

## Perception, *Phantasie*, Signification: The Ambiguous Status of Imagination in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*

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**Abstract:** Classical western metaphysics has, since Plato, been suspicious of the role and place of imagination in philosophy. This suspicion has not only generated conceptions of it being “whimsical” and, at times, “dangerous,” but has rendered its place in philosophy ambiguous and narrowly confined to a so-called “reproductive form or function.” With this background in mind, I demonstrate that Husserl, in the *Logical Investigations*, appears to have toed the line as regards philosophy tending to segregate imagination and thought as, on the one hand, evinced in his legitimation of imagination by elevating it to an intentional modality on par with perception and signification, and on the other, as an offshoot of perception. I argue further that whilst Husserl's imagination in *Logical Investigations* is clouded by an ambiguity, he articulates in *Ideas I* a strand of imagination central to apprehending essences such that, notwithstanding the ambiguity clouding his concept of imagination, there is to be seen in Husserl an increasing recognition of imagination's role in philosophy.

**Keywords:** *phantasie*, perception, signification, ambiguity

Classical Western metaphysics has been skeptical of imagination's role and place in philosophy. John Sallis, in his book *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, argues that this skepticism is evident in Plato, Aristotle, Pico, and Kant.<sup>1</sup> This suspicion has not only led

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<sup>1</sup> John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), particularly Chapter 1. The allusion to Sallis's account is important in that it situates within a broader context the problematic I am here inquiring into. See also Mark Raftery-Skehan, “An Imagination Reductive or Reproductive of the Sign? The

to the development of conceptions that view imagination as “whimsical” and “dangerous,”<sup>2</sup> but has rendered its place in philosophy ambiguous and narrowly confined to a so-called “reproductive form or function.”<sup>3</sup> Keeping this point in mind, I demonstrate that the same historical ambiguity reappears in Husserl’s analysis of phantasy in *Logical Investigations (LI)*.<sup>4</sup> I argue that an ambiguity leading to a tension or conflict in Husserl’s theory of imagination consists in, on the one hand, his legitimation of imagination in *LI II* by treating it as an intentional act on an equal footing with perception and signification, and on the other, in his delegitimation of phantasy by conforming to the classical tendency to segregate imagination and signification, and to regard it as an offshoot of perception. In so doing, Husserl aligns imagination with perception at the expense of developing its relation to signification, hence Husserl’s negative valuation of imagination. I argue further that an

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Possibility of Signification in Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* and Derrida’s *La voix et le phénomène*” (Unpublished manuscript, May 2019. Mark Raftery-Skehan has generously shared with me this yet unpublished manuscript in May 2019. I was the first external reader to have read the earlier version of the unpublished manuscript in question); Eva T.H. Bramm, *The World of Imagination: Sum and Substance* (Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1991); Maria Manuela Saraiva, *L’imagination selon Husserl* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970); Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern and Postmodern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998); Saulius Geniusas, *Phenomenology of Productive Imagination: Embodiment, Language, Subjectivity* (Hanover: Ibidem Press, 2022); Thomas Gould, “Plato’s Hostility to Art,” in *A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 3:1 (Spring, 1964), <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20162893>>; Dieter Lohmar, “The Function of Weak Phantasy in Perception and Thinking,” in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. by D. Schmicking and S. Gallagher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010); Julia Jansen, “Phenomenology, Imagination and Interdisciplinary Research,” in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. by D. Schmicking and S. Gallagher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010); Leslie Stevenson, “Twelve Conceptions of Imagination,” in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 43:3 (July 2003); James Morley, “Introduction: Phenomenology of Imagination,” in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 4 (2005). In two forthcoming articles, I have analyzed at length this status of phantasy in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Pico, and Kant. See Mark Antony Jalalum, “Phantasy: Un-Necessary Mediator,” in *Kinaadman Journal* (forthcoming) and Mark Antony Jalalum, “Re-Imagining Imagination: Revisiting Plato’s *Eikasia* and Aristotle’s *Phantasia*” in *Lumina Journal* (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Plato argues that imagination (phantastic imagination) is detrimental to the education of *Nomophylakes*. In a not-so-distant past, one could think, of Nikos Kazantzakis’s *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and the mixed reception it has received.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ricoeur’s “Imagination in Discourse and in Action” in *From Text to Action*. See also Saulius Geniusas, *Phenomenology of Productive Imagination: Embodiment, Language, Subjectivity* (Hanover: Ibidem Press, 2022), particularly, Chapters 1 and 2, respectively. For a further discussion on reproductive form of imagination in Husserl, see Saulius Geniusas “What is Productive Imagination? The Hidden Resources of Husserl’s Phenomenology of Phantasy,” in *The Subject(s) of Phenomenology, Contributions to Phenomenology*, ed. by Iulian Apostolescu (Cham: Springer Cham, 2020). Geniusas argues, among others, that productive imagination is a relative term—something that is (only) understood when juxtaposed or compare with *reproductive Phantasie*.

<sup>4</sup> I will interchangeably use *Phantasie*, phantasy, and imagination.

ambiguity obscuring Husserl's imagination theory is very much a function of it as a theoretical mediation or it theoretically mediating between perception and signification.<sup>5</sup> By recognizing the structure of *Phantasie* as an intentional modality, Husserl demonstrates that imagination is no less an intentional act directed towards its object for not having an object that exists empirically, as in the case of perception. With the recognition of *Phantasie*, having alongside perception and signification an intentional structure, which raised its status relative to the general evaluation of it in the history of philosophy,<sup>6</sup> imagination is thus freed from the traditional denigration of being illusory or delusional. A further positive valuation of imagination is also made manifest in Husserl's *Ideas I*,<sup>7</sup> where Husserl forcefully argues that imagination or phantasy is vital to eidetic seeing or the apprehension of essences.

Furthermore, in accordance with what I argue to be Husserl's positive valuation of phantasy, I devote a section exposing his critique of the *Bildertheorie* or the so-called "classical image-theory" espoused primarily by John Locke and David Hume. Put briefly, the *Bildertheorie* effectively argues that the "image" is immanent or intramental and is constitutive of the, say, imagined object. Thus, in the case of imagining a centaur, the *Bildertheorie* makes the error of thinking that it is the *image* of the centaur that I imagine or intend. Hence, the *Bildertheorie* is at odds with Husserl's contention that the intentional object is *transcendent* or, in other words, that the object imagined is not immanent in the intentional act. The centaur imagined is irreducible to the *image* of the centaur. Husserl maintains that there is a transcendence inherent to any intentional act such that consciousness is delivered over to what it is not, to an "other," to an object.<sup>8</sup> Thus, I intend the tree that I see before me, the tree that is depicted in the picture, the tree that I am phantasing, and the tree that I signify in my utterance, and not the *percept*, the *image*, or the *sign* of a tree. Moreover, by treating imagination as an intentional modality, Husserl offers a radical re-conception of imagination

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<sup>5</sup> While I concentrate on Husserl's *LI*, allusions will be made to Husserl's other works, particularly *Experience and Judgment* and *Husserliana* (Hua) XXIII, i.e., Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*, ed. by E. Marbach (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1980; for English translation, see Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image-Consciousness, Memory*, trans. by John Brough (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> The qualifier "almost entirely" is important in that one must consider certain exceptions, namely, Aristotle's analysis of tragedy and Kant's forging of the transcendental *Einbildungskraft* in the first of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cf. Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) and Saulius Geniusas, "Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy of Imagination," in *Human Studies*, 38 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Vol. I*, trans. by F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dan Zahavi, *Phenomenology: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

which, I believe, fortifies what I argue to be constitutive of his *legitimation* of imagination. Husserl's radical move to treat imagination on a par with perception and signification bears out the nature of consciousness as intentional through and through, and imagination as reducing empirical exteriority.

However, as Brian Elliott informs us in *Phenomenology and Imagination in Husserl and Heidegger*,<sup>9</sup> Husserl's vacillation, demonstrated in terms of his identifying, in a certain respect, imagination with perception and at others, with signification, accounts for, or at least, purports to account for, an ambiguity obfuscating Husserl's conception of phantasy. Imagination is both intuitive and inauthentic. It is intuitive because the imagined object and the image "resemble" one another, and it is inauthentic because the imagined or intended object is intuited in its absence. Being intuitive is a quality it shares with perception, while being inauthentic is a quality it shares with signification, hence, imagination shares qualities with the two. Imagination as being intuitive and inauthentic shows how the seemingly disparate modalities of perception and signification can nonetheless be brought together. This is not, as in Kant's transcendental imagination which navigates between the pure concepts of reason and sensibility, but that allow for the theoretical determination of the three intentional modalities to be enveloped under the category of objectifying intentional acts.<sup>10</sup> The mediation that imagination assumes between perception and signification is a theoretical one because it is a mediation only insofar as it shares a quality with perception and signification. However, in contradistinction to Elliott's argument that, overall, Husserl is wont to approximate imagination closely to perception as opposed to signification, I argue that such a reading fails to sufficiently appreciate the relation between phantasy and signification that Husserl recounts in Investigation One of *LI*.

Therefore, in pulling together what I argue to be constitutive of Husserl's legitimation and delegitimation of imagination or phantasy, I seek to establish and make manifest the ambiguity in evidence in his conception or treatment of imagination. In so doing, I attempt to demonstrate how Husserl's theory of imagination is central to the formation of his theory of intentionality.

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<sup>9</sup> Brian Elliott, *Phenomenology and Imagination in Husserl and Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2008). Cf. Mark P. Drost, "The Primacy of Perception in Husserl's Theory of Imagining," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 50:3 (March 1990).

<sup>10</sup> This "theoretical determination" is evident in both *LI I* and *LI II*.

**Phantasie as an Intentional Modality of Consciousness**

In the light of Husserl's clarion call, i.e., that of a return to experience itself as that which is amenable to consciousness and thus to phenomenological analysis, Husserl analyzes the "human lived experience" by examining what an intentional act *is* or what constitutes an intentional act. Husserl proceeds to carry out this "implied task" by categorizing and articulating the three fundamental intentional acts, namely, perception, imagination, and signification—which are intimately linked to his discussion of the intentionality of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> In other words, they constitute or characterize what it means for consciousness to be intentional in the first place. Hence, as Dan Zahavi notes in *Husserl's Phenomenology*,<sup>12</sup> when Husserl devotes himself in *LI* to a detailed analysis of consciousness, he does not venture to seek the empirical conditions which allow for human beings to be conscious, such as a fully developed brain. Instead, Husserl concentrates on what it really means to be conscious, that is, the constituent elements of the conscious act, the non-empirical elements that make consciousness what it is and which—crucially for phenomenology—reveal themselves to consciousness in its acts. What does Husserl's distinction between these three intentional acts consist of? A rapid sketch as regards these three objectifying intentional acts will help us here.

In perception, the intentional object (the perceived) is given in *propria persona* or in 'flesh and blood', as Husserl has it in Hua XXIII, that is, the perceived object is empirically given or available to me in *hic et nunc* or at the very moment I am intending it. Hence, perception is intuitive and authentic. In imagination, the imagined is empirically absent but is brought to presence by my imagining it, such that imagination brings something absent to presence, or as Richard Kearney puts it in *Poetics of Imagining*, the imagined is intuited in its absence. Hence, it is intuitive and *inauthentic*. In signification, the signified or the intentional object has, ostensibly, nothing to do with the sign or the vessel to which the signified is deployed, hence, the necessity for someone to learn or know the meaning of the sign. As such, signification is inauthentic; it could not, relative to perception, be intuitively fulfilled, i.e., it is an empty modality of intentionality. Amidst this rapid sketch, however, it is clear that in the act of perceiving, there is a specifically perceived object, in imagining, a specifically imagined object, and in signifying, a specifically signified object. Hence, I do not simply doubt, but doubt that "there will be a

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, these are not the only intentional acts Husserl speaks of in *LI*. But for the purposes of the current investigation, I concentrate on these.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

rainfall today” or, do not simply fear, but “fear that the rain will be heavy today,” do not simply judge, but “judge that my laptop is on the table,” and so on and so forth, such that my doubting, fearing, and judging, and all other intentional acts for that matter, all have a specific intentional object. In other words, consciousness does not imagine, perceive, or signify in a vacuum.

Imagination or phantasy demonstrates that the intentional object need not be restricted to the empirical object of perception, and thus that the transcendence inherent to consciousness is of a nature entirely other to the spatial and physical alterity of empirical objects. It is in this way that as Kearney informs us: “phenomenology rescues imagination from its ‘naturalistic’ confusion with perception and restores it to its essential role as a power capable of intending the unreal *as if* it were real, the absent *as if* it were present, the possible *as if* it were actual.”<sup>13</sup> As articulated above, imagination provides a form of theoretical mediation between perception and signification because it demonstrates that the intentional object neither is, nor need be reducible to the empirical existing object of perception. The intentional object in the form of an imagined object reveals the minimal intentional structure—an act–object correlation—that inheres across all objectifying intentional modalities and need not contain an empirically existing object as it happens to do in perception and may do in signitive acts (in judgments of perception). Hence, the role of theoretical mediation that imagination plays between perception and signification brings out a point on which it shares in at least in one respect with what seems radically different acts, i.e., perception as intuitive and authentic, signification as non-intuitive and inauthentic. In this structure, perception and signification appear to be very detached from one another even when their links with imagination in one respect allow them to be both included under a broad array of intentional acts.

As imagination shares a common ground with perception and signification, it assumes the status of a *sui generis* intentional modality that is understood within an act–object correlation or, as Husserl later phrased it in *Ideas I*, a noetic–noematic correlation. This places imagination on an equal footing with perception and signification. And this amounts to a legitimation of imagination as it defies the traditional conceptions of imagination briefly adumbrated in the introductory section of this project. For by treating imagination as such, that is, as a non-positing act with its own type of intentional object, Husserl legitimizes and salvages imagination from the

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, 17. In Hua XXIII, Husserl speaks of the object of phantasy or its peculiar character in three different ways: (i) as the *as if*, the *as it were*, and the *quasi*. Owing to the scope of this current paper, I will not touch upon this other voluminous text of Husserl.

accusations or denigration of it being illusory or delusional. Phantasy's *non-positing act-quality* accounts for how phantasing or imagining consciousness does not construe the intentional object to be empirically existing. By elevating imagination to the level of an intentional act on par with perception and signification, Husserl recognizes the fundamental role imagination assumes in demonstrating the nature of intentionality as *object-directed*. The same elevation of imagination relative to its conventional status emphasizes that since consciousness by nature is intentional through and through, then it relates to its object in various objectifying intentional acts under a single modality of intentionality, of consciousness being "object-directed."

The recognition of the object-directedness of consciousness, as we shall see in the following section, fundamentally contributes to Husserl's analysis and critique of the *Bildertheorie*. His insistence that the intentional object as in the case of imagining, is *transcendent*, that is, that consciousness entails a movement of self-transcendence, intending what is irreducible to itself, and thus is not intramental, contradicts the classical conception of the image which the *Bildertheorie* had espoused.<sup>14</sup> The same assertion further cements what I argue to be his positive valuation of phantasy. But it still leaves unclear the status of the image in Husserl. In arguing that the intentional object is not intramental, Husserl claims that the intentional object is not the image, and—for that very reason—says little about it other than that it is operative in an intentional movement.

### The Phantasied Centaur Is Not Inside My Mind, or Is It?

The *Bildertheorie* construes the imagined object as an "immanent" or mental object, that is, as Husserl recounts, it claims that "outside the thing itself, is there (or is at times there); in consciousness there is an image which does duty for it."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the *Bildertheorie* sees the *image as standing in for it* and effectively becoming the intended object.<sup>16</sup> In contradistinction to this thesis, Husserl emphasizes that it is different for me to imagine an image

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<sup>14</sup> *Phantasie* is neither delusional nor illusory in that it is a *non-positional consciousness*, that is, it does not construe its object to be empirically existing (although the intentional object may indeed exist somewhere else, as can the case when I imagine something *absent* at the moment, as in Sartre's example of imagining his friend Peter who happens to be in Berlin. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of Imagination*, trans. by J. Webber (London and New York: Routledge, 2004). S. Geniusas also offers an insightful reading of Husserl's distinction between *Phantasie*, illusion, and other (intentional) acts (see Saulius Geniusas, "Modes of Self-Awareness: Perception, Dreams, Memory," in *Husserl Studies*, 38:2, (2022), <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10743-022-09301-9>>).

<sup>15</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Ricoeur also speaks about this problematic of imagination in *From Text to Action*, particularly in the Chapter "Imagination in Discourse and in Action."

of something, like a picture within a picture, compared to imagining the thing within the image itself, where its content determines what is imagined. The *image as image* is not what consciousness is directing itself towards or what it “has in mind” but merely that through which it imagines *what* it imagines.

In §11 of *LI*'s Investigation Five, Husserl categorically asserts the “non-intramental” nature of the intentional object.<sup>17</sup> In imagining a Pegasus or some other fictional character, a noetic–noematic correlation is established notwithstanding it being a *fictional* character. I may then subject my experience of imagining of Pegasus to a thorough “descriptive analysis.” I may, as Husserl puts it, “dismember” the intentional experience and painstakingly investigate it, examine it carefully, but the fictional intentional object, i.e., the Pegasus, will be sought in vain. As Husserl asserts: “[T]he ‘immanent’, ‘mental object’ is not therefore part of the descriptive or real make-up (*deskriptiven reellen Bestand*) of the experience, it is in truth not really immanent or mental.”<sup>18</sup> Such a fact goes to show further that the intended object which is in this case, the *imagined*, does not “inhabit” my mind or consciousness as if it were something that, as Brough puts it in terms of a picture, is “tacked to the wall of the mind.”<sup>19</sup> Certainly, I am conscious of the Pegasus but not of the image which I merely experience or which I undergo the moment I intend it, but this does not imply that the Pegasus or the “centaur,” to use Husserl's example, is inside my mind or consciousness. As such, Husserl maintains that irrespective of whether the intended object exists or not, whether it is imagined or not, whether it is fictional, hallucinatory, or not, the intentional act remains nonetheless intentional, insofar as my imagining (as well as perceiving and signifying) is directed towards an object. As Husserl writes: “it makes no difference what sort of being we give our object, or with what sense or justification we do so, whether this being is real (real) or ideal, genuine, possible or impossible, the act remains ‘directed upon’ its object.”<sup>20</sup> Husserl makes a parallel point to the preceding in the vital Appendix to §§11–20. He writes: “if I represent God to myself, or an angel, or an intelligible thing-in-itself [...] I mean the transcendent object named in each case, in other words my intentional object: it makes no difference whether this object exists or is imaginary or absurd.”<sup>21</sup> As such, the

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<sup>17</sup> What do we mean by “intentional object” in this context? Husserl is clear on this point. For him, when one intends a cup, it is the cup one intends (or perceives)—the cup is the object of one's perception.

<sup>18</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 99.

<sup>19</sup> John Brough, “Something That Is Nothing but Can Be Anything: The Image and Our Consciousness of It,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*, ed. by Dan Zahavi (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 2012), 546.

<sup>20</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 120.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 127. Cf. §11 of Investigation Five in *LI*.



intentional object—whatever it might be—in no way invalidates the intentional act as intentional, i.e., as always object-directed. Hence, imagination allows one to see that intentionality can be operative whether the object is given in *propria persona* or intended only “as-if” (*als ob*).

Furthermore, Husserl, by carefully drawing the distinction between the matter and the intentional object, argues that while it is the *matter* that directs the consciousness towards the object; it is precisely the *object* that consciousness intends.<sup>22</sup> The matter or the sensory presentation (i.e., percept, image, sign) determines that it is *this* rather than *that* that shapes the content of the intentional object.<sup>23</sup> It is in this way that my *imagining* (and thus in equivalent fashion, my *perceiving* and *signifying*) is directed towards the imagined or the intended object. And as such, the “image” (the matter) simply facilitates or directs my consciousness towards the intentional object just as the “percept” does in my perceiving of the “tree” and the “sign” does in my signifying. Hence, as Julia Jansen writes, for Husserl, “in all cases, consciousness of an object amounts to a relation to an object, and not to a mental representation.”<sup>24</sup> The *Bildertheorie* fails to recognize this distinction and claims instead that the imagined object is “in the mind” or “intramental.” The “matter” may be combined with various act-qualities. Thus, I can imagine or perceive that “the pail is full of water.” Conversely, act-quality may likewise be paired with various matters. Thus, I can *imagine* that the iron is hot, imagine that the iron is on the table, imagine that the coffee is hot, imagine that the portable speaker is on the table, imagine that my laptop is running out of battery, and so on. As such, as part of the intentional act, the matter is together with the act, determinative of the object intended, insofar as it is *intended*.

Hence, the *Bildertheorie* overlooks the fundamental distinction between act and object, a distinction which, as Zahavi remarks, can be further demonstrated on two counts. First, I can intend or imagine one and the same object in various ways such that the “identity of the object cannot depend on

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<sup>22</sup> Otherwise put, the matter determines the content of the intentional (intended) object. Consciousness as intentional implies that intentional (conscious) acts are directed towards the object which is always transcendent.

<sup>23</sup> The *percept* points to the fact that I am perceiving something, and therefore, the object, say a cup of coffee on the table, is given to me in *propria persona*. In like manner, the *image* (in *Phantasie*) and the *sign* (in signification) respectively imply that I phantasy a cup—I see it *as-if* it is given to me in *hic et nunc*—or signify it, i.e., treat it as sign which points towards the signified. This implies that the intentional object appears in a certain mode of givenness, i.e., as perceived, phantasied, signified, among others. There should be no conflating between these modes of givenness, although it is possible for the same object to be given in perception, phantasy, and signification.

<sup>24</sup> Julia Jansen, “Husserl,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, ed. by Amy Kind (New York: Routledge, 2016), 75.

the identity of the act,"<sup>25</sup> i.e., I can perceive the same cup of coffee on the table while seeing it, for instance, at a different angle. In such a case, it is the same object I (visually) perceive in these different acts of perception. Second, for Husserl, objects appear perspectively, that is, objects appear in a specific profile, such that an intentional act in no way captures the entirety of profiles constituting the total phenomenality or appearance of the object perceived or imagined from all sides. Furthermore, this perspectival nature of the perceived or imagined object allows for the possibility of variations in terms of the experienced contents while intending the same intentional object.

### Phantasying Essences and Universals

In *Ideas I*, Husserl speaks of the role imagination or fantasy assumes in eidetic variation. More particularly, Husserl spells out the quintessential role of imagination in free variation with a view to the possibility of "eidetic seeing" (*Wesensschau*). This complex act finds its detailed articulation in another work of Husserl, titled *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*.<sup>26</sup> Early on in *Experience* (87a), Husserl articulates the necessity of free variation in view of eidetic seeing for the reason that "the universal which first comes to prominence in the empirically given must from the outset be freed from its character of contingency."<sup>27</sup> This is precisely so, because phantasy elevates the intended object to that status whereby it is no longer confined to or determined by its empirical or spatio-temporal component.

What does this eidetic seeing consist of? Jansen notes that for Husserl, eidetic seeing consists of three methodological phases. The first phase is that of "free variation." For Husserl, I must and can vary the examples in imagination, such that what is abiding in all of them becomes clear, a process similar to Hegel's conception of the associative imagination's rubbing off of the differences of the images and extracting the common among them.<sup>28</sup> Imagination is thus "free" on two important counts. First, imagination emancipates itself from the *limiting* confines of perception. This is so insofar as in the act of phantasying, the imagined object is not beholden to the limiting *spatio-temporal* and *empirical* components—that is, the *specific time* and *place* where the object is situated and intuited—of the intended or imagined

<sup>25</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. by J.S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Encyclopaedia 1830*. I have also dealt with this issue at length in Mark Antony Jalalum, "Phantasia in language Formation?: Imagination in Hegel's Psychology," in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 16:1 (June 2022).

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object as in the case of the perceived object in perception. In other words, as Jansen remarks, imagination or phantasy has the capacity to transgress the rules governing the perceived object such as the spatio-temporal and causal rules. As such, the imagined objects “may change color, shape, location, size, etc., in an instant and for no apparent reason.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the imagined objects do not only transgress the spatio-temporal and causal rules but also “defy the laws of gravity and nature.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, to use Jansen’s example: the imagined objects are floating in the air despite their supposed heavy weight or talking despite their being “inanimate.”

Early on in *Ideas I*, Husserl claims that imagination unshackles things from the manacles or confines of the status of being empirical facts, such that things receive, as Kearney puts it, “an ideal status as possibilities, possibilities of which each fact is but a single instance.”<sup>31</sup> Here, Kearney remarks that Husserl speaks of the “grasping of essences” which is achieved through imagination and abstraction. Reverberating with Husserl’s emphasis on imagination as having a pivotal role in eidetic seeing, Jansen writes, “[imagination] is free of all commitments to actualities, exploring strictly pure possibilities.”<sup>32</sup> Second, imagination, “produces arbitrary variations that are ultimately experienced as an infinitely open multiplicity”<sup>33</sup> from which the *eidōs* emerges as that which is invariable amidst the variation. The second methodological phase is best articulated in §87c of *Experience* when Husserl speaks about the superimposition and/or coinciding of similar images with each other leading to the formation of universals or essences. Incidentally, this move is also manifest in Hegel’s articulation in the “Psychology”<sup>34</sup> of the associative imagination in being fundamentally responsible for the creation of universals—a similar movement, which Hegel attributes to the function or power of associative imagination. But relative to Hegel’s insistence that it is the working of imagination through association that the universal is formed, or an essence is extracted and made known, Husserl maintains that *eidetic seeing* is a specifically undertaken series of imaginative acts, undertaken as

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<sup>29</sup> Jansen, “Husserl,” 71.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Jansen, “Husserl,” 77. Such a reading supports the view held by several Husserl scholars that Husserl’s phenomenology is by and large an “eidetic phenomenology” (phenomenology of essence/s). Jansen, in another work, goes further to suggest that *Phantasie* assumes a central role in Husserl’s phenomenological project (see Julia Jansen, “Phantasy’s Place in Husserl’s Work: On the condition of the possibility for a phenomenology of experience,” in *Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers Vol. 3*, ed. by R. Bernet, D. Welton, and G. Zavota (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–28*, trans. by R. Wood (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia 1830*.

part of the phenomenological methodology. The associative operations in Hegel are much less conscious than these. Furthermore, in a slightly different key, Husserl in *Experience* speaks of the overlapping of similar images which leads to the formation and apprehension of the universal. In the overlapping of different images, their specificities or specific determinations enter, writes Husserl, “in a purely passive way, into a synthetic unity in which they all appear as modifications of one another and then as arbitrary sequences of particulars in which the same universal is isolated as an *eidos*.”<sup>35</sup> Commenting on the ideality of meaning in Husserl, Ricoeur writes: “[i]t is always through an exercise of imagination that I grasp the ideality of meaning.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Jansen notes that this second methodological phase paves the way for the third, such that this “overlapping coincidence” as Husserl calls it, allows for the possibility of identifying the universal which is also in itself the *eidos*. This *eidos* which transcends particularities and specificities, is, as Husserl describes in §87a, “that without which an object of a particular kind cannot be thought, i.e., without which the object cannot be intuitively imagined as such.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, albeit by way of articulating the basic problem confronting Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger, that is, the relation between the empirically real and the transcendently ideal, Elliott, articulates how for Husserl phantasy is vital to phenomenological analysis. In an attempt to offer a Husserlian answer to the same problem, Elliott provides a detailed account of Husserl’s intention–fulfilment dynamic. Intuition or any act of intuition, as Elliott puts it, *fulfils* the intention. As such, it appears that Husserl, without resorting to a kind of third term between reason and sensibility as Kant had done with the transcendental *Einbildungskraft*, manages to establish the relation between the transcendently ideal and the empirically real. However, that Husserl has not resorted to a third term, Elliott argues, is not definitely the case, since Husserl in his *early writings* prior to his *LI* articulates two ways by which he may have resorted to a third term in an attempt to provide a clear account of the unity between the transcendently ideal and the empirically real. For one, Husserl recognizes the fundamental role that imagination or “free fantasy” assumes in the phenomenological analysis, so much so that he maintains though not without controversy, that ““feigning” [“Fiktion”] makes the vital

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<sup>35</sup> Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 343.

<sup>36</sup> The quoted passage is from Paul Ricoeur’s yet unpublished *Lectures on Imagination* (1975) he delivered at the University of Chicago. George H. Taylor is currently editing the same lectures and is expected to come out in print in early months of 2024. I express my sincerest gratitude to Prof. Taylor for allowing me to access Ricoeur’s unpublished lectures.

<sup>37</sup> Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 341.

element of phenomenology as of every eidetic sciences, that feigning is the source from which the cognition of “eternal truths” is fed.”<sup>38</sup>

What the preceding articulation amounts to, therefore, is that Husserl speaks about it being better to use cases of acts that are imagined—a perceptual act as one imagines oneself performing it—for phenomenological purposes. So, it is better for me, when investigating the essence of perception, not to take an actual perceptual act as my object of analysis, but to imagine myself perceiving an object. In this way, I take advantage of imagination’s *reduction of everything empirical* with the inclusion in normal acts for perception of a present, empirical object. The real intentional object of perception is thus contained within the phantasied act of perceiving, though without its actual empirical presence. Elliott notes that Husserl’s “preference for imaginary presentation in phenomenological description”<sup>39</sup> demonstrates that the meaningfulness of mental acts is fundamentally independent of the actual or empirical existence of an intentional object. Otherwise put, imagination performs a sort of phenomenological reduction that makes possible the appearance of the transcendental.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, from what I have demonstrated thus far, it becomes apparent that Husserl provides a positive account or evaluation of imagination evinced in his treatment of imagination as an intentional modality and as a potent argument against the claims of the *Bildertheorie*, and as vital to *eidetic seeing*. Having articulated such, in what way then does Husserl treat imagination in a negative fashion? What does his delegitimation of imagination consist of?

### ***Phantasie*: Close to Perception or Signification?**

In this section, I examine how for Husserl the proximity of phantasy to signification is undermined in the name of maintaining it as an offshoot of perception. Husserl’s elevation of imagination to an intentional act on an equal footing with perception and signification, I maintain, provides a fertile ground for phantasy to be recognized as being fundamentally engaged with, or even in, signification. Husserl does not develop this rapport as thoroughly as he might have done. The structure of the act–object correlation enveloping perception, imagination, and signification, I argue, contributes to Husserl’s

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<sup>38</sup> Husserl, *Ideas I*, 160. This point is also of immense importance in Husserl’s distinction between “fact” and “truth” in the early parts of *Ideas I*. Put briefly, whereas facts are contingent, that is to say, they can be otherwise, truth is unchanging.

<sup>39</sup> Elliott, *Phenomenology and Imagination*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> But one might ask: what particular form of phantasy is actually employed in eidetic seeing? One may employ, I argue, as many forms of phantasy possible. There are good reasons to suppose that such is Husserl’s suggestion not only in *Ideas* but also in other manuscripts, particularly in Hua XXIII, where he devotes himself to a detailed analysis of *Phantasie*.

identifying imagination in certain respects with perception, and at times, with signification. This *identification* goes back to the fact that insofar as imagination is intuitive, it approximates closely to perception, while it being inauthentic draws Husserl to identify imagination with acts of signification. Hence, this identification and Husserl's failure to fortify or develop further the rapport between imagination and signification, I maintain, constitutes his delegitimation of imagination.<sup>41</sup>

It must be noted that the ambiguity I am alleging is neither articulated in full in Investigation One nor in Investigations Five and Six of *LI*. But Husserl touches upon this ambiguity in a scattered manner in various sections of Investigation Six, where he shifts his inquiry from discussing the matters of consciousness and meaning (Investigation Five) to that of epistemological questioning (Investigation Six). In Investigation One, however, Husserl articulates the possibility for phantasy to be involved in signification or particularly in silent monologue, hence, imagination's proximity to signification. As such, attempts to demonstrate the same ambiguity confront the challenge of piecing together Husserl's various articulations regarding imagination as now allied with perception, now with signification.

We may point to two reasons which I think are constitutive of the argued ambiguity, namely, the object-directedness of consciousness and the relation between meaning-intention and fulfilment. The object-directedness of consciousness is vital here because the pointing away of the word-sound closely resembles or is very much like what a sign is or does. As such, it appears that signification assumes that moment not only in imagination but in all intentional acts insofar as the sensory presentation (i.e., percept, image, sign) points away from itself to the object. Otherwise put, the idea of intentionality, of act-matter, appears to presuppose a certain sign movement, a pointing away from sensory content to an object. The image as sensory presentation directs or points the consciousness towards the imagined object. And such a point evinces the possibility for a rapport between imagination and signification.<sup>42</sup> Imagination, therefore, will have been vital to thought and

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<sup>41</sup> A further point, I think, which has contributed to this ambiguous status of phantasy in Husserl's *LI* consists in the fact that Husserl has not yet spelled out—relative to what one finds in Hua XXIII—in greater detail the distinction between perception, phantasy, signification, among others. In Hua XXIII, he clarifies that, whereas perception, memory, and anticipation are positional consciousness, that is, they posit their objects to be existing, phantasy is non-positional consciousness, i.e., it does not construe its object to be empirically existing—there is no doxastic belief as regards the existence of the phantasied object ( Cf. 1904–05 Lectures, Hua XXIII).

<sup>42</sup> In "Text Nr. XIV," Hua XXIII, Husserl has insightfully dealt with this point at length. He maintained that in cases where—as can the case with picture consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*)—the image object does not faithfully resemble, depict, or represent the image subject, what one has is an image object which *symbolically* represents the image subject, i.e., the

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*logos* had it been aligned with signification, with signs as they are deployed in the to-and-fro of communicative discourse. *LI I*, despite its promising account of phantasy functioning in inner monologue, does not seem to say that much.<sup>43</sup>

In Investigations Five and Six, Husserl speaks of the relation between “meaning-intention” and “fulfilment,” a relation which implicates imagination as an offshoot of perception or approximates imagination closely to perception at the expense of the possibility of it being vitally involved in the activity of signification. Early on in Investigation Six (particularly in §11) Husserl talks about the relation between the concept or thought and the corresponding intuition. Husserl writes in §13: “[a]ll intentions have corresponding possibilities of fulfillment (or opposed frustration): these themselves are peculiar transitional experiences, characterizable as acts, which permit each other to ‘reach its goal’ in an act specially correlated with it.”<sup>44</sup> Jansen affirms the same point, thus: “Husserl points out that the most important feature imagining shares with perceiving is that both constitute an *immediate* intuitive awareness of objects. Neither of them, according to Husserl, involves awareness of representations or ideas (from which an object may at best be inferred).”<sup>45</sup>

Husserl maintains that when the intention “matches” with the intuition or when the intuition coincides with the intention, the intention is

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phantasied object in picture consciousness. This insight is important in that the symbolical representation of the image subject, as opposed to a “thoroughgoing resemblance” which points *inward*, points outward. For this reason, an image object which depicts an image subject symbolically exhibits the same dynamic one finds in signification, or the sign -signified link—of the sign *pointing away from itself* towards the signified. For relevant analysis of this point as it figures in *LI*, see Chapters IV and VII of Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. by L. Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> I concur with some Husserl scholars such as Bernet and Byrne arguing that one has to wait for a much later texts for Husserl's detailed treatment of signs ( Cf. Hua XX-1, i.e., Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil. Entwürfe zur Umarbeitung der VI. Untersuchung und zur Vorrede für die Neuauflage der Logischen Untersuchungen*, ed. by U. Melle (Den Haag: Kluwer Publishers, 2002); Hua XX-2, i.e., Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband Zweiter Teil. Texte für die Neufassung der VI. Untersuchung. Zur Phänomenologie des Ausdrucks und der Erkenntnis*, ed. by U. Melle (Den Haag: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002). By “not saying that much” above, I mean Husserl has not further develop the rapport between phantasy and signification. Indeed, Husserl provides an extensive analysis of signs in “Essential Distinctions.” But his analysis, perhaps owing to the fact that it was not in any way concerned with establishing the connection between phantasy and signification, fails to articulate the role of phantasy in language in further. Derrida's critique of Husserl in this regard consists in this: that signs function as reproducible ideality, thereby implicating phantasy as a reproductive agency (Cf. Chapter IV, *Voice and Phenomena*).

<sup>44</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 216.

<sup>45</sup> Jansen, “Husserl,” 73.

fulfilled; if not, the intention is frustrated. In other words, intuition either fulfils or frustrates the intention, such that the intention–intuition relation is synthesized either by way of *identification* or *distinction*; and these syntheses are in themselves objectifying acts. The latter forms of synthesis owe a brief articulation. To use Husserl’s own example, when I intend that “A is green” and the intuition shows that “A is green” then the intention is fulfilled, and thus, there is an *identification*, that is, the intention “A is green” is identified as such in intuition. Hence, there is no conflict between the intention and intuition, but a fulfilment. However, if I intend “A is green” but the intuition turns out to be that “A is red”, then the intention is frustrated. But the same “experience of conflict puts things into relation and unity,” as Husserl puts it, insofar as “A is green” is distinguished from “A is red,” and thus, are distinguished from each other.<sup>46</sup> The former synthesis, i.e., the synthesis of fulfillment is a kind of synthesis which Husserl calls “identifications binding self-manifestations of an object to self-manifestations of the same object.”<sup>47</sup>

Husserl will later on maintain in *Experience* that the hidden profiles of the intentional object are *emptily co-intended*,<sup>48</sup> that is, they, together with what is seen — as can the case with visual perception — are *intended*; otherwise, it would not make any sense to say, ‘I am perceiving a cup (of coffee) on top a table’. One might maintain that the link between perception and phantasy may be established here, i.e., that imagination can supply the *anticipated* profiles of the intentional object, and thus, Husserl will have appeared to be implicating phantasy in some acts of perception. Otherwise put, in the case of perceiving something, whereby owing to the object’s nature as appearing perspectively, other profiles are not perceived in the single intentional act, imagination will have assumed a role in supplying the object’s other profiles which are not outrightly perceived. For instance, in perceiving a laptop, I do

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *LI II*, Investigation Six, particularly §§ 10, 11, and 13.

<sup>47</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 221.

<sup>48</sup> I must note in passing, however, that some scholars working on Husserl — Prof. Maxime Doyon, for instance — would refer to this point not as *empty co-intention* but *anticipation*, that is, the hidden profiles are not emptily co-intended but *anticipated*. Doyon proposed this view in his keynote lecture delivered at the “2023 Copenhagen Summer School in Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind,” at the University of Copenhagen, DK (the conference I participated in, which took place from 14–19 August 2023, was organized by Prof. Dan Zahavi in coordination with the Ph.D. School and the Centre for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen). Such a reading is far from being immune to objections. For one, one can argue — and this thesis is not without textual basis — that as regards the other profiles of the intentional object, they are indeed given as part of the horizon of perceptual experience; and anticipation is apt for a kind of “not-yet” which is proper to a certain future. In other words, anticipation is linked to “futuraity.” On “anticipation” and “futuraity,” see Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. by A.J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001); Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time 1893-1917*, trans. by J.B. Brough (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).



not immediately perceive all the other parts constituting it such as its intricate internal connections, and whatnot, but I can — although, I do not *ordinarily* do so — anticipate and *imagine* or *know* through an interpretative *Auffassung* that the laptop has all those parts without necessarily breaking or dissecting the laptop into parts or pieces.<sup>49</sup> This supposed power of imagination, working in conjunction with anticipation and interpretative *Auffassung* suggests that imagination plays a certain role in all intuitive acts. One intends not just the profile of an object, but the object imagined or conceived as many-sided. This point finds its categorical pronouncement in Husserl's remark on the perspectival nature of the object. Writes he: "all perceiving and imagining, is, on our view, a web of partial intentions, fused together in the unity of a single total intention."<sup>50</sup> At the outset, it is indeed tempting to espouse the view the phantasy supplies the hidden profiles of what is perceived. But while *LI* appears to be open to such kind reading, Hua XXIII makes clear that the "fields of regard" proper to perception and phantasy could not overlap, let alone intermingle. Their respective "fields of regard" are different things. As Husserl puts it, "inspected more closely, precisely *corresponding fields of touch cannot be filled out simultaneously as fields of sensation and as phantasy fields: this can only happen in conscious succession, just as in the case of the field of vision.*"<sup>51</sup> An exception — if it is all justified to call it an exception — in terms of the possibility for perception and phantasy to 'come together' is *Bildbewusstsein* (image consciousness), since in it, an empirical content, an image-object is needed to re-present an image-subject. But in *Bildbewusstsein*, imagination makes no such act of supplying any hidden profiles, rather, it takes on an altogether different function, namely, re-presenting an image-subject through an image object, as would be the case in portraits (and whatnot).

Husserl details further the structure arguably shared by perception and imagination. The imagined object, just like the perceived, which is intended in various instances remains one and the same object in each imagining occasion. As Husserl puts it: "corresponding to the synthesis of manifold of perceptions, where the same object always presents *itself*, we have the parallel synthesis of a manifold of imaginations, in which the same object appears *in a likeness.*"<sup>52</sup> Thus, imagination's intuitive quality approximates closely to perception. Elliott maintains the same point in a chapter devoted to articulating Husserl's intentionality of consciousness.

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<sup>49</sup> For a more recent treatment of Husserl's concept of interpretative *Auffassung*, see Kayu Hui, "The *Hyle* of Imagination and Reproductive Consciousness: Husserl's Phenomenology of Phantasy Reconsidered," in *Husserl Studies*, 38:3 (2022).

<sup>50</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 211.

<sup>51</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory 1898–1925*, trans. by John Brough (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 181. Italics added.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Elliott argues that Husserl approximates imagination closely to perception and distances the former from signification insofar as the sign and signified have nothing to do with each other.

However, although Husserl, as Elliott further notes, is drawn, on the one hand, to approximating imagination closely to perception insofar as it is intuitive, to some extent, on the other hand, he construes imagination to be approximately close to signification insofar as it is inauthentic. Overall, however, Elliott argues that Husserl appears to closely align imagination to perception relative to signification insofar as there is a kind of *inner connection* between act and object which is common to perception and imagination. This inner connection is not shared by the sign–signified relation. Hence, the interpretation that imagination is an offshoot of perception. As such, as Mark Raftery-Skehan argues<sup>53</sup> Husserl emphasizes the proximity between perception and imagination, and thus overlooks the rapport he has begun to show between imagination and signification, of an interpretative *Auffassung* being involved in each. This is indicative of his attempt “to safeguard the autonomy of conceptual thought and expression.”<sup>54</sup> Here, it must be noted further that Husserl begins to conform to the general trend in the classical tradition of keeping apart imagination and signification. Such is a conformity which downplays or undermines the fertile possibility for there being a rapport between imagination and signification as evinced by the fact that there is a determination and an *Auffassung* of the sensory presentation in both, as Husserl himself demonstrates. Interestingly, Kearney emphasizes this failure of Husserl to recognize the proximity between imagination and signification. Kearney argues that imagination and signification “are not two opposed modes of intentionality but are inextricably related through their common belonging to language.”<sup>55</sup>

Raftery-Skehan argues that the sign–signified relation is not simply non-intuitive insofar as one needs the sign that is intuitive in its determinate

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<sup>53</sup> Mark Raftery-Skehan, “An Imagination Reductive or Reproductive of the Sign? The Possibility of Signification in Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* and Derrida’s *La voix et le phénomène*” (Unpublished manuscript, May 2019). Suffice it to say here that insofar as my concentration in this section is directed towards articulating the ambiguity clouding Husserl’s treatment of imagination, I do away with taking on-board and in detailed fashion the difference between Husserl and Derrida’s treatment of signification. Raftery-Skehan has dealt with the same distinction extensively. I thank Prof. Raftery-Skehan for allowing me to access this early version of his article on the Husserl–Derrida debate on imagination and signification. See also Michele Averchi, “Husserl on Communication and Knowledge Sharing in *Logical Investigations* and a 1931 Manuscript,” in *Husserl Studies*, 34:3 (October 2018).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, 145. Here, Kearney seems to echo Paul Ricoeur’s contention that fiction is language-based ( Cf. Paul Ricoeur, “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,” in *Man and World*, 12:2 (June 1979).

intuitability for signification to function. This intuitive content is not simply arbitrary, that is, it is conventionally determined in a language, and one cannot simply change or replace that intuitive content for another willy-nilly. It has a certain necessity for the community of speakers of that language. It involves an operation of *Auffassung*, just as does imagination, which, requires an operation of *Auffassung* interpretatively determining the sensory presentation or the physical image.<sup>56</sup> Hence, imagination and signification have more in common than might first appear, as when the distinction between arbitrariness and resemblance is that used to grasp them. Husserl shows this, but his text gives the impression, as Elliott comments or interprets, that the intuitive modalities, i.e., perception and imagination, must be rigorously segregated from the supposedly “empty” modality of signification.

In §25 of *LI II*, Husserl recognizes the fact that the signified could not simply just “hang in the air,” hence it has to “cling on” (*als Anhang*) to an “intuitable sign,” or as Husserl puts it, “we always find it clinging to an intuitive basis.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, the intrinsic material of the sign furnishes an “intuitive support (*Anhalt*)” to the signified without necessarily providing an intuitive fulfilment to signification. In other words, consciousness utilizes the sign at the service of the signified (meaning) by making it the carrier of meaning such that the sign is at the disposal of the signified. Thus, signification requires further supplementary acts for its intention to be intuitively fulfilled, which basically amounts to knowing. What allows therefore for or what determines the sign to be a sign carrying a particular meaning (signified) in a particular signitive act? The entry point to answering the preceding question can be found in Husserl’s articulation of the act-character, apprehension, or apprehension (*Auffassung*). Signitive *Auffassung* determines or allows for my utterance of a word-sound to mean beyond its mere intuitive-content. Hence, the necessity of *Auffassung* in the sign being not only merely intuitable but also intelligible as having an intuitive content that determines the signified, albeit in a different manner than the way in which the image determines the imagined.

Interestingly, as Raftery-Skehan notes, Husserl’s articulation of the moment of *Auffassung* in both imagination and signification assumes a role in dealing with resemblance consequently leading to the necessity of

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<sup>56</sup> Husserl maintains that it is the act-character and the mode of *Auffassung* or the apprehension of the presentation that causes the image to be taken as representational in character. Hence, the portrait of Frederick the Great or of Johannes Sebastian Bach or of Pope Paul VI becomes a portrait by virtue of it being interpreted as such, that is, as a portrait of such and such. The same is also made manifest in signification, but such a possibility has been overlooked and underdeveloped at least insofar as Husserl’s account in *LI* is concerned.

<sup>57</sup> Husserl, *LI II*, 241.

postulating a signitive reproductive imagination.<sup>58</sup> As such, resemblance allows us to identify two occasions of a sign as being the same sign, hence, on the one hand, the resemblance between sensory presentation and intentional object in imagination, and on the other hand, the “ideal” resemblance between occasions of the sensory presentation central to the possibility of the sign’s identity.<sup>59</sup> The imagination operative in imagination, that is, in seeing the resemblance between the image and the imagined is operative in signification, but this time in reproducing resembling occasions of signs, that is, as *Auffassung*, as interpreted as all amounting to one and the same sign (or “word”).<sup>60</sup>

While Husserl assigns to imagination a role in producing the intuitive content of the sign in silent monologue in *LI*’s Investigation One, and thus demonstrates that imagination identifies itself with signification in soliloquizing thought, this role that imagination assumes, however, is far more complex. Imagination does not just produce a sensible content for the word or sign and thus is never simply an intuitable content but in itself, a sensible ideality. Taking his cue from Derrida’s assertion in *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl’s Phenomenology* regarding reproductive imagination’s role in reproducing signs, Raftery-Skehan maintains that in Husserl there is a role for *Phantasie* in reproducing the sign and the signified.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the thesis that imagination is little more than an offshoot of perception is simplistic indeed. As such, Husserl’s treatment of imagination is not without the same ambiguity as the accounts

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<sup>58</sup> Raftery-Skehan, “Imagination Reductive or Reproductive,” 9.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, Chapters III and IV. The sign is an originally ideal reproducibility for Derrida, something also to be found in Husserl. See also Sections V and VI of Jacques Derrida *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. by J.P. Leavey, Jr. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) and “Form and Meaning” in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>60</sup> It must be noted, however, that resemblance between, say, two (copies of the same) books will have to be rigorously distinguished from the apparent similarity discernible in the functioning of signs—of signs being reproduced in the to-and-fro of communicative discourse. There is a certain “ideality” operative in signs, enabling signs to be “identically” across various instantiations or instances of being utilised. It is within this context that reproductive phantasy will have been summoned (Cf. Chapter IV of Derrida’s *Voice and Phenomenon*).

<sup>61</sup> In *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida critiques Husserl’s description of soliloquizing thought on the ground that (as Derrida maintains) Husserl attributes the ideality of signs solely to inner-monologue and not to the other communicative modalities. But such a critique, as Rudolf Bernet argues in “Husserl’s Theory of Signs Revisited,” fails to consider the significant modifications Husserl has done to his theory of signs which one could find, for instance, in the manuscripts from 1913 and 1914 (Hua XX-1 and XX-2, respectively). However, Derrida, in a sense, could not be wholly faulted for having, to a huge degree, confined his critique of Husserl’s theory of signs to the first of *LI*. One reason being, that for the Derrida of the *Voice and Phenomenon*, Hua XX-1 and XX-2 have not yet been made available; it is extremely likely that he knew nothing of, let alone examine these texts.

of imagination articulated in the classical tradition. Interestingly, this ambiguous role of imagination in Husserl is fundamentally a role of it as theoretical mediation between perception and signification. As an intentional modality theoretically mediating between perception and signification, imagination is elevated to the status of being an intentional act on a par with perception and signification, and thus is freed from the traditional denigration of it as being illusory or delusional. However, as a theoretical mediation between perception and signification, imagination has been delegitimized by neglecting its potentially vital role in signification in favor of treating it as an offshoot of perception.<sup>62</sup>

A brief articulation regarding Husserl and Derrida's articulation of the sign in *Voice and Phenomenon* suffices here. In §8 (Investigation One) of *LI*, Husserl speaks of the sign in inner monologue. For Husserl, in silent thought, the sign, which is either expressive or indicative, assumes the role of an expression in the course of consciousness's act of meaning. Thus, signification starts in that very act of meaning-intention, such that the sign's meaning, for the Husserl of the *LI*, springs from the meaning-intention itself. As such, Husserl maintains that silent monologue allows for the possibility of pure expression insofar as the signs here availed of by consciousness are representations of signs or imagined (*vorgestellt*) signs and not materially existing signs. This cements Husserl's claim that silent conscious thought—and of course, by extension, signs in all signifying modalities—transcends the empirical conditions or reality of language.<sup>63</sup> This is so because the signs availed of in silent monologue are free from circulating in communication, dislocated from the meaning-intention that for Husserl in Investigation One, posits as being the essence of a meaningful expression. It is consciousness imbuing the sounds with meaning that makes them meaningful, rather than language as a system other to each consciousness that Husserl privileges.<sup>64</sup> For Derrida, on the other hand, signification starts by the very fact that there

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<sup>62</sup> Again, as per the immediately preceding footnote, this holds true only to *LI*.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. §9, "Essential Distinctions," *LI I*.

<sup>64</sup> As I have adumbrated above, Husserl recognises the signs' being ideally reproducible in a number of later manuscripts, in Hua XX-1 and Hua XX-2, among others. Recent works on Husserl's theory of signification are as follows: Thomas Byrne, "The Evolution of Husserl's Semiotics: The *Logical Investigations* and its Revisions (1901-1914)," in *Bulletin d'analyse phénoménologique*, 14:5 (2018), <<https://popups.uliege.be/1783-2041/>>; Thomas Byrne, "Surrogates and Empty Intentions: Husserl's "On the Logic of Signs" as the Blueprint for his First Logical Investigations," in *Husserl Studies*, 33:3 (2017), <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10743-017-9210-7>>; Thomas Byrne, "Husserl's Early Semiotics and Number Signs: *Philosophy of Arithmetic* Through the Lens of "On the Logic of Signs (Semiotic)," in *The Journal of British Society for Phenomenology*, 48:4 (2017), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2017.1299941>>.

is already a system of instituted signs which are already meaningful.<sup>65</sup> Here, it must be pointed out that for Derrida, the sign is a *reproducible ideality*. In other words, for a sign to count as sign, then it must be “iterable” on other occasions independent of its actual iteration.

Furthermore, “for the sign to be a sign, it must be irreducible to this or that particular appearance. The word transcends the particularity of each instantiation, yet its every instantiation presupposes this transcendent ideality.”<sup>66</sup> However, the *indicative* nature of the sign for Husserl is a reduction of the original meaning-intention performed by consciousness to a kind of materiality, which gets lost in the vicissitudes of the day-to-day discourse. In other words, for Husserl, the indicative sign is a derivative mode of sign’s functioning. However, irrespective of their differing views regarding imagination’s role in signification, Husserl and Derrida recognize the vital involvement of imagination in that act of “de-materialization,” that is, in the act “of extricating the sign from a merely phenomenal, intuitable essence,”<sup>67</sup> a kind of an *idealizing operation*. Hence, insofar as imagination or phantasy assumes a role in making the sign “ideal,” by which it is no longer reducible to its merely intuitable content or its empirical existence and counts *as such and such* a determinate linguistic sign conforming to the ideal conditions of the possibility of signification or language, there will be a vital role for phantasy in signification in Husserl. This does not mean that phantasy conditions meaning; instead, *Phantasie*, within the context of silent thought, secures the meaning from it being dislocated from the original punctual meaning-intention or it being influenced by anything apart from the original meaning intention itself.<sup>68</sup> However, such function in no way denies the possibility for phantasy to work in language beyond the punctual act of meaning-intention.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> It would be a mistake to suppose that Derrida holds the view one must start from any actual forms of empirical language; rather, he argues that ideal conditions of possibility enable the possibility of any “actual” language.

<sup>66</sup> Raftery-Skehan, “Imagination Reductive or Reproductive,” 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Derrida will, however, suggest that while the original reproducibility of signs, i.e., of the possibility of signs being utilised by other speakers in discourse enables signs to be operative in the first place, signs remain nonetheless open to the possibility of “distortions” and whatnot. But such a case allows not only for reproduction but also for a kind of production of (new) signs.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *LI*, i.e., Husserl’s analysis of the judgement of perception and Chapter VIII of Derrida’s *Voice and Phenomenon*.

## Conclusion

Having gone through the presentation or demonstration above, it is now clear that Husserl's conception of imagination or *Phantasie* is obscured indeed by an ambiguity. As I have sought to show, this ambiguity is spelled out in his act of positively valuing imagination made manifest through a number of reasons adumbrated above and delegitimizing it by failing to fortify or establish further the fertile rapport between imagination and signification he has adumbrated in *LI I*. Husserl may not have explicitly declared his hesitation to develop an imagination that assumes a vital role in signification. However, as his scattered accounts and notes in *passim* in *LI* show, he is wont to treat imagination as an offshoot of perception. But this is a more complicated point as attested to by the telling passages which he devotes himself to in *LI's* Investigation One in painstakingly articulating the role of imagination in silent thought and signification. Hence, whether intended or otherwise, Husserl's conception of imagination has been obscured by an ambiguity. In failing to recognize the significance of his own insights into the commonalities between imagination and signification, Husserl perpetuates the gestures of the philosophers suggested in the introduction in keeping apart the image from the *logos*, imagination from conceptual thought.

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