

‘The only secret is that there is no secret’: Sense and Nonsense in Deleuze

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This article examines the philosophy of ‘sense’ developed in the 1950s and 1960s by two French philosophers, Jean Hyppolite and Gilles Deleuze, and seeks to show that the model of sense they develop seeks to oppose phenomenological and hermeneutical conceptions of meaning, which view sense as pointing to a deeper underlying reality. It will show that for Hyppolite and Deleuze, on the contrary, sense is its own reality, pointing to nothing deeper or outside it. On this basis, it argues that if for Hyppolite, ‘the only secret is that there is no secret’, meaning that there is nothing ‘behind’ sense, then for Deleuze, the only secret is that ‘nonsense’ is the underlying basis *of* sense, and is constantly co-present with it. This framework is then used to explore a Deleuzian post/structuralist theory of the text, in which a text’s ‘secret’ or ultimate signified is nothing else than the production of sense within the text itself, which must be considered as an *excess* of sense. This excess of sense is nonsensical only to the extent that it resists what Deleuze calls ‘good’ and ‘common sense’, and is not simply opposed to sense, being as it is the very basis of sense.¹

Keywords: sense, nonsense, structuralism, secret, Deleuze, Heidegger.



Much of the Anglophone reception of Gilles Deleuze treats his project as alien to Martin Heidegger’s and as espousing either a brand of realist vitalism, or, increasingly, a brand of post-Kantian critique. Both of these readings of Deleuze fail to capture what is at stake in his philosophical project, which is above all, as Knox Peden has recently shown, the development of a post-Heideggerian ontology aimed against phenomenology.² At least in regards to Deleuze’s 1960s writings, we must understand his ontology in terms of its being channelled

¹ This article was first presented as a paper presented at the conference *The Secret in Contemporary Theory, Society, and Culture* held at the University of Kent on 30–31 May, 2014.

² See Peden 2014. Peden argues in the final two chapters of his book that Deleuze’s project functions as a splicing of a particularly French rationalist reading of Spinoza together with phenomenology and particularly that of Heidegger. If other post-war rationalists of Deleuze’s generation, also known, in part, as ‘structuralists’, sought in Spinoza a way out of what they saw as the humanistic cul-de-sac of the then predominant in France phenomenological movement, Peden shows that Deleuze’s great coup was to feed Spinozist rationalism back into a now fully anti-humanistic and renewed (‘epi-’ — see below) phenomenology.

through and articulated within the transcendental, but this transcendental is decidedly not that of a finite subject, as some readers of Deleuze still argue.³ Even Heidegger, who was a self-professed anti-humanist, still speaks in terms of man and man's ontic *being*, even if he considers the human being or human animal as specifically defined by its relation or opening onto ontological *Being*.⁴ Deleuze's post-Heideggerianism thus entails the purging of any trace of subjectivism or humanism from the transcendental, even if he seeks to locate ontological Being there.

If Deleuze and others from his generation cannot be understood separately from the post-war French reception of Heidegger, this reception is nonetheless one aimed at marrying Heidegger and logico-linguistic formalisms. The advantage of this union is that the advances made by Heideggerian ontology, in its rejection of what it calls 'onto-theology' and its re-awakening of the question of Being, can be inherited, while jettisoning the phenomenological subject.⁵ Heidegger's critique of the classical Husserlian conception of intentionality entails the re-thinking of intentionality in terms of Being's own self-disclosure within finite acts of questioning. But what if we were to replace hermeneutical *interpretation*, as the recovery of a text's true sense waiting to be revealed, with logical structure and the *production* of meaning as surface-effect of this very structure? This structuralist re-working of Heidegger arguably characterises much of 1960s post-structuralism, but I will mainly limit myself in this article to Deleuze, after first turning to Jean Hyppolite.

Hyppolite was possibly the first post-war French philosopher to attempt to marry Heidegger and logico-linguistic formalism, and his 1952 text *Logic and Existence* had a galvanising influence on post-structuralism (Hyppolite 1997). In this text, Hyppolite tries to use Hegel *against* phenomenology, while also *productively* pitting Heidegger against Hegel, by foregrounding Hegel's logic and moreover the *difference* between his phenomenology, as found in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and his logic, as found in his *Science of Logic*. In doing so, he

³ In his *Philosophy after Deleuze*, Joe Hughes uses Deleuze's comments on the importance of Kant's discovery of man's 'constitutive finitude' (which we find throughout Deleuze's work, from his 'On Grounding' lectures, as Hughes notes, right through to and past his *Foucault*) to argue for what appears as a kind of hypostatisation of this finitude as a substantialised subject of some kind in Deleuze (Hughes 2012: 28-31). Rather, as we see in the final chapter of Deleuze's *Foucault*, but also in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze only ever speaks of a 'void' when discussing subjectivity. The importance to his thought of a kind of finitude is limited, arguably, to a dimension of the proposition (specifically that of 'manifestation') together with the forms of 'good' and 'common' sense, in *The Logic of Sense*, or to a function of historically-determinate bodily practices, in *Foucault*. See Deleuze (2006: 99 and 106). See also Deleuze (2004a) and my reading of Deleuze's theory of the subject in this text, in Collett, (forthcoming: Chapter 4).

⁴ See for instance Heidegger (2001). See also Heidegger (2010).

⁵ See Heidegger (1978).

offers new conceptual means of treating the theme of ‘sense’ and the ontology corresponding to it, a theme that had taken on renewed importance since Heidegger.

In Heidegger, for instance in the introduction to *Being and Time*, ‘sense’ relates to the ‘question’ of the sense *of* Being [*Sinn des Seins*]. Being for Heidegger is a lost Origin [*Ursprung*] involved in a process of partial self-disclosure necessarily mediated by finite acts of questioning its very sense.⁶ Heidegger considered Being to have been largely forgotten since the time of the Greeks and in need of recovery by modern thought. But what is recovered is never Being itself, however, only its sense, as that which exceeds the merely ontical domain of finite things, yet which cannot be understood separately from this domain. This is because what is revealed of Being depends on how we go about disclosing it, which thereby depends on the ontical domain through which, and in which, it is always disclosed. This ontical domain is always singular and hence will offer only a partial viewpoint onto Being. In the same way in which, when something breaks, we come to understand the previously concealed ways in which that thing extended much further and held together much more than we might have expected, so too is ontological being only recoverable within the world of ontic beings. Being is what exceeds the ontic or worldly, yet the sense of Being is inseparable from the singular collections and relations of things in and through which Being’s sense is disclosed. As such, sense in Heidegger is the sense of a Being that is fundamentally lost, originary, and only ever partly recoverable. In short, sense is the sense of something else, of something lying behind it and as distinct from it.

Now, Hyppolite writes, *contra* Heidegger,⁷ that ‘The only secret [...] is that there is no secret’ (Hyppolite 1997: 90).⁸ This is an explicit allusion to Hegel’s famous quote, from the last page of the first section (‘Consciousness’) of *Phenomenology of Spirit*: ‘It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to see’ (Hegel 1977: 103 §165). This must be contextualised within Hyppolite’s larger interpretative strategy in *Logic and Existence*, which involves emphasising the proposition’s, and more generally language’s, *expressivity* in regards to the Absolute (the dialectical unfolding of Spirit). Spirit cannot unfold or realise itself, overcome contradictory predicates (such as

⁶ Hence his constant appeal to the Greeks. See Deleuze 2004a (83–84) for a critique of the notion that sense derives from a lost (and transcendent) ‘Origin’, which Pierre Montebello argues is an allusion to Heidegger (Montebello 2008: 49–50).

⁷ Hyppolite’s tacit engagement with Heidegger in *Logic and Existence* was already prepared by Heidegger’s own work, when the latter speaks in terms of the ‘secret’ [*Geheimnis*] of Being (for instance in *Being and Time*).

⁸ Deleuze particularly emphasises this quotation and himself also makes this link with Hegel’s musing on the ‘curtain’, in his 1954 review of Hyppolite’s book; see Deleuze 2004b as well as in his later *Foucault*, ‘behind the curtain there is nothing to see’ (2006: 47).

black/white, sensible/intelligible) through dialectical synthesis of opposites, without the proposition, within which such a synthesis of contrary predicates occurs (equally in the mediating interiority of the concept and in the exteriority of being as sense). There is nothing behind the curtain/sense precisely because there is no self-realisation of the Absolute outside this process inside language. Outside sense, the Absolute has no other means by which to fully unfold, so sense is not simply the medium or bearer of the Absolute's self-unfolding, it is also actively involved in expressing it — indeed it is being.

Hence there is nothing behind the curtain, there are not two worlds, the world of phenomenal or ontic beings and the world of ontological or noumenal being. There is only one world, the world of sense. If sense is a curtain, there is nothing to see behind it, meaning that sense is both phenomenal *and* ontological, and furthermore, that there is no ontology, no Being, other than the one expressed as sense.⁹ While in Heidegger, Being is disclosed in thought as sense, the sense of Being, in Hyppolite there is no distinction between sense and Being, and, as such, sense is not the sense *of* a Being conceivable as partly separate from that sense and transcendent in regards to it. Instead, Hyppolite claims that by thinking sense as identical to Being, we reach an absolutely *immanent* position, according to which, Being is nothing other than that which can be propositionally expressed by language.¹⁰ Meaning *is* Being; meaning is not the meaning *of* Being. Or to put it another way, Being is footprints in the sand; Being is not the person who left them. Here we have a prototype of the post-structuralist or post-rationalist, if we want to call it that, attempt in post-war French thought to re-conceive Heideggerian ontology and intentionality in terms of formal logico-linguistic principles.

Turning now to Deleuze, we find the same rejection of Heidegger and of his conception of Being as that which is hidden, lost, or concealed, and must be revealed by means of interpretation. In *The Logic of Sense*, a text from 1969, sense is again seen as Being as such, as necessarily expressed by language.¹¹ More specifically, sense is expressed by what Deleuze calls the 'fourth dimension' of the proposition, which is the sum total or differential by-product of the inter-relation of the proposition's other three dimensions, those of designation, signification, and manifestation.¹² Language signifies by means of universal or general

⁹ In this way, being becomes, in Deleuzian parlance, a *fold* or pleat: being *is* the curtain, as the very difference between the inside and the outside, between words and things, the noumenon and the phenomenon, being and beings, and so on.

¹⁰ 'Immanence is complete' (Hyppolite 1997: 230).

¹¹ This text in turn draws some of its central claims from the Hyppolite review, in which we read 'philosophy [...] can only be ontology and an ontology of sense' (1997: 18).

¹² See Deleuze 2004a: 16–28.

concepts, it designates external spatio-temporal states of affairs using nouns or substantives, and it manifests a self which is constituted by the beliefs and desires implied by what he or she says. But expression, the fourth dimension, can only produce sense thanks to the mutual interdependence of the other three dimensions.¹³ Furthermore, since sense is thoroughly ontological for Deleuze, and indeed in this text is synonymous with Being as such, sense for Deleuze is nothing else than the objective ontological corollary of the logically consistent usage of the proposition's three primary dimensions. In short, using language to say things about the world produces that world, which is not only phenomenal, i.e. accessible to the senses, but also ontological, i.e. it is, or has, Being in itself.

Here Deleuze is advancing a realism of the transcendental aimed against any form of idealism, idealism being any position which sees the world as existing for a subject but not in itself, i.e. idealists consider the world to not exist independently of the subject perceiving it.¹⁴ Deleuze's position is different insofar as we do not need a subject in order to express ontological sense, i.e. paradoxically; the perceived world exists in itself and does not depend on a subject. There is a being of perception which exists in itself, independently of a subject, who appears only later as an attempt to organise these perceptions according to the parameters of that secondary process convention enjoins us to call a Self or person.¹⁵ Although we do not need a subject to express sense, for Deleuze, we nonetheless do need language, the structure and consistency of which can be understood and analysed using tools taken from disciplines such as logic, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, and without having to rely on any deep, substantial notion of subjectivity or selfhood to account for its workings.

¹³ Deleuze's original French term for that which is expressed is '*l'exprimé*', which he explicitly distinguishes from Husserl's '*l'expression*'. While Deleuze is partly dialoguing with Husserl throughout *The Logic of Sense*, this explicit distancing can largely be put down to Deleuze's continued use of the ontological problematic of expression first developed in his 1968 monograph *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Deleuze 1992), originally titled *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. Here he establishes a tri-partition between 'that which expresses itself', 'the expression', and 'the expressed', namely 'sense' (1992: 335). In a complex manner, and partly involving a dialogue with the history of propositional logic, Deleuze's notion of 'the expressed' (qua sense) is to be understood in terms of his lifelong attempt at articulating a notion of incorporeal monism (later called the 'plane of immanence' in Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* (1994)); conceived as the paradoxical bypassing, and not sublation, of an irreducible yet provisional dualism of powers, (namely, thinking/being, but also Being/beings, intelligible/sensible, phenomenon/noumenon, etc.).

¹⁴ In its most extreme form, such as the thought of Bishop Berkeley, this leads to solipsism. However, in Kant's transcendental idealism, inaugurated by his first *Critique*, the world as it is perceived is conceptualised by him as knowable qua (purely epistemological) phenomenon, but that is not to say that there is not an ontological reality behind it. Rather, his first critique is aimed at dispelling the pretensions of metaphysicians who believe they can know this ontological reality independently of direct experience of it (this he terms the 'noumenon').

¹⁵ Montebello (2008: 213–42) has gone the furthest towards an ontological interpretation of perception in Deleuze's work.

Sense, which is both meaningful and ontological — indeed it is Being as such for Deleuze — is nothing else than what propositions produce, and propositions must be understood as functioning according to a non-representational theory of language.¹⁶ If there is nothing behind the curtain, then language does not produce sense as that which is accurately representative of either the world of physical things or the world of perfect, eternal, and ideal forms. Instead, sense produces the world, the world being nothing other than the sense language produces.

The structuralist notion of production replaces hermeneutical interpretation, because interpreting a text is not a way of recovering something else which leaves its mark on that text, marks which need to be deciphered so as to reconstitute what it was that left these marks. Rather, the ultimate reality of which a text speaks is immanent or fully present within the text, it is nothing less than the meaning the text produces, one that cannot be exhausted since a text is not something bound.

I would now like to add a further feature to this picture being drawn. Deleuze differs from Hyppolite in that *there is*, however, something else other than sense, namely *nonsense*.¹⁷ It is not enough to say that sense is the ultimate reality, because sense for Deleuze is co-present with nonsense, which is arguably the secret that sense tries to conceal. The secret therefore is not so much that there is no secret, but rather that sense is co-present with nonsense. Sense, in the form of what Deleuze calls ‘good’ and ‘common sense’, namely *doxa* or opinion, tries to conceal its inherent nonsense, which is inherently *para*-doxical, on the fringes of or beside *doxa*. This is because for Deleuze paradox is the affirmation of contradictory predicates, such as smaller and larger, hotter and cooler and so on.¹⁸ Deleuze thereby replaces Hyppolite’s logic of sense, as determined by the synthesis of conceptual opposites, with his own logic of sense, whereby what the proposition expresses is actually, at root, a co-presence of sense and nonsense, in which contradictory predicates are given free reign and allowed a foundational role within the overall definition of sense. Contradiction is affirmed rather than negated, in Deleuze’s logic.

For Deleuze, *contra* Hyppolite, this is how sense initially subsists, and what we usually think of as sense is actually sense as constrained by the forms of good and common sense. Good sense requires that sense have only a *single direction*, i.e. it affirms a single predicate, rather than two opposed ones (e.g. ‘larger’ and not ‘smaller’, and vice versa). Common sense makes

¹⁶ This axiom derives from the work on language undertaken, in parallel, by the tradition of analytic philosophy, from Frege onwards, and the tradition of structuralism, from Saussure onwards. On this see particularly Livingston (2011).

¹⁷ Deleuze develops his theory of nonsense throughout *The Logic of Sense*, particularly in pp. 78–94.

¹⁸ Drawing on the work of Lewis Carroll, Deleuze writes ‘When I say “Alice becomes larger”, I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token, however, she becomes smaller than she is now’ (2004a: 3).

it such that this predicate can be recognised by a synthetic and unified Self, who collects together such predicates in order to build a consistent and unified picture of reality, yet one which I have stated is a fabrication since the Self is merely a convention rather than something with ontological weight.¹⁹ In its pure form, sense is closer to nonsense or paradox. Hence, the secret of sense is that sense is nonsensical; what this means is not only that the sense of a text is nothing other than the meanings it can produce as long as we subscribe to fixed laws of language and of the proposition. The sense of a text is also, at a deeper level, the nonsense of the paradoxes a text produces, its excess of meaning, its ability to affirm contradictory predicates which, contra Hegel, do not cancel one another out. This excess of sense is the bedrock underlying all signification and meaning, and it is an excess inherent to any text or collection of signifiers.

We find this excess in such works as Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* and *Le Voyeur*, (Robbe-Grillet 2012; 2013) which Deleuze speaks of positively in a number of his writings.²⁰ We see in these texts by Robbe-Grillet how the proliferation of viewpoints on a scene fragments that scene so that it loses all self-identity. The text produces an excess of sense and affirms contradictory perspectives, and this excess of sense is the precondition for any sense of the text to be made. While *Le Voyeur*, for instance, appears at first sight as a kind of detective novel centring on a murder, this mystery, which is never fully revealed to the reader, is not the text's forever hidden meaning. Rather, the nonsense the text produces, as we circulate around the never to be revealed mystery and in doing so multiply its senses, is its immanent truth and underlying meaning. Nonsense, as the secret of sense, is hence laid bare in Robbe-Grillet's work, and it is the immanence or immediacy of this revelation that frustrates any reader who resists taking this revelation at face value.

Furthermore, Robbe-Grillet's methodology, his formal descriptions of scenes, are intrinsic to the text's ability to produce its nonsense or excess of sense, since the text's production of nonsense can be said to rely on a rigorous formalism.²¹ As Paul Livingston has recently shown,

¹⁹ On good and common sense, see Deleuze 2004a (86–94).

²⁰ See Deleuze 2004a (47–48, 14, n.7); Deleuze discusses Robbe-Grillet throughout *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, (Deleuze 2009).

²¹ Deleuze notes in particular how Robbe-Grillet's at times geometrical, and usually detached and analytical descriptions of the typically visible minutiae of scenes and settings — a woman brushing her hair, the layout of a room, etc. — and especially the introduction of small anomalies and changes when such details are repeated in later retellings of the same material, prevent designation from taking on an overriding function within language, as we find for instance in most formal logic. For example, in *La Jalousie* a husband watches his wife (A...) interacting with a neighbour (Franck), obsessing over the perceived and/or misperceived details of their interactions, principally as visually witnessed by the husband. The drama circles around the visual field and the surface of things and encounters, never probing into a psychological depth of the characters. For instance, the presence of the largely absent narrator (the husband) is manifested in such visual clues as the number of plates laid

the history of twentieth century formalism, from analytic philosophy, with the exception of Wittgenstein, to the development of set theory, has consisted in an attempt to do away with and thereby conceal language's foundational paradoxes, as first discovered by Russell in the early 1900s (Livingston 2011). For Deleuze, writers such as Robbe-Grillet can provide us with an alternative logic of formal descriptions, one which does not attempt to conceal the paradoxes inherent to the linguistic formalisation of the world, as caused by sense's essential co-presence with nonsense.

As Deleuze writes in *The Logic of Sense*:

In Robbe-Grillet's writing, the series of designations, the more rigorous or rigorously descriptive they become, the more they converge on the expression of indeterminate or overdetermined objects (2004a: 48).

Objects are overdetermined because there is a structural excess of the signifier over the signified, as we are always already within language, within sense, and as such cannot exhaustively account for the totality of the multiple senses any object opens onto without losing touch with that very object. This is why, in *Cinema 2*, Deleuze will write that descriptions in Robbe-Grillet erase concrete objects (2009: 43), since objects are merely propositional attempts to tie sense to reference, and to account for the former in terms of the latter. In other words, the majority of logicians see sense as something objects produce or as in some way secondary to objects; few logicians will speak of sense itself rather than the sense *of* something. Deleuze wishes to reverse this so that we can understand sense as ontologically *prior* to reference, the designation of a concrete object being merely a halting or freezing of the open flow of pure sense. This pure sense is nonsensical since it does not abide by discrete distinctions between objects and does not have fixed perspectives on objects.

Any signifying use of language already presupposes a decision about which senses to disavow or not recognise, because signification requires that the signified at least attempt to totalise a portion of language's signifiers and their associated senses. Writers like Robbe-Grillet merely demonstrate the perverse dream or phantasm of an immanent usage of language and relation to the world, one which reaches the inconsistent totality of Being by not closing off any of sense's overdetermined avenues.²²

out at meal times or the number of chairs visible. Furthermore, the line between actually perceived and paranoid misperception becomes blurred, such that everything hinges on the smallest change of detail (is the wife having an affair or not?), and ultimately the protagonist cannot know for sure (there is an excess of sense, a lack of concrete designation).

²² We can compare this to the perspective of another of the influences on Heidegger, Friedrich Schleiermacher, a founder of hermeneutics, who considers hermeneutics as the art of avoiding *misunderstanding*, which is achieved by means of knowledge of grammatical and psychological laws. But we see precisely the opposite occurring in the work of Deleuze and Robbe-Grillet, amongst others of their generation, for whom understanding a text is

We also see similar themes playing out particularly strongly in the case of Lewis Carroll, another chief inspiration behind Deleuze's logic of sense. Nonsense in Carroll is often but not only associated with *humour*, which Deleuze gives an ontological status as what is perhaps, within language, closest to Being, as this excess of sense produced by a text.²³ But the hidden meaning of Carroll's work must again be seen as nothing else than its manifest nonsense. This comes across particularly clearly in his story *The Hunting of the Snark* (Carroll 2011). The Snark is the subject of the story and also functions as a secret sustaining it, because we want to know what a Snark is.²⁴ Carroll keeps deferring its signification, only referring to it in terms of other, equally perplexing names; the 'Snark' itself compounds the nouns *snake* and *shark*. We discover in the final verse that 'the snark *was* a Boojum', without being told, of course, what a 'Boojum' is (Carroll 2011: 41). But at a deeper level, we see again how Carroll is not hiding the Snark's meaning but revealing it as the nonsense which founds the possibility of sense, the excess of sense which is the disavowed bedrock of all signification.

The Snark is a 'conjunctive' portmanteau word combining shark and snake, a logically impossible denotation.²⁵ Further, it can be hunted with both 'forks' and 'hope', and so is both a denotable body capable of being physically pierced by a fork, and an expressible meaning capable of signifying the concept of hope to the one who pursues it. Yet the Snark is itself neither a denoted object nor a signified concept, and Deleuze claims it is pure sense, i.e. nonsense, namely sense which is incapable of being entirely tied to one or several objects, and hence which fails to ever be signified by fixed concepts.²⁶ But this excess or over determination of meaning is precisely what motivates the hunt for the Snark, the hunt itself being the text's

precisely to *avoid* a fixed signification, as well as the notion of a deep phenomenological subject or psychological ego as the transcendent source or origin of that meaning. We must therefore oppose structuralist *production* to phenomenological *interpretation* (Schleiermacher 1998).

²³ See particularly the remarks on the concluding pages of *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 285–86.

²⁴ Deleuze capitalises the Snark, whereas Carroll does not, because he uses it as the example par excellence of what he terms 'conjunctive esoteric words' (Deleuze 2004a: 56).

²⁵ Although 'Snark' appears to be a portmanteau word (combining shark and snake), Deleuze calls portmanteau words proper 'disjunctive' esoteric words (2004a: 56), it is only one at the level of 'content' not at the level of 'function' (2004a: 54). At the level of content, 'Snark' combines two heterogeneous nouns, shark and snake, but since these both belong to the order of bodies and not to the order of incorporeal expressions (which Deleuze opposes to bodies, as his primary ontological opposition in *The Logic of Sense*), the heterogeneous is conjoined at the level of bodies and not disjointed between bodies and expressions. 'Snark' does not function as one since it can only hold together heterogeneous series by being displaced in relation to them and, as shark and snake, is ultimately bound to the series of denotations or of bodies. On the contrary, 'Jabberwock' – the monster from Carroll's famous poem in *Through the Looking Glass* – both compounds words at the level of content ('jabber' = an animated or voluble discussion, 'wocer' (an Anglo-Saxon term, so Carroll claimed) = offspring or fruit) and functions as a portmanteau word (2004a: 54). It holds together in tension, without trying to resolve this enveloped paradoxical dual-status, denotable bodies (wocer/wocor) and expressible senses (jabber), which Snark can only do by being *displaced over* bodies rather than *suspended between* bodies and language.

²⁶ See Deleuze 2004a (32, 53–54).

meaning, rather than the signification of the word ‘Snark’. This is because the search for the Snark’s signification is itself what produces the story’s nonsense, since it is by hunting it that we are shown that the Snark allows multiple and contradictory perspectives to subsist within the story.²⁷

To finish I will turn to one of Deleuze’s little known writings, entitled ‘How Jarry’s Pataphysics Opened the Way for Phenomenology’ (2004c).²⁸ As a schoolboy, Deleuze once suggested in a philosophy class that Jarry was an unrecognised precursor to Heidegger, which prompted his teacher to send him out of the classroom for such a facetious remark. But this is actually already Deleuze’s ontology in a nutshell. As Deleuze writes, we must not refuse to take Heidegger seriously, but we need to also introduce into his thought some levity and humour. As Deleuze explains, pataphysics is an epi-phenomenology taking the same distance from phenomenology that metaphysics takes from physics and that pataphysics must take from metaphysics. The phenomenon is the object perceived, but the epi-phenomenon is the *sense* of that object, unmoored and floating high above it, like the goatskin which Michel Tournier’s re-imagined Robinson flies as a kite near the end of the novel *Vendredi*.²⁹

Hence, when Deleuze writes that phenomenology is an epi-phenomenology, he is not actually being derogatory, as some secondary literature has suggested.³⁰ Phenomenology, if it is to be of use to philosophy, must be a science of the epi-phenomenon, which in Deleuze’s terminology from *The Logic of Sense* is to be understood as a ‘counter-actualised event’. So, as Deleuze puts it, *Being*, which is this excess of sense, is the epi-phenomenon of all ontic *beings*. As a reversal of Heidegger, Being no longer transcends the beings in which it is disclosed. Rather, Being is now nothing other than the incorporeal cream of pure sense skimmed from particular actualised states of affairs or concrete objects, and it is constituted as the paradoxical sum-total of these contrary perspectives or predicates detached from the states of affairs or ontic beings in which they are initially housed.³¹ So, if Being is the paradoxical unity of the excess

²⁷ Following the basic structuralist principles of language, the word Snark itself signifies nothing in isolation, as is the case for any word within a language, and it is only in combination with other signifiers that its sense is produced. But rather than producing fixed and determinate sense, like most words in a language do when related to others in a particular proposition, the word Snark highlights this differential requirement of language, namely the fact that we can only ever know what a Snark means in relation to the words it combines with in the story, and as such in relation to what will always be more signifiers than one can assign to signifieds. This hunt for meaning, this attempt to snap up all the signifiers in a text using the jaws of the signified, which is what the hunting of the Snark really alludes to, allegorises the production of meaning as such in all texts.

²⁸ An expanded and modified version of the text appears in Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1998), pp. 91–98.

²⁹ See Tournier (1993).

³⁰ See Hughes (2011: 3).

³¹ Deleuze makes this point very clearly in *The Logic of Sense* when he writes that sense ‘wrests Being from beings in order to bring it to all of them at once, and to make it fall upon them for all times’ (2004a: 206).

of meaning within a text, then the text's secret or underlying basis is this paradoxical and fragmented unity it produces in spite of its ineradicable nonsense as excess of sense.

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