19th March 2026, paper

Notes on the Disfigural

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themes: aesthetics, subjectivity

Cite as: Edip Balkır, "Notes on the Disfigural". Institute for Syntropic Research, 19 March 2026. https://syntropyinstitute.net/notes-on-the-disfigural/

The face is the centre of gravity that pulls the figure together in its brief moment of passing. It is the nodal point of the figure in making. Then there is the body of the torso. It is plain and smooth. Here, lines draw apart, no longer forming a bundle of ink intersecting in knots. The limbs form a balance as they move around the torso, giving it weight. They have their own contingencies. They are made in the image of historical ruins that have provided the frame for decaying bodies, shoulders in collapse. Hands and feet barely exist. Their hold is empty with no palms or tenderness. They are there only for the eye and its compulsions. Genitals, in turn, are redundant. The subject makes no use of miosis in its figuration. It folds and encounters itself. It is made of itself.

From the line to the face, the face emerges out of the scribble. It is not possible to speak of expression before the scribbles of lines. Yet, at the same time, the line is nothing but the ground for the face to mould itself. There is no real distinction between the surface and its inscription. The latter, as thought, engenders itself only as the actuality of its lines. Sense is the etching of the surface, forming moments of corporeal thought, and the surface is sense etching itself.

Each singularity forms a whole; it is entire, desolate. The singular flatness of a face-to-be stratifies with expression. It raises its territories, layers, and contours. It becomes mobile, malleable in its own folds. It forms shadows that drape over itself.

The face does not precede itself. Its expression is nothing but its making. Subordinated to its constitution, the face is its relation to its own becoming. It remains tied to the contingency of the lines that make it, lines that are haphazard and continuous. As they curve, lines pass over, forming knots and definitions. Each crossroad becomes a new feature, an idiosyncrasy that will define the next moment.

Faciality is always an ephemeral condition. In its contingency, the face is fleeting, not from present to future, as a teleological arrow, but from itself to its making in disintegration. The face does not, therefore, form over time. It is simultaneous with its lines. Its flight, therefore, is spatial.

The face is figured in its disintegration, in its self-undoing. This is the nature of figuration. The figure is made in and through its disfiguration. To become is to be disfigured through lines and encounters. No person has been made without their disfiguration.

Figuration is not despite but through distortion. True distortion is not the distortion of a ready-made figure. It is not the subject-become-other. It is not the human turned beast. It is not the distortion of a constituted figure towards animality, losing resemblance to a human self-identity. Distortion is the becoming of the subject. It is the disfiguration of the inhuman towards faciality. In its constitution, the face and the figure that carries it are estranged from their duration and the processes that engender it. Disfiguration, then, as the increasing distancing of the figure from its becoming, is the being of figuration.

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