CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Anna Gorham

Entitled: The Surrealist Glance: A Phenomenological Analysis of Surrealism

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Philosophy)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Bela Egyed

_____ Examiner
Dr. Emilia Angelova

_____ Examiner

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)
Dr. David Morris

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by _____
Dr. Matthias Fritsch, GPD Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean

The Surrealist Glance: A Phenomenological Analysis of Surrealism

Anna Gorham

Supervisor: Dr. David Morris

September, 2021

A Major Research Paper in the Department of Philosophy
Presented in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Philosophy)
at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Abstract

This project draws out complementarities between Surrealist art and phenomenology by noting a convergence between the phenomenological effort of suspension and description, and Surrealist automatism. This is achieved by drawing on Edward S. Casey's effort to complicate phenomenological description by developing an understanding of "peri-phenomenology." Casey contends that our acquaintance with the world rides on our capacity to glance, on fleeting moments of uncommitted perceptual attention. Attending to these moments is especially hard to do, since moments of glancing are beyond our explicit focus. This challenges classic Husserlian approaches to phenomenology since it necessitates investigation of what goes on in our pre-reflective perceptual experience. I argue that Surrealist practice involves efforts complementary to this challenge, since its methodology seeks to negate our consciousness, which overpowers the neutrality of the world's givenness. An example is Surrealist automatism, in which the artist tries to pay closer attention to that which is peripheral to our experience. This example shows how the Surrealists are guided by the unconscious and starts to draw out complementarities between this guidance and Casey's focus on peri-phenomenology.

The task of the philosopher is not unlike that of the artist: to unveil certain truths of the world, and to explore them to their fullest depth. In that pursuit, neither the philosopher nor the artist are one to take their experience passively—they double-take, they reflect, they look deeper. Both practices begin this process of reflection through first hand experience. They draw on an awareness of being, that, for example, alerts one's consciousness to notice its situation within the body and its environment (or to putatively deny this situation, in the Cartesian case). Philosophers and artists alike are deeply inspired by their awareness of the world, an inspiration that unfurls itself through various methods of reflection—for example, contemplative theory, or creative expression and thought. While the philosopher may maintain that they, for example, deal directly with the essences of the world in and of themselves, they must first admit that their encounter with that world and its contents occurs through subjective experience, first developing through their faculty of perception. Understanding this, the origins of philosophy and art thereby reveal themselves as originating in the same plane: the artist and the philosopher are observing the same things, but from different perspectives.

While all art is inspired by existence and perception, the Surrealist movement especially focuses on our relation to the world and our experience of it, in ways that illuminate this common origin of philosophy and art, revealing complementarities between them. As an example of such art, the Surrealist movement can thus help us understand how the artist intrinsically begins their journey through subjective experience. In particular, the Surrealist's key effort demonstrates how this journey begins in subjective experience that is shaped by an attempt to gain consciousness over the unconscious mind, as it receives its content from the experiential world. The Surrealists seek to reveal this interplay between the conscious and the unconscious, by drawing the unconscious into play. This paper will draw out a complementarity between this

Surrealist pursuit and phenomenological thought, primarily in the work of Edmund Husserl and Edward S. Casey.

On the one hand, the paper shows how Surrealism begins with a step back from their usual approach to experience to look at things in a new way, which echoes Husserl's method of suspending our 'natural attitude,' to get back to the objects of experience in and of themselves. For the Surrealists, though, this sort of suspension requires the artist to be driven by the processes at work on the periphery of consciousness. They enact that suspension in terms of automatism, channeling the unconscious. On the other hand, this 'Surrealist suspension' diverges from and challenges a kind of phenomenology that claims to be able to reflect on phenomena in ways that fully or clearly describe and delimit them. This is because the 'Surrealist suspension' draws on processes and experiences peripheral to day-to-day consciousness. In doing so, Surrealism complements and converges with Casey's concept of 'peri-phenomenology,' which seeks to describe the subliminal aspects of our perceptual experience. Working in tandem, we can observe how Surrealism and peri-phenomenology show something that Husserl's philosophy misses (even if he touches upon it in various ways). What is important here is that the Surrealists emphatically and consciously retreat to automatism, in order to re-discover what is given in pre-reflective experience. This allows the Surrealists to forget their presuppositions and become better acquainted with the world, its objects, and their givenness—but in a way that draws in and on those processes and experiences that are peripheral to consciousness in our acquaintance with the world.

In the way that Merleau-Ponty, in "Eye and Mind," reveals a complementarity between the efforts of phenomenologists and painters such as Cézanne, as both work to reveal and explore vision as embodied and immersed in relation to things in the depths of the world, this paper

reveals a complementarity between Surrealism and peri-phenomenology as both draw on processes at the periphery of experience. This offers another example of how phenomenology can better understand perceptual experience as it is revealed through art, as both phenomenologists and artists are concerned with our embodied relationship to the world.

An Overview of Surrealism, the 'Surrealist suspension,' and Peripheral Experience

First arising in the 1920s, the Surrealists aimed to capture the marvelous spontaneity of life through their work. They believed that the traditional methods of artistic creativity relied too heavily on the constrained categories of everyday existence. While this traditional lens proved to have generated interesting work throughout history, the art world was becoming too redundant, failing to produce anything new or groundbreaking using typical creative methods and their reflections on reality. The traditional interpretation of experience had become too strong, steadily developing a restrictive grasp over the creative mind.

To break from restrictive creativity, the Surrealists sought out a way to reorient their approach. While outsiders might believe that the Surrealist project was to abandon reality altogether, this proves to be an incorrect interpretation of the movement. The Surrealists were aware that their practice was necessarily grounded in material reality, making a total abandonment of that reality impossible. In order to overcome one's creative restrictions, the Surrealists had to re-interpret the world in which they were living. Still bound by their ontological constraints, they were pushed to break all traditions of experience and suspend their mental connections. The Surrealists turned tradition on its head in order to see the world in a new light, by trying to understand objects as they appear according to those objects themselves, rather

than according to their subjective interpretation. This would achieve an exposition of experience that looked deeper than their contemporaries, who claimed to have already occupied the apex of creative imagination and conceptual ideas. The Surrealists challenged that claim to assert themselves as the most truly creative movement—re-encountering their world and experience by suspending their ideas of reality and posing deeper questions, probing at our usual interpretation of what is "real" and how we come to know it.

In the following, I will elucidate the principle aspects of Surrealist practice and use them to draw out several resonances with phenomenology, the philosophical study of experience and consciousness. In particular, I will delineate how Surrealism attempts to break the limitations of the traditional approaches to experience by describing how, for Surrealists, these traditional approaches echo what Husserl calls the natural attitude, as discussed in the next section, and further, how Surrealism complements Husserl's effort to suspend that attitude. Following this, I will turn to the contemporary philosopher Edward S. Casey, focusing on his concepts of the glance and peri-phenomenology. These elements of Casey's work offer a critical advance over prior phenomenology, as they explore what occurs within the immediacy of perception, to give an account of non-conscious aspects of our orientation within the world. In doing that, Casey contends that the conscious gaze of the subject, who is seeking to look at things as familiar objects, is not a neutral observer of their environment. Rather, their reflecting faculties constantly interrupt their direct, pre-reflective engagement with the world's givenness, which proceeds as a fleeting series of glances. The glance takes in that which is not at our primary focal point, yet contributes to our total understanding of whatever draws our focus. For that reason, it is extremely difficult to notice, even though it is a persistent element of perceptual activity.

In order to better describe how reflective processes interrupt this flow of direct experience and glances, one must return their focus to the minute, pre-reflective features of perception. This is precisely what Casey emphasizes in his writing about peri-phenomenology and the glance, which proposes a challenge to general phenomenology: in order to do work on personal prejudices and presuppositions, one must realize the limitations that restrict their direct access to the world. He explains that we, as perceiving subjects who focus our attention on our surroundings and its contents, navigate our experience in ways that are oriented by the peripheral elements of perception.

Casey's peri-phenomenology, then, will let us see that Surrealism's attempt to access the subconscious does something more than merely parallel the suspension of natural attitudes; it goes further to do something that Husserl's phenomenology does not. It emphasizes how we, as subjects, cannot be neutral observers. In order to get better access to the essences of the world, we need to acknowledge and possibly circumvent our limitations and presumptions of "reality," creating an opening for us to get to a *supra*-reality. By affording more attention to the intricacies involved in perception and our encounter with the objects of our experience, Surrealism reveals that a pre-reflective immediacy of experience is the foundation of our bodily orientation, wherein we find ourselves within the world; Surrealism shows how we interact with it, as it is always-already there, exposing its own givenness. However, the movement also shows how this immediacy is interrupted by our own humanity, by involving a constant process of reflecting, thinking, contemplating, and determining, which abstracts from pre-reflective data—in this sense, interrupting it. Yet, on the other hand, the reflective interruption does not actually stop the pre-reflective process; it goes on, and it would be futile to seek a stop to this process and to make the claim that reflection truly causes an interruption, since that process is the basis of our

conscious activity. This presents a challenge for phenomenology: consciousness depends on a process that it must interrupt, delimit, and so on, but what is flowing in that process is not fully delimitable according to consciousness's terms. This impedes our ability to get to know the world and its objects, in and of themselves. In Casey's terminology, consciousness's efforts to delimit and describe phenomena always depends on something peripheral to our reflective processes that escapes delimitation, in the way that, for example, each effort to focus on visible things depends on peripheral vision that involves phenomena that escape easy delimitation.

The challenge that peri-phenomenology proposes to general phenomenology is quite similar to Surrealism's reaction against classical art. By taking in the material world as a super-reality, or rather, a *sur*-reality, and forgetting the constructs of our presupposed ideas of the "real," we are able to get beyond our subjective voices and preconceptions. In doing this, we can start to see the world and its objects as they are, in and of themselves. The Surrealists acknowledge, though, that there is no neutral attitude to have towards conscious experience, and instead try to understand what we subconsciously receive through the periphery of our perceptual faculties. This attempt is demonstrated in many Surrealist projects and techniques but is most importantly modeled through Surrealist work that draws on pure psychic automatism. This practice serves as the primary method of Surrealist work as defined by its creator, André Breton.

By returning to pre-reflective experience, we find the fullest depth of the perceptual encounter—discovering how we can better understand the objects of experience and their givenness by circumventing our own mental structures. Bypassing such structures is a difficult task, as we cannot re-acquaint ourselves with the world's givenness by pure thought alone. Instead, we must employ some kind of methodology, such as the one devised by the Surrealists. To approach these matters appropriately, I will first detail Husserl's approach to phenomenology,

then move into Casey's challenge for Husserl's method. Finally, I will build a connection from Casey's phenomenological challenge into Surrealist thought, demonstrating how the Surrealists may have initiated a solution to this problem through their creative method.

Husserl's Natural Attitude: Laying the Groundwork for Phenomenological Thought

> I am conscious of a world endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having endlessly become in time. I am conscious of it: that signifies, above all, that intuitively I find it immediately, that I experience it.
>
> —Husserl in *Ideas,* 48

Edmund Husserl's development of phenomenology serves as a modern culmination of the Cartesian philosophical tradition, working with the subject's relationship to their world and discovering the indubitable basis upon which it is grounded. Husserl's study is formed on the idea that mental content is derived from something outside of itself—our concepts of worldly things are directed from phenomenal content of the experiential world. From there, those concepts can be shaped and altered to fit into experiences of dream, hallucination, and imagination; this gives an explanation of how states of consciousness are correlated to reality and gives credit to subjective experience. This aboutness, or mental directedness is what he calls "intentionality"—an intentional directionality,[1] as intentional content is necessarily correlated to what we experience in and as reality. Husserlian phenomenology proposes an analysis of cognition through an investigation of the first person singular consciousness.

To begin developing the outline of Husserl's framework, it must be made clear that his phenomenological method is (as clarified in later phases of his writing) primarily articulated in relation to a concept he calls the "life-world." As the world is a sum-total of objects of possible experience and experiential cognition,[2] the life-world holds all that we may experience on an

intersubjective level—the coherent universe of existing objects. This concept describes the horizon of what is always-already given, and that which is experienced in our shared reality—the pre-reflective and pre-philosophical dimensions upon which our life is grounded.[3] As we experience the contents of the life-world, we discover ourselves to be living in common with material phenomena, and we devise a mental structure of the world that accounts for these objects in connection to their particular social relations and directions of interest.[4] We build our understanding of reality upon this dynamic intersubjective background in which we live, and lives with us.

Using this principle element as an entrance into Husserl's philosophical system, we can introduce a dominant feature of his phenomenological method: the natural attitude. This term describes the mood or stance through which the conscious subject engages in ordinary experience.[5] As the subject navigates life through a natural attitude, they may take everyday objects for granted, grasping them as they appear according to the individual, often injected with their own learned and inherited categories. As the individual navigates experience, they will inevitably develop habituated patterns of association, and may unknowingly begin to solidify those connections into a mental structure of presupposed ideas. Upon encountering objects of experience, whether new or familiar, they are now susceptible to getting tangled up in that structure, which may obfuscate or mutate what they take to be given, or what they take to be essential in the given. While assuming the natural attitude, the subject encounters an object and sees it just as it appears, without questioning its existence or the preconceived ideas they may carry pertaining to it.

The natural attitude gives way to a system of presupposed concepts, a structure that largely neglects the role and implications of perceptual experience. As the subject assumes this

attitude, they encounter things as they are, without question: "The natural life, whether it is pre-scientifically or scientifically, theoretically or practically interested, is life within a universal thematic horizon. This horizon is, in the natural attitude, precisely the world always pregiven as that which exists."[6] This remains true even in regards to phenomena that are not objectively real, like illusions or mirages. Anything beheld in the horizon of perception immediately appears to the subject as pregiven, as *there*, even if the subject goes on to investigate and re-determine that there-ness.

To understand this structure of presupposed concepts in more concrete terms, we might imagine an individual walking down the street and meeting a bench on the sidewalk. Upon this meeting, the subject will typically perceive that bench as they would any other one from previous encounters; they know that the bench functions as a place to sit, to rest. By drawing this connection, the individual employs a code of preconceptions from past experiences that have instilled themselves into their mind. By having encountered a bench, I know it is a solid structure, built to give a particular affordance to myself and others like myself. By doing this, I avoid having to re-discover a familiar object every time I encounter it. The way that memory informs our experience of the natural world is a great asset, but may also facilitate a process wherein we take objects of experience for granted. The individual on the street may not see the bench as a unique structure carrying its own distinctive features; they encounter the bench as a material object that obviously belongs to a certain category, rather than seeing it according to itself. An object like the bench is not merely an individual object never repeatable; it has its own specific character, its own stock of essential predicables which must belong to it, then also carrying secondary, relative determinations.[7] Encountering an object as *there*, through the natural attitude, the subject may be making an equation of object-features to a prescribed use (equating

an assemblage of bench-like features to a sitting device). These equations may start to settle into a code of mental organization. While the natural attitude makes for easier navigation of life, the subject might eventually forget their singular connection with the core experiential essence of objects that are immediately available to them. The bench is reduced to a sitting device, rather than being recognized for its own structure with its own essence—something that could possibly serve a multiplicity of purposes, or even function as a work of art. This reduction is not an essential feature of the natural attitude itself, but rather, an all-too-common consequence.

This points to a move in Husserlian thought, where we can begin to observe something new about how the subject moves through the world, and grasp that world as filtered through their own reflective individuality. From here, we can see how the natural attitude puts limitations on singular experience, insofar as experience is eidetic seeing.[8] Being in the world occurs through a filter of individuality, encountering things as they are there for you. The natural attitude describes this default mode of experience: the mode of being non-conscious of one's movement throughout the world, encountering their environment and its contents, an object's causal relations, and its material effects. Within the phenomenological structure, the main feature of this attitude is to highlight Husserl's aim to explore the bare connection between consciousness and the world prior to the natural attitude. This is the project he took on in *Ideas*, where he goes beyond the philosophical dichotomy between the natural world and the world of ideas. His argument explains that consciousness is not entirely reducible to either of these worlds. Instead, these worlds should be understood as the relation between the activity of thinking and what thinking is about, the relation between what Husserl calls *cogitatio* and *cogitatum.*

In order to draw this out more explicitly, we will explore how this distance harkens back to the idea of intentionality—how our mental concepts are directed towards the plane of the life-world. As experiential givens are encountered, we receive it as a collection of evidence or data and use it to ground our ideas of truth and determine what is real. As previously mentioned, this is a consequence of the natural attitude that develops as the subject settles into it more deeply. From what is pregiven, and always-already there, the subject begins to build out their own structure of mental concepts, directly inspired from the data of experience. As I navigate my subjective experience, I come to know myself only as I exist within the world, amongst my worldly environments, interacting with and intending towards objects and tools. Although this is a subjective understanding of objective, experiential reality, the individual develops an ability to conceive of material objects, and imagine them in suspension from their usual setting. For example, I can imagine a tree existing in an alternate reality, however the concept of "tree," once removed from the natural world, functions only as an idea. When the subject imagines a "tree," it is an abstract thought, borrowing the common features from trees of their physical experience during day-to-day life. This development of mental concept is helped by linguistic and cultural contributions: these are the pieces of information that organize themselves into the subject's codified structure of norms. For instance, a botanist's general idea of a "tree" will differ from the average person's, as their concept is influenced by more detailed information, absorbed into their underlying structure of knowledge. Regardless, the resulting concept of "tree" turns out to be something else from its physical object—the concept is not simply a referent to one thing in reality, rather, it works only as an *idea*, drawn from those authentic material examples.

This idea is crucial to Husserl's phenomenology, as the philosopher is concerned with that distance between the object and our abstracted object-concept. There exists an interspace

between the act of conceptualization and the intended object. Usually, the average person is not very cognizant of this distance between object and concept, as they intuit their own mental framework of reality in suspension from the life-world. When I hold forth my mental concept of a horse, I do not usually consider that my idea of a horse is only a conceptual one, one that is intending towards previously encountered horses or images of horses I have seen. This conceptual activity is different from physically confronting a horse, where one can observe its natural movements and features. When I imagine my own concept of a horse, I assign it my own expectations for how a horse should behave, and how it should look.

Husserl describes this as the distinction between the *cogitatio* (the act of consciousness) and the *cogitatum* (the content of consciousness).[9] Developing an awareness of the natural attitude helps us notice and clarify this distinction, as it describes the flux of the conscious mind, directing itself towards objects and object-environments, taking them in and connecting them to one another. When the subject makes a realization that their mental concepts are, in fact, only concepts, they develop an awareness of their own structure of expectations. Such expectations may encourage a particular kind of blindness when encountering objects that do not align with those presuppositions. For instance, if I were to encounter a horse with one eye, I may not initially take notice of this, as I had unknowingly projected my expectation that all horses have two eyes, thus freeing myself from the responsibility of inspecting the horse closely to gather a full picture of its features and characteristics. While the horse displays a common structure of characteristics that apply equally to other members of the species, it simultaneously exhibits its own particular unique features, establishing its own individual essence. If I did not hold this expectation that a horse will always have two eyes, or if I carried no mental concept of a horse at all, I may have noticed this oddity more quickly by studying the horse's characteristics as they

revealed themselves to me, encountering the horse as it appeared according to itself, instead of how it appeared to me and my preconceived concept of its species.

By pointing out the habits of the natural attitude, this prompts the subject to take notice of what is immediately presented to them through their faculty of perception, becoming more conscious of their injection of preconceived ideas into the objects of their experience. This recognition helps to prevent the possibility of illusion and blindness imposed by presupposition. Experience (as it is living, valuing, eidetic seeing, and acting as the subjective ego) is existing among a community of egos—experiencing as "we." Living in the world amongst each other, existing as social beings, we constantly presuppose our reality to be commonly experienceable, in how we speak of it, and how we ground our knowledge in it. Yet, we contradict each other in matters concerning the common world—disagreeing on the particulars of objects as they appear to us through our individual faculty of perception. If you and I were walking along the beach and encountered a seashell nestled in the sand, you may see the nacre of that shell reflecting blue and purple from where you stand; while where I am, it is shining at me green-ish and white. Neither of us are incorrect—only standing in divergent positions, perceiving different refractions of light. This speaks to how our subjective experience shapes our personal understanding of the world, and creates different mental pictures of the same reference. My personal mental concepts will differ from another person's, even though we are existing alongside of each other in the same world.

No matter how well we understand the variety of experience, and corroborate each other's perspectives through communication and explanation, experience is individually lived. The "I" necessarily experiences what is common through the subjective— or rather, it is only through the singular that we can understand what is shared. The material truths received through

our singular perception are relative to our individual positions, filtered through our own eyes, reaching into our private consciousness, collected into our mental frameworks, and settled in with all that is carried within that structure.[10] As we derive our mental concepts from our singular experience with physical objects, although they refer to what is objectively real, this filter of individualized perception can result in varying representations of the real, leading to deeper contradictions in how we speak of and refer to the physical world.

In order to become more deeply in touch with that physical reality, Husserl defines a shift from the natural attitude into what he calls the 'phenomenological attitude'. This requires the subject to take more considerate notice of the objects of their immediate experience, in addition to their own processes of consciousness—how they understand those objects of experience, and how such objects contribute to their own idea of existence. This injects the issue of being into one's own understanding of experience, acknowledging that the full weight of being can never be accounted for in the empirical world alone. All subjectively perceived facticity is consumed within a wider horizon which encompasses that facticity. The phenomenological attitude prompts the subject to take notice of their own background of experience, to be cognizant of their own natural attitude as they navigate everyday life, which has evolved to inject presumptions onto the material world and its contents. Beyond this, the awareness urges the subject to take notice of the fact that their mental ideas of experience are not as self-evident or accurate as they assume them to be; this is due to the structure of presuppositions and preconceived expectations, which may at times limit one's ability to understand the full depth of experience, or access objectivity at a philosophical level. When the natural attitude is engaged, the subject encounters life as it is real and material, although they employ a naïve presupposition as to what real and material mean.

The Glance: The Intricacies of Perception and the Features of Peri-Phenomenology

> "All genuine activity is carried out in the scope of attentiveness." — Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgement*
>
> "In a landscape, we always get to one place from another place… In the landscape I am somewhere." — Erwin Strauss, *The Primary Sense of the World*
>
> "Je ne cherche pas, je trouve." — Picasso

Having now examined some of the fundamental principles of phenomenological thought, and its consequences, we can now focus on that which prompts our attitudinal reactions. This shift in focus takes our analysis even closer into the philosophy of phenomenology to consider something more specific: the qualities of perception that account for the subliminal aspects of experience. When perceiving, the subject takes in that which is in their focal point, but is perceptually oriented by what is around it—that which is on the edges of their focus, contributing to their understanding of the object of perception, and building their orientation to it. The subject routinely takes these subliminal elements for granted, thus overlooking their major contribution to our perceptual experience.

When the subject takes a step back and reflects on their capacity of perception, they will become more aware that our sense of orientation is based in the immediacy of perception. Upon entering new surroundings, we expeditiously gather a grounding for ourselves, orienting our bodies within that environment. By staying in connection to the idea of Husserl's phenomenological thought, we may now shift our analysis to that which occurs in those subliminal moments of orientation, prior to conscious cognition and reflective organization.

Our phenomenological reflections reveal that perception and reflection are oriented by something immediately given in perception, in the twofold sense of being given instantaneously, and without any sort of further mediation or breakdown on our part. However, further attention

to apparently immediate givens reveals how minute details received through our perceptual faculty are preliminary to both the natural and phenomenological attitudes. Indeed, these intricacies orient our attitudes, even as those attitudes overlook them as subliminal.

In the immediacy of perception, what is encountered is pre-reflective. The subject sees what is before them without being able to distort the objectivity of the world, or convert it from what is given into their mental framework, projecting their presuppositions onto it—without interrupting givenness with subjective impositions. Paying attention to the initial stages of pre-reflective perceptual activity, and what is encountered in those stages, helps to reveal precisely what occurs when the subject takes hold of their immediate environment, and what is given in it.

This general point about what appears as immediately given in perception, versus the intricacies at work beneath it, can be elaborated upon by taking it up in the case of vision, which is central to this project, given the visual nature of the Surrealist art that is being discussed.[11] In visual perception, we find something immediately given in a manner that is instantaneous and unchangeable. In the moment when the eye meets that which lies in front of it, the subject encounters the surface of the objects of their experience, observing its edges and limits. By drawing a closer focus onto these outlying elements that are presented in utmost immediacy—or rather, that which is peripheral to our perceptual focal point—our project turns from an analysis of phenomenology into one of peri-phenomenology.

This prompts us to engage Edward S. Casey's concept of the glance, and his description of its subliminal properties, what he calls “peri-phenomena.” While the concept of peri-phenomena is of partial focus in his book *The World at a Glance*, the idea itself is accredited to Casey’s professor William Earle, originating in his collection of essays, *Evanescence*.[12] Casey takes Earle’s concept and revives it in his philosophical meditation on the glance. He uses the

concept “peri-phenomena” to describe those phenomenological features that are tethered, yet peripheral, to each object in our perceptual field, speaking to the subliminal features of phenomenology.

Casey contends that much of what we glean through perception is gathered through a distinct series of glances, strung together as a steady stream of vision. He describes the glance as possessing several distinct qualities—for example, the glance retains a nimbleness that is deeply ensconced in our perceptual practice yet is not consciously traceable. Further, it possesses considerable range; it varies in degrees of attention, first as an unfocused, meandering glimpse that decides what warrants attentive looking. [13] The glance thus reveals itself to be a fundamental element to our attitudes, as it accounts for what is taking place while the subject navigates their experiential world. Through the glance, they perceive their surroundings, coming to terms with themselves as they are located within that particular space, simultaneously one with it, and outside of it, insofar as they are an observing subject.

Although the glance is our primary entrance to perception, it involves its own set of constraints. For example, our ability to perceive is limited by the depth of our perception, the borders of our eyesight, the placement of our heads, and the nature of the light. These are physiological factors that play into our connection to the life-world. In the curiosity of glancing around, the subject becomes drawn into their environment—they are in search of anything eye-catching. In the glance, there is no mis-glancing or mistaking. In fact, the ‘mistakes of observation’ are crucial to the faculty of perception, as they too contribute to building orientation within our natural environment.[14] When one mis-glances, they are given an opportunity to orient their focus and build a deeper connection with their environment.

It is nearly impossible for one to be conscious of their own glancing, as it is always occurring, flowing, in the process of building the pre-reflective and pre-personal experience of the world, which are guiding the subject's understanding of their orientation. To say that one "notices" the things in their glancing field would be too strong a word—the glance "contains" that which lies in our peripheral horizon. One sees the things in their peripheral vision in a strangely fleeting, almost non-conscious way. In that regard, the glance is hard to nail down. In the glance, we take notice of and measure our environment and its objects. In turn, glancing forms a reciprocal relationship, as those world-objects provoke a subliminal reaction from the subject. Casey writes: "I do not have to manipulate or penetrate what I glance at in order to come to terms with it. A bare glance suffices to bring me to the thing itself."[15] The glance is an effortless act, transporting the subject to the object—meeting its surface, determining its edges, and subconsciously taking measure of it.[16]

Our focus on the glance thus prioritizes a special method of observation that aims to describe what is found at the level of perceptual immediacy discussed above, where we encounter the pre-personal, the pre-contemplated, and the pre-reflective. Casey shows that the glance (different from the gaze, the regard, or the Look, which is Sartrean[17]) is primarily connected with the surface of that which it glances upon. It does not contemplate, it does not associate, it simply sees what is given. In that capacity, the glance is transportive— it takes us out of ourselves, and carries us from where we stand over to where we are looking. It shows us the layout of our environment, revealing itself as something already-there, existing pre-reflectively. In this way, the glance precedes the natural attitude, and is crucial in our conscious suspension of it. Attitudinal reflection and contemplation of our environment is what happens post factum—after the glance, we engage the opportunity to fixate on the confusing, the

beautiful, the unique, the strange; anything that may warrant a closer look. In the fixation, or the "close-up", we are able to make associations, attributions, equations, value judgements, and opinions. While the natural attitude does not question the reality or facticity of phenomena, the glance describes the instantaneous, pre-reflective action through which the subject first encounters that phenomena.

However, this poses an issue or challenge for phenomenology. Casey contends that one must gain awareness of their peripheral vision, in order to be more rigorous in getting back to the essences of things in themselves. While this is imperative, the glance is difficult to capture because it is so constant and fleeting. It occurs quickly, steadily, and without effort; it is so natural that the subject rarely, if ever, is able to reflect on their own glancing processes. Because of this, we take glancing for granted, particularly in what it affords us, which is primarily orientation. It is in the glance that the subject comes to gather their bearings within their surroundings, both in place and space.

To expand upon this affordance of orientation, we must understand that the subject naturally finds themselves disoriented in the expansiveness of space—lost, confused, and without bearings.[18] To be disoriented is inherently uncomfortable, and so, the subject seeks to establish themselves within their environment. To achieve this, they must get their groundings in *place*, as Casey emphasizes. Places are orienting by nature, in the way that they are so definite and physical, providing both literal and figurative grounding. The subject locates landmarks and guides themselves into a comfortable framework using orientational markers.[19] To enact this, they engage in many different forms of glancing: the empty glance, the insufficient glance, the clarifying glance, the checking-out glance, the re-orienting glance, and the confirmatory glance.[20] These forms of glancing contribute to a building up of body memory, creating mental

maps of the body situated in place. The subject is always necessarily *located*, although this does not require that they are comfortably oriented within that location. The process of finding that sense of orientation in one's place all rides on and is afforded by the glance.

Having considered the orientational purpose of the glance, we may now approach a second affordance that we encounter *within* the glance: the objects of our environment, and their peri-phenomenological features. In regards to this, Casey writes: "The glance does not make entities more 'entitative'; rather than ballasting them with Being, it endows them with the lightness of Becoming."[21] Through the glance, we arrive at the Becoming of entities, closing in the distance between us and the object, as we turn our gaze first towards, then away from them, as we absorb its Becoming and process it into a quality of Having-Already-Become. We familiarize ourselves with the objects of our experience, even if they present themselves as alien. We become quickly familiarized with the object's quality of alienness, as we encounter its Becoming. The alien object is already there before us, exhibiting its givenness. The process from Becoming into Having-Already-Become helps build phenomenological grounding within one's surroundings. This processing calms the subject, as they try to work out some permanence and familiarity with their environment, in order to establish orientation and equilibrium.

These ideas relate themselves to Husserl's concern in suspending the natural attitude and becoming rigorous in getting back to the things in themselves and investigating their essence. Casey's contribution claims that one must be attentive to this glancing process and field that is quite resistant not only to words, but to deliberate, active efforts of conscious articulation. To notice something in the glance is to go beyond glancing at it—this would turn into a gaze, which escapes the glance.[22] Here, Casey presents something that resists proposing a conscious, deliberate, willful attention to the glance, as that would be a futile pursuit. Instead, he attempts to

focus on that which we encounter through the peripheral: what he calls peri-phenomena, the objects of peri-phenomenology which reveal how subliminal features of perception form a major contribution to our world-view, behaving as the building blocks to our sense of orientation, and guiding our subjective experience.

The peri-phenomenal features of perception are that which we absorb non-consciously, through the fleetingness and instinctiveness of the glance. As made obvious by its name, we see it in our periphery—to draw one's focus to it would make it no longer peripheral. Casey describes peri-phenomena as consisting of three primary features, perched on the edges of the glance itself: the now, the all-at-once, and the here.[23]

To provide a more comprehensive definition for each of these features, the now speaks of the temporality of our perception. Casey writes: "A glance takes place in the *now*; it puts places and their surfaces together in the immediate present—or better, it captures them in that present."[24] The way we see is necessarily intertwined with our temporal position—we cannot separate the two. At the instant when you observe the object, it is seized at that moment—existing only there and then. The temporal basis relies upon its diminutive duration, fully constituted by the instantaneousness of perception. Duration is nothing but tiny cuts of moments, strung together and held as continuous by the faculty of memory. The peri-phenomenal "now" is an always-existing aspect of the object, it is there alongside it, within it, in its periphery. Our temporal moments are existing in absolute flux, as they are always grounded in the now, yet anticipating the next; projecting itself towards it. Our glance holds a continual collusion between the immanent and the subjective.

With this in mind, perception is both now and more-than-now. When one observes something in real space-time, they are simultaneously seeing that which was there just before:

the object that is seen is indeed the same one that was existing the moment before you laid eyes on it. We are engaged in our perception within the same spaces that were existing hundreds of years ago, although radically changed through time. In this way, age is contained on the surface of things, speaking itself to us at every flickering moment of attention we afford it. The now-ness is necessarily related to the past, just so far as it intends toward the future.

Next, we will examine how the act of taking-in happens "all-at-once," relating to the Husserlian concept of 'internal time-consciousness.'[25] For Husserl, the flux of the "now" moment happens all-at-once, instead of occurring in the splintered, successive immanence of time. The glance takes in the diversity of the moment, absorbing everything within its perceptual field. The all-around is taken in all-at-once; meaning, you take in the entirety of your environment just as you have entered into it. This is the purpose of the pre-reflective aspect of perception: before the mind is granted the opportunity to intervene, to mediate, or to meddle, the everything-all-at-once is already given to you. You are taking it up just so far as you are taken up with it, contributing to the physicality of your environment, while understanding it as though it exists for you alone; hence, why we refer to our surroundings as "*my* environment." The peri-phenomenal features of the glance necessarily exhibit the structure of the all-at-once as part of its own manifestation, just as it signifies its own now-ness, as we found in the first peri-phenomenal feature.

Now, our inspection turns to the third and last peri-phenomenal feature: the here. Glancing cannot take place without the spatial anchoring of location. Here is where my body is, and from here I distinguish between my position (here), and there. This speaks to the basic orientation of the body—how we know our situated position in space. However, the peri-phenomenal meaning of "here" goes beyond this basic spatial understanding. It acknowledges

the interactivity of our body in space, the capacity to reach out—or to go over there, trans-place oneself from the here-world into the there-world. In order for our glance to reach over-there, it must start from here. Of course, this seems obvious, but the obviousness of perception is exactly what we must re-discover in order to understand the most basic function of our being.[26] Through looking, you are taken out of yourself and projected towards the world; extended into your field of perception. Like all features of the glance, this is a basic act of our human experience and worldly interaction—always-already projected outwards, as the glance affords us our most natural method of corporeal engagement.

The subject is continuously taken away from itself, as they are incessantly intending themselves towards the objects of perception. Perhaps you may be familiar with the feeling of catching a glimpse of yourself in a distant mirror, and, for a brief moment, thinking that it was someone else— this is precisely the sort of pre-reflective instance of perception that Casey explains—it is that which occurs prior to the association of reflection with self-recognition. It is a peculiar feeling to suddenly recognize oneself, glimpsed through the mirror, as over-there—rather than here, where I know I am.

Understanding this, we begin to see how the temporal portion of our phenomenological observation is always taken up in the here, now, and all-at-once. The object of our perception, existing in space, cannot exist without this temporal component. While these linkages of spatio-temporality and self-positioning may appear as nothing new or special, they serve to reveal an awareness of our own temporality, consistently intertwined with our physical presence, and unconsciously responsive to what is peripheral to it. As we are temporal, spatial beings, we are always intending the next moment, just as we exist towards the space that lies beside us. This attention to what we experience through perception is a philosophical matter. The patience to be

in-tune with what lies before oneself reveals the subliminal features of perception. Drawing attention towards this reveals the extent to which philosophy can be simply experiential; while other philosophies may often get lost in ideas and theory, divorced from everyday materiality, a return to the glance proposes something radical as the subject navigates everyday life. Casey contends that rigid description belongs to classical philosophy, and requires something supplemental in order to gain better access to the essences of objects in our experience. His explanation of peri-phenomena accounts for these subliminal features that we take in without fully noticing them. We catch them in the periphery, as they make a significant contribution to our perceptual data.

Re-capturing this experience would facilitate a deeper connection with one's surroundings, and prompting an awareness of how they orient themselves within it. This would create a change for the filter of perception: the subject may start to notice objects and phenomena as they appear according to themselves, rather than presuming them to exist as a service to human-oriented utility. Instead, the subject would orient themselves within their environment by using world-objects and phenomena as landmarks and tools. This habituated utility would then shape their concept of world contents, as they become increasingly accustomed to their world-view, and confident in their orientation within place. In this way, the philosophical practice (particularly once performed through a phenomenological framework) is similar to the artist's starting point, as they take stock of their immediate experience, and that which lies within it.

However, Casey's ideas pose a challenge: to capture that which is in the glance, one must become aware of it. This awareness is something that the nature of the glance makes extremely difficult. A re-capturing of the glance, or processes very similar to it, is something that I believe the Surrealists attempt to do, particularly through their efforts to make art that involves the

process of pure psychic automatism. By drawing this connection, I will be able to demonstrate how Surrealist thought does something similar to Casey's work, by creating a method that could offer an insightful contribution to this phenomenological issue, in ways that could complement Casey's concept of peri-phenomenology.

Perception through Surreality

> "Let us not lose sight of the fact that the idea of Surrealism aims quite simply at the total recovery of our psychic force by a means which is nothing other than the dizzying descent into ourselves."
> —André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*

> "Pure psychic automatism, by which one seeks to express, be it verbally, in writing, or in any other manner, (is) the real working of the mind. Dictated by the unconsciousness, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and free from aesthetic or moral preoccupations.
> —André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*

Having detailed the features of peri-phenomenology, our project moves into its third and final section: illuminating how the subliminal qualities of perception are accentuated in Surrealism. Surrealist art emphasizes this in a two-fold manner: first, it positively breaks the spectator's usual habits of perception—those habits which subsume oneself into the obviousness and regularity of experience. Second, Surrealism advocates for the practice of pure psychic automatism that challenges the subject's regular mental processes, and facilitates a return to that which is found in the pre-reflective, similar to what Casey talks about in the glance. By drawing out these Surrealist ideas, we can see how the Surrealists do something similar to Husserl, but then go beyond his thought, as they re-determine their understanding of experience by appreciating what is found in the subliminal features of perception. By forgetting our learned

habits and categories that we hold in reflective experience, and undertaking a practice that is guided by the subconscious mind, we can re-encounter the world and its givenness in a new way.

In order to make these connections more explicit, we must first understand Surrealism from a more general perspective, and take note of its ideological origins. To speak of Surrealism is to speak of André Breton, who is regarded as the father of the movement. While the full extent of Surrealist work and practice is quite vast, as there were many renowned artists affiliated with the movement, Breton constructed the common ground for all those Surrealists who succeeded him. In search of the most authentic interpretation of Surrealism, we must reference the original meaning intended by Breton himself. This meaning was defined at length within two Manifestoes on the movement and its motivations, later compiled into one volume, *The Manifestoes of Surrealism*.[27] In the first of the Manifestoes, published in 1924 as the movement reached its peak, Breton produced a dictionary-style definition for term:

> "SURREALISM, *n*. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any manner—the actual function of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.
>
> ENCYCLOPEDIA. *Philosophy*. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought, it tends to ruin all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems in life."[28]

The Surrealist movement spawned as a protest against the suffocation of socio-political culture in the early 20th century. Harnessing itself to create a productive yet creative momentum, early Surrealists were inspired to recognize the constraints that had been imposed upon their creativity

and began to rebel against them. By choosing to fully indulge in the illogical, the Surrealists were freed from those constraints that imposed any right or wrong way to navigate human experience and, by association, the constraints imposed upon creativity and art, which behaves as a result of that humanity. In this way, one's understanding of "reality" could be rebuilt based on experience alone, removed from the imposition of everyday categorizations and presuppositions. In order for something to be considered Surrealist, indoctrinated knowledge must be, in effect, suspended, and the fundamental biases of what we regard as "real" or "logical" must be removed. The objective of Surrealism is to open up space within the realm of creativity, where the artist can give more credit to their Surreal or absurd ideas, letting go of their focus on how accurate those representations are to their material referents.

Breton calls this a break from the "realistic attitude," which seems to closely resemble what Husserl gets at when he describes the natural attitude. Although Breton himself was not a known reader of the philosopher, one could easily draw a parallel between these terms.[29] Of the realistic attitude, Breton describes it as "made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit…it stultifies both art and science by assiduously flattering the dullest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog's life."[30] The realistic attitude has a massive effect on even the best of minds; it interrupts their encounter with the novel, and stifles their creativity.

Breton's intention for Surrealist creativity was to give the artist an opportunity to shed their usual attitude and assume a better perspective. In Surrealist art, this opportunity is afforded in both a positive and a negative sense. Positively, it demonstrates the way that the subject non-consciously carries their own structure of categories and concepts, presuming the givenness of that which lies before them, and remarks on the problems that arise from this. In the negative sense, Surrealist art develops a method that actively silences the conscious mind, and allows the

subconscious to guide their work. In doing this, the Surrealist is allowing themselves to harness that which cannot be at the focal point of their consciousness; it finds a way to give attention to the peripheral features of our experience, while keeping them in the periphery.

First addressing Surrealism's positive contribution, we can look to René Magritte's famous artwork "The Treachery of Images" as an accessible example. The piece exhibits Magritte's painting of a wooden tobacco pipe, accompanied by a caption painted in fine script that reads: "*Ceci n'est pas un pipe*." The intention of the piece is to bring the viewer out from their typical spectating attitude—their "realistic attitude"—enlightening them to a new realization. Magritte is pointing out that the spectator is not, in fact, looking at a pipe. Rather, they are looking at a painting of a pipe.[31] By teasing out this realization through the painting's caption, the artist forces the spectator to reconsider their experience of the piece. They must ask: "if it is not a pipe, then what is it?" Without revealing the answer to the riddle directly in the piece, Magritte's caption allows the spectator to marinate in their own confusion, establishing a realization that their expectation may not always stand correct. Those who independently arrive at Magritte's intended conclusion will then understand that they have unconsciously drawn an inaccurate connection: equating an object-concept with an actual object. In doing this, Magritte has created distance between the referent object and the ideal concept, mirroring Husserl's concern with the distance between *cogitatio* and *cogitatum,* as the image reveals itself to be a representation of its referent, highlighting their difference.[32]

This practice contributes to a phenomenological project, as the representational image points itself out to the spectator, prompting them to grasp this difference and awaken from their default mode of perception: taking in the world and its objects as they appear according to the subject, rather than according to the objects in and of themselves. The painting prompts them to

re-determine what they know about a pipe, in its natural form—to take a look at a real pipe and pay closer attention to its essential features. This involves a process of abstracting the concept apart from the object, and taking notice of the difference between them; the distinction between seeing an object according to me, and according to itself. In this way, Surrealism does something similar to Husserl's phenomenology, interrupting and suspending the subject's everyday attitude and presumptions.

This activity of seeing an object according to itself is one component of Surrealist creativity, which coincidentally implements features of subliminal phenomenology. It achieves an approach to object-essences in and through artworks such as Magritte's, which lead us to access objects as they appear in and of themselves, rather than leaning too heavily on one's learned concepts and categories, or injecting the object with their own expectations. Magritte's affirmation "Ceci n'est pas un pipe" precisely suspends the word "pipe" and its related expectations as inadequate to a depicted pipe, let alone a real one. We might say that the relation between the painted object, so ready to be gazed at as a classic image of a pipe, similarly suspends or disrupts our gaze, perhaps opening a new way of glancing at a pipe. By painting the pipe, Magritte prompts the subject to consider a real pipe more closely, in order to get a better idea of its essence and givenness. In this way, Surrealism relates to Husserl's phenomenological project, as it motivates a suspension of the natural attitude; however, its process goes even deeper beyond this positive demonstration.

Next, we may consider the negative capacity in which Surrealism contributes to our project. The Surrealist method requires implementing an automatist practice, one that gradually lets go of conscious creative guidance. Where traditional art is guided by the subject's mental structures of "reality," along with those correlating concepts and categories, the Surrealist

practice works to disrupt this, and thus, this impedes upon one's habitual access to the world's essences and givenness. I call this practice a negative one because it does not prompt the subject to notice anything; rather, by negating conscious guidance it facilitates ways of art making that draw on the subliminal parts of consciousness and experience. As mentioned in Breton's definition for Surrealism, he calls this practice "pure psychic automatism," which works to suppress the artist's control over the creative process, giving room for the unconscious mind to take over. Surreal artists practice automatism through techniques that include (but are not limited to) methods they call: automatic drawing and writing, collage, echo poem, Exquisite Corpse, involuntary sculpture, dream résumé, paranoid-critical method, Surautomatism, and Étrécissements. These practices allow the artist to shed their non-conscious expectations of what counts as part of "reality," and their habits of category, meaning assignation, memory, and intentionality.

Focusing on one of these techniques to demonstrate its function in Surrealist practice, automatic drawing describes a technique of putting pen to paper, allowing the hand to lead the pen without any controlled guidance. When doing this, the artist expands their boundaries of what can be drawn—the artist might draw something that resembles a physical object, or something that does not exist in our world. Perhaps, the result of the automatic drawing will resemble nothing at all, made up of totally abstract lines. The purpose of the technique is not to escape all that could be referenced within our shareable reality, but rather to forget this expectation entirely. An automatic drawing is neither "good" or "bad," just so far as it can never be a drawing "of" something directly—an automatic drawing is guided by the subconscious, escaping the conscious mind's domineering voice.

As this practice expresses the subconscious, it involves and achieves what Casey brings up in his account of peri-phenomenology and the glance. By creating art through automatism, the Surrealist is channeling those things that are received through perception at the immediate level, but cannot be explicitly noticed as the focal point of attention. In that way, pure psychic automatism captures that which is almost uncapturable—it tries to bring a focus on that which must always remain peripheral. In this practice of automatic drawing, the Surrealist is not, say, trying to draw a pipe as it is seen in the realistic attitude; neither are they trying to draw a pipe as it would be better seen through more attentive gazing. Rather, the artist is trying to draw in and draw on that which cannot be directly drawn or encountered in perception. They are trying to record, in lines on paper, what is going on at an immediate pre-perceptual level that allows us to see and draw—but is not seen in usual seeing or drawing. This corresponds to Casey's efforts regarding the glance and peri-phenomena.

Channeled through this, the Surrealist's practice is a move to make something new, without specific intention, in order to create a piece that has been removed from their everyday presuppositions of what is considered beautiful, boring, innovative, overdone, stupid, sensical, genius, or creative. This practice challenges what artists even consider to be defined as "art" by its common standards, thus expanding its boundaries. This, in effect, behaves as an example of shedding the natural attitude, but also sheds the usual habits that guide that attitude, to expose what is at work on an unconscious or subliminal level behind that.

As demonstrated in these examples, Surrealism indirectly involves itself in something akin to the phenomenological method, but goes beyond it by implementing a practice that engages the pre-reflective and the peri-phenomenological. Surrealist automatism involves that which is not yet sanctioned and endorsed by everyday phenomena. Once this is practiced and

learned, the Surrealist is able to re-orient their approach to experience, and the way they organize that information upon receival—they begin to understand the world in a different way, through their new awareness of perception, and its peri-phenomenal features. In the pre-reflective processes of perception, our minds receive that which informs our mental free range of motion, free association, and free play of the imagination. By channeling that which cannot be consciously harnessed, the Surrealist uses the peri-phenomenological to expose a milieu for the creative. Then, guided by those parts of consciousness that are peripheral, the Surrealist can escape their own presuppositions. The idea of Surreal creativity devises a method to capture what goes on in the glance, then goes beyond it.

This proposes an added step to the phenomenological process we have laid out thus far: the subject glances, but then loses the glance just as quickly as it took place. While we usually take glancing for granted, the Surrealist perspective attempts to put more emphasis on what occurs in those moments. For instance, Magritte is not merely telling us that the word “pipe” is not a pipe, but instead demonstrates the realization of this difference between concept and physical object. By identifying that the image is indeed *not* a pipe, the spectator is prompted to re-engage their glance, in order to reorient their focus. This motivates the need to retreat from our natural or “realistic” attitude and to reflect on its successes and failures in our everyday life. Through automatism, the Surrealist attempts to re-engage and revive the glance. The spectator surrenders themselves to that which is automatically occurring, beyond their control.

The goal of this project is to demonstrate that the Surrealist method addresses and engages a necessary component of phenomenological understanding of the material world. In order to properly abstract the essence of the object from its material presentation, we must re-question what was initially experienced—we must engage a resistance of the obvious, and re-

encounter what reveals itself in the initial stages of perception, before the subject is able to inject their own presumptions and ideas. The opportunity for inserting the Surreal is in that pre-reflective stage of perception, which is still infested with novelty, before the perceiver becomes familiar, or assigns their own meanings and ideas to those objects of experience. When the looked-upon object is being understood for its true essence, one must suspend their presuppositions. This presuppositionlessness cannot be arrived at purely by way of thought, rather, it is already given. However, it is difficult for the subject to access that givenness, as we cannot be neutral observers—always conscious, thinking, and assigning meaning. In connection to that idea, Breton is adamant that Surrealism is indeed a type of attitude—once adopted, the Surrealist subject will not be able to navigate their world in the way they once had.[33] It is a conscious forgetting of learned habits of categorization, and an embrace of the immediate. While total, permanent presuppositionlessness cannot be assumed as a constant, it can be implemented as a conscious mode of experience, something to keep in mind as one suspends their usual attitude.

After having shattered their traditional lens of perception and corresponding thought, the Surrealist is prompted to continue navigating experience through this new approach. Speaking in regards to the subject's habituation to everyday normalcy, Breton writes: "Man, that inveterate dreamer… has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use, the objects that his nonchalance has brought his way."[34] Here, Breton contends how we, the non-Surrealists, have trouble accessing the essence of objects through our traditional encounters, as we become lost in our own structures of categories and presuppositions. Ultimately, this brings us farther away from what we are trying to access: the truth of reality, and a deeper connection to our surroundings.

In order to create this break from the realistic attitude and enact Surrealist practice, Breton describes the sense of honesty one must maintain. This is not a reference to interpersonal honesty, as it is usually meant, but rather in respect to honesty with oneself, or more precisely, honesty with one's own perception and thoughts. Even further, this involves an honesty to reality, a duty to provide oneself with an accurate understanding of it. In regards to this, Breton exoticizes "the insane" (as he puts it), expressing jealousy of their honesty in their own delusions.[35] He writes: "I could spend my whole life prying loose the secrets of the insane. These people are honest to a fault, and their naivety has no peer but my own."[36] Breton believes madness frees the imagination, behaving as an internal process of automatist freedom that separates the subject from the presuppositions that come along with the sane-ness of existence in the normal world. He often refers to these sane presuppositions as "logic," although it is not necessarily the logical that he rejects. Rather, he renounces the constraints that the habits of common logic have imposed on the mind, as it restricts our authentic access to the outside world, and obfuscates its givenness. Surrealism engages a playfulness that suspends logic in order to see the deepest essences of objects, as they are appearing to us in the natural world. This playfulness is often equated to a "madness" in Surrealist discourse, as their creative approach may appear unhinged and unstable to another person who still abides by the constraints of habituated logic.

From here, we can formulate an understanding as to why Surrealism is often portrayed as something that is unhinged from the constructs of reality. In truth, Surrealism is very much grounded in the natural world, inspired by experience and other shareable phenomena. What makes the Surrealist approach different from traditional thought is the way that its members come to approach that phenomena—fully allowing themselves to be struck with its novelty and strangeness. Surrealism does not aim to create artistic representations that are divorced from all

common knowledge and meaning, but rather to be inspired by a *super*-reality, one that is more true to our natural world and its contents.

Concluding Remarks

By detailing Husserl's natural attitude, and describing Casey's concept of the glance, we are able to see that the Surrealist method can function in ways that parallel Husserl's phenomenological framework, but goes beyond it. The Surrealist imagination is an actionable practice, an effect of having performed and then re-engaged what Casey would call the peri-phenomenological features of experience. The Surrealist is fundamentally grounded through the here, the now, and the all-at-once, but uses these subliminal features of perception to do something more progressive. They harness the subconscious in order to acknowledge that which cannot be at the forefront: the peripheral parts of our experience, that which is intuited through our subconscious and contributes to our sense of orientation within the world. The product of a Surrealist practice is part of the super-reality, one that is more connected to the peripheral features of our experience.

Being less occupied with ascertaining definitive truths, the Surrealists contrast with traditional phenomenologists by harnessing a playful concentration on object-essences, which is geared towards challenging those essences. This is achieved by positively pointing out one's preconceptions, as seen through the example of Magritte's pipe, but also works in automatic drawing, to negate that conscious voice that persistently announces itself in our everyday life, and overpowers the neutrality of the world's givenness.

By allowing oneself to re-determine their approach to experience, the subject may come to see objects of experience as they are already appearing according to themselves. To understand phenomena in this way is to know it in its most meaningful capacity. While the Surrealists are not directly involving Casey's problem, both are drawing on the same features of experience. In this way, the Surrealist attitude takes an insightful step that relates to Casey's challenge to phenomenology—it formulates a methodology that consciously lets go of one's learned categories and expectations, and allows themselves to be guided by their subconscious, and all that it contains as peripheral to the conscious mind.

The playfulness of Surrealism does not try to perform rigorous science or philosophy, rather, it is concentrated on suspending logic in order to see the full weight of our environment and its contents. In this sense, their project can be understood as complementary to phenomenology. By discovering the Surrealist attitude, the artist is able to understand why the mind assigns certain attributions with particular objects, creating a habituated structure of presumptions and conditioned categories. The artist is able to dive deeper than their beholden mental concepts of physical objects and the natural world—trespassing those eidetic constraints in order to investigate its real resonance or surplus. This method renders the Surrealist's understanding of reality to be a clearer one, as they can access their reality on a fuller plane, and understand their experience with greater depth.

This draws out a complementarity between philosophy and art, offering another example of how phenomenology can observe the peculiarities of perception as they are revealed through artworks. Since phenomenologists and artists both work to explore perception as it is embodied in our relationship to the world, this complementarity can be used as a point of departure for further inspection of connections from peri-phenomenology to Surrealist art, as it is a broad

movement with many branches and contributors, all channeled through Breton's concept of pure psychic automatism. The parallels drawn in this project function as an exemplar of such complementarities, pointing out how philosophers should be paying attention to how modern art accounts for the subconscious, casting light on that which is in the peripheral background.

Here, we see the topic of the peri-phenomenological challenge come to fruition through the Surrealist pursuit and vice versa. In both cases we see how the subject gathers their surroundings in order to access its contents and better understand the world and its givenness, and their experience of this. This helps the subject arrive at an understanding of how they become properly oriented within their place, in ways that pay attention to the *entirety* of perceptual experience—how we come to know what is real as the focus of everyday experience, but also how that focus draws on what is peripheral to our sense of knowing. In this complementary effort of art and philosophy, the phenomenological project can be advanced through the creative efforts of Surrealism, since Surrealist techniques offer a methodology on an active return to that which is given to us in the peripheral borders of our perceptive gaze, showing that what is given to us in experience can be summoned for inspection, in order to better understand our place in the world.

Notes

[1] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 85.

[2] Husserl. *Ideas I*. p. 6.

[3] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 121-123.

[4] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 146.

[5] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 145.

[6] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 145.

[7] Husserl. *Ideas I*. p. 8.

[8] Husserl. *Ideas I*. p. 8.

[9] Husserl, *Crisis*. p. 85, p. 186-189.

[10] By "that which is carried with it," I am referring to Husserl's idea of "presuppositions" which will be approached later on.

[11] Touch and hearing would reveal similar yet also different points.

[12] Earle also wrote about phenomenology and Surrealism, although in a very different capacity. As Earle was a filmmaker, his work primarily focused on Surrealist films, most explicitly in his book *A Surrealism of the Movies*.

[13] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 3.

[14] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 2.

[15] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 70.

[16] See Avrum Stroll's *Surfaces* p. 21 for a similar operation of intention towards surfaces, working from the question of "How do we talk about surfaces?"

[17] In chapter 4 of *The World at a Glance*, Casey goes further in depth into this distinction between the glance and the gaze.

[18] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 92.

[19] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 92.

[20] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 99.

[21] Casey. *The World at a Glance*. p. 147.

[22] Casey spends much more time distinguishing the difference between the glance and the gaze; as the glance is a part of the gaze. He does this is in chapter 4 of *The World at a Glance.*

[23] Casey, *The World at a Glance.* p. 10.

[24] Casey, *The World at a Glance.* p. 9.

[25] Casey, *The World at a Glance*. p. 11.

[26] Aside, perhaps, from the function of Being itself, but this would be better suited to a Heideggerian framework.

[27] These manifestoes, originally published in 1929 and 1930 respectively, are included together in the text *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor Press: 2010), along with his poetic texts "Soluble Fish" (1924), "A Letter to Seers" (1925) "Political Position of Surrealism" (1935), "Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not" (1942), and "On Surrealism in Its Living Works" (1935), all functioning as unofficial manifestoes on Surrealism, written by Breton.

[28] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.* p. 26.

[29] Breton specifies that his use of the term is inspired by positivists, like Aquinas and Anatole France.

[30] Breton specifies that his use of the term is inspired by positivists, like Aquinas and Anatole France.

[31] This example could not be given without mention of Foucault's 1968 (and then expanded in 1973) essay "Ceci n'est pas un pipe," wherein the philosopher paralleled an interest in the

relationship between language and objects; a relationship of signification. In the essay, Foucault concluded that Magritte's display of non-representational *resemblance* "presumes a primary reference that prescribes and classes" a copy of itself, due to its inherently mimetic relation. Foucault contends that *resemblance* is ultimately dominated by representation. See: Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*. Trans. by James Harkness. p. 9.

[32] While this is a particularly fitting example of the Surrealist's concern with distance between object and concept, the idea is interpreted differently throughout the movement's artists and their works (with many choosing to focus on different theoretical issues entirely). This is to say that Magritte's piece is not a centerpiece of Surrealist thought, rather it is a product of it.

[33] Breton calls this finding the "Surrealist voice," of which he explains in closer detail in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* p. 27.

[34] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* p. 3.

[35] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. p. 6.

[36] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.* p. 5.

References

Central Texts:

Breton, Andre. *Manifestoes of Surrealism.* Trans. by Richard Seaver & Helen R. Lane. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 2010.

Casey, Edward. S. *The World at a Glance*. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis. 2007.

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. by F. Kernsten. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: Boston, 1983.

Husserl, Edmund. "The Life-World and the World of Science." in *The Crisis of European S Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Trans. by David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Trans. David Carr. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

On Surrealism:

Alquie, Ferdinand. *The Philosophy of Surrealism*. Trans. by Bernard Waldrop. Ann Arbour, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1965.

Balakian, Anna. "The Surrealist Image" in *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute.* E.P Dutton & Co. New York: 1970.

Browder, Clifford. "Dreams and the Surrealist Object" in *Andre Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism*. Librarie Droz, 1967.

Earle, William. "Phenomenology and the Surrealism of Movies." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 38, no. 3. 1980.

Foucault, Michel. *This is Not a Pipe*. Trans. by James Harkness. University of California Press: 1983.

Rothman, Roger. "Object-Oriented Surrealism: Salvador Dalí and the Poetic Autonomy of Things." *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 57:2, Routledge: 2016.

Rubin, William S. *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage.* The Museum of Modern Art, New York: 1968.

Weir, Simon & Jason Anthony Dibbs. "The Ontographic Turn: From Cubism to the Surrealist Object" *Open Philosophy*; 2. 2019.

On Phenomenology and Perception:

Andrews, Jorella. *The Question of Painting*. Bloomsbury Academic: London. 2018.

Bratu, Horia, and Ileana Marculescu. "Aesthetics and Phenomenology." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, no. 3. 1979.

Crowther, Paul. *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame)*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Dufrenne, Mikel. *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press: 1973.

Husserl, Edmund. "Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory: Collected Works XI." Trans. By John B. Brough Dordrecht: Springer. 2005.

Gibson, J.J. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum 1989.

Jacobs, Hanne. "I am Awake: Husserlian reflections on attention and wakefulness" in *Alter Revue de Phénoménologie,* 18. 2010.

Luft, Sebastian. "Husserl on the Artist and the Philosopher: Aesthetic and Phenomenological Attitude." Marquette University. 1999.

Keyes, C. D. "Art and Temporality." *Research in Phenomenology, 1*, 63. Atlantic Highlands, N.J: 1971.

Northerner, Sara J. "From Edmund Husserl's *Image Consciousness* to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Flesh* and *Chiasm*." *Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception*. ed. by Duane H. Davis & William S. Hamrick. New York: New York Press. 2016.

The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting. ed. Michael B. Smith. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern Press. 1993.

Ferencz-Flatz, C. “Phenomenology of Automatism. Habit and Situational Typification in Husserl” *Phenomenology and Mind*. 2016.

Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception. ed. by Duane H. David & William S. Hamrick. New York: New York Press. 2016.

Loren, Lewis A. and Dietrich, Eric. *Merleau-Ponty, Embodied Cognition, and the Problem of Intentionality*. Cybernetics and Systems. 1995.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. “Cezanne’s Doubt,” in *Sense and Non-Sense*. trans. Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Dreyfus. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. “Eye and Mind.” The Primacy of Perception, ed. James M. Edie, trans. Carleton Dallery. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. trans. Donald A. Landes. New York: Routledge. 2014.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie, trans. Carleton Dallery. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. 1964.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and The Invisible*. ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern Press. 1968.

50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology. Ed. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, Gayle Salamon. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. 2019.