Method, metaphysics, metaphor: three words with a common prefix, which, for philosophy, bear an ancient pedigree. Classically, the last word, as an object of philosophical reflection, has mostly been excluded from bearing any philosophical significance; we will see how this can no longer be the case today, precisely for phenomenology. If the “method” of phenomenology is wholly determined by its goal, namely, “pure” description, and if description is paradoxically only actualized in a figurative mode through guiding metaphors, then we are compelled to ask after the meaning of such a situation for metaphysics, understood as the “redundance” or “affirmation” of existence in its declaration of itself as truth—precisely, I suggest, the work done by metaphor in its strange interlacing of being and human being in the event of language.

...arising as if bent over its own cradle.
—Levinas, Of God Who Comes to Mind

Introduction

Our title affords the reader three terms: let them appear in all their strangeness. We will ask ourselves first about the nature of method (§§1–3); we will quickly find that method becomes intelligible by virtue of an intrinsic relation to metaphor that we will attempt then to elucidate (§§4–5); this elucidation will lay bare, finally, something important about reason itself—something that we cannot quite grasp (§6)...1

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I would like to acknowledge the anonymous reviewers for their comments on the present essay.
1 Any proposal for, and enactment of a new, or better, renewed vision of phenomenology should shed at least new light on phenomenology’s most basic concepts (reduction, intentionality, etc.). Implied in the body of the essay,
1. The Presence of Method

In the introduction to Material Phenomenology, Michel Henry stated that the present “return to Husserl” undertaken in his work is primarily marked by “the return of a capacity for intelligibility,” which is itself “due to the invention of a method,” made by Husserl himself, “and, first of all, a question in which the essence of philosophy can be rediscovered,” referring to the philosophical relevance of the phenomenological attitude. According to Henry, phenomenology’s return “to the things themselves,” or, in his words here, toward a “capacity for intelligibility,” rests on or results from the application of a method to the data of experience which gives new access to things, making them capable of intelligibility—or rather, making us capable of their intelligibility, of the intelligibility which we share with things, the event of intelligibility as such. Now one could disagree and consider intelligibility as such to be impossible, an illusion, or at least not a normative part of experience, not inherent in the things themselves. But either way, intelligibility is a phenomenon, and method is the means of investigating our experience of intelligibility, even allowing us to reach the principle of the intelligibility of experience by asking the question of intelligibility in itself. Here the most radical skeptic and the most radical realist ought to agree. Intelligibility, whether true or false, comes, is captured, or is created by the path carved out by a method.

It is of the essence of philosophy to be concerned with intelligibility, and further, to be capable of intelligibility. The means to the rediscovery of the essence of philosophy is, however, not first tied to Husserl’s “invention of a method.” It would be superficial to say so. Rather, it results from the rediscovery, however reinterpreted or rearticulated, of the basic questions of philosophy. Method is secondary: it derives from the way the questions are posed. Yet, at the same time, it is primary in the sense that it is, very literally, the way the questions are posed. Method is the path of questioning. Indeed, this primary sense of method is perhaps more straightforward. Therefore, the “capacity for intelligibility” that is the rediscovery of philosophy is tied to the question that defines phenomenology. But what ties them together? The answer, as we can see, is method. This is not to say, of course, that the method of phenomenology is uniform therefore, is a “renewed” approach to some of phenomenology’s most basic concepts—though hardly exhaustive.

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among phenomenologists, even if they may tend to bear a sufficient degree of “family resemblance” with one another. Rather, the fact is that the presence of a method in the phenomenological task is necessary, however implicit or under-theorized it may be, for phenomenology itself. For method—as a rational account of the way toward elucidating the intelligibility of things or, perhaps, lack thereof—is necessary for philosophy in general. Method distinguishes one philosophy from another. Even if it is certainly the case that there is no philosophy without method, at least in the broadest sense, there is still no precise method shared among even the closest philosophers, even if they define the object of their inquiry in virtually identical terms. In fact, it is probably best to consider the differences among philosophies to be more or less based on their differences about the “task” of philosophy if only then also the proper method of approaching it.

2. The Path of Method

The “phenomenological method”: a phrase that nevertheless seems to define phenomenology. In 1928 Heidegger himself, describing phenomenology, affirmed that “implicit in the essential nature of all genuine method as a path toward the disclosure of objects is the tendency to order itself always toward that which it itself discloses.”

Three things at least stand out for us in this quotation. (1) Method is a “tendency”—one could even say “disposition,” or better, a “habit” and “habituating towards” something. (2) Method is, as a result, a “path.” (3) Method is marked by a paradox: it is a manner of approach only by first coming from that which it discloses. Regarding the first, we will let this observation stand without further elucidation; the second, we have introduced above and have already taken as a sort of metaphor that guides these reflections; the third will hold our attention here. Genuine method, though not equated with it, is a critical mark of the path to the disclosure of objects, and at the same time and precisely because it is present there, method is most essentially understood to be a tendency, a disposition, perhaps even a habit, to be ordered to that which it itself discloses, to disclosure itself. In other words, method, for Heidegger, is that which emerges out of an ordered disposition toward the disclosure of its object. More radically, method traces its own emergence in the event of

intelligible disclosure: just as intelligibility is, through questioning, “tied” to the questioning—where we found the disclosure of the presence of method—so also for the path of method, which is now the “tying” itself. Both towards and from, approach to disclosure and emergence from it. Method is only “calculated approach” as it is simultaneously wholly incalculable emergence. This conception of the nature of method—as a sort of formal name we give to a more fundamental disposition that defines phenomenology—indicates that method does not define phenomenology. Phenomenology, it seems, is not a method, although it surely requires that which method formally signifies. Thus, for Heidegger at least, the particulars of a method do not make phenomenology what it is, in the first place. Rather, the genuine question that arises from experience defines phenomenology. Here, method is the thoughtful approach to the phenomena of the questioning itself.4

For Husserl, by contrast, it is clearly the case that phenomenology is the adherence to a strict method.5 Yet, already for Husserl, phenomenology is also set against method, because truth is not attained by the technical calculation of a formalism that replaces the path of true philosophizing, but is attained by concrete intuitive experience, which, however, is accessed by rigorous method.6 Let us say then that method is not the thing that phenomenology is, but rather a name for the means of access to things that phenomenology is. To call phenomenology a method is to say that phenomenology is a, if not the, valid path to the realization of the philosophical ideal. One could say that the method of phenomenology is the un-method, the approach that seeks to make sure that our methods do not get in the way of the appearing of the phenomena.

4 Hence his famous remark: “The only thing that is truly new in science and in philosophy is the genuine questioning and struggle with things which is at the service of this questioning” (Basic Problems, 328). See also Martin Heidegger, “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview,” in Towards the Definition of Philosophy, (tr.) Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2000).


6 See Edmund Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, (tr.) David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 46. See also Max Scheler, for whom phenomenology is fundamentally an insight into experience; it depends not on method, but on the insights of individual experiences in particular. Hence there can be no methodological unity to the tradition of phenomenology. Max Scheler, “Phenomenology and the Theory of Cognition,” in Selected Philosophical Essays, (tr.) David Lachterman (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 328.
Today, as ever, there is no method that is consistent among those philosophers actively engaged in phenomenological research. What the community of phenomenologists share, instead, is a set of questions and an argument for the general way in which the capacity for intelligibility that defines philosophy is best undertaken. They are concerned with the “first things” of everything: the appearing of the appearances that everything to be considered by philosophy presupposes, that is, phenomenality itself, the universal “category” of every “region” of inquiry. The argument, for phenomenology as science of this first thing, as science of sciences, is that Husserl opened a new door to the authentic path of philosophical inquiry. Rather than a set of questions, then, it would be better to say that phenomenologists share a way of questioning or a path of inquiry into the intelligibility of things, which gives rise to similar ways of asking basic philosophical questions. Phenomenologists share a general consensus about the basic tasks of philosophy. Phenomenology is hence defined by commitment to a common task: “the things themselves.” It is the question of what these “things themselves” really are—even, as I will propose below, if it is the principle of metaphor that best “grasps” the phenomenality of things themselves in their original intelligible significance—that distinguishes one phenomenology from another.

3. Meta hodos

“Method,” of course, for the Greeks, meant simply the pursuit of knowledge. It was a meta hodos, “behind/with” (meta-) “the way or path of travel” [toward knowledge] (hodos). The base, hodos, is the same for modern words such as “electrode,” “cathode,” etc., coined in the early 19th century and pertaining to the modern discovery of electricity: the original reference to these is the path taken by an electric current on its departure from either a negative or positively charged pole. “Method” is that which is behind or beyond, the presupposition and end of successful inquiry, one with the path or way toward knowledge. Method “guarantees” that the thing and the path are one; the way of knowledge is the way of encounter with things, and therefore knowledge. Method, as we deduced above, is a moving towards and coming from the object to be known. Knowledge is the coincidence of this double movement, as presupposition, or path, and end, the thing itself. The “things themselves,” or, “thing itself,” has a double sense: the reality in itself, Ding an sich (contrasted with the “phenomenal,” asserted by Kant), and the matters themselves, die Sachen selbst (contrasted with mere signification, the concern of
Husserl). We will have to return to this towards the end of this paper, and we will do so by introducing the realist concept of metaphor and the introduction of a third, the "first things," the images that give rise to thought and found the formalities of method through the ontological transposition of metaphor.

Here, the double movement of method in knowledge is not understood—let us recall—merely as "truth about" things, a sort of correspondence between the content in the mind and real things, but rather as the encounter with the hidden principles that undergird the world of experience, as relation with the things themselves—the path that is advancement towards and emergence from the things in the event of intelligible manifestation. Method in its most basic sense is affirmation of the truth that things are. "Method" therefore was the particular path toward the truth unique to any particular philosophical school. The theses or doxa marking any particular school's path toward knowledge was based on the affirmation of the continuity of the path (hence teleios) with the things themselves (as telos). Method claimed to be the "straight path" (ortho) to the truth that things are.

The freedom for thought in the Greek sense, of philosophical theoria, is an affirmation of the world's freedom, and philosophy is the dilation of such freedom to the whole of being as such in its original emergence in pure intelligibility as origin of beings. Theoria is the vision of the world in its original freedom to appear from itself in itself and as itself. Method is therefore that path of reflection on the whole which dilates itself to the entirety of being in its primordial freedom of intelligibility. It is the response of reason to the sheer gratuity of what is: the response comes from and returns to, returns to as coming from the gratuity of appearing; it is the redundancy of freedom, the responding yes to the original yes without reserve of original intelligibility. Method rests on an absolute affirmation of the freedom of intelligibility. Method is the path of opening to the entirety of what is in its original appearing. In this sense that defines philosophy one becomes free when affirming the absolute freedom of the world to appear. One's freedom is found in tying oneself to the absolute freedom of being. Theoria is the work of inhabiting this freedom in and for the world. It is a philosophical attitude of giving things the right to appear in and of themselves. Here at the same time that the world becomes an absolute horizon that is absolutely self-evident in itself, the individual becomes free in, and for, and from the world by the philosophical attitude. The world is the fundamental accessibility of things; freedom defines the philosophical experience of this self-given accessibility. Method, for philosophy, is
the path of freedom, the cultivation of the self-evidence of the world in its totality.

4. *Meta hodos and Meta physis of Description: After Husserl*

Phenomenology, of course, makes a fundamental claim to begin anew the philosophical quest as it has been defined from its origin. Yet, at least in its original conception, phenomenology makes no claim to be a pure return to a Greek, or even a pre-metaphysical, way of seeing. Rather, for Husserl, phenomenology (as for Hegel) is the science that reaps all the gains made by the Renaissance and Enlightenment advances of the philosophical attitude, a return to the original Greek venture, a bracketing of opinion and appeals to authority extrinsic to the original freedom of intelligibility itself. For Husserl, phenomenology as a science, as the science of the sciences, is a way of access that is primarily a method—a method, which, as we have seen, carries the sole task of liberating intuition from a priori strictures. The fact is that Husserl’s conception of “science” is distinctly modern—an observation that is still hardly banal. For the ancients and medievals, science, or rather *scientia*, was fundamentally understood as a particular body of knowledge with its own particular distinctive object, field, and method of investigation. For the medievals, in particular, *scientia* indicated the knowledge mainly textual study, as well as any particular branch of study, which became a type of *scientia* marked by an appropriate method or path of inquiry. By contrast, there are at least two modern senses in which science is understood: first, it is understood as the mode of study correlated with theoretical truth (*epistemê*) over against the practical production of the arts (*tekhnê*). The critical modern sense is of course the second: a set of observations (or less commonly, propositions) ordered by strict methodology concerning a particular, clarified subject. These two distinctly modern senses emerge and become solidified in the 17th and 18th centuries respectively. Jean Vioulac offers an adequate description of the resulting modern sense of science:

 Quote: The truth of our epoch is technique: the phenomenological luminosity that opens the site of our epoch is the mechanical radiancy of machination. Thus science has nothing to do any longer with the science of Greece or the Middle Ages: today it is a determined mode of deployment of technique, which no longer approaches
the being with the question: “what is it?,” but with the unique question: “how does it work?.”?

In this entire period, the common name for such strict methodological unfolding of observations or concepts, was more often than not, simply “philosophy.” The key element of this reflective practice was of course method. Husserl is a direct inheritor of such a radically clarified conception of philosophy, the hallmark of which was rigor and clarity. The modern sense of method, of which Husserl, as much as Galileo, is exemplary, makes a fundamental claim to neutrality, that is, to a fundamental openness, apart from the obfuscating intrusion of preconceived ideas from other domains, to the widest possibilities in the realm of data. Observed phenomena alone are allowed to explain themselves; that is to say, the theory ought to come from nowhere but the observations themselves: “every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition” in relation to which “no conceivable theory can make us err.”8 We know this by heart. What we fail to see is that, despite Husserl’s critique of Galileo, there is something they fundamentally share: the ideal of modern science. In this sense, Husserl and Galileo are debating on common ground—specifically, about which method is truly neutral, what is the most adequate, and even correct way, to the things themselves in their self-evidence, or better, what is the best definition of the object. Husserl presupposes fully the modern sense of the scientific ideal and the centrality of method to the realization of that ideal. The ideal of method is therefore simply this: the complete coincidence of the path of reason with the phenomena. Method lets the things be themselves in their absolute freedom to appear. This coincidence defines objectivity. The method defines the scope and limitations of truth, because it is in the method that reason can be observed in its encoun-


ter with its data and hence human fallibility can be eliminated: objectivity! A purely neutral method alone would make possible a phenomenology of pure description. So much neutrality, so much description.

Yet there is no mere description, that is, description understood in the scientific “literal” sense, as “objective description.” Every method rests on disputable premises, of which, in fact, the method that marks a philosophical path is simply an outworking. I quote here Claude Romano’s incisive remark from Au cœur de la raison (2011):

Philosophy’s systematic revolutions always rest on unquestioned theses, on discussible premises subject to controversy, on presuppositions that they omit to explicate, so that the so-called “new” method can be adopted in all good faith—or naïveté—only by a philosopher who has already admitted a certain number of underlying theses. In other words, since there is no universally accepted method in philosophy—by direct contrast to, for example, astronomy, for which neither the object nor procedures that ought to be followed are matters of controversy—precisely because the adoption of this or that method already gives rise to philosophical problems, the idea of a philosophically neutral method makes no sense.10

9 See Jean-Luc Marion, Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology, (tr.) T. A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 4-39. See also Claude Romano, Au cœur de la raison, la phénoménologie (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 507–508: “Le réduction [of the pre-transcendental Husserl] est une exclusion de tout ce qui n’appartient pas à la conscience, un abstention de toute prise de position à l’égard de l’être transcendant dans son ensemble et, partant, une mise hors jeu de tout problème métaphysique. [La ‘neutralité métaphysique’ des Recherches logiques] signifie que la phénoménologie naissante s’abstient de prendre position à l’égard de problèmes classiques, comme l’opposition réalisme-idéalisme...l’essentiel de ce qu’avance Husserl provient en droite ligne d’une argumentation empruntée à Descartes jusque dans sa littéralité. Soutenir que la phénoménologie à son origine serait ‘métaphysiquement neutre’ en ce sens-là, ce serait à peu près comme soutenir que la métaphysique cartésienne est métaphysiquement neutre.” The Cartesian legacy of the metaphysics of Husserl is of course only developed further after the Logical Investigations with the transcendental turn of the reduction.

10 Romano, Au cœur de la raison, 35; my translation: “Les révolutions méthodiques reposent toujours en philosophie, sur des thèses interrogées, sur des prémisses discutables et sujettes à controverse, sur des présupposées qu’elles omettent d’expliciter, de sorte que la méthode réputée ‘nouvelle’ ne peut être adoptée en toute bonne foi – ou en toute naïveté – que par un philosophe qui a déjà admis un certain nombre de thèses sous-jacentes. En d’autres termes, puisqu’il n’y a pas de
Even as an ideal, description must be underwritten by a huge apparatus of theoretical speculation and, more importantly, implicit metaphysical judgments. All this, of course, is only a problem if one's philosophy considers itself as merely, that is, objectively, descriptive in the first place. Indeed, method is the name for this theoretical and metaphysical speculation that justifies itself as descriptive, that is, as reaching and communicating the truth of things “as they are in themselves,” the event of constitution. Method is reason’s observation of itself in its encounter with the things of experience. In this sense, method comes only after the experience, by slowing it down for the sake of observation (in the *epochê*), discerning its parts (*noësis/noëma*) and the implicit layers within it (most problematically temporality) and thereby justifying it as meaningful.\(^\text{11}\) Method is the justification of experience insofar as it locates the formal elements within experience and correlates these with rational acts of judgment. Method’s claim, for phenomenology, is therefore that its own logic is one with the universal logic of appearances and therefore guarantees the repeatability of its results in relation to any possible phenomena. Because the appearances have this formal structure, this method of universalizing reason justifies and is justified by the absolute correlation of world and transcendental ego. Hence we have *in this method* the science of sciences that self-justifies its descriptions as absolute objectivity. But this phenomenological description relies on the clarity and distinctness of rigorous concepts, especially the “world” and “transcendental ego.” We will return to this point.

\(^{11}\) It is important to acknowledge that the phenomenological reduction and the *epochê* are not equivalents: the former requires the latter but the latter does not complete the former insomuch as the former also involves the evocation of concrete meanings in lived experience that the latter only makes possible. The *epochê* can stand for the phenomenological reduction and can even be the name by which we call it insomuch as it is a synecdoche for the whole. This is only stated for the record.
5. Existence, Indifference, Logos: After Heidegger

“Indifference toward existence” is the hallmark of phenomenological method, from eidetic intuition to the transcendental reduction: neither the world nor the transcendental ego exist: the world is the horizon of pure possibility of appearances and the transcendental ego is finally constitutive of the world. In this sense, abstraction defines phenomenology, even if it is a hidden abstraction, one that hides itself behind the “pure description” of phenomena. Considering the phenomenon in its light, the act of existence is the self-declarative act of the self-manifestation of the phenomenon before all pre-conception or a priori rationality and as the source of its own manifestation. Abstraction from existence is the veiling over of this source of the original impulse of philosophical rationality; and if this abstraction from the original act of existing is indeed the telos of the Greek ideal finding its realization in (nihilism of) the technical control of scientific rationality (as Husserl and Heidegger both believed), then rationality, the method of intentionality (as path and disposition to things), must again be rethought from a new, or, rather, re-newed origin where the original disposition of thought is not founded on the correlation of ta ontos and logos, of being and the concept, but on the [specific modality of the] act of being itself, the original deployment of being as esse, which gives the certain reign of phenomenality by which the whole (ontos) is seen, if only under a certain perspective, the appearance which being takes, the essence (eidos), offered in the deployment of being at the origin.\textsuperscript{12} Hence, we can observe that the eidetic reduction asks what is permanent in every possible variation of the phenomenon experienced. It is therefore, like the phenomenological reduction, always incomplete. It is not generalization, but arises from and returns to concrete lived experience. It discerns the pattern of meaning specific to a kind of phenomenon. It finds an image. It is the act of recognizing that an image is at the base of any phenomenon whatsoever, composing its intelligibility. It finds the metaphorical logic of “indeterminacy” that makes up human experience. Categorial intuition takes the form of an image which is the

intuition of the *eidē*. We see this anew when we recognize that eidetic intuition is the implicit condition for sensory intuition. The eidetic reduction carries forward the phenomenological reduction and lies in continuity with it. When simply thought from within the primal correlation of logos/ontos, phenomenology remains with Hegel at the culmination of Greek rationality inaugurated by Parmenides on the side of the system of *possibilities* ordered from a human logos. Yet *reason*, as Schelling pleaded, is not possible as totally *indifferent* to the act of existence, which is sovereignly free from all subjective constitution, and which already founds the world. Reason requires existence...for it is only as an *image*, imbued with the life of existence, bearing that existence as its primal expression, manifesting the act of existence that things are, that reason *works*. To the degree that existence exceeds reason, and therefore to the degree that reason needs an image as *pre-* and *post*-rationally determinative of intelligibility, to that degree reason is rational.

The priority of possibility, “higher than actuality,” defines the “metaphysics” of transcendental modes of thought where possibility and rationality are identified; here, in the domain of metaphysics, abstracted from existence and seeking to replace the ever-greater excess of existence with its own manageable, pre-conceived intelligibility (according to science as *tekhnē*), reason institutes itself as first foundation; nothing can appear but what reason defines as possible. The basic problem of (subjective) transcendental philosophies—so well described by numerous thinkers that we all possess an awareness of the problem at heart of our thinking today—can be described for our purposes in the following, however simplistic, way: *to begin* with possibility, one never reaches actuality. To begin with possibility is to refuse, as a beginning, the impossible, relegating it to a mere opposition with the possible, as opposed to its more primordial (un)conditioning of the possible. Here, in the regime of the merely possible, things are known only as already known; nothing can be learned but what was already known: truth is merely *a-lētheia*, un-forgetting. The un-forgetting that defines possibility is the refusal of the forgotten, the unknown origin of essence in the existence that deploys *essance*. In the regime of the merely possible, the invisible—that which does not appear, the forgotten, the *lēthē*—is relegated to the status of un-truth. Truth, *a-lētheia*, is founded on this forgetting, which is not an affirmation but a *denying*, and as such conscripts the

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foundation of all possibility from the act of being that gives essence to itself alone. Further, the freedom of the phenomena to appear—that impulse that marks the beginning of philosophy—cannot be first founded on possibility. Rather, possibility comes after the appearing in which things appear, and as a consequence to be discovered and lived through; and method, the way of access, comes after the event of the appearing of the object, as we have remarked above. Freedom is act; it is the act of manifestation—not its possibility, which cannot be known in advance, or, if it is, is only known in advance as a pre-condition of the appearing of the phenomena, one that reduces the freedom of the appearing to the freedom of the gaze of the subject. Moreover, the freedom to see the phenomena is a freedom for the appearing; the philosopher is a slave to the freedom of manifestation and is free only as such (this is the truth of the “neutrality” toward which phenomenology aspires, and in this aspiration takes its beginning, as well as the validity of the drive to pure description). How to think the freedom from the possibilities existence gives? How to turn from the possibilities of metaphysics, as denial and therefore as nihilism, and mark a re-turn to the act of existence to receive it anew after the exhaustion of metaphysics’ own possibilities in the ethereal abstractions of reason immanent to itself in the illusion of the objectivity of calculation? With this question we find ourselves passing from an historical description of phenomenology and the phenomenological task as we have received it, to a proposal for its expansion or enlargement: the renewal of phenomenology and its task as first philosophy today.

6. Meta-phora

The answer to our question could be found in description without abstraction. Is such thinkable? The answer is that description without abstraction, an un-method that is method par excellence, that is, a path that is one with its end but not according to the correlation of logos and being, a reduction of the latter to the scope of the former (even as speculatively real), that defines metaphysics, is already thought, an impenetrably dense thought, the ever-greater origin of all rationality, present as the first thing in all thinking. Thinking never exceeds the basic guiding images upon which it rests. For example, it is well known that the various phenomenological projects tend to take an image as arch-phenomenon as orienting principle: the gift, the call, life, the event, face, kenosis, and the like. English philosopher Ray Brassier, a devout materialist critic of phenomenology, remarks that there seems to be a unique correlation between
one's fidelity to description of the appearance and the degree to which one must resort to figurative language to underwrite the descriptive project. He says:

[T]he more we stick to describing pure appearing qua appearing, the more we realize that we invariably have to assume something unapparent within appearances in order to be able to describe them at all—we have to excavate some originary dimension of (non-propositional) "meaning" or "sense"...in order to describe the autonomy of the appearances in their own terms.  

So much description, so much figuration. Thus, the following paradox presents itself: so much neutrality, so much figuration. Yet this is only a desperate situation if rationality, certitude, and truth are governed by the objectivity of the sciences (crudely understood as objective), of descriptive literality. We will assume with all certitude that they are not.  

Let us listen to László Tengelyi: "Flesh, face, symbol and life are quite different phenomena, however, they have one thing in common: they are, strictly speaking, indescribable, inapparent, deprived of phenomenalization. Even if they are clearly indicated by certain appearances, they themselves withdraw from appearing." As Tengelyi seems to imply, these phenomena are images meant to stand for phenomenality itself, the guiding image by which the intelligibility of appearing as such can be grasped. For Tengelyi, these founding images stand for "the phenomenon as such," for this third kind of phenomenology that has succeeded the previous German modes of Husserl and Heidegger, of transcendental and hermeneutical phenomenology, respectively. This phenomenology is founded on the recognition of the primacy of the "event" character of phenomenalization: the source and conditions of meaning is found elsewhere than in the subjective act of sense-bestowal and the primacy of its conditions.

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17 Tengelyi, "New Phenomenology," 301.
18 Ibid., 297–98.
Here is inaugurated the suggestion that “metaphoricity,” the eruption of the native expression of meaning in its irreducible image-character, names the spontaneous event of meaning in which the “intending subject” finds itself implicated and in which it finds the meaning of its very self. Perhaps the “first thing,” then, is the new “objectivity” implied here that only the notion of metaphor can invoke—the point where reason becomes conscious and in command of itself in the mode of the concept occurs already well-after the “constitution” of meaning has been established, which is more originally mediated by images. “Objectivity” here will have to be refigured to mean the most intense moments of meaning in experience. This leads to the following situation for thought: the dense intelligibility of the basic image that incarnates any method is determinative of this scope and value and therefore its very reach into the “things themselves,” or rather “first things” (the irreducible event of appearing, of the existence of appearing, from which our first principles alone derive).

A philosophical position or system is as potent as its fundamental images; the possibilities of any philosophical logos are grounded on the supremely existing act of esse that gives essance that exceed any (imaginable) conceptuality of being and therefore in the light of which philosophy proceeds. The arch-phenomenon is that which method is designed to reach, and it is that which method always implicitly presupposes. Let us, for the sake of the following, that is, for the sake of description, take the arch-phenomenon as our object of inquiry and let us call the arch-phenomenon by another name: meta-phor.

Met(h)a-phora, met(h)a-pherein—“meta-” signifies a common action shared by two disparate things, a change, a fundamental event. And “-phora” signifies to carry or to bear. Metaphor is an event that bears across, transfers, but it is also that which is beyond or after the transfer. Metaphor is that which the transfer discloses and that which it bears forth to be seen. Metaphor is therefore the enactment of a meta hodos, the path that is one with its end—not like the correlation of logos and being that terminates, by virtue of a rigor that denies its roots, in empty abstraction, but rather, like the event of being that being is; metaphor is being—this is “really” a metaphor.¹⁹ The “realism” of metaphor is not reducible to a transparent logos (built, as it is, on the annihilation of the act that founds it); rather, the logos of metaphor guards the sanctity of existence, which alone can

¹⁹ This expression of “real” metaphor is directly opposed of course to the common misleading expression “mere metaphor,” which has no place here.
bear it forth, which it does through the tension of a transposition that protects and bears the irreducible mystery that existence is. Metaphor is the work of reason turning away from itself in the ecstasy of its origin. This can only be articulated, again, metaphorically.

A merely descriptive vocabulary, a “literal” description, reduces the phenomenon to the a priori concept that a rationality provides itself. The “object” fills the description; the quality of the description is related to the corresponding adequacy of the words of description to the phenomenon that is described. By contrast, a metaphor is an image where one thing is substituted for another, not to erase the other, but in order to elucidate aspects that, without or apart from the conceptually barbaric substitution, would not be seen. Because the substitution does not erase or replace the thing seeking description, it can therefore be termed an “analogy,” for there is a transfer of meaning that purports to disclose meaning in which the thing to be described is elucidated apart from direct or corresponding description. Metaphor makes a claim to make manifest the existing act of its object, wholly distinct from (but not without) the letter of the literal “sense.” Metaphor is the way past the question of existence; metaphor arises from the affirmation of existence as an irreducibly meaningful act. Metaphor as method is, in its act of transference, shining the light of the better known onto the realm of the lesser known (as opposed to the grounding of all possibility in the light of the better known, as in the transcendentalism initiated by Scotus and exemplified in Suárez), a returning to by emerging from the affirmation of the inexhaustible intelligibility of existence in its undeconstructible facticity that precedes and exceeds the redounding response of reason. The object of metaphor is beyond conceiving in an irreducible freedom from the reductions of conceptual stricture. Metaphor is, as it were, reason’s “amen” to the irreducible freedom of things in their act of existing—to existence as such beyond the calculations of reason in its self-founding principle: metaphor lets the alterity of things shine in the mystery of their unknown commonality exposed in metaphor. Hence the “analogy” of substitution that marks metaphor’s “description” is not a reduction of the other to the same; it is the affirmation of the other (the unknown) by the peculiar substitution of the same (the better known), which “impossibly” joins them together and holds itself over the gap between existence and reason through the mediate exposure of unappearable being. The wildness or strangeness of metaphor makes present the irreducible difference of the unknown precisely in the transference of meaning, which does not rest as long as the metaphor is “alive.” When metaphors “die” the
difference is in danger of being reduced, for only metaphor can lay bare the distance by virtue of its analogical substitution. Metaphors say only what they say; in saying that, alone, they manifest incomprehensibly more than any “originary donation” that corresponds to simple, literal description of the phenomenal field, based on concepts. Metaphor gives the distance of sight by its affirmation of existence and by refusing the reductions of reason’s self-affirming certitudes. In this way, metaphor gives all the more to thought, enacting, as the naming of the event of intelligibility, the impossible transfer between existence and reason. That which is impossible for the concept is actual in the image, which, as metaphorical transfer, always remains inadequate to that which is. Its inadequacy determines its very metaphorical character: the king is not a roaring lion, but the roaring lion tells us infinitely more about the ideal character of kingship than any comparable concept. And the metaphorical character itself claims to tell us something about the meaning of things, however indirectly (and therefore rightly).

Phenomenology is constructive, therefore, inasmuch as it is descriptive. Reality, as Alexander Schnell has recently suggested, has an “imaginary character.” By this, however, one ought not to consider that reality is unreal, a dream, or in itself merely a construction posited by the transcendental subject understood as absolute. Rather, this “constructive phenomenology” is already found in Husserl inasmuch as constitution is a constructive act, for which “objectivity” includes the subject’s contribution to the being of the phenomenon, viz., the conceptual meaning-intention that the intuition “fills.” Husserl turns to the “transcendental subject” outside of the world, an anonymous observer who can see the whole phenomenon and ground the event of the appearing. For Husserl, descriptive analysis must move to phenomenological construction in order to ascertain the transcendental conditions of the phenomena. Paradoxically, it receives these conditions while simultaneously, or rather, as constructing them, for it constructs in response to only that which the

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21 Alexander Schnell, “Speculative Foundations of Phenomenology,” (tr.) Mary Beth Mader, Continental Philosophy Review, vol. 45, no. 3 (2012): 461–69, here 478; original emphasis. One need not follow Schnell’s quasi-recovery of Fichte’s subjective spontaneity in order to acknowledge this insight, and even carry it forward outside of a transcendental idealism as the metaphoricity of being would allow us to do.
phenomena give. In Husserl’s case, what is constructed is the structure of transcendental subjectivity in its absolute correlation with the world, through a foundational image. We see this clearly in Husserl’s lectures from 1905, the *Phenomenology of the Inner Consciousness of Time*, §36 (“The Time- Constituting Flow as Absolute Subjectivity”): “The flow is something we speak of *in conformity with what is constituted*, but it is not ‘something in objective time’ [i.e., it is not constituted in time, but time-constituting]. It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be designated *metaphorically* as ‘flow’; of something that originates in a point of actuality, in a primal source-point, ‘the now’, and so on. In the actuality- experience we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation. For all of this, we lack names.”

It is indeed remarkable that temporality, which is the foundational element of Husserl’s entire phenomenology as the unifying factor of consciousness, is self-avowedly only approached through metaphor. Here the single “originary intuition of time itself” in its threefold modality, is grasped through metaphorical construction. For if the originary “flow” or “flux” of time is the self-constituting element of subjectivity, then the being of subjectivity is time, and is, more radically, coincident with its own “metaphoricity.”

According to Husserl, this metaphorical construction of the absolute is necessary, which, as a construction, is the manifestation of these very transcendental structures themselves. These structures disclose themselves mediatively, but precisely thereby truly disclose themselves in their absolute character. To be fully descriptive, in other words, one must be wholly constructive. This constructive-receptivity of the absolute is, as Schnell observes, a fresh expression of the antinomic character of reason itself. Thus, for Husserl, the “definitive” if also highly paradoxical “truth” of the world, as “idea,” means both that it cannot be the object of an adequate perception, since it is the horizon that does not appear, but only makes possible appearances; at the same time, however, this truth is never an arbitrary positing. It is, Husserl says,

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23 Do we have here in the concept of “metaphoricity” used to describe Husserl’s gesture a powerful but implicit recall and deepening of Brentano’s theory of time as a sort of passage from perception to imagination in the “proteraesthesis” of memory? See, for example, the entries on “Time,” and “Time Consciousness” in Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2012), 320–26, esp. 321. For Brentano, see *Philosophical Investigations of Space, Time and the Continuum*, (tr.) Barry Smith (London: Croom Helm, 1998).
“a motivated ideal” as opposed to an “arbitrary” one, and arises “within the figure [Gestalt] of the universal flow of experience and—as long as this figure is given” is an ideal that is absolutely necessary. Further, it is a “pole that must be intuited” to which even “all the relativities of empirical truth relate in a valid way.”\textsuperscript{24} For Husserl, already, the concrete flow of experience in its totality is a figure through which the world as transcendental ideal is simultaneously posited and intuited.

In this context, there does not seem to be a clear distinction any longer between intuition and intention. It would seem that intentionality is the act of “figuring” reality that composes lived experience. If this is the case, then the universal category of “phenomenality” is only a way of expressing the problem of the temporality of intentional consciousness in its primal “flux.” The discernment and “making” of founding images of experience are one and the same event. One cannot get “behind” them. If intentionality is intuition in its subjective dimension, then intuition is intention in its objective dimension; they together make up the metaphorical interlacement of being that cannot be unknotted. We only tangle the knot more densely and arrive at more foundational images. Hence Schnell provides the following dictum that serves as a sort of riposte to Brassier’s critique precisely by affirming it all the more radically:

The more one descends into the originally constitutive spheres of phenomena, the more the concept of phenomenon risks losing its simply “intuited” character.... [I]n this “[originary] phenomenon” [what was called the “arch-phenomenon” above], the ultimate principle of legitimation properly becomes a “phenomenon” that is at the same time the principle of phenomenalization.\textsuperscript{25}

If it is the case that the truth is—to make reference to Hilary of Poitiers classic definition—“the manifestation and declaration of existence” (\textit{verum est manifestativum et declarativum esse}), then metaphor, as the highest linguistic act of affirming the irreducible strangeness of a thing’s integrity in existence, that is, as the height of the freedom of the thing to be itself (individuation was for this line of thought considered the highest mode of existence, so much so that for Aquinas in particular \textit{aliquid} [something] was a transcendental


\textsuperscript{25} Schnell, “Speculative Foundations,” 478.
category of being: *omne ens est aliquid* [every being is something)] is
the height of truth's act of manifesting and declaring existence (as such)—not only of the thing’s local existence, the exist-ing of the
existent, but the existing itself, the truth-fulness of truth, the event of
intelligibility, *esse*. 26

Metaphor, then, rests on and expresses the philosophical affirma-
tion par excellence—again, of Hilary Poitiers—*non sermoni res sed
rei est sermo subiectus* (“the things is not subordinated to speech, but
speech to the thing”): the thing gives rise to speech; speech is a
witness, an attestation; speech comes from the thing as a path of
return to it. 27 On this view, metaphor can become more than mere
ornamentation—descriptive of the event of existence in its absolute
intelligibility by means of its incarnate transfer of the act of existence
into the density of images by which reason can approach it. Metaph-
orph retains the subordination of speech to thing precisely by virtue
of its meta-phorical activity in the transference of meaning.

Husserl himself in the first of the *Logical Investigations* made a
similar statement to Hilary, one no less programmatic:

> [W]e can absolutely not rest content with “mere words,” *i.e.* with
a merely symbolic understanding of words, such as we first have
when we reflect on the sense of the laws for “concepts,” “judgment,” “truths” etc. (together with their manifold specifications)
which are set up in pure logic. Meanings inspired only by remote,

26 St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 1, a. 1, quoting St. Hilary Poitiers. See also
Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, (tr.) Daniel O.
Heidegger, in a seemingly willful misreading of Aquinas (in order to fit him into
the “Scholastic ontology” for which the determinations of being a priori deter-
mine God’s being), reads this the third aspect of truth in Aquinas as “keeping an
entity in the clear”... On *aliquid* as a transcendental, along with *verum, bonum,*
etc., see Philipp W. Rosemann, *Omne ens es aliquid: introduction à la lecture du
’système’ philosophique de saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Louvain: Peeters, 1996).

27 St. Hilary Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, IV, xiv: “*Intelligentia enim verborum ex causis
es adsumenda dicendi, qui non sermoni res sed rei est sermo subiectus* [Therefore
the understanding of spoken things is to be assumed from the things that give
rise *(ex causis)* to speech, because a thing is not subordinated to speech but
speech to the thing].” This statement of Hilary was enshrined at the heart of
Western thought by virtue of the programmatic reference made in the first book
of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. See Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, I, 5, 1. See also
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia–IIae q. 96 a. 6 *sed contra.*
confused, inauthentic intuitions—if by any intuitions at all—are not enough: we must go back to the “things themselves.”

How these “things themselves” are understood (and differently, perhaps, at various points in Husserl’s thought) matters little here. Rather, what matters is the priority of “the things” to speech and the question of the fidelity of speech to this priority. Here Husserl differentiates the study of the meaning of the symbols of our language in their “laws” of relation, and argues for a return to the fundamental experience of consciousness itself, the data of concrete intuitions, and specifically the meaning that arises there which we can *describe* through words. The things themselves “give rise to speech” (*ex causis dicendi*) as Hilary of Poitiers said, and this is the condition for which Husserl’s specific concern can come to light, *viz.*, with things’ own arising to which speech attests. But if the *question* of existence is bracketed, it is still necessarily presupposed by the irreducible act of existence that appearances irreducibly are in themselves as given, in their givenness, and, as bracketed, *remains* for thought, at the root of thought, the origin veiled from the beginning at the commencement of phenomenology (in the *epochê*) that is a repetition and renewed instantiation of the self-affirmation of reason (which can never exceed itself) at the heart of “metaphysics” (as denial). Metaphor, the passage of the image between existence (before which conceptual determinations fall silent) and reason’s returning response, exceeds reason, and gives reason the intelligibility of the things themselves in the primary mode of metaphor.

From this broad vantage point, we may remind ourselves of what we have already seen, *viz.*, that the way and meaning of phenomenology has always been a live question for itself. Even its perpetual developments in Husserl demonstrate that phenomenology, despite its rigor as a method for a singular purpose—but also precisely because of it—is a theory lived in practice. As such, it is always changing, taking unexpected turns, led on *according to the understanding of this singular purpose* by any particular practitioner—that singular purpose contained in the arch-metaphor at the root of a thought that grounds any thought’s “system.” Yet, for all its diversity,

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29 Hence Heidegger’s definition of the phenomenon of being in §7 of *Being and Time*: the “showing-itself-in-itself,” that which shows itself in itself starting from itself.
phenomenology is perpetually concerned, somewhat despite itself, with the status, the "standing" (stare) or existence of the things that it sees. Bracketing is here the mark of an obsession that allows itself to look everywhere but where it cannot—beyond the constituted object, beyond the eidos, beyond the world, the transcendental ego and the self-appointed conditions of the logos of the world. The "how" of things therefore is always and ever shall be still indirectly the ultimate condition of the "what" of these very things: existence, in the mode of essence, precedes essence, brings itself into relation with essence, forms the conditions of essence if you like.\footnote{Following, again, Levinas's neologism here, in order to distinguish the verbal character of a being from essence understood as "quiddity."}

What we should see is that [metaphysics as] the affirmation of existence is implied by the very brackets placed around the question of existence: whatever appears exists in appearing; appearing is one with the act of existence—at least insofar as it manifest and declares the hidden act of being. To bracket existence as a question only sets aside our conceptual relation to being. It reduces being to concept. Metaphor shows that existence precedes and founds the intelligibility of appearing in the appearance; it is the showing and manifesting of the act of existing beyond all concept in the appearing, sheltered in the intelligible density of the image that is not opposed to concepts but is rather their origin. Intelligibility is conditioned in the act of existing as such. Indifference to existence: not to be considered merely as the bracketing of the question of existence in order to see more clearly (neutrally) the appearing of the phenomenon. This would only remain on the surface of the phenomenological method. Rather: such an indifference to existence that motivates the epoché is an indifference for the sake of an affirmation of the compelling "nature" of the phenomenon as index of its "reality." The event—act—of being is no longer merely considered as the basic ontological category that fulfills the requirement of being fully transparent to its concept that thereby founds the self-surety of reason in its two most fundamental modes (first, in non-contradiction as the rule of what is considered as what can be allowed by reason, and therefore second, founding rationality as the rule of possibility, the principle of sufficient reason), but as that which founds and gives the horizon of its own intelligibility, giving the self-perception of reason from beyond reason precisely as the meta-ontological and grounding the is of what is.

In its transferative act, metaphor catches the elusive character of intelligibility: the "indirect" character of metaphor is the direct
quality of what is: metaphor is the letter of reality. To manifest (manifestativum) and declare (declarativum) the event of existing (esse)—truth (verum) is the fundamental task of “description”: to go farther with the things, the things themselves. Metaphor bears forth together the metaphysics (as affirmation) and description in one event, bearing across the event of manifestation by means of the declaration of the witness to the act of existence that things themselves manifest and declare—and here lies a description of the task of phenomenology. To elucidate this task would require nothing less than a radicalization of phenomenology from within, and even a transition from that model governed by Evidenz (and the images of givenness) to the proposal of a new model, which in no way encroaches upon the full scope of the phenomenonality of givenness (but rather grounds it) and which can only be broached. This would be a model governed by Existenz (and the first arising image(s) in the flesh), the willingness to see the being of existence, not in terms of the abstract concept of “being,” but through the metaphorical transposition of the flesh and its sense—the pre-conceptual “event of the manifestation and declaration of existence,” out of which even phenomenological givenness arises, as an event that partakes of that unnameable existence which precedes it, but which metaphorical truth manifests and declares.31

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31 This work will be accomplished, if only provisionally, in the companion to the present essay, “First Sketch of the Phenomenological Passage from Evidenz to Existenz,” in progress.