

# HUSSERL'S *LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

## *The Phenomenological Revolution*

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THE VIEW THAT LANGUAGE IS A VEHICLE FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF (IMMATERIAL) "CONCEPTS," IN OPPOSITION WITH THE (PHYSICAL) "WORDS" THAT CARRY THEM, IS THE FOUNDATION OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE, AND PERHAPS THE FOUNDATION OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY IN GENERAL. AS EDMUND HUSSERL AND JACQUES DERRIDA CONFRONT THIS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEALITY AND REALITY IN LANGUAGE, THE OLD ORDER PROMULGATING THIS BINARY COMES INTO QUESTION. THE FOLLOWING ESSAY EXPLORES THIS CHALLENGE TO THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNT OF LANGUAGE AS WELL AS ITS WIDER IMPLICATIONS FOR ONTOLOGY AND SUBJECTIVITY.



One of the seminal texts of the modern era, and indeed a text that would influence the course of Continental philosophy throughout the 20th century, is Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. Conceived in part as a response to what Husserl termed "psychologism," the view that the truths of logic are derived from the facts of psychology, the *Logical Investigations*<sup>i</sup> were a pivotal moment in the history of Western philosophy. Husserl's stated intention was to provide a stable ground for truth and knowledge, by "delineating" a

*...new, purely theoretical science, the all-important foundation for any technology of scientific knowledge, and itself having the character of an a priori, purely demonstrative science.*<sup>ii</sup>

This "new science" would be based on the principles of "pure logic," a decision made in reaction to what he saw as the tendencies of philosophy to downplay or deny the possibility of a direct knowledge and to assert that the universal and ideal truths of logic were derived from empirical experience.

Over the course of the *Investigations*, the theory of knowledge that Husserl articulated was, in its own way, radically different from everything that preceded it. His philosophy came to be known as "phenomenology," and it claimed to represent a total shift in how philosophical inquiry could, and should, proceed. The phenomenological revolution was characterized by its proponents as a radical break with the tradition of Western metaphysics—a new way of conceiving reality.

However, while certain aspects of phenomenology were no doubt radical, the question remains as to what degree Husserl's philosophy actually managed to break completely with traditional Western philosophy. Was the phenomenological revolution in fact a complete revolution independent of classical philosophy's principles, or was it constituted from within Western metaphysics? This question provides the starting-point for Derrida's critique of

Husserl, entitled *Speech and Phenomena*. In the Introduction to *Speech and Phenomena*,<sup>iii</sup> Jacques Derrida poses the question of how we are "to accept and read" the "portentous distinction"<sup>iv</sup> Husserl makes between *expression* and *indication*. This question is whether or not

*phenomenological necessity, the rigor and subtlety of Husserl's analysis, the exigencies to which it responds and which we must first recognize, nonetheless conceal a metaphysical presupposition . . . [and] harbor a dogmatic or speculative commitment which . . . would constitute phenomenology from within.*

Phenomenology was conceived by Husserl as a theory of science or knowledge *in general*: a "science of sciences." Fundamentally, this was an attempt to ground epistemology in the human consciousness of the present moment. The "transcendental reduction" central to phenomenology is *transcendental* insofar as it reaches toward the ideal essences of things, hence the motto "return to things in themselves;"<sup>v</sup> however, the *locus* of this ideality is necessarily the "real" world of appearances. Since Husserl posited no separate transcendental realm, he was, in this regard at least, not a Platonist. And how is the ideal essence of things, the "thing itself," to be comprehended? As Robert Sokolowski notes, "the transcendental reduction is the turn toward the ego as the agent of truth:"<sup>vi</sup> it is the perceiving subject, "intuiting" the world around him, to whom truth is made apparent. True knowledge is the truth of experience as *lived* by a transcendental ego. Moreover, true knowledge is considered absolute and ideal:

*"Since Husserl posited no separate transcendental realm, he was, in this regard at least, not a Platonist."*

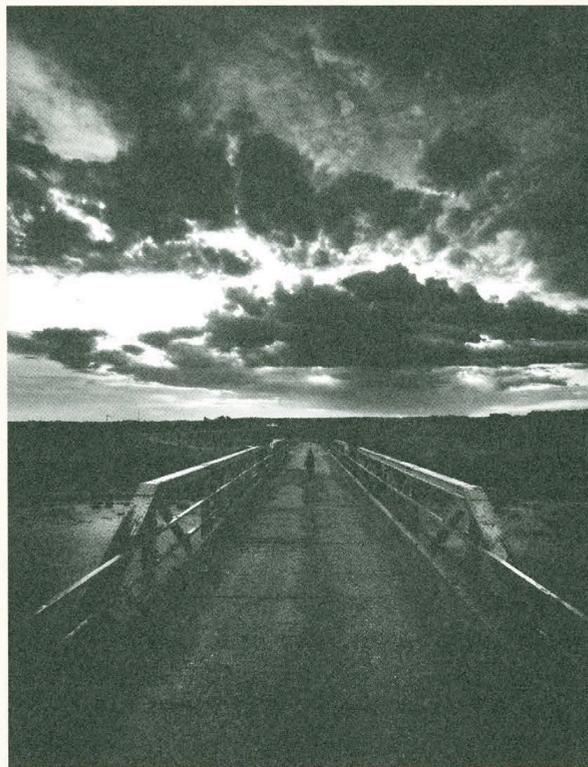
*experiences are real particulars, temporally determinate, which come into being and pass away. Truth, however, is 'eternal,' or, better put, it is an Idea, and so beyond time.*<sup>vii</sup>

The *Investigations* were termed “Logical,” and in many senses their object is, indeed, logic. Logic is, for Husserl, the ground of true knowledge as the sole guarantor of truth in its ideal form. If logic is indeed the vehicle of truth, it is nonetheless clear that human language is by no means a simple or pure logical system. It is at this point that the relationship between the ideality of a pure logical grammar and the reality of human language must be examined. Simply put, what is the relation of formal logic to practical language?

It is in answer to this question that Husserl proposes the distinction between expression and indication. An *expression*, in Husserl’s sense, is a linguistic sign which incorporates or is animated by a formal, logical, propositional meaning. An *indication*, by contrast, is still a sign, though one deprived of meaning. The difference between the two is thus explicitly one of *meaning*.<sup>viii</sup>

The meaning of an expression is defined as an ideal logical content;<sup>ix</sup> as Derrida puts it, the *logos* is “determined from logic.” But it is also something more: the ideal re-presentation of a conscious subject’s experience. Husserl’s position was that any experience of an object of cognition (“noema”), even the experience of its representation in language or memory, in some way refers to (“intends”) that object in and by itself. Meaningful communication occurs when a sensible signifier—e.g. a series of sounds—is “animated” by nonsensible conceptual content, always determined on the basis of both a pure logic and an ideal object, in the mind of a conscious subject. What is meaningful about a series of words is not the material words themselves—not the pattern of sound in the case of spoken language nor the pattern of light and dark in the case of written language—but rather the conceptual content they hold.

For Husserl, the distinction clearly functions at the level of an explicit willed meaning-content. For example, one can



APPROACHING STORM CLOUDS INDICATE RAIN

hear the utterance, “It will rain”; alternatively, one can see storm-clouds gathering. The knowledge gained in both cases is, in theory, identical. In the former case, however, the words function as an *expression*. In the latter, the storm-clouds function as an *indication*: they are that which “moves something such as a ‘thinking being’ to pass by thought from something to something else.”<sup>x</sup> What separates indication from expression is that the “something else,” to which an indicative sign refers, is an existent entity and *not* an ideal meaning. Expressions, on the other hand, “refer” exclusively to ideal, conceptual meaning-content.

However, concerning the possibility of a radical separation between expression and indication, Derrida notes,

*the difference between indication and expression very quickly appears in the course of the description to be a dif-*

ference more functional than substantial. Indication and expression are functions or signifying relations, not terms. One and the same phenomenon may be apprehended as an expression or as an indication, a discursive or nondiscursive sign depending on the intentional experience [*vécu intentionnel*] which animates it.<sup>xi</sup>

This is clear enough to see in a more salient example. What is the difference between a stone as a trail marker—a classic example of indication—and that same stone as part of a predetermined system of communication, with an explicit



STONES ALONG A PATH AS AN EXAMPLE OF INDICATION

meaning? Husserl will say that “signs in the sense of indications do not express anything, unless they happen to fulfill a meaning as well as an indicative function.” In other words, even when considering one and the same phenomenon, or one and the same communicative act, its indicative and its expressive functions are supposed to remain absolutely heterogeneous. And yet he will, on the other hand, admit that “meaning—in communicative speech—is *always interwoven* with such an indicative relation.”<sup>xiii</sup>

But how can it be that a rigid delineation between two entities exists when they are “always interwoven?” As Hume pointed out, what is in theory distinguishable is always in principle separable.<sup>xiii</sup> In fact, this provides the opening for

Derrida’s critique. As he states,

*We will have to clarify the modalities of this interweaving. But it is already evident that this de facto necessity of entanglement, intimately associating expression and indication, must not, according to Husserl, cut off the possibility of a rigorous distinction of essence. This possibility is purely de jure and phenomenological. The whole analysis will thus advance in this separation between de facto and de jure, existence and essence, reality and intentional function.*<sup>xiv</sup>

By admitting on the one hand an empirically necessary interweaving that on the other hand may ideally be done away with, Husserl has already involved his theory of language and thus of knowledge in a rigid separation between *fact* and *Idea*. He has subordinated the former to the latter; though expression always and everywhere involves indication, there is nonetheless an assumed *difference* between indication and expression. Empirical necessity does not impact ideal truth, the truth of phenomenology.

This separation of reality and ideality, matter and form, constitutes phenomenology as well as the entirety of Western metaphysics. Husserl claims that “no conceivable gradation could mediate between the ideal and the real,”<sup>xv</sup> and by extension that ideal meaning-content could never, in any way, have anything to do with the real experienced world. This is precisely the difference between form and matter, essence and existence, substance and accidents which inaugurates Western philosophy.

In fact, as Derrida has pointed out often over the course of his works, signs function at the border between ideality and physicality. Any sign, in order to signify, must have some generally recognizable, universal qualities—an ideality-through-repetition—since a purely particular “event” would be absolutely unintelligible.<sup>xvi</sup> A word can be understood if and only if it conforms somehow to predetermined expectations:

*A phoneme or grapheme is necessarily always to some ex-*

*tent different each time that it is presented in an operation or a perception. But, it can function as a sign, and in general as language, only if a formal identity enables it to be issued again and to be recognized. This identity is necessarily ideal.*<sup>xvii</sup>

Because the ideal form of a sign is precisely nothing actual or empirical, the very physicality of a signifier, and hence the signifier itself, is necessarily and absolutely different from the ideality it instantiates. The basis of this ideality is the act of repetition, and not the other way around: any pre-existing ideality would necessitate the existence of a pre-empirical, ideal realm, and thereby a lapse into stark Platonism. By contrast, phenomenology asserts that the locus of ideality is the phenomenal world, and thus, that the source of ideality is the act of indefinite repetition.

We have already seen that Derrida viewed the distinction between indication and expression as more “functional than substantial.” This was for two reasons: first, any sign may function both indicatively and expressively, and second, any actual expression is indicative, as the primary presentation or intuition of an object of cognition is always denied an interlocutor. A conversation partner will never have access to the full, ideal meaning of an expression, because any *actual* event of expression is always interwoven with indication, which makes the conceptual meaning-content *impure*. However, where the notion of “expression” could still possibly be relevant is within the consciousness of the subject.

Expression is supposed to be more “full” than indication because it connects directly with the willed meaning of a conscious subject. This meaning is taken to be that subject’s filled intuition. However, this is not necessarily the case. Husserl writes that what is ‘meant’ or intended

*can either be actually present, through accompanying intuitions, or may at least appear in representations, e.g. in a mental image, and where this happens the relation to an object is realized. Alternatively this need not occur; the ex-*

*pression functions significantly...but it lacks any basic intuition that would give its object.*<sup>xviii</sup>

Fulfillment of intuition is unnecessary for the functioning of expression. As Derrida concludes, “The absence of an object is hence not the absence of meaning.”<sup>xix</sup>

From the very beginning, Husserl’s project was to restore the “dignity” of knowledge, in part by ensuring that the “aim” of scientific inquiry (i.e. certain knowledge of the truth) is arrived at properly: Husserl insists, as we have already noted, that “whether a science is truly a science, or a method a method, depends on whether it accords with the aims that it strives for.”<sup>xx</sup> Language, in this view, is subordinated to the search for truth. The “dignity” of language lies in its ability to *express* the truth.

*If “possibility” or “truth” is lacking, an assertion’s intention can only be carried out symbolically; it cannot derive any “fullness” from intuition . . . it then lacks, as one says, a “true,” a “genuine” meaning.*<sup>xxi</sup>

“Symbolically” is equivalent to “mediately,” and insofar as mediation involves a step away from the “fullness” of true meaning, it accordingly introduces an impurity into the meaning that is communicated. Language *can* be used without the possibility of truth, but this is not how language *should* be used. Instead, language is ideally used to re-present an initial fullness of intuitive content, the “truth,” the actual presence of an ideal object to consciousness.

If, however, such a pure and full initial presentation is never, *in fact*, possible, the possibility of such a use of language would be radically altered. Regardless, such a state of affairs would in no way affect the ability of language to function. The dignity of language might be in the search for truth, but the possibility of language necessitates no truth.

Thus, even if, as Derrida notes, “[language] attains its en-telechy when it is true,”<sup>xxii</sup> it is nonetheless the case that language requires no accompanying present-intuition. The

ideality of meaning, which Husserl had attempted to determine earlier on the basis of a simple and pure relationship with such a present-intuition, is therefore constituted totally separate from any such intuition. If an ideal meaning exists, it does so only after language; the possibility of a pure expression is a question, and one raised only *after* the nonideality of an indicative signification.

Derrida sees this through to its logical conclusion: “we might be tempted to maintain not only that meaning does not imply the intuition, *but that it essentially excludes it.*”<sup>xxiii</sup> The existence of an ideal meaning makes the notion of any full, present-intuition absolutely impossible. This argument hinges on the distinction between the meaning of an expression and the ostensibly-accompanying—but in fact never-accompanying—intuition of an actual speaker.

If the general structure of signification is constituted by the *possibility* of absence, as indeed it is constituted by repetition and representation, it would be completely unjustified to determine this absence as exterior, secondary, or derivative to an initial presence or presentation. And far from being exiled as an abnormality or failure, it is this primordial absence or nonpresentation which is the foundation of meaning in general, as it is the necessary precondition of intelligibility. In examining Husserl’s concept of the sign, Derrida reveals that the “sign” conceived as the mediation between ideality and reality is always already deconstructing. As a result, the opposition between ideality and reality is untenable.

This is true of any conceptual operation that would seek to establish the terms of a relation in absolute purity. Hence, deconstruction is the construction of a new type of order from the incoherence of the old order. This old order is the structure of extremes; it is the determination of Being as absolute presence and Non-being as absolute absence.

Now, negation is often viewed as an independent mode of existence, as though the concept of “not-A” were intelligible without the prior concept of “A.” Non-existence is all too

frequently misunderstood as simply the negative analogue of existence. But “A does not exist,” in addition to not being a purely formal claim, is meaningless without the prior existence of A. Otherwise,

- 1) Why should A’s nonexistence be any different from, e.g., B’s?
- 2) How should the nonexistence of A be properly identified in the first place? Without A, how could we speak of the nonexistence of A?

Even within the more formal realm of propositional logic—that is, excluding statements of existence or nonexistence—these results are by no means exclusive to the negative term, not-A. Would a proposition that could not be negated make any sense? Even a tautology may be negated into a contradiction. If not-A is unintelligible without A, A is no less unintelligible without not-A. A and not-A, then, are both alike in only being intelligible on the basis of A. A negation may express an assertion of A’s nonexistence, but this assertion cannot be made without reference to A. As a result there can be no pure negation of A; existence and nonexistence are only ever misunderstood as opposites.

Husserl’s separation of the real from the ideal is no less radical than the distinction between the existent and the non-existent, or the true and the false. In fact, it is both coterminous and coextensive with these oppositions. Husserl ultimately reserved a peculiar, eternal mode of existence for the ideal; in real or empirical terms, ‘the ideal’ could only be said not to exist.

Derrida’s analysis of Husserl is neither definable as commentary nor determinable as interpretation. Derrida does not simply explain Husserl’s philosophy, nor does he simply draw conclusions from it, though both of these are stops along the way. *Speech and Phenomena* points out the critical incoherence of the linguistic model, generally assumed in the West, which would hold that language is a kind of vehicle that transmits a conceptual meaning, the signified, in or on or through a material signifier. Husserl’s account of

language, and in particular his strong attachment to ideality, might sound tinny to postmodern ears. But, in fact, his account of language—in which a conceptual meaning-content is transmitted across a physical medium—remains the dominant understanding of language in the West.

In the most general form, this model of language is predicated on the premise that there is a substantial materiality separable from a substantial immateriality, on whose basis truth is defined, and further that a material quantity can “refer” to an immaterial quantity, thus forming a mediation of experience and truth. It may be that Husserl expressed these premises in a more radical form than other thinkers had previously; certainly, if nothing else, Derrida brings to light the absolutely fundamental nature of Husserl’s initial distinction between ideality and reality. But that Husserl expressed the split in radical terms does not in any way imply that other thinkers did not hold or indeed have not held to it. In fact, it is this precise distinction between the material and the immaterial, *hyle* and *morphe*, which inaugurates Western metaphysics, and which continues to determine its course. Husserl gave this distinction the most definitive formulation of the modern era, but it does not begin with him; and though he radicalized the issue, he was not the last to wittingly or unwittingly commit to its being radicalized.

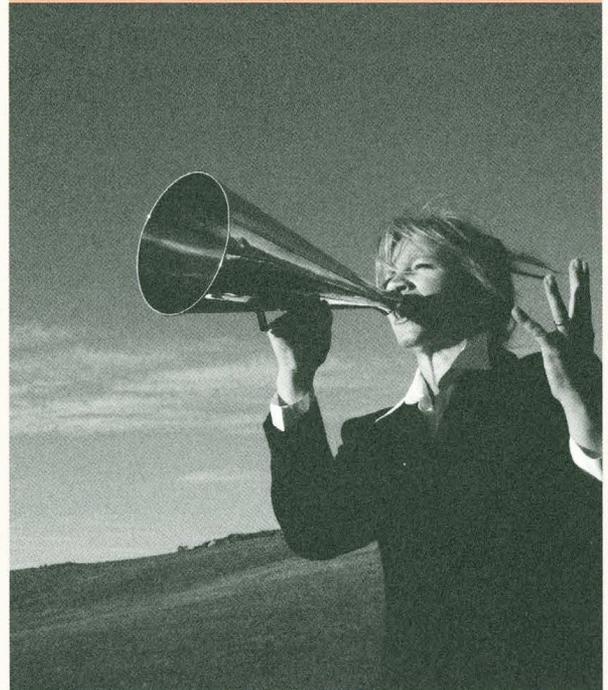
For Husserl, this conceptual meaning was necessarily propositional, but that is only because within his philosophy of true ideality, the truth of ideality is restricted to propositional logic, analogous to the formal rules of syntax. Derrida’s critique is leveled foremost against the view that speech or writing is primarily “representative” of an initial, conceptual meaning-content, whether it is purely propositional or not. Derrida ultimately points out the elements of Husserl’s account of language which work against each other; he demonstrates that Husserl’s sundering of ideal from real is an operation that is anything but purely descriptive. Rather, that which authorizes this philosophy to speak is the case which should render it mute: the case where the real and the ideal are conjoined, the spoken

word.

The defining characteristic of speech, in phenomenology, is its bridging of the gap between materiality and immateriality. Husserl predicated truth on ideality; however, ideality is not mediated through the senses. That is to say, for Husserl, the truth had to be absolute, ideal, and formal: thoroughly nonphysical. But there cannot be an apprehension of this truth apart from some sort of sensory activity. Husserl’s thought was in a trap; there had to be some means by which the truth of ideality could be grasped, else there was no sense positing it in the first place. This mediation is the spoken word.

The spoken word is, in phenomenology, the unfolding-in-time of eternal, ideal truth. It is the case which perfectly joins or mediates ideal meaning with real expression, eternity with temporality. This is because in spoken speech there is an unbroken link between the ideal meaning of the

THE SPOKEN WORD MEDIATES BETWEEN THE REAL AND THE IDEAL WORLD OF PHENOMENOLOGY



expression and the real acoustic pattern. The voice is the place where the distinction between the ideal and the real collapses. It is the perfect mediation between the two ends of the opposition. As a result, it is the “sole case to escape the distinction between what is worldly and what is transcendental [i.e. ideal]; by the same token, it makes that distinction possible.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Though there is not and cannot be any experiential difference between the voice and the meaning it signifies, such a difference must be maintained by Husserl, in order to preserve the initial “essential distinction” between the ideal and the real. Because the voice perfectly mediates between the two, it demonstrates that such a mediation—and hence that such a distinction—is in fact possible. An objective worldly science, in Husserl’s sense, can teach us nothing at all about the nature of the voice, precisely because this self-nature escapes empirical access, precisely because the voice is inscrutable in its ideal unification of the ideal and the real. “The signifier,” Derrida writes, “would become perfectly diaphanous due to the absolute proximity to the signified.”<sup>xxv</sup> The reason?

*There is an unfailing complicity here between idealization and speech . . . My words are “alive” because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance; not to cease to belong to me.*<sup>xxvi</sup>

In contrast with every other action, *speaking* brings the ideality of meaning and the reality of the world into indistinguishable contact. At the very moment that speech is produced, as it comes into being, its material

body—sound—fades away. As a result, “this effacement of the sensible body and its exteriority is *for consciousness* the very form of the immediate presence of the signified.”<sup>xxvii</sup> Speaking in the phenomenological sense is the foundation of and the authorization for the whole chain of *sine qua non* first principles: self, ideality, presence, and so forth.

Writing, however, is a fundamentally different case. There is no active consciousness producing the written page as it is read; writing exists (or may exist) in no way dependent upon its author. Unlike the voice, which always—at least until the invention of telecommunications—had to be produced in proximity to a recipient, and further could not be reproduced in time, writing bears no even putatively necessary relation between the physical word and the conscious meaning-intent of a subject. The subject who produced a text, the author, the “I,” may be unconscious or dead, and the text is still legible. It exists in the world, despite the fact that there is no “animating” intention. There can consequently be very little sense in positing this animating intention as a necessary requirement for intelligibility. The written word remains perfectly understandable, even without that which Husserl saw as absolutely required for intelligibility.

Husserl followed the traditional Western model; he viewed writing as merely a re-presentation of speech, which was itself simply a representation of the original meaning of an expressive act of communication. However, what he neglected to take into account was the radically cast-off nature of the written sign. If writing is merely a representation of speech, it nonetheless remains a full (in the sense of complete) use of language. What is the phenomenological dif-

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ference between producing a speech-utterance and producing a written utterance? The actual moment of conscious activity is fundamentally indivisible in both instances; the neurological processes involved may be different, but both make full use of language, both require the structures that define and order language use in general.

There was never a speech that was not “writing,” if we understand writing as what Derrida ultimately terms *pro-towriting*: the process of differentiation within the self that was always the origin of the concept “self.” There is no undivided self, and no pure presence which could exist in meaningful or mediable opposition with absence—there is no expression without indication. The motion of this pro-towriting is evident in the deconstruction of “expression,” “present” or “presence, and “self”; the very condition of these concepts’ intelligibility is their ultimate incoherence. What allows us to say “present” as opposed to “absent,” “self” as opposed to “other,” is a never-ending operation of effacing *differance*, effacing the fact that the condition of self-identity is an irreducible alterity—an alterity which, by extension, can never be pure or primal or absolute.

*Differance* “produces sameness as a self-relation within self-difference; it produces sameness as the non-identical.”<sup>xxviii</sup> The preceding examination of the transcendental or phenomenological reduction reveals difference always already at work within the same. This difference, however, does not and cannot exist in opposition with any notion of sameness; it is a difference within the same, a sameness within difference, that destroys the possibility of any meaningful opposition between sameness and difference, of any

absolute self-identity or absolute difference. *Differance* does not exist to be grasped.

In critiquing Husserl’s concept of the sign, then, Derrida is in fact showing how Husserl’s attempts to absolutely separate presence from absence, ideality from reality, and existence from nonexistence are absurd and futile efforts. The very attempt to articulate a notion of pure presence demands reference to a nonpresence or nonplenitude which *prima facie* constitutes the possibility of any presence at all. Nowhere is this more clear than within Husserl’s philosophy of language, precisely because language is so commonly viewed as the phenomenon which mediates between the world of sense and the world of ideas. But is such a mediation in fact possible?

In general, a mediation is that which forms a connective link between two terms. Or a mediation is that connection itself. As far as one may trust etymology as a source of (philosophical) knowledge, mediation is derived from the Latin *medius*, “middle.” The medium of a discussion is the material basis of a dialogue through which meanings are transferred. And the very assertion of an act of mediation, of a concept which is able to function as a midway point between the two poles of an opposition, implies that opposition. For Husserl, as ultimately for Saussure, the sign is the mediation between the sensible and the intelligible; this ineluctably presupposes the existence of such things as intelligibility and sensibility, at least insofar as the two are not one and the same. Thus, if the opposition between expression and indication, the ideal and the real, were tenable in the slightest, a mediation between the two terms would be possible.

However, Husserl's account of language, and by extension the entire phenomenological project, requires an absolute interiority, a pure subjectivity. It is in fact nothing other than hearing-oneself-speak which is the pure form of subjectivity: before one's speech, and hence one's thought, has gone "out" into the world, it is asserted to remain within the "solitary mental sphere" of subjective activity. In Husserl's philosophy, as Derrida demonstrates, the eventual exit of speech into the world is by no means necessary to its constitution as expression, that is, as representative of an original pure ideality.

Such a pure subjectivity is only ever and can only ever be a fantasy, in Husserl's words, an "ideal limit, something abstract which can be nothing for itself."<sup>xxix</sup> Just as "A" is unintelligible without "not-A," the notion of a "self" is not comprehensible without reference to the notion of "other." This mutual dependence of the terms of a conceptual opposition upon each other represents an irreducible alterity within the "I," or in general within the self-nature of any phenomenon. This alterity is not opposed to anything; it is what Derrida terms the primordial bifurcation, the *différance* which constitutes any notion of "self" or "other" from within.

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What an indication lacks is the immaterial volitional content typically termed "meaning." It is purely a physical phenomenon, with no ideal mental component. Hence the substance of Derrida's critique may be taken as an attack on the very notion of an immateriality separable from a materiality, or an intelligibility separate from a sensibility. But this attack stems ultimately not from Derrida's pen but from within the very conditions set forth by the notions of immateriality and self-nature. And this is by no means to say that Derrida is a materialist, or that he is asserting the existence of only the sensible signifier. In *Speech and Phenomena* as elsewhere, he admits that language is to some degree an operation of not-strictly-empirical entities.<sup>xxx</sup> Rather, the thrust of the argument exposes the open contradiction at the heart of any philosophical position which separates the ideal from the real—and this would include denying the existence of one or the other. The "Law of Non-Contradiction" would hold that an entity cannot be both material and immaterial; the related "Law of the Excluded Middle" would hold that an entity must be one or the other. But through the critique of Husserl's theory of signs, Derrida points out that the notions of materiality and immateriality, sensibility and intelligibility, are radically *inseparable*. In general, "A" is not in principle separate from "not-A." One may assert with the empiricists that the material is primary, or with Husserl that truth and meaning are strictly ideal, but in either case there is a total failure of philosophical coherence. Reality and ideality, the material and the immaterial, *hyle* and *morphe*, self and other, existence and nonexistence—far from being separable quantities, even in theory, these remain inextricably bound to each other.

While philosophy had always been determined on the basis of being as presence, the purity of this presence was always an impossible, incoherent idea. Concordantly, the refutation performed by Derrida is not and could not be done in the name of an absolute absence or nonexistence.

*Within philosophy there is no possible objection concerning this privilege of the present-now; it defines the very ele-*

ment of philosophical thought, it is [phenomenological] evidence itself, conscious thought itself, it governs every possible concept of truth and sense. No sooner do we question this privilege than we begin to get at the core of consciousness itself from a region that lies elsewhere than philosophy, a procedure that would remove every possible security and ground from discourse. In the last analysis, what is at stake is indeed the privilege of the actual present, the now. This conflict, necessarily unlike any other, is between philosophy, which is always a philosophy of presence, and a meditation on nonpresence—which is not perforce its contrary, or necessarily a meditation on a negative absence, or a theory of nonpresence qua unconsciousness.<sup>xxxii</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

- i. Husserl 2001
- ii. Husserl 2001 (14)
- iii. Derrida
- iv. Derrida (4)
- v. Husserl 1970 (17)
- vi. Moran (58)
- vii. Ibid.
- viii. Cf. *Logical Investigations* (183): "Every sign is a sign for something, but not every sign has 'meaning,' a 'sense' that the sign 'expresses.'" Expressive signs have "sense" or "meaning;" indicative signs do not.
- ix. Husserl (2001) early on speaks of "the concepts or propositions which function as the meanings of our expressions" (65)
- x. Derrida (28)
- xi. Derrida (20)
- xii. Husserl 2001 (269)
- xiii. Cf. *A Treatise of Human Nature*: "Whatever is distinct, is distinguishable; and whatever is distinguishable, is separable by the thought or imagination." What would it mean to posit two entities, e.g. expression and indication, which were never in principle separable? What possible sense would there be in claiming that two entities are being considered? In examining the "interwovenness" of expression and indication, Derrida is in fact interrogating the very possibility of the unity of the sign, with everything that might entail; "To say that there could be a truth for the sign in general, does this not suppose that the sign is not the possibility of truth, does not constitute it, but is satisfied to signify it?" Derrida (24)
- xiv. Husserl 2001 (20-21)
- xv. Husserl 2001 (50)
- xvi. Cf. "Signature, Event, Context" in *Limited Inc* (18-21)

- xvii. Derrida (50)
- xviii. Husserl 2001 (280)
- xix. Derrida (91-92)
- xx. Husserl 2001 (25)
- xxi. Husserl 2001 (Section II, pp. 285-286)
- xxii. Derrida (98)
- xxiii. Derrida (92)
- xxiv. Derrida (78)
- xxv. Derrida (80)
- xxvi. Derrida (75-76)
- xxvii. Ibid.
- xxviii. Derrida (82)
- xxix. Moran (63)
- xxx. Cf. *Speech and Phenomena* (50): "A signifier (in general) must be formally recognizable in spite of, and through, the diversity of empirical characteristics which may modify it. It must remain *the same*, and be able to be repeated as such, despite and across the deformations which the empirical event necessarily makes it undergo. A phoneme or grapheme is necessarily always to some extent different each time that it is presented in an operation or a perception. But, it can function as a sign, and in general as language, only if a formal identity enables it to be issued again and to be recognized. This identity is necessarily ideal."
- xxxi. Derrida (63)

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