

## OPENINGS, SCENES: IRREALITY, SURREALITY, ALTEREALITY

Transformation of the everyday world of consciousness and experience are the beginning sites of the projects of Edmund Husserl and Salvador Dali. From here, though, the lines each takes move in different directions: for Husserl toward irreality, for Dali toward surreality. Because both projects contend with essence and phantasy, the intention here is to explore, through words and painted images, the paths and desires of Husserl and Dali. A consideration of their differences contextualizes what I claim is the phenomenologically grounded essentializing nature of Breton's discourse and Dali's transgressive stance toward it.

Robert Sokolowski argues that phenomenology requires a theory of description to justify the notion that unperceived complexions of things do in fact exist along with what is naively experienced.<sup>1</sup> The same can be argued of the work of the artist. Husserl's project falls squarely within the realm of a description of phenomena of the world and those features of consciousness that make possible knowledge of that world. It would be a violation of Dali's project, however, to describe it as description, for it is deliriously more. Yet as statements about world and nature, both assume a critical posture toward the notion that what is seen is in fact what is. Through a consideration of the relation of essence and phantasy, we shall wonder about what it is we do when we assert, with any degree of certainty, what something "is" or "means." Because essence and phantasy are

pivotal to knowledge, reflections on their relations raise questions about us who look at the world and about the world that allows our stance (similar concerns were, of course, crucial to the Surrealist project of transforming both the subject and the object).

We will proceed by an examination of essence and phantasy as they appear in both Husserl and Dali. Not only will the ideas of each be explored in terms of philosophical and methodological thought, they also will be read through paintings. Dali's paintings are manifestations of and comments on his own thought. Husserl, not a painter, will be read through the works of the Synchrony painters (Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright) and through Kandinsky. Such a comparative reading is designed to explore the intertextuality of written and painted texts. Such a task involves specific referential movements, but it also generates an intermezzo text that asserts its own particularity. The concern then is to open the spaces of that evocative intertext that is always the promise and deferral of what is "present."

### HUSSERL AND IRREALITY

Phenomenology begins in silence.<sup>2</sup> Phenomenology's task, for Husserl, is to grasp what is indubitably given as consciousness and in consciousness as the possibility of concrete experience and knowledge in the natural attitude. Husserl's contention is that consciousness is epistemologically antecedent (transcendental) to the world in the sense that things in the world gain meaning and "existential status" for us through the intentionality of pure consciousness.<sup>3</sup> This intentionality, however, is typically hidden from view and undetected:

We must rise above the self-forgetfulness of the theorizer who, in his theoretical producing, devotes himself to the subject-matter, the theories, and the methods, and accordingly knows nothing of the inwardness of that producing—who lives in producing, but does not have this productive living itself as a theme within his field of vision.<sup>4</sup>

Husserl's Desire is to "stand . . . at the gate of the entrance to the realm, never before entered, of the 'mothers of knowledge.'"<sup>5</sup>

The means by which we can pass through the gates and expand our vision is the phenomenological *epoché* (or reduction). Phenom-

enological reflection "directs" our attention to the acts that accomplish the "natural reflection" of everyday life.<sup>6</sup> Phenomenological reflection "liberates"<sup>7</sup> and "delivers"<sup>8</sup> us from the naiveté of the natural attitude. While in the natural attitude the flesh of the world naively appears as given, Husserl's Desire is to recover the Flesh of that flesh. That Flesh dwells in the space of Essential Being<sup>9</sup> and is open to transcendental reflection.

The phenomenological *epoché* allows one to "stand above" the world, and thus to know it as a "phenomenon."<sup>10</sup> As Husserl notes, "eidetic intuition," along with the phenomenological reduction, constitutes transcendental reflection.<sup>11</sup> In particular, it is through a consideration of eidetic intuition that the essence (*eidos*) of a phenomenon is grasped. It is also here that phantasy becomes visible and crucial.

Eidetic intuition (*Wesensschau*) is a privileged species of intuition (*Anschaung*), which itself is a central feature of the intentionality of consciousness. The intentionality of consciousness, of course, is the fundamental insight of Husserl's analysis of consciousness and its constitution of meaning. Intentionality unifies, objectifies, constitutes, and synthesizes materials experienced in the world and, by so doing, gives them meaning. Intentionality, and thus eidetic intuition, are indispensable in Husserl's epistemology, whose commitment is to certainty and indubitability.

Eidetic intuition, or ideation, transforms individual, empirical experiences and reveals hidden in them their possibility, i.e., their essence. Essence is that which a number of distinct entities have in common. It refers to the structure of the object without which it cannot be:<sup>12</sup> the intimate self-being of a thing that tells what-it-is.<sup>13</sup> The description of an essence, and its presentation as a concept, identifies not only what a thing is, but also its necessary inability to be anything else (which Husserl takes up in his complex discussions of evidence and apodicticity).

Essences are the objects of ideation. Nonempirical via their apprehension in eidetic reduction, they are grasped through examples. It is only through examples that the phenomenologist is able to accomplish eidetic insight. Examples are crucial and are treated neither as facts nor as essences; they may stem from actual concrete experience or from imagination.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Husserl argued that "free fancies assume a privileged position over against perceptions." He further adds that "*fiction . . . makes up the life of phenomenology as of all eidetic science*" and is "*the source whence the knowledge of 'eternal truths' draws sustenance.*"<sup>15</sup> As Sokolowski suggests, the effort to isolate a viable instance is a

somewhat plodding procedure...In fact what usually happens is that . . . (one) . . . will project a single imaginative variant, but one that is strategic, crucial, and usually colorful, one that brings out a certain necessity in the thing we wish to examine. It is not easy to capture the right imaginative variant, to pick out the dramatic, vivid example that shows a *necessity*. We need *fantasy* to do so . . . We have to be able to think of things being very different than the way they are, and it is by no means everyone's power to do so. We have to be able to imagine the impossible and to see it as impossible.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship of eidetic intuition and imagined examples marks the first crucial place of phantasy (fancy, imagination) in phenomenology. A more profound moment of its appearance, however, is realized in "free imaginative variation." In Husserl's terms, in fancy he has perfect freedom in the *arbitrary* recasting of the figures he has imagined, in running over continuous series of possible shapes, in the production therefore of an infinite number of new creations; a freedom that opens up to him for the first time an entry into the spacious realms of essential possibility with their infinite horizons of essential knowledge.<sup>17</sup> Imaginative variation enables us

to vary the form of a material object without limits; we can also imagine it in different places at different times. In this case our imagination is absolutely free, nothing stops it, the object remains concrete, that is to say, it can exist "in itself."<sup>18</sup>

Essences or essential structures are thus grasped and clarified by *virtue of imagination*. What is revealed is a coherence or necessity, a thematic core that persists as a "felt resistance to the negating force of imagination."<sup>19</sup> In the *Logical Investigations*, which Husserl considered his first truly phenomenological work, he referred to a "law" that characterizes the essence's necessity,<sup>20</sup> a theme that persists through *Ideas*. This legal space is classified and fulfilled by imagination. Via its clarifying capacity, we encounter imagination's crucial role in phenomenological inquiry. Phantasy makes essence-knowledge possible, and it is from here also that the "irreality" of essences arises. For essences possess the feature of not being individualized or localized in time and space. They neither perish nor come into being.<sup>21</sup> Irreal things are "everywhere and nowhere," they are "non-real."<sup>22</sup> As phenomenology is an investigation of essential being, of the transcendental, its objects (essences) are always irreal. In

the play of fancy it is a matter of indifference in this connexion whether such things (melodies, social happenings) have ever been given in actual experience or not . . . we can through 'ideation' secure . . . primordial . . . and adequate insight into essences."<sup>23</sup>

Although Husserl thought himself a "beginner" even at a stage where his work could be considered mature, he envisioned the "promised land"<sup>24</sup> and lamented that he would never set foot on it.<sup>25</sup> Yet he had, for he had immersed himself in the irrealty of Essential Being ("qua Being as it is in itself").<sup>26</sup> By treating essences (Essential Being) in such a fashion, Husserl was later able to claim for his investigations an "authentic metaphysics" of experience that was to be taken as superior to and more certain than the "speculative excesses" of perverse and "historically degenerate metaphysics."<sup>27</sup> Not only did Husserl restrict the speculative "beyond" of any metaphysics to the here and now, he goes even further to posit "*only one Objective world, only one Objective time, only one Objective space, only one Objective nature,*" which is known by a "single community of co-existing monads."<sup>28</sup> The emphasis on essences, essential knowledge, and "*only one Objective world*" whose "beyond" is here in this world is precisely the same essential, apodictic claim Breton made for the essence of *surreality* when he took it to be the "pearl" of a nonidealistic idealism that could be retrieved from the "dung heap of absolute idealism."<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that Husserl recognized that the apprehension of essences is marked by "grades of clearness," and that there are "grades of intuitability" of givenness.<sup>30</sup> The task of eidetic reflection is to make clear what is intuitable, and we can

always bring the data nearer to us even in the zone of obscure apprehension. What is obscurely presented comes closer to us in its own peculiar way, eventually knocking at the door of intuition . . . possessing its own way of effecting the transition through a process of "unfolding" . . . until the object referred to (*das intendierte*) passes into the brightly lit circle of perfect presentation.<sup>31</sup>

The recognition of gradations of clarity led Husserl to an inevitable and controversial distinction between types of essences. This distinction is between essence (*eide*) and pure essence, between what is apprehended in "ideation" and what is rarefied in "idealization." Idealization pushes essences grasped in eidetic intuition (and the concepts that embody them) toward perfection, toward fixity, giving them a "second existence."<sup>32</sup> The legal character of essences is thus

problematic. Levinas notes, however, there is a certain primacy of the *eidos* over the "idea."<sup>33</sup>

Essences intuited by acts of direct ideation, which express the essence of the concrete world, are inexact essences. These "generic" or "morphological"<sup>34</sup> essences and concepts, however, are descriptive of their world. They do possess a certain distinct legal nature despite the fact it is not the higher gradation of purity and exactness embodied by pure essences achieved in idealization. Inexact morphological essences are unreal, but not perfectly unreal, and "the constancy and clear-cut distinguishability of generic concepts or generic essences . . . should not be confused with the exactness of the ideal concepts."<sup>35</sup> For as Husserl notes:

The geometer is not interested in actual forms intuited through sense, as is the descriptive student of nature. He does not, like the latter, construct *morphological concepts* of vague types of configuration, which on the basis of sensory intuition are directly apprehended, and, vague as they are, conceptually or terminologically fixed, the *vagueness* of the concepts, the circumstances that they have mobile spheres of application, is no defect attaching to them; for they are flatly indispensable to the sphere of knowledge they serve, or, as we may also say, they are within this sphere the only concepts justified. If it behooves us to bring to suitable conceptual expression the intuitable corporeal data in their intuitively given essential characters, we must indeed take them as we find them. And we do not find them otherwise than in flux, and typical essences can in such case be apprehended only in that essential intuition which can be immediately analyzed.<sup>36</sup>

For Husserl, then, imagination discloses essences. They and their meanings become evident through its work. In more rarefied gradations, essences point toward exactness, clarity, and purity, toward unreality and toward an other existence. In phantasy is clarity. Certainty is achieved in fancy. Is a fiction. What an extraordinary admission! A wonderful idea, and lovely. And to imagine it is not ironic? Husserl's Desire!

#### PAINTED IRREALITY: INEXACT MORPHOLOGICAL ESSENCES

Visual displays of unreality are available in the painting of modern abstract artists, many of whose advances were contemporaneous

with the works of Husserl. One of the most striking kinds of these, "Synchromy" painting, appeared almost precisely at the same time as Husserl's *Ideas*. In Synchromist painting, particularly prior to its turn toward pure, nonobjective painting, one finds insights into essences that are presented as the possibility and coherence of concrete experience. While Synchromy indeed has a nonfigurative, nonobjective moment, early Synchromist works present a visual grasp of morphological essences, which, while not purely unreal, are, nonetheless, unreal.

Synchromism (meaning "with color") plays on the notion of a symphony of color rhythms, and represents the first American, and one of the earliest efforts, at painting based on color and abstract form. It was initiated by Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright and articulated in their paintings, notebooks, and essays between 1912 and 1914.<sup>37</sup>

Synchromist painting asserts that color is generative of form and space, the idea being to "make the form and space with waves of color" by realizing and using the naively undetected "rhythmic basis to color."<sup>38</sup> These "color rhythms" infuse a painting with the notion of time: they create the illusion that the picture develops, like a piece of music, within a span of time. This is contrasted with the old view that paintings exist strictly in space, their very expression grasped by the spectator simultaneously and at a glance.<sup>39</sup> Russell's *Synchromist Poster* (1913) illustrates this principle in an advertisement for the first Synchromist exhibit in Munich. Reflecting on Russell's approach over forty years later, Macdonald-Wright noted:

on rotund objects illuminated from the viewer's direction, he made his highlights yellow and graded them toward shadow through greens and blues on one side, on the other through oranges, reds and purples. For him local color, as such, did not exist, and this left him free to play with the use of a pure color gradation . . . He called this method the "orchestration of tonalities" and, as we are cognizant of solidity only by means of light, this process produced intense form.<sup>40</sup>

Several entries in Russell's notebook, dated 1912, and one from his personal introduction for the Paris exhibition of 1913, are remarkably akin to Husserl's *epoché*. For instance:

Place in mind or vision clearly the subject as form—the points nearest you in projection—those furthest and side projections and seize the order of this . . . the sentiments of the whole as

color and as line. And in working ignore, forget the linear outlines of objects—never will you arrive at complete expression until this habit is lost.<sup>41</sup>

And further:

One often hears painters say that they work on the form first, in the hope of arriving at the color afterwards. It seems to me that the opposite procedure should be adopted . . . I have worked solely with color, its rhythms, its contrasts, and certain directions motivated by the color masses. There is no subject to be found there in the ordinary sense of the word.<sup>42</sup>

In September 1912, he exhorted, "makes lines color . . . never paint "the Thing" or the subject."<sup>43</sup> And in October 1913, he reflected, "I am not concerned, so to speak, with the local color of objects."<sup>44</sup>

Such statements took Synchronist painting out of the realm of naive taken-for-granted representational/figurative reality and pushed them toward abstraction, toward the realization of what it was that constituted and made possible that reality. In *Still Life Synchrony* (1912–13) and *Still Life with Bananas* (1912–13) Russell demonstrated his point. The painting is indeed figurative, but one is first immersed in color, out of which are generated recognizable forms.

In a September 1912 entry to his notebook, Russell looked beyond local, concrete, "factual" reality toward more essential features of its presence:

to forget the object entirely, yes to forget it—to put it out of our mind entirely and think only of planes, lines, colors, rhythms, etc. emotional visual quality . . . Some artists sacrifice or ignore these qualities and accent the fact—but one must do the contrary, accent the rhythm, the rapport, and let the object suffer. Keep the "music" at all costs—the palpitation or undulation—sacrifice the fact.<sup>45</sup>

As Levin notes, Russell was perhaps anticipating the future of Synchrony painting in particular, and modern painting in general.<sup>46</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the early formative years of Synchronist work were primarily abstract and not simply non-objective. There is a distinct "legal space" referenced by "abstract" and by "nonobjective." In some cases the delineation is very thin,



but in the work of the Synchronists, "abstract" refers to non-localized, nonfactual, or we might say derealized, objects that nevertheless retain a certain essential figurativeness due to their embeddedness in nature and world. "Nonobjective," on the other hand, refers to completely derealized objects—objects constituted by color and form or motion, as if color, form, and motion were the purified realm from which objects arise. In the words of Macdonald-Wright:

We are incapable of imagining a form that is not the result of some contact of our senses with nature. Or at least the forms that issue from this contact are infinitely more expressive and varied than those born of the inventive labor of the intellect . . . In opposition to purely logical theories, we mean to stay true to reality. In it is the foundation of every pictorial work . . . It would not displease me if my art were down to earth; the essential is that it should not be abstract.<sup>47</sup>

("Abstract," in Macdonald-Wright's lexicon, is what is referred to here as "nonobjective"). The distinguishing factor between "natural" and "purely logical" here is the same factor that for Husserl distinguishes between objects revealed by ideation and objects revealed by idealization, respectively.

A natural form that heavily influenced Russell and Macdonald-Wright was the human form. In particular, Michelangelo's *Pieta* and *Dying Slave* were inspirational. *Sketch after Michelangelo's "Pieta"* (1912) makes visible in the larger watercolor *Sketch after Michelangelo's "Pieta"* (1912) the abstraction of the essence of the human form and its generation by color rhythm. Likewise, *Sketch after Michelangelo's "Dying Slave"* (1910–12) and *Study after Michelangelo's "Dying Slave"* (1910–12), whose essence is constituted by an imagined spiral, formed the basis for the famous *Synchromy in Deep Blue-Violet* (1913). The notions developed in these latter sketches and painting also were central to another of Russell's major works, *Synchromy in Orange: To Form* (1913–14). Other paintings that also exhibit a decidedly morphological concern are Macdonald-Wright's *Self-Portrait* (1915), *Synchromy in Blue* (1916), *Oriental Synchromy in Blue-Green* (1918), and *Aeroplane: Synchromy in Yellow-Orange* (1920). (Also illustrative are Sheeler's *Abstraction: True Form* [1914], Sayen's *Scheherazade* [1915], and Yarrow's *Flowers* [c. 1920].) Macdonald-Wright's *Abstraction on Spectrum (Organization No. 5)* (1914) and *Conception Synchromy* (1914) appear to be moving toward nonobjectivity, but nevertheless still turn on the spiral extracted from the earlier interest in the

essence of the human form. When Levin observed that the essential figurativeness of *Synchromy in Deep Blue-Violet* and *Synchromy in Orange: To Form* has been consistently overlooked and misinterpreted, she called attention to the Synchronists' interest in the empirical, natural world prior to their departure toward a more purified realm of nonobjective foundations.<sup>48</sup>

Precipitated by his "spiralic plunge into space, excited and quickened by appropriate color contrasts,"<sup>49</sup> Russell's *Cosmic Synchromy* (1913-14) and *Conception Synchromy* (1915) move even closer toward nonobjectivism and are works that perhaps blur the line between abstract and nonobjective moments of early Synchronist aesthetics. These works, too, play upon the rhythmic undulation of color in a spiral that unfolds in time. It can be argued though not only that the painting itself unfolds in time like music, but also that the level of abstraction itself spirals toward nonobjectivity and progressively more pure realizations of what were previously cruder morphological essences, i.e., that the idealized or purer essential form of the morphological essence is made visible in a dramatically more irreal gradation of clarity.

Russell's *Archaic Composition No. 1* and *Archaic Composition No. 2*, both of 1915-16, are illustrative of the closest early Synchromy came to a statement of pure irrealty. In fact, Russell noted of these works that he "sought a 'form' which, though necessarily archaic, would be fundamental and permit of steady evolution."<sup>50</sup> The gradations of clarity and the level of eidetic purity (irrealty) are most profound in these works. Yet Levin points out that these two paintings were based on the artist's self-portraits.<sup>51</sup> As such the morphological is purified as much as possible without actually obliterating its grounding in the concrete, which would have had the effect of idealizing the prior ideation and moving it toward the more purely fictive, a level of intellectualism to which the Synchronists were deeply opposed.

Macdonald-Wright remained within the framework of Synchromy theory after 1915, even through his works in the 1950s. Russell, on the other hand, in a series of works in the early 1920s known as the *Eidos* paintings, explored synchromy in its most nonobjective possibility. Nonetheless, it can be said that Synchronist painting remained faithful to nature and to the heroic figure, pursuing the "the happy risk of falling on some of the correspondences that exist between reality and our sensations of color."<sup>52</sup> Its conception and display of essences thus remained within the orbit of the morphological, with intimations of the possibility of imagining purer essences.

## PAINTED IRREALITY: PERFECTLY IRREAL ESSENCES

In the painting and philosophy of Vasilii Kandinsky the notion of the irreal is given a sense that resonates with and is more profound than Husserl's renderings. For Kandinsky art is a vehicle of transcendence, a means by which noumenal and cosmic ideas can be evoked and expressed. Art for Kandinsky possessed a spiritual, messianic character, evident in the apocalyptic and eschatological themes and motifs embedded in his works. It could be no other way, for operative in the artist, as in the cosmos itself, is the undeniable "inner necessity" of the Spirit unfolding. A conception of transcendence resides in the works of both Husserl and Kandinsky, yet they are dramatically different in their philosophical commitments (though similar in their therapeutic desire). Nonetheless, Kandinsky's expression of essence, imagination, and irreal addresses a realm not completely unfamiliar to that of Husserl, particularly Husserl's notion of pure essences.

Kandinsky developed his thought in the light of a pervasive antimaterialist philosophy that swept through Europe and Russia at the end of the century. Voices of this *zeitgeist* included the French symbolists, theosophy, anthroposophy, gnosticism, mysticism, and related sciences of the "occult." The force of this chorus rippled through philosophy, music, painting, architecture, science, and the literary arts. As Kandinsky observed:

Our epoch is a time of tragic collision between matter and spirit and of the downfall of the purely material world view; for many, many people it is a time of terrible, inescapable vacuum, a time of enormous questions; but for a few people it is a time of presentiment or of precognition of the path to Truth.<sup>53</sup>

It was Kandinsky's belief that abstract painting, like music and other contemporary abstract arts, could induce a new vision for humanity. He envisioned the artist as one capable of revealing the indubitable foundations of truth. He saw the artist as an "invisible Moses,"<sup>54</sup> a prophet who brings to the blind the "inner vibrations" that were "lied about or passed over in silence" by positivists and materialists.<sup>55</sup> As Volboubt noted, for Kandinsky "naturalism with its monotonous repetitions hovered on the surface of things. Form loses its vitality in repetition."<sup>56</sup>

To overcome this mundane taken-for-grantedness and its loss, the artist is required to hold this reality in abeyance or to fathom it and look toward its possibility. In Husserl's phenomenology, this is

the *epoché*. In a line from Kandinsky's autobiography, published in the same year as Husserl's *Ideas* (1913), he remembered the passage into the world of form and color:

I first learnt to look at a picture not only from the outside but to enter into it, to move around in it and to take part in its life . . . I had noticed this sensation before . . . but unconsciously and confusedly. Now only for the first time I received it in its fullness.<sup>57</sup>

To enter and move around inside the thing, thus seeing and knowing its genesis as well as essential structure, was crucial for Kandinsky. This grounded his interest in abstraction. Abstraction was a means of bypassing the world of appearances that masks the soul of things. He sought to dissolve or dematerialize objects in order to know the "inner sounds" or "inner vibrations" constitutive of their presence.<sup>58</sup> He aimed to "make the invisible visible."<sup>59</sup> This invisible is "the spirit," the "origin," and "true author" of all works and things.<sup>60</sup> It is here that Kandinsky's supreme principle becomes visible: the principle of "inner necessity."<sup>61</sup>

Inner necessity is the interiority or essential inner meaning that lends things their presence and form, which in turn is constitutive of their objectivity. Inner necessity is the metaphysical or cosmic principle of the spirit manifesting itself, knowable with greatest clarity in the intuitions of the soul. While Kandinsky implied a mystical and occult rather than intellectual sense in his use of the word *spiritual*,<sup>62</sup> nonetheless, the intellect and imagination of the artist are important in selecting and translating intuitions into forms capable of generating a transformative radiance. Inner necessity is the realm of Essential Being—that which is unreal and gives things their coherence and meaning, that without which they would not be. The harmony of each form is not only a resonance of truth and beauty, but also an indication of that which, if violated or omitted, would destroy the fundamental essentiality of the thing. Inner necessity is the legal space of all that is, and it

arises from the colour and rhythm of movement, from forms in space, as an extremely sensitive demand from a categorical imperative and an *élan vital* of the creative conscience aspiring to express the 'eidetic presences' which are *purer than phenomenological perception*, in the more mysterious and fascinating reality which is the essence of the spirit in its infinite variety.<sup>63</sup>

As Kandinsky noted, "every phenomenon passes man, leaving behind its trace brushing against his soul."<sup>64</sup> Volboubt suggests of inner necessity that it is a

radiance spreading within the artist's consciousness, becoming part of the very movement of his actions. It is a presence, as it were, which affects and determines his deepest being. It introduces events, images, and impulses in the artist's mind and forces him to express them.<sup>65</sup>

It is thus unavoidably necessary that the artist "eliminate" the world of mundane reality. Again Volboubt: "to reach the concrete, the 'real' in Kandinsky's terminology, one must aim for the extreme limits of reality until its very existence is abolished."<sup>66</sup> Kandinsky's world of the "real" is Husserl's world of the irreal. This inner or reduced "invisible" world of essences is a world of objects. Husserl considered them so, noting they possess their own objectivity; so did Kandinsky. In fact, Kandinsky progressively preferred the term *concrete* as a description of his painting, indicating that the "objects" he presented (color, form) indeed possess an objectivity or reality.<sup>67</sup>

The objects created by the artist have their genesis in the inner necessity of the transcendent spirit manifesting itself in the soul of the artist. It surfaces in the intuition of the soul and resonates with the mind, generating

strange illuminations. Images and signs are born, allusions to an inexpressible world, a universe of *virtualities* which the creator discovers like a disconcerting and familiar reality that would be at one and the same time intimate and unknown. The artist is the mediator of this '*elsewhere*' whose laws and conventions he has established.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed the artist helps establish this "elsewhere," this irreal "everywhere and nowhere." For although a work of art is born of the artist in a mysterious and secret way,<sup>69</sup> it becomes flesh only through the artist. It is here that intellect and imagination fulfill the "will" of inner necessity. Kandinsky observed in his autobiography, dated June 1913, that forms come almost exclusively "from within the artist." This echoes his positions elaborated earlier in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and in "The Problem of Form" (an essay in the *Blaue Reiter Almanach*, 1912). In *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) Kandinsky further clarified his revelations, effecting a full reduction of natural forms to point and line and their relations to space,

form, and color: "in the last analysis, all have originated as points, and it is to the point in its geometrical essence that everything returns."<sup>70</sup> Earlier, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, he had anticipated that "the final abstract expression of every art is number."<sup>71</sup>

It is clear that Kandinsky was very much concerned with the grasp of essential possibility. Kandinsky's *Desire*, like Husserl's, was to move in the space of the irreal. Volboubt notes the intention of Kandinsky's *Desire*:

The imagination moves freely in a labyrinth of possibilities. Kandinsky wished to penetrate these "spiritual" sites and, in this way, break away from this side of the visible and travel to infinity . . . to find oneself at the center of a reality that has been freed of all accidents, where one can discover the simplest and at the same time most intense structures of sensibility.<sup>72</sup>

Kandinsky's work is concerned with the genetic and with the irreal. From intuition supplied by inner necessity, form begins to appear, and its voyage toward the natural, mundane object is traceable. For Kandinsky, as for Husserl, spirit begins where conventional materialism ends. While separated by their respective metaphysical and epistemological commitments, the focus on the possibility and creation of meaning and the coming-to-be-of-form of objects is of profound interest to each. A journey through Kandinsky's paintings illuminates the stripping away and transcendence of the mundane, the recovery of possibility in abstraction, the statement of that possibility as eidetic object, and the progressive movement from ideation to idealization, thus purifying the object so its very constitution becomes evident.

Visible in Kandinsky's work is a continually evolving meditation on the purer forms of irreal, those closer to and more profoundly evocative of the "unknown voice," the title of a painting done in 1916. As this painting would suggest, by 1916 Kandinsky had effected his *epoché* in full—his vision had recovered the source of meaning and plentitude, though it did not by any means exhaust its infinity. In phenomenological terms, the period between 1900 and 1916 is particularly interesting, for it reveals Kandinsky's continual overcoming of the mundane via a presentation of morphological essences, and a progressive overcoming of the morphological in favor of the more rarefied irreal of nonobjective constructions.<sup>73</sup> As he noted in the magazine *XXme Siècle* in 1938, "this art creates alongside the real world a new world which has nothing to do exter-

nally with reality. It is subordinate internally to cosmic laws."<sup>74</sup>

In the time between 1900 and about 1906-7, Kandinsky experimented with postimpressionism (e.g., *Beach Chairs in Holland*, 1904; *Santa Margherita*, 1906) and with Fauvism (e.g., *Couple on Horseback*, 1903; *Landscape at Murnau*, 1907). These appealed to him more than cubism or futurism because of their intense penchant for color and feeling and for their de-emphasis of rationalism. The dematerialization of naturalistic forms is obvious in a series of paintings done after this time. For instance, in such works as *Landscape with Tower* (1908), *Village Church* (1908), *Picture with Archer* (1909), *Train in Murnau* (1909), *Mountain* (1909), *Murnau with Church I* (1910), *Study for Composition II* (1910), *Improvisation XII* (1910), *Lyrically* (1911), *Romantic Landscape* (1911), and *Arabs II* (1911), Kandinsky began to reduce the representational aspects of objects. Yet a commitment to naturalistic morphology still reigned. As he became more and more concerned with his procedure of "hidden construction," accomplished by "stripping and veiling,"<sup>75</sup> as a means of developing the spirit-evoking nature of color and form, morphological essences were progressively reduced. Yet he wrote, "however diminished in importance organic forms may be, their internal sound will always be heard, for this reason the choice of natural objects in painting is an important one."<sup>76</sup>

Stripping and veiling led to more abstract and purified renderings of the irreality of morphological essences. This is evident in the two panels of 1911, *St. Georg I* and *St. Georg II*. It is also exemplified in *Impression 3* (1911), *Improvisations V, VII, XIV, 19, XXVI*, and *Arabs III (with Pitcher)* (1911). As Kandinsky noted, an improvisation is a "largely unconscious, spontaneous expression of inner character, non-material nature."<sup>77</sup> He further stated, "the hidden construction may be composed of seemingly fortuitous shapes, without apparent connection. But the outer absence of such a connection is proof of its inner presence. Outward loosening points toward an internal merging."<sup>78</sup> The movement from intuition as felt, sensuous apprehension toward ideation and on toward idealization continued to accelerate.

The movement toward a purer revealing of essence and spirit lead to a sustained stripping away of representation. The interest in abstract morphology gave way to more rarefied, nonobjective works. In an entry in his autobiography dated June 1913, he noted his paintings now were derived from *within the artist* rather than from nature, referring to them as "objectless."<sup>79</sup> What he meant by this can be seen in works such as *Composition IV* (1911), *Improvisation 30* (1913), *Painting with White Form* (1913), *Composition VII* (1913),

*Improvisation Deluge* (1913), *Improvisation Gorge* (1914), and *Untitled Improvisation* (1914). Indeed, he had plunged fully into the unreal, where the "outward loosening" and "outer absence" of connections surrendered the full presence of inner necessity.

In the 1920s, and up to 1944, when he died, Kandinsky's work became vigorously more nonobjective and precise. The essential relations of color, form, and space were presented with greater exactness and clarity. His works took on the character he described in 1912 as "compositions": an expression of a slowly formed inner feeling, tested and worked over repeatedly . . . Reason, consciousness, purpose play an overwhelming part."<sup>80</sup> Ideation gave way to idealization, and his paintings became statements of pure essence—"perfectly unreal" manifestations of the imagination of inner necessity. That his works had nothing to do externally with reality, as he had proclaimed in *Xxme Siècle*, is made abundantly obvious in works such as *Red Oval* (1920), *On White* (1923), *Composition VIII* (1923), *Calm Tension* (1924), *Yellow, Red, Blue* (1925), and *Circles* (1926). *Hard and Soft*, 1927 is particularly interesting, pictorially as well as thematically, for it suggests the coalescence of the essential, the innerly necessary, in the miasma of the accidental and inessential. It is this that defines essence, whether inexact morphological or perfectly unreal: that which makes things form, that form which makes things—that which is the very possibility of their meaning. Works such as *Quiet Assertion* (1929), *Moving Veils* (1930), *Soft Pressure* (1931), *Movement I* (1935), *Dominant Curve* (1936), *Animated Stability* (1937), and *Yellow Canvas* (1938) can be considered instances of further elaborations of essential insight into perfect irreality—imaginative variations of the infinite transcendental spirit peering as far as possible into the inner necessity of itself and of things.

The year 1913 was a pivotal year for many artists searching for an abstract style.<sup>81</sup> Kandinsky did not refer to his own works as abstract (i.e., "objectless") until then. The year 1913 was also a critical turning point in Husserl's phenomenology. Breton similarly locates 1913 as the year of his true awakening.<sup>82</sup> Though Kandinsky noted that by "spiritual" he did not necessarily mean "intellectual,"<sup>83</sup> he also did not exclude it as a dimension of artistic creativity. With the assistance of reason and imagination, the artist "chooses" and "constructs" objects that fulfill the presence of inner desire. Husserl, on the other hand, confined himself to the intellectual aspects of "spiritual," particularly those aspects relative to epistemology, leaving issues of noumena, Spirit/Being, and soul out of his discourse. Yet despite these profound differences and the uncanny



coincidence of their appearance, in Kandinsky's meditations on pure irreality,<sup>84</sup> Husserl's thought comes to light in color and form. One witnesses the utter beauty and allure of pure essentiality. And its necessity!

### FROM IRREALITY TO SURREALITY, TOWARD ALTEREALITY

The critiques of positivism, rationalism, and materialism that so moved Husserl, the Synchronists, and Kandinsky also moved Dali. More frenzied and radical than theirs, however, his derealizing practices included an intransigent desire to scandalize and cretinize subjectivity and objects of knowing. To the Surrealists, and to Dali, the complacency of bourgeois philosophy and aesthetics was despicable. Dali was especially contemptuous of their obsession with abstraction, logical intuition, and logocentric discourses that constituted the means by which knowing and perceiving, and thus reality, were grasped and understood. The accompanying assumptions of the decipherability of consciousness and objects, and a discerning of their immanent, essential structures, i.e., their "real" nature, were, for Dali, a disgraceful and miserable feature of modernity. Referring to the wretchedness of abstract art, abstract creation, and nonfigurative art, Dali exclaimed:

Sticky and retarded Kantians of scatological *sections d'or*, they continue to want to offer us upon the fresh optimism of their shiny paper the soup of the abstract aesthetic, which really and truly is even worse than the cold and colossally sordid vermicelli soups of neo-thomism, which even the most convulsively hungry cats would not go near.<sup>85</sup>

While not specifically singling out Husserl, the Synchronists, or Kandinsky, Dali was outraged by any rhetoric of purity<sup>86</sup> that would presume the certainty and clarity of essential meaning. He "hated simplicity in all its forms,"<sup>87</sup> for the character of consciousness (i.e., the noetic) and objects (i.e., the noematic) is that they are exorbitantly fecund and deliriously *con-fused*.

Dali's dithyrambic discourse, in the form of the productions of the paranoiac-critical method, gave Surrealism one of its most potent and controversial strategies. The paranoiac-critical method shared with the phenomenologies of Husserl, the Synchronists, and Kandinsky the recognition that things are other than they

appear and that consciousness has access to and desires this other. This parallel interest in what exceeds the mundane nature of reality, however, is where Dali separated himself from logical intuitionists and abstractionists generally, and from Husserl specifically. For Husserl's epistemological approach was one given to apodictic foundations whose clarity and necessity were made evident via the apparatus of the "rigorous science" of phenomenological reflection and the "return to things themselves." Dali delighted in observing that the aseptic intellectualism and sterile cleanliness of such approaches were inevitably cuckolded by the ecstasy of realities whose shameless exhibitionism enticed only the slaves and fools of rational clarity.

The phenomenological *epoché* of Husserl, as well as the abstraction of the Synchronists and the dematerialization of Kandinsky, shared with Surrealist derealization the notion of rupture. Such rupture is desirable and permits a grasp of what is "really" real, as distinguished from the "false" reality of the natural attitude whose tendency is to unquestioningly take things for granted. Yet there is a distinct difference between the Surrealist notion of derealization and that of Husserlian phenomenology. Like Husserl, Surrealism eschewed Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics that posited a duality between the knowable and the unknowable. Unlike the Surrealists, however, Husserl ignored metaphysical questions in favor of epistemological issues. The Surrealists, on the other hand, collapsed epistemological questions into the metaphysical problem of locating within the world (vs. otherworldliness, e.g., spiritualism, Kandinsky) and within the relation of consciousness and world, the possibility of encountering the Other that would open and transform consciousness and world. Surreality thus was promoted over irreality. Rather than stripping and reducing features of the world to their transcendental and immanent possibilities and then gathering them together in the embrace of discrete, universal (though non-Platonic) essential structures, whose coherence was guaranteed by a certain necessity, Surrealism celebrated a consciousness that synthesized, convulsively and ambivalently, and supposedly without unity,<sup>88</sup> any number of disparate realities: dreams, hallucinations, libidinous callings, logic, delirium, madness, illusion, objective chance, phantasy, and the like. All such realities were considered to hold equal validity and credibility on the same plane of the real, i.e., the *surreal*. Together they would overcome the conflict generated by the unfortunate, arbitrary sociohistorical separation of inner consciousness and external reality. It was Breton's hope that such surrealist activity would

"bring about the state where the distinction between the subjective and the objective loses its necessity and value."<sup>89</sup>

The Surrealist project aimed at reconciling knowledge and world, desiring to set the record straight as to what is real and what is necessary to make humans whole. As such it shared phenomenology's therapeutic and revolutionary ambitions. For Dali, though, the issue was much more serious. Although he did align himself early on with Surrealist aesthetics and with the desire to discredit ordinary consciousness and its sensibilities, he quite often was ideologically farthest from Surrealism when he appeared closest. His diatribes against science, rationalism, logic, idealism, and the clarity of essential knowing went far beyond the kind of reconcilable tensions the Surrealists aimed to deploy.

What Dali shared with Surrealism, initially, was the tendency to derealize conventional (and mediocre) mundane consciousness. He too sought to surprise, bewilder, and disrupt the rational crutches that the coherence and discourse of such consciousness so heavily leaned upon. He drew upon the fluidity of reality, celebrated in Breton's *Poisson soluble* and in Gaudi's undulatory architecture, as well as upon the deranging possibilities of humor, love, and poetry. Installing them as liquidation, colliquation, and digestion, he generated in them the simulacra of breakdown and excess that were inevitably to grow beyond and transgress the Surrealist desire to expose the wholeness of humans as they "really are." Liquescence was to tell of more than just the motility and flux of things fluid and their evocation of metamorphosis. It was also to call out anamorphosis, desecration, and *aneconomimesis*:<sup>90</sup> liquidation, eradication. This much was further supported by his paranoiac cannibalism, which made of reality a delectable object and event of digestion.<sup>91</sup> Transgressive and violent, cosmic and aesthetic, the edibility of anything and everything was more than simply a gastronomic indulgence. Succulence ravished and devoured was a simulacrum of chymic flow, dissolution, and efflux.

At the core of Dali's problem with logic, idealism, rationalism, logical intuition, and the like, and thus with Husserl, was the issue of certitude and foundationalism. Husserl's Desire was to establish knowledge on an unquestionable foundation of certainty. The search for certainty was for him synonymous with the development of European culture (what Dali termed, *L'age d'or*) and he feared the threat of skepticism and relativism. The very notions of contingency, temporality, and existential situatedness were contaminants that could be overcome by establishing unshakable foundations. What Husserl sought was a primordial insight where things are

revealed directly and undistortedly to consciousness. This insight would yield apodictically necessary knowledge that would constitute a certainty not dependent on actual experience. Such transcendental knowledge would be pure, secure, and undubitable.

Husserl's Desire was moved by a will to presence. It took as evident that presence is the *telos* of consciousness. The "miracle of miracles" was the immediate self-givenness of subjectivity to itself. According to Husserl, certitude inhabits meaning due to the absolute immediacy of subjectivity to itself, its ability to intuit its own presence. The assumption that consciousness is transparent or immanent to itself assures there is no mediation capable of distorting or deferring certitude. The ability to immediately intuit its own presence situated consciousness as a foundation beyond any reference to a psychological or historically constituted subject or any of its emanations. Indeed the transcendental nature of consciousness displaced existential identity in favor of an ideal identity.

The ideality or irreality of identity is arrived at not by any perceptual process, but by imagination, and it is here that imagination is elevated over perception (and history). Husserl described an imaginary conversation subjectivity has with itself concerning its presence to itself. This soliloquy or monologue is, however, fictive, and even Husserl noted that fiction makes up the life of phenomenology as well as all the eidetic sciences. In his scheme the fictive and the ideal were complicit and parasitic, and without them certainty would vanish into the vicissitudes of temporality. Meaning then, as an apodictic necessity, as certainty, exists only as it is constituted in and by transcendental consciousness. Meaning did not exist independently but was supplied by creative acts of, or as an accomplishment of, consciousness. To say that this meaning is transcendental, then, is to say that its validity is independent of actual experience. Husserl's Desire to capture this knowledge was deployed so that the possibility of meaning could be established. Establishing this idea fictively is what yields certainty.

It is not enough that Husserl complicated knowledge of meaning with the assumption of intuitive self-presence. Intuition, as the grasp of what is given, was further complicated by Husserl's insistence that consciousness constituted the object of knowing. This can be seen clearly through the process of eidetic intuition, i.e., the process by which what is interior to an object is separated from what is not essentially given in it. The essential structure of an object is a correlate of the intentional acts of transcendental consciousness that constitute it; thus, the facility of imagination is operative here