Image Consciousness and Historicity: Between Phenomenology and Art History

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Abstract

This essay concerns two distinct topics in Husserlian phenomenology. The first is "image consciousness" [*Bildbewusstsein*], which concerns the experiential nature of our encounters with pictures and other depictive objects. The second is "historicity" [*Geschichtlichkeit*], which refers to how human subjects, prior to any detailed knowledge of history, are in some sense always already temporally embedded and orientated. These topics come from quite different periods of Husserl's career, and normally receive separate treatments, but I will show that they have rich connections. Drawing from phenomenology, aesthetics and art history, I examine phenomenological and

interdisciplinary connections between image consciousness and historicity relating to visual perception, intersubjectivity and narrativization.

Keywords

Image Consciousness; Historicity; Art History; Phenomenology; Husserl.

I. *Images and image consciousness*

In this essay I will define the term "image" to be the set of cultural objects from the present and the past that are physical or digital media, and that share a depictive or representational quality, such as paintings, pictures, photographs, sculptures, selected artefacts, forms of ornamentation, films, and so forth. Any phenomenological consideration of such objects usually starts with Husserl's precise analysis of the state of image consciousness, which involves a series of objects and phenomena that are related, but not reducible to each other. These are: the image carrier, the physical thing, like the wood, clay, canvas, or technical apparatus that is the material of the image; the image object, or the appearing or depicting image that we "see-in" the marks, surface and form of an image; the image subject, like the depicted scene, person or object, either real or fictitious.[1]

This three-fold structure of image consciousness forms the background to what Lambert Wiesing has recently termed "phenomenological image theory," which categorizes image consciousness, as opposed to normal everyday perception, as concerning three paradigms concerning the object of

[1] The theory of image consciousness outlined by Edmund Husserl is contained primarily in the volume, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory*, trans. John B. Brough (Dordecht: Springer, 2005).

image perception, the state of image perception, and the subject of image perception.[2] Let me give a brief account of each of these three paradigms, which will be important in what follows.

The object of image perception, or Husserl's "image object' is ontologically unique, and has quite remarkable properties. It is not an extant and real object in the world; rather it *appears* to be there, rather than actually being there: "it is the intentional object that is, in image perception, conscious as the object of the perceiver's intentional experience."[3] The image object is what is "seen-in" the image and is an "artificial presence" that is not present in the world of cause and effect, and is invariant to the usual physical laws governing physical objects.[4] The second paradigm regarding the state of image perception concerns the particular phenomenology of image perception itself, which is construed, firstly in Husserl, as a dialectical interplay of conflicting perceptions of, and between, the image carrier and image object. This is alternatively, and perhaps more accurately, theorized as involving a particular mediated modality of perception, a "seeing-in," or form of "presentification" (making-present), which is a capability that is uniquely required for this singular act of perception, and is founded on the resemblance between the image object and subject.

The third paradigm regarding the subject of perception relates to observers of images and hence does not concern what we see in images, or what we do when we see them, but what happens within such an observer when they see an image; it is the distinctive consequences this mental state has for the subject. Wiesing outlines a key argument regarding this third paradigm of phenomenological image theory, which implicates what he calls a "pause in participation." Everyday perception necessarily involves this participation, which concerns the irreducible reciprocity of being both an observer of the

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[2] Lambert Wiesing, *The Philosophy of Perception: Phenomenology and Image Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[3] Ibid., 135.

[4] The closely related theory of "seeing-in" comes from work on pictorial representation by Richard Wohlheim, *Art and its Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

world, and something that can be equally observed within it. In contrast, and uniquely in image perception, this reciprocity is paused or subject to momentary cessation, so that what is normally foregrounded becomes backgrounded, and vice versa. Within images, something can be viewed without incurring visibility: "the perceiver does not himself turn into a visible part of a visible image world; he does not become an image object."[5] Image consciousness thereby affords the observer a pause or relief from the otherwise ubiquitous demands of everyday perception, albeit without these demands ever vanishing completely from the background. Wiesing also claims that this pause in participation additionally implicates a "de-individualization of the subject of perception," due to its unique spatial properties. Unlike physical objects, the image object appears to different observers in the same way, regardless of whether it is viewed from a particular individual spatial position or profile; it is "aperspectival."[6] The consequence is a levelling of the normative subjective difference between observers due to the usual demands of space-occupancy, and is a state in which I distinguish myself less from another perceiver.[7] In addition, this aspect of de-individualization extends from a spatial context to a temporal one. The image object appears in the same way over periods of time, something that again differentiates it from physical objects; it is *atemporal* or *anachronic* (out-of-time). Although its image carrier may age through entropic degradation, the image object does not, so that "my individual moment, in which I have just seen the image object, cannot be an exclusive moment."[8] Wiesing concludes by claiming that these consequences for observers of an image of both pausing and de-individualization are perhaps one reason for our enduring fascination with them.

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[5] Wiesing, *The Philosophy of Perception,* 143.

[6] There is an obvious exception to this, namely "anamorphic" images that do require a specific viewing point, like *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein, in which a feature of the image, a human skull, emerges into view, but only from a precise oblique angle.

[7] Ibid., 148-149.

[8] Ibid., 149.

In what follows, I will build on these claims about image theory, and extend them to a wider context within phenomenology, by thinking through various undertheorized intersections between the terms of my title. Firstly, in Section II, I make a new a reading of a key term in the later Husserl and other phenomenologists, that of "historicity," which concerns both the phenomenology of time-consciousness, and the nature of both individuated and socially collective historical experience and being. I will claim that this term has important theoretical connections to art history, aesthetics and the ontology of images, an account of which is given in Section III. In Sections IV-VI, I give three readings of how images, image consciousness and historicity are linked together, and explore interdisciplinary connections between these topics and phenomenology and art history more widely.

II. *On historicity*

In the late *Krisis* text Husserl reflects on the essentially historical character of science and philosophy and how this necessitates modifications to his transcendental phenomenology. This work contains Husserl's most complete thoughts on the topic of "historicity."[9] This concept arose as a way to ask what it means for human subjects to have historical *being*, rather than just historical knowledge, in the sense intended by the following well-known aphorism of Wilhelm Dilthey: "we are historical beings first, before we are observers of history, and only because we are the former do we become the latter [....] the historical world is always there, and the individual not only observes it from the outside but is intertwined with it."[10] Accounting for this sense of historical being means trying to answer how we are, in some sense, always already historical, prior to any knowledge we may have of the historical past, for example through academic writing about history. To accommodate this notion of historicity

[9] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

[10] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VII, 5th edition, ed. B. Groethuysen (Stuttgart: B. Teubner, 1968), 277-8.

within phenomenology more generally, Husserl constructs the idea of the "lifeworld" that is the overarching context or social milieu, which, at any given place or period in history, connects the subjective, intersubjective and larger societal and cultural levels of human organization. Crucial to Husserl's account is an emphasis on how each level in this complex is in its own way historical, whilst also maintaining the transcendental, or necessarily world-disclosing status of historicity itself. Husserl defines this as:

> Historicity [*Geschichtlichkeit*] in the most general sense has always already been in progress [*in Gang*], and in this progress it is rightly a universal, which belongs to human existence. It is a unified becoming [*ein einheitliches*] according to persons, in persons, and, as an environment, according to the plurality of forms of the environment, which can be seen as the unity of the organism.[11]

I want to emphasize the two-folded sense of the term historicity implied here. Historicity is in persons, in an individual sense, like our sense of time consciousness. The idea of consciousness as a flow which contains retentions of the past, even as it projects anticipations of the immediate future already has a historical dimension. And in addition, first-person subjectivity is often subject to a type of autobiographical narration, an act of storytelling about the temporal arc of a particular life. As Husserl points out: "the subject is constituted in the unity of a *Geschichte.*"[12] But in addition, historicity is also directed to persons, often again through cultural narratives, in their position within social environments and groupings, each of which has its own sense of historicity. For Husserl, each kind of cultural formation, including the cultural formations of art, has its own historicity, or temporal

[11] The translation provided here is by Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 155.

[12] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), Fourth Meditation, §37.

character. Husserl argues that the various layers within historically and ethnographically contingent lifeworlds, from the subjective to the cultural, are reciprocally modified by the others through successive processes of relativization. The underlying argument is that the relation between objects and acts of perception, human subjects, societies, and communities is oriented and interconnected rather than absolute and invariant.

Historicity, in another more recent formulation, implies "wanting to know how history is encountered, how it enters our lives, and in what forms of consciousness and experience it does so."[13] This important contemporary reading of the term historicity has been undertaken by David Carr. He understands the term as pertaining not merely to matters of epistemology, but rather as concerning the lived temporal structure of experience, or as a prerequisite for both personal identity and historical and communal understanding. Individual subjective lives unfold in a temporal and structured way, which makes them amenable to narration. This is because, like narratives, human lives and experience already have an inherent temporal structure; a beginning-middle-end patterning that exists prior to the formulation of actual narratives. Everyday experience always already possesses a narrative structure. Consequently, the subject and its historicity are narratively organized, and narrative understanding is not an external explicative tool but an extension of our natural experience of temporality: "To tell stories about the human past is not to impose an alien structure on it but is continuous with the very activity that makes up the human past."[14] In later work, Carr reaffirms this argument, but in a new direction regarding the limits of narrative structure, given that "experience is too broad to be encompassed by comparing it to narrative form."[15] There are additional, and more fundamental,

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[13] David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47.

[14] Ibid., 209.

[15] Ibid., 4.

senses in which experience has a historical nature. Historical being is not simply a question of narrative coherence but includes the possibility of encountering a particular class of transforming "world historical events." These are events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the 9/11 attacks on New York, that are experienced as transcending our individual subjectivity, and which bear upon us in terms of a more communal and collective historical subject. This relates neatly to the topic of historical intersubjectivity, or what Carr, following Husserl, calls "we-communities": each individual subject experiences itself as a member of a "we," which is not an empirical unity, but a historical and social community, constituted in the intentional life of subjects who understand themselves as belonging together, and is inseparable from narrative, even if tentatively: "The narrative unity of the community is neither easy nor permanent; indeed, it can be fragile and vulnerable."[16]

I will interrogate this tentability later in Section V in relation to images within art history. But in a final version, Jörn Rüsen's concept of "temporal orientation" refers to how people experience time and temporality in general, and reiterates the centrality of narrative within accounts of historicity. Rüsen explains how human subjects narrativize the past to achieve temporal bearing and orientation, analogous to the way that people use maps and other devices to orientate themselves spatially. The temporal orientation that results connects both memory, interpretation, and futural expectation. Rüsen explicates a typology of narrative form, separating four basic "modes" of historical narration, with each offering a different mechanism of temporal orientation: traditional (where the past is used to justify the present through continuity); exemplary (narratives that concretize abstract rules and principles); critical (narratives that undermine and deconstruct the traditional); genetic (narratives that integrate the critical with the traditional and exemplary).[17]

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[16] Ibid., 75.

[17] Jörn Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*. Trans. (various) (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

In what follows, I want to make several points regarding how whichever of these definitions of historicity we employ, there are important under-researched connections of the concept to images and image consciousness. This will involve making a claim about the second paradigm of phenomenological image theory, the paradigm that relates to the "state" of image consciousness itself. Namely, what I want to suggest is that images enter our experience not just in terms of the historical knowledge that they afford, but also perceptually elicit unique modes of historical visibility and expression. Images also afford unique relations to historical intersubjectivity and can inform accounts of perceptual historicity and sedimentations (Section IV). I will also show how images can either sustain, or challenge and perturb narrative systems themselves, and as such, are fundamental to temporal orientation (Section V). Finally, I will claim that images act as unique types of scaffolding between experience and other forms of presentification, like recollections, mental images and imagination, that form temporal trajectories with their own narrative-like structure (Section VI). But to do all this, we need to first integrate our account of historicity with some key areas of related interdisciplinary context that derive from aesthetics, art history and critical theory.

III. *Ontology of images; interdisciplinary connections between phenomenology and art history.*

Let us review one central insight from phenomenological aesthetics. Namely, that an artwork or image is only minimally specified, or underdetermined, by its material substrate, object, or "thing." To my mind, the insight in question finds its original exposition in a famous essay by Heidegger.[18] In this work, the claim is that we cannot fully understand the full ontology of the "artwork" by analyzing it only in terms of its material objectivity as a "thing," even as, at the same time, this same materiality is essential to its ontology. He writes: "the artwork is something over and above the thingly element,"

[18] Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*. In *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993). 143–212.

as well as "even the much-vaunted aesthetic experience cannot get around the thingly aspect of the artwork."[19] Additionally, Heidegger maintains that it is only through a full analysis of the ontology of the "work" that we can truly ascertain its materiality as a "thing," in terms of what we choose to attend to in its material constitution.

Within the context of contemporary writing on aesthetics, one author likewise insists that there is an essential materiality underlying every artwork, but that simultaneously, artworks are underdetermined by physical properties and are always distinct from the objects that constitute them.[20] Artworks and images are not merely things but mediated products of culture, and as such, their identity depends "on fairly complex intentional and relational properties"[21] in addition to physical ones. An artwork is a "work" at all because it depends on the artist's intention that it be so understood, and additionally, how it is understood by others in an institutional, historical and cultural context that recognizes, interprets and values it as art. As a result, the artwork has an ontology that includes survivability conditions that are different from its material substrate. Artworks are subject to constantly renewed semiotic and hermeneutical acts of interpretation and have a temporal force and perdurance that ensures their repeated public dissemination and perceptual engagement. Their ontology therefore is inseparable from human agency and intention, and can't meaningfully be extracted from context, history and intersubjective encounter. These criteria contribute to a crucial part of what Lamarque calls a "desiderata for an ontology of works."[22] These desiderata link the thesis that an artwork is more than its materiality with its essential cultural embeddedness; together these form conditions that

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[19] Ibid., 145.

[20] Peter Lamarque, *Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[21] Ibid., 56.

[22] Ibid., 10.

"state what kind of entity a work is."[23] In Section IV, I will present some new claims regarding the specific cultural and historical embeddedness of images that contribute further to this ontology of artworks.

Elsewhere, recent research furnishes further detail to what an artwork or image affords beyond its material construction. We see work linking art perception to embodied simulation, and providing a bridge between art history, neuroscience, and phenomenology.[24] Central to these arguments is an opposition to the idea that aesthetic experience is mostly about symbolic meaning or interpretation. Instead, when we view art, we simulate actions, emotions, and sensations depicted within images, using the same neural systems we use for real-world perception. This has been further linked to the phenomenon of "mirror neurons," which fire both when we perform an action and when we observe the same action.[25] In an aesthetic context, when we see a painted hand grasping an object or a figure in pain, our sensorimotor and empathetic systems are activated as if we were performing the action or feeling the emotion, a process which happens passively and pre-reflectively. This may explain the visceral and agentive power of art and images within history, whereby depicted affective and emotional expressions act as "contagions" with direct embodied effects. Some consequences of this agency are explored in Section V.

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[23] Ibid., 50.

[24] See, for example: David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese, "Motion, emotion and empathy in esthetic experience," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11(5) (2007): 197-203.

[25] The neurophysiology of "mirror neurons" has been interpreted as lending empirical support to Husserl's own notion of "pairing" [*Paarung*] or "making oneself similar to." See: Dan Zahavi, "Empathy and mirroring: Husserl and Gallese" In: R. Breeur & U. Melle (eds.) *Life, Subjectivity & Art. Phaenomenologica 201.* (Dordrecht: Springer 2012), 217-254.

As an additional contextual reference here, I want to mention Walter Benjamin's concept of the "transmissibility" of artworks and images.[26] This term refers to the capacity of things like artworks, narratives and stories to be temporally relocated and recontextualized whilst maintaining their original meaningfulness, and connection to lived experience. Transmissibility is not a mere reproduction of the past, but the active preservation of a living relationship between past and present (and future). Other authors have taken up this concept and connected it with the ontology of artworks, framing it as a theory of how art operates through temporal passages within societies. These passages both preserve something of the past, but also deframe or destabilize the present, through the transformation of conventional historical narratives, and act towards the creation of new cultural configurations in the here and now.[27] Under this rubric, artworks are never mere things but cultural forces undermining stories, dominant discourses, and compressed historical views. In addition, artworks, as active cultural forces, can compose new lines and temporal connections, generating unexpected new futural trajectories and affective, epistemic layers. I will again pursue this topic further in relation to images and historicity in Section V.

IV: *Connections between image consciousness and historicity, including perceptual historicity*

In this section I want to suggest certain connections of image consciousness to the concept of historicity, defined in Carr's sense as "wanting to know how history is encountered, how it enters our lives, and in what forms of consciousness and experience it does so" (quoted earlier). What is immediately striking about this definition, and the account that follows it, is that Carr doesn't refer to images at all, despite clear connections regarding how the past enters our experience through the specific form of

[26] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–251.

[27] Jae Emerling, *Transmissibility: Writing Aesthetic History* (London / New York: Routledge, 2023).

image consciousness, and in unique ways, as we will see in this section.[28] The omission here may well mirror a similar one in Husserl's own account, and the reasons for this may be both chronological and methodological.

In Husserl's phenomenology, this chronological shift reflects a growing awareness of the influence of the past on all forms of experience and manifests itself in a movement from static to genetic phenomenology, and finally in the later works towards generative phenomenology. This is a shift firstly from the precise synchronic analysis of certain intentional acts of consciousness (static), to showing how these same acts are influenced at an individual level by prior experiences, through temporally layered or sedimented processes of constitution (genetic). The focus in generative phenomenology then shifts to the constitutive role of tradition and history and analyzes the ways in which the accomplishments and sediments of previous generations become operative within individual experiences. However, as mentioned, this is not simply a chronological gap but reflects Husserl's methodological tendency to often treat the static, genetic and generative levels of analysis separately.

Husserl's main analyses of image consciousness (for example in *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*) belong to the earlier static phase and are focused on describing how images are intentionally constituted in experience through distinctions like those of image object and image subject. A generative approach to image consciousness is missing and would instead situate images within historically sedimented practices of representation, analyze how images are apperceived in terms of generative intersubjectivity, and show how images are both formed and shaped by historically contingent tropes of visual perception itself. These are all topics I will address in this section.

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[28] Carr, *Experience and History*, 47f.

At the generative level, Husserl's later work treats textual sources and scientific idealities as primary carriers of historical meaning. But recent work in phenomenology has shown a renewed interest in wider categories of these same generative sedimentations, which describe the way intergenerational meaning is externalized, stabilized, and transmitted through enduring cultural artifacts. As one author writes: "Beyond texts, similar structures can be discerned in technical devices, built environments, artworks, and other cultural objectivities, all of which function as sedimented, materially stabilized bearers of generative sense. A comprehensive generative phenomenology of material sedimentations would have to extend Husserl's insights about textuality to these further domains."[29]

And it is in this spirit that this section is directed. Specifically, I will make three claims regarding the contribution of images, through image consciousness, to our innate sense of historicity. The first claim builds on Husserl's analyses of visual perception and demonstrates the autonomous contribution to historical experience furnished by images in relation to their mode of quasi-intuitive givenness, which distinguishes them from other types of material sedimentations. A second claim builds on the first and makes more precise Wiesing's notion of "de-individualization" by showing that images elicit unique intersectional folds between past and present intersubjectivities. This claim is then compared to similar ideas in the hermeneutical aesthetics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Finally, I outline some ways in which phenomenology, aesthetics and art history can mutually inform each other to produce a more comprehensive phenomenology of material sedimentations.

Firstly, let us consider how historicity and image consciousness are jointly rooted in visual perception. Vision is central in Husserlian phenomenology because it offers direct perceptual evidence central to

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[29] Saulius Geniusas, "Generative phenomenology and sedimentations," *Continental Philosophy Review*, doi: 10.1007/s11007-026-09733-69, (online first, 2026): 9

Husserl's pursuit of a rigorous, presuppositionless philosophy.[30] Husserl views visual perception as: the basic and foundational act of intentional consciousness, due to its essential synthetic and horizonal nature; as a further basis for forms of presentification such as recollection and imagination, and as the paradigmatic basis for transcendental perception itself. Husserl privileges vision as paradigmatic of intuitive givenness [*Anschauung*], since in visual perception an object is given in itself [*leibhaftig*] while always exceeding what is strictly presented through differing profiles or adumbrations. This structure of presence coupled with absence, part–whole synthesis, and identity across changing appearances, becomes the template for all higher intentional acts.

At the minimal level of historicity, that of time consciousness, Husserl stresses the importance of visual perception. Though secondary memory or recollection involves reproduction of what is now absent, primary remembrance or retention is coextensive with visual perception itself. "For only in primary remembrance do we *see* what is past."[31] Husserl extends to immanent retention an identical status that he extends to immanent perception. In primary memory the experience is retained, still immediately given, so that every perception carries within it a retentional fringe,

Vision is therefore the foundational vehicle for encountering spatial realities but equally forms the gateway to the temporal elsewheres beyond the immediate retentions and protentions of time consciousness. For Husserl, vision allows us to perceive objects as space-occupying, enduring, spatially coherent, and re-encounterable, which means that what is seen is not just a present stimulus but carries implications of past configurations, prior human activity, and potential future interactions. This capacity to situate oneself perceptually and cognitively in a spatially structured environment forms the

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[30] We should note here that Husserl's privileging of vision and over-reliance on visual metaphor has been accused of a residual ocularcentrisim, particularly by Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida.

[31] Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (translated by J.S. Churchill). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964, §18.

foundation for experiencing history itself, as it provides the basis for understanding continuity, change, and context. Husserl also emphasizes that vision is inherently projective as it allows the perceiver to anticipate hidden profiles of objects, visualize relationships beyond the immediate perceptual field, and imagine alternative positions or temporal states of affairs.

But in moving from the immediate givenness of the present into history proper, a decisive extension occurs, I would claim, in image-consciousness. In this form of consciousness, these same visual structures are preserved in a mediated fashion, while actual presence is suspended. In seeing a photograph or painting from the past, one has a modified intuitive presentation of what is not there: the absent person, or the past event. Image consciousness is the only form of presentification in which absence, or pastness, can appear in a mode analogous to intuitive givenness. We could call this, following Husserlian terminology, a *quasi*-intuitive givenness, a presentation of the person or event in an *as-if*, non-positing mode mediated by the image-object.[32]

It follows, I claim, that image consciousness forms an autonomous connection with our innate sense of historicity. The obvious way that images give us access to the past is that they are part of a much larger class of material sedimentations or cultural objects, as described above. And, as is common in disciplines like art history and anthropology, we can gain knowledge about the past from all of these, in terms of the way they can be read or interpreted in terms of sociocultural factors pertaining to belief and cultural organization. As Husserl himself writes, recalling the discussion in Section III: "Cultural things are seen as things in their thingly properties, but at the same time they are apperceived as cultural products having cultural properties. Thus, they appresent people who have produced such things,

[32] Husserl refers to how objects in images are "quasi-seen". See: *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory*, 50.

as well as people who hold such things to be purposeful."[33] But there is a distinction to be made here. Cultural objects like tools, relics and artefacts do not primarily function by depicting or re-presenting an absent object. Phenomenologically therefore, this means that something like an artefact does not generate the same doubling found in image-consciousness. One does not perceive the relic while simultaneously quasi-seeing an absent person or place. Rather, one encounters the relic itself as present while apperceiving it as having historical provenance as such. Indexical or causal connections to the past are therefore first appresented and then subsequently inferred or deduced, but they do not firstly appear in the same quasi-intuitive re-presentational mode of givenness as images.

Images therefore disclose traces of the past that are unavailable through other material sedimentations, by depicting, or re-presenting, states of affairs, events, the nature of the landscape and built environment, and people and places that have vanished to us. Photographs are a class of images that are particularly important in this way, because of their affordance of "factive" pictorial experience or the way they faithfully represent to us slices of time and space through direct visual referencing. They present a happening occurrence, or state of affairs that we assume is empirically accurate.[34] But, for the purposes of historicity proper, images can do more than this, as they are also designed perceptual fields. A painting or photograph organizes space-occupancy, depth, and relational structures in ways that are analogous to visual perception. Images, like the perceptual field itself, present a systematic structure of objects and relations, which perceivers encounter as a coherent whole, and afford the same projective aspects of experience as visual perception. Through images we can immerse ourselves within past environments and imaginatively project ourselves within and beyond these depicted environments into history itself, something which both grounds and motivates further historical

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[33] Edmund Husserl, *Die Lebenswelt: Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916–1937)*, ed. Rochus Sowa. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 56

[34] For more on this, see: Robert Hopkins, "Factive Pictorial Experience: What's Special About Photographs?" *Noûs* 46:4 (2012): 709–31.

enquiry. Images visually disclose and enable empathetic responses towards depicted historical modes of expression, like feelings, gestures and affects. Such expressions of historical life are preserved in images in a visible, intersubjectively communicable and enduring existence in material objects that can be perceived by others. While Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness explains how the immediate past is held within the flow of experience, it does not by itself account for visually immersive access to a distant, non-lived past. This requires the quasi-intuitive form of presentification made possible by image-like structures.

But we should be wary here of reading images simply as copies or reproductions of visual perception itself. On the contrary, images adapt the visual world to meet the idiomatic demands of the relevant medium, and by changing aspects of the perceptual features that are basic to visual perception. Paintings, for example, maintain an internal logic, which can be discerned through the way the image presents an aspect of an object or set of relations that implies the presence of other hidden and non-depicted aspects. Images also incorporate aesthetic styles, abstractions and aesthetic emphases that both heighten and modify visual experience. Through image consciousness, we become aware of not just what images depict, but *how* they depict, through an attention to their various modes of appearance. This means that images are objects that, more than any other objects, focus attention on how they show themselves in modes of appearing.[35] And of particular interest here is how this appearance can reference historicity and temporality solely by pictorial means. An image can bring the past into consciousness because pastness is inherent in its mode of appearing, not something external to the image itself. Recent art history reads images as stratified fields of past productions, surviving traces and stylistic repetitions, viewing them as montages of heterogeneous temporalities.[36] This doubling in the

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[35] The strongest proponent of this thesis is: Günter Figal, *Aesthetics as Phenomenology: The Appearance of Things*. Trans. J. Veith. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[36] Goerges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*. Trans. J. Goodman. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

image of past and present is perhaps best exemplified by the factivity of photographs, which combine: "spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the here-now and the there-then."[37]

I want now to return to Wiesing's notion of the "de-individualization" afforded by images and reread it through Husserl's theory of social and generative historicity. Recall that this term relates to the third paradigm of image consciousness, which concerns the effects of this mode of consciousness within the viewer. De-individualization occurs, Wiesing claims, because in normal perception, repeated acts of seeing a thing over time imply a corresponding aging of both the perceiver and perceived thing. But the image-object is unique in that it does not age, unlike its image carrier, so that: "the absolute synchrony between the temporal being of the perceiver and the perceived is suspended with respect to the image object." This implies that: "my individual moment, in which I have just seen, am seeing or will see the image object, cannot be an exclusive moment […] images permit the same thing to be seen at different times."[38]

Although this is clearly a statement about genetic phenomenology, I want now to extend it to the generative, via two terms used in Husserl to epitomize generative historicity in his late texts. Firstly, consider the image carrier, which is an artefact in its own right. This is both perceived by an individual and apperceived to be potentially co-perceivable by an imminent horizon of social others. The image carrier is equally apperceived to have been co-perceived in the past, by an "open" and anonymous set of historical co-perceivers, whose identities we can never determine. In this way the perceptual horizons of social and generative intersubjectivity enter consciousness as an

[37] Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image", in *Image, Music, Text*. Trans. S. Heath. (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 44.

[38] Wiesing, *Philosophy of Perception*, 149.

"encroachment" or "overlapping" [*Übergreifen*] into our own.[39] We apperceive that others in the past may have also experienced this same materiality or had an experience of this object *qua* object. The same is true of artefacts in general. But we are aware of something extra in the case of images, namely that the appearance to us of the image object, and the appresentation of the image subject through the image object, are properties of image consciousness that uniquely intersect with the experiential horizons of social and historical others, due to the anachronicity of the image object itself. This is only possible because this anachronicity allows the continued temporal iteration of this same appearance. Equally, our experiences of the image, which include perceptions, apperceptions, empathetic and affective responses and interpretations, are then layered over or "superimposed" [*Überschiebung*] upon different responses and interpretations of historical others.[40] Horizons of perception and interpretation surrounding the image become sedimented and vertically stratified, without fully collapsing into each other, and operate in reciprocal modification. But only in the case of image consciousness are these horizons structured around a fixed "irreal" object of pure visibility that does not age, the fixed-point afforded by the image object. Put differently, de-individualization means in this generative context that image consciousness produces a unique effect in the viewer, because it entails a unique kind of momentary intersectional folding between individual, social and historical horizons, which are otherwise often opaque and inaccessible.[41]

No doubt this recalls Hans-Georg Gadamer's famous concept of the "fusion of horizons" between past and present. But the "fusion" here is expressed not in terms of perception, co-perception, apperception and appearing but is contained within a hermeneutic event necessitating subjective

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[39] This term can be found in: Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, trans. D. Carr, §47-50.

[40] Ibid.

[41] This intersectional folding can be read as operating between the normally separate layers of primordial, social and generative intersubjectivity which are analysed in: Joona Taipale, *Phenomenology and Embodiment: Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

participation.[42] For Gadamer, understanding an historical artwork is not about recovering its original meaning, nor a projecting of oneself into the past. Instead, understanding happens when historical and contemporaneous horizons enter into hermeneutical dialogue, shaped by tradition, and then produce a new shared meaning or truth that may not have been apparent before about the artwork.

This account of a fusion of horizons is therefore different to the account given above regarding intersectional folding, but I would claim that they can be seen as complementary rather than opposed. My account in this section of images and historicity explains how certain aspects of the past can enter experience at all; from the past as appresented through cultural objects to the structures of quasi-intuitive givenness and appearance that characterize image consciousness, and why this perhaps explains why these objects *matter* to us. And this, I would argue, happens prior to, and motivates Gadamer's hermeneutic event. Even in Gadamer's notion of fusion, there remains an implicit reliance on structures of givenness: the artwork, text, or tradition must still be encountered, perceived, and apperceived as historically significant as-such in order taken up as meaningful. This encounter presupposes a perceptual and apperceptual field in which something can show itself, however historically mediated. Equally, the eidetic structure of encroachment and superimposition outlined above explains how material sedimentations have historical being and hermeneutical significance as-such, prior to any particular interpretative act, and therefore motivate and ground the encounter described by Gadamer in his fusion of horizons.

I will move now to my final claim regarding images, image consciousness and historicity. One important aspect of Husserl's *Krisis* was the loss of access to the original meaning-constituting acts and sedimentations underlying scientific idealities. And in relation to all such obscured sedimentations, one recent author has hence claimed that: "one of the fundamental tasks of

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[42] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall. (New York: Continuum, 2004).

phenomenology is that of devising a reliable method for reactivating sedimented sense formations."[43] This task requires an eidetic analysis which relies on imaginative variations with the help of which phenomenology can identify the essential structures underpinning these historical sedimentations. To conclude this section, I will suggest how a method for such an analysis could merge insights from phenomenology, aesthetics and art history.

The task here involves the recognition that all perceptions, including image perception contain sedimentations of cultural and historical acculturation. And as a specific example of this, we can refer to a body of literature that theorizes a distinct shift in the phenomenology of image consciousness between early and late modernity, reflecting the immersion of image recipients into widely differing epistemic formations of knowledge and belief.[44] This shift is a movement, for example, from an image recipient who might have perceived images as carriers of resemblances, and as being causally intertwined with their subjects, to image recipients in later historical periods. The latter have arguably become used to the ubiquity of images, are additionally aware of their reproductions and copies, and have knowledge of art history, museums and heritage, and possess entirely different models of causation, deriving from the natural sciences, that necessitate an ontological separation of depiction from depicted content.[45]

But the second point I want to make is that the recognition and introduction of this historical contingency does not entail a type of circularity or regression, in which all claims about perception

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[43] Geniusas, "Generative phenomenology and sedimentations", 11.

[44] Most notably, this epistemic shift is given a detailed account in: Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans. A. Sheridan. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

[45] The causal intertwining of image object and subject has been theorized in the history of Medieval and Renaissance art through the notion of the "agency" of images, most notably in the works of Alfred Gell, W.J.T. Mitchell, David Freedburg and Caroline van Eck.

vanish into historical relativism. Indeed, in the *Krisis* text, Husserl equivocates between a position that stresses the historical relativity of lifeworlds to an alternative that seeks to isolate instead its transcendental core. As one commentator puts it: "Notwithstanding its relativity, the *Lebenswelt* exhibits an invariant structure, more precisely, an invariant structural framework within which the relative and changeable finds its place."[46] For example, we may speculate that every lifeworld has a lived and intersectional conception of space, place, corporeality, action and causation, which is not necessarily of course the model provided by the natural sciences, and so on. Husserl even speaks of a general science of the lifeworld, which, in principle at least, can identify its lawful "essential typicalities."[47] Husserl aims to locate these by engaging in an imaginative free variation or reduction from existing worlds, revealing a historically unaltered layer underneath the various and historically contingent sedimentations of culture, a view that has been criticized on pragmatic grounds elsewhere.[48]

But it is precisely here, I would claim, that an interdisciplinary approach between phenomenology, aesthetics and art history has relevance. In nineteenth-century art history, we already see a hint as to why this might be the case. For instance, much of the work of Alois Riegl was motivated by the problem of how to grasp the dynamics of historical lifeworlds from the artefacts that it leaves behind. The approach to answer this question was to conduct a kind of proto-phenomenology of history and time through the study of art itself. Riegl, in common with other art historians, like Heinrich Wölfflin and Jacob Burckhardt, believed that visual art works embodied aspects of historical perception, which

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[46] Aaron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), 425.

[47] Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 202.

[48] For a summary of these criticisms, see: Eran Dorfmann, "History of the Lifeworld: From Husserl to Merleau-Ponty", *Philosophy Today* 53:3, 2009.

determine how a culture organizes visibility, space, and form, and thereby revealed clues about the spatial and temporal nature of our ancestor's perceptual constitution of the world. Accordingly, one of the main intellectual aims of Riegl's scholarship was to read or discern the movements of history and the perceptual characteristics of historical actors by investigating the perceptual, and particularly visual matrices of images: "Riegl was convinced that an empirical analysis of artworks could reveal perceptual characteristics of cultural periods and the physical traces of history."[49]

In many ways, this key idea in Riegl's art history has found an echo in contemporary work in art history and aesthetics. Jonathan Crary's strongly historicist account of vision argues that seeing is not a natural, fixed capacity but historically and culturally constructed. He shows how modern forms of perception emerge through specific institutions, technologies, and practices, through producing new kinds of observers. Vision is shaped by historically specific "techniques" that determine how and what one sees, which in turn entails that images both encode and transmit these same ways of seeing.[50] This aligns exactly with the phenomenological concept of sedimentation. Husserl argues that perception is structured by accumulated layers of past experience that become habitual and operate passively. Recent art history extends this insight beyond individual consciousness to the historical and cultural level: the sedimented structures of perception are not only formed through personal experience but are also embedded in visual technologies, artistic conventions, and representational systems. Images, in this sense, are not neutral objects but carriers of sedimented perceptual habits. They both reflect historically formed ways of seeing and actively shape future perception, reinforcing and reproducing those same structures across time.[51]

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[49] Michael Gubser, *Times Visible Surface* (Wayne State University Press: 2006), 9.

[50] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

[51] See also: Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

In the opposite direction to historicism, aesthetician Paul Crowther returns to the problem introduced by perceptual historicity via an appeal to the transhistorical phenomenological factors that are heightened and epitomized through various historical styles of visual art. These depth factors are intended to form an invariant hyletic layer on which various historical sedimentations are overlaid, and are what is unconcealed through a close phenomenological analysis of historical artworks.[52] These depth factors relate to, as we have seen, how images heighten, or even transform the hidden conditions of immediate perception, like tacit orderings of the perceptual field, based on our current positioning; imagination or how our perception of an object depends on the simulation of other experiences of it; self-consciousness and agency, or our awareness of ourselves and others as free volitional agents, and the prereflexive understanding of our own bodies. But there are, I would claim, some deficiencies in this account. The first is that Crowther relies on a strong static interpretation of imagination derived from Kant, which lacks generative nuance, and which arguably threatens the validity of some of his transhistorical claims. This is coupled with a defence and analysis of a specifically Western canon of visual art, which is at best contested.

As a result of this, a complete phenomenological theory of the non-textual material sedimentations that are visual artworks would therefore need to combine different elements that cut across and organize both historicist and transhistorical approaches. These elements would include: the eidetic approach of phenomenology, based on Husserl's extant analysis of textual sedimentations; an inclusive historical account of image-making; aesthetic accounts that identify typicalities and intersections amongst historicist accounts of vision, imagination and image-making.

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[52] Paul Crowther, *The Transhistorical Image: Philosophizing Art and Its History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

V. *Image consciousness and historicity: temporal orientation and the sustainment or perturbation of narrative.*

In this section, I want to interrogate the relation between image consciousness and questions regarding narrative and narrativization, which we saw in Section II to be at the core of both Husserl's conception of historicity, and Rüsen's theory of temporal orientation. My claim will be that a further consequence of image consciousness relates to the dichotomy of either the sustainment or perturbation and transformation of narratives themselves. The argument depends crucially on what one art historian has called "the power of images."[53]

David Freedberg argues that images hold power because people respond to them via direct emotional contagion, resulting in actions that are underpinned by historical belief systems (see Section III). These responses occur in ways that exceed the tendency to treat images solely hermeneutically or via semiotic interpretation. Consequently, Freedberg maintains that images have an autonomous affective power, elicit tangible bodily responses, and act in a quasi-agentive fashion on their perceivers, prompting emotional reactions that are expressed through actions as various as veneration, tactile interaction and even destructive hostility. Images are more than just signs, and have historically maintained a sense of apparent agency, not because they literally act on perceivers, but because of belief systems that maintain that they act "as if" they do. Reponses involving actions and beliefs regarding images oscillate around two contrasting poles. Firstly, there is "iconophilia," or the drive to venerate and embrace images. Concrete art-historical examples across different times and cultures of this tendency include: the utilization of images within religious iconography, often furnished with mythical powers such as healing; statues that are perceived as living presences, and which receive embodied interaction, and are even sometimes bathed and fed; Catholic devotional prints; images and

[53] David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

photographs of loved ones, and so forth. Secondly, there is "iconoclasm," or the impulse to control or destroy images through destruction, defacement, prohibition, and often reflecting an anxiety surrounding their agentive power. Images matter historically because they produce real tangible effects in human lives, and can be seen as agents in shaping rituals, narratives, political configurations, and everyday behavior through the force of the responses they provoke.

Let us now relate this material back to the topic of historicity and narrativization. We saw in Section II how historical being or historicity is simultaneously a question of narrative coherence and sustainability in historical "we-communities" but also includes the ongoing possibility of encountering a particular class of transforming "world historical events." These events are experienced as transcending our individual subjectivity, and introduce us to a communal and collective historical subject. However, what this account ignores, or at least elides, is the role of images and image consciousness in both sustaining and disrupting these narratives themselves, at both world-historical and more prosaic levels. Images have played a crucial role in history in providing continuity and temporal coherence to religious and other belief. For example, images afforded in Renaissance art a sense of "substitutional time".[54] Artworks like statues and images were treated as timeless and atemporal, and capable of agentively standing-in for a sacred original. Such images were seen not as contingent historical products, but as repetitions or continuations of an eternal truth. Additionally Renaissance artists often sought, through the making and distribution of images, to recreate or reactivate the past, not merely represent it. Artworks thus functioned as vehicles for connected temporal experience, allowing viewers to perceptually inhabit or access other historical times and places. They enabled religious narratives to sustain temporal coherence and therefore formed tangible examples of historicity, defined in Section II as how, in each given present, the temporal dimensions of past, present and future are related.

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[54] Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Zone Books, 2010).

In more contemporary history, we can see examples of the opposite tendency, or how images have functioned to disrupt and perturb narratives themselves and therefore play a crucial role in what Rüsen terms the "critical" typology of narrativization. The latter introduce a crucial element of negativity into prevailing narratives, introducing questions regarding their validity and the values they reflect, and are: "based on people's ability to say no to traditions, rules and principles that have been handed down to them."[55] What we can assert here is that the dialectical and disjunctive interplay between traditional and critical narrative can be mapped onto an exact art-historical equivalent. And that this is more than a conceptual mirroring: images in both the past and present continue to both ensure stability and continuity *and* cause disturbances in matrices of oral and textual narratives. The sustaining properties of traditional narrative are reflected in substitutional and embodied presentational tropes redolent of iconophilic art history. And the transformational and critical opposite within narrative typology is equally reflected in an iconoclastic, destructive alternative. As an example within recent image history, the image of a naked Vietnamese girl fleeing a US napalm attack arguably did more to change official narratives on the Vietnam war and contemporaneous political and social realities, than did any textual documentary or spoken narrative evidence. Such images of course sometimes *show* what cannot be spoken about. The Vietnam war photograph was an invitation to political engagement. The violence of the image was viscerally symptomatic of the violence of the surrounding conflict itself, coupled with the geopolitics that sustained it, and did so by visually presenting bodily suffering, and thereby activating public conscience and empathy.

Another example here might be helpful. A contemporary art historian writes of four hastily taken images smuggled out of the gas chambers of the Auschwitz concentration camp at enormous personal risk by members of the *Sonderkommando*. These horrific images contain both a historical disclosive

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[55] Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation,*14.

power and futural force, related to Benjamin's idea of "transmissibility" (see Section III). Both now and at the time, they show what cannot be said or written about. Through this transmissibility, we can see an example of what Benjamin additionally called "the dialectical image," fleeting moments of truth that flash up against present regimes of forgetting or denial; connecting us perhaps to more contemporary genocides; reminding us of truths that cannot be reduced to narrative alone.[56] Such images are sites where an unjust or the oppressed past can suddenly erupt into the present, recontextualizing it in the process, and enabling new potentialities into the future. They again provide tangible links between past, present and future characteristic of our prior definitions of historicity itself. Images can reflect historicity and temporal orientation but can simultaneously recompose and perturb the narratives of historicity itself.

VI. *Image consciousness and historicity: images and traits*

In this section, I want to examine a final aspect of image consciousness that represents a culmination of the account give so far. My claim will be that physical images form important fixed points within temporal chains containing other forms of phenomenological presentifications (imagination, mental imagery and recollection). The analysis will mirror the approach taken in Section IV, and move from a static to genetic, and finally generative account of what I will call "traits."

But let us begin this section with an account of how presentifications relate to language. It is common in philosophy to link language-acquisition with capacities for mental imagery and imagination.[57] In order for individual human subjects to learn a language, it is necessary to connect words and signifiers

[56] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*. Trans. S. B. Lillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[57] See for example: Paul Crowther, *The Language of Twentieth Century Art: A Conceptual History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

to objects and phenomena that are not immediately present to visual and other perception. To use language, we must be able to mentally image and picture things that are not immediately present. A word is coupled with an image-schematic of the thing that it designates, even when the thing is absent. Imagination is also foundational for the abstracting of things into coherent categories and developing counterfactual and hypothetical thinking. Seen this way, imagination and language develop together and the former provides a kind of cognitive scaffolding for the latter.

And we can immediately connect this situation with a fundamental aspect of image consciousness. When we use words that designate objects and phenomena that we have never personally encountered, and have never entered our direct visual perception, it is self-evident that that the image-schematic that is formed in relation to the word is derived from recollections of actual physical images. What this implies is that physical images also play a role in the cognitive scaffolding of the presentifications required to use and understand language. This is perhaps familiar, but in what follows, I want to present another link between image consciousness and presentification, which relates to the concept of "trait" in psychoanalytic metapsychology, particularly in the work of Serge Leclaire.[58]

For Leclaire, a "trait" is a type of mental image that represents the affective magnitude, or emotional salience of a prior experience. He writes that: "a repetition of this past magnitude is sought by following the thread of the trait *qua* iterable mark."[59] This trait is abstracted from the experience during which an affective intensity linked to a specific part of the body is first encountered and becomes frozen in the unconscious. Traits therefore are a question of a formally identifiable term, one whose "intrinsic and paradoxical nature is to be this materiality abstracted from the body."[60] Leclaire

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[58] Serge Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing: On the Order of the Unconscious and Practice of the Letter* (Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 1998).

[59] Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 352.

[60] Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing*, 96.

cites an example of the formation of an olfactory trait derived from a perception immediately after a traumatic accident. He also refers to an example from Freud, where a personal visual trait was formed in relation to a particular shade of yellow associated with the colour of a dress, a shade which came to overdetermine subsequent aesthetic choices in Freud's life.

The formation of traits is firstly a genetic process that emerges within individual subjective life history. An object or event, first encountered in an initial moment of affective intensity, is ratified into a contingent trait whose imprint thereafter functions structurally as a kind of privileged signifier. Once formed, the trait thus engendered exercises a power of determination over subsequent object choices: "A frozen moment of the individual's experience becomes elevated into a transexperiential template, a coordinate establishing a range of eidetic variations for a given drive."[61] Leclaire allows any sensory or perceptual impressions to act as image-like traits, which can be visual, acoustic, graphic, or tactile.

I want now to connect the phenomenology of trait formation with a key final linkage of image consciousness with historicity, and in doing so, move to the generative layer of phenomenology. In the last section we saw how images are often implicated with either the sustainment or perturbation of narrative structures within historicity itself. We saw how images of world-historical events, such as film footage and photographs, are crucial to the transformative shifts in cultural meanings and historical narratives that these events engender, and the we-communities that are formed because of them. What I also want to suggest is that these same images can be additionally formalized as phenomenological traits. Images of Auschwitz, the Vietnam War or the fall of the Berlin Wall, and so forth, inaugurate temporal chains commencing with a visual perception of an image. There is then the subsequent ratification of the emotionally salient nature of this perception into a trait, and additionally subsequent acts of recollection that link to this trait. In these cases, trait-like mental images are

[61] Johnston, *Time-Driven*, 353.

formed from physical images themselves, forming what we could call “meta-images” which thereafter form a transexperiential template to which other experiences refer through recollection.

This is actually a special case of a wider phenomenon involving the imbrication of image consciousness with acts of memory and recollection. When we recall experiences, events and places that form our historicity, we often, in the absence of any other information, recall image-based traits as types of scaffolding for wider imaginative free variation. The image, even if incomplete, serves as a bridge between present and past that enables additional recollections and memories to form, and scaffolds further acts of presentification.

Seen this way, physical images, due to their physical perdurance and survivability, form crucial fixed points within the flux of visual and other perception, just as how in Section IV, they afforded fleeting moments of encroachment within an individual subjective life from social and generative and intersubjectivity. Images and traits therefore represent another constitutive part of our innate sense of historicity. Through image consciousness, temporal chains are formed from (for example): a past scene; a visual perception of a scene; a capturing image; a photograph as a perduring physical object with social circulation; a recollection of the image; trait formation from the image; recollections and future expectations based on the trait, and so forth. These chains of visuality incorporate physical images that act like attentional and phenomenological anchors, and whilst these chains are not like conventional narratives, they have narrative-like properties, linking an individual present with its communal past and future.