

Forgetting

by Friedrich A. Kittler

One night—the music was loud—you said as you were leaving; don't forget. I did not forget and told you. But you had forgotten the don't forget. And since then I no longer know what I heard, whether you said don't forget or forget me.

What's the difference. It's all the same—here where I and Me and Not play no role. The rest is words.

The words on the other shore drift along. Sometimes they come upon a memory, arising where the ear is deaf; sometimes upon an act of remembering that wants to appropriate them and in doing so sucks them dry; sometimes it is forgetting itself that carries. When your voice comes like breathing, everything is as it is: incomprehensible, beautiful and ephemeral.

But it ought not be that way on the other shore! In one and the same light of thought the "human being" invents his/her essence, Other and misfortune. Where words were drifting a moment ago, memory and remembering are raising their monument, their command to recall. If the man's name happens to be Nietzsche, it reads like this:

At some point man asked an animal: why do you just look at me and not speak to me about your happiness? And the animal wanted to answer and say: it's because I always promptly forget what I wanted to say— but by then it had already forgotten the answer and was silent and so man was left in astonishment.¹

A tragicomedy in three acts. First act, a reproach that already contains all the misfortune. Instead of allowing another look, the "human being" wants to be spoken to, simply because his/her only response to the look is speaking. He/she introduces the rules of the game of his/her limited economy: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a word for a word.

Second act, which seems to avert the misfortune for the time being: the being that is supposed to answer takes even that far too literally. The requested speech does not take place because it takes place so limitlessly. In forgetting the word forget, utterance and enunciation coincide.² This vertiginous coincidence is truth.

The "human being," however, to resist the vertigo, has language. Or does it have him/her? For there is a third act to the tragicomedy, an act staged by all sorts of new gods *ex machina*. Where there were only two a moment ago, there are now: a near-sighted pair of eyes, a fountain pen, a piece of paper, a printing press, Nietzsche editors, a private library and my typewriter. They join forces against the eventuality that someone might forget his/her forgetting. The "human being" was not just "at some point" in some private or historical past "astonished;" as a good philosopher he/she transforms astonishment into an eternal present and a business as well. The non-recollection of non-recollection is collected in a memory and a book which, to top it off, is about "history."

There is no mention of this third act in the text for the good reason that it is the primal scene of the text itself. There can only be texts when a gap opens up between utterance and statement. The statement, the anecdotal encounter between the "human being" and animal, becomes an utterance of the author Nietzsche. It acquires the force of a definition which posits the "human being" and the "animal" in terms of and in opposition to one another. On the one hand, memory, history, speech—on the other, forgetting, bliss, the look.



The third act is as tautological as it is conclusive. It does not stop writing itself because the power of writing itself is staging it. Only speaking separates the one who speaks from his/her mute counter-part, only writing separates the one who recollects from his/her forgetful opposite. So it is only on paper that the "human being" originates, this being, *per definitionem* distinct from the animal, who then for his/her part continues "at some point" to get people to pose questions to the animals, just so non-comprehension does not die out.

This non-comprehension is called theory. It posits theses about the forgetting of forgetting in order to obscure its own status: theory prescribes what it represents as harmless description. How often could the forgetting of the difference—along with the difference that supposedly separates us from the animals—be forgotten,³ if books like Nietzsche's did not intervene every now and then to remind us of the difference.

II

Discourse analysis, by contrast, means to let the "human being" be. I forget every day whether I forget or remember. But that is not the question. The question is where and how those memory systems function that philosophy ascribed to the "human being." If, according to Foucault, all the "designations which philosophical discourse invented to give knowledge complexes a subjective significance" have and are only an "intention to exclude,"⁴ then the self-ascription of memory likewise circumscribes very simple and unspeculative practices of power. Nietzsche, as long as he was writing philosophy, passed over the "active forgetfulness" that we are in order to exclude it and, having excluded it, to reintroduce it: as an attribute of the Other. Not until his final years, when he had become an archaeologist of power and discourse networks, was Nietzsche able to describe our "bodily forgetfulness" and along with it the techniques that regulate it.⁵ Philosophical astonishment has never challenged its own preconditions: the techniques of questioning, the books and the institutions, which are philosophy too.

This boundary does not indicate a mere oversight but rather a resistance. As long as memory is considered an attribute or even a peculiarity of the "human being," books, mnemo-techniques and memory machines must continue to be taken for granted, that is, veiled. Then these storage devices would appear to be mere or-

gans, instruments, warehouses for a capacity which could exist on its own precisely because it parades as their inventor and user. But even school children who are handed their first book laugh at this fairy tale—if they don't cry over it. They did not invent the book and they have yet to learn how to use it. In the name of the illiterate, this confusion between people and the storage devices they stumble upon must end.

The methodological hypothesis of discourse analysis is as simple as that. It presupposes forgetting and disappearance, disintegration and erosion⁶ precisely where philosophy decreed presence and retaining. Such simplemindedness has its advantages. It is only against the background of disappearance without return that the techniques and institutions which produce or insure a certain permanence can appear in their specificity. Books cease to be taken for granted because they themselves cease to be. Discourse analysis does not treat the interplay of forgetting and remembering as a binary opposition, which would only rewrite the old themes of presence and absence. The very storage devices which regulate the erosion of time and language succumb to that erosion." As with human beings so too with monuments: time will not relinquish its claim."⁷

There is no storage device which could retain once and for all the ongoing drift of words. Precisely for that reason individual storage apparatuses are both functional and describable. They retain certain types of information and not others; they store for measurable periods of time and deliver their data within measurable periods of access; they are constructed under definite circumstances and are replaced by others under definite circumstances. Therefore, if discourse analysis archives archives, it is not to reconstruct the unity and continuity of a history, but quite the contrary: to dissolve the phantasm of world history into many individual storage devices which themselves were forgotten and/or retained.

Discourse analysis is not a philosophy that would posit the archive in place of the "human being," writing in place of his/her voice, the always already receding trace in place of presence. That is to say, it is not a grammatology. Certainly no one has, as precisely as Derrida, deciphered philosophical discourse as a type of text which pretends not to be one but rather the soundless voice of reason itself.⁸ Whether the "love of wisdom" can only whisper wisdom's name, because to write it would be to approach violation of the incest taboo,⁹ or whether only a soundless voice can

produce neophytes without violence—: in any case Derrida’s deconstruction has shown that texts, instead of merely transmitting contents or meanings, take effect by virtue of their emergence or erection. The existence of texts is the event which even grammatology takes as a point of departure. But it is nevertheless to remain within the space of philosophical discourse if one portrays and suppresses the Western metaphysics of presence in terms of another which, already by virtue of its name: *Urschrift* (primordial writing), is transcendental and categorial. If grammatology translates all the systems of notation that in the West have supported and supplanted one another into the hegemony of one metaphysics, it renders every positive analysis impossible. Grammatology wants to ignore the fact that storage devices can be erased and destroyed; it continually attempts to rewrite the story of how the one metaphysics never ceases to cease. It will not allow itself to say anything definite about how specific systems of notation functioned because it fears that it would thereby become a science, that is, an accomplice of the one metaphysics.

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102. Texte marlien écrit par Hélène Smith le 3 octobre 1889.

Discourse analysis practices a “joyful positivism.”¹² It accords not even a relative autonomy to philosophical discourse. It does not deal with the one *Urschrift* which every metaphysics of presence has supposedly forgotten, but rather with the many forgotten techniques which were invented to counteract forgetting. It renounces the pleasures of a commentary which tracks down, at the outermost fringes of texts, the trace of their inscription. Instead it sets to work on the archived texts with the patience and the lack of reading passion that characterizes an archivist.

Archives themselves provide plenty of material to archive. Only imperial myths propagate the belief that sentences are eternal once they have been hewn into stone, once they have become lapidary. No storage device operates in isolation. Archives are hooked up with other archives, directly or via interfaces, and are themselves archived in other archives. Archives require input and output stations (even if these be just sense organs and brains). Archives contain mechanisms that bring about and/or prevent the erasure of their data. The development of electronic computers has merely provided precise terms and circuit diagrams for factors which come into play in all cases of archiving.

I reread *The Order of Discourse* in order to write these pages. But no order and no discourse can protect us from the beautiful accidents and voices that make us forget even what we have reread. And so a little apparatus comes into being. Marks next to quotable sentences (in pencil, so they can be erased again); cross references from one marking to the next; copied passages (the writing hand, as Malte Laurids Brigge and Walter Benjamin knew,¹³ stress more than the reading eye); marginal comments—all these are tools for inscribing a few foolish associations into a corpus of books, storage devices so I will not forget what I wanted to write about forgetting.

In order to keep up with the state of research in philological hermeneutics I go to a reserve library. First I put together a bibliography from the latest bibliographies, then go through the relevant review, find this book recommended, that one panned, look up a highly praised book in the card catalogue—but this time it is for nought: the volume is missing from its place. I imagine the cunning, self-serving reader who got there before me. Probably he/she did not steal the book at all, just placed it elsewhere. So for now the truth about hermeneutics remains somewhere in the shelves, missing.

Thus, according to Lacan, it follows that books belong to the register of the Symbolic.¹⁴ If they were simply of the Real, like stones or bodies, then their position would move with them and they could not be misplaced. Symbolic elements, however, have their position and their existence in networks. The missing book and its position are linked together (even if it's no longer customary to put chains on folios) by other books and archives, which are themselves linked to still others. Every link in the chain derives its function from its delimitation. The card catalogue is a RAM (Random Access Memory), which can record new data (purchased books) and erase obsolete data (stolen or lost books). The bibliography and the review journal are PROM's (Programmable Read Only Memories), which take up less space but on the other hand do not allow for erasures. The call numbers are interfacing switches between two RAM's, the catalogue and the shelf system. And the cunning reader, so as not to forget him/her, is an address selector of the sort that is hooked up to the latest generations of IBM computers. To keep programmers from getting at the data (no longer just harmless books, but corporate earnings or fingerprints), the address selector equipped with a *randomness generator* sends the incoming data to *free positions*, the exact address of which does not appear at any of the many output stations. This is how electronic memories forget the "human being."

It finally follows that there can be no book in the singular, no Bible in the literal sense of the term. By virtue of its thoroughgoing interconnection, the Symbolic excludes the possibility of a book of books and it's God. The beginnings as well as the end of scriptural culture attest to this. What was brought forth from the ruins of Elan, Uruk and Nineveh was not an *Urschrift*: it was archiving cuneiform tablets contained in tablet archives. And what both propelled and impeded the project of a mathematical logic were librarians' jokes of the type: "the catalogue of catalogues that do not contain themselves." Not until the theory of types had subdued the phantasm of super-catalogues and super-books could the project be submerged in electronic circuits and disappear.

The Symbolic, concatenation without subject and superfluity without measure, is the threat to all that is One. The most passionate of monotheists have always recognized this and stated it forthrightly. When, following the conquest of Alexandria, the general Amru inquired of the Calif Omar what should become of the famous library, he received the answer: "if the books are in



HEADS OF MAGI WITH THE MOUTHS MUFFLED.
FROM HYDE, HIST. RELIG. VET. PERS. TAB. IX

agreement with the Koran, the Word of God, then they are superfluous and needn't be saved. And if they aren't, then they're dangerous, so let them burn!"¹⁵

The cunning reader who misplaces a volume in the library and the pious Calif who put the greatest library of Antiquity to flame—both act exactly according to the range of possibilities afforded by the Symbolic. "Le monde symbolique, c'est le monde de la machine".¹⁶ Because they are machines, textual archives can be used/abused within the register of the Symbolic and built/^o destroyed within the register of the Real. The one thing that does not work is to experience them in the Imaginary.

III

But that is precisely what philosophical hermeneutics dreams of. Its program, from the beginning, has been the reconversion of machine programs into spirit, life, speech. Schleiermacher in 1822: "The art of interpretation and the art of translation are the dissolution of language into thought."¹⁷ Dilthey in 1900: "Understanding is the process of recognizing a psychic element in sensately given signs which are the externalization of this element. Such understanding comprehends the whole scope from a child's babbling to *Hamlet* or the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The same human spirit speaks to us through stones, marble, organized musical tones, through gestures, words and writing, through actions, economic orders and constitutions, and it calls for interpretation."¹⁸ Gadamer in 1960: "Everything written is a kind of alienated speech and requires reconversion of the signs into speech and into meaning. Because in the process of writing, meaning has become alienated from itself, this reconversion presents itself as *the* hermeneutic task."¹⁹

In act one, the three kings of philosophical hermeneutics establish domains which escape "the human being" in order to assign him/her the task of recovering them in act two. In the case of Schleiermacher this domain is language as a structure which the "human being" possesses only insofar as he/she is possessed by it.²⁰ Therefore Schleiermacher supplements the traditional grammatical and rhetorical techniques of interpretation with a psychological one. Its task is to relate speech to its author and to show "that it is through the incommunicable practice of the individual that the structure in every speech act is retrieved back into life."²¹ In the case of Dilthey the domain of elusion is history as a confusion of deceitful signs,²² which disclose only to hermeneutic decipherment that an internality free of lie and deception—life understanding and interpreting itself—brings them forth and illuminates them. In the case of Gadamer the domain of elusion is writing as an externality which could tempt the humanities away from "truth" to "method" and for that reason must be reintegrated into the linguistic capability of the "human being" and the "world": three phases of philosophical hermeneutics as three phases of the "anthropological sleep"²³ since 1800.

The anthropological sleep dreams away the machines. They only throw pale shadows onto its dream images: strange theories of memory and remembering emerge. First of all Schleiermacher.

In order to arrive at a definition of writing as the "memory and tradition of language," his *Ethics* first formulates the alert sentence: "No one really requires memory for himself," and then immediately perverts the sentence by substantiating it. Schleiermacher claims there is a "cognition" prior to all discursive orders, a cognition which, as an "originary production," produces spontaneously and arrives again and again at the same result.²⁴ Secondly Dilthey. In order to derive the fundamental category of meaning, a metaphysics of autobiography is developed. Autobiography—described not as a culturally prescribed proof of identity but rather as spontaneous self-interpretation—transforms a "chaos of harmonies and dissonances" (of our sheer and forgetful present) into continuities and unities. "The category of meaning designates the relationship of the parts to the whole of life, a relationship which is grounded in the essence of life. We grasp this interdependence only by means of an act of memory, which affords us an overview of the previous course of our life."²⁵ Third, Gadamer, who seems more careful and who does not have psychological or epistemological theories which reduce storage devices to thought or remembering. In *Truth and Method* he admits that apparatuses and techniques "determine a part of the history of memory," only to argue immediately that such a "pragmatic perspective would be inadequate." In the final analysis, "the phenomenon of memory" is and remains "part of the essence of man's finite-historical Being."²⁶ Certainly, a history of memory (that is, of course, of history itself) which is concerned only with the familiar mnemotechnics would be inadequate, but not because human historicity supports them. The reason is rather that the instructions for using machines are more lax than their blueprints. Above and beyond the mnemotechnics there are constructions for registering and storing, and from these every act of memory must draw its data.

Transcendental philosophers, *Lebens*-philosophers and existential philosophers all tell the same fairy tale, namely that "the human being" stores the storing devices. It remains for us to ask, with Nietzsche, what this assertion says about those who assert it.²⁷ The answer is readily at hand: these various hermeneutics conceal the memory-making machines because they themselves are such machines. Ascribing to us a capacity of reproducible thinking, a memory, a historicity, instead of describing the measures taken to prevent forgetting: this is a means of making us forget the violence of the philosophical hermeneutics themselves.

There is supporting evidence for this. Not just any kind of evidence. The famous hermeneutic circle, the key term within these theories, is itself one of those mnemotechnics which hermeneutics treats with such disdain. The circle, in its simplest formulation, subjects reading to a law according to which the whole makes sense only as the sum of its parts and the parts only in terms of the whole. The relevance of this law to theory formation in philology can justifiably be called into question;²⁸ the consequences of this law for the practice of reading are massive. Schleiermacher drew them quite openly:

Complete knowledge is found everywhere in an apparent circle, in such a way that the particular can be understood only in relation to the general, of which it is a part, and vice versa. And knowledge is scientific only when it is so formed. . . . It follows then . . . , that nothing that is to be interpreted can be understood all at once, but rather with each reading, which enriches our prior knowledge, we are better equipped to gain understanding. Only in the case of the insignificant are we satisfied with what we have understood at once.²⁹

Thus the hermeneutic circle separates reading and understanding as if it were a question of everyday and "scientific" "knowledge." It soars above the many reading practices which have existed and still do exist as if to exclude them. Whoever simply follows a series of letters just once has not yet achieved an understanding, but merely the preconditions of understanding. Only those who retain and repeat the forgetfulness-laden act of reading as best they can are admitted into the secret society of "science." Accordingly, to understand a book means: to have read it at least twice, first in a "cursory reading"³⁰ aimed at the whole, and then in the following readings working from the whole to the parts.

To be sure, books are reusable discourse. But it is up to the discursive regulations in a culture to decide whether reading means taking up one book a hundred times or a hundred books once or twice. Rolf Engelsing has advanced the global but plausible thesis that our culture made the transition from the former to the latter kind of reading around 1800.³¹ Reading "in" became reading "of;" a community which read in and around the Holy Scriptures again and again gave way to a public which consumed, more or less intensely, an indefinite number of ever new books (a literary market). That was when Literature was born as an in-

stitution. Schleiermacher's statement that understanding just once is no understanding at all describes and codifies this transition. It guarantees the products of unprecedented text multiplication (a phenomenon that was just emerging in those days³²) a kind of permanence. The obligation to read everything except the "insignificant" at least twice developed into a new kind of mnemotechnics involving whole books which replaced the old European practice of learning individual passages (*loci*) from the Bible and the classics by heart. These mnemotechnics as Schleiermacher himself indicates, was given the name education (*Bildung*). From then on the reader was tested not to see if he had retained the exact words but rather if he could interpret them. That marks the transition from violence to reason, from mimicry to self-determination. But there is an economic measure behind this, a deployment of power and a good bit of cunning as well.

The economy of the growing book market made a greater economy of memory necessary. People, once simply PROM's who were programmed once and for all through baptism, village schools, and the order of estates, became RAM's. In order to supply storage space for new books, new knowledge, new programs, information had to be made erasable—and according to Nietzsche understanding is the erasure of signifiers.³³ But what if the RAM's were impudent enough to erase all the data? In order to control them a new power structure developed in the schools and universities. We all know what school essay questions and university exams in literature are like. Readers have to be able to attribute to every sentence a position within the whole of the work without falling back on such literal instances as chapter headings or a table of contents.³⁴ By means of the pens they hold in their untiring hands they are themselves supposed to become miniature authors who do not let anything pass without having understood it, and who translate what they have read into their "own conception of it."

When we read, our pens have to be constantly ready at hand, we have to write down key sentences and important and new thoughts either the way they are written or according to our own conception, that is, when we are completely convinced that we have grasped their meaning correctly . . . On second reading we must not let anything pass that we have not thoroughly understood.³⁵

So when I reread *The Order of Discourse* and sorted its "new thoughts," there was somewhere in the background an order of

ALPHABET TAMOUL ou MALABAR.

	<i>Ki.</i>	<i>Ki.</i>	<i>Ki.</i>	<i>Kou.</i>	<i>Ku.</i>	<i>Ké.</i>	<i>Ké.</i>	<i>Ké-kai.</i>	<i>Ké.</i>	<i>Ké.</i>	<i>Kouli.</i>
க	கா	கி	கீ	கு	கூ	கே	கே	கை	கோ	கொ	கூலி
ச	<i>Si.</i>	சா	சி	சீ	சு	சூ	சே	சே	சை	சோ	சூலி
சு	<i>Tsch.</i> <i>sch.</i> <i>sch.</i> <i>sch.</i> <i>sch.</i>	சா	சி	சீ	சு	சூ	சே	சே	சை	சோ	சூலி
ட	<i>Da.</i> <i>d.</i> <i>d.</i>	டா	டி	டீ	டு	டூ	டே	டே	டை	டோ	டூலி
ண	<i>Na.</i> <i>n.</i> <i>n.</i>	ணா	ணி	ணீ	ணு	ணூ	ணே	ணே	ணை	ணோ	ணூலி
த	<i>Da.</i> <i>Da.</i>	தா	தி	தீ	து	தூ	தே	தே	தை	தோ	தூலி
ந	<i>Na.</i>	நா	நி	நீ	நு	நூ	நே	நே	நை	நோ	நூலி
ப	<i>Pa.</i> <i>Pa.</i>	பா	பி	பீ	பு	பூ	பே	பே	பை	போ	பூலி
ம	<i>Ma.</i>	மா	மி	மீ	மு	மூ	மே	மே	மை	மோ	மூலி
ய	<i>Ya.</i> <i>Ya.</i>	யா	யி	யீ	யு	யூ	யே	யே	யை	யோ	யூலி
ர	<i>Ra.</i>	ரா	ரி	ரீ	ரு	ரூ	ரே	ரே	ரை	ரோ	ரூலி
ல	<i>La.</i>	லா	லி	லீ	லு	லூ	லே	லே	லை	லோ	லூலி
வ	<i>Va.</i> <i>Va.</i>	வா	வி	வீ	வு	வூ	வே	வே	வை	வோ	வூலி
ழ	<i>Scha.</i> <i>La.</i> <i>Ki.</i>	ழா	ழி	ழீ	ழு	ழூ	ழே	ழே	ழை	ழோ	ழூலி
ள	<i>La.</i> <i>La.</i>	ளா	ளி	ளீ	ளு	ளூ	ளே	ளே	ளை	ளோ	ளூலி
ழ	<i>Ra.</i> <i>Ra.</i>	ழா	ழி	ழீ	ழு	ழூ	ழே	ழே	ழை	ழோ	ழூலி
஠	<i>Na.</i>	஠ா	஠ி	஠ீ	஠ு	஠ூ	஠ே	஠ே	஠ை	஠ோ	஠ூலி

Voyelles Initiales.

Voici les Voyelles qui se lient avec les Consonnes, ainsi qu'on le voit dans le Syllabaire précédent. Les Tamouls ou Malabares ont dix Voyelles Initiales, 8 brèves & 6 longues, deux Diphtongues et une Lettre finale.

Savoir.	1. அ	2. இ	3. உ	4. ஊ	5. ஋	6. ஌	7. ஍	8. ஞ	9. ட	10. டி	11. டீ	12. டு	13. டூ	14. டே	15. டை	16. டோ	17. டூ	18. டூலி
	19. டி	20. டி	21. டி	22. டி	23. டி	24. டி	25. டி	26. டி	27. டி	28. டி	29. டி	30. டி	31. டி	32. டி	33. டி	34. டி	35. டி	36. டி

Alphabets, Anciens et Modernes.

discourse in power, an order which we still confuse with our "own conception" of things.

As correlate to this technique of reading an unprecedented construct is created: the work. The multiple reading, which earns the honorific title "understanding," requires books which are in fact worthy of the honor—precisely those books which Schleiermacher distinguishes from "insignificant" ones and which he consistently calls works. The oscillation of the reader's focus between near and far, between parts and whole, produces on the page any number of internal references, complexities and mirrorings. These provide books with the predicates of wholeness and inexhaustible wealth. Both predicates—to this day key terms within an aesthetics of the work—are derived from the new technique of reading. The two books about books by J.A. Bergk demonstrate this. Written sometime between Kant and Romantic hermeneutics, they still explicitly set forth imperatives where later descriptions of essences will appear. On the theme of wholeness:

But what does it mean to "understand?" It does not just mean knowing words and their definitions, grasping the purport of figures of speech, of the various periods, it does not mean just knowing but also comprehending the sense and the relation that the thoughts have with one another, discerning cause and effect, combining everything to a unity in consciousness and instilling the lifeless letters and words with spirit and speech. He who understands has an insight into the internal relations, the sense and the purpose of the whole.³⁶

On the theme of inexhaustible richness:

When we read books profound in spirit we receive many thoughts and the more we think about them the less we are capable of comprehending in their entirety all the ideas they contain and awaken in us. A large number of them always escapes us, ever new ones appear and we swim, as it were, in a sea of thoughts.³⁷

IV

Swimming is what matters. The sea on which Bergk's shipwrecked reader drifts and the horizon with which Gadamer surrounds the interpreter have one thing in common: from the sea

one could see neither shore nor land; one can never reach one's own horizon. The reading technique called hermeneutics posits fields of discourse without exit, oceanic media without borders. The only thing left for the "human being" is to experience and increase the inexhaustibility of inexhaustible richness.³⁸ Hermeneutics is like those perfidious programmers who feed computers problems that exceed the machines' capacity to calculate. The computers cannot figure it out and go hay-wire. The only difference is that hermeneutics designates its "halting problem" to be the destiny and fortune of the "human being." Gadamer proclaims the "dignity" of "multiple interpretability," of works because they themselves are interpretations: "The essence of the human being is to entangle him/herself in the interpretation of the ambiguous."³⁹

It is no accident that the key word is "circle." The name itself suggests inescapability. But what it does not indicate is that the hermeneutic circle can still be intensified, raised exponentially to a higher power. It ends by no means with the relationship between individual passages and the work as a whole. That is what Schleiermacher, the interpreter of his own hermeneutic predecessor, disclosed:

Not yet satisfied with the scope of the task as circumscribed, Mr. Ast shows us a method—not to be scorned—of raising that task to a higher power. That is: just as the word relates to the sentence and the sentence to the next higher unit and both of these to the work according to the relation of an individual to a totality or a part to a whole, so too every discourse and every written work is itself an individual instance which can be completely understood only within a still greater whole. But it is easy to see that for two reasons each work is such an individual instance. It is an individual instance within the particular area of literature to which it belongs, forming a whole with other similar works in terms of which it is to be understood linguistically. Each work, however, is also an individual instance insofar as it is an act of its author, forming together with his other acts the whole of his life, and thus it can only be understood in relation to the totality of his acts, which is the second reason, namely the personal.⁴⁰

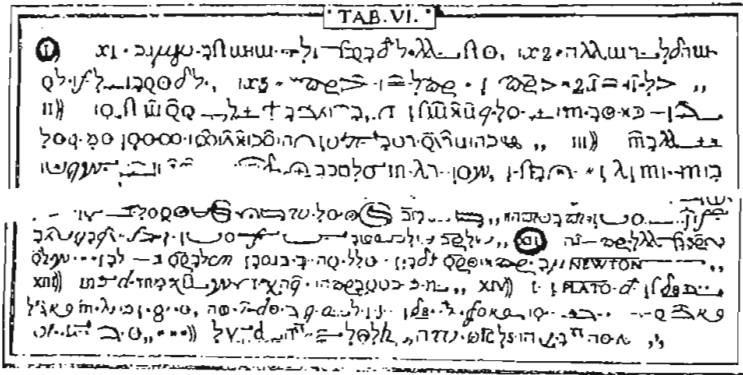
A circle made up of circles can thus be said to "have been raised to

higher power." Not "satisfied" with any delimitation of its task, hermeneutics indicates and makes it imperative to follow two paths that lead beyond the works. First of all, the works have to be inserted into *totalities* (otherwise the insertion would be simple subsumption), and secondly they must be inserted into *several different* totalities (otherwise the insertion would be unambiguous). Because they have their position in two systems, the works never cease to cease. The circle of circles has unleashed literary scholarship as we know it today. Beneath such titles as experience and poetry, man and work, poet and world literature or (in current German) individual and society, the endless task of mediating connections continues, connections which in the first place were posited because of their unrelatability.

It was Schleiermacher who first determined that all linguistic determination derives from "positional value." For that reason, Manfred Frank has dated Saussure's structural linguistic back to him.⁴¹ What gets lost in the process is the difference between a theory of positional values of signifieds and signifiers. The first opens up an endless field of interpretation, the second organizes calculable sets of phonemes and graphemes. The first produces interpreters of a sense that is ungraspable, the second analysts who register a nonsense that can be grasped and counted. The analysis of structures precludes hermeneutics. Therefore it is entirely logical when Frank finally bends the imaginary line from Schleiermacher to structuralism back to the non-structuralist Sartre. It was Sartre who truly took up Schleiermacher's paradoxical task of grasping "the individual universal;" it was Sartre who posed the question of how one can understand exhaustively an author along with his *oeuvre* and his epoch.⁴² After two thousand eight hundred and one pages, the answer is still outstanding—and will remain so forever because blindness has struck the interpreter. The beginning of Western literature came about when a certain man, having gone blind, joined a community of rhapsodes. The encouragement of Mnemosyne, who is the mother of the Muses and the goddess of memory, and the trick with the winged multi-purpose phrases ("rosy fingered dawn" could not be captured in terms of positional values)—all that helped him to recount the lengthy battles and the journeys of the heroes to a group of listeners who had forgotten them and who were allowed to do so. The end of Western literature came about when a certain man sacrificed his sight to the project of understanding and remembering an author. Ever since poets have been allowed/required to write free of rules, ever since the obligation to *Bildung* has allowed them to forget in the middle of writing the beginnings

of their works,⁴³ ever since it is the unconscious which guides their pen, forgetting and remembering have reversed positions. The community of interpreters, as Karl Otto Apel calls us, is the inversion of the community of rhapsodes.

And all that to keep the words from being extinguished, to prevent forgetting, to keep the humanities in the curricula.



43. Kaimar : Langue Philosophique Universelle, 1772.

Derrida has associated texts—literally webs—with spider webs, traps.⁴⁴ That is, like so many etymologies, too semantic. Not the texts but their pragmatics, not the books but the instructions for their use are what set the traps. Elsewhere I have described this in terms of such critical key terms as author and work. This time an example from philosophy. First of all there is a young philosophy teacher, born in the age when philosophy was ceasing to be an interlinear version of the same standard texts.⁴⁵ It becomes possible, then, to replace the standard texts with one's own, for instance with a *Phenomenology of Mind*. One has only to insure somehow that they are not just read once and forgotten and in turn replaced by other books. So the *Phenomenology* is equipped with a preface which demonstrates to the readers that none of the sentences that follow will be of the usual sort. Rather, they are “speculative propositions” whose subject is equivalent to the predicate and whose predicate is equivalent to the subject of the proposition. “Spirit is a bone” means, without being explicit, that the bone, too, is a spirit. The author Hegel has invented as elegant a “reason” as any why his philosophical text “has to be repeatedly read before it can be understood.”⁴⁶

So far, so good. The reader's work has doubled, the “*Geist*” philosophy has become a “bone” for aspiring philosophers to chew on. But, because so cunning a book has remained famous—has remained at all one hundred and thirty years later, yet another introduction is added by an editor who in a thrice transforms an apology into a pedagogical program:

As awkward as it might be to preface the *Phenomenology of Mind* again, when Hegel himself wrote first an introduction and subsequently a preface, it is nevertheless true that those who do not have a comprehensive and precise knowledge of the history of German thought, especially from the Enlightenment on, lack the necessary prerequisites for understanding this work, especially since Hegel himself in introduction and preface moves entirely within the circle of his own philosophizing and presupposes, as of course he must, the intellectual world of German Idealism.⁴⁷

As if Hegel had tossed a stone into the Bergkian sea of reading, all sorts of new circles form around the circle of circular sentences. First the circle which Ast and Schleiermacher drew between work and author,—a circle which in Hegel's case, to be sure, tends to preclude understanding. For what the philosopher wrote as an introduction for his readers is a self-referential, delirious circling and requires itself an introduction into a second circle, the one Ast and Schleiermacher constructed around the work and its literary environment. The sum of the demands made by author and editor is thus an infinite number—the “necessary prerequisites” of a single book extend well beyond all the reading and speaking and writing time that death allows us.

And so it goes when hermeneutics confuses machines and spirits. Even the circle of circles has a positive side in libraries. The two totalities to which every book is attributed arise simply from a method of classification. All the Hegel volumes stand next to one another on the library shelves—this is how the reading requirement *author* comes about. All the philosophers of an epoch stand next to one another—which creates the reading requirement *intellectual history*. The rational justification which philosophical hermeneutics seeks by speculating on the meaning of meaning is in fact a set of empirical effects arising from specific practices of canonization. But books can also be rearranged.

For several years now empirical studies of reception have tried to puzzle out why high school and college students fall silent when they are supposed to interpret. The cause is sought in psychic stress or restricted codes. It would be simpler sometime to investigate those who make others interpret. Then it might become clear that the falling silent is a response to the pragmatic paradoxes and double-binds which for a long time have been linked to this coercion-to-understand.

Fortunately falling silent is not the only response. One can also parody our rites of reading. Jorge Luis Borges, with his librarian's joke, has done precisely that. The "Investigation of the Work of Herbert Quain" attributes to a fictive author of the same name a detective novel called *The God of the Labyrinth*:

The first pages contain a mysterious death, the middle pages a long discussion, the final pages a solution. After the mystery has been explained, a long retrospective section follows which contains the sentence: "Everyone believed that the encounter of the two chess players had been an accident." The sentence makes it clear that the solution is false. The disturbed reader goes through the relevant chapters once again and discovers a *second* solution, which is the correct one. The reader of this unique book is more incisive than the detective.⁴⁸

Finally a book that remains suspenseful at second reading because it presupposed hermeneutic readers from the beginning. But there are (as Borges points out too) other labyrinths, startling in their simplicity. The sense of books dissolves upon rereading not only when they are as unique as *The God of the Labyrinth*. Simple fulfillment of the hermeneutic requirements can bring about the same effect everywhere. Writing a paper . . . seminar on literary criticism . . . from the primary text through the secondary literature and back again—in the end the pages of all the books looked like alphabet salad. The story has never been written down, not even by Borges; I heard it somewhere. But even this very simple labyrinth shows that an excess of hermeneutics can make one immune to it.

V

Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, called understanding one language game among many. That irritates the hermeneuticians,⁴⁹ and with good reason. A theory that places speech into a set of ever intensifying circles attributes to itself what Habermas called *the universality of hermeneutics*.⁵⁰

The universalizing begins at the beginning, with Schleiermacher. Hermeneutics, previously a specialized exegetical technique for a caste of scholars, becomes, when Schleiermacher extends it from books to speech, the structure of communication itself. This step has at once provoked criticism⁵¹ and produced difficulties. On the one hand understanding is supposed to emerge from repeated readings, on the other hand speech is "intended to be heard only once"—in Schleiermacher's days there were no tape recorders. Two things rescue the universal hermeneuticians from this delicate situation: one, a listening "memory," which "has retained the individual parts . . . , and, once the whole is given makes it possible to return to those parts;"⁵² and two, a most peculiar curiosity:

Indeed, I must return to the fact that hermeneutics is not restricted to written productions; even in intimate conversation I catch myself employing hermeneutic operations, for instance when I am not satisfied with the usual degree of understanding and instead endeavor to discover how the transition was made from one thought to another in my friend's mind, or when I figure out what opinions, judgements and aspirations are involved in his expressing himself in one way rather than another as regards a given theme.⁵³

The innocence of speech is gone. No matter how unselfconsciously I speak, my hermeneutic opposite will note recurrences and reiterations that would escape anyone who merely listens and answers. When friend Schleiermacher "catches himself employing hermeneutic operations in intimate conversation," he is really somewhere else; he stores details that he does not communicate and he hears interconnections that I do not communicate. Hermeneutics subverts the discourse for the sake of an in-depth meaning which can then be called my world view or style. In this way hermeneutics posits behind the signs of language a being which, in speaking, animates them, but which cannot express that very fact. The "human being" and his/her "existence" are the

correlates (and not the objects) of this new technique of the ear.

To classical thought, uncertainty as to what a sign might signify, was lack of knowledge of what it represented—to modern thought, uncertainty as to what a sign might signify will characterize any discourse that touches on the interlocutor's existence. Thus Schleiermacher, in his *Lectures on Hermeneutics* (1819), turns the technique of exegesis into the art of understanding.⁵⁴

Schleiermacher's rule or citation—that to understand an author is to understand him better than he does himself—means precisely this. Someone spoke or wrote without “suspecting how the thoughts contained therein would continue to have effect both in him and upon him;” the interpreter must therefore “endeavor to bring many things to consciousness that otherwise would have remained unconscious to him.”⁵⁵ Thus the universalized hermeneutics has always been an in-depth-hermeneutics. It is well known how quickly and brilliantly detectives like C. Auguste Dupin and psychologists like Sigmund Freud put this new technique of the ear into practice. For Dupin, as he reconstructs the fifteen-minute chain of thoughts in the mind of his fellow *flâneur* at the opening of *Murder in the Rue Morgue*, the problem is exactly “to discover how the transition was made from one thought to another in my friend's mind.” And the entire technique of the psychoanalyst—detecting with free-floating attention unconscious, compulsive repetitions that escape the speaker on the couch—transforms the speculative concept of the unconscious into a practicable scientific deployment of power.

Thus it is something of a locker-room joke in the history of theory when Habermas calls of all things on psychoanalysis to oppose the universality claim of hermeneutics. Psychoanalysis is supposed to demonstrate to philosophical hermeneutics, which departs from successful communication within traditional contexts, that pseudonormal communication and merely apparent consensus do occur. And in this way it is supposed to trace systematically distorted communication back to specific forms of domination and conditions of socialization.

Hermeneutics does, in fact, draw the line at certain types of language games. A search committee which had to fill the position of professor of literature was presented along with many others a study which had simply picked out all the finite verbs in a famous

scene in a famous novel and written them down in a series. And lo and behold: what the reader only finds out many chapters later—that the heroine had slept with someone—was there in black and white on paper . . . the paper of the novel, the paper of the study. For that reason, and only for that reason, the committee's vote was unanimous: No. The author should have interpreted, that is to say, should have imitated the contortions of the novelist. But to do that he was either too lazy or too quick. No attempt to reveal a dialectic between silence and speech, experience and poetry, private and public language, id and ego in the work of the novelist—the reader had simultaneously transgressed both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis. He stuck to the words. Anyone on the street can laughingly understand the words, but that, of course, is pseudonormal consensus without autonomous subjects and not the sort of understanding that hermeneutics and psychoanalysis aim for. They prefer that we use our ears as the Bible says: in order not to hear. The pure and simple stating of the truth is supposed to occur elsewhere: in an understanding that understands such straightforward speech as pseudonormal.

Habermas gives the name systematically distorted communication to the literalness of speaking, for which language does not represent a “distinct reality, separate from the denoted objects and the signified states of affairs as well as from private experiences.”⁵⁶ To call it systematically distorted communication and not a daily occurrence is a transparent ploy. It sets interpretive and reflective machinery into motion which, while pretending to destroy a fairy-tale taboo regarding sexualities, socialization practices and acts of violence, establishes an altogether different taboo: you may not not interpret. Discourses which laugh at interpretation are excluded. Hence the (pseudo)normal consensus between Habermas and Gadamer to the effect that “hermeneutics, without doing injury to its own concept, can ignore obvious linguistic disturbances which occur, for example, in the case of psychotics.”⁵⁷ Schleiermacher had already excluded all discourses which someone “utters or writes in a distorted mental state,” which is to say “against his own mind.”⁵⁸ Psychotic speech is hard to relate back to a “human subject” who speaks it. The seven notebooks of a nineteen year-old ended with the sentence: “What he she it writes is all wrong.” Then followed empty pages and institutionalization. Just like Schleiermacher's “conversations about the weather” where one talks just for the sake of talking, schizophrenia marks the hermeneutic “degree zero.” Faced with a language that is empty “repetition,”⁵⁹ even the understanding of language games comes up empty handed.

The identical exclusion—as if to ridicule Habermas—is practiced by psychoanalysis. If in schizophrenia “language shows itself in a naked condition, but at the same time places itself beyond any meaning as if it were an immense despotic and empty system,” then psychoanalysis can “find no access to it: as if psychosis exhibited and presented to us in a gruesome light in uncomfortable proximity that toward which analysis must slowly proceed.”⁶⁰

Artaud, the schizophrenic, on Van Gogh, the schizophrenic: “Le corps sous la peau est une usine surchauffée.” Factories of the body, machines of language,—that is where hermeneutics, along with all forms of universality, fails, not in *de rigueur* exercises in the criticism of ideology. In disbelief and fascination, hungry for interpretations and antagonistic, hermeneutics circumvents the fact that speaking is syllable salad, this “zero degree.” During the years when I spent every day interpreting I used to have a recurring nightmare. I go to the toilet of a hotel which turns out to be cell 13 of an insane asylum. A philosophy professor gone mad has been interned there. His hand writing is all over the paper and I read and read it like a Japanese scroll. At some point the clandestine writer ran out of ink, but he continued: with saliva, with sperm, finally chewing out the borders of the paper with his teeth.

The nightmare is that interpreters have such nightmares. Instead of co-producing in the factories beneath the skin they read bodytraces as books. Their fascination forgets the degree to which it is a reflex reaction to commands. The “human being,” according to Lévi-Strauss, “perceives and distinguishes sounds very poorly, perhaps because of the dictatorial claim that a privileged category of sounds makes on him/her: the sounds of articulate language.”⁶¹ And the scriblings are no exception. It takes training, and sometimes even a little apparatus, in order to read page proofs as they should be read: as signifiers not as signifieds. But nevertheless, the noises and the scriblings do not command understanding; particular discourses issue the order: perceive discourse and not noise, letters and not bodies. The ears and eyes do their work under remote control.

Not to speak of the interpretations . . . Gadamer’s demand that texts be applied to situations derives of course from legal hermeneutics. What that means is revealed by one of the most ridiculous confusions of meaning and force I have ever read. In order to demonstrate that the “principle: a text ought to be better

understood by the interpreter than by the author” is an internal textual principle, Seebohm writes: “For instance, the ‘code civil’ stipulates a judge, who refuses to apply a law because the law is not formulated clearly enough, violates the law. In other words, texts themselves require that the interpreter supplement them and by not doing this he fails to do them justice.”⁶² It is the same confusion as in the case of Lévi-Strauss. No noise, no scribbling, not even a book of laws, can make demands on its own. In reality the matter is much simpler: ignorance of the law (subjective genitive) does not exempt from punishment. To have to explicate the *code civil*—however ambiguous, however high above the heads of the people it might be—or be expelled, *hors la loi*: that is how force guarantees that “texts themselves” continue not to have a sense but are bestowed with one. Neither to state something clearly nor to obscure it, but rather to remain chiaroscuro and interpretable⁶³—has been an instrument of power at least since the Delphi oracle. If the interpretation of the ambiguous statement brings good fortune, then it is the accomplishment of the authoritative dictum; if not, it is the interpreter’s fault. The king, who followed Pythia’s prophecy and set out to cross the Halys, knew all about it.

It is Gadamer’s ambiguous accomplishment to have grounded hermeneutics once again in the power of authorities. His rule that one should attribute to the interpretandum, through an “anticipation of perfection,” an undeniable fullness of meaning characterizes king Kroisos exactly. One cannot do exegesis without believing in the meaning of what is being interpreted, even if it is a laurel-wreathed, intoxicated stammering. Thus, hermeneutics, in spite of its dependencies, never pushes forward to the point where power is sheer stammering, exceeding its own law, a “dark blind and tyrannical instance,” a “wild and obscene figure.”⁶⁴ But hermeneutics does not dream the dream of allaying the powers of discourse in one discourse, to reach verbal consensus about the good life free of constraint. Such jokes—you have guessed it—are told only by Habermas. The *passerpartout* of his Enlightenment is supposed to be made up of metacommunicative questions of the type: “how do you mean that?”⁶⁵ As if interruptions could make power step down, as if they themselves were not tactics of power. On the one hand: because “the clever and dangerous strategy of domination consists in its ability to represent and interpret itself,”⁶⁶ no one would rather speak about the difference between saying and meaning than those who administer the secret memory stores. And on the other hand: even when someone who is not in control of the situation asks, “How do you

Clef

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4	5	6
7	8	9

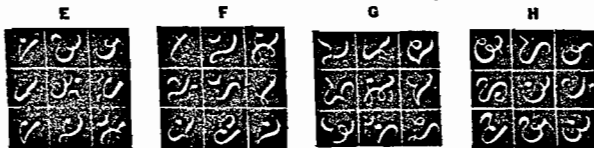
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LA PHOTOGRAPHIE DE LA PAROLE.

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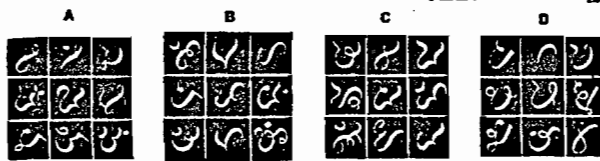
A. 1-muse. 2-somme. 3-mère. 4-que. 5-ret. 6-sac. 7-sec. 8-caisse. 9-cas.
 B. 1-rod. 2-ronse. 3-vic. 4-corps. 5-serre. 6-crème. 7-guet. 8-haine. 9-maille.
 C. 1-time. 2-gras. 3-hymne. 4-sacré. 5-maque. 6-même. 7-som. 8-reine. 9-nord.
 D. 1-abas. 2-nous. 3-veine. 4-sarr. 5-rare. 6-sang. 7-aigre. 8-sous. 9-bors.



E. 1-heure. 2-comm. 3-nor. 4-vent. 5-gros. 6-herse. 7-heure. 8-verre. 9-bouffe.
 F. 1-nez. 2-cesse. 3-sourd. 4-crème. 5-héris. 6-camp. 7-vire. 8-arc. 9-sour.
 G. 1-saire. 2-ros. 3-cinq. 4-mine. 5-lourd. 6-vaive. 7-savre. 8-mours. 9-Metage.
 H. 1-soq. 2-masse. 3-mot. 4-ganne. 5-sort. 6-rain. 7-arme. 8-nomme. 9-cure.

DESCRIPTION DE L'APPAREIL.

A— Embouchure, cornet acoustique recueillant les mots, syllab. par syllabe. B— Serpen-
 tin, conducteur du son. C— Grotte hémisphérique où se concentre le son et s'amplifie les
 vibrations. D— Ouverture intérieure de l'appareil. E— Membrane vibrante, baudouche dis-
 posée de façon à recevoir le choc des vibrations de la voix. G— Série de petits reposeoirs
 fixés derrière la membrane vibrante, garnis de petits canons d'acier pour retenir les aiguil-
 les aimantées faisant agir en tout sens le stylet. H-I-J— Le stylet ou la pièce la plus délicate
 de l'appareil, en parfait équilibre sur une pointe de bossole, obéissant à tous les frémisse-
 ments de la membrane vibrante. J— Traçoir garni d'un griffe, dessinant sur une glace
 noircie au noir de fumée, le mouvement communiqué au stylet. K— Mécanisme d'horlogerie
 faisant tourner en spirale la glace noircie. L— Pour éviter que les mots, en se dessinant,
 ne se tassent les uns sur les autres. M— Redressement de la glace pour obtenir, par la lumière,
 à l'aide d'un appareil d'optique, l'amplification des figures sur un papier huilé tendu au
 bout de l'appareil. N, O, P, R, S— Boutons que manœuvre l'opérateur attentif à la cadence
 de la parole.

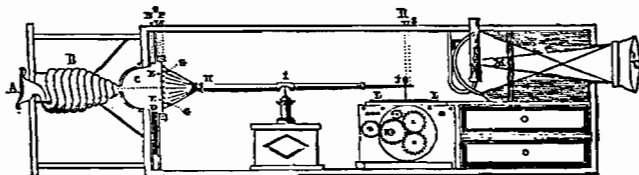


A. 1-qual. 2-leur. 3-scène. 4-rire. 5-cime. 6-vent. 7-nerf. 8-naque. 9-rus-c.
 B. 1-mouss. 2-vin. 3-mit. 4-barre. 5-mont. 6-rire. 7-ode. 8-main. 9-gomme.
 C. 1-scène. 2-rep. 3-sil. 4-cas. 5-cire. 6-moc. 7-coque. 8-maque. 9-si.
 D. 1-art. 2-mc. 3-tase. 4-vagur. 5-caose. 6-corre. 7-aigre. 8-mort. 9-mois.

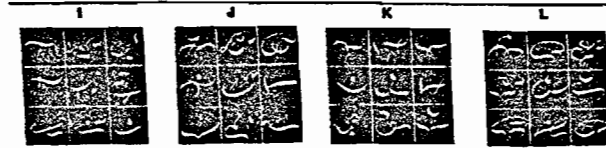


E. 1-sève. 2-gris. 3-mare. 4-lue. 5-quart. 6-rare. 7-rbam. 8-aine. 9-muse.
 F. 1-rhôm. 2-cyrie. 3-quine. 4-une. 5-laire. 6-murs. 7-rouet. 8-air. 9-noie.
 G. 1-za. 2-reins. 3-gaine. 4-tomur. 5-cerre. 6-sec. 7-sint. 8-sol. 9-nel.
 H. 1-âne. 2-rose. 3-cave. 4-suc. 5-gare. 6-mire. 7-rang. 8-nacre. 9-qui.

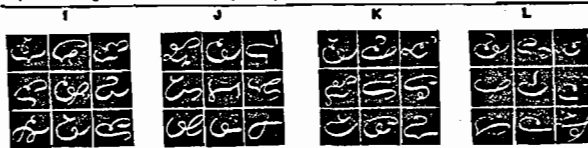
En résumé, le personnage prononce le mot dans l'embouchure A, le son s'éclaire et se dé-
 veloppe dans le serpentin B, s'amplifie dans la grotte C, et va frapper la membrane vibrante
 E. Celle-ci, en recevant le choc, frémit, tre-saillit et mélangemorphose le son en mouvement ;



de sorte que la figure que l'on obtient par le traçoir du stylet, devient non plus l'image du
 son, mais l'image du mouvement imprimé par le frissonnement de la membrane vibrante.



I. 1-ict. 2-aigle. 3-ruc. 4-bis. 5-grappe. 6-terme. 7-plat. 8-perle. 9-phare.
 J. 1-pose. 2-ucric. 3-colle. 4-lourd. 5-fabre. 6-dans. 7-ssa. 8-marim. 9-peine.
 K. 1-blanc. 3-fond. 4-faire. 5-dur. 6-lla. 7-régn. 8-pomot. 9-sis.
 L. 1-pour. 2-mah. 3-ongle. 4-cyrie. 5-farent. 6-passe. 7-pie. 8-pleurs. 9-salle.



I. 1-ave. 2-ville. 3-cable. 4-meur. 5-bod. 6-fume. 7-four. 8-fosse. 9-parle.
 J. 1-égl. 2-for. 3-maz. 4-pore. 5-pou. 6-pis. 7-fot. 8-dus. 9-det.
 K. 1-beur. 2-tanne. 3-épre. 4-sangle. 5-pape. 6-gale. 7-ferr. 8-saut. 9-dine.
 L. 1-ronq. 2-puqe. 3-voqe. 4-la. 5-phase. 6-barpe. 7-pain. 8-dard. 9-gace.

mean that," the question exerts power. It requires a memory and is a resistance to and defense against the fact that what just happened was a speaking like breathing. The urge to flee from a voice and the desire to hear a meaning are indistinguishable acts of language. I see nowhere—except perhaps in the paragraphs of the penal code which define responsibility for one's actions—that "ought" in which Habermas believes he can transcendently ground questions of interpretation and explanation.⁶⁷

Pink Floyd, *The Whistler at the Gate of Morning*—Syd Barrett, lead guitar and vocals, sings a fairy tale: After every stanza comes the chorus: "Tell me more." And the voice, strengthened or perhaps amplified, rises higher. Perhaps this was how the listeners once carried the blind rhapsode. *Götterdämmerung*, Act Three: Siegfried, in order to assuage Gunther's sadness, sings of his youth. At the beginning a hesitating recitative. The men ask how the story goes on. While singing, Siegfried forgets his forgetting, his voice carries, it carries him out beyond the prohibition against mentioning his beloved's name. Heroic and shining (Hagen has taken the transgression as an excuse to murder him), he sings breathlessly of Brunhilde.

Speaking is a technology of ecstasy. The old precolonial signification of spirit says as much. From this it follows that the Habermasian variety of hermeneutics invents or underwrites a sublime form of violence. It takes exegesis away from the exegetes and attributes it to the speakers themselves. "How do you mean that?" sounds very gentle but it by no means establishes metacommunication and peace—it would stop a voice that soars supported by its feedback. Ruling bodies which calculate and govern with public opinion polls simply require philosophers of state who translate the Socratic "what is that?" into "how do you mean that?"

SPECIMENS FROM THE BEHISTUN INSCRIPTIONS.



The relationship of discourse analysis to hermeneutics is not criticism or strife; it is curiosity. The young Foucault dreamed of drawing up an inventory of the strange manipulations that have been applied to speech in Western culture.⁶⁸ A very peculiar one, certainly, is the technique of manipulation called hermeneutics, which dreams of not being such a technique at all.

Discourse analysis, on the other hand, dreams of catalogues. The person who draws up catalogues does not understand them any more than the person who uses them. A book list, a representation of the keys on a typewriter, or a telephone book do not constitute sentences, but statements. Catalogues are statements which make statements manipulable. And if the most frequently printed and the most frequently used books today are tables, inventories, circuit charts which only schizos write or read from front to back, then discourse analysis becomes curious when hermeneutics, without question, takes as its point of departure that subclass of books that some people still write or read from front to back. (This already excludes the hermeneutics of this collection of essays on text hermeneutics.)

An inventory of Western techniques of exegesis would be the same story: all strobe effects and no history. Once there was a patristic-scholastic hermeneutics of the four levels of meaning. Twelve stones lie in the Jordan, it says somewhere in the Old Testament; twelve Apostles followed the Saviour, the New Testament says—ergo, say the interpreters, God placed the stones in the river in order to prefigure the apostles. The allegorical level of meaning thus permits a reading of the Book of Books, this motley collection of texts, from front to back.

Once there was a Romantic hermeneutics. It dreaded the "outright madness" of treating even the first five books of the Bible as "an original totality."⁷⁰ Only books which have an author can be called originarily whole. That was long ago—since then we have learned to discern falsification or madness in this unity as well. Since Nietzsche, interpretation is a distortion, both as defined in principle and as revealed in individual philological analysis.⁷¹ Since Freud, we laugh at the *quid pro quo* which produces the ego-identity. "The subject transfers the permanence of its desire onto an evidently intermittent ego and conversely protects itself from its desire by attributing these interruptions to it."⁷² So texts, even this one, are allowed to crumble.

If there ever was a self-interpretation of interpretation it was at Delphi. "Zeno the Stoic asked the oracle: what he should do in order to live the best life. As an answer he got: 'Have intercourse with the dead'. He understood this to mean *reading the ancients*."⁷³ What is perennial in reading and understanding is thus the desire of the Other. Discourse analysis opposes such necrophilia with the desire for inventories. It goes back to the senseless fact which all interpretations presuppose and misconstrue:

In contrast to all these interpretations whose existence becomes possible only through the actual scarcity of statements but which misconstrue this scarcity and on the contrary take as their theme the compact wealth of what is said, the analysis of discursive formations turns back on this very scarcity and makes it its explicit object. It attempts to determine the singular system of this scarcity and in precisely that way it accounts for the fact that interpretation was possible at all.⁷⁴

But even this holds old-fashioned and mythical traits. Mythical, for instance, is the regression to utterances for their own sake; old fashioned is the archiving of statements and interpretations of statements in books. The American namesake of discourse analysis has long since had computers perform the task of sorting texts. Accordingly, the later Foucault, Professor of the History of Systems of Thought, announces that "history" is inescapable—an old-fashioned archivist of old-fashioned things declares why his type of mnemotechnics must not be erased.

But "'we have invented happiness,' say the last human beings and blink." They do not want to remember and philosophize, they do not want to rule or obey.⁷⁵ As the last human beings they have had enough (of) history. So it is probably only the one who derides them that winks: Nietzsche, who in the man-animal story, reversing Zeno's dictum calls "happiness" the ability to sense the world unhistorically. The Cabbala predicts a terrible day when words will lose their meaning and become simply words, dead stones which fall from our mouths. That day need not be terrible and no longer has to be predicted. Somewhere in catalogues and discourse analyses words have been discarded and forgotten, personal information and fingerprints have been left in data banks, the latest historical events in television stations. People no longer need memory:

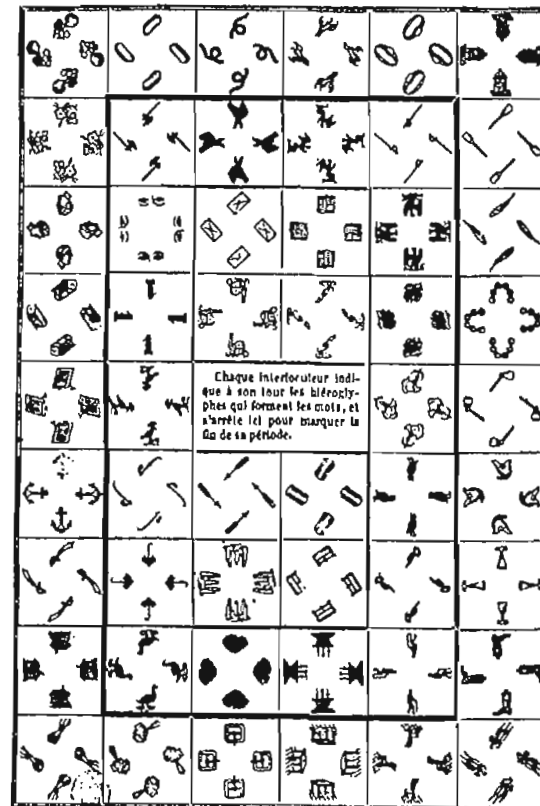
He spent every evening from around five-thirty on in front of the television set, switching channels impatiently back and forth without making any definite choices, until late into the night when there was nothing on any more. Often he would watch up to five news programs, always *Today*, always the *News of Today*. and yet he couldn't remember so much as a single report; as soon as he switched off, it all seemed like an illusion. Gone, never really having been.⁷⁶

Black out. It's time for other stories. I got your postcard without words.

translated by Caroline and David Wellbery

INDICÉOMILIE,

OU: CONVERSATION PAR LA SEULE INDICATION DES HIÉROGLYPHES.



Ne pas quitter une case sans savoir où placer le style, afin que l'indication soit continue.

NOTES

- ¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, Zweites Stück: *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*. Werke, hg. K. Schlechta, München, 1954-1956, Bd. I, p. 211.
- ²On this distinction of Lacans, compare Jean-Louis Gault, *La parole ambiguë* (Enoncé-énonciation), Diss. Strasbourg, 1974.
- ³How this works is shown by the games played by Carlitos and the little dog in Carlos Castañeda's *Die andere Realität. Die Lehren des Don Juan. Ein Yaki Weg des Wissens*, Frankfurt/M., 1972, pp. 36-41.
- ⁴B. Rommel, *Transformationen des Ästhetizismus*, in: *Urszenen. Literaturwissenschaft als Diskursanalyse und Diskurskritik*, hg. F.A. Kittler/H. Turk, Frankfurt/M., 1977, p. 352. What is meant by a critique of discourse can't be specified: how can discourses criticize discourse? Abandon some discourses, take up others—less than that can't be done.
- ⁵Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, II pars. 1-3. WW, Bd. II. pp. 799-802. Nietzsche's transition to genealogy and discourse analysis can only be hinted at. The other kind of philology which therewith became possible is discussed in my essay "Nietzsche", in: *Klassiker der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. H. Turk, München, 1979, p. 191-205.
- ⁶Compare M. Foucault, *Das Denken des Aussen*, in: *Von der Subversion des Wissens*, München, 1974, p. 80.
- ⁷J.W. von Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, II, 2. *Sämtliche Werke* (Jubiläums-Ausgabe) Stuttgart-Berlin, n.d., Bd. XXI, p. 157.
- ⁸Compare J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris, 1967, p. 229 and J. Greisch, *Herméneutique et grammatologie*, Paris, 1977, p. 208 f.
- ⁹This point is demonstrated as regards Novalis in my essay *Die Irrwege des Eros und die 'absolute Familie'*, in: *Psychoanalytische Textinterpretation*, hg. W. Kudzus/B. Urban, forthcoming.
- ¹⁰Compare J. Hörisch, *Das Sein der Zeichen und die Zeichen des Seins*, in J. Derrida, *Die Stimme und das Phänomen*, Frankfurt/M., 1979, p. 40.
- ¹¹Compare for example *De la grammatologie*, p. 141 ff.
- ¹²M. Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, München, 1974, p. 48.
- ¹³R.M. Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, hg. E. Zinn, Bd. VI. Frankfurt/M. 1966, p. 756 f.; W. Benjamin, *Einbahnstrasse. Gesammelte Schriften*, hg. R. Tiedemann/H. Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt/M., 1972 ff., Bd. IV/1, p.90.

- ¹⁴Compare J. Lacan, *Schriften*, hg. N. Haas, Olten-Freiburg/Br., 1973, ff., Bd. I, p. 24.
- ¹⁵Quoted from Nietzsche, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur. Sämtliche Werke* (Musarion-Ausgabe), München, n.d., Bd. V, p. 210.
- ¹⁶J. Lacan, *Le séminaire II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychoanalyse*, Paris, 1978, p. 63.
- ¹⁷*Dialektik*, hg. R. Odebrecht, Nachdruck, Darmstadt, 1976, p. 261.
- ¹⁸*Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik. Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. V, Stuttgart-Göttingen, 1957, p. 318 ff.
- ¹⁹*Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen, 1961, p. 371.
- ²⁰Compare M. Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge. Eine Archäologie der Humanwissenschaften*, Frankfurt/M., 1974, pp. 379-384.
- ²¹M. Frank, *Das individuelle Allgemeine, Textstrukturierung und-interpretation nach Schleiermacher*, Frankfurt/M., 1977, p. 208.
- ²²Compare *Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik*, p. 319 f.
- ²³Compare M. Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, pp. 410-412.
- ²⁴*Ethik*, pars. 184-189, in: F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, hg. M. Frank, Frankfurt/M. 1977, p. 381 f. Subsequent citations will be taken from this anthology.
- ²⁵*Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VII, Leipzig-Berlin, 1942, p. 233.
- ²⁶p. 13.
- ²⁷*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, par. 187. WW, Bd. II, p. 645.
- ²⁸Compare U. Nassen, *Vorwort* in: *Studien zur Entwicklung einer materialen Hermeneutik*, hg. U.N., München, 1979, p.7.
- ²⁹*Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 95.
- ³⁰p. 97. On the principles involved here, compare T.M. Seebohm, *Zur Kritik der hermeneutischen Vernunft*, Bonn, 1972, p. 106 ff.
- ³¹Compare *Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit*, in: *Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Mittel- und Unterschichten*, Göttingen, 1973, p. 112-154.

³²Compare my study *Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters*, in: G. Kaiser/F.A. Kittler, *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel*, Göttingen, 1978, p. 108-114. There the historical aspects of the following remarks are developed in greater detail.

³³*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, par. 192 WW, Bd. II, p. 650.

³⁴F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 97. See also the essay *Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik in Bezug auf F.A. Wolfs Andeutungen und Asts Lehrbuch*, p. 336.

³⁵J.A. Bergk, *Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen. Nebst Bemerkungen über Schriften und Schriftsteller*, Jena, 1799, p. 351.

³⁶*Die Kunst zu denken. Ein Seitenstück zur Kunst, Bücher zu lesen*, Leipzig, 1802, p. 172.

³⁷*Die Kunst zu denken*, p. 186. Compare also F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik*, p. 334: "The greatest [discourses] are those works of a creative spirit, whatever the form and genre might be, each of which is in its own way internally articulated to an infinite degree and at the same time individually inexhaustible. Any solution to the task appears to us only an approximation." In other words, to speak with Herman Lübbe, "a case of unpragmatic discourse de-limitation." Compare *Pragmatismus oder die Kunst der Diskursbegrenzung*, in: *Normenbegründung-Normendurchsetzung*, hg. W. Oelmüller, Paderborn, 1978, p. 118-125.

³⁸The fact that the early Romantics defined art as a medium of reflection *par excellence*, a medium which is to be constructed through the critical analysis of all individual works, expresses this historical innovation most precisely. Compare W. Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. I/1, pp. 63-109.

³⁹*Dichten und Deuten*, in: *Kleine Schriften II*, Tübingen, 1967, p. 13.

⁴⁰*Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik*, p. 335.

⁴¹*Das Individuelle Allgemeine*, p. 169-178. The claim is restricted however at p. 48-53.

⁴²Compare *L'Idiot de la famille*, Bd. I, Paris 1971, p. 7 ff.

⁴³Compare F. Schiller, *Briefe über Don Carlos. Sämtliche Werke* (Säkular-Ausgabe), Stuttgart-Berlin, n.d., Bd. XVI, p. 52 f.

⁴⁴*Marges de la philosophie*, Paris 1972, p. 331.

⁴⁵Fichte summed up this old teaching method and the reason for its

eclipse in the following cynical remark: "Now that there is no longer any branch of science for which a superfluity of books isn't available one still feels obliged to posit this entire book world a second time in the universities and to have professors recite precisely that which already lies printed in front of everyone." *Deducirter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höheren Lehranstalt. Sämtliche Werke*, hrsg. I.M.v.Fichte, Berlin 1845 ff., VIII, p. 98.

⁴⁶G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. J. Hoffmeister, Hamburg, 1952, p. 52.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. VI.

⁴⁸*Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain. Obras completas*, Buenos Aires, 1964-1966, Bd. V, p. 78 ff.

⁴⁹Compare for example K.O. Apel, *Transformationen der Philosophie* Bd. II, Frankfurt/M. 1973, p. 346 ff.

⁵⁰In: *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, Frankfurt/M. 1971, pp. 120-159.

⁵¹Compare H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, pp. 120-159.

⁵²*Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik*, p. 333.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁵⁴H. Bosse, *The Marvellous and Romantic Semiotics. Studies in Romanticism*, 14 (1975), p. 229.

⁵⁵*Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 94. Whether this Unconscious is that of the author or is "the set of all the interpreters which are no longer present" and which speak through him (M. Frank, *Das Individuelle Allgemeine*, p. 361) has no bearing as regards the anthropological sleep.

⁵⁶*Der Universalitätsanspruch*, p. 140. Compare exactly the opposite view in R. St. Zons, *Messias im Text*, in: *Urszenen*, p. 229 ff.

⁵⁷*Der Universalitätsanspruch*, p. 134.

⁵⁸*Über den Begriff der Hermeneutik*, p. 344.

⁵⁹*Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 82. Cf. also p. 179.

⁶⁰M. Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, p. 449.

⁶¹*Mythologica I: Das Rohe und das Gekochte*, Frankfurt/M. 1971, p. 40.

⁶²Zur Kritik der Hermeneutischen Vernunft, p. 13 ff.

⁶³Heraklit, Fragment B 93 (Diels): "The master whose oracle is at Delphi, neither speaks out nor conceals, but signifies."

⁶⁴J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, Paris, 1966, p. 137 and p. 434.

⁶⁵"Vorbereitende, Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der Kommunikativen Kompetenz" in: J.H./Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*, Frankfurt/M. 1971, p. 116.

⁶⁶B. Rommel, *Transformationen*, p. 352.

⁶⁷*Vorbereitende Bemerkungen*, p. 118: "We *must* assume, insofar as we *want* to orient ourselves toward our opposite as toward a subject that our opposite would be able to tell us why in a given situation he behaves thus and not otherwise." Schleiermacher had already wondered why a friend "expresses himself just so and not otherwise in discussing a particular topic." (In Habermas, the grammatical error (a "he" [er] refers to an "it" [das Gegenüber, the opposite]) shows under what phallogocratic conditions such *musts* can be insisted upon.

⁶⁸"Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," in: *Nietzsche*, Cahiers de Royaumont, 1964, p. 183.

⁶⁹Compare M. Butor, *La Littérature, l'oreille et l'oeil*, in: *L'endurance de la pensée, pour saluer Jean Beaufret*, Paris, 1968, p. 120.

⁷⁰F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, p. 176.

⁷¹On the theoretical principles regarding this point, cf. *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, III par. 24. WW, Bd. II, p. 890. For the individual analysis of a falsification—the Pauline case—half of the Antichrist is available.

⁷²J. Lacan, *Schriften*, Bd. II, p. 191.

⁷³F. Nietzsche, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, p. 213.

⁷⁴M. Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens*, Frankfurt/M. 1973.

⁷⁵F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*. WW, Bd. II, p. 284 ff.