Martin Nitsche (ed.)
Image in Space

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Contributions to a Topology of Images

Edited by
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The texts are accompanied
by Martin Kolář's illustrations from the cycle *Scrolls* (2014).

Content

Image in Space: Introduction to a Topology of Images

Martin Nitsche

The title "Image in Space" may imply that our book will deal with the problems of location and locating images into particular spaces. Nevertheless, our aim is different: it is to conceive the relationship between image and space non--locatively. This "non-locative" approach to the "image-in-space" relationship is comprised in the subtitle "topology of images" where "topology" principally indicates the problem of relation. Still, we decided to keep the words "in space" in the book's title to allow readers to read the chapters as a quest for a non--locative, topological "in".[1]

How do we understand location as a feature of image-in-space relation that we want to refrain from in the topology of images? There are two basic types of location: the first can be grasped as indexing, the second as positioning. Indexing means to locate something in an abstract (mostly mathematical) multidimensional network by using some type of coordinates. Positioning means to place something in an appropriate (or inappropriate) context, usually in a practical sense. In both cases, locating implies putting in or inserting, which presupposes an existing space of surroundings or dimensions. Dynamically considered, inserting indicates the pointing (in the sense of both dotting and pinning) of something that is located towards the existing space. Inserting, as pointing, articulates the space, the existence of which it presupposes, only as a circumstance, surrounding, background, or opened dimension with a capacity. What is located is pinned against a background (almost as if pinned on a wall) of a circumscribed dimension.

The non-locative relationship between image and space, on the other hand, avoids the dynamics of location and the way it influences the concept

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1   This introduction is the outcome of the project "Image in Space", which was realised at the Jan Evangelista Purkyne University in Usti nad Labem, Faculty of Philosophy.

of space. This influence is twofold. Firstly, location presupposes the existence of an opened space with a capacity. Secondly, this pre-existent space is organised as a surrounding or background by emphasizing the fact of inserting an entity. The locative model of space thus combines openness (pre-existence) with a figure-background structure. This locative understanding of space is a significant characteristic of human everyday understanding of space, because we usually handle things by putting them somewhere or we need something to be somewhere. Analogically our gaze usually concentrates on something in its background. These features of our everyday understanding of space allude to two phenomenological conceptions: 1) Heidegger's beings-at-hand, which are always located at a proper distance (das Zuhandene), and 2) the Merleau--Pontyian application of gestaltism (the figure-background structure of our perception). But upon closer examination, we notice that even though both conceptions respect everyday experience, they are not naively bound to an everyday model of space. Heidegger's "being-at-hand" and the related notion of distancing make sense only in the framework of "being-in-the-world", which is precisely distinguished from a locative container-like conception of space. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (in accordance with gestaltism) differentiates the figure-background structure from simply locating something against a backdrop; according to him, a mutual coordination of figure and background requires a non-locative model of space.

To explain the non-locative relationship between image and space, we need to ontologically redefine both concepts and revise the connection between space and location in the topological context. More specifically, our ontological redefinition of image addresses the relation between image and entity. In the Greek-rooted western tradition, an image is conceived as a form or appearance of an entity, so an image is always an image of something. This also applies to fantasies or dreams, which are understood as images of something unreal. The tight link between an image and entity remained unbroken even by the modern subjective metaphysics inaugurated by Descartes and developed by Kant: mental images are, in this conception, still fixedly bound with their objects. The modern conception, however, enables a reversed image-entity relation: to conceive objects as projections of mental images, where mental images play the role of "entities" and objects are paradoxically "images" (precisely: projections) of mental "entities". Although the image-entity relationship is reversed in modern ontology, the link remains tight, thus referring images to entities and entities to images.

Again, analogically with location, the link between image and entity conforms to everyday experience: images are commonly understood as images of

something real or projected. Yet the ontological redefinition that we apply to the topology of images loosens the tight link between an image and entity. The image can be conceived as such, and not necessarily as a picture of something. Reflecting on our everyday experience, we may claim that what we encounter are images, not entities. Entities may be consequently understood as parts of an ontological model of encountering images; these parts can be reduced or transformed in another ontological model. The ontological redefinition that we apply starts with the ontological primacy of images: the focus is not on entities but on images. The second step then is to transform (or in some thought experiments even reduce) the link from an image to an entity. This step comprehends images primarily as parts of a phenomenal (visual) field. The topology of images thus replaces the Greek ontology with an iconology.

Our effort to rethink the image-space relation topologically includes a temporal dimension. In the location based model of space, presence gets priority, for it connects location with the presence of an entity. Since this connection has been widely criticized in phenomenology by e.g. Heidegger in one of his later short lectures "Time and Being", our book wants to focus instead on the topology of images and rethink the relationship between image and presence.

Methodologically, our approach combines the spatial and pictorial turn. The "spatial turn" defines a new methodology in social and human sciences, which has been influential since the late 1970 s (Foucault, Virilio, Lefebvre in the 1970 s; Casey, Soja, and other thinkers in the 1980 s). To gain a radically new scientific perspective, the spatial turn primarily considers the spatial aspects of the topics in question. This does not mean that space and other spatial aspects (place, location, etc.) are the most important categories. In fact, it signifies a radical decline from the categorical thinking of traditional metaphysics: space stands here for the basis of a new ontological grounding. This new methodology accentuates the involvement of human beings in their environment. It implies that the new way of ontological grounding is connected with the structures of this involvement (including the sense of orientation, location, transition, etc.), rather than with the systems of causal foundation, typical of the ancient as well as modern metaphysics. Briefly, in this new methodology, the sense of space replaces the sense of solidity and hierarchical order.

The pictorial turn (similar to the term "iconology") stems from the work of W. J. T. Mitchell (1980 s/1990 s). Mitchell notices a massive turn from words to images in everyday life including culture, technology, fashion, etc. He analyses this change not only to provide a scientific account of this shift, but also (and more importantly) to advocate a paradigm shift in human and social sciences and consequently propose a new methodology of the pictorial turn.

Again, the new methodology does not suggest that our world consists entirely of images; it rather emphasises that seeing images (spectatorship) involves a rich complex of thought processes, and thus can guarantee a comprehensive model of human understanding. The model offers an alternative to the reading-based semiotic and linguistic paradigm of understanding.

The topology of images draws on the new methodologies of the spatial and pictorial turns, thus connecting the focus on human involvement in relevant environments with a non-linguistic model of thinking. In the framework of this connection, images can be understood as creating environments that are not modelled as environments of entities or objects, but rather as phenomenal fields. The phenomenal fields can be further described using phenomenological methods as transitive spheres – a novel approach that will be emphasized in particular sections of this book through multiple perspectives. Consequently, the methodological framework is applicable to our aim to weaken the link between images and entities and to conceive of the non-locative relation between image and space.

The book consists of six sections according to six perspectives on the non-locative relation between image and space:

"Appearing": The first section looks into the roots of non-locative approaches to images at the end of the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century. The appearance of an image in a space starts to be considered as a specific transitive sphere, where new conceptions of space and reality may originate. In this framework, Aleš Novák, in the chapter "Tyrannei der Linie", analyses the power of lines to reveal a form and investigates the possibilities of a nonlinear appearance of images. Martin Ritter in the chapter "Time of the Dialectical Image" offers an investigation into a typical model connecting the image, time, place, and truth of appearance, which can be found in Benjamin's notion of the "dialectical image".

The three following sections, "Embodied Imagination", "Bodily Configurations", and "Spatial Openings", consider the role that the phenomenological accounts of corporeality might play in the effort to redefine the relation between image and space. The lived body, as conceived initially by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, opens a transitive sphere between consciousness and the outer environment. In this respect, the transitive character consists in the embodiment of image-consciousness, which enables us to conceive of the connection between an image and the environmental space as a non-locative relationship.

"Embodied Imagination": Dylan Trigg exposes the topic of embodied image-consciousness with a pointed analysis of Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*. In the chapter "Another Earth: Alien Encounters in Husserl and Tarkovsky", he recalls

Husserl's connection among a lived body, alterity, and the Earth as originary ark to describe an imaginary space of alien encounters in Tarkovsky's film. Alice Koubová calls for a topology of imaginative spaces and a radically new ontology of images. In the chapter "Gaston Bachelard's Topology of the Image", she exploits the performative experience of being bodily involved in imaginary spaces.

"Bodily Configurations": While the previous section starts with imagination to explore the spatial character of embodiment, the two chapters of this section, Komarine Romdenh-Romluc's "Image – for the Eye and in Mind", and Adam Dzidowski's "Corporate Image and Organisational Space", begin with images to show that they can be conceived as spatial configurations of embodiment. Komarine Romdenh-Romluc explains how Merleau-Ponty determines a mental image as a configuration of the body schema. This conclusion is analogical to Adam Dzidowski's findings of phenomenologically inspired management studies: a corporate image should not be primarily created as a mental image but as a configuration of the corporate "body" (offices, stores, etc.).

"Spatial Openings": In this section, the connection between the embodiment of image-consciousness and space is accessed via research into artistic creative activity. The seemingly simple fact that works of art open a specific space is subjected to further investigation, including the question of how to understand the openness of space. The chapters in this section aim to connect the openness of space not with localisation, but (non-locatively) with embodiment. In this respect, Monika Murawska, in "Space in Art: Henri Maldiney's Phenomenology", follows Maldiney's conception of rhythmical dimensionality. Martin Nitsche, in the chapter "Painting as Heteroeisodia: Does Art Exist in a Special Space?", critically enquires into the nature of the openness connected with spaces opened by works of art. Finally, Šárka Slaninová, in "Rethinking the Spatiality of Sculptural Work: Jan Patočka's Review of Herbert Read's Book *The Art of Sculpture*", recalls the haptic constitution of sculptural space.

"Pictorial Words: Here the book lays the thematic emphasis on the corporeality of image-consciousness to investigate the merging of images and words. Merging enables us to read images or to watch meanings. Specifically in this book, merging is understood spatially as a transitive sphere accessible by works of art. Piotr Schollenberger, in "Transforming Image: Duchamp's *pictorial nominalism* and the Visual Experience", explores the mutual transformations between appearance and discourse in the artistic field. With reminiscence to Lyotard's book *Les Transformateurs Duchamp*, he offers an interpretation of Duchamp's *Large Glass*. Schollenberger's analysis is completed in the chapter "The Utopian Space in the Works of Carlfriedrich Claus," where Martin Kolář

presents another example of an artistic approach to merging images and words – Carlfriedrich Claus' *Sprachblätter* (sign-sheets or language-based images).

"Public Sphere": The last section explores the sphere of political and social relationships, which represents a transitive sphere *par excellence*. Paulina Sosnowska, in the chapter "Arendt – Heidegger: Visual Art and the Public Space", repeats the Arendtian assertion that works of art essentially belong to the public sphere. This assertion elucidates the role that images may play in political or social transitions. A concrete example of this role is given by Karolina Kaderka in the chapter "Kunstwerke in römischen Tempeln: Einblick in den Umgang der antiken Römer mit Bildern", where she uncovers how different conceptions of political power relate to different configurations of sculptures at the tympana of Greek and Latin temples.

The texts are accompanied by Martin Kolář's illustrations from the cycle *Scrolls* (2014), which vividly and accurately depicts what our book aims to conceive of: the topological account of the relationship between image and space.

I. APPEARING
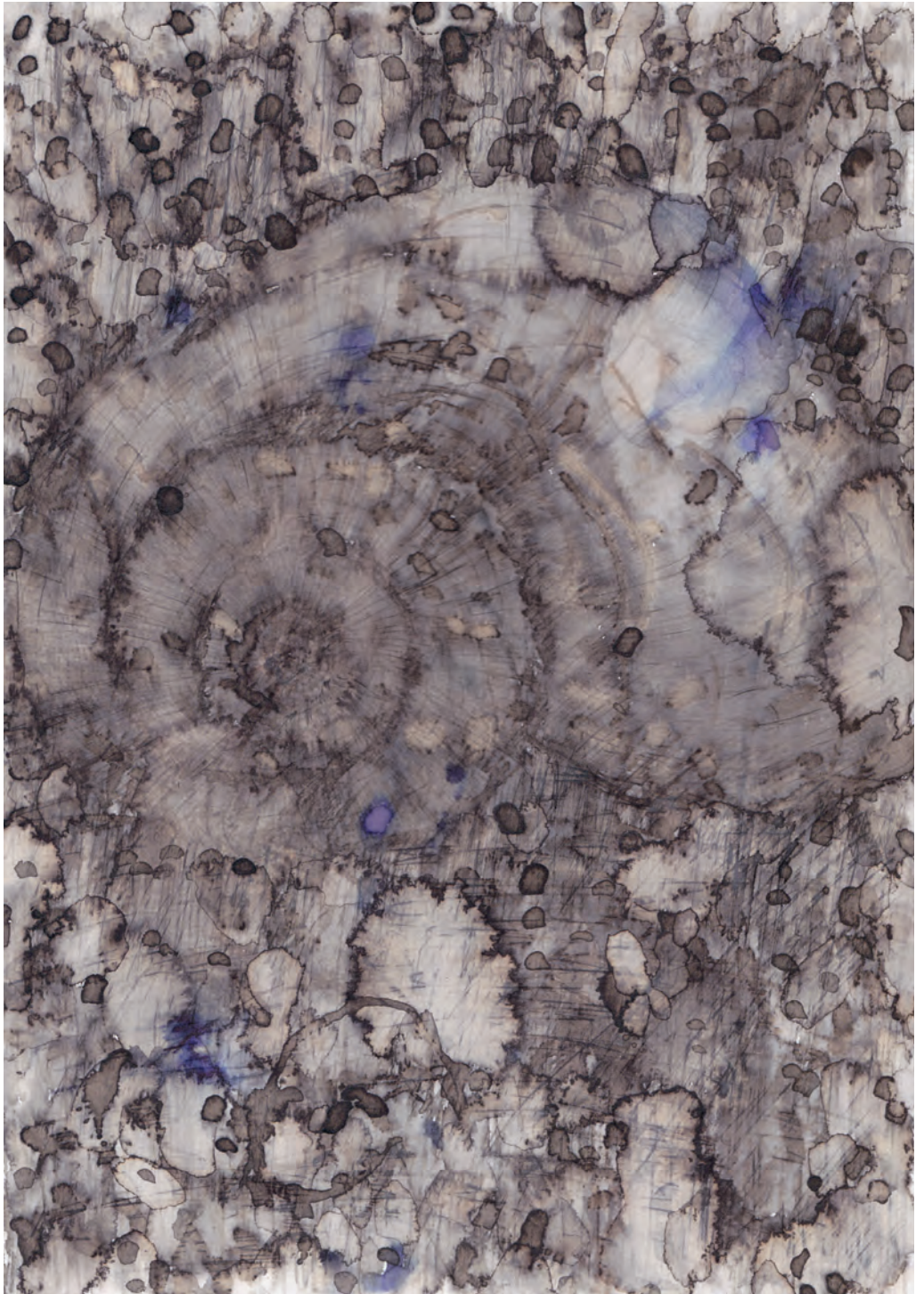
Tyrannei der Linie

Aleš Novák

Die Kunst und der Raum gehören auf untrennbare Weise zusammen. Die Kunst kann sogar den Raum auf spezifisch neue Art „erfinden" und somit *sichtbar machen*. Gerade dieses „Sichtbar-Machen auf eine neue Art und Weise" ist der Inhalt des folgenden Kapitels, dessen Thema ist, inwiefern die metaphysische Grundstellung Friedrich Nietzsches seine entsprechende Gestaltung im Werk von Paul Klee erhält. Das Bindeglied zwischen Metaphysik und Kunst, Paul Klee und Friedrich Nietzsche, zwischen Kunst und Raum ist dabei *die Linie*.

1. In einer Aufzeichnung aus seinem *Nachlaß* schreibt Friedrich Nietzsche folgende Worte über einen Grundzug der modernen Kunst:

> Die moderne Kunst als eine Kunst zu *tyrannisieren*. – Eine grobe und stark herausgetriebene *Logik des Lineaments*; das Motiv vereinfacht bis zur Formel, – die Formel tyrannisiert. Innerhalb der Linien eine wilde Vielheit, eine überwältigende Masse, vor der die Sinne sich verwirren; die Brutalität der Farben, des Stoffes, der Begierden. Beispiel: Zola, Wagner; in geistiger Ordnung Taine. Also *Logik*, *Masse* und *Brutalität* […].[1]

Obwohl Nietzsche in seiner Aufzeichnung über seine Zeitgenossen spricht, für die er nichts als Verachtung übrig hat – im Fall von Richard Wagner sogar puren Hass –, ist seine Aussage eine grundlegende Einsicht in das Wesen der modernen Malerei, auf das wir uns in unserer Abhandlung beschränken wollen.[2]

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1   F. Nietzsche, *KSA* 12.10[37], in: F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe (KSA)*, Bd. 12, *Nachlass 1885–1887*. Hrsg. von G. Colli/M. Montinari, München – Berlin – New York: dtv – W. de Gruyter, 1999, S. 473.

2   Dank der theoretischen Betrachtungen über die moderne Musik, die im Almanach *Der Blaue Reiter* (Hrsg. von F. Marc und W. Kandinsky, München 1912; jetzt als dokumentarische Neuedition Hrsg. von Klaus Lankheit, München: Piper, 2004) zu lesen sind, wäre es möglich, auch über den musikalischen Aspekt des Gedanken

Die Moderne, die als solche durch die Grundzüge Reduktion, Formalisierung, Abstraktion, Konstruktion, Destruktion („Brutalität") charakterisiert wird, ist Nietzsches Ansicht nach eine „Tyrannei", die allerdings sogar im größten Gewirr noch ihre strengste Ordnung und ihr tiefstes Grundgesetz im Sinne einer „Logik" behält: einer „Logik des Lineaments".

2. Über die wesentliche Bedeutung der Linie für die moderne Malerei sprach auch der Maler Paul Klee, der im Jahre 1921 in einem Vortrag aus Anlass seiner Ausstellung im *Kunstverein* zu Jena den folgenden Satz aussprach:

> Wollte ich den Menschen geben, so ‚wie er ist', dann brauchte ich zu dieser Gestaltung ein so verwirrendes Liniendurcheinander, daß von einer reinen elementaren Darstellung nicht die Rede sein könnte, sondern eine Trübung bis zur Unkenntlichkeit einträte.[3]

Doch schon einige Jahre früher (1912) schrieb Paul Klee in seiner berühmten Rezension der Ausstellung der Künstlervereinigung *Moderner Bund* im Züricher *Kunsthaus* folgende Zeilen, die im tiefsten Zusammenhang mit Nietzsches Aussage über das Wesen der modernen Kunst stehen:

> Mit der verarbeiteten Wiedergabe hängt auch die Wiederaufnahme des Auswendigmalens zusammen. Schlagfertige Künstler werden wohl vor der Natur direkt von ihr abstrahieren können, und auch solche, die nicht sicher genug sind im Aufspeichern von Vorräten und im Disponieren solcher Vorräte, werden vor ihr arbeiten. Dennoch wird die Wiedergabe fern von der Natur wieder zur Norm, und dabei gewinnt die Konstruktion auch als technische Erleichterung vermehrte Bedeutung. Es tritt also das Gerüst des Bildorganismus in den Vordergrund, und wird zur Wahrheit *coute que coute*. Häuser, die

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Nietzsches nachzusinnen, da es doch die Musik war, die für ihn die stärkste Kunst, weil der stärkste Ausdruck des Lebens als des Willens zur Macht war. Dennoch bescheiden wir uns in unserer Betrachtung eher mit der bildenden Kunst.

3   P. Klee, *Über die moderne Kunst*. Zum ersten Mal veröffentlicht in: P. Klee, *Über die moderne Kunst*, Bern: Verlag Benteli, 1945. Der Text stammt aus Klees handschriftlichem Nachlaß und war die Vorlage zum Vortrag, den P. Klee aus Anlass der Eröffnung seiner Ausstellung im *Kunstverein* in Jena am 26. 1. 1924 vorgetragen hat. Jetzt zugänglich in: P. Klee, *Kunst-Lehre*, hrsg. von Günther Regel, Leipzig: Reclam, 1991, S. 70–85, das Zitat auf S. 84. Siehe auch in: P. Klee, *Schriften. Rezensionen und Aufsätze*, hrsg. von Christian Geelhaar, Köln: DuMont Verlag, 1976. Zur Bedeutung der „Linie" siehe auch den Tagebucheintrag Nr. 842 in: P. Klee, *Tagebücher* 1898–1918, hrsg. von Felix Klee, Köln: DuMont Verlag, 1957.