

## PHILOSOPHICAL POETICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

### 1. Unanticipatability: Coming Out of Nowhere

The modern term “poetics” is derived etymologically from the ancient Greek term [“poiesis”](#) which, in its oldest sense, indicated “making” of various kinds ... basically any bringing of something into being which had not been before. This would not necessarily implicate the infamous *ex nihilo* of the creationist account, as if making were not always a re-making, yet there is always an element of the “out of nothing” in the new. Out of the chaos comes cosmos by way of the word, both the active, rational word, the *logos*, and the passive, poetic word, with its *pathos* of the poetic. Whatever brings the light. Let there be light. The interest and the fulfillment of poetics is to stand in the light of the text revealing the mystery of itself in the poetic word.

From the perspective of literary analysis, poetics is a way of making sense of the text in the approach to the text through the reading of the text (or the text produced by my reading), which is an allowing of the text to speak. If a poetic reading is anything active at all at this point it is a getting out of the way of the emergent meaning of the text without severing all the threads of sense-making with the text such that the text can speak itself on its own, albeit necessarily through my interpretation of the text. My interpretive words, however, only allow the text to speak when they do not purport to speak for the text itself and are thus spoken from within the ‘subjectivity’ of the text.

Rather than logically analyze and deduce sense from the terms utilized by the reduction to objective categories of sense-making, the poetic attunement to reading listens-in to the deep texture of the text as it is allowed to unfold on its own terms into the construction of my listening or reading without intermediary categories. Logical analysis commands sense to appear knowing it must follow the logical, systematic rules of sense-making, whereas the poetic approach cajoles and invites sense to show itself, hoping it will.

From the outset, the poetic shows itself to be more passive than assertive, logical, analytical, deductive, intellectualist activity of figuring out. The poetic is less

prone to the activation of systematic thinking and so does not move systematically or discursively. Poetic rumination, to borrow Nietzsche's metaphor, moves like a grasshopper, that is, with a certain *unanticipatableness*: now forward, now back, now up, now down, now who-knows-where? If you approach poetic thinking like a child coloring outside the lines in need of reconstruction, this will be like trying to impose the strictures of logical analysis on the free play of poetic consciousness. Not likely to happen.

To follow the course of the poetic interpretation it will be necessary to adopt an attitude that allows the playfulness of the unencumbered word within the poetic 'method'—if it really should be called a "method" at all—to unfold ... an attitude of patience and tolerance, openness and willingness to listen and be changed by the gift brought to you by the word. This is easier said than done in a social/cultural context where it is the productive, logical positivity of the reasonable and not the wayward, wandering leisure of the poetic that is rewarded by the commonweal.

**ABSTRACT:** This reflection uses the idea of a philosophical-poetic orientation to elucidate the polysemous grammars engaged by the phenomenological ruminations of Merleau-Ponty in his linguistic investigations that seek to non-rationally surpass the inadequacy of the principle of identity and non-contradiction for generating authentic knowledge. The central importance of the body as the locus of an overflowing interpenetration with the meaning-production of the poetic utterance as a conjunction of the said/unsaid or speakable/unspeakable reveals the poem to be an organism of words with a life of its own. Thus, philosophical-poetics offers an alternative to analyses based on the metaphysics of presence such as that which haunts Husserl's early phenomenology and is finally only overcome in the later, poetic work of Heidegger, Gadamer's hermeneutics, and is (not surprisingly) reflected in Hatab's approach to articulating a supposedly mystical grammar, which may be found at the heart of the poetic.

