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The aesthetic purport of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology Theodor W. Adorno's rethinking of the subject-object relationship

Abstract

This paper draws a comparison between Theodor W. Adorno and Edmund Husserl according to a mended dialogue in the aesthetic field. In this regard, the essay does not ponder over the customary critique on the so-called idealistic phase of phenomenology, embodied by Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a Phenomenological philosophy, and copes with the genetic stage of Husserl's thought, signified by Formal and transcendental logic and Cartesian meditations. The relevant influence of Husserl's philosophy on Adorno's aesthetics springs out of the last and mature phase of transcendental phenomenology. It results, notably, from a renewed notion of intentionality whereby a critical concern with subjectivity contributes reshaping the core on which artworks detect and conceal the rational purport of intentio so that their thingly feature reconfigures the status of the aesthetic subject. As a result, Adorno's aesthetics may earn a new perspective on the questioned relationship between subject and object through the comparison with Husserl's phenomenology.

Keywords

Aesthetics, Edmund Husserl, Theodor W. Adorno

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1. Introduction

This paper yields a sketch of the relationship between the dialectic and aesthetic thought of Theodor W. Adorno and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. In this regard, it cannot but draw on the stance which Adorno adopts on Husserl's phenomenology and phenomenology *tout court*. This framework has been exposed in Adorno's masterpiece on phenomenology, i.e. *Against epistemology: a metacritique. Studies in Husserl and the phenomenological antinomies*. However, this paper reads this work to sketch out a different bending of Adorno's interpretation by focusing on the other side of Adorno's critique. The aim is fulfilled by taking into account some motifs from Husserl's *Formal and transcendental logic* and *Cartesian meditations* so as to inquire whether Adorno's aesthetic thought profited from his reading of Husserl's phenomenology and whether helpful hints were developed accordingly. However, this foreground does not commit to assessing the correctness of Adorno's analysis as to a philological study of Husserl's phenomenology. In the aforementioned works, Husserl revises the overwhelming power of rationality over the noematic senses of intentional acts and detects objective appearances together with act moods suited for them. Thereby subjectivity does not acknowledge its inheritance with psychological bounds, a topic which Husserl addresses, and is revealed as the concrete linchpin regarded in its transcendental roots, scrutinized also under the improved condition of the object, which is judged as the source of sense. The relationship between the static target of the act and the dynamic conception of constitution and stratification of objectivity conveys the settlement of history tangled in subjective activities. As a result, the judgement is envisaged as the hinge around which both the expression of the manifold sense-precipitate and the constitution of objectivity revolve; its significance prompts Adorno to scrutinize the historicity of sense and its crystallized shape distinctly so as to bring them into the artwork. However, that conclusion traces back to the challenging blend of two major stages of Husserl's thought showing up in Adorno's enquiry: from the comparison with the idealistic phase, as Adorno understands it, of Husserl's phenomenology, represented by *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, to a reformed insight into the so-called genetic phenomenology, *Formal and transcendental logic* and *Cartesian meditations*. As the analysis goes on, Adorno adopts a multifaceted stance on the features of intentional experience that Husserl tries to un-

fold in his mature phase. Unlike *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, Husserl's *Formal and transcendental logic* provides a peculiar feature of subjectivity, which is regarded as the dynamic core and as the pivot of phenomenological research.

The paper explores how this framework is developed by Adorno in regards to the general setting of epistemology, namely the relationship between the genesis of sense and the validity of meaning, and to the reconfiguration of the dichotomy subject/object by means of a renewed interpretation of conceptuality.

Finally, the paper latches onto Adorno's posthumous work, *Aesthetic theory*, in order to pore over the relationship with phenomenology according to the outline of the analysis. In this case, the attention shifts to the concern with subjectivity so as to describe the figure of the aesthetic subject, which for Adorno recovers the features overwhelmed by the static analysis of meaning deployed by the transcendental facet of phenomenology and eschews the reified conception of the object through the dialectic between mimesis, heir of the phenomenological way of coping with otherness, and conceptuality, related to the genetic conception of meaning fostering the mediation between objectivity and the aesthetic setting of its grasping.

2. Intentionality and subjectivity

Adorno's interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology bears a double standpoint of analysis, which can be examined from his final degree thesis, wherein he aims to describe Husserl's phenomenological philosophy by examining its two foils, namely, the transcendence of consciousness and the transcendence of noematic cores. In brief, Adorno devises in this work two sources, namely the transcendence of noematic cores and the actuality of reason, which is, though, the most important feature of knowledge for Adorno since it demands and assures the thingly feature of appearances. It interprets the immediate relationship as a look at the givenness of what appears and bestows on it transcendence on the basis of the a priori regularities of consciousness and, even, in the givenness in person of the object, which presents itself as such in the appearance but not in respect of its phenomenal content. As a result, according to Adorno, an underlying ambiguity springs up. By pursuing this framework,

Adorno achieves the ultimate insight into the division of Husserl's philosophy which foregrounds his interpretation as a whole: on the one hand, an objective phase, which is traced back to *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, and, on the other hand, a genetic one, which by and large goes back to *Formal and transcendental logic* and *Cartesian meditations*. Adorno considers the genetic transcendental logic as the chance to reassess the functional side of knowledge, which is dismissed by Husserl in *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy* and is the representative of Kant's idealism (Adorno 1986b: 72-4, 112). The logic of function is a logic of action, namely the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one, and it originates in the spontaneity of the "I think". This logic devises the relationship between the subject and the object in an unsystematic way, according to which can be reckoned the significance of the object for the shaping of subjective activities. In Kant, however, this dynamic feature is dwarfed by the synthetic unity of apperception, since all the burden of the argument is attributed to the subjective pole of consciousness (Galeazzi 1983: 264-5; Marino 2017: 73-7; Marino 2019b: 149-52). On the other hand, the synthesis purported by spontaneity is disappointed if it is rooted in the transcendental identity between objectivities and intentional acts, as *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy* shows: this results into a *bloße Korrelation*, as Adorno says (Adorno 1982: 112; Adorno 1986b: 88-9), between the noematic cores embedded into a definite species and the noetic concern with objectivity (*contradictio in adjecto*). The twofoldness of spontaneity imbues Adorno's reading of Husserl's phenomenology: Adorno envisages Husserl's research as the study of the objective validity of knowledge, thus recovering the Kantian heritage, and as the analysis of the features of consciousness, deployed at the disposal of the subject (Adorno 2002: 137-8, 266-9). Adorno envisages spontaneity as the awareness of the failure to grasp objectivity through conceptuality, restored by the mimetic impulse within the spiritual experience (Adorno 1998a: 505, Foster 2007: 104-6; Ruschi 1990: 114-23; Scutari 2018: 148-52).

The objective turn of Husserl's phenomenology, as Adorno understands it, draws on the mutual trait between the *noema* and the judgment. This thesis may be traced back to Adorno's analysis of the thing-noema in his degree thesis, whose keynote is that the perceived as such, in case the analysis of Husserl's thought is performed thoroughly, should

supersede the thing-noema, which Husserl envisages as the eidetic insight into the reference of the same thing (Husserl 1982: 358-9), by focusing solely on the immanent perception, thereby excluding the value of *ἐποχή*, and on the meaningful connection of mental experiences (Adorno 1973a: 54-5, 67-8, 74-5, 376; Galeazzi 1983: 266-71, 274-6; Pettazzi 1977: 440-2; Terzi 2016: 211-3). With the same tenor, Adorno acknowledges the genetic phase of Husserl's thought and its mended conception of judgment whereas he complains about the reifying mood of formal logic, which prescribes the overall categories of regional ontologies, and of eidetic variation.

The subject-object relationship might be clarified through the judgment analysis, which is reckoned by Husserl as the main device which the phenomenologist employs so that the hidden implications of the sense-bestowal of the original modes of consciousness may be educed from their correlation, thus enlightening the noetic side within the objective representation. Furthermore, Adorno was deeply involved with the judgment analysis expounded by Husserl, as it can be seen throughout the research on the Hegelian thought gathered up in *Hegel. Three studies*. The judgment is the result of the peculiar behaviour impressed by the consciousness on the act; this framework yields the strict implication between the act intentionality and the relationship with objectivity, which may be questioned by the judgment in order to reach the sense implicit in the subjective constitution of *noesis*. Husserl acknowledges that a proper theory of experience should spring out of the inferior layer of consciousness, that is knowledge of individuals. Through the attention to individuals, the categories of the predicative judgment take care of the immediate experience of objects. The intertwinement between immediate actuality and self-givenness, whose concern with the formation of meaning introduces the original sphere of actuality and the correlative ego constitution, highlights the phenomenological reference of actuality judgments to original mental processes (Adorno 1986a: 127-30; Almeida 1972: 175-80; Husserl 1969: 187-8, 327; Smith, McIntyre 1982: 240-5).

In order to find out a proper description of the relationship between original mental processes and objectivity, we may recall the passages from *Logical investigations*, II, 1, II, 2 (Husserl 1973: 121-2, 244-5; Sokolowski 1970: 47-8, 54-60), wherein Husserl distinguishes between the propositional content and the mode of the givenness of the object within the intentional act, which can be envisaged as the act-quality by which the act-matter is fashioned in a definite sense.

The descriptive method of phenomenology aims indeed at inspecting the noematic cores according to the different epistemic conditions of perceptions. Thus, these conditions differ according to the noetic gaze: the similarities between the acts can be uncovered by judgment analysis, whereby it may be disclosed a definite judgement material or a material core, which, in *Formal and transcendental logic*, is acknowledged as core stuff (Vásquez 1976: 178-81; Welton 1984: 175-9). The syntactic matter is labelled as *Urteilmaterie* which in *Logical investigations* serves as a distinction between the content of the proposition and the quality of the presentation of the intentional object in the act. As the act-quality derives from the material cores retrievable from the original mental process, so the objectivity of the noema is included in different syntactical ways of expression, according to the several types of judgment. Hence, the quality of the intentional act develops into the homonymous feature of judgment, and the judgment material may be the same under different types of expression, thereby revealing the intertwinement between the modifications of the noetic sense and those of original mental processes (Adorno 2000: 45; Gordon 2016: 60-4; Hodge 2008: 79-83).

Pursuing the enquiry further, Husserl acknowledges that the identity of material cores implies the identity of a meant objectivity standing for a world thing. The original sense-bestowal act, which is the positing (translation of *Setzung*; Vásquez 1976: 132-5) of consciousness within intuitive knowledge, represents the transcendental intuition within the immanence of the ego sphere, which grasps the constitutional deficiency of the perceptive series of acts within the transcendence of a definite horizon which every retention implied by an act aims at (Husserl 1969: 207-8; Ingarden 1974: 178-82). The givenness of things is the transcendental correlate of positing, according to which the act is rationally motivated by the appearances of the thing in person. However, the non-independence of the content (sense) of the judgment from the modalizations of judgment outlines the permanence of the material substrate along with judgment-modalities (Husserl 1969: 215-9; Husserl 1973: 9-13). Abstracting from the genetic scope of formation in judgment, meaning can be understood as the meaning of the whole, as an idea, as an object in general (Adorno 1982: 66-9, 121-2), given the continuity of a material syntactic core despite the change of objective background, wherein the eidetic variation plays the vital role of discerning genres. In other words, the sense-giving act accounts for the permanence of reference within the definite formation of perceptual data (ὑλη) whereas the essence of vision lies into the thesis of consciousness (Adorno 1982: 75; Eley 1962: 34-7; Husserl

1982: 328-9; Mensch 1981: 117-20). The dependence of the judgment quality from the positing consciousness is provided by the eidetic variation, which according to Adorno's target conflates the richness of experience and the search for the eidetic invariant (Adorno 1982: 117-23, Foster 2007: 94-8; Terzi 2016: 208-11, 218-9), and foreshadows the final assessment of Adorno's critique. According to its outline, Husserl dithers between two equal conceptions of judgment: the one construing it as a unitary act of unravelling the thing as a portrayal of the identity core of regional ontologies, the other as the expression of the multiplicity of fundamental relationships with the object matter (Adorno 1986b: 75-6).

Thus, intentional consciousness, as a consciousness of, cannot help but be explicated by the analytical investigation of formal ontology as the description of the correlation of formal types of categories and corresponding propositions and of the permanence of syntactical cores of meant substrates, signified by the unity of noematic cores (Husserl 1969: 314-8). The static intentional explication refers to pure logical grammar, whereby the original act of judging individuality is related to the correctness of formal syntax, whilst pure analytics investigates the rules of formal consequentality of distinct judgments according to their adequacy to syntactically formed states of affairs (Holenstein 1972: 26-32; Sokolowski 1974: 283-9). It is not germane to a genetic interpretation, since the synthetic unity of noematic non-actuality may lead up to possible self-givenness of the object, and the sense implicit in noematic stages is included among the next ones. The genetic process relates the meaning as it is devised in the constitution of constant reference to the temporal nexus of the original act. On the one hand, there stands the expression of sense with the predicative judgment, on the other, the seizing of universality implicit in intentional performances.

Prior to the submission the analysis of the dynamic import of transcendental phenomenology, we ought to introduce the notion of "passive genesis" as it is stated in *Cartesian meditations* (Biceaga 2010: 68-73; Holenstein 1972: 61-2, 115-7; Husserl 1988: 41-2, 77-80; Moran 2011: 60-5). Passive genesis is the fundamental token of what Husserl defines the primordial sphere of the ego. The passive genesis of association is the prelude to the actuality of reason and to the correlative side of epistemic modifications. The active genesis associates the sense-bestowing to the temporal flux of lively perceptions (the background of passive genesis; Biceaga 2010: 1-4, 95-7; Lohmar 2012: 287-93; Sokolowski 1970: 177-83, 185-93; Vásquez 1976: 186-7; Welton 2003: 276-82). The thetic feature of positing shows itself in the ever-changing original perception of the

thing (Husserl 1988: 80-1). It constitutes the foreground of the intentional effect produced by the synthesis of consciousness (Aguirre 1970: 160-6; Biceaga 2010: 17-22; Holenstein 1972: 62-4; Husserl 1988: 41-3, 75-7; Lohmar 2012: 293-302; Welton 1984: 237-45), wherein the noematic cores and the material cores are subsumed in the field of active genesis under the transcendental features of the ego. It is the inferior layer of the disclosure of consciousness as reason, wherein the universality associated with the intentional gaze is yet rooted in temporal becoming. Although Adorno criticizes passive genesis as it is explicated in *Cartesian Meditations* (Adorno 1982: 212), it nonetheless is the layer which *Formal and Transcendental Logic* develops and whereby Husserl devises the relationship between original modes of consciousness and judgement analysis, a theme which is considered below. However, Adorno recognizes this indirectly when he exposes the progressive features of Husserl's phenomenology, according to which "thought 'means beyond itself' under the compulsion of its contradictions" (Adorno 1982: 212; 1986b: 51-2, 85; Lauro 1994: 143-5; Lauro 2007: 47-53, 109-11; Tavani 2004: 160-4).

The intentionality of experience, recovered by the theory of the genetic sphere, allows reckoning the intentional constitution of the object, not only regarding its modes of givenness but also its objectivity. Hence, the soul is the linchpin of the transcendental functions of knowledge and coheres with the world remnant (*Stückwelt*) of the empirical ego as the pole of mental processes. Remarkable is the heed taken by Adorno of this term and its implications: the first hint about the concern with the eidetic analysis of the sense-bestowal and the renewal of the genetic implications of the ego experience (Adorno 1973c: 99-100; Adorno 1986b: 99-104; Adorno 1993: 14; Adorno 2002: 339-40; Adorno 2018: 131-2). What has an objective character outlines the sense modalities of consciousness: the critique of sense reveals that the soul is the explication of the transcendental ego, i.e. a foundation of the eidetic possibility of experience. The sense-givenness is now considered as the detection of the intentional implications encompassed by ideal objective unities, thereby pursuing the different modifications of sense by means of the different syntaxes suitable to the expression of the noematic cores. The introduction of pure psychology in *Formal and transcendental logic* connects the universal grasp of the possible experience to the material evidence of the percept: according to the primary constitution of sense in the primordial sphere ego reveals itself as the core of mental processes.

Experience, thus, does not lie before or after eidetic evidence but pertains to formal logic related to the universal mood of pure analytics, retrievable in the eidetic variation of experience. If sense, as the unavoidable facet of the material core expressed in judgment categories, is not self-sufficient, it nonetheless is the reason of the intentionality of experience and leads up to the unity of possible experience, thus testifying the intertwinement between genesis and validity, whose importance for epistemology is crucial for Adorno (Adorno 1982: 73-8, 134-6; Adorno 1998b: 500; Foster 2007: 97-9; Lauro 1994: 139-41; Sullivan-Lysaker 1992: 99-103)¹.

3. *The aesthetic boundary of phenomenology*

The judgment analysis, rooted in the individual, rests on the syntactical and formal scrutiny of the meaning, intended as noematic sense-bestowal. What Adorno further acknowledges is the awareness of the external influence of reality as contrasted with the form of the artwork. The individual for Husserl is comprehended by the positing of consciousness, represented by the act value, and it is modified according to the change of the value; on the contrary, the objective facet of non-identity regarding the subjective principle subscribes to the outcome of the experience. However, as the individual is shaped in noesis according to the thematic interest, i.e. the outcome of positing, the empirical material is modified by the immanent logic of artworks: here we can grasp the common trait between Husserl's critique on the sign theory and Adorno's one on *adaequatio rei atque cogitationis* (Adorno 1998a: 505-6; Gordon 2016: 76-8, 81-3; Marino 2019b: 30-5; Noppen 2017: 89-92; Payot 2018: 59-63).

The universal mood of artworks is signified by their inwardness, i.e. the concretion, and is related to epistemology through the *intentio obliqua*. Due to the reference to otherness by the transitive nature of meaning, the concept can be included in the ideal meaning and the

¹ Husserl claims in *Formal and transcendental logic* (Husserl 1969: 245) that Brentano does not recognize the synthetic activity proper to consciousness, since he admits the intentional analysis of the empirical ego and endorses an atomistic study of the nature of experience. This remark harks back to the Adornian critique on Husserl's study of intentionality in his degree thesis (Adorno 1973a: 50-2). According to Adorno, Husserl promotes a study of intentional acts that aims solely at correlating acts of consciousness to noematic actualities.

intentio obliqua can retain objective knowledge: this feature, which is common both to the concept and to the rational facet of artistic formation, is mediated by subjectivity and by the second reflection according to the intertwinement between mimesis, which is a qualifying feature contrasting with the rational one and denoting the expression of universality by the concretion of artwork, and the determination of sense, which is a transitive feature related to linguistic expression (Di Giacomo 2005: 107-12; Noppen 2017: 94-8; Tiedemann 1985: 18-22). The objectivity of the artwork demands distinctive mediation because the subject is aware of the correlation between the peculiar core of artworks and the changing modes of conceptual grasping.

The progressive core of Husserl's doctrine is reckoned by Adorno as the proximal identification of objective content and subjective recognition: if the leaning of consciousness over the object were acknowledged, the conceptual dithering of discursive knowledge would be recognized accordingly. As a result, the reductive feature of epistemology ties up with the artistic field, wherein the intertwinement between the constraint on the form put by the elements of reality and the universal side of spontaneity binding them to a definite outline arises. Moreover, the same relationship provides the distinction between the subjective side of the experience and the subjective facet within mediated objectivity, that ought to be further split into the first reflection including immanent analysis, which is a method whereby the logic of artwork shaping copes with the *principium individuationis* signified by the autonomy of the artwork and tackled by the aesthetic experience accounting for the configuration of the form, and the second reflection (Farina 2018: 181-92; Hohendahl 2013: 11-4; Singh 2017: 33-5, 37-40; Tavani 2019b: 94-102; Zuidervaat 1991: 251-4). The first (observing subjectivity; Adorno 1997: 164-5; Hohendahl 2013: 123-6) is directed towards objectivity itself (aesthetic feeling), the second stands for the necessary effort of spontaneity, which for Adorno is credited with the burden of aesthetics in Kant's *Critique of the power of judgment*, wherein discursive logic acts as the pattern of the aesthetic subject-object relationship.

The second reflection endorses immediacy through the intuition of objectivity by dismissing its outcome with the awareness of the heterogeneous character of the thing. Hence, Adorno does not subscribe to the desideratum of intuitivism whilst he acknowledges its piece of truth (Adorno 1982: 45-7; Adorno 1997: 96), that is an aconceptual concept of what challenges discursive knowledge (Adorno 1982: 169; Maurizi 2004: 163-6; Moravia 2004: 31-6; Wolff 2006: 567-9). Here it lies the reason for

which Adorno indicts Husserl for only concerning himself with inner historicity (Adorno 1986b: 91-3) since he conflates the typical essential process of discursive knowledge and its development (Adorno 1982: 131-2).

4. *Foundation of sense: the aesthetic subject*

Although the modification of syntactical forms implies the material syntax, wherein the persistence of sense is related to a material substrate, Husserl's thought latches onto the historicity of judgment. According to Adorno, the genetic standpoint should be extended to the subject/object relationship in its entirety. The portrayal of thought as temporal change echoes the historical substrate rooted in the structure of thought: the history of thought develops along with its content, thus retrieving the conception of the ego as world remnant (Adorno 1998b: 508-10; Gordon 2016: 64-7, 72-3). What has the character of objectivity as it is before consciousness is outlined according to the sense-bestowal modality of consciousness: the criticism of sense establish that the soul is the objectification of the transcendental ego as the foundation of the eidetic possibilities of experience, whose framework resembles the infinite givenness of the object of the natural world (Adorno 1973c: 276-7; Adorno 1984b: 103-5; Adorno 2018: 351-3; Lauro 2007: 91-3). Thus, the spiritual experience is the leaning over the givenness of the phenomenon, insofar as it symbolizes, at the same time, the commitment to a philosophy of immanence and to the conceptual mediation of the representation of the object by subjective reception (Giannopoulos 2019: 58-61; Lauro 2008: 20-2; Lauro 2014: 160-3; Römer 2012: 73-5; Tengelyi 2012: 58-9). The task turns out to be the description of the historical genesis of meaning, as the non-conceptual, in contrast to what in the identification mood of the conceptual relies on the reifying stage of thought. The descriptive intention switches to the recognition of the original objectivity, since the static regard to each concept turns into the dynamic conception of its history, as what attains identity through its change. The historicity of genetic analysis is synchronic as it associates specific behaviour to the dynamic value of the relationship with the object. As for Husserl, the noteworthy trait of the life of consciousness sets up the original constitution of the *raison d'être*, since the genetic standpoint within the primordial sphere of the ego implies the transcendental foundation of sense. Adorno recovers the outline of this argument – without, of course, being committed to the search for the original sphere of meaning – to the extent that

the dynamic facet of experience is retrieved by the subjective facet of the constitution of the form (Adorno 1973b: 54; Czernin 2017: 169-70; Desideri 2016: 132-7). The aesthetic subject pursues the form and enacts the unity of the artwork as its concretion, for it is enhanced by what Adorno defines the “sense of form” (Adorno 1997: 114-115, 146). This phrase chimes in with the inwardness of the conceptual feature retrievable in the spiritual facet of construction; it does justice to objectivity through immanent analysis, namely the subjective plunging into the artwork, which discloses the subjective mediations crystallized in its moulded form rather than making a reflection *about* the artwork (Di Giacomo 2004: 106-12; Ross 2015: 74-6). Then, it relapses in the so-called “second reflection”, which “restores naïveté in the relation of content to the first reflection” (Adorno 1997: 27), thus recognizing the feature of form within the relevance of content.

The form is mediated by the first reflection of the thing itself as unobstructed aseity; the objective content of the thing is regarded by the form as the material of the artwork, but it is primarily the universal character of mimesis. So, the naïveté of the artwork is its immediacy translating universality into appearance and restoring the aseity of things by an overt unity (which harks back to natural beauty; Di Giacomo 2013: 242-6; Marino, Matteucci 2016: 24-39; Matteucci 2012b: 143-6, 158-61), thereby providing what is immune to reflection (as Adorno puts it, “to produce the blind aesthetically”; Adorno 1997: 114-5). If naïveté is the reconfiguration of intuitability in the experience of the artwork, it can be also argued that an analogous to intuition may be included in the spiritual mediation of the existence of artworks. On the one hand, the existence of artwork puts forth intuitability as the first reflection managed by the form itself, namely a mediation between mimesis and spiritual conceptuality; on the other hand, the second reflection, as understanding-based re-enactment, restores the immediacy of the objectivity of the meant as it has been experienced by the qualitative mimesis detecting the conceptual flaws that contend with the striving for expression of the mimetic impulses led by objectivity. The awareness of the conceptual mediation within the concretion of artwork can be gathered by the immediacy of mimesis, which according to Adorno is conveyed by the conception of spiritual experience, a singular intertwining of spirituality and mimesis.

Mimesis is the unavoidable foil of the spiritual facet because it suits the task of objectivity by managing to recover the multi-faceted *aporiae*

of the need for expression. Thus, the spiritual facet must retain the universal feature of *intentio obliqua* within the constraint of individuality: this aim is already encompassed by mimesis since it can mean beyond itself, namely the background of every act of *intentio*, by only gazing at objectivity. According to an Adornian viewpoint, a two-edged perspective can be detected (Adorno 2002: 286): Husserl does not overwhelm the distinction between *intentio recta* and *intentio obliqua*, that are correspondingly related with each other but not sharply distinguished insofar as Husserl acknowledges the immediate leaning over the sense of judgement whilst he dims it out with the eidetic view and circumscribes it to the regional scopes of Being. The subjective mediation is imbued with absolute import, whereas the mingling of *intentio recta* and *obliqua* should represent the revelation of the inner historicity of conceptual knowledge (Adorno 2002: 282-4, 340). As a result, the spontaneity of the artist restores the chief feature of mimesis by converting the impulses of the material in a derived form of rational accomplishment (what Adorno means by “construction”), under the constraint of objective aseity (Desideri 2002: 86-9; Di Giacomo 2005: 101-4; Di Giacomo 2008: 201-6; Di Giacomo 2016: 85-94; Di Lorenzo Ajello 2001: 154-60; Farina 2019: 20-6; Marino, Matteucci 2016: 39-42; Moravia 2004: 29-31; Tavani 2010: 171-3; Tavani 2012: 153-66). Conversely, the immanent analysis entailed by experience enhances the mimetic facet of spontaneity recovering its *outwardness*, and the second reflection purported by spiritual experience re-enacts the process of the concretion of artwork by means of the relation between technical tools and the unity of form, thus improving the *inwardness* of spontaneity.

The concern with subjective re-enactment deserves being considered properly: Adorno dwells indeed upon it in various writings but the sketch of the differences between Valéry and Proust in the essay *Valéry Proust Museum* may serve as an example. By this dichotomy, the intertwining of mimesis and spirituality can be detected, albeit their constitutive difference. If Valéry complains about the degenerated situation of art in museums, Proust, on the contrary, outlines a comprehensive description of the artistic experience by acknowledging the free involvement in the experience of the artwork (Farina 2018: 177-8). Adorno relates their conceptions to divergent backgrounds, namely the expertise, for Valéry, and the amateurish experience, for Proust. The ultimate judgment about these experiences relies on the tension retrievable in the abyss of the reifying mood of art and in the infinite variety of the historical enjoyment of artworks.

Further, the concern with the objectivity of the artwork is recovered as it is devised into its composition and develops into the gaze of immediacy, which results in the analysis of the meaning of the artwork so as to scrutinize what exceeds its singularity (Adorno 1981: 179; Adorno 1991: 100; Desideri 2002: 160-8; Desideri 2016: 127-30; Matteucci 2012a: 174-7; Valentini 2019: 85-9). Valéry develops a conception of the first reflection according to which the form itself reflects upon its non-aesthetic meaning: he discovers a sense of form increased by the rationalist inspection of the historical changing of aesthetic conventions that turns into the experience of artwork which relinquishes into its non-aesthetic meaning. Proust's conception, instead, stands for a second naïveté, which is sustained by the historical development of the work, which is not embraced by the metaphysical *intentio* or by a definite message that the artwork should convey (Adorno 1981: 180; Matteucci 2017: 49-53). The second naïveté is the mimetic re-enactment which is tied to the spiritual experience as the awareness of what is consistent with the judgmental process of knowledge (see §5).

This last framework is retrieved by what Adorno defines as the spiritual experience, i.e. the subjective concurrence of the concretion of the artwork, whereby the muteness of artwork, boosted by the cultural place of the museum, can be broken through, thus revealing its genetical process of configuration. Spiritual experience entails the concern with immediate givenness and stands for a philosophy of immanence, and, concurrently, for the conceptual mediation of the objective representation. It focuses not only on the thingly feature implied by the concept but also detects the historical genesis of meaning along with what withstands the identifying thought, i.e. the non-conceptual. It overlaps with the immanent analysis recovering the particular within the inspection of the inner normativity of the artwork (Adorno 1997: 180; Desideri 2005: 127-31; Di Lorenzo Ajello 2004: 40-1, 47-51; Farina 2018: 192-205; Lauro 1994: 87-92, 119-26; Scutari 2018: 154-6). Further, the objectivity revealed by the aseity of artworks may be unveiled by the close inspection to the immanent normativity of artworks. Owing to the objective constraint on the spiritual experience, spontaneity as the linchpin of epistemology earns a new layer of relation with the demands of subjectivity (Adorno 1998a: 110-1, 140; Adorno 2008: 93; Foster 2007: 91-4). What Adorno means by spontaneity is conceived as the dynamic mutuality between subject and object rather than a grounding relationship, i.e. a hierarchy of ontological layers (Adorno 1986b: 75-6); in this respect, Adorno's conception of spon-

taneity recovers and pursues the genetic phenomenology of Husserl further than he provides since the relation of judgment to its founding categories about formal analytics is still retained by Husserlian thought. The remark made by Adorno (1982: 35) on the immanent influence of the transcendental features of consciousness may agree with *Negative dialectics*, wherein the subjective reflection exemplified by the immanent cognizance of intellectual abilities is joined to an antidote, that is the dialectical leaning over the object (see Adorno 1973b: 43-4). As a result, the spiritual experience restores the subject/object relationship: the so-called continuity of experience through the medium of reflection aims to cope with idealistic philosophy within the philosophy of immanence, which is signified in the spiritual continuum assessed by the concretion of artwork. Strikingly, Adorno agrees with Husserl's critique of sign theory by appraising the tension between the phenomenon and the concept under which it is grasped and construing it as the definition of epistemology (Adorno 1973c: 270; Adorno 2018: 344-5).

In the expressive mood of the artwork there reveals a fulfilling sense which lacks in the subjective involvement: the aporetic struggle for expression provided by the mimetic impulse within objectivity is without fulfilment, according to the spiritual process, but it is yet recognized by the spiritual experience. This framework harks back to spontaneity as Adorno moulds it under the Hegelian influence with the "freedom toward the object" (Gutiérrez Pozo 2005: 295-305; Gutiérrez Pozo 2013: 10-6; Ruschi 1990: 91-102; Vinci 2004: 64-9). As a result, the dynamic portrait of aesthetic theory results in objectivism, according to which the search for essence turns into the expression of the relationship between the recognition of conceptual universality and its outcome through the mimetic impulse (Adorno 1982: 216). The subject/object relationship fosters the framework of the objective original mode of givenness: hence, the transcendence proper to the artistic remnant does not lead up to tautology, but to the process existing between the formal unity of the artwork and the subjective experience of the immanence of mediation. Consequently, subjectivity is the pivotal requirement, albeit its mediated nature, of the detection of aseity.

5. Spiritual experience and mimesis

This kind of revelation turns out to be the unmediated reading of the concealed status of the artwork (Adorno 1997: 323; Di Giacomo 2010: 76-8;

Sakoparnig 2015: 171-3; Zuidervaart 1991: 183-6). Since the concept attempting to grasp the content means beyond itself, only about otherness can the concept be included in the mingling between the spiritual experience, qualifying as *intentio obliqua*, and mimesis (Adorno 1973b: 52; Fronzi 2016: 191-8; Miller 2009: 116-9; Tengelyi 2012: 54-6); besides, essence signifies the turn between the subject and the freedom toward the object. By recognizing the truthful meaning of detail (Czernin 2017: 166-8; Marino 2019b: 157-60; Payot 2018: 121-7; Tavani 2019a: 285-7; Valentini 2019: 83-5)², spiritual experience, in compliance with the critically unfolded spontaneity, unveils the accomplishment of artwork within the subjective mediation of the objective appearance disclosed by mimesis, i.e. the linchpin of the disclosure of sense genesis. In so doing, mimesis encompasses the expression of objectivity within the aesthetically mediated knowledge envisaged by the subject. The intertwinement between the spontaneity revealed by the mimetic impulse of the experience of the artwork and the one disclosed by the artist within the construction of form resembles the relationship between immanent analysis and spontaneity proper to discursive knowledge, critically regarded by Adorno as aesthetically mediated.

This does not involve identifying appearance and essence but reckoning appearance as the meaning of truth; the resemblance of appearance and essence is established insofar as the genetic standpoint inheres in the sense immanent to the intentional gaze. Through this interpretation of ontological objectivity, Husserl tackles the critique on the division of genesis and validity, whose first hint has been prompted from the idealistic phase of phenomenology, that is from the transcendental sphere of meanings; they are now recognized in their mutual dependence. It is worth comparing Husserl's turn towards sense genesis with the notorious passage from *Negative dialectics*, wherein Adorno is concerned with "the fulfilling concurrence in the judgment" (Adorno 1973b: 64; Adorno 1986b: 76-8; Adorno 1993: 145; Marino 2019b: 50-3), which implies that the active (conceptuality) and passive (intuitability) facets of comprehensive reasoning pursuing the dithering of the object re-enact the aesthetic

² The form earns a new status by recovering the individual along with the accomplishment of mimetic intuitability. Therefore, intentionality should be conceived as the understanding of the immanent coherence of the artwork. The mimetic facet of spontaneity may be ascertained by the re-enactment of the artwork, that is "an objective experiential reenactment" (Adorno 1997: 121).

gaze at the unity of the artwork. In Husserlian terms, for Adorno, it is unviable to judge of truth and falsity without accomplishing the truth content involved in the unity of the artwork. The recovery of sense goes through its “filling”, i.e. the dialectic between intuitability and conceptuality. As a result, the distinction between active and passive sides blurs as they are indistinguishable parts of a unique act of the aesthetic subject, that is the spiritual experience (Adorno 2001: 220; Marino 2015: 84-90; Marino 2017: 82-5; Payot 2018: 97-101; Römer 2012: 78-80; Tavani 2019a: 289-93). The background of immanent analysis is renewed by spiritual experience. As Adorno writes:

The limit of immanent critique is that the law of the immanent context is ultimately one with the delusion that has to be overcome. Yet that instant – truly the first qualitative leap – comments solely in the performance of immanent dialectics, which tends to transcend itself in a motion not at all unlike the passage from Platonic dialectics to the ideas, which “are in-themselves”. If it became totally conclusive, dialectics would be the totality that goes back to the identity principle. (Adorno 1973b: 182)

The spontaneity bestowed on the aesthetic subject results in the spiritual and mimetic features, that, as we have seen thus far, are deeply intertwined (the comparison between the spontaneity conveyed by the mimetic impulse implied by the experience of artwork and the one included in the artist's work resembles that among the immanent experience of artwork and the spontaneity germane to epistemology). By conceiving their merging, that is by moulding the form and the required shaping process of the artwork, the peculiar essence of art as crystallized form may be envisaged. Essence results in the concurrence between the subject and the reception of the experience of artwork within the relinquishment of the subject, endorsed by the immanent analysis of artwork and the conceptual categories suitable to crystallized form. This feature springs from the unity of the concretion which empowers an essence conceived as spiritual mediation (Adorno 2001: 218; Di Giacomo 2004: 115-9; Fellmann 1989: 98-106; Foster 2007: 101-4; Tavani 1994: 37-40, 57-61; Tavani 2012: 51-69).

These remarks on essence indicate that art is a scope wherein the mimetic facet of a renewed *intentio obliqua* does duty for the irrational feature of intuition. Whereas Adorno's philosophical style betrays a peculiar mingling of presentation forms and dialectical leaning over otherness (Marino 2008: 30-5; Marino 2019a: 251-6), the reflection upon artworks and aesthetics resumes the same background as it draws on the intertwinement of conceptual knowledge and objective aseity. Accordingly,

mimesis encompasses the several ways of experiencing things as the development of the inner history of discursive knowledge in order to deploy the same history, thus developing a conception of artwork as an open form. Adorno sets forth a definite notion of immediacy only to point out the mingling of *intentio recta* and conceptual mediation (Adorno 2008: 116; Giannopoulos 2019: 48-51; Huhn 2016: 66-75; Ruschi 1990: 28-34; Tavani 2004: 165-72; Tavani 2005: 169-72; Tavani 2012: 128-42). Intuitivism, which calls forth naïveté, chimes in with the mimetic process gazing at the individual. Since the form expresses the individual, the subjective mimesis re-enacts the division between spirit and content and grasps what of the form is incommensurable. It is worth stating that mimesis is the way of spontaneous reception of what exceeds the mere form as a structure so as to reveal the form as what enhances the structure itself. The static analysis of concepts must contemplate them to break through their tightness and to reveal their dynamic genesis, thus recovering the kingpin of phenomenology. The primacy of an overall disclosing of universality is retrievable in the phenomenon as long as this universality is set forth in the prominence of the non-identical, which moulds epistemology as a whole due to the intertwinement of genesis and validity. With the label of *spontaneous receptivity* (Adorno 1982: 206-7; Adorno 1993: 7, 140; Adorno 2002: 282; Szilasi 1959: 115-9), Adorno glimpses at the dynamic, i.e. non-reified, facet of the judgement theory along with the retrieval of the validity of objective knowledge outside of the influence of the εἶδος ego. With this term, Adorno encompasses, on the one hand, the genetic interpretation of meaning (De Palma 2015: 201-6; Schweppenhäuser 2004: 131-40), and, on the other hand, acknowledges the quid pro quo between the one-sidedness of categorial intuition and the multifarious features of judgement.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparison with phenomenology does not lead up to the withdrawal of its import. Indeed, it may be qualified as a recovery: it is retrievable in the features that are dismissed by Husserl due to the pre-eminent framework within different theoretical facets, whereof the contrast/mutuality between active and passive genesis has been mainly considered. The relationship with phenomenology may be divided into the features that Husserl did not manage with or that he did not pursue and those that influenced Adorno directly. If we wanted to trace out the chief

feature retrieved by Adorno according to his conception of phenomenology, we could cite the influence of Husserl's phenomenology detectable in the growing import which Adorno attributes to the subject in epistemology. On the other hand, it seems that direct influence of Husserl's phenomenology on Adorno's insight might be devised in the mimetic experience of the aesthetic subject, in the backward development of genetic criticism, retrievable in the relationship between mimesis and conceptuality, and in the conception of a conceptual receptivity, which discovers its phenomenological object in the aseity of artwork akin to the givenness in person of the object. The backward development that genetic criticism attempts is, from an Adornian point of view, biased by the statement of an a priori theory of constitution, which flattens the syntactic matter of judgment within a conception of meaning that stiffens the relationship with the pre-predicative sphere of the ego under the compulsion of the eidetic variation and of the perception, through categorial intuition, of the *raison d'être* of the particular. The second reflection, on the one hand, which fosters the mediation of the expression of meaning in judgment, and the categorial character of *intentio*, on the other hand, featured, as it were, by aesthetic immediacy, can constitute the edges whereby the comparison with Husserl's philosophy enriches Adorno's aesthetic thought.

The first outcome of this framework results from the recovery of appearances conceived not as outstanding ideas but as sense settling: it is worth noting that "appearance" is understood not as deceiving but as revealing the essence of things. In this regard, the concern with individuality, namely the outcome of the genetic facet of Husserl's phenomenology, and with the renewed subject/object dialectic, which inheres both in the Husserlian genetic critique of sense and in the Adornian aconceptuality of the concept, makes sure that the monadic character of the artwork allows to counterpoint reality. Thus, the concretion means more than the universal signifies, but the aesthetic subject concurrently grasps in the form the change occurred due to the spiritual experience signified by spontaneity, thereby crystallizing the genetic process and originating an open form. According to Adorno, the disclosure of the subjective effort to break into the muteness of the artwork and to reveal the composition of the image settles both the coherence and the genesis of its material. The image arranges the ensemble of conceptual knowledge due to the experience of the objective essence in the context of the never-ending apprehension of significance experienced by the subject. According to this perspective, the artwork makes palpable the objectivity of meaning

into the so-called “construction”, the fulcrum of the subjective involvement, thus recognizing the same core of meaning conveyed by the reference to the content involved by the crystallized form. Through this dynamic pattern, unfolds the attempt to discern, through the spiritual experience, the history settled into the artwork in the appearance of what appears to be shaped.

From this framework, the second feature joining aesthetic theory and phenomenology arises, i.e. the constitutive likeness of subjective instances and objective image: by the form of the artwork and even in the experience of it, the subject is aware of what is compelled by the empirical material that takes part to the unity – involved also in the conception of the meaning of artwork as the contrast between reality and image – and of what exceeds the singleness of the image as long as it reaches the details that overwhelm the rough *intentio recta*. Overall, a comprehension of universal knowledge undergoes in the depths of an all-embracing perspective tangled in empirical bounds. Where noesis needs to take place, it must reveal itself in the appearance and disclose objective essence in the domain of singularity, which can be conceived only if universality does not constrain the detail.

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