

"Form and Meaning" in *Margins: of Philosophy*

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Epigraph: "Form is the trace of the un-formed." [discussed 206n]

STRUCTURE: untitled intro, 4 titled sections: "Meaning in the Text," "Mirror-Writing," "The Limiting Power of Form," "Form 'is'--Its Ellipse"

GLOBAL STATEMENT: JD shows phenomenology's complicity with metaphysics of presence by using "form" as his leading thread to investigate Husserl's contention in *Ideas* 124 that sense and expression are separate levels, with sense as a silent, pre-expressive stratum and expression as non-productive conceptualization. After a close reading of Husserl's metaphors of expression as writing and as mirror, JD shows how sense is preformed by expression: for all experience [sense] to be conceptualizable [able to be expressed] there must be a core pre-formed to accept the conceptual form of "S is P." We see here an economy of sense: meaning channels sense into the direction of possible intuition, that which can be presented to consciousness. The link of form and the sense of being is challenged in the conclusion by the notion of trace.

NARRATIVE:

Intro: relation of phenomenology to metaphysics

Phenomenology sees itself as a purifying critique of metaphysics, as *Cartesian Meditations* makes clear. JD proposes "form" as his leading thread to investigate this complicity: even though it collapses the Greek terms *eidos* and *morphe*, Husserl tries to awaken an original sense, that was nonetheless perverted from the start; however his recall rests on metaphysical resources, for "form" relies on the "evidence of kernel of sense."

We see this inescapable bind of sense and form in considering the finite system of metaphysical oppositions carried in metaphysical language. Despite Husserl's work in reworking Platonic and Aristotelian conceptuality, form is linked to presence in general, as we see in Husserl's casting of the LP as form of transcendental experience. [Perhaps a deconstruction of the text of metaphysics might show trace or *différance*, but this entails a different work, a double reading, than an "interpretation of conceptuality."]

Within phenomenology's own terms, the submission of sense [experience] to the sense of sight [putting an object on view, able to be intuited in the temporal form of the LP of an act] is clear in several directions. JD will focus on the distinction Husserl wants between sense and discourse, sense and meaning, *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, and show that the system linking language, form and theory is worked by the outside of the relation to a certain outside that is the relation to form. This pull of the outside will deform the systematic circle into an elliptical trace. In other words, sense is pre-formed to allow its exteriorization in expression, to allow an object drawn from its conceptualizable nucleus to be held for vision in an intuition with the form of the Living Present. We see here an economy of sense: sense is forced into the direction of conceptuality so that a metaphorized sensibility, the intuiting vision of theory, can grasp its object. Why "force"? Because a certain decision is needed to be put language in the service of knowledge and sense in the service of conceptual expression, and this decision is complicitous with forces shaping social texts that privilege a certain conception of reason [stable, stationary capture of difference by identical concepts: State Philosophy in Deleuze/Guattari's terms, as distinct from nomad thought of tracing differential structures of immanent fields], and, through confusing gender/race/class skewed access to training with aptitude read off of body markers, locate reason as a European male preserve. In other words, making sense--production of meaning--for Husserl is capture of difference by identity which he privileges over other types of making sense, which, while equally forceful, might have other--affirmative--relations to difference. [To repeat: making sense for me

is production of meaning in a economy of sense by hegemonic formation of force vectors in open directional field.]

"Meaning in the Text"

This section links the analysis of Ideas undertaken here to that of *Logical Investigations* given in *Speech and Phenomena*.

Beginning the close analysis, JD remarks that 2/3 of *Ideas* passes as if sense [experience] were silent. Husserl is able to do this, because he believes he has shown in *LI* that expression is reducible [as we recall this is JD's focus in *SP*]. In *Ideas*, expression is thought in *noesis-noema* parallelism, specifically, as a "stratum"--both founded and delimitable--a metaphor that is used by Husserl, but then suspected at the end of the section.

JD is here addressing the problematic of philosophic metaphoricity he will analyze at great length in "White Mythology." Briefly stated, neither philosophy nor rhetoric [or linguistics, as the "Linguistic Circle of Geneva" will show] can dominate each other: neither a philosophic domination of rhetoric--the establishment of a rigorous concept of "metaphor" for instance, as the raising of sensibility to conceptual meaning [cf. "The Pit and the Pyramid" for JD's reading of Hegel's semiology]--since the metaphoric nature of philosophemes such as "con-cept" "*Be-griff*" would then go unanalyzed, nor the rhetorical domination of metaphysics--the tracing of concepts as dead metaphors back to sensibility [the "Nietzschean" position]--since the philosophic nature of "metaphor" [transportation of meaning] would in the latter instance go unanalyzed. Starting from the analyses of Margins, this structure is generalized in a formal rule of haunting or movement of quasi-transcendentalty whereby any element in a field that attempts to raise itself to the level of domination of that field will find itself haunted by the gap in the field left by its elevation and will fall back into the field. Lawlor, Gasché, and Bennington can be consulted on this point.

The specific metaphor Husserl uses that interdicts that of stratum is "interweaving" or "interlacing," a textual metaphor, that recalls the factual interweaving of expression and indication that Husserl in *LI* 1.1 hoped to untangle by "essential distinctions." JD recalls at the end of this section the enormous stakes of *SP*: if indication were to be irreducible then the very heart of the phenomenological project itself, its principle of all principles, the reliance on intuition would be threatened by the irruption of indication, sign, delay, relay, space, death, and force at the heart of the self-presence of the act in the temporal form of the Living Present.

"Mirror-Writing"

STRUCTURE:

Double reduction.

Distinctive traits of expression [vs. sense]

Terminological differences between *LI* and *Ideas*

Expression as exteriorization

1st trait: meaning is non-productive [stratum: relata]

2nd trait: expression is raising to conceptual level [act: relation]

2 metaphors in H's description [vs intention]

writing

mirror

NARRATIVE:

In this section, JD first simply notes w/o examination H's double exclusion: of the sensible aspect of language, and of the issue of the unity of body and spirit that structures his account of "animation." He then establishes H's goal: delimiting the distinctive traits of expression vs. sense. He clarifies the terminological distinction Husserl introduced in *Ideas*: *Sinn* now = the total noematic level of experience [intentional correlates or objects], while *Bedeutung* = expressive meaning.

Expression as exteriorization is the thematic that results from this analysis of the overflow of sense beyond a meaning that does nothing but repeat or reproduce a [pre-formed conceptualizable] sense, or in JD's terms, draw upon that sense in carrying it to the outside. This outside is the space of consciousness of the voice, as I've explicated it in the discussion of the economy of exteriority of *SP*.

Two metaphors give body to this non-productivity in Husserl's descriptions [JD using intention vs description schema of deconstruction]. First, JD shows that Husserl can establish the independence of sense from expression using an converse argument. Since the *LI* has shown the independence of expression as meaning-intention from perception as meaning-fulfilling intuition, this entails that perceptual sense must also be independent of its expression. Expression thus adds nothing to sense, but it does effect the ascension of sense to the "conceptual form." Expression is both nominal [stratum] and verbal [act], one of the relata of the relation sense-expression, and that very relation itself, the act of ex-pression as exteriorization. As a stratum it is transparent, but as an act it effects passage to conceptuality. This conceptualizability of sense is universal: all experience can be conceptualized.

JD notes that the transparence of expression must have a consistency that allows for impression: pre-linguistic [but conceptualizable] sense must imprint itself in conceptual linguistic expression. Sense is ready for expression, it is a "pre-existing conceptuality." Since expression is an impression, sense is a "white and mute writing redoubling itself in expression." [We might note here the current interest in the Platonic *chora* as site/medium of inscription mediating between *eidōs* and sensible thing: Kristeva and Irigaray offer noteworthy feminist readings of the way Plato names *chora* "mother."]

JD next addresses the grave consequences of the inscriptive metaphor of expression as *tabula rasa*. JD poses two problems: the history and systematic order of conceptual meaning that is to receive the imprint of sense. If the order of conceptual meaning has a history, then, even supposing the bracketing of linguistic historicity [but this is the bite of the problem of old words, of metaphysical language JD alluded to earlier in setting up this discussion of phenomenology's use of "form" and its essential ties to presence], then concepts are older than sense and form a text whose systematic order--again on a problematic assumption of bracketing textual history--would in fact "impose its sense on sense," that is, channel sense in the direction of conceptual form. The fact of this channeling of sense by expression cannot be bracketed, for sense and expression are co-determinant. Husserl's wishing to bracket expression's channeling of sense, his desire to protect the production of sense from signitive textuality, that is, protect temporal form of consciousness from delay, relay, force, etc., is the non-critical opening of phenomenology, its acceptance of a personal form for the transcendental field, instead of the impersonal general text of force and signification.

These uncritical intentional thematics of Husserl--his metaphysical desire--are then hard to reconcile with his faithful descriptions in *ITOG* of the sedimented history of meaning.

JD moves on to discuss the second metaphor, that of the mirror. His brief reading shows that Husserl's use of bild-metaphors (image) shows a double effect: reflection and imposition, *Abbildung* and *Einbildung*, copy and marking. Husserl is however uneasy about the metaphoricity [*Bildlichkeit*] of language, and warns against its seductive power. Here again we can note JD's recourse to Fink, who shows Husserl's failure to consider the problematic of a language oriented to ontic description being used for transcendental description. JD's "Retrait of Metaphor" considers the analogous, but much more sophisticated, issue of Heidegger's thematization of ontic language and ontological difference: Being is not a being, but all language is oriented to beings, so Being withdraws, its description are all ontic metaphors, etc.

"The Limiting Power of Form"

As a result of the previous section's bringing the dual character of expression, JD can here call it a "medium": an element and a means, an unproductive productivity. Medium serves as a link with the problematic of the history of concepts we will deal with in *ITOG*: "every science is objectivated in the specifically 'logical' medium, in that of expression ..." [quote #13, p. 296]. Thus theory needs objectifying expression [as the element that endows it with omnitemporal validity], but cannot abide by any deformation [by the means of reaching that element]. As telos of expression, the unproductive productivity of logical-scientific univocal transparency serves as the model of all possible discourse.

This character of expression is designated as "parallelism": that which perfectly overlaps w/o confusion. [JD notes Husserl also uses parallelism to describe the relation of pure psychic activity and transcendental life. The overlapping of parallel expression can only occur if expression is complete reproduction of sense. As always, Husserl would like to avail himself of the fact/essence distinction to secure a sphere of complete expression from factual incompleteness. Scientific expression as a univocal *telos* appears as the candidate for complete expression. But surprisingly, Husserl shows in #126 that the conceptual form of expression, the *eidōs/telos* of expression, entails an essential incompleteness, an essential deformation that occurs in the passage to conceptual form. Thus the act of ex-pression comes into conflict with the element of expression. The element is to be transparent and reproductive, but the act of expression installs a conceptual difference between sense and expression. Conceptualization is generalization in which all particulars are left behind; difference is judged as to its relevance and specific difference is captured in a universal concept by a forceful making sense. This impoverishment of sense, the winnowing out of difference, is the essence of science, the limit-power of formality. [Has JD conflated generalization and formalization here?]

"Form 'Is'--Its Ellipsis"

Derrida quickly announces that this section is the payoff to the opening questions. He has shown us that the relation between the form of expression and the content of sense is linked to the relation between types of expressions. Two questions ensue: What is the privileged form of expression [element] that allows for the facility of passage [act] of sense to expression? How does the link of form and the sense of being as presence tie phenomenology to metaphysics?

The form of judgment, S is P, is the privileged form of expression. This privilege was announced in an analysis of Ideas before the question of expression was even broached: there is a "doxic kernel" to all acts, be they aesthetically or morally valuational or not. For Husserl, all valuation is valuation of a being, and the positing of belief in that being is the core around which valuation occurs. The doxic kernel allows the conversion of experience of that which is not a present being--emotional or axiological experience--into experience in the form of being-present. The theory of the doxic kernel means Husserl must try to respect both

the originality of practical, affective, or moral experience and its character of being founded, of supervening on a fundamental logical core of objectification. All experience, in other words, offers itself to logical discourse having the form of predicative judgment. [This doctrine of Husserl is Levinas' target in his 1930 *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl*, and remained his constant objection to phenomenology, and as the priority of the horizon of being to ethics, his objection to Western philosophy as a whole.]

Derrida now asks whether the form of the predicative expression, the privilege of presence, might not have secretly conducted the analysis of the doxic kernel of all experience. If this metaphysical privilege had essentially directed the analyses, then the entire motif of the separation of sense and expression is questionable, as is the characterization of the passage as ex-pression. Now JD clarifies his aims: he does not wish to contest Husserl's doctrine directly by reducing one level to another. In other words, it is not a matter of naively calling sense a language of words [although JD has shown the signitive--trace--structure of sense and LP in *SP*], nor of claiming that sense hides ineffable treasures of experience that words cannot do justice to. Rather, JD seeks only to question about another relation of sense and meaning.

This other relation can arise through thinking on the unity of sense and word in "is" and in thinking the relation of "is" and formality in general. The relations rest on privilegings: the privilege of presence in the privilege of predicative judgment over all other forms of language rests upon the teleological promising of all sense to meaning. In general, one can surmise that the sense of being has been limited by the form of presence, and conversely, that formalization has been limited by the sense of being. Being beyond the form of presence, and form beyond the sense of being as presence. Husserl's project thus shows the identity of the two limits of form and presence: Husserl's formalist demand, showing the subjective constitution of objectivity, rests on Being as self-presence in the form of the LP. The final word for JD is that one is not to choose between the form and presence, but to think their circularity, and in thinking thus the closure of metaphysics to deform the circle, to render it an ellipse that is not to be thought oppositionally to the circle. Rather the ellipse is produced by the thought of non-dialectical difference: the trace.

A footnote near the end of the text gives a dense and "infinite" reading project: to see form as the trace of non-presence, as that which is refractory to, yet constitutive of, presence. Thus the epoch of the metaphysics of presence produces marginal texts: any time "form" appears, "trace" can be read. For our Husserl reading, we have seen this in the reading of the LP: the temporal form of all experience is read as trace, as spacing, as *différance*, as force.