

**Questioning the Essence of Literature: A
Deconstructive Reading of Ortega Y Gasset's and
Mikel Dufrenne's Phenomenological Investigations
of the Ideal Literary Object**

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Abstract

Phenomenology offers a presuppositionless methodology for investigating phenomena which does not determine their nature from a metaphysical, sociological or psychological standpoint but lets them stand on their own. It, therefore, functions as the eidetic science which determines the essences of phenomena and provides the ground on which theories which agree with their nature can be established. Through tracing José Ortega Y Gasset's and Mikel Dufrenne's static and genetic phenomenological investigations of literature, this article offers a deconstructive reading of their accounts. Although Jacques Derrida has also worked on a phenomenological investigation of literature, he has not been able to reach similar conclusions. The reason is that his investigation of the ideal literary object has led him to examine the metaphysical presupposition of the presumably presuppositionless method and how it controls Husserlian phenomenology. The present study extends Derrida's findings to other phenomenological investigations and shows how their metaphysical presupposition determines the results they reach in advance.

Keywords: Derrida, Deconstruction, Phenomenology, Husserl, Ortega Y Gasset, Dufrenne, Formalism, New Criticism

مساءلة جوهر الأدب:

قراءة تفكيكية لأبحاث أورتيجا إي جاسيت وميكل ديفرن الفينومينولوجية في موضوع الأدب المثالي

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مستخلص

يعد تقديم منهج بحثي لتحديد طبيعة الظواهر والوقوف على جوهرها دون افتراضات مسبقة عن تلك الطبيعة الإسهام الرئيس للفينومينولوجيا في مجال العلوم الإنسانية. وتسعى الفينومينولوجيا بهذا لإرساء علم ماهوي ترتكز عليه كل العلوم والنظريات التي تدرس تلك الظواهر. أي أن الفينومينولوجيا علم تأسيسي ولهذا يجب أن يركز على طبيعة الظواهر وحسب دون تحديدها سلفا من أي منظور ميتافيزيقي أو اجتماعي أو فلسفي أو نفسي. قدم أورتيجا إي جاست وميكل ديفرن أبحاثهما الفينومينولوجية الرامية للوقوف على جوهر الأدب دون تحديده سلفا بأي افتراضات نظرية في هذا الإطار. إلا أن التزام كل منهما في مشروعه بطبيعة المنهج البحثي أدى إلى تجاهلهما لطبيعة الظاهرة المدروسة وعدم تحقيق القدر الكافي من الالتزام بوصف الظاهرة دون افتراضات مسبقة. تقدم هذه الدراسة قراءة تفكيكية لأبحاث أورتيجا إي جاست وديفرن الفينومينولوجية. وتسعى من وراء ذلك إلى شرح طبيعة الظاهرة الأدبية وإيضاح الافتراض المسبق الذي يحكم المنهج بشكل غير واع والذي أدى لوصولهما للنتائج التي وصلوا إليها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ديريدا، التفكيكية، الفينومينولوجيا، هوسرل، أورتيجا إي

جاست، ديفرن، الشكلية، النقد الجديد.

“Nothing I do would be possible without the discipline of phenomenology, without the practice of eidetic and transcendental reduction, without the attention given to the meaning of phenomenality, and so on.”
(Derrida, *Paper Machine* 143)

Under the supervision of Jean Hyppolite, Jacques Derrida, in 1957, embarked on his first PhD project entitled “The Ideality of the Literary Object” (Derrida, *Thesis* 36). Although the project has never been finished, this choice marks the beginning of a life-long preoccupation with phenomenology in general and Husserl in particular. It also shows interest in literature which he describes as his “most constant interest” that comes even before his interest in philosophy. This life-long interest “has been directed towards literature, towards that writing which is called literary” (37). Derrida indicates that the attempt to answer the question “what is literature?” has led him to reexamine the whole phenomenological project because it disturbs its guiding question “what is?” (37). The phenomenological investigation of literature, of the ideal literary object, of literariness has not been finished not due to lack of rigor in the method but because the nature of the object investigated disturbs the method of investigation. Deconstruction does not take leave of phenomenology but pursues its goal as a “rigorous science” with more rigor and fidelity to the phenomenon investigated until it shows the unattainability of the goal for which the method has been designed in the first place (Husserl, *PCP* 71). Born out of this encounter between phenomenology and literature, deconstruction does not move beyond the transcendental space or overcome it for the desire to move beyond and start over is itself metaphysical (Norris 15). Deconstruction does not start a different discourse (Evink 3). It occupies the same space and works deconstructively within it (Derrida, *Grammatology* 24).

The goal and promise of phenomenology is to offer a neutral method for investigating phenomena without presuppositions.

[W]ith the radicalism belonging to the essence of genuine philosophical science we accept nothing given in advance, allow nothing traditional to pass as a beginning, or ourselves to be dazzled by any names however great, but rather seek to attain the beginnings in a free dedication to the problems themselves and to the demands stemming from them (Husserl, *PCP* 145–46).

The phenomenological method does not start from a certain theory and, therefore, does not determine the nature of phenomena from an *a priori* theoretical perspective. Each philosophical or literary theory determines the nature of literature according to its presuppositions. In Kantian aesthetics, literature, and art in general, should produce harmony in order to induce mental pleasure. It is determined as a beautiful object by the need to harmonize the demands of pure and practical reasons. In the Hegelian system, literature is an expression of the *Geist* or the collective human consciousness and manifests it at a certain stage of its development. In traditional Marxism, it is part of the upper structure which, like other parts, reflects the infrastructure. In Freudian psychoanalysis, it is expression of the individual or social subconscious. The nature of literature is determined in advance by the system of thought into which it is absorbed and from which it is interpreted. It is approached as an epiphenomenon or a byproduct of a larger system. Phenomenology, by contrast, suspends all theories since they belong either to a metaphysical system or to the natural attitude which it seeks to transcend into the phenomenological transcendental sphere (Moran 11-2). The problem with the natural attitude is that our everyday engagement with objects in ordinary experience is distorted by our habitual attitude, popular opinion and scientific, philosophical and psychological theories (11). Theory of whatever kind is still directed towards the object as it is encountered in the natural attitude. Therefore, all our assumptions about the world as well as any theory based on the nature of the object as we encounter it in the natural

attitude must be suspended. Phenomenology seeks to purify consciousness and experience in order to ground knowledge and science in the nature of things as they show themselves to intuition without distortion. It seeks to go “back to the things themselves” in order to create an eidetic science or a science of essences (Husserl, *LI* 168). Return to the things themselves frees knowledge of all theoretical attitudes and anything that does not belong to the essence of things. This return to the essence as it shows itself in eidetic intuition or essential insight, *Wesensschau*, is what Husserl calls in *Ideas I* “the principle of all principles” (Husserl, *Ideas I* 44). When knowledge is established in the essences of things, it is true, certain, rational and free of theoretical blur.

Due to methodological rigor, phenomenological investigations of literature manage to suspend all its irrelevant and contingent aspects and to reach the essence or the ideal object of the phenomenon under investigation. Nevertheless, the ideal object turns out to harbor its own contradictions in a manner which destabilizes the phenomenological concept of essence itself. Deconstruction is born out of this encounter. It does not regress behind the transcendental sphere or abandon the phenomenological pursuit of essence but pursues it with more rigor until it destabilizes itself.

Derrida is not the only philosopher to have started a phenomenological investigation of literature. He has been preceded by José Ortega Y Gasset (1883 – 1955) and Mikel Dufrenne (1910 – 1995). This article offers deconstructive readings of their phenomenological accounts of literature in order to show how the essence of the phenomenon under investigation deconstructs the phenomenological concept of essence. This does not lead to the conclusion that phenomenological methodology and the results gained through the investigations should be abandoned, for in such a case one would miss the phenomenon itself for something else. It means that its goal should be pursued with more rigor and “fidelity” to the phenomenon until the presumed essence deconstructs itself (Derrida, *Paper Machine* 115). This leads to a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon itself, of essence in general and of

literature in particular. Put differently, this article examines Ortega Y Gasset's and Dufrenne's investigations of the ideal literary object to explain the reason behind the unfeasibility of the task, the reason why Derrida has never finished his first PhD project and how deconstruction has been born out of this encounter between phenomenology and literature, the repercussions of which have had impact on all fields of phenomenological research and the humanities in general.

In the first part, the article sketches the phenomenological methodology introduced by Edmund Husserl in *Ideas I* which is regarded as the most developed version he has introduced (Brainard 22). Although Husserl himself has not offered a phenomenological investigation of literature, his writings on image consciousness and hints at the similarity between the phenomenological method and the aesthetic approach to literature in his "Letter to Hofmannsthal" may help philosophers and critics start an investigation into the essence of literature. In the second, it traces Ortega Y Gasset's phenomenological investigation into this essence along the phenomenological methodological procedures. Ortega Y Gasset comes to the point where the pure essence shows its contradictoriness yet refuses to consider its implications. In the third part, the article follows Dufrenne's investigations of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience and the ideal literary object in order to show the harmony, or rather mutual determination, of the noema and the noesis in the transcendental sphere and how this determination ends up in self-contradiction. The result is a more nuanced understanding of the literary object and, consequently, of the internal dynamics of the work of art. Since phenomenology is an eidetic science which determines the nature and essence of phenomena, this different understanding poses challenge to formalist literary theories and the other approaches which take the unity and neutrality of form for granted. This should lead to a deconstructive understanding of the operation of form in literature. It also leads to a necessary distinction between deconstruction and the literary formalism into which it has been absorbed.

I) The Phenomenological Method:

One of Husserl's main contributions is the introduction of a new view of consciousness, partially adapted from Franz Brentano, as intentionality or directedness rather than an entity with a fixed structure. This means that consciousness is always consciousness of something not an entity in itself. One is always aware of something even if it is an imaginary object or when one is hallucinating. Consciousness does not exist in itself; it is a relation even when there is no actual object to be aware of. This means that intentionality is not relation to objects but is the nature of consciousness *per se*. Explaining consciousness by one of its activities, Heidegger, Husserl's disciple, writes: "[a]s perception, it is intrinsically intentional, regardless of whether the perceived is in reality on hand or not" (*HCT* 31). Consciousness, hence, is an activity, an act of intending whether the intended object is actually on hand or imagined. As an activity rather than a fixed entity, it can be modified to intend phenomena in different ways. The activity of consciousness, for instance, can be modified from perception of factual objects to remembrance of phenomena or events which no longer exist.

Man exists in the natural attitude where all objects in the world are real in the sense that they exist in space and time. These objects are transcendent; they exist outside consciousness and have inexhaustible features. Transcendent objects have a large number of inessential features which may be confused for the essential. A circle may be drawn in chalk, lead, ink or imagined. A work of art, for instance, may have characters, themes, motifs, plot, subplots, rhyme and rhythm. While such features may be essential to some artworks, they are not so for others. The goal of phenomenology is to reach the essence of phenomena free of any accidental or non-essential features that may happen to belong to an individual object.

As the sphere of "actional living," the natural attitude is the one in which we exist most of the time (Brainard 59). Consequently, it has priority over any other attitude and remains the predominant one. Everything in this attitude has the character of "there" or "on hand"

(60). Yet in this attitude one is not aware of numbers and essences as well as other phenomena which do not have a factual character. These phenomena do not have factual existence and, hence, are not real. Yet they are not unreal. They are more essential than real objects and can, therefore, be said to have a different mode of existence which Husserl calls “irreal” (36). Since consciousness is intentionality or activity, it can be modified to intend these phenomena. One can exercise such modification in the natural attitude when he remembers or imagines an object or an activity. Husserl shows that it is not only possible but also necessary to modify consciousness to the phenomenological attitude since it is the way to reach the essences of phenomena and create a rational life established on these essences.

Having established the “attitudinal diversity of consciousness,” Husserl seeks to effect a change of direction from the natural attitude to the transcendental sphere (62). This modification is so revolutionary that it requires nothing less than neutralizing the whole world by suspending belief in it. It is done through *epoché* or “bracketing” which switches off the natural attitude or brackets out any reference to the world. As the first of three reductions seeking to reach the essence of phenomena and describe the transcendental structures corresponding to them, *epoché* is refraining from or suspension of judgment on the object as it exists in its worldly spatiotemporal existence. The goal is to suspend our natural habits of thinking about the world in order to move from the accidental to the essential, from the contingent to the necessary, ultimately seeking to overcome the investigated individual object present here and now into its essence which is shared by all objects of the same nature. As a modification of consciousness, the *epoché* seeks to move from the natural attitude in which objects appear confused with others and display many inessential features to the purified transcendental phenomenological attitude in which phenomena manifest their pure essences. After the *epoché*, what remains is the image of the object as it manifests itself to consciousness. The return to the things themselves requires switching off theories since they refer to objects as they exist in the world (48-9). The early Marxist theory of

reflection, for instance, which takes the work to be part of the upper structure *directly* reflecting the lower structure of society, a vision of the female characters in a work as representatives of women in the society which produces the work and the view of a native character as representative of colonized subjects in society are instances of what Husserl calls the natural attitude. They make confirmations about the artwork or one part of it which relate it *directly* to the world without considering its essence. The phenomenological objection to theory does not rule it out completely. It only renounces its precedence over the thing itself. When the essence of a given phenomenon is properly determined, theories established on this essence or which properly correspond to it can be accepted. Those which are not harmonious with the nature of the phenomenon they purport to explain must be excluded.

After the *epoché*, reference, whether it takes the form of affirmation or negation, can no longer be made to the world or to an object existing in it but merely to the image of the phenomenon as it appears in consciousness. *Epoché*, hence, reduces transcendence to immanence. What is judged is no longer a contingent object but a stable phenomenon. Analysis should be directed towards the phenomena intended and perceived by consciousness and the acts of intending these phenomena regardless of actual objects in the natural attitude. Having freed consciousness of the contingency of the natural attitude, eidetic reduction comes at this stage in order to zero in on the essence of phenomena. The goal of phenomenology is to establish an eidetic science, a science of essences. It is the nature of consciousness to be intentional or directed towards objects and, therefore, it is constantly intuiting them. Since the entities one encounters in the natural attitude are physical objects, the kind of intuition predominant in this attitude is perception. Through another modification of consciousness, a change is effected from perception to “intuition directed toward eidos or essences ... [It is] eidetic intuition or essential insight (*Wesensschau*)” (Føllesdal 109). The image that appears to consciousness in this purified state is the noema which is not inexhaustible like the transcendent object in the world. As the logical meaningful structure of the intended

phenomenon, it contains the essence or the essential features of the object.

Just as it is the nature of objects to reveal themselves to consciousness, it is their nature to reveal their essences or essential structures to eidetic intuition when they are freed of the contingent features which may belong to any particular object. Eidetic reduction, the second kind, reaches from “the experience of a particular concrete object to the experience of an eidos” (109). The phenomenon is imagined in all its different forms until its constant and inalienable structure is intuited. Through this method of “free variation,” the essence of the phenomenon manifests itself to the investigating consciousness as the invariable (Sousa 92). This is done through a thought experiment in which one mentally replaces one property or element of the noema and reimagines it. If it remains the same, the replaced element is not essential. (Smith 19; Wiltsche 351). The thought experiment of eidetic variation is repeated until all the inessential elements are excluded. What remains is the essence; that which, if excluded, the phenomenon would not be what it is, that without which a given phenomenon would not be the same. Since the “essence of an individual is a stock of essential predicables that constitute its what” (*Was*), this essence (*Wesen*) belongs to all species of the same genus (Carta 44). It is the structure of ideal possibility that belongs to all individual cases of the phenomenon (34).

In eidetic reduction, the goal is to investigate and describe the eidos or the essence of the phenomenon which is described as it appears to consciousness. The analytic methodology employed to describe essences is static in the sense that it describes the phenomenon as it appears to consciousness in the present time. Husserl introduces another kind of descriptive methodology which is the genetic method that focuses on the becoming of the phenomenon. It traces the historical constitution of the phenomenon up to its final form (Sousa 92-4). Since this developmental constitution leads up to the essence of the phenomenon, the genetic

method is guided by and remains subordinate to static analysis (Brainard 2).

The ultimate goal of the phenomenological project is to establish knowledge and all phenomena in their essences, creating, thereby, a rational life. This can be done only if the essence of every phenomenon becomes clear and certain which is the goal served by the phenomenological method. The methodological guarantee of certainty rests on the presence of essence to intuition, of sense to consciousness. Without presence, there is neither intuition of essence nor guarantee of the certitude of knowledge. “What does the value of primordial presence to intuition as source of sense and evidence, as the *a priori* of *a prioris*, signify?” (Derrida, *SP* 53). It defines, as Husserl conceives of it, “the very element of philosophical thought, it is *evidence* itself, conscious thought itself, it governs every possible concept of truth and sense” (62). Without the presence of essence to consciousness, which Husserl regards as the principle governing all other principles, not only would phenomena lack definite forms but their sense and the idea of certainty would be unattainable.

The third reduction is the phenomenological transcendental reduction which seeks to “analyze the correlational interdependence between specific structures of subjectivity and specific modes of appearance or givenness” (Gallagher and Zahavi 27). In contradistinction to the word ‘transcendent’ which, in phenomenological terminology, means existing outside consciousness, transcendental refers to those hidden or a priori conditions which make a certain experience possible; i.e. conditions of possibility. After the eidos or the essence of the phenomenon reveals itself to eidetic intuition, the investigator analyzes the noema and the act of consciousness corresponding to it, the noesis, which is the way it is experienced by consciousness, in order to understand how consciousness experiences and structures the meanings of experienced phenomena. “The noeses are the structuring experiences, those that give structure, or meaning, to the act. While the noema is the meaning *given* in an act, the noesis is the meaning-

giving element in the act” (Føllesdal 108). The phenomenological transcendental reduction reduces the object in order to discover the meaningful logical structure of the noema and to reflect on the structure of the noetic experiences which correspond to it. It does not seek to describe individual or idiosyncratic structures of experience but rather the invariant ones which logically correspond to the intended noema. The meaningful structure of lived experience is intuited by consciousness and expressed in linguistic expression (Detmer 8). Both knowledge and language are, hence, founded on the pure essences of phenomena as they are given in experience (18). As eidetic science, phenomenology provides the secure ground on which all life, knowledge and sciences should be established.

II) Pure Art: Investigating the Aesthetic Object in Ortega Y Gasset:

Husserl’s “Letter to Hofmannsthal” and analysis of image consciousness in *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory* furnish some guidelines to the phenomenological description of the ideal literary object. Husserl finds similarity between the attitude which art forces on us and that demanded by the phenomenological methodology. “The more of the existential world that resounds or is brought to attention, and the more the work of art demands an existential attitude of us out of itself (for instance a naturalistic sensuous appearance: the natural truth of photography), the less aesthetically pure the work is” (Husserl, “Letter” 2). The intuition of the pure work of art demands a modification of consciousness to a mode different from the existential engagement dominant in the natural attitude. Both the “phenomenological method” and “the intuition of the purely aesthetic work of art” demand “a strict suspension of all existential attitudes.” Intuiting the pure work of art requires, “forces us into” to use Husserl’s words, a modification of consciousness that disentangles it from the natural attitude just like the departure required for the entry into the phenomenological intuition of essence. In both cases, the natural existential mode of consciousness towards objects has to be suspended, bracketed out or put under *epoché*, in order for the essence of a given phenomenon to

reveal itself. “Phenomenological intuiting is thus closely related to the aesthetic intuiting in ‘pure’ art ... The *artist*, who ‘observes’ the world in order to gain ‘knowledge’ of nature ... relates to it in a similar way as the phenomenologist” (2). Lack of existential engagement is a necessary prerequisite for pure essences to manifest themselves. The difference, of course, is that the artist does not attempt to grasp the meaning of phenomena in concepts to establish knowledge on a secure basis as the phenomenologist does but rather portrays his intuitions in artistic forms.

It is, perhaps, from this suspension of the natural attitude that Ortega Y Gasset takes his clue to the intuition of the pure essence of literature. In *The Dehumanization of Art*, he pictures four people present at the death of a public figure to indicate the different levels of existential engagement and distinguish the attitude of the artist from the natural attitude. The wife of the dying man is completely absorbed in her grief. His physician and a newspaper reporter are present for professional reasons and are, therefore, distanced from the emotional content by many degrees. Since the physician and the reporter are involved in a practical manner, they deal with the tragic event on the human level and remain, together with the wife, in the natural attitude. A painter present in the same scene has to switch off his existential involvement and modify his attention to something different if he is to perform his task successfully. “His is a purely perceptive attitude ... the tragic inner meaning escapes his attention which is directed exclusively toward the visual part – color values, light, and shadows. In the artist we find a maximum of distance and a minimum of feeling intervention” (Ortega Y Gasset 17). As a human being, he may feel sad but, as T. S. Eliot would say, the creative artist in him would be separate from the man emotionally and existentially involved in the tragic condition (Eliot, *SE* 18). Unlike the three others involved in “lived reality,” he directs his attention to “observed reality” (Ortega Y Gasset 17). The aesthetic attitude requires a different mode of attention from the natural. In both the aesthetic and the phenomenological attitudes, there is a change from what things are and how they feel to how they appear. One cannot focus on both the human destiny in the work of art and

the aesthetic feeling at the same time and with the same kind of attention.

The modification of intentionality which artistic creation requires from the artist, phenomenological *epoché* effects and the pure work of art “forces” on its receivers share an affinity; namely, directedness towards the *eidos*, the form of the phenomenon perceived not emotional involvement with it. This affinity between phenomenology and aesthetic formalism has recently drawn attention to the similarity between the distance required and enforced by *epoché* and the Russian formalist concept of *ostranenie*, estrangement or defamiliarization, according to which literature breaks the familiar – i.e. natural – forms of everyday life to renew one’s experience and perception (Chernavin 95). Like *epoché*, defamiliarization cuts objects from the familiar form in which they appear in everyday experience – i.e. the natural attitude. “Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways” (Shklovsky 4). The source of aesthetic pleasure in formalist aesthetics is not the object presented but the form of presentation. “Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important” (4). The same disinterestedness in the object is conveyed by T. E. Hulme’s words: “Subject doesn’t matter.... It doesn’t matter if it were a lady’s shoe or the starry heavens.” What matters is that the poet has “an actually realized visual object before him” (Hulme 137). It is not the object itself that makes poetry, or art in general, but the manner of presentation, the form in which it is presented. If there were such a thing as an artistic object, there would have been a certain number of objects or themes about which it was possible to create art. Disinterestedness in the object or the subject matter of art and directedness towards the manner of presentation is the result of a modification of consciousness that results in the suspension of the natural attitude in which objects, characters and events appear as they naturally do, so that the change effected by the process of formation on objects and the harmonious presentation of all these elements in the form of the artwork may appear. The object itself has to be put under *epoché* in order for the form in which it is presented to be pleasurably intuited. This is

precisely “the intuition of a purely aesthetic work of art [which] is enacted under a strict suspension of all existential attitudes” that Husserl finds similar to phenomenological reduction (Husserl, “Letter” 2). Aesthetic pleasure is derived not only from breaking the automatic recognition of familiar objects as they naturally appear but also from the renewed perception of things in modified attentiveness. When distanced from its natural content, what remains in art is pure form, the pure casting of objects, characters, events and use of techniques into the artistic form which distinguishes the artwork from any other object. Without the required modification of consciousness, one would be dealing with the artwork as part of life. One would not enter the sphere of art proper and the meaning of the phenomenon would not be realized. The phenomenon would be missed due to the dominance of the natural attitude.

In order to focus on the phenomenon of art *per se*, Ortega Y Gasset starts the investigation with an attempt to determine its limits. He casts doubt on the sociological approach to art because it confuses the phenomenon with its “social effects” (3). Without mistaking the phenomenon for its effects, he takes one effect of modernist art as a clue to one of its intrinsic characteristics; namely, its unpopularity. Modernist art is unpopular, even “antipopular” because it requires a particular modification of attention which most people do not practice (5). “The object towards which their attention and, consequently, all their mental activities are directed is the same as in daily life: people and passions” (9). They like a work of art if they find interesting characters they would enjoy meeting in real life and get attached to it as they grow interested in their human destinies. This form of art induces pleasure not rationally through the intuition of form but by “psychic contagion” (27). Art is regarded as an extension of life. This means that understanding the phenomenon of art *per se* has not occurred yet. Most people “have never practiced any other attitude but the practical one” (9). Intuiting the phenomenon of art requires suspending the practical and existential attitudes dominant in everyday life and modifying attention to focus on the phenomenon itself. In order to indicate this modification, Ortega Y Gasset uses the metaphor of a windowpane through which

a garden can be seen. The vast majority of people deal with the artwork as the transparent pane through which they can see the garden; i.e. the destinies of the characters they like, hate, admire or feel for. They have not come to realize the phenomenon of art yet. In order to do so, one has to modify his attention to focus on the windowpane, the work, not the human figures seen through it in the garden. "Hence to see the garden and to see the windowpane are two incompatible operations which exclude one another because they require different adjustments" (10). The phenomenon of art has mostly been missed and confused with life due to the dominance of the natural attitude and people's inability to switch it off. The same is true of any theoretical attempt to relate one fictional character *directly* to lived reality as representative of a certain gender, class or colonized nation without going through the formal totality of the artwork. It comes from a natural and pre-phenomenological understanding of the artwork which relates it directly to lived reality without considering the nature of the phenomenon itself. The meaning of any element in the artwork has to be mediated by the form of the phenomenon to which it belongs. Otherwise, it would be dealt with as an actual person or event in lived reality not part of an artwork.

A process of purification of art has been going on throughout history which leads the phenomenon to finally come into its own in modernist art. Husserl regards Western civilization as rational in essence since its inception in the early Greek platonic attempts to determine the rational and ideal forms of phenomena (Husserl, *PCP* 160-5). The teleological development of forms is their incremental actualization of their rational essences. Ortega Y Gasset sees a concomitant development of art, purifying it of its inessential features, going on in history until it reaches its essence in modernism. Modernist art, a musical composition by Claude Debussy (Ortega Y Gasset 30), a poem by Stephane Mallarmé (32), a novel by Marcel Proust or James Joyce (36), a cubist or expressionist painting (38) or a play by Luigi Pirandello (39), cannot be understood by focusing on the human reality or emotions reflected in the artwork as if the latter was a conduit to lived reality

or an extract from the world. In modernism, there is “a tendency to eliminate all that is human and to preserve only the purely artistic elements,” those which exist in the work not in life (46). Art comes to self-consciousness, to regard itself as art, not a reflection of life, and to understand itself as what it is, not an epiphenomenon, in modernism. The autonomy of modernist art can, hence, be understood as the historical realization of the potential of art to be governed by its immanent laws of form not by the laws of the function it has served throughout history whether it is religious, social, psychological or otherwise. Out of faithfulness to its laws and desire to be nothing but itself, art repudiates any “transcendent importance” (49). The artist decides to “turn his back on reality. From painting things, the painter has turned to painting ideas” and “ideas are really unreal” (33). In modernist artworks, there is a deformation, a defamiliarization which Ortega Y Gasset calls dehumanization, of lived reality and a tendency to depict forms and ideas which have their existence only in the artwork not outside it. There is a tendency to retain of reality only what shows the change that the mind of the artist effects.

The question is not to paint something altogether different from a man, a house, a mountain, but to paint a man who resembles a man as little as possible; a house that preserves of a house exactly what is needed to reveal the metamorphosis For the modern artist, aesthetic pleasure derives from such a triumph over human matter. That is why he has to drive home the victory by presenting in each case the strangled victim (23).

In modernism, art has finally reached the self-understanding that form is its essence and attempts to make the artwork correspond to this essence. The distance from the natural attitude demanded for the intuition of essences takes the form of defamiliarization in art. The familiar appearance of objects as they appear in the natural attitude is metamorphosed into artistic form. This is the essence of art; a process of formation, of creating form. If one performs an eidetic reduction of all the elements that go into the making of art, the only

invariable that would remain is form. All the other elements – ideas, philosophy, description of social classes, music, character analyses and expression of feelings – may be dispensable. The artist's activity of forming these elements into artistic form remains the only constant. Artistic form which exists only in the artwork is the change which makes the artwork what it is. It is the *eidos*, the pure essence which remains invariable when different features of the artwork are varied in eidetic reduction. To intuit this essence, one must suspend reference to what is outside the phenomenon; i.e. the natural human figures and events represented in the artwork. One must put these elements which may be found in the natural attitude under *epoché* and modify his attention to focus on the transparency which is the work of art. In other words, one must focus on what is in the artwork not on what can be encountered elsewhere.

Defamiliarization, or wresting phenomena from routinized perception and cognition and endowing them with new form, is separate neither from the autonomy of art nor from the question of essence. It leads to the creation of form which has its life in art not outside it. Art no longer justifies itself as depiction of reality but rather as the creation of form. Since the essence of the artwork is that which exists in the work not outside it, the attempt of the work to coincide with its essence and function according to its own formal laws and nothing else comes to define modern art, the most important characteristic of which is autonomy. Autonomy, hence, comes as a result of art's realization of its essence and attempt to be nothing else. Art cannot exist without the creation of form. Its historical development is the trajectory leading to its realization of its essence. This means that the words on the page in literature, the lines and colors in painting and sounds in music change their nature. They no longer exist in order to refer to a reality existing outside the work. Their referential function starts to attenuate and so does the representational nature of art. They exist for their own sake as the aesthetic object proper.

Having determined the essence of art to be pure form in static analysis, Ortega Y Gasset follows the genetic constitution of the

phenomenon in history. In the nineteenth century, art abandoned its pure aesthetic nature and got entangled in the human existential attitude. This is the reason why the romantic, realistic and naturalistic forms of literature have gained popularity. Enjoying these artistic forms requires no modification of consciousness. It merely requires sympathy with the fates of the characters. Art has been conceived of as a mere extension of human emotions which are expressed in natural life. Yet this means that their audiences enjoy life or an extract of it not art. The phenomenon of art *per se* has been missed. The growing tendency in the movement from these forms to modernist art is “a purification of art” which proceeds by a “progressive elimination of the human” content in order to reach “pure art” or “artistic art” (12). This genetic analysis of the constitution of the phenomenon of art shows a process of purification to reach its essence as it appears in modernism. This purification is what he calls dehumanization because it is a progressive elimination of the human, practical and existential aspects of art; in a word, of art’s involvement in the natural attitude. It is also a process of rationalization in which art comes to exercise effect on its audience rationally through its form to induce aesthetic pleasure not irrationally, emotionally or by psychological manipulation (13). “[A]rt ought to be full clarity, high noon of the intellect” (27).

In its departure from the realism and naturalism of the nineteenth century, the development of modernist art is not merely an attempt to “make it new” as a response to the spirit of the time as Ezra Pound formulated the motto of modernism (Pound 74). It is crucial to pay attention to the direction and form of the new. The development of modernism is a process of rationalization through which art comes into its own, an entelechy or a realization of the rational potential of art that has been dormant in it due to what Husserl describes as the “naïve exteriorization of reason” which dominates the West (*PCP* 189). According to Husserl’s analysis, modern science as conceptualized by positivism and philosophical naturalism is a product of naïve rationalism which, in the attempt to understand and explain human existence, denies reason and regards

man as a material phenomenon (Husserl, *CES* 48). Both realism and naturalism are products of the “materialist” mind frame which dominates the nineteenth century (Neyrat 126). As products of materialist rationalism, they are involved in the same paradox. In reducing the function of reason to that of a “mirror,” the realist principle denies the role it plays in understanding and organizing reality (Abrams 32, 36). In its attempt to overcome the subjectivity of romanticism in order to portray social reality as objectively and accurately as possible, realism, at least in principle, denies the role played by reason in selecting and forming reality into a work of art. “A literary realism that would only focus on the selection of details, objects to be described ... would amputate reality ... In philosophical words, I would say that realism needs to self-negate itself to be realist” (Neyrat 120-1). On the other hand, a realism satisfied with reproducing common views of the whole creates “familiar clichés” and “bad literature” (121). The paradox of realism is that it relies on reason while claiming to reduce its role to that of a mirror. This is a manifestation of the larger paradox in which materialist rationalism as a “naïve exteriorization of reason” denies rationality and the role played by reason in understanding reality. The modernist recognition of the inescapability of the role played by the mind in perceiving reality and forming the artwork is an overcoming of the realist paradox. Modernism cannot be regarded merely as formal innovation but must also be understood as a necessary logical development to overcome the contradictions of realism and the materialist frame of which it is a part. Due to its logical recognition of the role played by the mind, it is a rationalization of art, an ineluctable development of art towards its rational essence.

Guided by the essence of art revealed through static investigation, the genetic analysis of the development of art up to the realization of its essence as pure form shows that it takes a rational trajectory not only because it depends on rational form to induce aesthetic pleasure rather than psychological manipulation to produce an emotional impact but also because it logically overcomes the paradoxical nature of the realist idea of portraying reality as it is.

Art, thus, comes to realize its essence as form in modernism. This genetic analysis of the development and constitution of the phenomenon has been guided by a prior static analysis of its essence as form. The investigation of this essence in phenomenology and its manifestation in literary and artistic modernism have been synchronously accompanied by similar results in Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism.

The purification of art as a historical process, which appears as dehumanization or as distancing itself from natural appearance or human content, reaches its climax in the modernist understanding of the essence of art as pure form. Having distanced itself from the natural attitude in which romanticism, realism and naturalism remain locked, the new art is “pure art,” “artistic art” or “art for artists” (12). The problem is that this process of purification should purify art of all content to end up, following the logical progress of this line of thought, in pure form which is the essence of the phenomenon. It has to exclude to the outside all that does not belong to the purity of the inside. In other words, the purity of the inside is constituted by excluding impurity to the outside. Yet as the eidos, form is not a thing that can exist in itself as a pure essence. In a literary work of art, form is the harmoniousness of the content. It is the formation of the human content into artistic form, the change effected by the mind on the content. Without content, form cannot exist. It is not a self-contained entity. It is not an ideal object or possibility that can stand on its own because it is constituted by what it is not. It cannot be what it is without what it is not. Ortega Y Gasset reaches this conclusion yet shies away from it immediately. “I will not now discuss whether pure art is possible. Perhaps it is not” (12). Ignoring this conclusion, he retreats from this essential insight or eidetic intuition, *Wesensschau*, of the essence of art into its genetic constitution to avoid the ineluctable logical impasse; i.e. the contradictoriness of the essence. “Even though pure art may be impossible there doubtless can prevail a tendency toward a purification of art” (12). Instead of “fidelity” to the essence of the investigated phenomenon, he prefers to remain with the methodological presupposition of a stable, self-sufficient essence. If

the essence is pursued more rigorously, this would lead the investigator to the instability of essences, to a deconstructed vision of essence. The pure essence needs to be supplemented, as Derrida would say, with what it is not in order to be what it is. “What happens is always some *contamination*” (Derrida, *AOL* 68). Without contamination, the pure essence cannot be what it is. The essence harbors a trace which escapes it.

The literary event is perhaps more of an event (because less natural) than any other, but by the same token it becomes very ‘improbable,’ hard to verify. No *internal* criterion can guarantee the essential ‘literariness’ of a text. There is no assured essence or existence of literature. If you proceed to analyze all the elements of a literary work, you will never come across literature itself, only some traits that it shares or borrows, which you can find elsewhere too, in other texts ... (73).

Without its other, what it is would escape it. What is outside the essence proper is inside it. What must be excluded for the essence to be what it is cannot be excluded. Literature and art in general disturb the idea of pure essence that can be revealed in eidetic intuition. “What is literature? And first of all what is it ‘to write’? How is it that the fact of writing can disturb the very question ‘what is?’ and even ‘what does it mean?’” (Derrida, *Thesis* 37-8) If the investigator does not halt the investigation and pursues his most insightful intuition of the essence, this would lead him to the “logic of supplementarity, which would have it that the outside be inside” (Derrida, *Grammatology* 215). Ortega Y Gasset, nevertheless, reduces the rigor of the method, abides by the presupposition of the stability of essence, betrays fidelity to the phenomenon and retreats from the essential insight revealed under eidetic reduction and from the deconstructed essence of the phenomenon.

Pure form reveals itself as the essence of art not only because eidetic variation retains it as the only invariable but also because the modernist focus on form requires suppression of reference to content which parallels the phenomenological suspension of any form of

transcendence enacted by *epoché* (Pinotti 64-5). In both cases, reference to the non-present is suspended and the essence of the phenomenon is that which is present. Since phenomenology regards presence as the principle of determining the essence and form is what comes to presence in consciousness, it is determined *a priori* to be the essence. Against the phenomenological insistence on starting without presuppositions, phenomenology relies on the unexamined determination of essence as what comes to presence, as the present. Derrida has already shown the “epistemological and metaphysical value of *presence*” in Husserl’s theory of the sign (Allison 90). Here, it becomes clear that not only are the findings of Husserl’s work determined by presence but those of phenomenologists like Ortega Y Gasset and others – guided as they are by phenomenological methodology – are also determined in advance by the method they adopt. Since content is referred to or signified, form, as what comes to presence when reference to what is transcendent or non-present is suspended, is determined to be the essence of art. The manner of appearance, the how, is the what (*Was*) or the essence (*Wesen*) of art because it is what comes to presence. This conclusion has been determined in advance by the unacknowledged presupposition of the method which is supposed to function without presuppositions.

Deconstructing Ortega Y Gasset’s phenomenological investigation of the essence of literature should not lead the investigator back to a pre-phenomenological vision for this would mean that the phenomenon itself is missed. It should lead to a different understanding of essence and of the relation between form and content which will be discussed later.

III)The Glory of the Sensuous: Dufrenne’s Investigation of the Aesthetic Object

In spite of its high explanatory value as an investigation of modernist formal experimentation, the determination of the essence of art as pure form and the resulting exclusion of content lead to a self-deconstructing vision of the essence. Yet a no less rigorous investigation of art would focus on the sensuous presentation that

meets the eye in the artwork and the sense given (*gegeben*) with it in intuition (*Anschauung*) and, therefore, not outside the essence.

Although content is not strictly of the essence, it is not excluded in a manner that destabilizes it since it is given in intuition. It contributes existential delight that may enhance the aesthetic pleasure induced by form. Husserl's investigation into image consciousness in *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory* may serve as a ground for such a project. Significantly, he makes it clear that the existential delight which may accompany aesthetic pleasure could occur in a narrative form of art like the novel or a theatrical show just as it may in contemplating a visual form of art like painting (621, 706). The source of pleasure in both cases is the appearance of what is given. "[W]hat is depicted in the How of its being depicted determines the boundary of what appears insofar as it appears here – that is, the boundary of what is depictively presented in the How of its presentedness" (706). In aesthetic contemplation, the boundary of the essence presented – i.e. made present – in the noema to consciousness is drawn by the how, by the manner of appearance not the what. What determines the unity of the ideal aesthetic object is the "unity in the How of its givenness" (706), "*Diese Einheit im Wie der Gegebenheit*"; i.e. the "How" or the manner of appearance of what is given to consciousness. It is the unity of the manner of appearance that determines the aesthetic object. Although this unity is determined by the manner of appearance or form, it is not limited to it. It is form and content given together as a unity the contours of which are determined by the former. What lies beyond this unity determined by the "How" of appearance is "cut off" (*ist abgeschnitten*) because it does not belong to the unity of the given. "This restricted synthetic unity, in just the way in which it is intuited there, is my aesthetic object" (705). All that does not properly belong to its formal structure is excluded.

Aesthetically, I am not interested in reality, not focused on reality. I can contemplate a picture of Bismarck and learn much from it about his character. But then this is not an aesthetic contemplation. That the image is Bismarck can also

be aesthetically significant, insofar as it simultaneously awakens for me the horizon of a personality on which the artist may count. But even if a part of the focus on being may also do service [aesthetically], it is nevertheless not the same as [the focus on being] in other cases; a change in theme presents itself. What serves us aesthetically, moreover, would have the function of awakening only certain moments and horizons, and of doing so in universality. Everything else, without exception, would be wholly excluded from the horizon of the theme (704).

The content which appears within the contours of the aesthetic object, determined as it is by the form, is not excluded. It is not intended as reality but only as it exists and serves aesthetically in the aesthetic object. Anything that does not serve or enhance the aesthetic object is cut from its horizon. In the transcendental sphere, reflection on the acts of consciousness intending the object lays bare the hidden mental operations, the noetic acts, which endow the object with the manner in which it is to be experienced and make sense of it. This allows the transcendental structure and experience of consciousness which correspond to the noema to come to light. The determination of the intended object has been carried out according to the intentional attitude and all that does not induce aesthetic pleasure has been cut out from the object. The aesthetic object is determined as form or manner of appearance because it is form that corresponds to the noesis of aesthetic pleasure. The noesis does not only correspond to the noema of the phenomenon but also determines it; i.e. the noema is determined by the mental compoment towards it.

According to Husserl's investigation, form – the how – is the essence of art because the thematic horizon is determined by aesthetic pleasure as the noetic pole. This, nevertheless, does not totally exclude content, the what, which is included only insofar as it is framed by form and given with it to consciousness.

The content of the object itself is not aesthetically insignificant. Whether or not it is an emperor, whether it is

an important destiny or one that is commonplace, and so on, is not a matter of indifference.... But it is also [a question of] something else: [Think of] every objectivity that motivates existential delight or, as phantasied, *quasi-delight*. In itself, this delight is not aesthetic. But the aesthetic pleasure, which depends on the manner of appearing, can combine with this delight (understood as something actual), and the whole has the character of an enhanced aesthetic delight (462).

Although content is not the aesthetic object per se, it is given with (*mitgegeben*) form and enhances the aesthetic pleasure induced by the latter with the existential delight it endows. It is not excluded in a manner that destabilizes the aesthetic object. This account of the aesthetic object overcomes the impossibility of pure form.

The transcendental correspondence of the aesthetic noema and noesis determines the structure of the aesthetic object with which literary theory deals. It establishes the nature of the phenomenon which must be accounted for by any theory. If any theory or interpretation from a theoretical perspective ignores the operation of form on content or their unity and relates any part of the content to the world directly, it fails to address the nature of the phenomenon per se. Since phenomenology as eidetic science determines the nature of the phenomenon which any theoretical vision should take into consideration, this vision of form as the essence with which content is given functions as the transcendental eidetic ground on which the new critical vision of the organic unity of form and content has been established and which is presupposed in formalist readings. In any reading, new critical or otherwise, form cannot be ignored. The similarity between phenomenology and the new critical and Russian formalist visions of literature is hinted at by György M. Vajda in “Phenomenology and Literary Criticism” where he refers to *A Theory of Literature* by the Polish René Wellek and the American Austen Warren as the product of joint phenomenological structuralist and new critical visions (225). New Critics regard form and content as “inextricably intertwined” (Hickman 7). Establishing

his vision of the nature of literature on W.M. Urban's linguistic theory of the "inseparability of intuition and expression," Cleanth Brooks accepts his conclusion that "[t]o pass from the intuitible to the nonintuitable is to negate the function and meaning of the symbol" which denies the nature of literature (Urban 434). Accordingly, one must remain with the intuitible or the present. The nature of literature consists, for Brooks and the New Critics in general, in the inseparability of form and content (Brooks 183). It is remarkable that Urban himself offers a phenomenological account of language which confirms that experience is meaningful in itself and that it is possible to restore "all the intuitive meanings present in the primary experience" (Urban 147). This agrees with the basic phenomenological principle – accepted by phenomenologists like Husserl, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur – that lived experience is meaningful and that the restoration of this meaning is possible through interpreting linguistic expressions of life (Ricoeur 5). "Experience is not wordless to begin with ... experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word – i.e., the word that really belongs to the thing – so that in it the thing comes into language" as Gadamer writes (417). The meaningfulness of experience as well as the recuperability of its meaning in linguistic expression and Brooks' dependence on Urban's phenomenology of language provide two more links between the phenomenological vision of the unity of form and content in givenness (*Gegebenheit*) and the new critical presupposition and confirmation of this unity in interpreting artworks. The phenomenological vision of the meaningfulness of lived experience and the unity of intuition and expression provide the necessary transcendental ground on which the new critical theoretical confirmation of the organic unity of form and content is established.

This line of phenomenological research, started by Husserl, which finds content given with form is further developed by Mikel Dufrenne who does not exclude content from the essence of art as Ortega Y Gasset does and avoids, thereby, the self-contradictory vision of pure form as the essence of literature. In order to zero in on the aesthetic object, Dufrenne puts three kinds of objects under

epoché; the technical, the natural and the beautiful. In “The Aesthetic Object and the Technical Object,” he brackets out the latter by distinguishing the different essences of the two objects. While both are man-made, the technical object is “defined as a means of acting upon matter” (117). Such objects are characterized by “their serving as means to an end” (115). In ontological terms, they belong to the “in-order-to” mode of being, characterized by “serviceability” and “conduciveness” as Heidegger writes (*BT* 97). Unlike the useful object, the aesthetic is neither useful nor consumed in usability. When the artwork is used to illustrate a psychological point, give historical example or educate the masses, it is not intended here as an aesthetic object but rather as a pedagogical one. On the noetic side, while the technical object requires a practical attitude, the aesthetic object “requires our feeling and not our acting” (Dufrenne, *AOTO* 116). In *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, the natural object is also bracketed out. Both natural and useful objects may be aesthetically pleasurable but they are not intended for their aesthetic appearance. The aesthetic object may share with the natural its “stubborn presence” but in the latter the aesthetic aspect is subdued to its natural aspects (Dufrenne, *PAE* 85). Both objects may have sound and color but in the natural object, these qualities are subdued to its nature and are not intended for themselves. In the aesthetic object, the sensuous qualities are intended for themselves and are tied to its form. The aesthetic object also needs to be distinguished from the beautiful like a natural scene or a bird’s chirping since the former evokes “an aesthetic perception where this beauty will be fulfilled and consecrated. The beautiful object can be beautiful without wishing to be so, that is, without seeking its aestheticization” (*AOTO* 115). The nature of the aesthetic object and the manner in which it is intended are, hence, different from those of the technical, the natural and the beautiful.

Having bracketed out the technical object in which form is subdued to use, the natural in which form is not intended for its own sake and the beautiful in which no intentionality is embodied and no aesthetic intention fulfilled, Dufrenne finds that the essence of the aesthetic object is that “it exists fully, definitely, according to an

intrinsic necessity, in the glory of the sensible” (116). It is the “triumphant presence of an achieved being, [it requires] that it affirm itself in the sensible” (119). The eidetic reduction of all the elements manifested by the artwork retains only its sensuous appearance which shines on the beholder with its “presence” as its irreducible essence. Transcendental reduction reveals the noetic intention corresponding to the aesthetic object to be mere perceptive contemplation devoid of practicality and emotiveness. “It moves me to do nothing but perceive, that is, open myself to the sensuous. For the aesthetic object is, above all, the irresistible and magnificent presence of the sensuous.... Thus the aesthetic object is the sensuous appearing in its glory” (PAE 85-6). The essence of the aesthetic object is the shining forth of the sensuous which evokes a perceptive stance on the noetic side.

The determination of the essence of the aesthetic object to be sensuous presence requires not only a discussion of presence but also of the genetic constitution of the phenomenon of art. Since the aesthetic object is that which shines on the beholder with its sensuous presence, it cannot be something non-present. “Whether a portrait resembles its subject or not, it is not an aesthetic object until it ceases to be a portrait and loses the signifying role which is so frequently assumed by the photograph.... *The aesthetic object is not a sign* which points to something else” [emphasis added] (118). The necessity to abide by what is merely present and what exercises the aesthetic effect on the recipient leads to a necessary discussion of the status of signification in the aesthetic object which – as Dufrenne is forced to confess – “even in the most extreme experiments in abstraction ... *continues to signify*” and of the status of content and the subject matter of artworks produced in previous eras; i.e. it leads to a genetic description of the phenomenon [emphasis added] (119). It is remarkable that although the aesthetic object is not a sign because what comes to presence and pleases aesthetically is the “*Wie*,” the “How” or the manner of appearance, no matter how abstract it may be, it continues to signify because the how frames a what which necessarily refers or signifies to what lies beyond the aesthetic object, to what is not present. A manner of appearance

cannot exist without that which appears, without what appears. The aesthetic object, therefore, is not a sign yet it continues to signify. This contradiction in the aesthetic object must be resolved. The purpose of the genetic analysis is to show the reduction of signification in the historical development of art.

Tracing the genetic constitution of the phenomenon shows that prior to art's realization of its essence as form and its conscious attempt to model itself after this pure essence in modernism, it has centered on content or what is represented. Phenomenology does not deny the art of previous ages an aesthetic status since there is no one single style that is recognized as such. Yet the phenomenological determination of the aesthetic object as that which is present and which manifests the sensuous in its glory conflicts with the status of the content of the artworks of the past which is important for its own sake and also clashes with the embeddedness of these artworks in, and reference to, the context in which they are produced. Art's consciousness of itself as art and nothing else becomes apparent in its attempt to become pure art. "From all this arises the temptation toward a pure art liberated from any necessity for imitation or statement. This is a magnificent temptation, for purity has not been given its due" (122). In the development of the phenomenon, there is a tendency to let art consist in what it is and purify it of what it is not, to let it consist in sensuous presence and purify it of signification. Dufrenne comes here to the impasse of pure art reached by Ortega Y Gasset yet with a different understanding of sensuousness as purity.

The investigation conducted by Dufrenne yields results similar to those obtained by Husserl and not completely different from those reached by Ortega Y Gasset. He acknowledges that the art of the past has been mainly centered on its subject matter, themes and human passions and that it gains its status by reference to what lies beyond the artwork proper; i.e. by signification. Without reference to the human condition and affairs, art would lose its substance, the status it has gained and the passions it has aroused. He also acknowledges that the increasing tendency towards the purification

of art is an attempt to model art after its essence, to make art what it is; namely, sensuous presence. Yet if art is reduced to the sensuous, it would lose all sense. This leads him to discuss the nature of signification in the work of art. "If, therefore, the work does retain a signifying power and the aesthetic object is not something purely sensuous, what then is the place of such signification in the structure of the work and its function in the dynamic of the creative act?" (PAE122). Although the aesthetic object consists strictly in sensuous presence because it is the element that affects the receiver aesthetically, subject matter or the state referred to cannot be excluded because it is given with it.

Only that revelation which we shall call "affective" is truly constitutive of the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic object does not speak to me *about* its subject. The subject itself speaks to me, and in the manner in which it is treated. The subject is an inevitable ingredient in the work not so much for its own sake as for the sake of the form which is given to it and by which it becomes expressive (123).

The aesthetic object proper consists in sensuous presence since its "affective" revelation is the noema that communicates with aesthetic pleasure as the noetic pole. The content is not bracketed out of the aesthetic object because it is given with the sensuous. In contradistinction to Ortega Y Gasset's account, the content in Dufrenne's phenomenological investigation is given as a secondary component of the aesthetic object. It is necessary only in as far as it is formed "in the manner in which it is treated," the how. Since the content is given with the sensuous in presence and not bracketed out, this revelation of the aesthetic object avoids the impasse of pure art in which Ortega Y Gasset's account is stuck. Abiding by what is given as the principle of all principles, this revelation of sense in the sensuous is not the result of a prior process of formation or the synthetic sublation of the metaphysical opposition of form and content or idea and matter. It is determined by the phenomenological

methodological rule which restricts the description of the aesthetic object to what is present.

In order to understand how Dufrenne's account does not get locked in the impasse of pure art, it is necessary here to distinguish between the content (*Inhalt*) which Husserl and Ortega Y Gasset refer to and what Dufrenne calls the sense (*Gehalt*). The content of the narrative artwork, for instance, is what one encounters in the process of reading like characters and events. This content is framed by the form and appears with it in sensuous presence. Since form cannot appear without content, their unity in givenness renders the aesthetic object harmonious. This unity in givenness avoids the impasse of pure art in which the account offered by Ortega Y Gasset is trapped. The aesthetic object is not merely the sensuous appearance which may be shared by other phenomena but also the sense (*Gehalt*) or the meaning of the artwork which is not referred to but which surges within it. The result of the genetic tracing of the status of signification in literature is that, unlike the literary output of previous eras, there is a tendency to contain signification in the sensuous in modernism. The aesthetic object is the sensuous through which sense shines forth. The account offered by Dufrenne avoids the self-contradictoriness of pure art because it does not regard form as the aesthetic object and excludes content (*Inhalt*) but rather sees both of them revealed in intuition as the sensuous through which sense (*Gehalt*) is revealed in presence.

The aesthetic object reveals itself as a structure in which sense is in the sensuous. It is not referred to by the sensuous as an absent object; it is, according to Dufrenne, present in the sensuous without a process of reference. In identifying the essence of poetry or the "poeticalness of poetry," the investigator finds that it is revealed to be the presence of sense in the sensuous, the revelation of sense in presence through the sensuous not reference to it (*IPS* 119).

In poetry, sense is totally within the sensuous. The meaning carried by the discourse is not signified, it is expressed. Signification becomes expression... In French, when we press (squeeze) an orange, we say, that the juice is

“expressed.” The orange expresses itself in producing its juice. Likewise, a poem is expressive. It expresses itself in expressing its meaning. If you prefer, the sense surges within the sensuous in the reciting body as perfume surges within a flower in the heat of the summer. Poeticalness realizes and actualizes expressivity. Here language is driven back to its origin. Here signs are not yet arbitrary; they somehow imitate the object they refer to and conjure up its presence instead of being merely representational (123).

In this phenomenological investigation into the essence of poetry, the latter reveals itself to be the presence of sense in the sensuous, of meaning in language; the language of the poem does not refer to a meaning that exists elsewhere but materializes this meaning in itself. The meaning is not signified or referred to but “expressed.” It is present in the poem just like juice in a fruit or perfume in a flower. It is immanent in the poem not transcendent. Dufrenne confirms that poetry conjures up “presence”. The essence of poetry is not signification or reference to meaning but the containment of sense or its immanence in the poem. Hence, sense is present in the “sensuous.” Meaning is not referred to but is present in what “expresses” it.

Dufrenne has previously acknowledged the impossibility of excluding content (*Inhalt*) from the work and that it necessarily continues to signify (*PAE* 119). Now, the aesthetic object – which is both form and content in unity – does not signify but reveals sense in the sensuous. This requires an examination of the function of signification in the aesthetic object which he describes as expressive in the sense that it conjures up the presence of the object. It does not refer to a non-present object through signification. “This meaning inhabits the word as essence inhabits a phenomenon; it is there, held in words, and it cannot be extracted from them to be translated or conceptualized” (*IPS* 166). In poetry, sense is brought to presence via expressive signs. It is remarkable that the objects referred to in his attempt to describe the expressive nature of poetic signs are natural ones like orange and flower. Yet, in these natural objects

characterized as they are by “stubborn presence,” there is no signification. In this investigation into the essence of poetry, there is an attempt to contain the signifying function of signs through which they refer to non-presence in order to render the signified sense (*Gehalt*) present so it would be immanent in the sign. The essence of poetry is determined according to what comes to presence; i.e. according to the phenomenological principle of all principles.

The presence of sense in the sensuous is possible only if there could be something like expressive signs which conjure up sense without reference, without signification. This goes against the nature of the sign itself which consists of a signifier that refers to a non-present signified. “The hinge [*brisure*] marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and a signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence” (Derrida, *Grammatology* 69). The attempt to make sense present in the signifier is not possible. Yet it is required by the phenomenological suspension of reference to non-presence and restriction of all description of essence and proof to the present. The definition of sense surging in the sensuous as the essence of poetry is determined by the phenomenological requirement that essence be present to consciousness. The conclusion reached in Dufrenne’s investigation into the essence of poetry has been determined in advance by the presupposition of the phenomenological method. Nevertheless, the nature of poetry, language and sign in general, is that they produce sense by using signifiers to refer to non-present signified senses. The process of signification cannot be made present to consciousness. Reference cannot be cut out (*abgeschnitten*) because it is part of the structure of the sign. Since reference to non-presence is its structure, the sign cannot be made fully present. It cannot conjure presence or make its signified present. Abiding by the phenomenological principle of presence, Dufrenne determines the presence of sense in the sensuous to be the essence of poetry, to be the inside and any reference to a non-present sense to be outside the essence proper. The genetic examination of the status of signification in literature shows its increasing reduction and the presence of sense in the sensuous as the ideal object of poetry. Yet reference to non-presence

cannot be excluded to the outside of the sign or suspended. It is constitutive of the sign. The outside is inside; it constitutes the inside.

In Ortega Y Gasset's account, the determination of the *Wie*, the "How" or the manner of appearance to be the *Was*, the "What" or the essence (*Wesen*) of the phenomenon presumes that in a phenomenon like art, the how or the manner of appearance can appear without the "What" or the content in stability (Ortega Y Gasset 12). The dissolution of this presumably stable essence is laid bare when the attempt to bring it to presence without any impurity is carried out. When impurity is excluded, the essence shows its dependence on what has been excluded or suspended. The same is true of Dufrenne's investigation into the essence of poetry. Sense conjured up and made present in the sensuous presumes the possibility of expressive signs which produce meaning by themselves without reference. This runs counter to the nature of the sign itself part of which is not present. Since creating the illusion of the presence of sense in the sensuous is dependent on the structure of the sign, presence is dependent on what has been excluded, suspended, cut out or put under *epoché*, on non-presence. Non-presence is a condition of conjuring presence. Deconstruction does not reject phenomenology or regress behind its rigor but rather indicates that non-presence is the transcendental condition which makes presence to consciousness possible. It discovers a higher transcendental condition beyond the phenomenological transcendental. Here, the role played by the "metaphysics of presence" in Husserl's theory of the sign has been shown to control not only the metaphysical foundations of phenomenology but also the results reached by phenomenologists like Ortega Y Gasset and Dufrenne (Derrida, *Speech* 51). The metaphysical principle governing the method determines in advance the results reached in every investigation.

Literature forces the phenomenological investigator to reconsider presence as the unexamined presupposition of phenomenology. This is what Derrida means when he says that

literature disturbs “[w]hat is” as the guiding question of phenomenology. In every determination of essence or of the meaning of any phenomenon, the investigator is forced to abide by what is present, by what comes to presence after the contours of the phenomenon have been determined by putting under *epoché* or bracketing out what does not belong to it. Regressing behind the rigor of the method would mean that the phenomenon is missed for something else or that its essence is mistaken for some accidental feature. Rejecting presence would mean that the investigator proceeds without sense or adequate evidence. Proceeding rigorously with the method without betraying fidelity to the phenomenon investigated not only gives a deconstructed vision of the essence but also forces the investigator to reconsider meaning and presence and examine the transcendental conditions which render them possible and impossible at the same time. Deconstruction indicates the transcendental conditions of transcendental phenomenology.

What makes Ortega Y Gasset’s and Dufrenne’s investigations possible is that they abide by the methodological presupposition of presence and betray fidelity to the phenomenon investigated. What has made it impossible for Derrida to finish his dissertation and led him to deconstruction is fidelity to the phenomena not the methodological presupposition. A more rigorous investigation of phenomena would show the deconstructed essence and lead to questioning the presuppositions of the method, its hidden metaphysics. Deconstruction is born out of more ‘rigor’ in methodology and more “fidelity” to the phenomenon investigated which force the investigator to reexamine the metaphysical presuppositions of the method.

The unity (*Einheit*) of appearance – of the how or the manner of appearance as a delimitation of the what or the content of what appears and of sense in the sensuous – is the aesthetic object given in intuition as the transcendental model for the organic unity of form and content accepted by different kinds of formalism and many other literary theories which take this unity on faith rather than question it. If the phenomenological insight into form as the essence of literature

prevents the reader and the literary critic from dealing with any element in the artwork directly as part of life without examining the role it plays in the formal unity of the work, deconstruction forces him further to examine the politics of form. If the delimitation of content by form is exclusion, then the formation of the artwork is a violence perpetrated against the content. Formation is not a neutral process. Form and content are not harmonious; they are in conflict. What is formed by excluding the left out expresses a power relation in the context which produces the artwork. Rather than accepting the harmony of form and content on faith, a pursuit of what has been excluded, of what has been cut out must replace the search for form as the pursuit of the meaning of the artwork. That which is left out, which is silenced so that content can be harmonized into form, the other which is excluded so that the critic can end up with a cogent interpretation based on the harmony of the artwork must be restored. Rather than linking one event or character directly to the world on the one hand, or pursuing the unity of form on the other, the critic may examine the silencing of a certain class, gender or colonial discourse which renders the closure of form possible. Destabilizing any harmonious interpretation of the artwork, what has been cut out returns to show not the meaning of the artwork but the conditions which make this meaning possible. It shows the other which has to be excluded in order to create the harmony presupposed by all possible interpretations. This indicates not the meaning of the artwork but what has been excluded and silenced in the process of formation to make meaning possible. This reveals the violence of formation as exclusion, lays bare the social forces which determine the form of the artwork and does justice to the overpowered who are silenced so that the artwork can be formed.

In its American version, or perhaps versions, deconstruction loses its radical political nature. It has been domesticated as a new version of textual criticism or “narrow formalism” (Leitch 142). Employing a strategy of close reading of texts, it appears as “a New Criticism denied its ontological supports and cultural goals” although “the fundamental aspects of Derrida's writing plainly do not sanction a new formalism or a new hedonism” (Lentricchia 169).

As a kind of textual reading, it has been assimilated into the new critical close reading and regarded as a continuation of the formalist attempt to contain radical ideas and a confirmation of the conservative politics of New Criticism (Newton 19; Jancovich 15-6). The new critical focus on the formal aspects of the artwork and pursuit of “‘irony,’ ‘paradox,’ and ‘ambiguity,’ all of which name techniques for neutralizing content” is a conservative method of containing any radical politics (Menand 558). The formalism of Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren is regarded as an ideological expression of the political outlook of the southern Agrarian penchant – supported by T. S. Eliot – to maintain the status quo (Fekete 71; Hickman 7; Eliot, *ASG* 17). Deconstruction, hence, loses something of its radical nature when appropriated as a new kind of formalism. The revelation of form as the harmoniousness of content stems from the givenness of form as the revealed unity of the artwork. It is grounded in a revelation of unity and, hence, based on the phenomenological intuition of form as essence.

The new critical pursuit of meaning in the unity of form and content and focus on “the words on the page” – i.e. on what is present – as a means to guarantee the objectivity of meaning is in agreement with the whole tradition of Western metaphysics which determines meaning as presence to consciousness (Hickman 11). The hidden metaphysics of whole tradition has come to be crystalized in Husserl’s formulation (Allison XXXII). It is not in harmony with the deconstructive pursuit of what constitutes unity yet escapes it, with the discovery of what has to be excluded for the creation of form or with the transcendental conditions which render presence possible and impossible.

To reduce deconstruction to mere pursuit of formal instability depends on reducing the meaning of text to written signs and establishing an opposition between the text and an outer social text, between the inside and the outside which Derrida complained about (Derrida, *America* 15). The new critical assimilation of deconstruction as pursuit of textual ambiguity and instability for the

sake of aesthetic pleasure is precisely the kind of instrumentalization which Derrida condemns in the American versions (7). Deconstructing the transcendental unity of the “How,” the manner of appearance or form and of the presence of sense in the sensuous, shows that formation necessarily harbors exclusion. Since every exclusion involves a cultural, political or social power hierarchy, deconstruction exposes the power relations in the context – or, perhaps, the larger text – which produces the text. It destabilizes the unity and harmony presupposed by New Criticism and formalisms in general and taken for granted by many other literary theories. It challenges their conservative political outlook and their neutralization of the content through focus on formal techniques. It gives voice to what has been silenced, cut out and excluded to the outside in the process of formation. It shows form as an expression of social power and lays bare how the practice of power depends on exclusion.

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