

## *Towards a Meta-problematics of Sensitivity*

### **0 / Preface**

Can we separate sense from situation?

If sense is first broached in the rupture of presence– if sense is merely an immanent intelligibility– then accordingly we would wish to know which ontological rules, if any, sensibility obeys. But is sense actually structured this way?

In attempting to answer this question, our first guiding principle shall be that not only is ontology inevitably economized and politicized as an active process in classifying and ordering the world, but also that ontology as such is a form of political economy. The neutrality is only apparent, or actual sterility; for ontology is by nature a colonialism. It is efficient organization. A closed ontology is consequently an anxiety, a monumental repression and, when taken literally, a refined form of self-deception.

Since they are interdependent, we can never properly divorce sense from situation. However, we can open out our entire sense-situation system, allowing the whole assemblage to unfold along radically new lines. We cannot change the sense of a situation at will. Importantly, it is an open question whether some new sense-situation system is possible. The encounter calls us precisely to sensitivity and to responsibility. Because sense is always a transversal mapping between and across radically different kinds of reality, sense is not just transparent sensation, but clear agency. Sense is cosmic: it accomplishes an active connection across material and abstracted ontological territories.

A modern Zeno's paradox: the limit of the self-difference within and between autonomous ontological planes is unbounded. This illuminates three important questions: (1) Can we separate sense from sensitivity? (2) Can we transparently distinguish the perception from the interface? (3) Can we distinguish authoritatively between an ontological system and the energies it classifies?

### **1 / Space**

Sense is nothing without a space in which to unfold, to insist, to happen. Thus in sense we find both inner and exo-natural space, and an active movement coupling them together. Sensitivity is a bridge which subsists from concrete duration: sense is something that happens. Sense in-sists as an event which opens a space *within* the 'boundary' between matter and thought, or between the motion of energy and its trace. These traces, insofar as they constitute our perceptual horizon, form a circularly linked chain: impression, memory, imagination, and language. But is the space open or closed? Are we ultimately bounded on the outside by 'culture'? Or is culture what allows us to conceive of boundaries, that is, to *authorize* ontology?

Culture informs the cognitive horizon and en-acts its limitedness. Ontology is a quite necessary cultural function: it performs the degree-zero taboo encoding. Hence a formal ontology states what may or may not be spoken of sensibly. To think ontologically is to label the relation of

flows of energy to flows of speech, each according to its own mythical measure. Ontological thought is magical thought with real consequences.

The formal encoding of a relation between energy and speech is always a prescription. Describing the relation between surfaces of varying metaphysical reality– to trace between systems of different ontological dimension– is always to inscribe the relation as a fractal marking upon bodies, which makes possible the internalization of both surfaces, as well as the depths, in a singular transversal mapping. Sensitivity is not limited to the sensical. We are as impressed by the depths of delirium as we are awed by the heights of clarity and eloquence. Within ontology the traces of the sensible are arranged: from intensity to image to sign to thought, sense is in each case a differential relation between a metaphysical and a physical surface.

Sense is therefore an intra-ontological interface, an event which occurs on the edge of the situation. The deployment of sense is a violence, whether onto the metaphysical surface as language or transcendent sounds which inspire focus, order, obedience; or whether sense is deployed upon physical surfaces as marks cut into bodies, sense is a forced fractal mapping which inscribes upon bodies their place not only in the family-social space but cosmically, environmentally, politically, and so on.

Ontology is never indifferent to politics: no one has been more aware of this, perhaps, than Wittgenstein, with whom we agree that naming is always a labeling. Ontology as such, and meaning more generally, can only be considered in terms of its use: as force, as sign, as thought. Sense presupposes the social.

Sensitivity demands a great deal of mutual observation. Sensations are not ontologically equivalent to image-words which in turn are not ontologically equivalent to the rules of language games. All instances of sense are self-destructing, but infinitely adaptive.

But sense is neither logic or reality or culture. The sensible event traces a transversal mapping which consummates the deepest interconnections between reality and culture and logic, and in fact, their mutual foundation . We must remember that not only do the elements of an ontology impose a sort of measure upon reality, but each ontology as such imposes a metric, establishes a field of verblativity upon which events can be traced. This field of the sensible cuts across the energies it classifies–it marks them, controls, predicts and explains them.

Ontology is the formal incarnation of an absolute authority, transcendent relative to the energies it classifies. These sorts of organizational schemes always have a sort of neutral and derivative kind of quality about them; the ‘philosophical’ issues involved are highly symbolic, authoritative, abstract and indifferent. But ontology by its nature cannot be politically indifferent; and we shall turn next to that process by which cultural ontologies fracture reality, logic and their objectivity, in the mark(et)ing process which form and inform subjectivity.

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