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# Husserl on the Artist and the Philosopher: Aesthetic and Phenomenological Attitude

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# Husserl on the Artist and the Philosopher: Aesthetical and Phenomenological Attitude

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## Introduction

In Western Philosophy, there is an old tradition establishing an essential connection between an aesthetic, pleasing contemplation and that of the curiously perceiving theoretical spectator, who is interested in how the “things themselves” *really* are, *both* of which points of view are opposed to dealing with things in a pragmatic context (i.e. as artifacts). These two forms of life, that of the artist and the philosopher or scientist, have thus been seen to have something in common, namely their way of viewing and experiencing the world, *their* “world.” Let me paraphrase this way of experience the common *phenomenological* term with *attitude*. These “special” attitudes, long before the disciplines of aesthetics or epistemology came into being, have been referred to as *theoria* (as e.g. in Aristotle) or, later, as *interesseloses Wohlgefallen*, disinterested well-pleasing (e.g., in Kant).<sup>1</sup> However, whereas the Kantian notion of a disinterested, pleasurable viewing of the world outside of the rigid nexus of causality seems to lead into a purely contemplative aesthetics which can and should be achieved in order to reach a higher realm where we are freed from the “bad” and “mean” world—as Schopenhauer’s aesthetics would have it<sup>2</sup>—the Aristotelian notion of *theoria* still retains a close link between the philosophical and aesthetical attitudes in the following sense. Since the Greek world view (*Weltanschauung*) conceives of the world as *kósmos*—which literally means decoration, even jewelry—viewing the world as it *really* is by philosophical contemplation means perceiving it as a universe of *systematic order* which is in itself understood as rationally structured and, therefore, *beautiful*. Philosophical contemplating is thus nothing but viewing the beauty of the world, which is otherwise disclosed to the common, obscured eye.

Although the modern view on aesthetic contemplation (I am not talking about the discipline of aesthetics) seems to be rather detached from the sphere of philosophy<sup>3</sup>—what could be more stern and rigid than philosophy, being thus in strong opposition to the playfulness and beauty of art? This has not always been the case—and needn’t be, either. Furthermore, since, as is well-known, *Husserl* conceives of the attitude of the philosopher as a “disinterested onlooker,” it seems that in him we have a modern witness to a position which enables us to reestablish a link between both attitudes which in their own ways open up a universal, totalizing view on the world. It was Husserl himself who drew attention to this more than external parallel. I shall try to show that this position can in fact let us gain a more universal and thus legitimizable view on the role of *art* in our world.

Thus, in my paper I will deal with these issues in four steps: both higher-order attitudes have an underlying stratum from which they emerge. Husserl has called this basic phenomenon of everyday-existence the *natural attitude*; hence I first want to give a short description of this attitude from where it is clear why this attitude has to be overcome (I). Second, I will sketch out Husserl’s theory of the phenomenological reduction, thus inaugurating the philosophical (or in his words: phenomenological) attitude (II). Next, I will elucidate Husserl’s reflections on the *aesthetical* attitude which can only be understood on the basis of the

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philosophical attitude. (III). Concluding, I will try to compare both attitudes and give the upshot of this parallel and the way we should account for art in a corresponding aesthetical attitude, thus spelling out Husserl's intentions (IV).

Generally speaking, my interest in this paper lies in the *attitude* of the one contemplating art, not in its representation or substantiation in concrete art forms, and it is my impression (from my very limited knowledge of this discipline) that contemporary art theory—even that which tries to remain faithful to phenomenological description—has neglected this (correlative) aspect to a certain extent.<sup>4</sup>

### I. The Natural Attitude

The objection arising here, naturally, will be: if we intend to talk about the attitude of the artist and the philosopher, why start out the discussion with the “natural” attitude as the basic substratum? Shouldn't our aim be, precisely, to *move away* from this basic life form in order to arrive at these “higher-order” phenomena? True, but it is also Husserl's claim that all human activity rests on this basic phenomenon which he calls the *natural attitude*. Not only do all actions stem from and come forth from it, but also the philosophical and, respectively, the aesthetical attitude can only be characterized by that from which both of them radically *differ*, and that is, again—the natural attitude. Thus, it is indispensable to give a short description of this first attitude to understand the Husserlian conception; however, this first step will also have to show the finitude and limitedness of the natural attitude, for if it were in itself complete and self-sufficient, there would be no necessity to go beyond it.

This attitude is determined by the so-called “general thesis of the natural attitude,” meaning that it is our basic belief that the world in which we live, the things and people we have to do with, and ourselves as part of this world, *exist*.<sup>5</sup> In other words, we take this “existing” for granted, as it were, and this implies, to use yet another term, that the being of the world is “objectively” existing (*being* means *being objectively*). But a look at this objectivity reveals that it is always objectivity-for an experiencing subjectivity. World is always world-for-us (-for-me, -for-you). This correlation between world and experiencing subjectivity (in the broadest sense) Husserl has called the *correlational apriori*. Hence, the general thesis implies that the natural attitude *knows nothing* of this correlation; since we are

always intentionally directed towards things “out there” in the world, we neglect that the world is not existing for itself but for an experiencing (“constituting”) subjectivity. The natural attitude is in this sense *naive*, i.e., oblivious of the true nature of its being. The person in the natural attitude can be seen as (as Husserl sometimes calls it) a “sleeping monad.” The monad has not yet awakened to its actual self-understanding.

This naivety can have a positive and a negative connotation. The positive side is that the person living in this natural attitude is not “faulty” of being as he or she is, “always already”; it is not his or her fault to live in this way and therefore not “bad,” but rather the basic mode of life people live in, everybody, no matter who he or she is, when we are in the daily modes of eating breakfast, taking a cab, asking for the time, etc. It is in this sense a basic life form we share in the objective world and that even the philosopher has to live in to a certain extent. The negative twist to the natural attitude, however, is that it is nevertheless limited since it is oblivious of the full meaning of this life. Its “straight forward” way of living towards the objective world means it has no notion of the experiencing subjectivity who “has” the world for its experience. It is thus oblivious of its own involvement in the process of having the world.

Yet there is still another essential reason why the natural attitude is limited (which is merely an extension of the first notion). Living naturally, we don't know of this universal horizon called “world,” which is Husserl's term for the objectivity of being. This normal executing of our life always lives itself out in a certain context or, as Husserl calls it, in a *special world* (*Sonderwelt*). Examples of these contextual life forms are the world of the home, of the job, of sports, business, etc. We know of these situational contexts, and we *not only* always already live in these worlds, but we always and unknowingly live in attitudes *corresponding* to these special worlds. However, and more significantly, we automatically switch attitudes and usually do so with great virtuosity: the moment we get in a car we switch to the “traffic attitude,” while having immediately faded out the sports attitude we just now occupied while having sat in the baseball stadium, etc. So this switching around between many (maybe innumerable) attitudes corresponding to special worlds goes on *within* the natural attitude. This behaviour is completely normal and thus belongs to the natural attitude *itself*.

But to get at its limitedness, let's take a look at what is implied in an attitude *as such*. Within an attitude I have certain experiences, in Husserl's words: acts, which are directed at something. However, it is the very essence of an act to not have the thing "completely," I will only see one side or profile of a thing, with the back side unseen. But this back side can be made seen, e.g., by turning the thing around. Hence (to say it in a very condensed form) an intentional act has the character of a necessary unfulfilment which points beyond (to a "*plus ultra*"); it is not isolated but takes place within a *referential nexus*. However this nexus of pointing beyond is endless, there are always more aspects which are unseen, hence the acts are directed to an *endless horizon*—and 'world' is precisely the name for this horizon. Now adding the phenomenon of attitude to this, it is clear that if all acts stem from an attitude, then this attitude will itself be endless in the sense that there is no limit to the acts to be directed from the horizon of an attitude correlating the horizon of the world these acts are directed to.

Considering that we are talking of *special* worlds and attitudes, we can now clarify what is limited about them. If each attitude is directed towards its endless horizon, it can essentially never *transcend* this horizon. But we were speaking of special worlds: that of sports, that of business, etc. There is no criteria to privilege one over the other. They are, in other words, *relative* upon each other. But if being *in* one attitude means never coming to an end within its confines, then this attitude does not *realize* its relativity. In other words, it takes itself as *absolute*. And this is precisely its limitedness: *it sets itself as absolute where it is in fact only relative*.

But have we not said before that our natural life is always already carried out in such a way that we constantly switch between attitudes? Yes, but we are naive about it, we are not aware of doing so. This does not mean to blur the distinction between the relativities, but this in fact proves their "existence," since it is one part of this natural attitude to not be aware about this what "always already" goes on—and besides, it does happen that one gets, as it were, "stuck" in one attitude, be it that one has a car accident by being attuned to the voice on the radio or that of his boss minutes before, etc., and down to what we call plain "narrow-mindedness," which means precisely somebody's inability to see the world differently than from his or her point of view.<sup>6</sup>

## II. The Reduction and the Phenomenological Attitude

Thus, if the task of philosophy is to overcome any kind of unreflected presuppositions, it is clear from what has been said that the *naivety* of the natural attitude must be made explicit, and making it explicit means already having gone beyond it. But what exactly is the reason for this leaving behind, if 'naivety' is to mean more than a mere polemical term? Simply put: If the one living in the natural attitude does not know of this essential relativity, he or she cannot claim to have full self-transparency about him- or herself. If philosophy in its most original sense is about enlightening humankind and oneself, it makes sense postulating to overcome the natural attitude in order to gain a universal, uninhibited view on life. The method Husserl employs in order to attain this is the *phenomenological reduction*. Without wanting to delve too deeply into this method of revealing transcendental subjectivity, I want to focus on the "metaphilosophical" intentions Husserl pursues in this method. Very generally speaking, uncovering transcendental subjectivity is nothing but revealing humankind's most essential possibilities as a rational being. In doing so, it is radical self-introspection and inquiry. If it is about the loss of naivety, then one task in this methodic step is to reveal these relativities we are stuck in in the natural attitude. This does not in any way mean annihilating them—so little as the reduction means gaining a view from nowhere or living in an ivory tower—but *understanding* them in their relativity.

Thus, the natural attitude cannot be abandoned or nullified, it can only be understood.<sup>7</sup> It is this full understanding that Husserl means by the term *absolute*, the attaining of which being an endless limit idea. It is only then that each individual can claim for him- or herself to completely legitimize one's own actions, if they are understood in the absolute, encompassing consciousness of transcendental life. Thus, the philosopher in Husserl's view (the one performing the reduction) is not leaving the world, is not detaching him- or herself from action or dispensing oneself from responsibility; rather, he or she is (and is *only then*) the full person (or monad), fully awakened to the understanding of one's own ultimate possibilities. It is only then that he or she can claim to take over responsibility for one's own actions and for those of everybody else—everybody else, in other words, who has not come to the realization of being caught in the confines of

the natural attitude. From this perspective we can understand Husserl's characterization of the philosophers as "functionaries of mankind."<sup>8</sup>

In this *tour de force* in outlining the meaning of the reduction, I have skipped the question of how this reduction is at all motivated. If the natural attitude is so limited and in this limitedness at the same time endless, *how* can it ever be possible to overcome it? Is this not futile or an undertaking comparable to that of the legendary baron *Münchhausen* who pulls himself out of the swamp by his own hair? Husserl has had some trouble coming to terms with this problem which he clearly saw, but has tried to give a number of answers. One solution is comparable to the Platonian-Aristotelian *thaumázein*. It is *astonishment* that comes over certain individuals which renders them speechless before the beauty of the cosmos and leads them to abandon their old dogmas and beliefs and to gain a new position on the world, that of the pure *theoria*. Husserl once, in a letter to the poet von Hofmannsthal, frames it in another ancient metaphor:

As soon as the sphinx of knowledge has posed its question, as soon as we have gazed into the abysmal problem of the possibility of a knowledge which is carried out only in subjective experiences and yet grasps an objectivity existing for itself, then our stance on all pre-given knowledge and on all pre-given being [...] has become radically different. *Everything* [has become] questionable, everything incomprehensible, enigmatic.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the philosopher—or, strictly speaking, he/she who *becomes* a philosopher by experiencing this being overcome by unanswerable questions, does not become so by his or her own will or initiative, but because enigmatic questions arise and pose *themselves*. The sphinx of knowledge is a metaphor for genuine curiosity originally inborn in the human race, which is always already covered up by the situational concerns and everyday problems of the natural attitude. In other words, one becomes *drawn in* into this sphere which detaches us from this original state of affairs, a sphere where everything we once took as known, becomes enigmatic. We have now become "disinterested spectators" "above" the natural attitude. This sphere we are now attuned to in an uninterested way, to Husserl, is nothing but that of radical self-introspection which one has no knowledge of in the natural attitude. It is the sphere of the full and real self

which is still a *terra incognita*<sup>10</sup> in the beginning, after having just performed the reduction, but which we can inquire into. And in Husserl's belief in philosophy as rigorous science, we are called upon to systematically analyze it as "disinterested spectators." But this "sphere" or "region" as one can metaphorically call it, is of course radically different from any (actual) sphere in the world. This means, concretely speaking, that we cannot have any *preconception* of the *typicality* of that which we are about to experience as we have in worldly experience: whatever I will encounter in the world I will know in its typicality (e.g., I might not know this certain thing, but I will understand it is a *thing*, etc.). Performing the reduction means giving up on any preconceived typicality without which we could not live naturally.

So, we can say, we have reduced ourselves to absolute poverty of knowledge, we know nothing of that which is "to come." But this "poverty" is not an impoverishment; quite to the contrary: it harbours an absolute potentiality or freedom; since we are not limited in any way by relativities whatsoever, we have the theoretical freedom of thinking through every possibility, of entering any sphere of the mind. Everything is possible and thinkable, we can enjoy the theoretical delight, as it were, to let our thoughts roam freely, to try out new possibilities, to let ourselves be creative, etc. This freedom is thus the mark of creativity which great thought harbours and which is opposed to the relativities and pragmatically oriented ways of thought of everyday existence, where our considerations are always limited by their pragmatical context. Philosophical thought as Husserl understands it, is the absolutely unleashed and instantiated freedom of the rational mind which is open toward every region of the world and every possibility to be thought through by imagination—however not in this "playful" sense alone but in order to fulfill the very essence of humanity in a responsible and legitimized way by systematically working through the now open horizons of problems. If I may say so, phenomenology is emphatically "joyful science."

I realize that I have now characterized Husserl's view of the philosophical attitude in quite an unorthodox way; however, my aim was to spell out Husserl's concrete intentions on the one hand (which all too often are covered up by his sometimes cryptic talk of the transcendental life) and on the other to formulate it in a way to be in a position to compare it to the aesthetical attitude, which I shall undertake now.

### III. The Aesthetical Attitude

Husserl's claim is now that the philosophical and aesthetical attitudes have essential features in common, and if this is so, they must share this commonality over against its opposite focal point: the *natural* attitude. Let's again see what Husserl has to say about the aesthetical attitude, once more quoting from Husserl's famous letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal:

Contemplation of a *purely* aesthetical art-piece is carried out in rigorous inhibition of any existential positing [*Stellungnahme*] by the intellect or every positing by feeling and will, which presuppose an existential positing. Or more precisely: The art-piece puts us in the position of (as it were, *draws us into*) a state of purely aesthetical contemplation which excludes every positing. The more the existential world is posited or is called upon in its liveliness, the more existential positing the art-piece asks for .... the less aesthetically pure is it. .... [The "existential attitude" is] the counter-pole to the mental attitude [*Geisteshaltung*] of purely aesthetical contemplation and of the state of mood accompanying it.<sup>11</sup>

Although Husserl is certainly a child of his time, especially in his privileging of the "aesthetically pure" art-piece (which is apparently purer the less sensual representation it has<sup>12</sup>)—and in no way do I want to defend this—let us see, rather, what we can get out of this definition in comparison with what has been said regarding the philosophical attitude in order to gain a more satisfying picture of what Husserl can offer for a theory of the aesthetical attitude.

The first feature both the philosophical and aesthetical attitudes have in common is that, according to Husserl, both of them no longer stand on the basis of the natural attitude. Aesthetical contemplation, just as philosophical theorizing, excludes any positing of something as existing. Does that mean what we contemplate in the aesthetical attitude is less real or even non-existing? Not at all. Rather, what goes on in the "aesthetical reduction," as we may call it, is a certain neutrality modification, which means that we no longer are in the usual, pragmatical contexts (the special worlds in their relativity) but in a different stance which is completely different from the usual special attitudes. In other words, the world is now not posited as existing—as it is in one way or the other in any natural attitude—

but is turned into a phenomenon. In the neutrality modification it has the index of the "as if." This does not in any way mean it is less real for us contemplators, but we have detached ourselves from the pragmatical context of our everyday existence and view the world in the mode of the "as if."<sup>13</sup> We have become "disinterested spectators" in the sense that we view the totality of what is outside of any pragmatically limited context. \*

So if we see a "normal" scene of such a pragmatical context in, say, a painting or a movie, it is clear that we are not participating in it, on the one hand (we are unparticipating spectators), and on the other, it in no way means that we are not seeing this scene as what it is—a pragmatical one—or that we cannot partake in the emotions it evokes (sadness or happiness, etc.) but that we do so in the mode of the "as if": this scene is *as if* it were real (and the better the art piece the better its depiction<sup>14</sup>). However the compassion or sorrow I feel *is in fact* real; there is no feeling-as-if. However, this feeling I have which accompanies my contemplation is detached from myself in the sense that it is in fact *my* pain, etc., but *not pertaining* to me, although by the law of motivation this scene might remind me of a similar event I myself might have witnessed earlier. I am detached from it in the sense that I do not merely perceive it as something I myself have to engage in but which reveals to me the "truth" of this context as such.

So, one might ask, what is so special about this contemplating if the only difference between witnessing it in my daily existence and that of contemplating it in an art piece is that one is in fact real and the other is experienced as phenomenon? This neutralizing of the existing world can only occur on the basis that every special attitude within the natural attitude is limited to its certain world: the world of sports, of business, etc. But the reason these attitudes are limited is precisely because they are limited to that existing world. The sports attitude cannot transcend the world of sports, etc. However, the aesthetical attitude (alongside the philosophical one) on the other hand has the freedom to view *all of these special worlds* in the aesthetical attitude, precisely because it neutralizes the existence positing in the same way as in the phenomenological reduction. If the whole world becomes aesthetically reduced, everything in it can be viewed in this *modification as aesthetical*. The whole world has taken on a new meaning, and once this new attitude has been

attained, it is impossible to go back into the old state of affairs. Art can reveal the world to us as it has never been seen before, precisely by showing us the world as it always and usually is, but in an attitude in which it has never been attained before. As such, it can for the first time truly open up the world for us. The Mona Lisa can for the first time reveal to us what it means to look ambiguously. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony can reveal to us what it means to be afraid of death. We are seeing the same world, but with new eyes.

Now there seems to be another parallel to the philosophical attitude which is important to Husserl, namely the question of how this attitude can be attained. It is precisely this power the art piece can gain over us which draws us into its realm, and that means, correlatively speaking, to lift us up out of the natural attitude. The encounter with art can stun us, bewilder us, scare us, fascinate us, giving us experiences that radically break open the attitude we live in normally. Being as such, it shows us not only *the world*, but also *ourselves* in a different light. This radical change of attitude means nothing else than getting to know ourselves in a way that is impossible in any context within the natural attitude. This break in our normal living can happen by a slow shifting, e.g., in a realist painting where the scene presented seems to be almost like a photo with nothing special about it—but it is this normality in the depiction that we would otherwise never see because we are always already immersed in the context depicted now. Or the break can be drastic, even violent, when our whole style of perception is changed, e.g., in surrealist paintings where the whole act of seeing is called into question (and the same would go for a 12 tone symphony in the tonal art piece).

In short, the art piece has the power to lift us out of the natural attitude. In this sense, what motivates the aesthetical reduction is nothing but art itself, thus changing our whole attitude in a way that it excludes the general positing of the being of the world. If this attitude is attained, it is not the world that has changed, it is rather ourselves who have changed our view on the world and ourselves as a whole, in a way that we see the world as we never could before. Whereas everything is called into question, becomes enigmatic, a new meaning, a new sense arises through art which make us understand the world more fully. This understanding is again not radically different from natural "knowledge" but makes this understanding explicit. The aesthetical

reduction thus does not alter the sense of the world, but places it into an encompassing, universal understanding which is in this very universality comparable to the phenomenological reduction.

It is from here that we can, concludingly, spell out the philosophical consequences from this analogy.

#### IV. Philosophical and Aesthetical Attitudes as Ways of Getting to Understand the World

Now, if the phenomenological and the aesthetical reduction can be compared and in this sense explicated, as Husserl has it, then there must be, concludingly, one more parallel which can show us the consequence for the role of art in the system of philosophy, as well as give us a clue for a phenomenological theory of art.

Probably the most important trait of the phenomenological attitude is the freedom of thought which it can attain due to its detachment from the natural attitude where nothing is principally unknown but pre-known in its typicality. Since it has no typicality in its new sphere, it begins at the point of absolute poverty but from there has the ability to build up sound and philosophically legitimizable knowledge in absolute freedom and as such serve humanity's inborn telos of self-understanding. If the parallel between both attitudes is plausible, this must also hold for the aesthetical attitude. And it is, I believe, in fact so. There is no sphere where there is more freedom than in art. Art has no limits whatsoever, "everything goes" here, we are not bound to space and time and their laws. Likewise, the aesthetical reduction reduces the aesthetical spectator to absolute poverty: he or she cannot take over any preconceived notions from the original sphere, but this poverty proves to be the greatest richness for the absolute freedom of human activity, beginning from thought but extending to every form of human behaviour.

However, it is this far-reaching extending which makes it so powerful. For this "anything goes" is not to be mistaken with arbitrariness. And this is where this freedom is limited and in this it is again conceived in parallel to the role of philosophy. The philosopher as a "functionary of mankind" must not just enjoy his theoretical contemplation and thus remain detached from the world, but he or she must re-inworld him- or herself, make the results of this research known to others and as such take over responsibility for humankind as such, which is nothing else than that

which he or she has revealed in regressing back into the depths of one's transcendental subjectivity, where he or she will find nothing but the essence of subjectivity as such, which reveals itself to be transcendental intersubjectivity.

Likewise does the artist have a duty for mankind. Art's purpose is not mere aesthetical well-pleasing which offers a certain "relaxation" from our everyday life, but the artist must partake in the universal task to understand humanity—not in the scientific sense, i.e., as philosophy as rigorous science (and any other positive science) does, but in its own way and in its own forms of realizing the freedom of humankind as such which is no longer bound to any particular set of values or contexts. What Schiller has once said about theatre thus would in Husserl's eyes apply to art as such: it must be a "moral institution" (*moralische Anstalt*), not in the sense of teaching people a certain set of values but of posing existential questions, e.g., what value as such is life, death, being? Delving into the depths of the human soul, it must then likewise "reinworld" itself (in a concrete art form) in order to have the concrete possibility to draw people into it or, meaning the same thing, lift them up out of the natural attitude. In this sense, this position would radically be opposed to that of, say, Adorno, according to whom "lyrics after Auschwitz is impossible." Quite to the contrary, art is called upon to assume its role in the context of a humane world. It would be absurd, say, to view a movie like *Schindler's List* in an aesthetical attitude in the ordinary sense (as a purely disinterested well-pleasing). More than that, it would be irresponsible. This movie can only be understood if viewed in its enlightening function.

But whereas philosophy in the Husserlian sense is bound to scientific analysis and systematic knowledge, it seems to me that art is *much freer* in the possibilities of its stylistic formations, and this is the reason it can have much more impact on people, since it doesn't have to theoretize to make its point. Rather, it has the freedom of a truly playful, joyful wisdom which has by far not been exhausted. Forms of this freedom which are external to philosophy would be satire, where something is grossly exaggerated for the sake of emphasis; irony, where something is said "around the corner" or from its opposite extreme; humor, which makes it possible to attack somebody without hurting his or her feelings; allegory, where constellations or structures become transparent; metaphor, where something is expressed precisely

in its special and precious nature which otherwise would have remained hidden—and all other forms and devices we love art for.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, I want to end these considerations on a more jocular note. At the end of his letter to von Hofmannsthal, Husserl becomes aware of this role as rigorous philosopher and actually transgresses this sphere in a self-ironical, self-referential way:

[Here goes] the incorrigible and genuine professor [again]! He cannot open his mouth without giving a lecture.... I shall not even begin saying anything about your works. I think you are indifferent enough towards praise as well as criticism and wise talk of any sort. And certainly and visibly do you know the three golden rules of the artist (in the broadest sense), which are at the same time the open secrets of all true grandeur, namely: 1) that he have genius; this he has in any case, otherwise he *is* no artist; 2) that he follow purely and only his demon in the way it drives him from inside to spectating-blind effecting; 3) Everybody else knows it better anyway, thus he ought to view them all—either aesthetically or phenomenologically.<sup>16</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the discipline of aesthetics is actually a very late development within the canonized philosophical systematics of Western philosophy; the first Aesthetics (in the modern sense) comes from Baumgarten in 1750/58: *Aesthetica* (2 vol.s). Cf. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, Darmstadt 1971, Vol. 1, col. 555-64.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Part IV. However, although Schopenhauer criticizes Kant's theory of aesthetic in the Critique of Judgment (essentially for not doing justice to "real" art), his theory could in fact be seen to have the intention to "make" Kant "true."

<sup>3</sup> Although postmodern thought has significantly dealt with art and aesthetics, I believe the philosophico-historical roots for this lie for the most part in Heidegger's turn to art in the time of his *Kehre*, cf. "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" (1935/36), in: *Holzwege*, Klostermann 1950, pp. 1-72.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Casebier, *Film and Phenomenology* (Cambridge 1991), which has the subtitle: "Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic



Representation.” Here we find a fine analysis of cinematographic representation in a Husserlian vein (with, however, mainly taking the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* into consideration), however no attention whatsoever is paid to the phenomenon of attitude correlating any kind of cinematographic presentation.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ideas I*, §§ 27-32.

<sup>6</sup> However, it does not take a philosopher to detect simple narrow-mindedness! For a more detailed treatment of the theory of the natural attitude, cf. my “Husserl’s Phenomenological Discovery of the Natural Attitude,” in *Continental Philosophy Review* 31 (1998), pp. 153-170.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Cartesian Meditations*, The Hague 1950 (transl. D. Cairns), p. 151: “*phenomenological explication does nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing, and obviously gets solely from our experience – a sense which philosophy can uncover but never alter ....*”

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston 1970), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> From Husserl’s letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Jan. 12, 1907, in: Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by Karl and Elisabeth Schuhmann, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, Husserliana-Dokumente III/7, p. 134 (my translation). Cf. also Hua. XXIV, p. 397 ff.

<sup>10</sup> As such, Husserl also calls it “das gelobte Land” (the “promised land”) of philosophy. Cf. Hua. V, p. 161.

<sup>11</sup> “Die Anschauung eines *rein* ästhetischen Kunstwerks vollzieht sich in strenger Ausschaltung jeder existenzialen Stellungnahme des Intellekts und jeder Stellungnahme des Gefühls u. Willens, die solche eine existenziale Stellungnahme voraussetzt. Oder besser: Das Kunstwerk versetzt uns (erzwingt es gleichsam) in den Zustand rein ästhetischer, jene Stellungnahme ausschließenden Anschauung. Je mehr von der Existenzialen Welt anklängt oder lebendig herangezogen wird, je mehr an existenzialer Stellungnahme das Kunstwerk von sich aus anfordert [...], um so weniger ist das Werk ästhetisch rein. [...] [Die natürliche Einstellung ist] der Gegenpol zur Geisteshaltung der rein ästhetischen Anschauung und der ihr entsprechenden Gefühlslage.” Op. cit., p. 133 f. (my translation). It should be added that this letter is from 1907, when Husserl had just “discovered” the method of the phenomenological reduction, and hence his

terminology is not yet fully developed. However, I think it is clear from the content that this description of the “positing” of the “existential world” is essentially the same phenomenon as that what he, as of 1913 (firstly in the *Ideas I*), terms “natural attitude.”

<sup>12</sup> One might note that Schopenhauer was one of the first philosophers Husserl read in his youth. Schopenhauer’s privileging of music over every other art form might play a role in Husserl’s position here.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Husserliana VIII, pp. 112-120 (on positional and *quasi*-positional acts).

<sup>14</sup> In this sense, I would object to Husserl’s thesis that the art piece is “purer” the less “existentiality” it has. As it is, one would have to define the sense of “pure” here more in detail.

<sup>15</sup> I want to leave open the question what this would mean for an aesthetics where these disciplines are precisely merged, e.g. in Nietzsche’s “philosophy,” in which it is his point that philosophy becomes aestheticized. Certainly, for Husserl it would be unhealthy to merge disciplines. But maybe in this point Husserl is mistaken.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to von Hoffmannsthal, op. cit., p. 135 f. “Der unverbesserliche u. unverfälschte Professor! Er kann nicht den Mund aufthun, ohne ein Colleg zu halten! [...] Über Ihre Werke etwas zu sagen, werde ich mich sehr hüten. Ich denke, Lob wie Tadel und weises Gerede jeder Art sind Ihnen schon hinreichend gleichgiltig. Und die drei goldenen Regeln des Künstlers (im weitesten Sinne), zugleich die offenen Geheimnisse aller wahren Größe, sind Ihnen sicherlich und sichtbarlich bekannt: nämlich 1) Er habe Genie – das hat er ohnehin, sonst *ist* er kein Künstler. 2) Er folge *rein* und *einzig* seinem Daimonion, wie es ihn von innen her zu schauend-blindem Wirken treibt. 3) Alle Anderen wissen es ohnehin besser, also betrachte er sie alle – bloß ästhetisch oder phänomenologisch.”