing of the past.

The reasons for this are twofold: 1) the internet, and 2) artfairs and commerce. The internet has allowed the processing of information and accomplished a vast educational program that is the unintended consequences of that technology. Everyone can easily know about the history of modernism, about who Picabia was for example and who the Dadaist were, what was the idea behind minimalism, etc., etc. And it can all be known quickly, though often in truncated and incomplete form. The same is true of the consequences of the world's literally uncountable number of artfairs: anyone within a small distance from a metropolitan area (any metropolitan area, anywhere!) probably has the opportunity to attend an artfair—those wonders of art commerce that make the traveling salesman look charmingly benign. Art is no longer a rare bird, it is no longer out of reach of the ordinary person, it is no longer something requiring extensive education and years of study.

And as that fact is true for the viewer (do we still call someone that? Or is it the consumer?), a similar fact is also true for artists: the rules are known, and they are global. Art education is easy, both through the internet and through the multiplicity of international university programs, which more or less offer the same information. The rules are easily available, and knowledge about what other artists are doing is easily at the tip of one's fingers. Small clubs in Zurich don't have a monopoly on what art is, as they did in the heyday of Dada, nor do the movements that comprised post-modernism control the language of art. Those languages—those rules—are available to everyone. Hence, a global grammar.

It is interesting to also note that this global grammar allows for both the early modernists' focus on the outer physical world as well as the later modernists' focus on the inner world, while also allowing the coded adoption of styles vis-à-vis post-modernism. The most important change is the role of truth. Gone is the objective truth the modernists believed in and also gone is the de-stabilizing relativism of post-modernism. Today, there is a renewed interest in establishing consensual-based truth, a truth that takes as its constituents the summation of the particular experiences of individuals.

Conclusion

What does this give us? It gives us a world of truth; a world whereby each individual speaks on their own behalf, and gives over to the rest of us a sense of what their particular experience is: what their newly named objects are. What we choose to name—how we construct our objects—is the same epistemological activity as when we decide our history. We choose what to remember, and thereby we choose what lives on. In looking back at postmodernism and modernism, we can see the role of truth and the importance of the epistemic function of art. We can see art that stops functioning as mere high-class portraiture or religious story-telling. We can see the switch over to art as truth-teller, to art as evidence for individual experience. And now we can see the role of qualia as experienced by the individual and understand how that particular experience is handed over to others and becomes fodder for publicly accepted reality. Artists are an important part of this naming process, of this public consensus of truth. Art matters because knowledge matters. Bibliography

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Rethinking Space in Telepresence Art through Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind"

Abstract

Eduardo Kac, an important contemporary telepresence artist, has maintained that telepresence art contributes to the breakdown of our sense of space. His argument rests in part on a reading of Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind." Contrary to Kac on this matter, I argue that an interpretation of telepresence art through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology does not inevitably lead to the conclusion that such art diminishes our experience of space; in fact, such a reading can reveal telepresence art to be a means of expanding that experience.

Keywords

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eduardo Kac, telepresence art, space, embodiment

Telepresence art, a type of contemporary interactive art that utilizes various telecommunications technologies to allow participants to experience and participate in distant events, has been implicated in the alteration of our conception of space in recent decades. Such claims are part of a broader criticism of contemporary life on the part of philosophers, anthropologists, and communications scholars who have maintained that space is gradually being subsumed under time, particularly the notion simultaneity.¹ Their arguments generally hinge on the role of technologies such as television, the telephone, and other telecommunications devices, as well as the internet, which allow us to be instantaneously present to those who are spatially dis-

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¹ See, for example, Augé 1995; Harvey 1990; Meyrowitz 1985.

tant, or to observe distant events in real time. In addition, these technologies force us to experience the world through the mediation of a screen, keyboard, headset, or other device, thereby competing with or even displacing our direct experience of objects in our immediate vicinity. This combination of instantaneous presence at distant events and a mediated experience of the world, they argue, has led to a breakdown in our ability to experience ourselves as situated in space in the way that previous generations did.

In this essay, I will focus on the position of one of the most important telepresence artists, Eduardo Kac, who has argued that telepresence art, like all applications of telepresence technology, has contributed to the "disappearance" of space and distance from contemporary life. To make his point, Kac draws in part on Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind," but he does not discuss the text in great depth. A closer examination of the conception of vision and embodied experience that Merleau-Ponty develops there will show, however, that Kac has failed to see the potential of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology for an analysis of telepresence art. Through an examination of the conception of embodied perception developed in "Eye and Mind," along with key sections from *Phenomenology of Perception*, I will present an alternative interpretation of telepresence art to that which Kac offers. Specifically, while Kac uses Merleau-Ponty to argue that telepresence art contributes to the marginalization of space, I argue that his phenomenology actually provides a means of demonstrating that such art enriches, as opposed to impoverishing, our experience of space.

I

I will begin with a brief discussion of telepresence art, along with a few examples. *Artforum* magazine described telepresence as "the ability to produce action at a distance" (*Artforum*, September 2001, 42). In a similar vein, in an early discussion of cyberspace it was defined as "the experience of presence in an environment by means of a communication medium" (Steer 1995, 36). Telepresence art grew out of telematic or telephone-based art, which has existed in one form or another since the 1920s.² Contemporary Brazilian artist Eduardo Kac, one of the pioneers of telepresence art, describes it in his seminal 1993 essay "Telepresence Art" as "an art based on the integration of telecommunications, robotics, new kinds of human-

² For a multifaceted introduction to the history and theory of telematic art by one of its most important proponents, see Ascott 2003.

machine interface, and computers" (Kac 1993).³ Crediting cognitive scientist and AI researcher Marvin Minsky with the first use of the term 'telepresence' in a scholarly context, Kac lists some of the many scientific applications of telepresence, which range from bomb disposal to remote surgery, and which have in common the fact that they enable users to perform remote actions using robotics and wearable devices designed to give the user "a quantifiable feeling of 'being there'" (Kac 1993). In his own work, Kac states, he emphasizes the interactivity that such technologies facilitate, seeing telepresence art as "a means for questioning the unidirectional communication structures that mark both high art (painting, sculpture) and mass media (television, radio)" (Kac 1993). While the sense of "being there" is a necessary component of any successful telepresence artwork, for Kac it is not in itself the ultimate "point" of such works, but rather the basis for an inquiry into the nature of communication, perception, and various social structures.

Before continuing with Kac's analysis of telepresence art, I will first briefly describe a few examples of telepresence works which should help explain the genre to those unfamiliar with it. As a first example, "Ornitorrinco," the piece Kac discusses in "Telepresence Art," was a long-term artistic collaboration he engaged in with Ed Bennett, a staff member in the Electronics Department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.⁴ The work takes its name from the small one-eyed telerobot which was its central component. Between 1990 and 1998, Ornitorrinco was installed in various locations, where its movements within its environment could be controlled by members of a remote audience by means of a touch-tone telephone keypad. As Ornitorrinco changed position in response to the user's commands, a feed from a camera in its "eye" transmitted a still image every eight seconds, allowing the user to experience the remote environment from Ornitorrinco's perspective (Kac 1991, 233). Describing the significance of this early telepresence work, Kac states that

In Ornitorrinco, the enigmatic idea of 'telekinesis' is embodied in electric and electronic parts, to unveil new paths for telecommunications as an art form beyond the exchange of images. This project is meant to express some of the possibilities of an out-reaching vision, in particular, and an extended body, in general, as a consequence of the cultural impact of telecommunication systems (Kac 1991, 233).

³ Originally published in English and German in Teleskulptur, ed. R. Kriesche, Graz, Austria: Kulturdata, 48–72.

⁴ The name of the piece means 'platypus' in Portuguese. Other important telepresence works include Ken Goldberg's "Telegarden", Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's "Pulse Park", and the cyborg-based performance art of Stelarc and Marcel·lí Antúnez.

To take another example, Kac's 1999 telepresence work "Darker Than Night" addressed the question posed in the title of Thomas Nagel's influential 1974 article "What is it Like to Be a Bat?" (1974, 435-450).⁵ Nagel argued there that any organism that can be said to have conscious mental states must have a unique type of subjective experience, "something that it is like to be that organism—something it is like for the organism" (Nagel 1974, 436). In "Darker Than Night," Kac attempted to demonstrate what it is like to experience the world as bats do by means of a telerobotic bat (the "batbot") which was placed in a cave in a Rotterdam zoo where 300 Egyptian fruit bats were living. The batbot produced ultrasonic emissions, transmitted a video stream, and transformed the bats' echolocation emissions into sounds audible to humans. Participants stood outside the cave wearing virtual reality headsets which allowed their "sight [to be] transformed into the point of view of the batbot's sonar." According to Kac, the experience of "being there" in the cave as a bat was so immersive that he referred to "the behavior and the telerobotic sonar of the participants in the body of the batbot." While Kac's specific goal for "Darker Than Night" was to explore "the humanmachine-animal interface and telepresence as a means of mediating relations of empathy" (Kac 1999), the work is of interest here because it attempted to achieve this goal by making the viewer present in a distant and unfamiliar place and engendering an experience of a wholly different form of embodiment.

As a final example, the dance performance "Dancing on the Feet," a collaboration between BeAnotherLab and the dance troupe Liant La Troca, allowed a group of dancers who use wheelchairs to experience the embodied perspective of dancers who are able to stand upright and move their legs. Wearing a special headset, a wheelchair dancer (the "user") communicated through hand gestures with a standing dancer wearing a video camera (the "performer"), who moved her legs in response to the user's gestures. The user was thus able to experience her "virtual legs" moving in response to her commands (BeAnotherLab). During performances of "Dancing on the Feet," users reported "a very strong and unfamiliar feeling that many of them couldn't remember in their lives (being able to stand up or vertigo of being taller)" (Bertrand et al.). This, it was claimed to indicate, allows not only a perceived change of location or position, but, as in "Ornitorrinco" and "Darker Than Night," a profound shift in the nature of their embodied expe-

⁵ While Kac does not explicitly discuss Nagel's article in his notes for this piece, the connection has been made in the scholarly literature. See, for example, Milevska 2000, 47–52.

rience as well. These three examples give a good illustration of the ways in which telepresence art stretches the notion of presence and embodiment, allowing participants, in some sense, to experience the world with an "extended body" of some sort. As I will show, this "extension" comes about not through a destruction of the participants' sense of space or situatedness, but rather through an expansion of these aspects of their subjective experience.

II

Returning to Kac's "Telepresence Art" essay, one of his main goals there is to discuss the way that telepresence art makes space "disappear" in deference to time, specifically the "real time" of videoconferencing, live televised sporting events, or any application of telepresence technology. With our ability to interact with people, and witness or participate in events, anywhere on the globe in real time, Kac argues, "real space and the very notion of distance are becoming increasingly irrelevant, giving up their once privileged status to real time" (Kac 1993). With the growth of virtual reality applications, the distinction between direct and mediated perception of reality is growing ever more blurred, as works such as "Darker than Night," and "Dancing on the Feet" illustrate in striking fashion (Kac 1993).

Kac relies in part on Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the intertwining of vision and embodied experience in "Eye and Mind" to make his point about our increasingly mediated experience of the world, and how he claims it suppresses and homogenizes space. In particular, he references Merleau-Ponty's critique of Cartesianism and operationalism in science, in which he asserts that movement "is not a decision made by the mind ... some change of place miraculously executed in extended space" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 162). On Kac's interpretation, Merleau-Ponty is implying that traditional science constructs the world in such a way that "the constructs are abstracted from that body caught in the fabric of the world which generates them," in part because "science uses instruments that 'sense' phenomena that the human body doesn't respond to" (Kac 1993). In this sense, the operational models produced by scientists are akin to experiences such as the simulation of echolocation in "Darker Than Night," which provide participants with input from sense-organs that humans do not possess.

Thus, for Kac, telepresence art creates the same type of "miraculous" change of place for which Merleau-Ponty rejects Cartesianism, although in this case the miracle "is not achieved by a mental command but by the use of specific instruments (telerobot, video modem, telephone, video monitors,

etc.)" (Kac 1993). In contrast to Merleau-Ponty's attempt to remove Cartesian dualism from his own work. Kac, while perhaps equally critical of it. chooses to highlight, and even intensify it in his telepresence art, in order to bring participants' attention to its detrimental effects. Referencing Merleau--Ponty's discussion of the "maps" of "the visible world and the world of my motor projects" in "Eye and Mind" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 162), Kac argues that the ubiquity of video monitors and telecommunications instruments has created a world in which "electronic images command the map of the visual and of the motor projects of humankind" (Kac 1993). Screens are thus "both the bridge to another place and that which makes vision possible. But this vision doesn't separate what it sees from where it sees it," and thus all places, regardless of how distant, take on a similarly mediated character (Kac 1993). The maps of the visual and the tangible, the overlapping of which is central to Merleau-Ponty's conception of painting as a form of vision in "Eve and Mind," are thus decoupled from each other, and our embodied experience of space, location, and distance is necessarily impoverished. Whether in robotic surgery or telepresence pieces such as "Ornitorrinco," "the screen, then, is as much a part of the process of seeing, as the movements made by the participant in consonance with the telerobot" (Kac 1993).

In such cases, Kac argues, the body is not operating with the same "map" as the vision, since it cannot move within the space mapped by the eyes. The users of "Ornitorrinco," for example, are directing the telerobot in a different city from where the robot itself is located; in one implementation in 1990, for instance, the users were in Rio de Janeiro while the robot was in Chicago (Kac 1991, 233). Thus, even though the users are controlling the robot's movement and seeing what it "sees" on the video monitor, the world through which their bodies are able to move at that moment is located in Rio, not Chicago.⁶ By decoupling the two maps, then, telepresence art reinstates a Cartesian perception, in which "worked-out phenomena" are presented to a disembodied intellect and the prediscursive level of phenomenal experience is suppressed (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 160). As Kac puts it, "The use of the video monitor in our telepresence installations is meant both as a door or passage between two spaces and a metaphor for our mediated

⁶ Although contemporary "virtual reality" technology allows for a much more immersive experience than that which was available during the years "Ornitorrinco" was being staged, the same principle holds true; even in the case of such technologies, the user's body is physically located in a different environment from that which her vision experiences.

experience of an intelligible world" (1993). Kac thus sees Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodied perception as supporting his own position that telepresence art represents a subsumption of space under time, in particular simultaneity. On Kac's view, by enhancing the Cartesian divide between intellect and embodied experience, his telepresence art illustrates the same points that Merleau-Ponty makes regarding the way in which mediated experience impoverishes our sense of space. However, I believe that this interpretation fails to see the full implications of the account of vision and motility developed in "Eye and Mind." A close examination of some key passages will reveal that, contrary to what Kac contends, Merleau-Ponty's account can help us to see how telepresence art actually reveals an expanded, extended experience of space and embodiment.

"Eye and Mind" begins with the statement that "[s]cience manipulates things and gives up living in them" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 159). In other words, empirical science constructs models of the world and gives meaning to objects based on those models. As a result, it fails to confront lived, individual objects, instead "admit[ting] only the most 'worked-out' phenomena" which it constructs on the basis of experimental data (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 160). To embark on a more fruitful path, "[s]cientific thinking, a thinking which looks on from above, and thinks of the object-in-general, must return to the "there is" which underlies it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 160). No sort of scientific methodology can help effect this return, however: only the "vision" of the painter has that ability. In contrast to philosophy, literature, and music, "art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which activism [or operationalism] would prefer to ignore. Art and only art does so in full innocence" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 161). Inasmuch as painters are not required to evaluate what they see, they are exempt from the "working-out" and manipulation of phenomena which characterizes scientific inquiry. The painter's objects thus remain brute objects without being "transformed into thought" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 163). Here Merleau-Ponty expresses a sentiment that is also present in the essay "Cézanne's Doubt", where he wrote that "Cézanne's painting ... reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 16).

Being a process that makes accessible a prediscursive level of experience, painting cannot be a product of representational thought. "The painter "takes his body with him ... Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 162). The painter's vision is fundamentally embodied and cannot be separated from the movements of the body, insofar as "[t]he visible world and the world of my motor projects are each total

parts of the same Being" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 162). While Kac maintains that mediated, electronic images have taken over both of these worlds, disrupting our sense of space and situatedness in our environment, Merleau-Ponty's conception of painterly vision provides an alternative to this view, rather than reinforcing it. At the center of "Eye and Mind" lies the notion of the "reflexivity" of vision: the basic insight that the body is "a thing among things", and that "the world is made of the same stuff as the body" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 163). As opposed to the representationalist understanding of perception, in which the subject creates internal representations of objects it assumes exist in a world outside of it, on Merleau-Ponty's account, vision and movement are inseparable aspects of a body which is itself inextricably enmeshed in the world. He thus sets aside the false dichotomy of self and world, or inner experience and external states of affairs, conceiving of vision and painting as fundamentally embodied processes.

If we view telepresence art in this light, the fact that it relies on a mediated form of vision and creates action at a distance becomes less important than its underlying ability to create a profound experience of "being there," even in a distant and very different sort of body. When directing the "Ornitorrinco" telerobot, the user still experiences the body as both seer (that who sees) and (that who is) seen, and recognizes it as the same type of thing as any other visible object. What makes this case unusual is the geographical location of the body being experienced, not an impoverishment of the spatiality of that body. This understanding is supported by Merleau--Ponty's own characterization of vision as "not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 186). In other words, vision allows me to experience both the commonality between my body and other visible objects and those objects' physical distance from me. By "seeing myself" in distant objects, I experience a connectedness at least as fundamental as the physical separation between objects. Thus telepresence art, rather than destroying or disrupting space, expands my embodied experience and thus my sense of space insofar as it relocates my visual and motor worlds to a geographically distant place.

Interestingly, in his discussion of the aims of "Ornitorrinco," Kac himself characterizes the project as an exploration of "some of the possibilities of an out-reaching vision, in particular, and an extended body, in general," phenomena that he sees as arising from our constant exposure to contemporary telecommunications technologies in everyday life (Kac 1991, 233). This sentiment is very much in keeping with Merleau-Ponty's conception of vision as

an "absence from myself." but crucially, as discussed above, for Merleau--Ponty this "absence" does not equate to a loss of the sense of self or a "disembodiment" of any sort. On the contrary, it "makes us learn that beings that are different, 'exterior,' foreign to one another, are yet absolutely *together*, are 'simultaneity'" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 187). The mediated experience of simultaneity, which Kac sees as indicative of the breakdown of our natural sense of space and embodiment, is thus, for Merleau-Ponty, a central aspect of embodied vision. Far from removing me from the spatial world, this "reflexive" vision emphasizes my status as one material, visible object among others in the world. In a similar vein, media and communications scholar Panayiota Tsatsou has argued that "through mediated images, people either become aware of the existence of other places or enrich their perceptions of what a place can be, acting in favor of the evolution of their own place" (Tsatsou 2009, 27). She suggests that theorists who forecast the demise of place or space tend to reduce it to a mere geographical location, overlooking factors such as subjective experience, perception, and individual identity, all of which contribute to the "continuously evolving process of place construction, as places are still significant elements of social reality and individual identity" (Tsatsou 2009, 25). Acknowledging the transformative power of the mediated experience of the world created by recent technological advances, she concludes that "[m]ass and new electronic communications mediate the sense of place ... but without eliminating the essence of place.

space, and time" (Tsatsou 2009, 27). Telepresence art, which takes advantage of these communications media, likewise produces mediated experiences that are constructive, rather than destructive.

III

While "Eye and Mind" provides compelling support for this "constructive" understanding of the spatiality of telepresence art, I would like to briefly consider some further evidence from *Phenomenology of Perception*, in particular with respect to the question of whether it makes sense to speak of "embodied experience" when, as in "Ornitorrinco," the parts of the "body" in question are not spatially continuous with one another. In that text, Merleau-Ponty argues that the spatiality of my own body is something quite different from the geometrical spatiality of the world: "my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed its spatiality is not, like that of external objects or like that of 'spatial sensations', a *spatiality of position*, but a *spatiality of situation*" (Merleau-Ponty 1962,

100). My directedness toward a particular object, task, or activity defines the 'here' of my lived body, a body which always finds itself already situated within a world that makes sense to it. This experience of being already in-the-world cannot be explained by the objective spatiality of external objects: "[e]ven if the universal form of space is that without which there would be for us no bodily space, it is not that by which there is one" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 101). As in "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty contends that perception provides the foundation of our lived experience of the world, but he also acknowledges that the mechanisms by which this occurs are difficult to articulate, inasmuch as "it is of the essence of consciousness to forget its own phenomena thus enabling 'things' to be constituted" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 58). Although it seems as if terms such as 'on' or 'under' should have some universal meaning apart from our embodied experience of such relations, the self-evident givenness of these relations

[...] suggests that we should look beneath the explicit meaning of definitions for the latent meaning of experiences. ... The truth is that homogeneous space can convey the meaning of orientated space only because it is from the latter that it has received that meaning (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 102).

While, in our everyday, discursive engagement with the world, we assume that objective, "homogeneous" space is the background against which our experience of experiential, embodied space derives its meaning, in fact, the reverse is the case.

Returning to the consideration of telepresence art, it becomes clear that Merleau-Ponty's conception of spatiality allows for the experience of radically different types of embodiment beyond that allowed by the limits of one's physical body. Users who direct the Ornitorrinco telerobot or the standing dancers of "Dancing on the Feet" are experiencing situatedness or "directedness" toward objects and activities in the environment in which their "extended" body is located. The reports of the wheelchair dancers of "being able to stand up or vertigo of being taller" provide compelling first-person evidence of this (Bertrand et al., 3). By conceiving of the spatiality of the body solely in terms of the body's geographical position, Kac is failing to acknowledge the extension of the user's body and the "out-reaching" of her vision across space and is instead seeing the kind of "miraculous change of place" that Merleau-Ponty decries. The philosopher and cultural anthropologist Michel de Certeau gives a particularly clear explanation of this distinction in The Practice of Everyday Life, when he invokes Merleau-Ponty in a discussion of space and place. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's distinction between geometrical and lived space, which Certeau refers to as 'place' and 'space,' respectively, he states that, while a place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions": a space "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables" (de Certeau 1984, 117). For Certeau, place is determined by our physical relations to other objects, but space arises as "a determination through operations ... by the actions of historical subjects" (de Certeau 1984, 118). While Certeau is not concerned with aesthetic experience in particular, he, like Merleau-Ponty, argues more generally that space is not simply a sort of supplement to place, but is rather "a practiced place": for example, "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (de Certeau 1984, 117). While "objectively" composed of disparate elements such as the sidewalk, lampposts, trees, and stoplights, a pedestrian experiences a single street—a geographically extended whole comprising all of these objects as well as the pedestrian's own body. Applying this interpretation to telepresence art, we can see the activities performed by participants in works such as "Ornitorrinco" and "Dancing on the Feet" as this type of transformative "practice," which turns two geographically distinct places into a unified space of embodied vision and motor activity.

Throughout Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty himself addresses situations in which an individual's experience of embodied spatiality does not precisely coincide with the physical boundaries of her body; prominent examples include his treatment of phantom limb pain and various disruptions of proprioception and body awareness (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 76ff, 103ff, respectively). While he acknowledges that "it is clear that there is a knowledge of place which is reducible to a sort of co-existence with that place" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 105), if that were all there was to embodied experience and situatedness, then there would be no way to explain the experience of patients who have difficulty locating a spot on their body that has just been touched or describing the position of their arms, or of amputees who feel sensations in absent limbs (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 107). Such conditions seem even more perplexing given patients' ability to easily complete routine motor tasks such as sewing. They become more understandable, Merleau-Ponty argues, when we acknowledge that "it is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body," a body which, "as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges toward objects to be grasped and perceives them" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 106).

While it might seem that a "body" composed of a human in one city and a telerobot in another is well beyond what Merleau-Ponty is referring to here,

I believe that, at least by the time of "Eye and Mind," his conception of the body was expansive enough to accommodate the types of embodied experience created by telepresence art. Rejecting the view that the body is merely a collection of parts organized in a certain way, he characterizes it instead in terms of the reflexivity inherent in its status as both seer and seen: "There is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen ... a blending of some sort takes place—when the spark is lit between sensing and sensible" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 163). Telepresence works such as "Ornitorrinco," "Darker Than Night," and "Dancing on the Feet" allow for this "blending" of seer and seen to occur even across great distances, producing in participants an experience of embodiment, vision, and motion in a place other than where they were before they put on the headset or stepped up to the monitor. While the ability to be in direct physical contact with other objects in the new visual environment may be lacking, it is also absent when we view a painting. However, for Merleau-Ponty this does not detract from the ability of painting to access the "brute meaning" of our prediscursive embeddedness in the world. Indeed, "painting evokes nothing, least of all the tactile. What it does is much different, almost the inverse. ... thanks to it we do not need a 'muscular sense' in order to possess the voluminosity of the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 166). Locational contiguity is thus not required for an experience of spatial situatedness, and the mediated vision that telepresence art produces does not marginalize space, as Kac contends is the case. Spatial separation is inherent in vision, and our embodied spatiality is no more threatened by telepresence art than it is by painting. Like painting, telepresence art expands and enriches this spatiality, bringing us closer to the "latent meaning of experiences" that underlies discursive thinking and homogeneous geometrical space. Contrary to Kac's concern that the simultaneity and the mediated nature of telepresence art are contributing to the destruction of space, such artworks in fact have the opposite effect. By creating embodiment across physical distance, they allow participants to experience new forms of situatedness and embodied experience, thus enriching our sense of spatiality and contributing to its ongoing evolution.

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49 (2/2018) | The Polish Journal of Aesthetics

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