

**Proceedings of the
European Society for Aesthetics**

Volume 9, 2017

Edited by Dan-Eugen Ratiu and Connell Vaughan

Published by the European Society for Aesthetics

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Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch

Internet: <http://proceedings.eurosa.org>

Email: proceedings@eurosa.org

ISSN: 1664 – 5278

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Towards an Aesthetics of Misalignment. Notes on Husserl's Structural Model of Aesthetic Consciousness

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to offer some introductory considerations regarding the convergence between perception and image in Husserl's structural model of aesthetic consciousness as argued in *Phantasy and Image Consciousness*. Insofar as this model operates from the perception of the materiality of the work of art to its immanent apprehension, it begs the question of how both strata link together if, in principle, as Husserl argues in his main text (*Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900/01; *Ideen I*, 1913), it is not possible to attribute characteristics of image to the perception of the physical because that which is given is the object in person. Given this conflict, the doctrine of figurative modification introduced in *Ideen I* allows us to understand how the presentation and re-presentation of the same object can take place through the idea that all original doxa, determined by the belief in the perceived, are modified in a way which, in the case of aesthetic contemplation, is characterised by both indecision and by being the opposed to all doing. Finally, the analysis and elucidation of the relation between perception and image within the conceptual interweaving of *Ideen I* opens up problems and aporias in Husserl's thought regarding the structure of intentionality as seen through the noesis-noema correlation.

1.

At the beginning of the 20th century the historical avant-gardes questioned the idea of the perpetuity and immutability of the artistic object (Foster, 1996) insofar as the work of the artist was not revealed in the creation but in the work of the beholder. In effect, by working with fragments and perspective, Cubism problematized the reception of the visual image through the structuring operations that the work of art aroused. An

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exemplary case would be Picasso's paintings, where works of art such as *Ma Jolie* (1911-12) and *L'aficionado* (1912) are presented from the possibility that the gaze has of endowing the image with continuity, assembling and reordering each of its parts. Likewise, in the 1980s, David Hockney used fragmentation to destabilise the narrative linearity and thus, paradoxically, to recover the continuity of the event. For instance, *Nathan Swimming* (1982) is a single image of a swimmer gliding through a swimming pool which has been made out of 200 photographic shots. Thanks to the adjacent arrangement of the takes, which overlap each other as if they were pieces of a jigsaw, the author fractured the space of representation by joining dissimilar spaces together.

If one thinks about the recompositive work carried out by the beholder, reordering Picasso's assemblies or giving continuity to Hockney photographs, some questions emerge regarding both the way we relate to the space of representation and the way we constitute its meaning. Contemporary aesthetic theory and the analyses developed by Roman Ingarden, Jean Paul Sartre and Mikel Dufrenne, among others, have dealt with these questions by reflecting on the genesis of the aesthetic image and its immanent experience, taking Edmund Husserl as their primary point of reference. For instance, in the 1930s, Ingarden, disciple of Husserl in Gotinga, published *The Literary Work of Art* (1979), where he developed an experiential interpretation of the literary work of art, whose places of indeterminacy predefine the way it is understood, through the concepts of concretion and reconstruction. Likewise, in the 1950s, Dufrenne, influenced by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and inspired by Husserl's phenomenological method, published *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (1973), where he carries out an analysis of the relation of consciousness in a contemplative attitude with its objects. Given Husserl's influence on contemporary aesthetic theory, Sartre went as far as to say that Husserl's notion of intentionality renewed the notion of image in the 20th century (Sartre 2012), to the extent of having acquired relevance, we should add, within, for instance, the iconic turn diagnosed by Gottfried Boehm and W. J. T. Mitchell in the 1990s, which undoubtedly takes Husserl as a point of reference of contemporary aesthetics (García Varas 2011).

Somehow, all phenomenological aesthetics are founded on the doctrine of intentionality, by means of which Husserl explains the relationship between consciousness and its objects, as opposed to a psychologistic interpretation, which takes for granted the existence of consciousness on the one hand and the existence of its contents on the other. Husserl's reflections on aesthetic experience map out to the study of image consciousness, which is the key for the possibility of the aesthetic feeling, since, as Husserl puts it: "Without an image, there is no fine art" (Husserl 2005, p. 41). Husserl understands image consciousness neither as an internal object nor as a psychological entity. We must not forget his own words in the appendix to the Fifth Logical Investigation, where he refuses the traditional theory that takes the image as being "in" consciousness as a representation of what lies outside of consciousness (Husserl 2001, p. 125). As he argues in the second book of the Logical Investigations, the intentional object is not in consciousness as an image of a transcendent object because "[...] all relation to an object is part and parcel of the phenomenological essence of consciousness [...]" (Husserl, 2001, p. 126).

In his lectures from 1905, in order to deepen his reflection on the phenomenology of perception, Husserl deals with the internal images of phantasy and image consciousness.² In order to carry out an analysis for the phenomenological elucidation of knowledge (Husserl 2001, p. 181), he already established in *Logical investigations* that it is at the highest level where we find the conceptual and categorial acts of understanding, which are founded in intuitive acts and their modifications. The latter correspond to intuitive presentations, which include perceptual presentations, physical-figurative presentations and phantasy presentations (memory and expectation), and are characterized by the fact that an object appears by

² After the publication of *Logical Investigations* (1900/01), Husserl taught a course during the winter semester of 1905, at the University of Göttingen, titled "Fundamental elements of phenomenology and theory of knowledge", the aim of which was to examine those aspects of knowledge which had not been understood in the investigations carried out in 1901. The course was, therefore, divided into four parts dedicated to perception (*Wahrnehmung*), attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*), phantasy (*Phantasie*), image-consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) and time (*Zeit*), thus contributing –as John Brough puts it in the preface to *Husserliana XXIII*– to an understanding of the essential structure of experience (Husserl 2005, p. xxx).

itself or by means of an image and are the basis of the signifying acts (Bernet 1993, p. 141).

Within the scope of intuitive presentations, and unlike perceptual presentations whereby that which appears is “a sign *for itself*” (Husserl 1983, p. 121), in phantasy and image consciousness a thing is represented by means of a mental image (Husserl 2005, p. 22). Specifically, what characterizes image presentations is that they are defined and stable, whilst phantasy presentations are discontinuous, faint (ghostly) and variable (Husserl 2005, p. 63). Following Marc Richir (2010), this distinction suggests that phantasy presentations cannot be figurative because, in being elusive and unsteady, they lack the stability that is distinctive of the external image. Image presentations, on the other hand, would be figurative because, in being defined and stable, they “require the mediation of something that appears perceptually in the present”, as Rudolf Bernet has put it (Bernet 1993, p. 144).

According to this distinction, and as Husserl claims in his writings of 1905, the experience we have when we look at a picture or sculpture, is performed by aesthetic consciousness. Insofar as it is related to a physical object, it is called a physical figurative representation, and it takes place when the image carries a relationship to something represented through moments in which the thing, the object represented, matches the image (Husserl 2005, p. 19). This relationship emerges from its very own structure, which is made out of three strata; firstly, the physical thing (*physisches Ding*) or physical image (*physische Bild*), namely, the specific materiality of the work of art, like for instance the canvas or the photographic paper with the layout of colours and lines; secondly, the theme of representation (*Bildsujet*); and, thirdly, that which is represented (*Bildobjekt*) (Husserl 2005, p. 20).

In summary, image consciousness, which in the case of aesthetic experience is called physical figurative representation because it maintains a relationship with a physical object, is a complex unit which generates tensions and conflicts (Husserl 2005, p. 33). One of these conflicts is the one between the physical thing and that which is represented (*Bildobjekt*). In this case, Husserl indicates that the conflict arises because the materiality of

the work of art, along with its formal layout, differs from the aesthetic image. For example, the image in motion and the 360° rotational fluidity of the head of Mussolini in *Continuous Profile of Mussolini* (1933), by Italian futurist Giuseppe Bertelli, does not match its bracket; a solid and static wooden figure which, due to the continuity of some of the features of the carved face, generates the feeling of movement. In this sense, the image object (Bildobjekt) differs from the physical thing and the theme which is being represented, and it is this form of independence that brings it closer to the image of phantasy, characterised by indeterminacy and the absence of referents. It should be noted that, in his writings of 1905, Husserl mentioned a second conflict between that which is represented (Bildobjekt) and the theme of representation (Bildsujet). However, and unlike the opposition between the physical thing and that which is represented, this second conflict is resolved through the concept of pictorialisation (Verbildlichung) (Husserl 2005, p. 18), by means of which he explains that the theme of representation resides somehow in the image, sharing the contents of apprehension (Husserl 2005, p. 28). By contrast, to go from the perception of the materiality of the work of art to its immanent apprehension makes the union between both strata rather problematic, thus begging the question of how both parts are articulated together in the whole model of the physical figurative representation if, theoretically, as Husserl often argues, it is not possible for the characteristics of the image to be attributed to the perception of the physical thing (Husserl 1983, p. 219) because the object is given in person (Husserl 1983, p. 83).

It is worth considering that, unlike in figurative representation, where the object appears independently from all claims to existence or inexistence (Levinas 1995, p. 58), transcendent or external perception is conceived as an originary and primary act or, what is the same, as an exemplary one. This means that perception, by being empty of mention and intuition, constitutes its unity out of the multiple apparitions of the object. In effect, the object is apprehended partially, that is, through its diverse aspects. Nonetheless, and despite its fragmentariness, we constitute a donation that unfolds without “interruption of the continuous course of actional perception” (Husserl 1983, p. 87). It is for this very reason that

Husserl says that, as well as the appearances of the object, “necessarily a *core of ‘what is actually presented’* is apprehended as being surrounded by a horizon of ‘*co-givenness*’, which is not *givenness proper*, and of more or less vague *indeterminateness*” (Husserl 1983, p. 94). In this way, that which is exemplary in the perception of things lies in the unity of sense that prevails and which is previous to the partialities of its appearances. As Husserl puts it, “the indeterminateness necessarily signifies a *determinableness which has a rigorously prescribed style*” (Husserl 1983, p. 94), being a sort of a priori that “*points ahead* to possible perceptual multiplicities” (Husserl 1983, p. 94) projecting forward new appearances or retaining the previous ones within the horizon outlined by the thing itself.

In contrast to perception, in the case of imaginative contemplation, although the object exists as an objective fact, consciousness only has the image, and reference to its physical support does not explain the essence of the act of imagination (Husserl 2001, p. 528). Already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl thinks about the split implied in image consciousness, when he says that: “Only a presenting ego’s power to use a similar as an image-representative of a similar –the first similar had intuitively, while the second similar is nonetheless *meant* in its place– makes the image *be* an image” (Husserl 2001, p. 125). In *Phantasy and Image Consciousness* Husserl emphasises the distinction between image and thing (Husserl 2005, p. 19) by referring to the fact that an image appears when we contemplate an object aesthetically, and it is by means of such an image that a person, a landscape, etc. is meant, the latter being different from the object originally perceived.³ In effect, if we pay attention to the assembled and square layout of each of the photographs of the swimmer taken by Hockney, these do not correspond to the unitary object meant, namely the movement of the swimmer in a homogeneous space. Consequently, and taking note of the immanent image of aesthetic

³ Husserl exemplifies this difference: “The Madonna by Raphael that I contemplate in a photograph is obviously not the little image that appears photographically. Hence I do not bring about a mere perception; the perceptual appearance depicts a nonperceived object. (...) the image is immediately felt to be an image” (Husserl 2005, p. 27).

contemplation, Husserl concludes that, unlike perception, which is characterised by presence, the image is held in an internal representation, namely, it appears only “as if it was there, but only as if” (Husserl 2005, p. 34). This means that, although the image has concrete referents a physical thing with a materiality and a specific theme, it differs from these insofar as it re-presents and simulates something different from it.⁴ In this sense, Husserl takes a radical standpoint when he affirms that the image does not exist: “which not only means that it has no existence outside my consciousness, but that neither does it exist inside my consciousness; it has no existence at all” (Husserl 2005, p. 23).

If we pay attention to Husserl’s writings of 1905, *Phantasy and Image Consciousness*, as well as to the Appendix of the Fifth Investigation, "Critique of the 'image-theory' and of the doctrine of the 'immanent' objects of acts", given the non-presentness of the aesthetic image on the one hand, and the real here and now that is distinctive of the perception of the work of art on the other (Bernet 1993, p. 149), which is not suppressed by the apparition of the image –for if it were, as Husserl says, there would not be a figurative representation but rather an illusion or a dream (Husserl 2005, p. 5)– the following questions emerge: How do perception and figurative representation converge in this stratified model of aesthetic consciousness? What form does this relationship have?

2.

Following Husserl’s analyses in *Ideas I*, a process called figurative modification (*verbildlichende Modifikation*) enables us to understand the presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) and representation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of the same object; for example, in the case of the contemplation of a painting, the perception of the craquelure of the oil painting in accordance with that

⁴ Husserl says: "Living in the image consciousness, we actually feel ourselves to be in a corresponding perception. Looked at more closely, however, this use of the phrase “we actually feel ourselves to be” is surely analogous or indicates a quite momentary deception. What is there is always only re-presentation and not being present" (Husserl 2005, p. 33).

which the image exhibits or, as is the case in the previous example, the density of the carved wood that makes up the head of Mussolini in Bertelli's piece and the movement that his face suggests. In the following I shall argue that the concept of figurative modification is central to eidetic phenomenology. The analysis and elucidation of this concept within the conceptual interweaving of *Ideas I* leads us to the problems and aporias of Husserl's thought regarding the structure of intentionality seen from the noesis-noema correlation.

In the introduction to *Ideas I*, Husserl says that his aim is to search for a pure phenomenology the peculiarity of which is to be far removed from the thinking and experience characterized by the natural attitude, that is, "from the world as it confronts us, from consciousness as it offers itself in psychological experience" (Husserl 1983, xix). Conceived as such, phenomenology is a science of essences, rather than of facts, and deals, as Husserl puts it, "with consciousness, with all sorts of mental processes, acts and act-correlates" (Husserl 1983, p. xix), in order to achieve the understanding of transcendently purified phenomena, the main theme of which is intentional life-experience, whose main characteristic is to be conscious of something (*Bewusstsein von Etwas*); this is, Husserl says again, "is what characterizes *consciousness* in the pregnant sense" (Husserl 1983, p. 199). This consideration includes the temporal flux of intertwined and overlapping life-experiences under the domain of a priori eidetic laws which determine its movement. Therefore, Husserl's task is to establish the way in which the intentionality of consciousness is constituted and the manner in which intentionalities are transformed and intertwined with each other, all this through laws that predefine such an understanding (Husserl 1983, p. 209). In this sense, Husserl analyzes the constitution of new objects by means of the modifications of intentional life-experiences. This analysis starts with the consideration that to all original doxa, determined by the certainty of that which is perceived, belongs a modification. Figurative modification is inherent to aesthetic contemplation and, as such, from the perception of that which is figuratively exhibited, it is characterized by indecision and by being opposed to all doing (Husserl 1993, p. 258). It is important to note that this modification is a special mode of neutrality

deriving from the doctrine of qualitative modification explained in the second part of *Logical Investigations*.⁵ In *Ideas I*, Husserl says that the modification of memory, otherwise called phantasy, also belongs with the modification of neutrality (Husserl 1993, p. 260); however, unlike figurative modification, and insofar as it is reproductive, phantasy is a type of primary belief belonging to immanent experience.

It is noteworthy that as modification of the belief in the perceived, the immanent image (Bildobjekt), that which merely appears (Husserl 1993, p. 261), is that which is more distinctive of the experience of the work of art –assertion that matches the argument from 1905 when Husserl says that “Without an image, there is no fine art” (Husserl 2005, p. 41). Husserl says that when we behave aesthetically, consciousness has a “mere picture’, without imparting to it the stamp of being or non-being, of being possible or being deemed likely, or the like” (Husserl 1983, p. 262), the function of which is to exhibit, represent, depict in order to turn a particular theme into something intuitable (Husserl 2005, p. 31). Thus, when we marginalize and remove all voluntary elements from this modification, that which is figuratively modified emerges as something undecided, something that is there before us but without being “‘actually’ intended to as standing there” (Husserl 1983, p. 258), because the interest of the spectator, as a spectator in the aesthetic attitude, centres only on that which is exhibited through the image, this image being “consciously there, although not in the manner of something ‘actually’ thought of but instead as something ‘merely thought of,’ as ‘mere thought’” (Husserl 1983, p. 258). For example, if we pay attention to the portrait of Pope Innocent X by Francis Bacon, the most characteristic feature for the spectator is the image object (Bildobjekt), which manifests realities such as the horror and the monstrosity of the anamorphosis of the saint, rather than its referent (Bildsujet), i.e. the 17th century Pope Innocent X, successor to Urban VIII, also portrayed by Velázquez and sculpted by Bernini, or its physical thing (physisches Ding); namely, the strokes of the thick paint over a canvas hanging from a wall –

⁵ *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, Fifth Investigation, chapter v.

although, obviously, both the referent and the material and its usage could be objects of interest to the historian or the artist, although in this case the relationship would be one of study rather than of contemplation.

As modification of an intentional life-experience the understanding of the relationship between perception and image implies difficulties because the intentional life-experience is conceived from the noetic-noematic correlation.⁶ Taking this into consideration, the noetic side of the intentional life-experience implies contents of sensation (hyletic data), which in the *Logical Investigations* were referred to as the “quality of the act”, upon which the noesis operates as a layer that “animates” or “bestows sense” (Husserl 1983, p. 203), thus participating in the constitution of the objectivities of consciousness (Husserl 1983, p. 207).⁷ Nevertheless, even though animated by the noesis, the contents of sensation do not determine the identity of such objectivities because they are a sort of fragmentary information that it is exhibited or nuanced in each life-experience. This being the case, if we can say that in aesthetic contemplation the contents of sensation of the work of art perceived and the image (Bildobjekt) maintain a correspondence, because the physical thing or the material image -as is the case with the engraving by de Dürer “Knight, Death and the Devil” (Husserl 1983, p. 261), with its black lines laid out over the paper, as Husserl emphasizes- continues to be an undisputed material referent of that which the image exhibits, how, then, can we distinguish between image and perception? What is the nature of the intention of the image regarding the intention of perception?

⁶ In fact, in *Ideas I*, the phenomenological domain is extended with the noetic-noematic correlation, which, as Husserl puts it, is of the greatest importance for phenomenology and decisive for its legitimate grounding (Husserl 1983, p. 233).

⁷ It must be said that although the term noesis had already been employed in *Logical Investigations*, when the term is used as part of the correlation noesis-noema it refers exclusively to the transcendental domain, as Morant has noted: “the noesis-noema correlation cannot be simply taken as equivalent to the act-object or psychic-physical distinction inherited from Brentano’s analysis of intentionality. We are now approaching *Erlebnisse* under the *epoché* and from the transcendental point of view” (Morant 2015, p. 20).

3.

In order to answer these questions, we must first consider what Husserl says in *Ideas I* regarding the noesis-noema correlation, which, as Dermot Moran argues, is a new and clear way of thinking the composition of the *Erlebnisse* and delving into its structure (Moran 2015, p. 16). In *Ideas I*, the phenomenological domain is extended with the consideration of the intentional correlate, for the sphere of life-experiences is not only reduced to the real immanent, to the noesis, but also to “the objects like them which are intentional in these acts, as they are adequately given”, as Bernet has explained (Bernet 1993, p. 90).

As mentioned above, the noesis operates on the contents of sensation animating or bestowing sense. Nevertheless, insofar as it is a kind of fragmentary information that is exhibited or nuanced in each life-experience, it does not determine the identity of the objectivities of consciousness. This being the case, it is the noema which grants an objective sense to the hyletic data. In effect, in the case of perception, the noema corresponds to “the perceived as perceived” (Husserl 1983, p. 214), that is to say, to that of which one is conscious, whilst its correlate, the noesis, corresponds to the mode of turning such sense into being conscious of. As Husserl puts it in paragraph 89 of *Ideas I*: “The tree simpliciter can burn up, be resolved into its chemical elements, etc. But the sense –the sense of *this* perception, something belonging necessarily to its essence –cannot burn up; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties” (Husserl 1983, p. 216).

In the case of aesthetic contemplation, under the perspective of the noesis-noema correlation, if we consider that we are before the same object and that the way of approaching it varies, in the case of perception the belief, and in the case of aesthetic contemplation indecision and abstention, we can then go on to say that in these types of life-experiences the variation in the way we approach the object, understood in *Ideas I* as figurative modification, implies that the noema, that which is intended as such, is the nexus between perception and image. This thesis is grounded in the constant relation between perception and image, insofar as the correspondence

between the strata of the structural model of aesthetic consciousness, as Husserl explained in 1905, is not exhausted either in the perception or in the apprehension of the image, due to the fact that both are in mutual and constant determination. In this way, thanks to figurative modification, as phenomenological reflexion (Husserl 1983, p. 178), we can be conscious of the noema, that is to say, of the sense of that which is meant by the act, in the mode of not acting or of indecision. We should not forget that Husserl's phenomenological proposal in *Ideas I* consists in elucidating the access to the objectivities of consciousness, distinguishing between the different types of reflections, and analysing them in full and systematically (Husserl 1983, p. 178), due to the flowing nature of living experiences and their capacity to be reproduced.⁸ Consequently, in the aesthetic attitude, one can access that which maintains its identity, regardless of the changing approaches of the spectator, whether these be perceptive or referential, a sort of contained gaze that presents visibility itself, as Waldenfelds reminds us (Waldenfelds 2011, p. 159). Under this perspective, we can also understand that in this attitude we see that which is represented in a relationship or a representation of similarity (Ähnlichkeitsrepräsentation) (Husserl 2005, p. 27; Bernet 1993, p. 151), whether this is towards the object or towards the theme of representation. Having said this, if our aesthetic opening culminates with the noematic consideration of the object, then a question emerges regarding whether aesthetic consciousness corresponds exclusively to the immanent image, and, if that is the case, we must then pose the question as to whether Husserl's aesthetic considerations place us or not in a dualism between reality and image.

In order to answer this question, we shall consider some interpretations regarding Husserl's notion of the noema. According to Sartre (2012) and Bernet (1993), the concept presented in *Ideas I* was formulated in an incomplete manner insofar as the different forms of noematic givenness were not rigorously differentiated. More specifically, Bernet

⁸ Husserl defines life-experience as: "continuous flow of retentions and protentions mediated by a flowing phase of originarity itself in which there is consciousness of the living now of the mental process in contradistinction to its 'before' and 'after'" (Husserl 1983, p. 170).

argues that Husserl's explanation contains ambiguities insofar as, on the one hand, the noema is considered to be "inseparable from consciousness" (Husserl 1983, p. 307) and "an object, but utterly *non-selfsufficient*" (Husserl 1983, p. 241), whereas, on the other hand, it "allows for being considered by itself" (Husserl 1983, p. 241). According to Bernet, these ambiguities show that the concept as introduced here is not clear enough and needs further elucidation in other manuscripts (Bernet 1993, p. 96).

Likewise, we can highlight two interpretations within the more contemporary debate regarding this concept. A first interpretation takes the noema as a self-sufficient mental entity which, thanks to epoché and phenomenological reduction, can be analysed independently both from the act and the object and, therefore, is an ideal of meaning by means of which consciousness is directed to its objects (Føllesdal 1974, p. 96). According to Dan Zahavi (2004), this interpretation rests on two assumptions: (1) the argument that takes phenomenological reduction to be a sort of purification of the items transcendent to consciousness that provides us with abstract mental experiences; and (2) the reading offered by Dagfinn Føllesdal, for whom Husserl's noema plays the role of interpreting mental representations and the directionality of mental activity (Zahavi 2004, p. 45).⁹

In opposition to this interpretation, authors such as Sokolowski (1987), Drummond (1990) y Zahavi (2004), have argued that epoché and phenomenological reduction do not replace the objects of the world with mental entities. We must not forget that phenomenological reflection is a change of attitude rather than a change of objects; namely, an attitude by means of which we gain access to the way in which we intend objects. This means that it is through phenomenological reflection that we access the object itself rather than its mental representation (Sokolowski 1987, p. 527; Zahavi 2004, p. 48); as Drummond argues, we intend the object 'through' its meaning, but not 'through' in the sense of going beyond it, but rather

⁹ Nonetheless, Zahavi asks: "But does the epoché imply that we parenthesize the transcendent spatiotemporal world in order to account for internal mental representations, or does the epoché rather imply that we continue to explore and describe the transcendent spatiotemporal world, but now in a new and different manner? Is the noema, the object-as-it-is-intended, to be identified with an internal mental representation, with an abstract and ideal sense, or rather with the givenness of the intended object itself?" (Zahavi 2004, p. 47).

‘through’ in the sense of penetrating it (Drummond 1990, p. 136; Zahavi 2004, p. 48).

However, if we now return to Husserl’s exposition in *Ideas I*, where he argues that in the phenomenological attitude, to say that we hold cogitative theses within brackets does not mean to say that we stop living in them or that we stop performing them; rather, on the contrary, it implies that we perform acts of reflection directed at them (Husserl 1993, p. 114).¹⁰ It is important to take into account that Husserl understands phenomenological reflection as a kind of modification that operates on a non-reflected living experience which functions as substrate (Husserl 1983, p. 178). Both phenomenological reflection and modification are second level acts, by means of which we access that which is given, that is the “infinite” and “absolute” field of living experiences through which reality is gained. For Husserl, singular things and the world in general are not an absolute that can be considered independently from or as intertwined with consciousness (Husserl 1993, p. 113), insofar as they are only meaningful when we access their intentional essence, namely, when we become aware of them as given. At this point, we must take into account that Husserl’s theory of intentionality begins with our relationship with the world and, therefore, it also includes the reality whereby we unfold our existence. As Zahavi explains, the noema is in the world, and not the other way round –or, what is the same, the noema is not a piece of the world that offers us a collection of isolated meanings (Zahavi 2004, p. 50). And he goes on to add that: “As intentional beings we are centers of disclosure, permitting worldly objects to appear with the meanings that are their own” (Zahavi 2004, p. 50).

Finally, if we now return to the stratified model of aesthetic consciousness under the idea that perception and image share the sense of that which is meant by the act, we can then conclude that under this model we are not seeing a discrimination between the materiality of the work of art

¹⁰ As Julia Jansen has argued regarding the well-known paragraph 89 of *Ideas I* regarding the perception of the tree: “The tree, as we experience it (the noema), is the same tree that we experience (the physical thing). As Sartre reminds us, Husserl does not think that this experience is ‘in consciousness’, but that we experience the tree ‘just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the dust’” (Sartre 2012, p. 382; Jansen 2014, p. 86).

and the immanent image, but rather a self-differentiation (Waldenfelds 2011, p. 158), for aesthetic representation emerges from that which is meant by the act and it is constituted through the misalignments or the lags that take place between the appearing of the image in relation to the physical thing and the theme it represents. This gap does not imply a dualism, for the image is anchored, so to speak, to the physical object and to the theme it represents. In effect, when we mean mention the portrait of Innocent X that we had contemplated months ago in the Des Moines Art Center, and we want to remember what it is really like, we need to renew its sense by means of either direct contemplation or memory (Husserl 2005, p. 27). This also implies that the image, in aesthetic representation, does not give itself to us as a completely finished object because it is subjected to a permanent adjustment between the apparition of strata, thus disclosing the active aspect that constitutes that which is properly aesthetic and that allows the spectator to remain in a constant constitutive activity. In order to conclude these considerations, I would like to go back to Hockney's *Nathan Swimming*, where the fragmented layout of a unique scene makes absence visible, allowing us to understand the possibilities that are at stake when we configure our knowledge, and leaving the following question open: what is the place of aesthetic images in relation to the present in which we forge our belief in reality?

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