

Postscript 82
Phenomenological Quartets in/on
Purschwitz's "Overflow Chart"

YING YAO

on "Overflow Chart"
NATALIE PURSCHWITZ

Preface to the Score

An exhibition is a symphony of potential poems, which are composed, conducted, and concerted all at once, recurrently and constantly. A text complementary to the exhibition delineates the melodic lines, instrumental demarcations, and thematic variations of the music of meaning implicit to the exhibition. Such a text is not for the audience to impose on the exhibition as an analysis or explanation, but it is for the audience to deploy as mixer and amplifier, so as to *hear* more closely, clearly, and in harmonious multitude. It offers a possible score with which one could improvise, which consists of the enactive simultaneity between hearing and composing, seeing and grasping.

In this text, I present possible scores of *phenomenological quartets* based on Natalie Purschwitz's "Overflow Chart". The quadruple short form of the score is inspired by the form of the original description of the exhibition. Each phenomenological quartet is as much *on* the exhibition as it is *within* it. One is free to carry out their own performance according to each of these scores.

Each score comes with its own set of instrumentations. As in a musical quartet, the various instruments within a set can be distinctly and thematically discerned, yet you hear *all* of them together in *relation* to and in *contrast* to each other. An exhibition could be seen as a reservoir of themes and instruments, from which upon every viewing

a unique quartet could be rehearsed with its own set of instrumentation.

Inspired by these scores, the viewer of an exhibition could re-compose their own quartet based on the group of instruments they brought into relief from the exhibition for themselves. Furthermore, one can take each version of the quartet as a singular instrumental line, and compose a quartet *across* the proposed variations. The scores attempt to elaborate the poetic potential of the exhibition that rehearses and orchestrates its music of meaning in infinitely various yet strictly grounded ways.

I. Four Destinies of a Plant

i.

One, in slow heat you become dark and brisk: on the verge of a collapse you attain the crispness of form. This destiny is ideal if you are a plant with thorns and edges. At the sight of you, one would gasp: such delicate distinction! Tempted by the shrewdness of this sight, one couldn't help but approach you with the tenderest of touches. If you were held under pressure, you would become a diamond, as scientists profess.

ii.

Two, you want to take a long bath in warm water, so long that you disintegrate. Your parts float with others that share this destiny. Someone comes to salvage you with a frame. In it, you attain diaphanous integrity and sporadic uniformity. You become a microwavable marble or a patch-sewn summer cloud. You possess a density that mimics volume or a volume that echoes density. One may write a poem *on* you. Marble and cloud are ideal mediums of poetry.

iii.

Three, you sprout, flourish, wither, decay — into clay. One gathers you, and with liquid massages you into a new form. In fire, you expand until acquiring solid porosity, enclosing a hollow heart. One stirs into you a singular branch, another fills you with a batch of seeds. Still, another leaves you void, with air.

iv.

Four, you were made into an image. You become the image that other images draw from whenever an image of a plant is being summoned. One creates an image out of that image that drew from you. You attained immortality in this way for you are perpetually dreamt of by your own image.

II. Four Voids

i.

The first void is that of a net. It is a void bounded by the meridians and parallels of slender fluorescent strings. This void is defined by the non-actuality of whatever is possible for the net to capture. It is a void in morphological resemblance with shellfish, oranges, a breeze, a gaze, or a heart. It is at once a void in between boundaries and a void that cannot pass through the boundaries. To be captivated is to fail in *both* ways: failed to filter through the mesh for you are too large, and fail to bypass the mesh for you are not large enough; fail to squeeze through the mesh for you are not volatile enough, and fail to penetrate the mesh for you are not still enough. The non-actuality of the total possibilities of such dilemmatic failure is the void of a net.

ii.

The second void is that of a container. To be contained is to be saved from, above all forces, gravity. A contained void unfilled is more masculine than a mass uncontained. Wherever the latter goes horizontal, the former goes vertical. Every contained void is a constant but inverted erection — when it is filled, what goes to the bottom is the furthest from gravity.

iii.

The third void is that of a representation. A representation is precisely *not* what it is representing. Yet a representation is also nothing if not in relation to what it is representing. A representation is essentially empty, but it is empty in such a way that could only be filled by the presence of what it is representing. The void of a representation consists not in its lack of tangibility but in its transience. For it is not *an* actual presentation, but a potential one that could be *re-curred* in the beholder's eyes.

iv.

The fourth void is that of a shelf. The function of the shelf is to provide new ground. The voids of a shelf are new horizons upon these grounds. A shelf consists of grounds sandwiched by horizons so that whatever lands on a shelf is also above the horizon below the shelf. The void of a shelf is not unlike that of the container, but it has the openness of a net. When something enters the horizon of a shelf, the shelf becomes like a net; when the thing lands on the shelf, the shelf is turned into a container. It is of their essence that shelves are the container of what is being captivated.

III. Four Juxtapositions

i.

The first juxtaposition is between a container and what it contains.

ii.

The second juxtaposition is between the constituents of an entity.

iii.

The third juxtaposition is between one representation of a species of object and another representation of the same species of objects.

iv.

The fourth juxtaposition is between a horizontal platform and what lies vertical on the platform.

**A postscript on the method of the score's composition
(or exhibition space as a studio for
dedicated phenomenological fieldwork)**

What the text is attempting is an *object-oriented* phenomenological investigation. While traditional phenomenological examination has as its thematic focus the structure pertaining to experience — to grasp experience at what is necessary for an experience to be the kind of experience that it is — this alternative phenomenological investigation has at its focus the object that is the correlate of experience, to grasp experience at what is contingent yet essential for an experience to be the particular experience that directs at its object. To be exact, the investigation focuses not on the structure of the experience, but on the horizon of the possible experiences and possible objects that constitute the real and particular object of an experience. The horizons are the phenomenological quartets, which at once transform and are rendered by the artefacts, phenomenons, and patterns of experience as sets of instruments afforded by the exhibition.

This approach is reflecting the phenomenological practice that is already carried out by the practice of art. It is a practice that suspends not the positing of the existence of the physical objects but the posited *ways* of seeing objects in natural attitudes. A gallery provides the infrastructure for such a phenomenological exercise, for it separates the exhibition space from the space where one operates

in a natural attitude, so when one enters an exhibition space, the *bracketing* of the world is done for them by such segregation. The gallery is at once the studio and the stage for the composing, improvising, and auditing of the phenomenological quartets. To *see* instead of merely viewing an exhibition is to do the phenomenological work as prescribed by the art objects and facilitated by the exhibition space. The art objects are crafted in such a way that the natural attitude in relation to the objects has to fall apart in order to *make sense of* them. Art objects alter the horizon that renders objects perceivable to the extent you would be frustrated if you want to grasp the object in a natural attitude. In order to grasp the object, one has to give in to decoupling between the horizon and object in the natural attitude and allow things to speak for themselves and in their current voice, with their particular cadence and contour. The voice is the refreshed *sense* that an object already grasped in a natural attitude *would* have if and when placed into a new horizon. It is the horizon that you have to be acquainted with on the spot, to allow what is constituted by such a horizon to come into relief. The task for you as an audience is this: while hearing the choir of objects presented in an exhibition, discern and demarcate a musical theme, then conjure a score accordingly and assemble the ensemble that could perform such a score — so that you could rehearse it *in* you over and over again, with ever more exactitude, subtlety, and lucidity.

YING YAO is a practicing poet in praise of all existence through the medium of everything, a phenomenologist dedicated to the examination of time as the structure of experience, an artist who deploys her mind and the world as the studio, and a warrior towards the eradication of her own delusions and the sufferings of all sentient beings. She is an ongoing apprentice of academic philosophy and holds an MA in Philosophy from the University of British Columbia.