

Derrida: Introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry

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STRUCTURE: unnumbered introduction; 11 numbered sections.

TOPICS:

1. INTRODUCTION [25-30].
2. HUSSERL'S METHODOLOGY [30-46].
3. FIRST MOVE: STRUCTURE OF GENESIS [46-51].
4. DEVELOPMENT: THREE GENERALITIES OF RETURN INQUIRY: [51-62].
5. SECOND MOVE: GENESIS OF STRUCTURE: [62-107].
6. INTERLUDE: H'S ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS [107-117].
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GENERAL FIELD OF OG:

The last part of Husserl's career is devoted to an analysis of a "Crisis of European Humanity," as the title of the "Vienna Lecture" would have it. Crisis is the phenomenon of a culture whose science has grown too complex. In crisis, science has lost its meaning for the culture as a whole, has become an autonomous machine, whose results seem to have been simply waiting there to be discovered. Husserl wants then to reign in a runaway science that sparks the irrational and irresponsible responses of naturalism/psychologism/historicism, which gives up universal truth and settles for relativism or Platonism/objectivism which denies human agency in constituting truth, by retrieving an original sense of science as a human endeavor. In these broad outlines we should compare Kant's critical project.

Husserl's response to crisis is not just to show how scientific objects are constituted by transcendental subjectivity--for in the modes of either static or genetic phenomenology he had been doing just this from *Ideas I* through *Cartesian Meditations*--but to show the historical roots of science as a project of European--and that meant for Husserl, Greek--origin. The response to crisis is to reactivate an origin by a return inquiry starting from that which we have been bequeathed. This retrospectively arrived-at origin will be both original and originary: original as first temporally, and originary as first establishing the sense of science: what it means and where it is heading. To access the original and originary sense, that which sent science on its way, buried beneath the sedimentations--the accretions of sense piled up after the origin--will require a new form of phenomenology, a zigzag return inquiry adequate to investigating the transcendental historicity of sense. The sending structure of historicity requires a zigzag access.

BRIEF NARRATIVE REMARKS ON *ITOG*:

OG proposes a phenomenology of the historical constitution and transmission of ideal objectivities, such as geometrical theorems. Combining critiques of historicism and objectivism, Husserl shows that ideal

objectivities can neither be simply the result of psychologically real acts nor simply pre-existent and waiting to be merely discovered. Instead, ideal objectivities are constituted by the indefinite repeatability of real sense-giving acts.

Insisting on repeatability saves Husserl from empiricism: it is not just the act, but its repeatability, the sense which accompanies each act, which constitutes its ideality. Here Husserl insists on structure to undercut empiricism. On the other hand, Husserl insists on genesis to undercut Platonism; ideal objects are historically constituted, the result of subjective acts, albeit transcendental subjective acts. The strange "parallelism" of empirical and transcendental egos [Fink] is an absolutely unique relation; it ties transcendental sense-giving acts to their empirical, historical, parallel empirical acts.

Now the sense of idealities must be embedded in writing to become objectivities, to escape from the subjectivity of the first geometer into intersubjective tradition. As such, they are now vulnerable both to empirical catastrophe and to association: their sense must be re-activated, or risk simple passage by association.

Derrida derives *différance* as the genetic structure or the structural genesis of any ideal objectivity through a close reading of Husserl. *Différance* is differing and deferring, spatial and temporal together. The historical acts are different in space and time, and their final, total sense is endlessly deferred. Because they are historical, the end sense of any ideal objectivity is never given, but only announced in the form of an Idea in the Kantian sense, a rule directing the continued search for ever-newer angles of examination. Just as spatial objects offer ever-renewed angles, so too do ideal objectivities, in that they must be continuously reactivated by living subjects and their transcendental parallels in ever-new contexts. We thus have a zigzag of *telos* and *arche*: new discoveries send us back to new origins, which lead to new discoveries, and so on.

In perhaps his most important move, Derrida also shows how *différance* constitutes the self. Before sent out into the world, ideal objectivities must be able to be reactivated by the same person in different contexts. As the passage of ideal objects to different selves within the same self, *différance* is the very form of transcendental time consciousness, as Derrida shows in *SP*. Retention is recollection across a gap of non-presence ("space" as the other of time), and protention is sketched out as abiding by the unity of the Living Present as an Idea in the Kantian sense (*Ideas* #83).