Phenomenologies of the Image: Editors' Introduction

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Images have been a remarkably constant preoccupation for the phenomenological tradition. Beginning with Husserl's early investigation of image-consciousness, with its threefold conceptual articulation of material *Bildding*, appearing *Bildobjekt*, and referential *Bildsujet* (Hua XXIII), phenomenological accounts of the image can be found in the classic works of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Eugen Fink, all the way to current phenomenologically inspired approaches such as those of Jean-Luc Marion or Georges Didi-Huberman. The plural in "*phenomenologies* of the image" stresses the diversity of the aspects that these analyses have addressed: the relationship between image and perception, image and imagination, image and embodiment; the issue of the world-image; and the question of the dialectics between the visible and the invisible. Besides such basic phenomenological implications, the image has also been considered from an aesthetic point of view. In its application to visual arts—especially to painting, to photography, or to the filmic image—phenomenology has made decisive contributions to visual studies and to the "iconic turn." The contemporary metamorphoses of imagineering technologies and of its correlated visualities, which profoundly modify the very experience we have of images, nevertheless ask for a renewed phenomenological reflection on this matter. What does it mean for the image to be considered as an act rather than as a thing? What is implied if we think of images in terms of correlations between an appearance and a viewing subject?

Is the space of images a space of freedom or of capture? Can phenomenological resources help us to understand what it means to be absorbed, provoked, or injured by images? What does it mean for an image to be moving, both in temporal and in affective terms? What is the difference between "thematic" images that are contemplated for their own sake and "operative" images that serve other purposes? The questions addressed in the papers of this issue, and the manifold angles of interrogation, follow the different stages of the phenomenological tradition: Husserl and his influence; Heidegger's turn; developments in French phenomenology; and contemporary openings.

The first section of our dossier explores various topics related to the question of the image as they emerged in phenomenology's early phase, starting with influences stemming from the work of Edmund Husserl and also engaging other philosophers such as Eugen Fink, Ernst Cassirer, Roman Ingarden, and Leopold Blaustein. **Seyran Sam** focuses on Husserl's oeuvre in exploring the question of imagination and of its limits. The article argues that imagination evolves between a lower limit anchored in perception and an upper limit intertwined with ideation or thinking. The author shows that the various forms of imagination should be delineated in relation to these limits: image-consciousness in contrast to perception, and free phantasy with regard to ideation. Sam contends that various forms of imagination can be characterized in terms of their degree of freedom. Accordingly, imagination becomes freer as it takes its departure from perception and from the contingencies of the sensuous data, thereby moving closer to ideation, although this must still submit to the eidetic laws of thinking. In this sense, the article argues that free phantasy, which is the enabling condition for the intuition of essences, has a higher degree of independence than image-consciousness, which is still bound to perception. In the next contribution, **Lorenzo Biagini** connects the question of imagination with the dimension of language by focusing on the difficulties raised by the linguistic "image" in Husserl's works and on its function within the project of a "phenomenology of phenomenology." Examining Fink's observations on this topic, the article argues that a rigorous understanding of phenomenological language is paramount for the endeavor of a self-critical analysis of transcendental experience. The figurative concepts and their relation to pre-predicative experience are decisive in this context. However, the primacy of intuition over the concept, illustrated by the fact that the concepts must render the corresponding intuitions in a quasi-mimetic way, is challenged by the figurative character of language. In order to point out the nature of this "linguistic figurativeness," Biagini explores the analogy between image-consciousness and language-consciousness, underscoring the crucial role played by the symbol in the affinity between image and sign, and finally emphasizing the mutual determination of linguistic and intuitive moments of experience. The question of the symbolic is equally at the core of the article by **Irene Breuer**, who offers a contribution to the hermeneutics of expression by analyzing the tension between the views of Cassirer and Husserl on the

problem of the image. Elaborating the distinction between "images as examples" and "images as exemplars," the article shows how Cassirer determines the symbolic idea as an insight into a whole that functions as an exemplary image, as a categorically determined singularity that carries an ideal meaning, while for Husserl the eidetic variation is carried out on an image taken in its ideal arbitrariness, which stands in sharp contrast to the precise determination of the eidos. Thus, Breuer argues that while the imagistic example is for Husserl only an arbitrary individualization of an eidos, for Cassirer the imagistic exemplar in its uniqueness illustrates the plenitude of the meaning of the phenomenon. With the next article, written by **Witold Płotka**, we move toward the influence of Husserl's theory of images on two Polish philosophers, Roman Ingarden and Leopold Blaustein—both students of Husserl, although in different periods and with dissimilar intensity: while Ingarden was an important member of the early Göttingen Circle, Blaustein only occasionally attended a lecture course that Husserl held in his late period in Freiburg. Moreover, Blaustein also attended Ingarden's own lecture courses discussing the topic of image-consciousness, and was equally greatly influenced by Twardowski, who was his teacher as well. In this network of influences, Płotka examines the distinct contributions of Ingarden and Blaustein to the phenomenology of the image, chiefly approached in relation to painting and aesthetics, in a critical reading of Husserl's views. The article analyzes their descriptions of the pictorial experience, showing that in examining the famous example of Dürer's engraving *Knight, Death, and the Devil* discussed in §111 of *Ideas I*, they also criticize various aspects of the Husserlian theory of intentionality.

The following two articles engage with the problematic status of the image in the framework of Heideggerian thought. **César Gómez Algarra** questions whether we are dealing in Martin Heidegger's writings after the *Kehre* with a "thought without images," with an iconophobic or iconoclastic thinking that denies any legitimacy to the dimension of the image. The article argues that Heidegger's rejection of the image should be understood in light of his constant criticism of the notion of representation. Image and representation are intrinsically connected in the history of metaphysics, namely, in the advent of the era of subjectivity. Likewise, an emphasis on the subjective capacity of representing the object is a strong indication that the question of Being has been abandoned. Gómez Algarra contends that in spite of this rejection of images, they nevertheless permeate Heidegger's later writings, which mobilize evocative and pregnant images in order to rethink the deployment of Being. This approach opens up a new non-imaginative experience of Being, a radical imagination without images that no longer aims to be metaphysical or subjective, representative, or transcendental. In the same vein, **Shawn Loht** examines how despite Heidegger's well-known critical view of images, mainly expressed in "The Age of the World-Picture," some of his other texts also make possible the affirmation of an authentic meaning of images. Thus, the article analyzes several positive accounts of images in Heidegger's work. These are

not restricted to his famous analyses of great paintings, such as Van Gogh's "Pair of Shoes" or Cézanne's various renderings of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, but also include a reference to the "subdued gestures" in Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*. Such images, argues Loht, cannot be reduced to subjective representations, since they are no longer pictures that objects transmit to the mind, but are on the contrary able to reveal a meaning beyond what they simply depict. These extraordinary images bear an authentic meaning inasmuch as they are disclosures of Being, originating in the call and the appeal of language, in the commemorative experience of things. The article finally suggests that this essential disclosure-character of an originary experience is possible even for modern technological media.

The following five contributions then explore the multifarious inquiries into the essence of images in French phenomenology. **Simone Villani** and **Andrea Altobrando** focus on the question of "mental images," beginning with Jean-Paul Sartre's early analysis in *The Imaginary* and connecting it with his observations in the unfinished work *Notebooks for an Ethics*. More precisely, the article explores the connections between imagination and desire, analyzing how mental images articulate the experiences of desire and enjoyment, evolving in the tension between the unreal horizon of an imagined enjoyment and its realization in an actual experience. While the mental image initially prefigures an imaginary enjoyment, inasmuch as it enables the imagination to produce a fictional object to fulfill a craving, it subsequently leads consciousness to transform the environing world in order to realize the enjoyment effectively in an actual event. Thus, Villani and Altobrando contend that mental images provide the connection between the imaginary and the real world by creating instruments that are able to satisfy the desire in reality. Approaching the question of vision and the gaze in the articulation of the visible and the invisible, **Huaiyuan Zhang** explores the confrontation between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, both undermining in different ways the visual model of self-reflective consciousness. The author focuses on the complex relationship of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan, analyzing the compatibilities and divergences that surface in their constant dialogue. Examining Lacan's discussion of the specular image and of its role in the formation of the self in the mirror stage, connected with the symbolic identification with the other, the author analyzes his twofold criticism of Merleau-Ponty: Lacan considers not only that Merleau-Ponty neglects the subject's self-differentiation through the discourse of the other, since the *cogito* remains a presence of self to self, a way of seeing oneself in the process of seeing oneself, but he also fails to interpret the phenomenon of the gaze adequately. Zhang finally shows that an attentive reading of Merleau-Ponty's final texts can provide an answer to this criticism, opening a new path for the emergence of psychoanalytic phenomenology. In the next contribution, **Alex Obrigewitsch** tackles the question of the literary image as it is disclosed in the dialogue of another famous tandem within contemporary French philosophy: Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Blanchot.

The article focuses on the relationship between phenomenology and literature, emphasizing the tension between the visual image and the imaginary image, taking the experience of writing and reading as its point of departure. Obrigewitsch argues that the literary image, standing between reality and the imaginary, is not reduceable to the transparency of the imaginary suggested by the metaphor of the window, but evolves in and through an intrigue that both presents and withdraws, serving as the appearing of an appearance without ground. The article shows that for Levinas as well as for Blanchot, the image is removed from any representational theory of consciousness, being the originary absence-in-presence of a disappearance lacking any objective ground. The relation between phenomenology and literature is finally understood in terms of a fundamental or transcendental impossibility of essence. **Erik Lind** focuses on Henri Maldiney's phenomenology of the image, carried out in critical dialogue both with Husserl and with Sartre. The article shows that, on the one hand, Maldiney's criticism aims to point out the insufficiency of the doctrine of intentionality when it comes to considering the pictorial image in the realm of art. On the other hand, the author argues that for Maldiney, the image cannot be reduced to a consciousness that is itself understood as pure negativity. Instead, it is a mode of presence, comprehended in a Heideggerian vein that amounts to a more originary meaning of space than the one objectifying the world through representation, namely, the presence in the world and the presence of the world. Discussing Maldiney's approach to Byzantine mosaics and Cézanne's paintings, Lind finally explores two central notions that are central to his phenomenology of the image: the form and the rhythm that belong to the non-intentional structure of the image. Thus, the extraordinary images are able to give rise to an anti-intentional orientation of the experience. **Samuel Lelièvre** argues that a similar critical appropriation of Husserl's theory of image-consciousness can equally be found in Paul Ricoeur's writings. The author emphasizes the crucial role the question of the image has in the whole framework of Ricoeur's philosophical project, since it is not only interconnected with his philosophy of imagination and engages the topics of perception, representation, and memory, but also underlies his philosophy of action, with its various ramifications in ethics or political philosophy. Lelièvre thereby shows that Ricoeur's philosophy of the image participates in the complex relationship between phenomenology and anthropology, traversing a variety of layers going from symbol to trace and sign, as well as being permeated by influences coming from Bergson and Heidegger, Gadamer and Bachelard, Wittgenstein and Dagognet. The article finally questions the semiotic nature of the image, exploring the articulation of image and language and connecting Ricoeur's theory of the imagination with his theory of metaphor.

The final section of our dossier includes two contributions that illustrate the further broadening of the phenomenology of the image in contemporary thought. Two rather divergent topics are tackled, questioning on the one hand how phenomenology is able to enrich the theological discussion concerning

the old debate regarding the nature of icons in the Christian tradition, and on the other hand, how phenomenology can approach the new types of images created by the most advanced imagineering technologies. **Stephanie Rumpza** draws on phenomenology to correct the defense of the icon found in Orthodox thinkers such as Ouspensky and Florensky. Their opposition to the naturalistic turn within Western aesthetics in favor of the "spiritual" icon not only risks overlooking an essential dimension of the visibility of images, but disregards the visibility of the world of experience as such, bypassing the real issue: the possibility of spiritual experience. As a corrective, Rumpza first draws on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of painting, which challenges the false visibility of the flattened aesthetics that forgets the originary experience of sight and returns instead to a lived experience entangled with the world. Next, Marion's phenomenology of Revelation opens a broader notion of experience that can better articulate the Orthodox concern about the "spiritual" character of an icon's phenomenality. Drawing these resources together, the paper closes with a positive sketch of the phenomenological possibility of the icon as a spiritually revelatory image. Our dossier concludes with a contribution devoted to the challenges that the recent developments of new technologies address to contemporary phenomenological reflection: the experience of virtual reality. Assuming a Husserlian background, **Fabrizia Bandi** explores how image-consciousness is enacted in the experience of VR images, questioning the specific type of presentification that is at work here. The author investigates the structures of the imagistic experience given as virtual reality, distinguishing it from perception, hallucination, phantasy, dreams, and lucid dreams, and shows that VR images cannot be reduced to simple phantasms. Tackling the topic regarding the reality or unreality of virtual objects, the article therefore emphasizes the elements allowing us to differentiate between VR images and phantasy images. Bandi finally analyzes the peculiar type of image-object that is given in such an experience, arguing that the VR experience should be situated between image-consciousness and perceptual apprehension.

The texts gathered here for this special issue bespeak the relevance of the topic of the image both for classical phenomenology and for contemporary phenomenology. While some hasty and superficial commentators had written off the question, misled by Husserl's rejection of the "image theory" (*Bildertheorie*) of consciousness in the *Logical Investigations*, it turns out that phenomenology can offer both a critique of representationalism (as the name of a theory where consciousness would yield a mental image of an external reality) and some of the richest and manifold methods to describe the realm of image-based appearances. It is probably no accident that phenomenology is currently being widely rediscovered as a decisive resource for intervening in the current debates around the "pictorial turn" and in visual studies by and large. May the following special issue contribute to consolidating this momentum.