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Text Machines:
Mnemotechnical Infrastructure as Exappropriation

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Jared McCoy

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Andrzej Warminski, Chair
Professor Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan
Professor Geoffrey Bowker

2020

Dedication

To my parents

for their boundless love

and patience

…this requires a comprehensive reading of Heidegger that is hard, you know, to do quickly.

Paul de Man

Contents

Acknowledgements

Vita

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2010	B.A. in English Literature, American University, D.C.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Critical Theory, Continental Philosophy, Digital Humanities,
Knowledge Infrastructure & Visualization

Abstract of the Dissertation

Text Machines:
Mnemotechnical Infrastructure
as Exappropriation
by
Jared McCoy

Doctor of Philosophy in English
University of California, Irvine, 2020

Professor Andrzej Warminski, Chair

Text Machines explores the rhetorical and technological resonances of Martin Heidegger's "event of appropriation" and Paul de Man's "material event." The crucial questions here are what it would mean to approach the "text machine" of which de Man writes as a "question concerning technology" and whether the ironic, allegorical and inhuman aspects of this textual machination will ultimately resist machine learning and algorithmic translation. I argue that mnemotechnics is the task of thinking the historiography of forgetting, which is to say, the task of representing or, at least, *charting* that which might be said to "generate history" by dint of the "unreadability" of its inscription. In tracing the genealogy of inscription through Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Saussure, Husserl, Adorno, Benjamin, Althusser, Derrida, Stiegler and many others, I show how mnemotechnical infrastructure can only be approached by way of a mnemotechnical exappropriation, which is to say, a "tautological" thinking that constitutes the "only possibility for thinking what dialectic can only veil." In the inhumanity of the "text machine," I read the technological "danger" that faces and defaces the humanities as the "saving power" by which our collective memory is dissolved and resolved through the mechanism of thematization and citation.

I. History of Inscription

Inscription / Dialectics

The "text machine" of which Paul de Man writes is virtually incompatible with the devices that comprise and command our world. After proving "suspiciously text-productive" in the 1980s, it has been relegated to the high-theoretical junkyard that is now the primary residence of so many deconstructive apparatuses.[2] We might say that the text machine is by no means anything mechanical just as the "essence of technology," for Martin Heidegger, "is by no means anything technological."[3] To some extent, these gestures toward a machination behind all mechanisms or a technicity beyond all technology remain "traditionally philosophical," as Jacques Derrida has indicated.[4] But they also call for a more inceptual thinking in which the conceptual buffer between reality and ideality collapses into the materiality of inscription.

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[1] "Welt weltet nicht. Ding [/] Welt ereignet sich nicht; das Ereignis verweigert sich . Der Unter-schied bleibt vergessen; die Vergessenheit west!" [World does not world. Thing [/] World do not take place; the event of appropriation refuses itself. The differentiation remains forgotten; forgetting essences!] Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking (Studies in Continental Thought)* (Indiana University Press, 2012), 22; Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1994)

[2] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (Yale University Press, 1979), 200

[3] "The essence of technology is by no means anything technological" [So ist denn auch das Wesen der Technik ganz und gar nichts Technisches]. "Technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology" [Die Technik ist nicht das gleiche wie das Wesen der Technik]. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*, ed. David F. Krell (New York: Harper, 2008), 311; Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 7. Cf. "For ourselves, let us finally set aside conceiving the technological merely technologically, i.e., starting from the human and its machines" [Setzen wir uns endlich davon ab, das Technische Technische nur tech nisch, d.h. vom Menschen und seinen Maschinen her vorzustellen]. Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 116; Heidegger, *Bremer*, 123

[4] "This matrix statement remains, at least in one of its aspects, traditionally philosophical. It maintains the possibility of thought that questions, which is always thought of the essence, protected from any original and essential contamination by technology. The concern, then, was to analyze this desire for rigorous non-

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The materiality of inscription *loves to hide*.[5] It retreats into the *wood* [ὕλη] wherein the

light of reason [λογος αποφαντικος] fades and the straight path is lost.[6] It is here that *truth* [ἀ-

λήθεια] is discovered in the mirrorplay of forgetting [αμνησία] and remembrance [ανάμνηση].[7]

This is to say that the protolinguistic, apophantic 'essence' of truth is forgotten whenever

technological phenomena pass into logical, hermeneutic discourse. Since its inception,

dialectical thinking has attempted to sublate the hypomnesic substrate (and its inscription) into

the hyperuranion realm. Platonism is programmed by this impossible reference to an Idea

"beyond essence" [ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας].[8] Like the *primum movens* of Aristotelian metaphysics

and the *clinamen* of the Epicurean-Lucretian universe, it remains paradoxically anterior and

exterior to the ideologies it sets in motion.[9] But the inscription would not *matter* very much if it

left only a sense of randomness and chaos. Its deviation from all known laws retains a kind of

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contamination and, from that, perhaps, to envisage the necessity, one could say the fatal necessity of a contamination- and the word was important to me- of a contact originally impurifying thought or speech by technology. Contamination, then, of the thought of essence by technology, and so contamination by technology of the thinkable essence of technology-and even of a question of technology by technology, the privilege of the question having some relation already, always, with this irreducibility of technology. It is easy to imagine that the consequences of this necessity cannot be limited. Yet Geist, as I will try to suggest, also names what Heidegger wants to save from any destitution (Entmachtung). It is even perhaps, beyond what must be saved, the very thing that saves (rettet). But what saves would not let itself be saved from this contamination. What happens here will be in the difference between Geistigkeit and a certain (non-Christian) Geistlichkeit of the Geist whose purity Heidegger wants to save, a purity internal to spirit, even though he recognizes that evil (das Böse) is spiritual (geistlich)." Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the question* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 10

[5] Cf. Heraclitus fragment 35: "nature loves to hide" or, more exactly, "A nature is hidden" [Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ]. Daniel W. Graham, ed., *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The complete fragments and selected testimonies of the major Presocratics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 160-161..

[6] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 151ff; Heidegger, *Bremer*. "A diritta via era smarrita." Alighieri, "Inferno" in *The Divine Comedy*, I.3

[7] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 18-20, 42-45, 70

[8] Plato, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1997), 509b

[9] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016); Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

lawfulness. It deviates according to the laws it disrupts, affording a certain insight into the

lawfulness of the law as such – its impetus, growth, evolution, life, idea, etc.

Hegel performs some of his most prodigious feats of dialectical aerobics while

attempting to sublate the tautology of force and law, the "I = I" of self-consciousness and the

increasingly recursive models of causality that threaten to interrupt the march toward

"absolute knowing." It is in this kind of tautology that Heidegger sees "the only possibility for

thinking what dialectic can only veil."[10] Tautological thinking is not thinking the same thing over

and over again but, rather, thinking difference within sameness and sameness within difference

without positing them in the logical form of a contradiction. What dialectics regards as the

'same' is, essentially, "what calls for thinking" and, hence, what deserves to be called thinking.[11]

"Yet this 'same' is so essential and so rich that no single thinker exhausts it; each commits all

the others to it all the more strictly."[12]

The 'originality' of *Being and Time* does not consist in the invention of ontic and

ontological categories but, rather, in the unveiling of the truth of what, for millennia, remained

concealed as an empty tautology – the "being of beings." What Heidegger calls "'descriptive

phenomenology' . . . is at bottom tautological."[13] The ontological structure of existence [Dasein]

as care [Sorge] is so constituted that one can only speak tautologically of a "care for oneself"

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[10] Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars: Le Thor, 1966, 1968, 1969, Zähringen 1973* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), 81

[11] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper, 1968). Cf. Chapter V "Thematization / Tautology" of the present work.

[12] Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche I: The Will to Power as Art," in *Nietzsche {I-II}* ([San Francisco]: Harper, 1991), 36

[13] "The inceptual Greek understanding of phenomenology as it is derived from φαίνεσθαι ("to show itself") and φαίνω ("to bring to the light of day, to put in the light"). Phenomenology means ἀποφαίνεσθαι τὰ φαινόμενα – "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1962), 51

[Selbstsorge].[14] A phenomenological science can only gain access to this tautological truth by way of *thematization*. In thematizing being, Heidegger attempts to think thinking without relying on the speculative distance between consciousness and the philosophical observer.[15] The aim of fundamental ontology is nothing more (and nothing less) than the questioning of this *ontological difference* – the questioning of the question of the being of being and the truth of truth – an inceptual tautology that remains "higher" than any "actuality."[16] "Questioning," as Heidegger argues at the conclusion of "The Question Concerning Technology," is "the piety of thought" [die Frömmigkeit des Denkens].[17] According to Derrida, this "unquestioned possibility of the question" engenders a "spiritual duction" [geistige Führun] that "remains itself unconducted."[18] Because Heidegger does not question the priority of this most inceptual, tautological of questions, an infinitesimal, pseudo-dialectical gap opens between the ontic and ontological 'perspectives.' Thinking is "contaminated" by the "reflexive machine" of its very questioning.[19] The question of "spirit" [Geist] remains an "unthought" [Un-gedacht] and spectral presence – not something lacking per se, but that which animates the questioning. It is the "knot" that holds together Heidegger's thought, if not thinking in general.[20]

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[14] "existential characteristics are not pieces belonging to something composite, one of which might sometimes be missing; but there is woven together in them a primordial context which makes up that totality of the structural whole." Heidegger, *Being*, 366

[15] We will see, however, that there is a more radical, thematic reading of the phenomenology that would bring it much closer to Heideggerian phenomenology.

[16] Heidegger, *Being*, 63

[17] Derrida, *Spirit*, 9n4

[18] Derrida, *Spirit*, 9, 43

[19] "Contamination . . . of the thought of essence by technology, and so contamination by technology of the thinkable essence of technology – and even of a question of technology by technology, the privilege of the question having some relation already, always, with this irreducibility of technology." Derrida, *Spirit*, 10

[20] "Following the trace of Heidegger's spirituality would perhaps approach, not a central point of this knot – I believe there is none – but approach what gathers a nodal resistance in its most economical torsion. I shall explain in conclusion why what I am presenting politely as a hypothesis must necessarily turn out to be true. I

The difference between Hegelian and Heideggerian phenomenology comes down to our faith in the dialectical narrative – the history of logic. For de Man, it is an allegorical pursuit in which "[w]e write in order to forget our foreknowledge of the total opacity of words and things or, perhaps worse, because we do not know whether things have or do not have to be understood."[21] Reading and writing are inextricably bound up in this "truly temporal predicament."[22] If we read 'being' as a metaphor and sublation as a metaphor of metaphor, then there is very little separating the movement of the Hegelian dialectic from de Man's 'concept' of allegory. In referring to the *Logic* as a "circle of circles" is Hegel not saying that dialectics is an allegory – a trope of a trope?[23] The difference between allegory and dialectics can only be maintained by insisting that the (metaphorical) 'truth' is, in fact, an error, and the (allegorical) unfolding of this a truth, "a lie superimposed upon an error."[24] This is to suggest that *allegorical difference* allegorizes every attempt to establish a speculative or ontological difference. In moving dialectically from one 'level' of understanding to the next we are, in effect, lying to ourselves that we are making any progress at all.

But far from claiming exception from the task of fundamental ontology and the *Destruktion* of Western metaphysics opened by *Being and Time*, both Derrida and de Man

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know that this hypothesis is true, as though in advance. Its verification appears to me to be as paradoxical as it is fated. At stake in it is the truth of truth for Heidegger, a truth the tautology of which does not even have to be discovered or invented. It belongs to the beyond and to the possibility of any question, to the unquestionable itself in any question. *Geist* cannot fail to gather this interlacing insofar as, for Heidegger, as we shall verify, it is another name for the One and the *Versammlung,* one of the names of collecting and gathering." Derrida, *Spirit*, 8–9

[21] Man, *Allegories*, 203

[22] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the rhetoric of contemporary criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 222

[23] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 751; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1991), §15

[24] Man, *Allegories*, 155

remain, to a remarkable extent, devoted to this 'end'.[25] In announcing the "end of philosophy

and the task of thinking" Heidegger launches the deconstructive "program" of "overturning"

and "paleonymy." Deconstruction is a matter of leverage within the 'economy' of thought – a

matter of tactics and of technics. It is not enough simply to show the reversibility of terms like

'metaphysics' and 'metaphor' or 'rhetoric' and 'being,' one must also show that something

would be gained by reversing them within a system that, by necessity, relapses into more naïve

usages. When asked to improvise about the meaning of deconstruction, Derrida often comes

back to the double movement and "double bind" of "exappropriation." [26] Just as

deconstruction is not the opposite of construction, the *event* of exappropriation is neither

appropriation [Aneignung] nor expropriation [Enteignung]. It is the double, ironic, allegorical

movement of which the text machine is forged – the force that dislocates rhetoric from every

hermeneutic, tropological model of understanding. It is a tautological force that 'begins' by

exappropriating itself.

In "The Principle of Identity," Heidegger 'defines' identity as the "propriety of the

appropriative event" [Eigentum des Er-eignisses]. The identity that resonates from out of the

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[25] Heidegger, *Being*, 44ff.

[26] "The origin of sense makes no sense. This is not a negative or nihilistic statement. That which bears intelligibility, that which increases intelligibility, is not intelligible - by definition, by virtue of its topological structure. From this standpoint, technics is not intelligible. This does not mean that it is a source of irrationality, that it is irrational or that it is obscure. It means only that it does not belong, by definition, by virtue of its situation, to the field of what it makes possible. Hence a machine is, in essence, not intelligible. No matter what, even if it makes possible the deployment or transmission or production of meaning, in itself, as machine, it makes no sense. This absence of sense can also be dispiriting, producing effects of dehumanization, of expropriation, of nihilism. In itself, this non-sense is not an absurdity, it is not negative, but it is not positive either. . . . The condition of sense, in general, is a finite appropriation, an exappropriation. For an infinite being, there is no meaning. For a being who can't appropriate anything or who can appropriate everything, nothing makes sense. The condition of sense is the tension of this law, the double law (*double bind* [in English in the original], if you like) of the most general law on the basis of which we are able to "approach" meaning, existence, intentionality, desire" Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed interviews* (Cambridge, Malden (Ma): Polity Press, 2007), 108–11

event is not a proper meaning. It is the "abyss" [Abgrund] in which we are given to think the

belonging-together [Zusammen*gehören*] of being, language and thought.[27] The event is a

"*singulare tantum*" like the Greek λόγος or the Chinese Tao.[28] One might even think of it as the

obverse of perception – the essencing [Wesen] of singularity and its abyssal ground. The 'truth'

of exappropriation is not a "characteristic" that might be measured according to the

"calculability of the calculable" – counted as stock or supply within a "standing reserve"

[Bestand].[29] The architecture of the modern warehouse, fulfillment center and server farm are

more than just figures of the standing reserve – they are its actuality [Wirklichkeit]. While no

human being can claim responsibility for the implacable "requisitioning" [Bestellung] of the

standing reserve, it is, nevertheless, a fundamental aspect of our technological destiny

[Geschick] and must, therefore, be conceived as part of the dialectical unfolding of history

[Geschichte]. In the positing [stellung] of the standing reserve lies the essence of technology

that Heidegger calls Gestell. If Gestell is left to reign unchecked, it seems inevitable that the

destiny of human being will converge with the standing reserve – that human beings will

become beings-supplied – beings supplicated before a planetary supply chain – Amazon Prime

citizens.

Heidegger draws our attention to the "eerie" [shaurig] quality of this term, Gestell,

stressing its uncanny deviation from the "ordinary usage" [gewöhnlichen Bedeutung] by which

one might refer to the frame-like structure of a "bookrack" [Büchergestell] or "skeleton"

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[27] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 119
[28] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 117
[29] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 120

[Knochen-gerippe].[30] He often hyphenates the term to foreground the "gathering" of the "Ge-"

as a linguistic device to show how the formal properties of language are informed by the

"grammar of being" and vice versa. The etymological monotony of Ge-stell and its cognates

remind us that everything we think and do is constellated within a technolinguistic totality.

Seeking the "tonic pitch" [Grundton] of this prefix is an abyssal pursuit, but the abyss is not

without a certain topography.[31] That which gathers the truth of the physical world juts up and

bounds off the "horizon" like a "mountain range" [Gebirg] just as the psychological world is

gathered by the "mind" [Gemüt] and the technological, by Gestell. [32] Together, these structures

make up the law [Gesetz] on which identity is founded.

(While Gestell is often translated as 'enframing' I often opt for Andrew J. Mitchell's

alternative, 'positionality,' in order to preserve the etymological resonances that Heidegger

puts to work.)

The great difficulty one confronts in reading Heidegger's writings on the event is his

insistence that it cannot be opposed to positionality. This entails that thinking is not an

autonomous, anthropological activity and that, whatever we refer to as subjectivity is not some

interiority cloistered away from the technological state of affairs. Positionality is proper to

thought. It is the appropriation of thought. Thought is the exappropriation of positionality. The

two form a circle that becomes increasingly tautological (i.e. less dialectical) the further we

move from Being and Time. If positionality remains mysterious to us it is because the very

mechanisms of critique and historicization are posited by it. Heidegger acknowledges the need

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[30] Heidegger, *Basic*, 325
[31] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg,* 110
[32] Heidegger, *Basic*, 324

to articulate the relationship between ancient and modern technology but struggles to do so in a way that does not lapse back into the vulgar, chronological sense of history. In the "Question Concerning Technology," he challenges the "instrumental" and "anthropological" understanding of technical causality, but he does not fully explore the shifting "constellation" of human and machine. He hesitates in making some of the leaps he attempts in later (and earlier) writings, leaving the idea of a more authentic technopoiesis suspended between the earth and the heavens.

In the Bremen lectures entitled *Insight into that which Is* [*Einblick in das was Ist*], Heidegger elaborates the question of technology over the course of four lectures – "The Thing" [Das Ding], "Positionality" [Der Ge-stell], "The Danger" [Die Gefahr], and "The Turning" [Die Kehr]. These are subsequently and substantially abridged into "The Question Concerning Technology." By juxtaposing the latter with the more furtive pathways Heidegger follows through the lectures, we begin to see the enframing at work in the concept of enframing – the positionality of the concept of positionality. While the first and last lectures were published independently during Heidegger's lifetime, the middle two only appear in a drastically revised form in the more canonical essay. This raises the question of whether there is some kind of interference between the concept of positionality as the essence of modern technology and the more inceptual formulation of "the thing."[33] While there has been a proliferation of "thing theory" of late (e.g. new materialisms, actor-network theories, cognitive assemblages, etc.), few of them rethink the concept of causality as profoundly as Heidegger attempts here. The Aristotelian model of "fourfold causality" that he draws on in "The Question Concerning

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[33] Heidegger, *Basic*, 314

Technology" is a considerable simplification of the "fourfold" [das Geviert] he explores in "Das Ding." The latter revolves around a metonymic play on the words 'ring' and 'gering' (nestling, malleable, pliant, compliant, nimble) that "put[s] to work, to the point of dizziness, all the resources of this idiom."[34] While Derrida is right to point out that this resonance is "traditional since Hegel," Heidegger leverages it to open the possibility of thinking a realm beyond dialectics in which we can only say that the cause is a "thing," that a "thing things" and this "thinging" is, somehow, part of the resonance by which the "world worlds."[35]

In pointing out the "folded referentiality" and "integral orderedness" of the Bremen lectures, Babette Babich touches upon one of the reasons Heidegger never published them in their entirety.[36] If "positionality" is the essence of technology and the "danger," the essence of positionality, then the "turn" would, in a certain sense, be the essence of danger – the danger of danger – the essence of the essence of the essence of technology. It really "can't get any more Hegelian than this." But, if the task of thinking is to separate itself from the movement of the dialectic, it must fall out of step with the *démarche* of sublation by marching tautologically in place (like the "*piétinement* of aimless enumeration" of which de Man writes). [37] Semiology and rhetoric provide a *pragmatic* means of approaching the tautological resonance of the thing than dialectics. It is through the sign that language speaks, but never of the same thing to which

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[34] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 125

[35] "On the one hand, the thing (in at least three or four languages: Greek, Latin, German, and English) is not without relation to the possibility of speaking, discussing, debating in public about a matter of litigation: the thing is not merely what one is talking about, but what is not necessarily mute, speechless: the thing chatters and causes to people to chatter [*la chose cause et fait causer*]. And this goes just as well for *Ding, thing, causa, cosa, chose,* etc." Derrida, *Beast II*, 120

[36] Babette Babich, "Constellating Technology: Heidegger's Die Gefahr/The Danger," in *The Multidimensionality of Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, ed. Babette Babich and Dimitri Ginev (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2014)

[37] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 254

the sign points. Between performance of a speaking sign and the grammar of a signifying speech lies a profoundly allegorical *thing*. To speak of *das Ding* is to risk mumming the same tautology over and over again. It is to think in such a way that "[t]he dialectic [is] flattened out into tautology, in the endlessly circular repetition of the same, and the teleological form of infinite transcendence [is] replaced by [a] monotony."[38] In letting ourselves be disrupted in this manner, we discover an inhuman power by which thinking might be saved from its dialectical programming.

Heidegger speaks of this programming as the "errancy" of truth. De Man regards it as an "aberration" of the text machine. But are errancy and aberration the 'same' or are we in danger of confusing them the moment we attempt to inscribe the 'meaning' of error? Does the *Kehr* revolve within the history of metaphysics or does it mark an *Einkehr* into the event of inscription – a singular point around which rhetoric and ideology trope themselves into history? If so, we might attempt to map Heidegger's thinking of technology onto de Man's theory of textual machination as follows:

Thing	[Ding]	:	Grammar
Positionality	[Gestell]	:	Metaphor
Danger	[Gefahr]	:	Allegory
Turn	[Kehr]	:	Inscription

By way of a provisional definition we might say that the *text machine* is a *system of tropes* that *disarticulates* itself in a manner that *generates*, *allegorizes* and *inscribes* history. But we must go further if we are to conceive a *mnemotechnical infrastructure*. Such an infrastructure must always be thought as exappropriation. Mnemotechnical infrastructure, as mnemotechnical

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[38] Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 65

exappropriation, begins with the insight that there is no way out but through. It must encircle

the event in which Heidegger thinks the essence of humanity and technology – the inscription

of memory and forgetting that marks the site where language can be said to *occur* as a

"material event" or "material inscription."[39] If it can manage this, it will have demonstrated the

cohomology of the event of appropriation and the material event.[40] It would suggest that it is

through the text machine that anthropological and technological singularity are to be inscribed.

We can only approach such events by way of a "strange leap."[41] Regardless of whether we find

respite [Einkehr] or get ourselves troped into oblivion around this singularity our leap will at

least have had some heuristic value. Our aberrant course might help chart the gravitational

field of these ponderous inscriptions.

Grammar / Rhetoric

Mnemotechnics concerns the event of the inscription and the inscription of the event – an

event that might be said to take place whenever and wherever 'understanding' trips over and,

thus, *happens upon* the materiality that Marcel Proust once called "un misérable relevé de

lignes et de surfaces."[42] Even a work of memory as monumental as the *Recherche* fails to

transcribe the "pulpe frémissante" – the grey materiality of the Proustian brain – onto the pulp

of the printed page. This is because every author is necessarily suspended between what

matters to readers and the materiality of memory as such.[43] Texts *matter* because, in them,

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[39] Andrzej Warminski, *Ideology, Rhetoric, Aesthetics: For De Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 3–37

[40] For an explanation of the term 'cohomology' in contradistinction to the more dialectical use of 'homology' (e.g. in Jameson's dialectical allegoresis) see Chapter VI "Inscription / Magnitude."

[41] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 114–15

[42] Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 2276

[43] Proust, *Recherche*, 2393

forgetting materializes as a texture of misreading. The gravest inscriptions are those that make

it impossible to forget that meaning is a tropological phenomenon derived from, but irreducible

to, the logic of a grammatical code. Without codifying grammar, we would be unable to

communicate but, when we communicate, we understand one another rhetorically, which is to

say, tropo*logically*, without understanding grammar itself.

Attempts to define rhetoric in opposition to logic end up undermining the foundations

of logic itself – the lawfulness of noncontradiction, the finitude of the definitional boundary,

etc. This, in turn, raises the question of whether rhetoric makes logic possible. Is rhetoric a

deviation from a logical truth or is logic an attempt to distill truth from a rhetorical reality? In

questioning rhetoric, we question the relationship between the subject and object of our

questioning. Which grounds which? Which comes first? Are we the subject of our questioning

or is rhetoric? This sounds like a rhetorical question. We are the 'who' of our questioning and

rhetoric is the 'what.' We are the subject and rhetoric is our object. The ability to decide what is

literal versus figural, logical versus rhetorical, is presumed whenever discourse is regarded

dialectically as an intersubjective, communicative act between and author and an audience:

what is the author's purpose? How does he use rhetoric to achieve this purpose? But if the

author is not certain of what his rhetoric is doing, then its ambiguity cannot necessarily be

disambiguated. De Man writes that

> If to read is to understand writing . . . then it presupposes a possible knowledge of the
> rhetorical status of what has been written. To understand primarily means to determine
> the referential mode of a text and we tend to take for granted that this can be done. . . .
> There can be no writing without reading, but all readings are in error because they
> assume their own readability. Everything written has to be read and every reading is

susceptible of logical verification, but the logic that establishes the need for verification is itself unverifiable and therefore unfounded in its claim to truth.[44]

For de Man, literary (i.e. critical linguistic) "theory" is an attempt to read the resistance that inheres between the literal definition and what is literally, grammatically, graphically inscribed. The "resistance to theory" has to do with the internal resistance between logic, grammar and rhetoric. The idea that rhetoric is an aesthetic superfluity from which one might extract a more essential, logical datum is an axiom of the 'hard' sciences, which tend not to concern themselves with the rhetoric of human speech because they already regard it as a medium of lies and errors. From this viewpoint, 'natural language' is a supplement to a more mathematical, programmable language – a facilitation of the proof. But, as Derrida argues, it is a "dangerous supplement"[45] that is always more *and* less logical than logic, objective than objectivity, scientific than science, etc.[46]

While grammar may at first seem closer to logic than to rhetoric, de Man suggests that what is grammatically inscribed is radically opposed to every tropo*logical* understanding. Grammar is not that which allows for the translation of rhetoric into logic but, rather, an inscription that cannot be read logically – decoded, transcoded, translated grammatologically. Because its potential significance is never exhausted by the codes that seek to comprehend it, de Man encourages us to read grammar as γράμματα (i.e. written marks, lettering, orthography). The singular materiality of grammar cannot be codified or communicated. It can only be 'read' in its effects – in the history of misreading and misinterpretation that issues from

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[44] Man, *Allegories*, 201–2

[45] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 141–64

[46] But how dangerous is it *really*? If machines are built, medicine produced, economies regulated by way of machine-readable codes does this not ironize the irony on which many poststructuralist insist?

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it. In the classical model of the trivium (logic, grammar, rhetoric), the position of grammar is no

less problematic than that of rhetoric. It is the "defective cornerstone" on which the ideological

edifice of the liberal arts depend.[47] To think the trivium mnemotechnically we must *theorize* the

relationship between grammars, codes and inscriptions and the possibility of translation

between linguistic, computational and historical realities.

Where to even begin with translation? With the translation of speech into writing or the

translation of thought into language? We might say that grammar is first and foremost the

translation of the verbal speech act into a coded system of signs that allows for communication

between individual speaking subjects across space and throughout time. But is it not rhetorical

to speak of translation 'between,' 'across' and 'throughout' space and time? While this does

not prevent us from understanding discrete acts of translation in terms of cause and effect, it

does prevent grammar from functioning as an adequately logical ground. A critical linguistic

reading reveals the threefold tautology of this phrase ('adequately logical ground'). It is possible

to think of grammatization in terms of translation but not without deconstructing the idea of

translation as mediation. Translation arises long before the sending of the message – it is not

just the swerve of an individual attempt at communication after it passes from the mind of an

author into the world of interpretation.[48] No "hermeneutic of reception"[49] can ever isolate a

pure moment of intention prior to publication.[50] The translational movement of

grammatization cannot be approached as mediation because it exceeds even the most

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[47] Man, *Aesthetic*, 104 cf. Warminski, *Ideology*, 21–24

[48] Man, *Aesthetic*, 181

[49] Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 54–72

[50] If some as yet unthinkable algorithm manages to do this, it will have attained the power to program history. It will have derived derivation as such – the *fons et origo* of the Idea and, thus, the mechanism of its reception and dissemination.

dialectical understanding of causality. Grammar does not sublate the contradiction of logic and

rhetoric. It can only be read *in* and *as* a history of inscription. It carries us beyond the passage of

space into time and of time into space, to the spacing and temporizing of différance.[51]

It is no accident that the Latin *translatio* translates the Greek μεταφορα. As Heidegger

argues in "The Principle of Reason," the 'origin' of metaphor traces back to the passage

between thought and perception:

> If we take thinking to be a sort of hearing and seeing, then sensible hearing and seeing is
> taken up and over into the realm of nonsensible perception, that is, of thinking. In Greek
> such transposing is called μεταφέρειν. The language of scholars names such a carrying-
> over "metaphor." So thinking may be called a hearing and listening, a viewing and a
> bringing into view only in a metaphorical, figurative sense.[52]

It is this partitioning of the sensible and the non-sensible that makes metaphor "normative"

and "metaphysical":

> When one gains the insight into the limitations of metaphysics, "metaphor" as a
> normative conception also becomes untenable – that is to say that metaphor is the
> norm for our conception of the essence of language. Thus metaphor serves as a handy
> crutch in the interpretation of works of poetry and of artistic production in general. The
> metaphorical exists only within metaphysics.[53]

The passage between the sensible and intelligible can only be conceived as a passage within the

metaphysical closure in which they are opposed. But if metaphor were precisely that which

extends beyond this closure, if it were that by which one comes to think the relationship

between the closure and its 'beyond,' then metaphor would describe the whole panoply of

terms Heidegger uses to think ontological difference. To reverse the statement and say that

'metaphysics exists only within the metaphorical' would not deviate essentially from what

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[51] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3–27
[52] Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 47
[53] Heidegger, *Principle*, 48

Heidegger argues here. As Derrida shows in "White Mythology," this metaphysical aspect of metaphor is implicit in the definition of analogy in the *Poetics*.[54] The 'sense' of analogy that Aristotle regards as a modality of metaphor is really the *metaphor of metaphor*, which is to say, the "*usure*" or "catachresis" of all metaphysical conceptualization: "If every metaphor is an elliptical comparison or analogy . . . we are dealing with a metaphor par excellence, a metaphorical redoubling, an ellipsis of ellipsis" that belongs "to *mimēsis,* to the fold of *physis,* to the moment when nature, itself veiling itself, has not yet refound itself in its proper nudity, in the act of its propriety."[55]

The well-nigh Shakespearean influence that Heidegger exerts over Derrida is all too apparent. If we were to judge by de Man's more direct engagements, however, we might too easily conclude that he got Heidegger out of his system and moved on to bigger and better things (or, at least, less readable things). But we would be very poor readers of de Man if we were to limit our consideration to the more topical references. The essence of their relationship is something we can only begin to discern after charting the unspoken, unwritten and, perhaps, unthought [ungedacht] resonances of their thinking. While de Man often seems to evade Heidegger at precisely the points where comparison would be most appropriate, we must attempt to follow the ellipses and plot the convergence of the dotted lines.

It is possible (if not particularly prudent) to regard the entire Rousseau section of *Allegories of Reading* as a rhetorical microcosm of *Being and Time*, where we begin with the

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[54] "Metaphor (*metaphora*) consists in giving (*epiphora*) the thing a name (*onomatos*) that belongs to something else (*allotriou),* the transference being either from genus to species (*apo tou genous epi eidos*), or from species to genus (*apo tou eidous epi to genos),* or from species to species (*apo tou eidous epi eidos),* or on the grounds of analogy (*ē kata to analogon*) (1457b6–9)" Derrida, *Margins*, 231

[55] Derrida, *Margins*, 241, 243

primordial role of "fear" and advance to the more ontological structures of selfhood and the

properly [eigentlich] historical anxiety [Angst] of a being-toward-death and, eventually, arrive at

something like a textual theory of world historiality. The entire exploration of the temporality

of the promise and the inescapability of guilt can, with all necessary precautions, be correlated

with the exposition of *Schuldigsein* in the second division of being and time. The conclusion to

"Promises," we might recall, is a profound (mis)quotation of Heidegger's saying: "Language

speaks" [die Sprache spricht]. And the peculiar difficulty of the final essay, "Excuses," seems, at

least in part, to arise from unresolved tensions between the Freudian, Austinian and

Heideggerian models at work in de Man's argument that "[g]uilt is forgiven because it allows

for the pleasure of revealing its repression."[56] We might juxtapose this provocative remark with

the footnote in the "Self" chapter where (again with a sidelong glance at psychoanalysis) he

associates "the formal structure of representation" in *Being and Time* with "rhetoricity,"

arguing that the "epistemological integrity of the rhetorical moment," far from remaining

"repressed" or "inpensé" as it does for Freud (or at least Freud according to Paul Ricoeur)

"accomplishes the much more redoubtable feat of becoming the 'totality of Being.'"[57]

In the early essay "Heidegger Reconsidered" (1964), de Man argues that "nothing is

more remote from Heidegger than [the] confusion between the pathos of direct experience

and the knowing of this experience." One might even "describe *Being and Time* as the most

thoroughgoing attempt to cleanse our thought from that confusion not only in language, but in

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[56] Man, *Allegories*, 286
[57] Man, *Allegories*, 175n15

the philosophical project as a whole."[58] That Heidegger generally opts not to speak in rhetorical

terms has more to do with the tactical value of such terms as they pertain to his attempt to

overcome metaphysics than it does with his failure to grasp the essential relationship between

rhetoric and metaphysics. It evinces a preference for the poetry of thinking over the more

"prosaic" model of "critical linguistic analysis" we find in de Man.[59] This is in no way a naively

logocentric preference. It is an attempt to work from within a structure that can never be

escaped. What is often dismissed as a kind of hackneyed etymologism or "uninhibited word

mysticism" is, in view of the task of overcoming metaphysics, an attempt to polemicize

everything in language that appears to reach beyond metaphysics, which is to say: rhetoric.[60]

The violence of Heidegger's rhetoric is a calculated violence – a violence against violence – an

"economy of violence" as Derrida would say.[61] In coining new terms for each occasion, adorning

philosophy with flowers of rhetoric, Heidegger makes of the metaphysical closure something

like a wreath. In this he performs the rhetorical exappropriation of metaphysics without taking

pains to point out, at every turn, that it's really all just rhetoric after all. In one of his late

notebooks he writes: "The twisting of the *wreath*, not of the *screw*. Twisting: wound into a ring,

twisted up in the form of a ring" [Das *Gewind* des *Kranzes* nicht der Schraube. Gewind: zum

Ring gewunden, im Ringhaften eingewunden].[62] It is, perhaps, here that the chiasmus of

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[58] Paul de Man, *Critical Writings 1953-1978*, ed. Lindsay Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 104

[59] Man, *Resistance*, 95ff., 121

[60] "hemmungsloser Wortmystik" Heidegger, *Being*, 262

[61] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 117

[62] Martin Heidegger, *The Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 115; Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 135

speculative, *ontological* and *allegorical difference* – between Hegel, Heidegger and de Man – is to be thought.

In an interview with Robert Moynihan, in the context of a discussion of the metaphors of revealing and concealing in Heidegger, de Man says that "Heidegger can play for me the role that Freud [does] for Derrida."[63] This would be a very significant role indeed (even after we allow for the more subjunctive inflection of the "*can* play"). He says this shortly after making the equally provocative claim that "No critical text, really, no theory of text, according to Derrida, can come into being if it avoids Freud." The implication, then, is that Heidegger serves (or *can* serve) as a kind of crucible for all subsequent theories of language. It may be helpful to juxtapose this analogical scheme – *Heidegger : de Man :: Freud : Derrida* – with the one that de Man hazards in the late, somewhat informal lecture "Kant and Schiller" where he describes the kind of regression that ensues after the opening of critical philosophy by Kant. Schiller, he argues, "domesticates" or "aestheticizes" the "critical incisiveness" of Kant in a way that proves paradigmatic for centuries to follow. De man then offers a handful of examples of this Kant/Schiller dynamic:

> We saw what the juxtaposition between Schiller and Kleist does, and we saw the way in which Kleist takes you back in a way to certain of the more threatening Kantian insights in terms of Schiller. Or you would find a play like that between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the way in which Nietzsche – not just the Nietzsche of The Birth of Tragedy, but the later Nietzsche as well – acts critically in relation to Schopenhauer and, I would say, "de-Schillerizes" and "re-Kantizes" what Schopenhauer has been saying. Or, I would even suggest, to take a name which isn't purely German, that something like that could be said to go on between Heidegger on the one hand and Derrida on the other; so that the reading that Derrida gives of Heidegger, in which Heidegger would play the role of Schiller, Derrida would then appear as being closer to Kant, in a kind of similar critical

examination of a certain claim for the autonomy and the power of the aesthetic which is being asserted in the wake of Schiller, but not necessarily in the wake of Kant.[64]

The twists and turns of this de-Schillerizing and re-Kantizing scheme are quite dizzying, but the point is that the history of philosophy can be read, allegorically, in the movement of the Kantian *turn toward* epistemological problems of rhetorical language and the Schillerian *turn away* from these problems that results in their aesthetic, ideological neutralization. This kind of pseudo-dialectical scheme is fairly common in de Man's writing.[65] The early collection, *Blindness and Insight*, demystifies the efforts of so many Schillerians to demystify texts which, like those of Kant, are already the greatest de-mystifiers of themselves. It is among these essays that we find de Man's initial critique of Derrida in which he argues that, in claiming to deconstruct Rousseau, Derrida ends up Rousseauscitating him.

However strange it might be to regard Derrida as Kantian, de Man is actually paying him highest honors in doing so. The analogy is, no doubt, intended to be somewhat ironic, but this does not make it any less *critical*. What is strange is that the roles seem to be reversed or, perhaps, superimposed. In saying that Derrida re-Kantizes Heidegger, de Man seems to attribute to Derrida the role he aspires to himself. Is it not a commitment to Freud that marks one of the most critical differences between the textual mechanicity of de Manian deconstruction and the more spectral shapes it assumes in Derrida's writing? Had he lived on, would it not have been de Man's explicit aim to Re-Kantize Heidegger and Derredact Derrida yet again? One can only speculate.

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[64] Man, *Aesthetic*, 131
[65] Derrida speaks of a "dialecticizing" style of de Man's earlier writings Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 57.

In a rare discussion of Heidegger's later writings (again in "Heidegger Reconsidered"), de Man offers something of an apology for the latter's "oracular tone"

> I know that Heidegger himself, in his later essays, has occasionally adopted an oracular tone – but this is perhaps an understandable human weakness in someone who may well feel he is not correctly understood. Utopian prophecy in any form is alien to him, a dangerous misconception of time as a determined, particularized entity, the very opposite of the open and free time of man's historical project. It is a classic case of confusion between – to use Heidegger's vocabulary . . . – an "ontic" and an "ontological" view of history, all the more dangerous since the unprepared reader is likely to focus on such passages; they seem concrete and revealing precisely to the extent that they are fantastic. And they breed another kind of confusion in that they are often linked with Heidegger's avowed interest in poetry in later life. . . .
>
> It is likely, rather, that poetic language interests Heidegger because it is not less but more rigorous than the philosopher's, having a clearer consciousness of its own interpretative function.[66]

The "danger" of the "oracular tone" is that it threatens to confuse ontic actuality with ontological possibility. De Man is suggesting that when Heidegger speaks of the "destiny" [Geschick] of man in the age of technoscience, he is, at least to some extent, speaking of an allegorical future that must always be distinguished from what eventually graces the headlines. This distinction between the allegorical and mundane senses of history bears directly on the idea of a "messianic without messianism" that pervades Derrida's thinking from roughly the time of de Man's death in 1983 to his own in 2004. In *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida offers one of the most profound meditations on the difference between Hegelian, Heideggerian and de Manian models of temporality and the mnemotechnical implications thereof

> The failure of memory is thus not a failure; we can also interpret its apparent negativity, its very finitude, what affects its experience of discontinuity and distance, as a power, as the very opening of difference, indeed of an ontological difference (ontic-ontological: between Being and beings, between the presence of the present and the present itself). If this were the case, what would happen when this ontological difference is translated

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[66] Man, *Critical*, 105

into the rhetoric of memory? Or vice versa? Can one speak in this case of a simple equivalence or of a correlation that could be read in one direction or the other? Let us allow this question the opportunity to remain open; it was never posed as such by Paul de Man.

If memory gives access to this difference, it does not do so simply by way of the classical (originally Hegelian) schema that links the essence of a being to its past being (*être-passé*), *Wesen* to *Gewesenheit.* The memory we are considering here is not essentially oriented toward the past, toward a past present deemed to have really and previously existed. Memory stays with traces, in order to "preserve" them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and always remain, as it were, to come – come from the future, from the *to come.* Resurrection, which is always the formal element of "truth," a recurrent difference between a present and its presence, does not resuscitate a past which had been present; it engages the future.

In this memory which promises the resurrection of an anterior past, a "passé antérieur," as we say in French to designate a grammatical tense, Paul de Man always saw a kind of formal element, the very place where fictions and figures are elaborated. If one allowed oneself to hazard a summary no less unjust than economical, no less provocative than hasty, one could say that for Paul de Man, great thinker and theorist of memory, there is only memory but, strictly speaking, the past does not exist. It will never have existed in the present, never been present, as Mallarmé says of the present itself: "un présent n'existe pas." The allegation of its supposed "anterior" presence *is* memory, and is the origin of all allegories. If a past does not literally exist, no more does death, only mourning, and that other allegory, including all the figures of death with which we people the "present," which we inscribe (among ourselves, the living) in every trace (otherwise called "survivals"): those figures strained toward the future across a fabled present, figures we inscribe because they can outlast us, beyond the present of their inscription: signs, words, names, letters, this whole text whose legacy-value, as we know "in the present," is trying its luck and advancing, *in advance* "in memory of . . ."[67]

While it is true that de Man never explicitly poses the question of "ontological difference" as a "rhetoric of memory," it is our explicit aim here to regard it as a hypotext for his theory of material inscription and to explore the uncanny resonances of what Heidegger calls "positionality" [Gestell] and what de Man, the "positional power" of language.

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[67] Derrida, *Memoires*, 57–59

Prosthesis / Hypomnesis

Thinking is the translation of metaphor. Metaphor is the translation of thought. Translation is the metaphor of thinking. This tautology – *μεταφορα-διαφορα-διανοια* – binds every copula. To think tautologically is to think *being-thinking-language* in its inceptuality – to think grammatization as the allegory of dialectics.

In thinking dialectically, by way of contradiction, we presume some mnemotechnical infrastructure (i.e. background, context, milieu, horizon, screen, interface, etc.) upon which our thinking is composed. We assume this to be a 'thing of the past' that must already have been adequately understood if the contradiction is to have appeared in the first place. But this overlooks everything in the background that cannot be reduced to human memory – the externalized and, increasingly, industrialized memory that Bernard Stiegler calls "tertiary retention" – a term that he derives from Husserl's *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time.*[68]

> Tertiary retention is in the most general sense the prosthesis of consciousness without which there could be no mind, no recall, no memory of a past that one has not personally lived, no culture.[69]

Stiegler agrees with Borges that "[t]o think is to ignore (or forget) differences, to generalize, to abstract."[70] The relationship between primary and secondary retention is characterized by a constant work of selection without which thinking would give way to a boundless recursion:

> primary retention is a selection process brought about through criteria that have been established during previous clearings away, which were themselves selections resulting

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[68] Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* (Dordrecht, Pays-Bas: Kluwer, 1991)

[69] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 39

[70] Jorge L. Borges, *Collected Fictions* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1998), 137

from other, prior clearings. This occurs because as memorization, primary retention is also a primary memory *lapse,* a reduction of what *passes by* to a *past* that retains only what the criteria constituting the secondary retentions allow it to select: secondary retentions inhabit the process of primary retention in advance.[71]

There can be no stable opposition between primary and secondary retention because perception and imagination mutually condition one another. The hypomnesic 'ground' of memory must, therefore, be sought in the mnemotechnical substrate of tertiary retention.

Memory is a text rewritten by rereading – what Stiegler calls "*un écran d'écriture*" – an original prosthesis in which the mind constitutes itself by externalizing itself through a process of "grammatization."[72] This process begins *avant la letter,* tracing at least as far back as the genetic inscription of intergenerational memory in the cellular proteins that eventually become DNA. It culminates in the modern algorithmic state capable of governing a global ecosystem of human and inhuman organisms by way of self-regulating inscriptions.

If the event of inscription were coextensive with the history of grammatization it would be difficult to imagine how it could even be said to *take place*, which is why Stiegler speaks of technology as an original prosthesis. "The prosthesis," he argues, "is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body *qua* 'human.'"[73]

A pros-thesis is what is placed in front, that is, what is outside, outside what it is placed in front of. However, if what is outside constitutes the very being of what it lies outside of, then this being is *outside itself.*[74]

Once the *trope* of prosthesis is permitted, it is only a difference of degree and not of kind that separates it from the global cybernetic system. The *constitution* of the human body, like that of

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[71] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 19
[72] Bernard Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, ed. Daniel Ross (Open Humanities Press, 2018)
[73] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 152–53
[74] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 193

the body politic, involves the *contraction* of both psychical and technical entities in a process that Stiegler, after Gilbert Simondon, calls "transindividuation."[75] In its most radical formulation, this pros-*thesis* implies that technics *is* time[76] – that all memory is technical and all technology, mnemotechnical. This means that the *differentia specifica* of the technical object is the "externalization" or "industrialization" of memory. It also means that all technology is prosthetic insofar as it inscribes memory in and upon body-world interfaces and cybernetic insofar as it gets disseminated throughout global networks and stored in physical and virtual archives. Regardless of whether it is a matter of a living body or a body politic the questions are the same: who or what is driving, steering, commanding the history of technics?

In *Technics and Time I*, Stiegler expounds the "necessary default" of the original prosthesis through the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus as it is told by Plato in the *Protagoras* and Hesiod in the *Theogony*. In the Protagoras, Epimetheus, after being assigned the task of distributing the abilities amongst the animals, forgets about humankind, requiring his brother, Prometheus, to steal fire from the Gods. Unaccommodated, the human would be the lowest of animals destined for extinction. Granted the divine prosthesis of knowledge and fire, humans no longer ek-sist in the same way as other animals but, rather, in the mode of a 'being-toward-death' : "Humans only occur through their being forgotten; they only appear in disappearing."[77]

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[75] Gilbert Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1995)
[76] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 83
[77] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 188

It is difficult to say whether this kind of forgetting constitutes a triumph or a fall.[78] It is the invention of history without which we would be unable to chart the vicissitudes of human progress. But it is also that which makes every technological 'origin' allegorical. We should read, in the allegory of the Fall, the *Verfallenheit* of *das Man* in *Being and Time*. According to de Man, we should also pay heed, in German, to the grammatical *fall* and its various declensions: *Beifall* (success), *Einfall* (improvisation), *Rückfall* (relapse) and, of course, *Fälle* (trap).[79] Only allegorically can we read the Fall as the movement of cultural, political and technological differentiation. It constitutes the movement of time itself as the diaphora of the diachronic. Prometheus' liver, doomed to be devoured each day becomes the "Titan's clock." It is an "organic *mirror* in which divinatory hermeneutics is practiced."[80] The stones [calculs] it contains, become the rudiments of all chronological calculation.

Epimetheus is not simply an idiot, he is the origin of idiomaticity. He defines the singularity of the subject as a "who" prosthetically woven into the mnemotechnical substrate (the "what"). The "doubling up" of the fault of Epimetheus – forgetfulness and then theft – provides the mythic archetype of what Stiegler calls "epokhal redoubling."[81] The thinking of epochal redoubling is a thinking of epokhal différance, which is to say, a thinking of the *speed* of différance. When grammatology becomes pro-grammatology – when différance comes to include automated, algorithmic systems – *noetic* différance – the singularity and idiomaticity of the "who" – has a more difficult time breaching through the time in which it is suspended. To

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[78] Man, *Resistance*, 20
[79] Man, *Rhetoric*, 290
[80] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 203
[81] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 233

"make the différance" is to suspend, however temporarily, the suspension of temporality as

such, which is to say, as ἐποχή. This suspension of suspension and différance within différance

is the epokhal redoubling by which human beings are woven into the "idiotext."[82] The idiotext

is a texture made up of "long circuits" of transindividuation that shuttle between organic and

inorganic entities. It is that which composes the "transindividual" of which Gilbert Simondon

writes.[83] In weaving together Simondon's thinking of transindividuation with Derrida's thinking

of différance, Stiegler seeks to describe the texture of tertiary retention as an "organology of

dreams":

> The life of the spirit is exteriorization inasmuch as it constitutes a *loop*, wherein the
> *secondary interiorization* of primarily effected exteriorization constitutes, in an après
> coup, *noesis as technesis* – which always ultimately leads to the formation of a new
> *pharmakon* generated by the organological condition of the noetic soul insofar as it
> dreams, that is, inasmuch as it can realize its dreams, and can do so only at the risk they
> may turn into nightmares. Such a *pharmakon* may be a new instrument, a new drug or a
> new work [*oeuvre*]: a work works only by inscribing itself into a present, which it
> temporalizes only by spatializing it as its *différance*, a *différance* that is pharmacological
> *through and through*.[84]

Stiegler's exploration of différance and pharmacology "differs considerably from Derrida's

exposition in *Of Grammatology*" insofar as he "think[s] the supplement essentially in relation to

tertiary retention . . . whereas for Derrida the arche-trace constitutes the living trace in general

– well before the appearance of tertiary retention."[85] For Stiegler, tertiary retention is that

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[82] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 255–58; Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 60, 64, 240–243

[83] "By the intermediary of the technical object an interhuman relation is created. That is the model of transindividuality. . . . The relation to technical objects cannot become adequate individual by individual, except in some very rare and isolated cases; [the relation] can only be instituted under the condition that it succeeds in bringing this collective inter-individual reality into existence, which we call transindividual, because it creates a coupling between the inventive and organizing capacities of multiple subjects" Yuk Hui, *Recursivity and Contingency* (London, New York: Rowman et Littlefield International, 2019), §33

[84] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 227–28

[85] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 160

which makes it possible to think noetic life as a process of technical transindividuation. It is that

against which the entire history of Western thought is to be judged.

According to Stiegler, the three syntheses of which Kant writes in the first version of the

Critique of Pure Reason (apprehension, reproduction, and recognition) are an attempt to think

tertiary retention, but one that ends up failing even to distinguish between primary and

secondary retention. He thus posits a "fourth synthesis" for Kant that corresponds with the

tertiary retention he posited for Husserl. This fourth synthesis would entail the a priori

conditioning of the third synthesis (recognition) and, thus, a kind of "a priori prostheticity." He

associates this "fourth synthesis" with an "industrial schematism" that, despite its "a-

transcendental" nature, is no less fundamental to reason than the schemata posited by Kant. It

is to be thought along the lines of the "culture industry" described by Adorno and Horkheimer –

a kind of mnemotechnical programming for the masses.[86]

On the basis of this reading of Husserl and Kant, Stiegler contends that Heidegger's

critique of Kant (that Kant overlooked the being of Being) overlooks the kind of industrial

schematism on which memory is 'based.' He argues that Heidegger's "'existential analysis' has

no idea how to establish that in-the-world-ness, exclusively out of which the thought of space

can occur, is first and foremost retentions."[87] According to Stiegler, "tertiary retention is

Heidegger's *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*" or, rather, it is what *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* might have been if

Heidegger did not insist on the priority of 'authentic' temporality over ordinary, 'worldly',

technical time. Part I of *Being and Time* is characterized by a

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[86] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 138–43
[87] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 158

forgetting of retentional mechanisms supporting this world of tools that are themselves forgotten *as* tools, devices that precisely constitute this world *as* world, and through whose interiorization we see, sense, move, think, etc.

This corresponds, in Part II, to the

> failure to think tertiary retention under the name he gives to *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*, . . . his pure and simple forgetting of the thought of the existential nature of teaching, [and] his failure to think schematization as transcendental imagination, as *Dasein's* temporality.[88]

As one might have guessed, this failure to think tertiary retention is also the 'ground' of

Stiegler's critique of Derrida. In *Technics and Time II,* he asks whether

> the grammatological project [is] not weakened in advance in frequently blurring phonological writings specificity, in suggesting that most of the time virtually everything that takes place in it was always there beforehand, and in not making this specificity a central issue (and does all of grammatology not, in a certain sense, necessarily banish just such a question)?[89]

In more recent writings he goes as far as to say that in "contest[ing] Husserl's opposition

between primary retention and secondary retention," Derrida "simply ignore[s] tertiary

retention."[90] It is here that the reading becomes less of a critique and more of an allergic

reaction:

> Derrida places tertiary retention at the heart of the question. And yet he nevertheless evacuates from this question any politics of invention capable of taking the *pharmakon* as its object – a fact that, all things considered, in the end locks deconstruction into a depressive, anti-inventive and anti-alternative discourse of 'resistance'.[91]

Stiegler is willing to follow the thinking of différance to the point that it puts the relationship

between primary and secondary retention in crisis, but he still wants tertiary retention to serve

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[88] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 161
[89] Stiegler, *Technics 2*, 30
[90] Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017), 223
[91] Bernard Stiegler, *States of Shock: Stupidity and knowledge in the 21st century* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014), 82

as the ground for the history of mnemotechnical invention. He historicizes the différance of the trace as a technical process without always deconstructing it to the point of crisis. In order to speak of the historicity of the grammatological trace one must be able to specify different types of traces. But this is to historicize the crisis in precisely the same way that Foucault historicizes madness.[92] One might even say that, in historicizing différance, Stiegler Foucaultianizes Derrida. This is not to discount the merit of Stieglerian or Foucaultian reading. It is simply to say that the considerable strength of Stiegler's insight requires that he remain *critically* blind to what Derrida is saying. This is an entirely understandable and deeply human failing – many would consider it a virtue. If the crisis is really undecidable then why not just make a decision already? Why persist in pondering the imponderables while the world goes haywire? Like Frederic Jameson, Stiegler follows the thinking of deconstruction up to a point, but ends up trying to mediate the most *critical* insights dialectically in a way that seeks to recover a more conventional sense of historical materiality. Even in illustrating how the "shock" of technical invention disrupts the metaphysical foundations of thought itself, he maintains that these shocks can be read according to a chronological scheme. But, in doing so, he reduces différance to a relative stability, or "metastable equilibrium."[93] Technical invention remains an historiological, metaphysical concept.[94]

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[92] Cf. Chapter II "Crisis / Madness"

[93] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 94

[94] We might contrast this with Derrida's more aporetic formulation of invention in "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" : "This invention of the entirely other is beyond any possible status; I still call it invention because one gets ready for it, one makes this step destined to let the other come, *come in.* The invention of the other, the incoming of the other, certainly does not take the form of a subjective genitive, and just as assuredly not of an objective genitive either, even if the invention comes from the other – for this other is thenceforth neither subject nor object, neither a self nor a consciousness nor an unconscious. To get ready for this coming of the other is what I call the deconstruction that deconstructs this double genitive and that, as deconstructive

After supplementing Husserl's theory of internal time consciousness with tertiary

retention, Stiegler grafts this onto Kant's *Critique* in formulating a ternary synthesis, then

critiques Heidegger for confusing authentic and everyday temporality, and Derrida for blurring

the boundaries between literal tertiary retention and its other modalities. But could we not,

just as easily, argue that it is Stiegler who confuses and blurs the boundaries between

Husserlian retention, Kantian synthesis, Heideggerian temporality and Derridian pharmacology?

A monotony lurks under this proliferation of terminology, as if the thinking of tertiary retention

had to convince itself of its effects by constantly finding some new lexicon to parasitize. There is

something almost comical in this relentless insistence on the failure of others to think tertiary

retention. The phrase takes on a somewhat magical power. It begins to function like *mana* – as

if simply uttering it could empower us to change the technological state of affairs.[95] But if

tertiary retention really had such an incantatory power, would Stiegler really need Husserl,

Heidegger, Kant, Derrida or anyone else for that matter?

In equating tertiary retention with the pharmakon, Stiegler claims to move beyond

Derrida in the thinking of a "positive pharmacology."[96] But to speak of a "positive

pharmacology" is somewhat perverse. It attempts to sublate that which puts the very idea of

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invention, comes back in the step – and also as the step – of the other. To invent would then be to "know" how to say "come" and to answer the "come" of the other. Does that ever come about? Of this event one is never sure." Jacques Derrida, *Psyche I: Inventions of the Other*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 39

[95] "The murky, undivided entity worshipped as the principle of *mana* at the earliest known stages of humanity lived on in the bright world of the Greek religion. Primal and undifferentiated, it is everything unknown and alien; it is that which transcends the bounds of experience, the part of things which is more than their immediately perceived existence. What the primitive experiences as supernatural is not a spiritual substance in contradistinction to the material world but the complex concatenation of nature in contrast to its individual link." Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002)

[96] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 221-223, 229

sublation in crisis. Even the most rudimentary understanding of the pharmakon blocks any simple opposition of positivity and negativity. In arguing that Derrida fails to deliver a more practical, political, humanistic pharmacology, Stiegler fails to read what was inhuman about the pharmakon in the first place. This is to say that he can only think inhumanity in terms of tertiary retention. He cannot think it rhetorically. He confesses that he has "always been perplexed by Derrida's position, which excludes studying the specificity and *privilege* of literal tertiary retention," making it sound as though thinking could somehow escape the metaphysical closure of language simply by evoking tertiary retention.[97] But simply coining a special terminology for the substrate of memory does not make this terminology any more fundamental or material. There is nothing less deconstructive or even less Kantian than this insistence that we might know the substrate as such. This is what Stiegler's critique in its weakest moments seems to suggest – that it has somehow grasped the very noumenality of memory. A real mnemotechnical critique, in the Kantian sense, would insist that we could only know tertiary retention through its phenomenal manifestations. While Stiegler makes great strides in this direction by differentiating, schematizing and historicizing the various modes of tertiary retention, a critical component drops out when he claims that this critique has somehow moved beyond the literal – as if he forgets sometimes that he is still writing in a natural language and not an executable code.

Here I merely want to suggest that Stiegler's critique loses its critical power when it exalts tertiary retention into the position of a metaphysical concept while at the same time claiming to have surpassed the merely linguistic efforts of the deconstructive texts he purports

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[97] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 244

to read. While this is in no way the general tendency of his writing, it seems, unfortunately, to be the drift of some of his more recent works and might, perhaps, correspond with the incredible speed at which these works are being written. Derrida once wrote of one of de Man's critics as the kind of person who "like[s] to read the way one drives on the interstate, perhaps even while driving on the interstate."[98] Stiegler, in a recent work, describes the process by which he dictates his drafts while flying down the A1 motorway at 130 kilometers per hour and how these dictations are subsequently transcribed by his wife and, eventually, edited into his publications.[99] However amusing it may be to imagine this workflow, it raises the critical, mnemotechnical question of the relationship between the automobility of the automobile and the automobility of the soul – a 'vehicle' that can no longer simply be regarded as figurative. As Stiegler asserts, the question of différance must, from a mnemotechnical perspective, be regarded as a question of speed.[100] If this is the case, then we cannot regard the speed of

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[98] Jacques Derrida, "Biodegradables: Seven Diary Fragments," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 4 (1989): 846

[99] "And yet, many of the books I published between 2004 and 2009 were written while driving a car between Paris and Compiegne on the A1 motorway, in this mental state of diurnal dreaming that is provoked by both the fluidity of the motorway and the subjugation of the body to the mechanics through which it augments its automobility - which, according to Aristotle in *Peri Psūkhês*, is constitutive of any soul whatsoever. I did so by creating for myself a literary practice, through an arrangement between my vehicle and the state of my soul, while driving at 130 kilometres per hour with a digital voice recorder, from which my wife Caroline would later retrieve the audio files and turn them into text files with the help of an automatic transcription software called Dragon, thereby providing me with the materials for books that I would finish writing during the summer.

The noetic stakes of mechanical automobility become, then, a question of ensuring that automatization (of my technical devices as well as the automatic gestures that they require me to interiorize as neural circuits and to perform, for example, in the situation of driving a car) is *designed, studied and cultivated* in order to *free up time for intermittences that are richer in experience and learning than the practices for which they are an automated substitute.110* This freeing up must in some way be a release from the behavioural constraints of learning in one epoch so that they may be replaced by others that are richer and that yet preserve the memory of lost practical experiences, transforming them into a new experience, proper to the new epoch." Stiegler, *Automatic*, 123

[100] "The conquest of mobility, *qua* supernatural mobility, *qua* speed, is more significant than intelligence – or rather, intelligence is but a type of mobility, a singular relation of space and time, which must be thought from the standpoint of speed, as its decompositions, and not conversely (speed as the result of their conjunction). It would be necessary, moreover, to analyze the relation of différance to speed: différance is itself also a conjunction of space and time more originary than their separation. It is in this sense, then, that différance will, perhaps, have to be thought *as* speed." Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 146

textual production as something 'beneath' the purview of critique. The text machine, however ineffable it may seem, is fundamentally a publication machine, which is to say that even the most mundane questions of textual dissemination are never far from the materiality of inscription.

Again, I would stress here that I am merely rehashing what Stiegler himself freely offers us in the manner of an autoethnographic autocritique. In attempting to critique his critique of grammatology, we must not forget that he is not only an arche allegorist of our algorithmic age, but also a profound (if inadvert) allegorist of himself. In arguing that almost everyone forgets the materiality of tertiary retention does he not, himself, forget the necessity of this default. In positing this default as a substrate does he not frequently carry out the allegory of *le defaut qu'il faut?* While Stiegler at times presents himself as a Promethean figure bearing the divine, mnemotechnical insight into all that is *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*, he can also, by the very light of this gift, assume the guise of Epimetheus, the Idiot, unable to remember (or, at least, take *literally*) what he himself has written. If we can read the necessary default along the lines of the allegorical "imperative" of which de Man writes, then, perhaps, there is a way to read Stiegler's reading of Derrida's pharmacology that would not be as positivistic as it might at first seem. In doing so we would have to allow that Stiegler 'knows' that the pharmakon could never be something positive and that, in saying so, he is being willfully perverse, polemical, which is to say, allegorical. Rather than attempting to think beyond the letter and presuming to do so by applying the same critique to the entire philosophical canon, perhaps we might critically examine the ease with which we are convinced that there is something other than language – how susceptible we are to the ideology of a hypomnesic substrate that is ultimately no less

aesthetic than the surfaces it claims to underly. The moment that tertiary retention no longer functions, conventionally, as a metaphor of Substance, one would have to read Stiegler's entire critique as an allegory of the pharmakon (tertiary retention) that only succeeds in positing itself over and over again without producing the 'sense of history' or political exigency to which it aspires.

What would it mean to read "positive pharmacology" as a calculated step in the wrong direction? For starters, it would put a certain Stieglerian avatar in the position of Ra in the allegory of the *Phaedrus* and, especially, the deconstructive reading of this allegory that Derrida famously provides in "Plato's Pharmacy." 'Stiegler' assumes the role of the logocentric, or in this case, technocentric sovereign who examines and ultimately rejects the gift of an intractably literal and literary pharmakon offered up by Derrida (Theuth) in *Grammatology*. What this Stiegler wanted from Derrida – what he tried, on numerous occasions, to coax from Derrida when he was alive – was a more elaborate theory (if not a full-blown philosophical treatise) on the digitization of what Derrida (circa *Grammatology*) still called the "trace." But the fact that Derrida never provided such a supplement to *Grammatology* is why we have three volumes of *Technics and Time* and counting, not to mention the countless other volumes that Stiegler continues to produce at a downright maniacal pace. A more allegorical 'Stiegler' would have to have known that Derrida's gift could never have been refused and that it would always already have pervaded everything he (Stiegler) would have liked to have said about grammatology, pharmacology and mnemotechnics in general. In refusing this gift, he plays out the Bloomian drama of "misprision" in which the rival attempts to carve out a space for himself.[101] In

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[101] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A theory of poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

speaking from out of the death of the father he assumes or, rather, presumes the throne – the

sovereign power to refuse the gift of influence, inheritance, memory. But what if this were just

an act? What if there were a Stiegler that 'knew' nobody would take him seriously in claiming

to move beyond Derrida in the thinking of a "positive pharmacology?" And, more importantly,

what if he knew that this polemical, dialectical insurgency into the thinking of deconstruction

was bound to produce a powerful pathological reaction that would no longer be 'negative' in

the manner of a dialectical negation?

In attempting to respond to Stiegler's critique of Derrida while answering to the aporias

of Derridian ethics you might, at first, say: '*No, you can't just historicize différance and politicize*

the pharmakon like this! Différance is too mysterious and the pharmakon is too 'slippery'!' But

then you would (over)hear the silly, profoundly uncritical character of what you have just said

(or are in the very act of saying). In deferring to "Différance," you remember that Derrida,

himself, in his reading of Heidegger's reading of Anaximander, actually *does* entertain the

possibility that différance is, in a peculiar sense, "older" than ontological difference.[102] You then

find yourself seriously rethinking the epochality of différance that, for Heidegger, remains

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[102] "In a certain aspect of itself, *différance* is certainly but the historical and epochal *unfolding* of Being or of the ontological difference. The *a* of *différance* marks the *movement* of this unfolding.

And yet, are not the thought of the *meaning* or *truth* of Being, the determination of *différance* as the ontico-ontological difference, difference thought within the horizon of the question *of Being*, still intrametaphysical effects of *différance*? The unfolding of *différance* is perhaps not solely the truth of Being, or of the epochality of Being. Perhaps we must attempt to think this unheard-of thought, this silent tracing: that the history of Being, whose thought engages the Greco-Western *logos* such as it is produced via the ontological difference, is but an epoch of the *diapherein*. Henceforth one could no longer even call this an "epoch," the concept of epochality belonging to what is within history as the history of Being. Since Being has never had a "meaning," has never been thought or said as such, except by dissimulating itself in beings, then *différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) "older'' than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being. When it has this age it can be called the play of the trace. The play of a trace. which no longer belongs to the horizon of Being, but whose play transports and encloses the meaning of Being: the play of the trace, or the *différance*, which has no meaning and is not. Which does not belong. There is no maintaining, and no depth to, this chessboard on which Being is put into play." Derrida, *Margins*, 22

suspended between the inceptual thinking of the Greeks and the enframed reasoning of modernity. You begin to see that Heidegger did not simply 'oppose' modernity and technology any more than Derrida opposed traditional logic or historicism – that they both, to a surprising extent, regard the commonsensical 'understanding' of the 'origin' and 'end' of philosophy as an inevitability that it is impossible to think beyond. You are forced to concede that there might actually be something to Stiegler's critique of deconstruction as a "depressive, anti-inventive and anti-alternative discourse of 'resistance'" after all. In passing along this detour – in discharging the noetic energy of a "long circuit of transindividuation" – in actually reading what, previously, you were only really presuming to write about – you find yourself lost in thought and, perhaps, even a little depressed. Even though you are doing the 'right' thing in adhering to the ethics of deconstruction, you find it hard to get excited about proving yourself wrong. What's worse is the thought that this idea of a "positive pharmacology" might actually be *so* wrong that it ends up being *more* productive of critical linguistic analysis than a more careful, mincing, plodding and (let's face it) boring study of the sort that so many 'deconstructivist' thinkers – despite their admiration for the sublime irony, brutal economy and all around good humor of Derrida and de Man – tend to succumb.

As your/our research amasses, we begin to realize that, rather than 'disproving' the thesis of positive pharmacology we have, in effect, been allegorized by it. Here it *occurs* to us to ask whether it might have been better just to let someone else react since whoever ends up doing so is basically setting himself up for a fall – and, also, whether it is this very quasi-critical awareness to which de Man was alluding when he spoke of textual "occurrences," blinding insights, and material events. We wonder whether it is only by giving up our desire to react in

such a pathological manner that we really live up to the task [Aufgabe] of deconstruction. Eventually, with a shrug of relief and a grimace caught between self-deprecation and mutual admiration, we end up commending 'Stiegler' – no longer the psychobiographical entity but, rather, the machination at work under this pseudonym – for generously having programmed all of this in advance.

History / Danger

Deconstruction, as it is formulated in *Of Grammatology*, is a "question about the meaning and origin of writing [that] precedes, or at least merges with, a certain type of question about the meaning and origin of technics." It is because of this technicity or "pro-grammaticity" of writing that deconstruction is fundamentally joined to the thinking of cybernetics:

> whether it has essential limits or not, the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be the field of writing. If the theory of cybernetics is by itself to oust all metaphysical concepts – including the concepts of soul, of life, of value, of choice, of memory – which until recently served to separate the machine from man, it must conserve the notion of writing, trace, grammē [written mark], or grapheme, until its own historico-metaphysical character is also exposed.[103]

The idea that such a cybernetic program enframes human perception has many names: "anxiety," "influenza," "archive fever" [*mal d'archive*]. [104] It is the thought that there is no memory without censorship and repression. This "*anarchivic*" and "*archeviolithic*" force is the "danger" to which Derrida alludes when he writes, in the exergue to *Of Grammatology,* that

> The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, *presented,* as a sort of monstrosity.[105]

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[103] Derrida, *Grammatology*, 8
[104] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian impression* (Chicago [Ill.]: University of Chicago Press, 1998)
[105] Derrida, *Grammatology*, 5

According to Stiegler

> "Absolute danger" and "monstrosity" are what arise [apparaît] in and as the Entropocene, that is, as the negative phenomenology of a negative teleology. Hence the ordeal presents itself: the ordeal of what challenges us and creates questions as a pharmacology and through the symptomatology of a denial – of which the election of Donald Trump, as advent of the Trumpocene, is a caricature, as reign of "post-truth".[106]

"Absolute danger" is what Heidegger regards as the essence of Gestell – the possibility of a total loss of worldhood and historicity that is, ironically, the authentic essence of history (and not just the historiological contemplation of events):

> Historiological knowledge concerning what was previously thought – taken on its own and tallied – does not yet guarantee that we send ourselves with our whole essence into that thinking that, from far off beyond us, is given to us in thought by the oldest thoughts of Western thinking, which themselves thereby come upon us.[107]

Authentic history is the "sending" [Geschick] Derrida treats under the heading of the "envoi." It is to send and to let oneself be sent by history into history – to become a kind of emissary of one's own death. The subjectivity of the authentic 'self' cannot survive this historical transmission. To think history authentically is, thus, to forget one's self. To think historiologically, as a subjectivity laying claim to historical objectivity [Gegenwart], is to forget the essence of history. As that which is "impending" [Gegen-wart], authentic history never simply stands against the subject as an object.

> The relationship to what concernfully approaches us as a sighting and a claim, to what comes upon us [Angehende], to what is impending [Gegen-wart] and thus is authentically destiny and history, this relationship to history remains as simple as today it is difficult for us to even achieve and retain such a relationship. The reason for this difficulty lies not only in the representation of the human as a subject, but also in the representation of history as an object and formation of historiology and of historiological consciousness. . . . Because it itself is historically attuned [*ge-stimmt*], the

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[106] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 197
[107] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 94

thinking which determines [*bestimmt*] contemporary world history only speaks to our contemplation when it has delivered us over to its claim [Anspruch].[108]

The *danger* of historiology is that we might only grasp history without letting ourselves be grasped by it. History is not a concept [Begriff] that can be grasped sensuously. The elliptical course of the envoi has little to do with the various feedback loops at work in our optical and auditory senses. When Heidegger speaks of seeing and hearing, he is not referring to the activity of our sense organs. He strips "sighting" [Anblick] and "claiming" [Anspruch] of the sensuous presence they inevitably evoke so that they might be attuned to the nothingness of history. We cannot think the positionality of the human world-historically without listening to the language [Sprache] in which history addresses itself to us as an An-spruch.

> tradition, i.e., that a claim of what has-been brings itself into the space of freedom and that history thereby speaks to us, such tradition does not rest on the historiological knowledge procured by us, but rather all historiology is each time only a particular kind of technological-practical refinement and presentation of that tradition. All historiology requires history. But history does not necessarily need historiology. Thus there are peoples who know no historiology although they live historically, perhaps even in a deeper sense. Admittedly, we today are still all too accustomed to understand the titles "history" and "historiology" indiscriminately, at one moment objectively, at another epistemologically.

> The country that counts among its great thinkers R. Descartes, the founder of the doctrine of the subjectivity of human beings, has no word in its language for history [Geschichte] to distinguish it from historiology [Historie]. No one of any insight will proclaim that this is by chance [Zufall]. There where a language has to say what is essential for it, there is no chance.[109]

Heidegger regards chance in language in much the same way that Hans Arp regards chance in art, especially when the latter writes: "Der Zufall in der Kunst unsere Zeit ist nichts

[108] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 96–97
[109] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 96–97

Zufalliges."[110] It is through language – thought inceptually as logos, noesis, aesthesis and technopoiesis – that it befalls us to think the contingency [Zufall] of what we claim to be 'necessary' (i.e. the being that we claim to be ourselves). Language recalls us to the thinking of the nothing. It is that in which thinking can remain suspended in and as time [ἐποχή]. But it is impossible to grasp this nothingness once and for all except, perhaps, in death. We are destined to forget the meaning of destiny [Geschick]. We can only tarry with its negativity. Our very selfhood depends on this forgetting. The grammar in which we express ourselves (as selves) requires it.

While Stiegler, in *Technics and Time*, critiques Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, for failing to think the essential technicity of world history, we can clearly see how Heidegger explicitly regards historiology as a technological process – especially in some of the later writings and lectures where he argues that contemporary, "logistical," calculative thinking, in becoming "still more logical" departs even further from the essence of Logos. The contingency of history is "levelled off" into an historiological necessity – a fait accompli – a fact in the common sense of the term.

> The thinking-machine in itself is already much more the consequence of a transposition of thinking into a manner of thought that, as mere calculation, provokes a translation into the machinery of these machines. Thus we overlook what happens here as an alteration of thinking, as long as we do not keep our eyes open to the fact that thinking must become logistical because it is inceptually logical.[111]

It is beyond the powers of any individual to change this state of fact because our very selfhood is part of the mechanism:

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[110] Joseph L. Koerner, "Bosch's Contingency," in *Kontingenz*, ed. Gerhard v. Graevenitz and Odo Marquard (Munich: Fink, 1998), 251

[111] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 98–99

Technology is technology of historiology; historiology is historiology of technology. . . . Hence the technological steering of the "history" that still remains (a steering which has dissolved itself into a mere arranging of life processes in service to the will to willing) is guided by the principle of the fastest imitating and quantitative surpassing. Nowhere is there transformation, meditation, reconfiguration, but only the single overreaching in more and more devices and implements of the will.[112]

While Stiegler eventually acknowledges Heidegger's contributions to the thinking of technicity and world history, he still maintains that Heidegger was unable to think the mnemotechnical substrate rigorously enough in terms of "tertiary retention." But even if Stiegler's recent "hypercritique" remains mired in historiological thinking and a fetishistic attachment to tertiary retention, it is, nonetheless, indispensable to any inquiry into Heidegger's mnemotechnics.

Hypercritique is what thinks the limits of thinking, that is, of critique itself in the conditions and *under* the condition of exosomatization such that it thereby constitutes and destitutes the *there* (*Da*) and as that which there is (*es gibt*), that is, as that, *es*, which gives, *gibt.* Exosomatization, insofar as it 'transcends' noetic life by *imposing itself* upon it, is what trans-forms *surrealities* into various forms of transcendence. . . . According to this perspective, *words,* too, are organs, fruits of *poiēsis,* and each generation must relearn them, pending the direct or indirect coining of new ones. To coin new words, like the creation of instruments and other organological organs, is always a collective activity, and this collectivity produces circuits of transindividuation, which in turn support this collectivity.[113]

This "hypercritique," while it could always be more *critical* in the Kantian and de Manian sense, has the merit of sketching the exigencies of our technological moment. We might even regard "exosomatization" as a kind of material event were it not for the fact that Stiegler, despite posing the question in terms of synchrony and diachrony, rarely shows how this would all play out in a more technical, rhetorical analysis. He is primarily interested in the world-historical implications of the mnemotechnical event and not its discrete linguistic structure – its

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[112] Heidegger, *Event*, 75–77
[113] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 209

grammar. His recent focus on the interplay between "synchronic stereotypes" and "diachronic traumatypes," however, adds a whole new dimension to the thinking of "tertiary retention." It suggests the possibility of carrying out something like a deconstruction of technical temporalities. At stake in the "traumatype" is the idea that our noetic life depends on the capacity to dream (individually, collectively, literally, metaphorically) and that this very capacity is being short-circuited by the proliferation of stereotypes that, today, have grown so powerful that they function as "digital pheromones."[114] This means that humans, prosthetic, exosomatic creatures that we are, are not guaranteed the capacity to dream. When exposed to a kind of prosthetic dreaming for any amount of time we begin to mutate "epiphylogenetically."[115] Our

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[114] "To facilitate understanding of what is at stake in these externalities and their valorization, Moulier-Boutang adopts the metaphor of pollination by bees in the plant world - and, by extension, the question of the viability of living things in totality. Interpretation, which is a fruit of intelligence qua 'understanding of the environment, . . . is akin to pollination by bees[5].[13] We ourselves conceive contributory income as an *income for noetic pollination* - pollination practised as the *otium* of the people, and inasmuch as it is always 'missing'.

This metaphor, which can be taken quite far, and which is thus something more than an allegory, makes it possible to think the conditions of a hermeneutic and noetic traceology, because it itself raises the question of an organology of traces: bees, like ants, secrete chemical traces called pheromones, while the algorithmic governmentality of 24/7 capitalism is itself a traceology in which it is the data industry that makes the honey.

It is precisely in this that this algorithmic governmentality of fact - based on a structural legal vacuum imposed by the fact that automatized analytical understanding outstrips the hermeneutic faculty that is reason - is intrinsically toxic, because it fundamentally destroys value: the 'value of value[5]that, on the contrary, treats pollination as precisely not honey. Honey is 'monetized[5] in the form of exchange value by the beekeeper, who, because of this fact, takes care to maintain the hive. But the value of value is produced by bees themselves above and beyond the m arket [par-dessus le marché], if we can put it like that - as a quasi-sumptuary surplus, and within this general economy that is the sumptuousness of life, and especially noetic life, as Bataille showed.

The monetization of traces and of what automated management makes possible as the calculation of their protentions, that is, as the manipulation of these protentions, rapidly sterilizes protentional capacity itself by dividuating psychic individuals, that is, by depleting their libidinal energy, which we now know is noetic energy as such, that is, energeia as the work of trans-formation by which a noetic being can take care of itself - and of others into the bargain [pardessus le marché]." Stiegler, *Automatic*, 101, 212-213

[115] "What Heidegger calls the already there, constitutive of the temporality of Dasein, is this past that I never lived but that is nevertheless my past, without which I never would have had any past of my own. Such a structure of inheritance and transmission, which is the very ground of facticity itself since tradition can always conceal from me the sense of the origin that it alone can transmit to me, presupposes that the phenomenon of life *qua* Dasein becomes singular in the history of the living to the extent that, for Dasein, the epigenetic layer of life, far from being lost with the living when it dies, conserves and sediments itself, passes itself down in "the order of survival" *[survivance]* and to posterity as a gift as well as a debt, that is, as a destiny. This is not a "program" in the *quasi*-determinist biological sense, but a cipher in which the whole of Dasein's existence is caught; this

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"long circuits" of transindividuation are reconfigured, short-circuited. The result of our

immersion in this state of "disruption" is that our capacity to dream atrophies. It would be

somewhat anachronistic or catachrestic to speak of this process in terms of a 'loss.' If it were

the type of thing that even registered as a loss, as *trauma*, it would be something that we could

at least confront in a dream [Traum]. But the real *danger* of this disruption is that it never

manifests as such and, thus, absents itself from the libidinal economy in which it might become

an object of desire, contempt and, presumably, political action. However pleasurable dreams

may be, they are no match for our *feeds* – the hyperabundant continua of 'live' transmission

that challenge the surreality of our dreams and install us within the temporality of the *meme*.

Richard Dawkins claims to have derived the term meme from the Greek *μίμημα* to

describing the inherited information that cannot be accounted for by genetics, which is to say,

our "epiphylogenetic" memory. Today it is more closely tied to the baroque humor of social

media. The ironic instantaneity of the *meme*, we might say, has outstripped and overtaken the

diachronic expansiveness of *mneme*.[116] In its most general form, the meme denotes anything

with the power to arrest our *feed* for even a moment. It is the basic unit of attention and the

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epigenetic sedimentation, a memorization of what has come to pass, is what is called the past, what we shall name the *epiphylogenesis* of man, meaning the conservation, accumulation, and sedimentation of successive epigeneses, mutually articulated. Epiphylogenesis is a break with pure life, in that in the latter, epigenesis is precisely what is not conserved ("the pro*grammē* cannot receive lessons from experience" [Jacob 1974, 11]) even if this is not without effect on the genetic selection in which evolution consists (these questions have at any rate to be put in the perspective of the relation phenotype/genotype as embryology sets it forth, thereby giving a new place to epigenesis)[1] – but this effect can therefore only transmit itself genetically, precisely; epi-*phylo*-genesis also in the sense in which, just as the embryo recapitulates each stage of evolution, each branch of the shrub of which it is the most recent bud, epigenesis must be recapitulated to take place. This is the very ideal of *mathesis* (an analogy to be handled all the more prudently as the concept of embryonic recapitulation is itself a metaphor). Epiphylogenesis bestows its identity upon the human individual: the accents of his speech, the style of his approach, the force of his gesture, the unity of his world. This concept would be that of an archaeology of reflexivity." Stiegler, *Technics 1*

[116] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 192

site at which memory is channeled or foreclosed. The 'feed' is both a source of information and a vector of navigation. It is less a scrolling than a falling – like the Fall of Man, the lapsus linguae, the downward drift of atoms in the Epicurean void and the sight of others falling that so fascinated Baudelaire. Perhaps what the meme memes is nothing other than this *Verfallenheit*. It is the emblem of a World in which the essence of Care has given way to a global Sinecure. The apocalypse itself has become a meme which, at most, evokes a twinge of concern, but falls far short of what Heidegger had in mind when he defined Care as the fundamental structure of existence.

While there are few things more stimulating than thumbing along this smooth infinity, it is difficult to ignore the extent to which it preys upon our attention, effectively extorting us for weeks (if not months) of affective labor per year. Stiegler challenges N. Katherine Hayles' more equivocal stance on the shifting relationship between 'deep' and 'hyper' attention, arguing that we are living in an age of functional stupidity characterized by a poisonous pharmacological relationship with our machines – an age in which memory and, with it, the knowledge of how to think, do and live are being short-circuited on a planetary scale.[117] Apps like Instagram seem to strive for a state of perpetual crisis – a paradoxical state reminiscent of Friedrich Schlegel's definition of irony as a "permanent parekbasis."[118] But how could a crisis be permanent? We need only scroll for a few minutes (hours, days) to grasp what Schlegel had in mind. Everything feed-worthy must be parsed and scintillated so that it might glide down with minimal resistance toward elimination. Everywhere we look, however well we budget our time, however many

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[117] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Think: Digital media and contemporary technogenesis* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 69n3
[118] Man, *Blindness*, 228; Man, *Aesthetic*, 179ff.

icons and badges augment and enframe our vision, our attention is always better invested elsewhere. Where exactly matters little as far as the algorithms that monetize the perambulations of human attention are concerned. The market [ἀγορά] runs best when the span of our attention remains narrow and the aim of our queries remains allegorical.

'*Siri, how do I reach Erewhon?*'

The implicit answer:

'*Not without my aid, hapless traveler. And not without an unlimited plan for the unlimited plane that unfurls before us.*'

But the crisis is not simply all the bad stuff that lurks at the horizons of this conjectural tale. It cannot be reduced to what we know is happening or will likely continue to happen for the foreseeable future – the ecological, the political, the manifest decadence of 'Western civilization that now enwraps the planet and gorges itself on its own factory-farmed tail. It has, rather, to do with the unforeseeable future of the event – whether this reserve of mystery will ever give way to the more absolute knowing of the machine.

Exergue

"*Die Vergessenheit west!*"[119]

This is the singular point around which we enter – the Einkehr from which we must, eventually, retreat.[120] We can only begin to translate this saying – this saga of mnemotechnics.[121]

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[119] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 22
[120] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 69-70, 89, 114-118, 144, 157
[121] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 160ff.

Forgetting matters! For Heidegger, it is the fateful course [Geschick] of history [Geschichte]. For Derrida, it is what defines deconstruction as a "politics of memory" – a hospitality towards a spectrality that cannot be accommodated by ontology.[122] For Stiegler, it is "le défaut qu'il faut" – the "necessary default" of our technological origin.[123] For de Man, it is the "material inscription" of the "text machine."[124]

While it would be naïve to think of such statements as modular units that could be swapped out ad libitum, it would be *more* naïve not to acknowledge that they are destined to be treated as such. When uttered by such imposing figures, they might be said to "generate history" – not in the form of wars and revolutions, but in the form of text. In its most mundane sense, the text machine generates history by driving academic presses and filling library stacks or, as is more often the case these days, amassing subscriptions and spiking citation metrics. In pursuing these theses, we question the psychological and institutional horizons of what can currently be published, taught and read on the basis of our citational and thematic finitude. It is by way of such a critique that we enter most inceptually into the thinking of the mnemotechnical crisis.

Crisis is a caesura of memory – an interval in which memory and forgetting are dissolved. The resolution of crisis is not just the clearing up of problems with which it may coincide. It is resolved more in the manner of music. In the abyss that opens between citation

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[122] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The state of debt, the work of mourning and the new International* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), xviii

[123] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, xi-xii, 61, 101, 106, 182-183, 198

[124] Man, *Allegories*, 277, 299; Man, *Aesthetic*, 181ff.

and thematization, we can begin to hear the harmonic structure and the rhythm (or arrythmia)

of collective memory.

II. Crisis of Crisis

Crisis / Madness

When confronted with a crisis, we seek out the root of the matter, come up with a prognosis

and set about the work of triage – effectively divvying it up into so many crises and, in so doing,

forgetting what was critical in the first place. But if the crisis persists for any length of time, we

begin to wonder whether, as far back as we can recall, there has ever been anything but crisis –

whether crisis was not always already there, waiting, even before the advent of the

Anthropocene, the institution of modern science or the 'invention' of technology. If this were

so, then we would have to regard time itself as the history of crisis, the crisis of history, the

crisis of crisis.

Crisis is the instant of decision and "the instant of decision is madness."[126] Recalling this

aphorism of Kierkegaard's does not immunize us from madness. In using it as an epigraph to his

critique of Michel Foucault's reading of Descartes' *Meditations*, Derrida is not saying that he (or

Kierkegaard) 'know' more about madness than Foucault. He is not critiquing the intellectual

merit of *A History of Madness* per se but, rather, the possibility of writing such a history in the

first place. It is a critique of critique as the power to decide, within history, about states like

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[125] "… and they are borne [/] both deaf and blind, dazed, undiscerning tribes, [/] by whom to be and not to be are thought to be the same [/] and not the same, and the path of all is backward-turning." Graham, *Early Greek*, 214–15

[126] Derrida, *Writing*, 31

madness, which seem to exist without it. In question is the moment in the *Meditations* when

Descartes, pursued by the hypothesis of an "evil genius" capable of fabricating the world in its

entirety, recovers reason by way of the cogito. Derrida argues that such a narrative does not

"intern" madness because "hyperbolical doubt" "belongs to the narration narrating itself and

not to the narration narrated by Foucault."[127] If it is "imprisoned" it is not Descartes who

imprisons it but, rather, the representational structure of history. One can always question

whether any document of madness is really mad in itself or just an attempt to represent

madness from the outside.

Madness only exists in the moment of narration. It cannot be confined to the mind of

the reader or writer through which it passes. It is, itself, this passage. To think crisis critically,

we must postpone judgement as long as possible because the moment judgment is passed

there is no longer crisis. This is not merely some anomaly of cognitive experience, it is the law

en général: "madness cannot be conceived before its relation to law. This is the law, the law is a

madness."[128] In assuming that anyone in their right mind can be subjected to the law, we

presume that the memory of what has taken place is the rightful property of the subject. We

have decided that a subject can be held accountable for what it swears to recount.

> In order to maintain the proposition "only a decision is just," one need not refer
> decision to the structure of a subject or to the propositional form of a judgment. In a
> way, and at the risk of shocking, one could even say that a subject can never decide
> anything [*un sujet ne peut jamais rien décider*] : a subject is even that to *which* a
> decision cannot come or happen [*arriver*] otherwise than as a marginal accident that
> does not affect the essential identity and the substantial presence-to-self that make a

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[127] Derrida, *Writing*, 55–58
[128] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 251

subject what it is – if the choice of the word *subject* is not arbitrary, at least, and if one trusts in what is in fact always required, in our culture, of a subject.[129]

While it would be irrational to think that there could ever be a one-to-one ratio between truth and memory, we are each obliged, by way of the social contract if not the letter of the constitution, to pledge exactly this – to enact exactitude – to misdirect citation – to equate what is inadequate with *adequatio* itself. The veracity of our judgment is self-indemnifying. We will never fully exculpate ourselves from interpolation, narrativity, misrepresentation, fabrication, etc. To excuse ourselves from the impossible demands of this promise we would have to claim *temporary* insanity: "The instant of decision is a madness, says Kierkegaard. This is particularly true of the instant of the *just* decision that must rend time and defy dialectics."[130] No temporal being can own up to madness. It must always be rendered unto Time. Time renders itself thinkable by rending itself into the synchronic, constative statement and the performative, diachronic act. "*La justice, il n'y a que ça de vrai.*"[131] The metaphysical violence of this statement governs every temporal being. The subjectivity of the thinking Subject is, *de jure*, predicated on the decisiveness of every act of testimony and confession, but such acts are, *de facto*, performative. We can only promise to state the truth – to conjure the constative.

> A constative can be *juste*, in the sense of *justesse,* never in the sense of justice. But as a performative cannot be just, in the sense of justice, except by grounding itself [en *se fondant*] in on conventions and so on other performatives, buried or not, it always maintains within itself some irruptive violence.[132]

On the one hand, this suggests that states such as madness and crisis cannot be cited because they involve a pure performativity that cannot be rendered constative. On the other hand, we

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[129] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 253
[130] Derrida, *Acts*, 255
[131] Derrida, *Acts*, 256
[132] Derrida, *Acts*, 256

might say that crisis *only* occurs as a *performative citation* – that it is only *between* the

performative and constative – in the undecidability of the citational act – that they might be

said to *take place*.

In the early essay "Criticism and Crisis" de Man reads Stephan Mallarme along similar

lines as Derrida's reading of Foucault. While Mallarme cites his contemporaries as evidence of

the "crisis of verse," this is little more than a ruse by which he can talk about his own poetic

experiments. As was the case for madness in Foucault: "It can always he shown, on all levels of

experience, that what other people experience as a crisis is perhaps not even a change."[133] This

is because the rhetoric of crisis in literature and literary criticism is always an index (a "mere

ripple") of the crisis of literary language as such.

For de Man, the literary work cannot be distinguished from the work of deconstruction.

In view of this it is better to approach the relationship between the 'poet' and the 'critic' not as

a formal or generic difference but, rather, as a difference in the intensity of the crisis that

precipitates between reader and text. It is "redundant" to speak of a "crisis of criticism"

because both criticism and crisis entail the collapse of the boundary between the subject and

object of literary analysis and the model of history that would allow for this differentiation. If

history *really* is literary, if criticism is *really* critical, then the attempt to cite history can do little

more than perpetuate its own critical blindness more or less consciously. This relationship

between critical blindness and insight cannot be understood dialectically: "Critics' moments of

greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which

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[133] Man, *Blindness*, 6

they achieve their greatest insight."[134] No matter how great the insight, blindness cannot be

escaped because, according to de Man, *critical* insight stands in *direct* (and not inverse)

proportion to blindness. "The rhetoric of crisis states its own truth in the mode of error. It is

itself radically blind to the light it emits."[135] This is what he shows in his critique of Derrida's

reading of Rousseau – that Derrida had to remain blind to what was literary in Rousseau in

order to procure the space for his own critical insight. When asked whether his own texts were

subject to this kind of blindness, de Man "just smiled inscrutably. He did not say yes and he did

not say no."[136]

Allegory / Irony

Reading and writing are critical insofar as they participate in the rhetoric they endeavor to

deconstruct: "Criticism is a metaphor for the act of reading, and this act is itself

inexhaustible."[137] The metaphor of reading is the metaphor of the failure to read metaphor.

This notion of the metaphorical nature of the act of critical reading is the 'basis' of what de Man

calls "ironic allegory."[138] Allegory is, in a certain sense, a second-degree metaphor.

After many caveats, Andrzej Warminski provides a remarkably concise gloss of what it

means to read allegorically in the style of de Man:

> de Man's readings start out by *first* setting up, reconstructing, the text as trope, as a
> tropological system (of substitutions and transformations of meaning) – or, most
> directly put, by interpreting the text as to be understood on the basis of (and *as*) a
> tropological system that would be closed, in the sense that its intelligibility is *grounded*
> in some ultimately stable meaning, an ultimately stable hermeneutic horizon of
> meaning. (In such a set- up, the rhetoric of tropes would be continuous with,

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[134] Man, *Blindness*, 109
[135] Man, *Blindness*, 16
[136] J. Hillis Miller, *Literature Matters* (Open Humanities Press, 2016), 157
[137] Man, *Blindness*, 107
[138] Man, *Allegories*, 116

homogeneous with, logic – the possibility of universal and hence extra- textual [and hence extra-linguistic] meaning.) All this means is: de Man begins by interpreting the meaning of the text, figuring out what the text means and how its figural language works to produce that meaning (once one takes even a small step beyond sheer literal-mindedness). De Man's readings, in this account, proceed by, second, demonstrating how it is that the text as tropological system, as system of tropes, in fact cannot close itself off and remains "open." The reason this happens, most directly and succinctly put, is that the tropological system of the text (i.e., that *is* the text) can't close itself off (in a final stable meaning) because that system cannot account *for its own production,* that is, cannot account for the inaugural act that put it into place in the first place in its own terms, i.e., according to principles internal to itself as system. Hence, third, the text makes a sort of jump – it stutters, as it were – into another textual and linguistic model, that of the performative, of text as *act* – a model that diverges from the text as trope, as cognitive rhetoric, indeed, disrupts the cognitive dimension of the text. The upshot is that the text issues in the performative and that the text as performative disrupts the text as cognitive, as trope.[139]

The second stage of de Man's deconstruction consists in showing that what we thought was a supplemental, figural 'level' of understanding is actually primary and that the understanding established in the first stage is, in fact, an aesthetic aberration. The tropological analysis with which Warminski associates the second phase of de Man's approach is essentially the deconstruction of the *metaphorical* illusion of literal meaning, whereas the performative element that emerges in the third phase has to do with the necessarily *allegorical* nature of every reading. Since allegory is already the metaphor of metaphor, a second-degree allegory would be a third-degree metaphor. But – while we can distinguish between a first and second level by citing the discrepancy between what is laid out, grammatically, before our very eyes and the cognitive processes taking place behind them – any talk of a third level requires some form of decision about the initial undecidability. But if the latter is *really* undecidable, there is nothing to stop another reader from arguing that this third level was already implicit within the

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[139] Warminski, *Ideology*, 57

second. When allegory is conceived as a "lie superimposed upon an error"[140] we are counting

upon a foundation that is, literally, uncountable or, as Warminski might say, *unaccountable*.[141]

If we want to get to the bottom of allegory (presuming that it has something like a

bottom or even a 'structure' that would not, itself, be rhetorical), we should, at the very least,

be wary of the superaddition of such 'levels' of understanding. They always attempt to

neutralize and sublate the phenomena in question. In view of this predicament, we might speak

of an *allegorical leveling* – the demand that allegory places on us to think metaphysically and

dialectically in terms of 'levels of consciousness' and its persistent, ironic voiding of these

structures – the undeniable urge to construct a many levelled edifice (a tower, if you will) and

the inevitable fall (deconstruction, leveling) of such a structure. Here we would be remiss if we

did not (re)cite the allegorical gospel according to Paul:

> The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its
> deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it
> engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the
> unreadability of the prior narration. As distinguished from primary deconstructive
> narratives centered on figures and ultimately always on metaphor, we can call such
> narratives to the second (or the third) degree allegories. Allegorical narratives tell the
> story of the failure to read whereas tropological narratives, such as the Second
> Discourse, tell the story of the failure to denominate. The difference is only a difference
> of degree and the allegory does not erase the figure. Allegories are always allegories of
> metaphor and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading – a
> sentence in which the genitive "of" has itself to be "read" as a metaphor.[142]

Every "allegory of reading" is what Warminski would call an "allegory of reference" – an

allegory of everything we mean (and do not mean) to say when we utter the genitive 'of.' It is

'here,' in the undecidability of this genitive, that we find a power to inscribe and, thus,

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[140] Man, *Allegories*, 155
[141] Warminski, *Ideology*, 3–37
[142] Man, *Allegories*, 205

"generate history" – not the history we are accustomed to reading but the unreadability of history that de Man identifies as "the materiality of actual history."[143] It is also 'here' that de Man, with characteristic prudence, places the possibility of a third degree between parentheses. The parentheses that enclose this allegorical third should also be placed around the possibility of "psycholinguistics" that he mentions in "Semiology of Rhetoric":

> The narrator who tells us about the impossibility of metaphor is himself, or itself, a metaphor, the metaphor of a grammatical syntagm whose meaning is the denial of metaphor stated, by antiphrasis, as its priority. And this subject-metaphor is, in its turn, open to the kind of deconstruction to the second degree, the rhetorical deconstruction of psycholinguistics, in which the more advanced investigations of literature are presently engaged, against considerable resistance.[144]

While "psycholinguistics" is something of a hapax in de Man's oeuvre, the idea continues to interest him until the late essay on "Aesthetic Formalization" – a profoundly *psychotropic* reading of Kleist's "Uber das Marionetentheater." Without a doubt, De Man's most infamous foray into the "deconstruction of psycholinguistics" is the third and final movement of the "Excuses" essay that concludes *Allegories of Reading*. The triplicity of the latter has been troubling even for readers accustomed to his usual duplicitousness. Unlike so many of de Man's readings which, despite so many vagaries and involutions, tend to settle into the tripartite scheme outlined above, the kind of performativity at work in the infamous reading of the "performative excuse" seems to attempt a kind of quantum leap into a third rhetorical level (or fourth deconstructive phase). For Warminski, the move is aberrant enough to warrant a lengthy postscript on the "super-performative."[145] The strangest thing about this super-performative,

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[143] Man, *Allegories*, 277; Man, *Rhetoric*, 262
[144] Man, *Allegories*, 18–19
[145] "Or, if one still wants to speak of " performative" at all in relation to the random utterance " Marion," then one would have to think of it as something of a " super-performative" - that is, not one that functions within an

psycholinguistic dimension of language is its machinal character. It remains autonomous from

every cognizable *νόμος*. It disautonomizes the autonomy of the *αυτός* as such. It may be

helpful, therefore, to think of it more as an *automaticity* – more of a function or process than a

law.

In his late notebooks, Ferdinand de Saussure was perplexed by this kind of inhuman,

dehumanizing super-performativity. The proliferation of terms by which he uses to describe the

latter might be read as an allegory of the kind of undecidability in question here: anagram,

program, phonogram, paragram, paramime, paratext, paranomasia, logogram, antigram,

hypogram, hypograph.[146] De Man, too, throughout his late lectures speaks of the "material

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established juridico-political system (within which it can come off or not) but rather one that itself is the inaugural act of positing that puts such a system into place in the first place. In any case, what disrupts the figural chain and the text as system of tropes is not the performative dimension, not language as act, but rather the (impossible and yet necessary) moment of radical excuse, radical " fiction" (as de Man will call it after reading the Fourth Reverie) , at which two " systems" heterogeneous to one another - like meaning and grammar - "intersect." It is at the point of the intersection that the text as system of intelligibility and understanding gets disrupted. But, once this "textual event" happens, occurs, it inevitably gets disseminated throughout the text, all along the narrative line, and turns into a permanent parabasis that de Man, following Friedrich Schlegel, calls irony - "the systematic undoing, in other words, of understanding" (AR 301) In other words, a certain radicalization of the disjunction or divergence between cognitive and performative, trope and performative, takes place in the course of de Man's reading - which suggests that already in the case of "the performative excuse" that would be continuous with and part of the system of intelligibility, there was (always already) a trace of the radicalized " performative," the pure positing power of language whose position - as in the case of the random utterance "Marion " - as an " excuse" is radically disjunct from, has nothing to do with, the "excuse" as linked to the affective feeling of shame and the understanding it makes possible. . . .

For what happens when the text " passes " from trope to performative - which is not a temporal progression but an event, an occurrence (as in "comes to pass ") - is a certain "repetition" of the violent, groundless and ungrounded, inaugural act that, again, put it into place in the first place. The event of this repetition is what gets disseminated all along the narrative line and thus renders the text an allegory of its inability to account for its own production (an allegory of unreadability, to coin a phrase) - with Rousseau's autobiographer doomed to mindlessly, mechanically, repeating "Marion" over and over again, and Kant's critical philosopher "I must be able to bridge pure reason and practical reason," "I must exhibit the ideas of reason," "I must be able to find sublime," "I must must," " Ich mus mussen, mus mussen, mus mussen . . . " 20 So: that's the difference the reinsertion of " rhetoric" between " aesthetics " and "ideology" makes . Without "rhetoric," without the epistemological critique of trope, as de Man puts it, nothing happens. There is no direct, immediate, royal road to the performative, to action and the act, political or otherwise. Pretending that one can go to it directly is sheer delusion and a guarantee that nothing can happen, nothing will ever happen." Warminski, *Ideology*, 59–61

[146] "1. Pourquoi pas anagramme. [/] 2. Sans avoir de motif [pour tenir] 3 particulièrement au terme d'hypogramme, auquel je me suis arrêté, il me semble que le mot ne répond pas trop mal à ce qui doit être

inscription" and "material event" with a similarly varied set of terms: hypogram, hypostasis,

hypotyposis, anamorphosis, anacolouthon, parabasis. There is a strange symmetry between the

super-performative and sub-constative dimension of language, as if the work [ἐργασία] and

energy [ἐνέργεια] of tropes, in wresting themselves free of every dialectical, metaphysical

model of circularity, wreathed themselves around the horizon of the thinkable.

    While every tropological structure and every deconstruction thereof is chiastic in

nature, the movement of this crossing is not entirely reversible. The irreversibility of tropes is

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désigné. Il n'est en aucun désaccord trop grave avec les sens d'υπογραφέιν, d'υπογραφη \ d'υπρογραμμα. etc.,
si l'on excepte le seul sens de signature qui n'est qu'un de ceux qu'il prend. [/] soit faire allusion; [/] soit
reproduire par écrit comme un notaire, un secrétaire, [/] soit même (si l'on songeait à ce sens spécial mais
répandu) souligner au moyen du fard les traits du visage 1. [/] Qu'on le prenne même au sens répandu, quoique
plus spécial, de souligner au moyen du fard les traits du visage, il n'y aura pas de conflit entre le terme grec et
notre façon de l'employer; car il s'agit bien encore dans « l'hypogramme)) de souligner un nom, un mot, en
s'évertuant à en répéter les syllabes, et en lui donnant ainsi une seconde façon d'être, factice, ajoutée pour ainsi
dire à l'original du mot 2. [/] *Dans l'un des cahiers qu'il consacre à Lucrèce, Saussure suggère - sans s'y tenir - une
autre dénomination:* [/] Le terme d'anagramme est remplacé, à partir de ce cahier, par celui, plus juste, de
paragramme. Ni anagramme ni paragramme ne veulent dire que la poésie se dirige pour ces figures d'après les
signes écrits ; mais remplacer - gramme par - phone dans l'un ou l'autre de ces mots aboutirait justement à faire
croire qu'il s'agit d'une espèce de choses inouïe. [/] Anagramme, par opposition à Paragramme, sera réservé au
cas où l'auteur se plaît à masser en un petit espace, comme celui d'un mot ou deux, tous les éléments du
motthème, à peu près comme dans l' « anagramme II selon la définition ; - figure qui n'a qu'une importance
absolument restreinte au milieu des phénomènes offerts à l'étude, et ne représente en général qu'une partie ou
un accident du Paragramme 3. [/] *Il faut relever aussi ces notes fugitives dont les phrases restent inachevées:* [/]
Introduire paramime en s'excusant de ne pas prendre paronyme. - Il y a au fond du dictionnaire une chose qui
s'appelle la paronomase, figure de rhétorique qui- [/] La paronomase s'approche de si près par son principe de
[/] La paraphrase par le son - phonique 1 [/] *Il est singulier que Saussure, qui s'est préoccupé de la dif érence
entre l'allitération et les « règles II suivies par le vers saturnien, n'ait pas fixé plus longuement son attention sur la
paronomase. Peut-être redoutait-il, plus ou moins consciemment, que cette « figure de mots II ne mît en danger
tout l'aspect de découverte qui s'attachait pour lui à la théorie des anagrammes. Peut-être lui paraissait-il
essentiel de distinguer l'imitation phonique sur'venant librement dans le cours du texte (la paronomase) et
l'imitatiOiz obligatoire qui, selon lui, en règle la genèse. [/] La terminologie de Saussure varie donc au cours de
son tra·vail. On voit apparaître, fugitivement, la notion de paratexte. Et voici d'autres suggestions encore:* [/] La
deuxième utilité de Logogramme à côté d'antigramme est - outre de marquer l'antigramme pris en lui:'même -,
de pouvoir s'appliquer à la somme des antigrammes quand il y en a par exemple dix, douze, quinze qui se
succèdent, dans un passage, autour d'un même mot. Il y a des logogrammes qui se décomposent en de multiples
antigrammes, et qui ont une raison cependant de pouvoir s'appeler d'un seul mot, parce qu'ils tournent autour
d'un seul mot. - Indique ainsi l'unité du sujet, du motif 2, et, à ce point de vue, se trouve cesser d'être choquant
dans sa partie Logo - qui n'a plus à être prise nécessairement au sens de mot phonique, ni même de mot : c'est
un « gramme » γραμμα, autour d'un sujet qui inspire l'ensemble du passage et en est plus ou moins le logos,
l'unité raisonnable, le propos. Un passage est caractérisé par tel ou tellogogramme, ce qui n'empêche pas de
parler plutôt d'antigramme quand on en vient au détail de la corrélation avec le mot à reproduire." Jean
Starobinski, *Les Mots Sous les Mots: Les anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure, 1971* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

the *crux* of *Allegories of Reading* and tropological linguistics in general. As we can see in de

Man's reading of the "performative excuse," there is a passage from the understanding of

tropes as an exchange that takes place between subjects and predicates to an act that

undermines the subjectivity of the subject as such:

> The excuse is a ruse which permits exposure in the name of hiding, not unlike Being, in the later Heidegger, reveals itself by hiding. Or, put differently, shame used as excuse permits repression to function as revelation and thus to make pleasure and guilt interchangeable. Guilt is forgiven because it allows for the pleasure of revealing its repression. It follows that repression is in fact an excuse, one speech act among others.[147]

It would be naïve to think that any human could be exonerated from the kind of guilt in

question here. The linguistic verdict of guilt may be aberrant, but it cannot be overruled. At the

very least, de Man did not let any ethical values obstruct his inquiry into their fraudulent

epistemological foundations. Of this he is strangely innocent – much to the dismay of those

who have attempted to reverse his ruling in the court of critical linguistic analysis.

Fredric Jameson likens this mechanistic theory of psycholinguistics to the Russian

Formalist's "motivation of the device" and the James-Lange theory of emotion "in which . . .

'feeling' follows on the physiological symptoms, anger deriving from bodily heat and tension,

etc."[148] He argues that, for de Man, "the 'authenticity' of the subject" is "the after-effect of the

posture and syntax of his (or her) speech act." We might even compare this with Marvin

Minsky's idea of the "society of mind" as a "bureaucracy" of unthinking "agents" (tropes) out of

which (allegorical) consciousness arises.[149] De Man suggests as much when he writes

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[147] Man, *Allegories*, 286

[148] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the ontology of the present* (London: Verso, 2012), 156

[149] Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 34, 60, 102

One should not conclude that the subjective feelings of guilt motivate the rhetorical strategies as causes determine effects. It is not more legitimate to say that the ethical interests of the subject determine the invention of figures than to say that the rhetorical potential of language engenders the choice of guilt as theme; no one can decide whether Proust invented metaphors because he felt guilty or whether he had to declare himself guilty in order to find a use for his metaphors. Since the only irreducible "intention" of a text is that of its constitution, the second hypothesis is in fact less unlikely than the first.[150]

However much it may resemble other theories of the psycholinguistic mechanism, de Man's does not necessarily allow for the kind of "cognitive mapping"[151] by which Jameson attempts to show the "homology"[152] of tropological structures from the depths of the unconscious all the way up to the productive forces that constitute the (dialectical) materiality of history. The question is whether and to what extent this kind of allegorical reading depends on an impossible delimitation of the metonymic topography on which it would be based – whether the sequential passage of such a reading from level to level would not be mistaking an arbitrary relationship for a necessary one. This is precisely the kind of reading that de Man challenges in his reading of Proust, where he deconstructs the layered, multiplex, sequentialist ontology of metaphor on the basis of the prosaic, flat, uncanny topography of metonymy.

In approaching the question of allegory between Jameson and de Man, it is useful to turn back to "Semiology of Rhetoric."[153] De Man argues here that, in attempting to move 'beyond' the "intrinsic" model of literary criticism (e.g. Russian Formalism and New Criticism), "extrinsic" criticism regards the literary object as the "structure" and social reality as the "reference." This "new version of . . . reductiveness" simply displaces the paradigm that regards

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[150] Man, *Allegories*, 64–65
[151] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 52, 54, 158, 283, 346
[152] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 187-189, 195, 198, 266, 284
[153] Originally published in 1973 before the first version of "Excuses" in 1977

the relationship between the critical object and subject in terms of an inside/outside metaphor. This is what many take to be de Man's point – that neither position is ultimately better off and that both are equally mystified by the objects to which they lay claim – that neither approach fundamentally challenges the box-like structure. The text is not a container. It is a Pandora's box that leaves criticism with only a meager hope of reference. The only thing that it "contains" is the metaphorical play that transpires around it. To think allegorically, is not to think 'outside the box, for this is always to carry out the intrinsic-extrinsic trope and remain blind to the metaphorical nature of every critical 'perspective.'

When speaking of extrinsic criticism, de Man does not cite any schools or critics directly but he does allude to Jameson's *Prisonhouse of Language* and, more interestingly, his own "Dead End of Formalist Criticism" which, according to its English translator's note, "was written for the express purpose of introducing the New Criticism to French readers at the moment that there were some stirrings in French Criticism, but before the advent of Structuralism on the literary scene." Juxtaposing his own work with a Marxist critic like Jameson, de Man suggests that referential error inevitably moves all readers regardless of their affiliation. The fact that he aligns Jameson with the extrinsic model suggests the impossibility of separating extrinsic questions of reference from intrinsic questions of structure. The entire tradition of Marxist-Materialist and Formalist-Structuralist thinking is deeply intertwined. There is already a keen awareness of the interplay between internal and external structures in the earliest works of Formalism and Structuralism. The thinking of allegory is not an attempt to think 'outside' this box, it is an attempt to think the materiality of the box as such in terms of a thinking that is

attentive to the insights of formalism and structuralism, but which no longer limits these structures to a literary object conceived as an 'inner content.'

We need to read beneath the chiastic reversal of inner/outer form/content to see the asymmetry of form/meaning v. reference/structure. The reversal of inner meaning and outer reference is stark enough, but the relationship between outer form and inner structure is less symmetrical. Once the 'content' goes from being something inside the text to something that transpires along its boundaries it is difficult to maintain the methodological division between the intrinsic and extrinsic. The allegorical nature of the intrinsic/extrinsic opposition is revealed by the more complex opposition of grammar and rhetoric. It is in the exposition of the latter that we realize that there is no direct analogy between the former and the latter pair – that in both intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives there is a grammatization of rhetoric and a rhetorization of grammar at work regardless of whether the literary object is read as form or content.

What is often overlooked is that the fixation on the form as code (i.e. grammar), which correlates loosely with the intrinsic position, is capable of greater technical innovation. When de Man writes that "the hope that one can be at the same time technically original and discursively eloquent is not borne out by the history of literary criticism," we should read 'eloquence' as a consolation prize. "Eloquence" is the latent aestheticism of morality, politics, ideology. It pales in comparison to the "technically correct rhetorical reading" that de Man frequently prizes in the name of critical rigor.[154] The grammatization of rhetoric ends up being productive of "critical discourse" while the rhetorization of grammar, remains "suspended."

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[154] Man, *Resistance*, 37

This suggests that in (re)inscribing certain technical, grammatical possibilities, certain texts exhibit a singular capacity to "generate history" – however allegorical this generativity and historicity may be.

> We call *text* any entity that can be considered from such a double perspective: as a generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatical system and as a figural system closed off by a transcendental signification that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence. The "definition" of the text also states the impossibility of its existence and prefigures the allegorical narratives of this impossibility.[155]

Since "there can be no use of language which is not, within a certain perspective . . . radically formal" and "mechanical," the "text machine" must be understood as "the grammar of the text when it is isolated from its rhetoric, the merely formal element without which no text can be generated."[156] While he does not insist upon the formality of grammar, Derrida offers a similar definition of the undecidability of text in the exergue to "Plato's Pharmacy"

> The dissimulation of the woven texture can in any case take centuries to undo its web: a web that envelops a web, undoing the web for centuries; reconstituting it too as an organism, indefinitely regenerating its own tissue behind the cutting trace, the decision of each reading. There is always a surprise in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it had mastered the game, surveyed all the threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without touching it, without laying a hand on the "object," without risking – which is the only chance of entering into the game, by getting a few fingers caught – the addition of some new thread.[157]

In warning us of the *hazards* of the pharmakon, Derrida recalls the episode in the fourth *Reverie* in which Rousseau's fingers are caught between the cylinders of a machine. Rousseau's willingness to forgive and (almost) forget about the incident that permanently scarred his hand is strange. But the machination that transpires between the *Confessions* (from which the

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[155] Man, *Allegories*, 270
[156] Man, *Allegories*, 294
[157] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 63

episode is omitted) and the *Fourth Reverie* (in which it is recalled) is stranger still. According to de Man, it is between these texts that

> The text as body, with all its implications of substitutive tropes ultimately always retraceable to metaphor, is displaced by the text as machine [that] threatens the autobiographical subject not as the loss of something that once was present and that it once possessed, but as a radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text.[158]

Perhaps it would be better to lose "a few fingers" than to experience the total *disfiguration*[159] of the "text machine" – the "implacable determination" and "total arbitrariness" that inhabits "words on the level of the play of the signifier" – the "inhuman" or "nonhuman aspect of language . . . from which we cannot escape" and "against which" we "fight constantly."[160] De Man insists that this is not "some kind of mystery or some kind of secret." It is nothing more (nor *less*) than the "tensions" and "events" that occur "independently of any intent," "drive," "wish" or "desire we might have."[161]

In attempting to grasp the text machine (or examine it safely from a distance) we must try to gauge the relationship between the mechanism of grammar and the mechanism of psycholinguistic inscription. Both resist dialectical thinking from within but remain distinct (if interlocking) mechanisms. The text machine is both rhetorico-grammatical and psycholinguistic. These components operate at different rhythms and emit different frequencies. Thinking their "heterotautological" operation will be our first, last and constant task – our theme. [162]

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[158] Man, *Allegories*, 298
[159] Man, *Rhetoric*, 22, 76, 81, 93-123, 266
[160] Man, *Aesthetic*, 181; Man, *Resistance*, 101
[161] Man, *Resistance*, 96
[162] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 82–83. Cf. Chapter 5 of the present work ("Thematization / Tautology")

In the wake of the discovery of his wartime journalism (in which we find certain anti-Semitic and Nazi-sympathetic remarks), many have attempted to psychoanalyze de Man's attempt at psycholinguistic reading.[163] The fallout from the 'de Man affair,' like that of Heidegger's wartime rectorship at Freiburg, remains radioactive to this day. It is tempting to read "Excuses," for instance, as a preemptive and indemnifying attempt at self-exculpation. In a series of diary fragments published under the title of "Biodegradables," Derrida muses: "Perhaps even de Man wished [the revelation] to happen, secretly or unconsciously. Perhaps he foresaw it even as he denied it."[164] Tasked with responding yet again, for who knows how many times in total, to the criticism of de Man in the wake of the publication of the *Le Soir* articles, Derrida's hospitality, normally so unconditional, is undergoing a bit of degradation in its own right. One of the critics to whom he is responding even speaks of deconstruction as "the age-old salami technique, which consists in cutting off slice after slice until the sausage has totally disappeared," a remark which solicits one of Derrida's profoundest apothegms: "a text is not exactly a sausage."[165]

"Biodegradables" also poses important mnemotechnical questions about the archive and the digitization of texts.[166] The question of the biodegradability of texts is essentially the

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[163] Paul de Man et al., *Wartime journalism, 1939-1943* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1988)

[164] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 818

[165] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 861

[166] "When one speaks of the destruction of an archive, do not limit oneself to the meaning, to the theme, or to consciousness. To be sure, take into account an economy of the unconscious, even if only to exceed it once again. But it is also necessary to take into consideration the "supports," the subjectiles of the signifier – the paper, for example, but this example is more and more insufficient. There is this diskette, and so on. Differences here among newspapers, journals, books, perhaps, the modes of storage, of reproduction and of circulation, the "ecosystems" (libraries, bookstores, photocopies, computers, and so on). I am also thinking of everything that is happening today to libraries. Official institutions are calculating the choices to be made in the destruction of nonstorable copies or the salvaging of works whose paper is deteriorating: displacement, restructuring of the archive, and so on. What would have happened if people had been able – yesterday or ten years ago – to consult

question of what a discursive "ecosystem" might entail – a question that Derrida clarifies by

turning it back, allegorically, upon itself: "What will remain of all this in a few years, in ten

years, in twenty years? How will the archive be filtered? Which texts will be reread?"[167] He

argues that there is an "[e]nigmatic kinship between waste, for example nuclear waste, and the

'masterpiece.'" It is the "singular impropriety" of the latter that "permits it to resist degradation

– never forever, but for a long time."[168] After suggesting that "what we call rhetoric [is] a large

discourse, itself in a constant state of recycling, . . . composition, decomposition, [and]

recomposition," he asks whether "as 'nonbiodegradable,' the singularity of a work . . . stays on

the surface and survives like an indestructible artefact or in any case one which is less

destructible than another." This difference between what it means to "survive" [*survivre*] and

"float on the surface" [*surnager*] is a particularly incisive way of framing the question of

allegorical difference.[169] If every metaphor and, thus, every text is essentially allegorical, then

how can we assert that certain texts, Rousseau's for example, are singular in their ability to

"generate history?" At stake here is the fundamental citability of the textual object – the

"question of context."

> there is nothing but context, and therefore: there is no outside-the-text [il n'y a pas de
> hors texte] (used-up formula, yet unusable out of context, a formula that, at once used

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on a screen the whole "de Man" archive in a minute, from one library to another? In short, telematically?
Difference between the war articles and certain of his last seminars whose "voice" we still have, the audio
archive that students pass among themselves from one university to another, even in Europe, and certain of
which are already *published on the basis of* this recording. I risk annoying any number of people, for example "de
Man's successor," if I say once more that I must "postpone" two short treatises that are indispensable here.
Possible titles: (1) On the support and the insupportable (keep the ellipsis and the pun in French); (2) On the
impossible distinction between public and private, in general and in particular, in a modern problematic of the
archive. [. . .]" Derrida, "Biodegradables," 865.
[167] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 816
[168] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 845
[169] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 812

up and unusable, might appear to be impossible to wear out [inusable]. I don't believe that in the least, but the time involved is difficult to calculate).[170]

When he says "il n'y a pas de hors texte," Derrida does not mean that everything needs to be thought *within* the text. To prevent the degradation of this citation into a traditionally metaphysical closure, it would be better to say that there is no non-textual thinking – no thinking *without* text. The privation at work in this 'without' cannot be thought. The (non)biodegradability of a text, like the historical generativity of allegory must remain hypothetical.

The unthinkable closure of the text is a question of proximity and contexture. It bears directly on the ongoing debate between Derrida and de Man regarding the text of Rousseau. Many have seen Derrida's critique of "Excuses" in "Typewriter Ribbon" as an attempt to recontextualize their debate on this topic. According to Tom Cohen and Andrzej Warminski, it is in turning back to Rousseau that Derrida turns away from the task of reading the "material inscription" in de Man's late writings. Warminski discerns in this essay "a certain carping, needling, nit-picking, almost petty quality."[171] Cohen writes that "despite its great length, [it] basically sidestep[s] the assignment" in an attempt "to settle scores, patch an inassimilable wound, to get the last word on the index called 'Rousseau.'"[172] At the heart of this debate is de Man's assertion that Derrida did not actually "need Rousseau" to write *Of Grammatology*, a remark that would, unquestionably, have stung quite a bit. We might say that the wounded healing [τρωσας ιασεται] that follows from this critique is what weaves the de Manian and

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[170] Derrida, "Biodegradables," 873
[171] Warminski, *Ideology*, 188
[172] Martin McQuillan, ed., *The Political Archive on Paul de Man: Property, sovereignty and the Theotrophic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 139

Derridian texts together in friendship and in rivalry – hospitality and hostility. To need Rousseau

is to have woven oneself inextricably into his text. To *read* this text is not to deconstruct

Rousseau per se but to let the text deconstruct itself.

What Derrida finds most objectionable in de Man's reading of Rousseau is the

pretention to a technical mastery of tropes and, more importantly, the kind of thematic closure

that "Excuses" seems to entail. He spends a considerable (perhaps exorbitant) amount of time

redressing a single footnote that de Man appends to his reading of the *Confessions*:

> The embarrassing story of Rousseau's rejection by Mme. de Vercellis, who is dying of a
> cancer of the breast, immediately precedes the story of Marion, but nothing in the text
> suggests a concatenation that would allow one to substitute Marion for Mme. de
> Vercellis in a scene of rejection.[173]

As readers of Freud or Heidegger are well-aware, this 'nothing' is, surely, *not nothing* – not in

the sense of a simple negation at least. It bears traces of some other being – be it the being of

Being or the Unconscious. De Man would hardly have been blind to the metonymic link

between the body of the text and the appendage of the footnote or the implications of the

psychoanalytic, Oedipal scheme Derrida proceeds to sketch (if only to prove a point):

> It is not a textual nothing even if there is nothing, nothing else, *in* the text. Even if
> nothing else were posed, nothing positive, a force would be at work there and thus a
> potential dynamic. From one woman to the other, from one attachment to the other,
> this topology of sequential juxtaposition, this à-propos, this displacement of the à-
> propos can by itself have a metonymic energy, the very force that will have suggested to
> de Man's mind the hypothesis of the substitution that he nevertheless excludes
> vigorously and with determination. In order to be excluded, it must still present itself to
> the mind with some seduction. It must still be tempting. And the temptation suffices.
> We are talking here only about temptation and forbidden fruit. So even if there were
> nothing *in* the text of these two accounts, the simple topographic or sequential
> juxtaposition is "in the text," it constitutes the text itself and can be *interpreted*: it is

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[173] Man, *Allegories*, 285n8

interpretable. Not necessarily in an Oedipal fashion, but it is interpretable. One must and one cannot not interpret it; it cannot be simply insignificant.[174]

It is helpful to recall here that "Excuses" was first published under the title of "The Purloined Ribbon" – a clear allusion to Edgar Allan Poe's "Purloined Letter" and Jacques Lacan's eponymous seminar.[175] The more overt signs of this influence are cut (castrated) from the final draft which is, perhaps, why Derrida finds it "sometimes too Lacanian, sometimes insufficiently Lacanian, in any case insufficiently 'psychoanalytic.'"[176] While Derrida does not say this, it is possible to read this essay as an attempt to deconstruct Rousseau according to the Lacanian categories of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. But, while de Man is clearly conversant with the Lacanian unconscious, his furtive interest in the "psycholinguistic" has more to do with the tropology of language than it does with the schematism of the unconscious. A psycholinguistic deconstruction, for de Man, would not be a deconstruction of the linguistic unconscious so much as a linguistic deconstruction of cognition as such – a *linguistic psychosis*.

This allegorical, psycholinguistic 'structure' does not belong to consciousness. It gives way to the madness of "absolute irony" as theorized in "The Rhetoric of Temporality":

> absolute irony is a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness; it is a consciousness of a non-consciousness, a reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself. But this reflection is made possible only by the double structure of ironic language: the ironist invents a form of himself that is "mad" but that does not know its own madness; he then proceeds to reflect on his madness thus objectified.[177]

This ironic aspect involves the collapse of the empirical self into a timeless instant whereas the allegorical manifests as the infinite distance between the temporality of narration and that of

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[174] Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 92–93
[175] The Zurich manuscript appears to liken Lacanian "Phallus" to the "rhetorical fallacy of reference." Paul de Man, "Textual Allegories," (unpublished manuscript, 1972*), 185
[176] Derrida, *Alibi*, 157
[177] Man, *Blindness*, 216

history. The point however is that they are really two sides of the 'same' movement. Irony and

allegory are, in the 'final' analysis, "linked in their common discovery of a truly temporal

predicament."[178]

> the difference now resides in the subject, whereas time is reduced to one single
> moment. In this respect, irony comes closer to the pattern of factual experience and
> recaptures some of the factitiousness of human existence as a succession of isolated
> moments lived by a divided self. Essentially the mode of the present, it knows neither
> memory nor prefigurative duration, whereas allegory exists entirely within an ideal time
> that is never here and now but always a past or an endless future. Irony is a synchronic
> structure, while allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration
> as the illusion of a continuity that it knows to be illusionary. Yet the two modes, for all
> their profound distinctions in mood and structure, are the two faces of the same
> fundamental experience of time.[179]

Later, in "The Concept of Irony," de Man jokes that he, as a representative of the American

criticism of irony (as opposed to the German), is the "real *alazon*" – the "dumb guy" – the

object or ironic humor and not the subject self-conscious enough to master it. We might

dismiss this as a trivial bit of self-deprecating humor, but it comes up again later in the talk

when he identifies his current (non-) definition of irony as an "*autocritique*" of the theory of

irony he ventured in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," which he likens to Schlegel's text "Eine

Reflexion" in its attempt to reduce irony "to a dialectic of the self as a reflexive structure."[180] It

is important to clarify what exactly de Man is critiquing here (since it bears directly on the

question of *thematization* and hence, the possibility of a mnemotechnical infrastructure). He is

by no means abandoning the notion of "ironic allegory" which remains integral to numerous

later formulations of the "rhetoric of temporality." He is referring, instead, to a certain

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[178] Man, *Blindness*, 222
[179] Man, *Blindness*, 226
[180] Man, *Aesthetic*, 169–70

dialectical residue that remains even in passages like the one quoted above. One must take great care not to leave a reflexive, dialectical model intact that would allow for consciousness to resurrect itself. It is not even enough to say that "absolute irony" is "the end of all consciousness." The powers of sublation can never be underestimated. It claims even to raise the dead.

Thinking the material event as a machination of the text machine is essentially the task of thinking the crisis of crisis, irony of irony, allegory of allegory, allegory of irony, etc. But the question is whether these amount to a *method* or the deconstruction thereof. De Man's speculation about the materiality of inscription and the possibility of a "meta-ironical" position in which one might read/write the relationship between allegory and irony without being allegorized or ironized by it are more or less destined for a more metaphysical and dialectical reading.[181] While he entertains the possibility of an "allegory of irony" as a "meta-ironic" text, he eventually concludes that there is really only the "ironic" or "deconstructive allegory" of understanding as such.[182] Every reading is an allegory of its own deconstruction insofar as it "pretends to order sequentially, in a narrative, what is actually the destruction of all sequence." It implies "the (ironic) pseudoknowledge" of its own impossibility."[183] This "pseudoknowledge" is resolutely non-conceptual and, hence, incompatible with the speculative, dialectical model of the self – a true *autocritique*.[184]

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[181] Man, *Blindness*, 223
[182] Man, *Blindness*, 228
[183] Man, *Aesthetic*, 69
[184] Man, *Aesthetic*, 170

Dialectics / Aesthetics

In Hegel's speculative dialectic, it is through determinate negation (sublation), that the subject

and object are split from themselves, joined to one another, and continuously reconfigured

across both sides of the dialectic. This process extends well beyond human history. It is

prehistoric and even extratemporal. Not only does it characterize the movements of the

heavenly bodies and the formation of life on Earth, it can also be thought in purely abstract

terms according to a *Logik* which, unlike that of Kant, is neither inductive nor deductive but,

rather, self-conducting. While there is a pseudo-chronological succession to most of the

dialectic, world history only becomes thinkable for Spirit [Geist] proper, the final shape

consciousness assumes after becoming self-conscious of its Self and Rational through a

prolonged struggle with Nature. What consciousness achieves in attaining to the level of Spirit,

then, is an approximation of the fullness that Logic has in itself and Nature has in reality:

"World history in general is thus the unfolding of Spirit in time, as nature is the unfolding of the

Idea in space."[185] If Spirit remains the sovereign and sublime force that fills and animates time,

then its unfolding will not have reached its 'end' until space itself has been permeated by the

Idea. When the Idea has permeated all of space or at least, the entirety of the known world, the

only thing left for Spirit to mediate is itself as a historical, spiritual process.

The Subject does not emerge, as such, until the end of the *Phenomenology* because it is

only at this point that the model of causality becomes complex (i.e. concrete) enough to

approximate Reality. The Subject is the Substance of Reality itself – the culmination of the

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[185] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History: With selections from The philosophy of right* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1988), 75

process of Realization by which the speculative Idea becomes absolute and the Real and Ideal

are revealed to be one and the same. As Subject, Spirit realizes itself to be the infinite relation

between Reality and Ideality of which it is the definition and by which it is defined – without

which it would never have been able to arrive at such a realization in the first place. Such a Sub-

ject is no longer some *thing* against which one (or other) might ob-ject. It is the ground of all

ob-jection – the infinite relation between subjectivity and substantiality as the substrate (hypo-

keimenon, hypo-stasis) of phenomenality as such:

> Spirit is in itself the movement which is cognition – the transformation of that former *in-itself* into *for-itself,* of *substance* into *subject,* of the object of *consciousness* into the object of *self-consciousness,* i.e., into an object that is just as much sublated, that is, into the *concept.* This transformation is the circle returning back into itself, which presupposes its beginning and reaches its beginning only at the end.[186]

This "returning back into itself" implies the closing of the speculative gap between the

philosophical spectator and the phenomenological spectacle. It is only with the revelation of

the dialectic as a "circle of circles"[187] that consciousness becomes historical. It is only through

what Hegel calls 'Religion' that the object-oriented 'desire' of Mind begins to subside and

mediate upon the objectivity of representation itself by way of Art, Religion, and eventually,

Philosophy proper. It is only here that Substance and Subject begin to cohere into something

like a world historical, human existence. All previous shapes of consciousness, while their

objective content may correspond to historical events in the common sense, are prehistorical

or extratemporal (as mentioned above). The dialectical succession of shapes is of a different

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[186] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 462
[187] Hegel, *Science*, 751; Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, §15

order than the course of historical events and yet, it is on the basis of the former that the

essence of the latter is to be thought.

> Religion presupposes the whole course of the development of those moments, and it is their *simple* totality, or their absolute self. - In addition, in relation to religion, the course those moments travel is not to be represented as taking place in time. Only the whole spirit is in time, and the shapes, which are shapes of the whole *spirit* as such, exhibit themselves in a sequence, one after the other, for only the whole has genuine actuality, and the whole thus has the form of pure freedom with regard to others, which expresses itself as time. . . . This self-certain spirit and its movement are their genuine actuality and the being-*in-and-for-itself* which corresponds to each single one. - However much therefore one of the previous series in its forward movement through the nodes [of the whole series] marked a regression within the series but then again continued out of those regressions in a single line, still it is henceforth, as it were, broken at these nodes, these universal moments, and it falls apart into many lines, which, gathered together into *one* coil, at the same time symmetrically unite themselves so that the same distinctions, within which each moment itself gave itself a shape, all meet together. . . . Spirit must pass over from that aspect into the concept in order to fully dissolve the form of objectivity within the concept, that is, the concept which likewise includes its opposite within itself. At that point, spirit has grasped the concept of itself as we have just grasped it, and its shape, or the element of its existence, is, because it is the concept, spirit itself.[188]

This supremely aesthetic moment in which the entire progress of the *Phenomenology* hitherto

is parsed into so many nodal fragments and gathered back into a world historical totality is

entirely contingent on the possibility that an historical consciousness might reach a supra-

historical vantage point with which to justify the organization of the whole. The question is

whether and to what extent this non-historical power by which history is expressed is regarded

as a matter of consciousness or as a textual machination. It is a question, in other words, of

whether speculative dialectics can be regarded as an "allegory of irony" in which a conscious,

human subject can be said to "overcome irony" and assume a "meta-ironical" perspective or

whether it is this last, unsublatable margin that *generates* history as such. Where Hegel sees

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[188] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 393–96

this process as symbolic, de Man insists that such a transcendent expression of Spirit can only

be regarded as an ironic allegory. The text machine is what prevents the filaments of

temporality from being woven back together. It is the inherent pseudo-temporality of each

shape that allows for both the articulation and disarticulation of the whole.

De Man's idea of allegorical generativity is deeply parasitic of the movement of the

Hegelian dialectic. Rather than simply identifying thematization with the sublation of the

phenomenological object from its immediate, living reality into the more abstract, ideal, but no

less concrete ideality of the Concept, he reads this movement allegorically as a machination

capable of thinking everything in the world except the pseudo-successive, rhetorical

relationship between the shapes of which it is comprised. De Man's theory of mnemotechnics

hinges on such a *reading* of Hegel's definition of memory as "the *self-externalization* in which

intelligence posits itself inside itself" [*die* Äußerlichkeit *ihrer selbst in ihr*] and, in particular, the

corresponding notes and Zusatz to §462 of the *Encyclopedia*:

> Unlike what is retained in memory, what is mnemonically impressed is not produced *by heart*, i.e. strictly from the *inside*, from the deep pit of the I, and thus recited, but is, so to speak, read off the tableau of the imagination. – Mnemonics is connected with the common prejudices which we have about memory in comparison with imagination; as if imagination were a higher, more spiritual activity than memory. On the contrary, memory no longer has to do with the *image*, which is derived from intuition, from the intelligence when it is determined in an immediate, unspiritual manner; it has rather to do with a reality that is the product of intelligence itself – a reality known *inside out* that remains enclosed in the inside of intelligence and is its outside, its existing side, only *within intelligence itself*. . . . Just as the genuine *thought* is the *thing*, so too is the *word*, when it is employed by genuine thinking. Intelligence therefore, in filling itself with the word, receives into itself the nature of the thing. But this reception has another sense too: intelligence thereby makes itself into something *thingly*, in such a way that subjectivity, in its distinction from the thing, becomes quite empty, a mindless container of words, it becomes *mechanical* memory. In this way the *excess of the recollection* of the word veers round, so to speak, into extreme *alienation* of the intelligence. As I become more familiar with the meaning of the word, as the word thus unites more closely with my inwardness, increasingly the objectivity and hence the determinacy of

> the meaning of the word can disappear, increasingly, therefore, the memory itself, together with the word, can become something bereft of mind.[189]

While Hegel views this inscription as preparation for the reunification of Substance and Subject in the form of "absolute knowing," de Man questions the extent to which what has been memorized can still be *read* by consciousness.[190] What remains allegorical for dialectical consciousness is the *notion* that we "learn by heart only when all meaning is forgotten and words read as if they were a mere list of names."[191] This mechanical inscription of recollection [*Erinnerung*] as memory [*Gedächtnis*] "is a truth of which the aesthetic is the defensive, ideological, and censored translation." It is on the basis of this theory of inscription that de Man offers a sympathetic reading of Hegel's infamous argument that art is a "thing of the past":

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[189] "Das mnemonisch Eingeprägte wird nicht wie aus, aus dem tiefen Schachte des Ich hervorgebracht und so hergesagt, sondern es wird von dem Tableau der Einbildungskraft sozusagen abgelesen. - Die Mnemonik hängt mit den gewöhnlichen Vorurteilen zusammen, die man von dem Gedächtnis im Verhältnis zur Einbildungskraft hat, als ob diese eine höhere, geistigere Tätigkeit wäre als das Gedächtnis. Vielmehr hat es das Gedächtnis nicht mehr mit dem *Bilde* zu tun, welches aus dem unmittelbaren, ungeistigen Bestimmtsein der Intelligenz, aus der Anschauung, hergenommen ist, sondern mit einem Dasein, welches das Produkt der Intelligenz selbst ist, - einem solchen *Auswendigen*, welches in das Inwendige der Intelligenz eingeschlossen bleibt und nur *innerhalb ihrer selbst* deren auswendige, existierende Seite ist. . . . Wie der wahrhafte *Gedanke* die *Sache* ist, so auch das *Wort*, wenn es vom wahrhaften Denken gebraucht wird. Indem sich daher die Intelligenz mit dem Worte erfüllt, nimmt sie die Natur der Sache in sich auf. Diese Aufnahme hat aber zugleich den Sinn, daß sich die Intelligenz dadurch zu einem *Sächlichen* macht, dergestalt daß die Subjektivität, in ihrem Unterschiede von der Sache, zu etwas ganz Leerem, zum geistlosen Behälter der Worte, also zum *mechanischen* Gedächtnis wird. Auf diese Weise schlägt sozusagen das *Übermaß der Erinnerung* des Wortes in die höchste *Entäußerung* der Intelligenz um. Je vertrauter ich mit der Bedeutung des Wortes werde, je mehr dieses sich also mit meiner Innerlichkeit vereint, desto mehr kann die Gegenständlichkeit und somit die Bestimmtheit der Bedeutung desselben verschwinden, desto mehr folglich das Gedächtnis selber, mit dem Worte zugleich, zu etwas Geistverlassenem werden." Georg W. F. Hegel, "Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse III: Die Philosophie des Geistes," in *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 10:§462; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Being part three of the Encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), §462.

[190] Absolute Wissenschaft see Georg W. F. Hegel, "Phänomenologie des Geistes," in *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 3:§788–808; Hegel, "Wissenschaft" in *Werke*, iii.3; Hegel, "Enzyklopädie" in *Werke*, §572 -77

[191] Man, *Aesthetic*, 101

> Art is "of the past" in a radical sense, in that, like memorization, it leaves the interiorization of experience forever behind. It is of the past to the extent that it materially inscribes, and thus forever forgets, its ideal content.[192]

Aestheticism is a temporary amnesia that allows art to "appear as a discovery, when it is in fact preestablished by the one who claims to discover it."[193]

Causality / Tropology

In outlining the modalities of causality that Louis Althusser develops in his "double reading" of Marx's *Capital,* we see how the metonymic, ironic, allegorical nature of temporality constitutes a fundamental rift between rhetoric and dialectics. According to Althusser, Marx's "immense theoretical revolution" consists in the revelation of

> a necessary invisible connexion between the field of the visible and the field of the invisible, a connexion which defines the necessity of the obscure field of the invisible, as a necessary effect of the structure of the visible field[194]

He describes three models of causality:

- a Cartesian-Galilean mechanistic causality, in which cause and effect are reduced to a "*transitive* and analytical effectivity"

- a Leibnizian-Hegelian model of expressive causality "deal[ing] with the effectivity of a whole on its elements" in which "such and such an element (economic, political, legal, literary, religious, etc., in Hegel) = the inner essence of the whole"

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[192] Man, *Aesthetic*, 103
[193] Man, *Aesthetic*, 117
[194] Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London, New York: Verso, 2009), 20

- a Spinozist-Marxist *structural* causality problematizing the relationship between the essential, "global" structure of the whole and the inessential, "regional," phenomenon of the part, element.[195]

The mechanistic perspective regards the effectivity of the cause as something that passes between subjects and/or objects. It works well enough in the context of Galilean and Newtonian physics, but it breaks down when it comes to the task of modeling complex totalities and cybernetic organisms like the human. In order to think the causality of the latter more concretely, one must develop a more abstract model of causality. Mechanistic causality appears more concrete because it simplifies the world by abstracting it while expressive causality appears more abstract even though it does a better job of modeling this complexity as such. In order to model the system as a whole, the cause becomes less and less observable. It can no longer be discerned as a finite, linear chronological unfolding but extends to include the vastly overdetermined structure of history itself.

In the Hegelian system, expressive causality can be regarded as the "infinite" complication of the mechanistic notion of causality. The former is the simplest and, therefore, most abstract shape of consciousness. The idea of causality must be thought both in-itself and for-another (i.e. on either side) and in-and-for-itself (between the two sides). The expressive causality of the speculative dialectic is no longer a simple, "transitive," unilateral movement between subject and object but, rather, the second-order reciprocal movement that manifests for the philosophical observer (i.e. 'reader' of the *Phenomenology*) in watching consciousness express itself in its various shapes. From such a perspective, the expressive cause would be that

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[195] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 206–7

which necessitates the movement from one shape to the next – the conceptual tensions that accrue when the causal structures are no longer reciprocal, negative and complex enough to model the subject-object relationships. With each sublation it becomes increasingly difficult to speak of the subject-object relation as something that takes place between two 'sides,' which is why Hegel speaks primarily in terms of "shapes of consciousness" and the reciprocal, objective relations between self and other out of which they are comprised.

A science of the political economy and historical materialism would have to account for its own history as a history of historiological and ideological production. [196] The greatest obstacle to this is the idea of 'production' itself – the difficulty of distinguishing the productive forces from the reproduction and representation thereof.

> We have retained this term [*Darstellung*] because it is both the least metaphorical and, at the same time, the closest to the concept Marx is aiming at when he wants to designate at once both absence and presence, i.e., *the existence of the structure in its effects.*
>
> This is an extremely important point if we are to avoid even the slightest, in a sense inadvertent relapse into the diversions of the classical conception of the economic object, if we are to avoid saying that the Marxist conception of the economic object is, for Marx, determined from the outside by a non-economic structure.[197]

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[196] "by means of what concept is it possible to think the new type of determination which has just been identified as the determination of the phenomena of a given region by the structure of that region? More generally, by means of what concept, or what set of concepts, is it possible to think the determination of the elements of a structures and the structural relations between those elements, and all the effects of those relations, by the effectivity of that structure? And a fortiori, by means of what concept or what set of concepts is it possible to think the determination of a subordinate structure by a dominant structure; In other words, how is it possible to define the concept of a structural causality? . . . If the whole is posed as *structured,* i.e., as possessing a type of unity quite different from the type of unity of the spiritual whole, . . . not only does it become impossible to think the determination of the elements by the structure in the categories of analytical and transitive causality, *it also becomes impossible to think it in the category of the global expressive causality of a universal inner essence immanent in its phenomenon.*" Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 205–7

[197] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 208

Marx's concept of *Darstellung* gives rise to the entire theater of conceptualization. Even though

Marx partakes of this theater he is, according to Althusser, less mystified by it than any of his

predecessors. He actually "produces" the problem of structural causality rather than merely

'posing' it. He renders it "revolutionary" by making it "dramatic." What Marx (re)presents as

"*Darstellung*" is less a concept than the dramaturgy thereof.

> the mode of existence of the stage direction (*mise en scéne*) of the theatre which is
> simultaneously its own stage, its own script, its own actors, the theatre whose
> spectators can, on occasion, be spectators only because they are first of all forced to be
> its actors, caught by the constraints of a script and parts whose authors they cannot be,
> since it is in essence *an authorless theatre.*[198]

Althusser's reading of Marx here recalls de Man's theory of blinded insight: "We even owe it to

[Marx] that we can see his weaknesses, his lacunae, his omissions." The difference is that, for

de Man, such a thesis depends on the radical suspension of the historicity of rhetorical

structures. The question is whether these kinds of faults can still be attributed to an historical

author and, thus, an historical understanding of the revolution of structural causality. Althusser

admits that one cannot raise the problem of this structural causality without "slip[ping] into the

really almost inevitable use of the classical opposition between essence and phenomenon."[199]

But, despite the necessarily 'overdetermined' nature of all structural events, he still wants to

attribute some authority to Marx. It is only by way of metaphor that Marx functions as an

author capable of describing a "specific reality, *unthought before him*."[200] Referring to the work

of Jacques Alain-Miller and Jacques Lacan, he associates the slippage between structural and

expressive causality with a "metonymic causality."[201] But can structural causality be reduced to

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[198] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 213
[199] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 211
[200] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 210
[201] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 208

metonymic causality without collapsing the difference between economic and linguistic phenomena? The slippage of "metonymic causality" is not only an historiological relapse into a previous model of causality (structural into expressive) as Althusser suggests, it is also the "really almost inevitable" slippage at work in his own presentation of these models. Ultimately, the relation between linguistic and economic structure is just as susceptible to the inside/outside metaphor as the relation between phenomenon and essence. Darstellung may appear closer to metonymy than metaphor, but only within an already metaphorical theater in which the difference between structural and metonymic causality has been rendered indistinguishable ("invisible").

Whenever we encounter the question of metonymic causality or, more accurately, the undecidable causal relationship between metaphor and metonymy, we are dealing with a text machine. The machine is the event of structural causality regarded as an unconceptualizable, unproblematizable, and ultimately, unphenomalizable difference between linguistic and "empirical" events. However "revolutionary" structural causality may be, in order to attribute it to Marx, one must regard it as a historic event in a more straightforward, mechanistic sense. As Fredric Jameson argues:

> Mechanical causality is thus less a concept which might be evaluated on its own terms, than one of the various laws and subsystems of our peculiarly reified social and cultural life. Nor is its occasional experience without benefit for the cultural critic, for whom the scandal of the extrinsic comes as a salutary reminder of the ultimately material base of cultural production, and of the "determination of consciousness by social being."

> It must therefore be objected, to Althusser's ideological analysis of the "concept" of mechanical causality, that this unsatisfactory category is not merely a form of false

consciousness or error, but also a symptom of objective contradictions that are still with us.[202]

The question of structural causality is fundamentally a question of the tropological relations out of which the semiological and ideological 'whole' are comprised. It is a question of how an aesthetic, ideological unity might come to bear upon the construction of the model of causality itself. While he privileges metonymy over metaphor, Althusser overlooks the inherently metaphorical nature of every meta-theater. However distant the Marxist and Hegelian concepts of history may be, they still presume that mechanistic causality is something that can be staged for consciousness and not the mechanism by which consciousness itself gets staged. In confronting the question of structural causality, Althusser ultimately runs into the *radioactivity* of metonymy that eradicates any illusion of spatiotemporal 'depth,' but he backs away from this insight for fear that this would no longer be a Marxist revolution. At some point the recursivity of tropes must be cut off by the borders of the frame through which they are beheld. In this flattening of the *recursive depth* of causality we encounter the prosaic quality that de Man attributes to metonymy and allegory. To speak of this as a flattening or a prosification is, of course, a metaphor. The flattening corresponds to a break with the idea of the necessary directedness of temporal phenomena and the attempt to understand the overdetermination of causal relations in an historiological manner. Every 'cause' is a metaphor within a network of metonymic relations. The cause knots itself off from a network of metonymic contingencies and contiguities *by way of* these contingencies and contiguities.

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[202] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 26

When such knots are gathered together, they exhibit something like a logical movement but they are, from a tropological standpoint, reversible – *metaleptic*.

History / Translation

For Hegel, this unsublatable reversibility is tantamount to Evil itself.[203] But it is important to note that Evil is a radicalization of the force that drives the entire dialectic – the *Eitelkeit* of ironic consciousness out of which Self-Consciousness arises. Irony is integral to every act of determined negation. It is what leads Consciousness to the realization that it is itself comprised of negations which, taken together, exhibit a directedness and necessity. Unlike Plato, Hegel regards the Idea of the Good as something temporal – something that must be actualized historically. For this to 'occur,' Evil must eventually be sublated by the Idea of the Good. From a world historical perspective, this does not mean that Evil simply disappears from the face of the Earth. It means that to grasp the Idea of History we must eventually surrender the ironic tendency to question the dialectical nature of historical progress. Even the greatest Evil might be absolved so long as absolute irony is regarded as a speculative moment. But, if Irony remains unsublatable, it puts the legitimacy of the Law in question and, with it, the Idea that "[w]hat is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."

One of the most striking differences between Hegel's dialectic and that of Benjamin, is the latter's refusal to sublate irony – his insistence upon a materiality that diverges from the

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[203] "you actually accept a law . . . and honestly respect it as absolute [*an und für sich seiend*]. So do I, but I go further than you, because I am beyond this law and can make it to suit myself. It is not the thing that is excellent, but I who am so; as the master of law and thing alike, I simply play with them as with my caprice, and in this ironic consciousness in which I let the highest things perish, I enjoy only myself. This type of subjectivism not only substitutes a void for the whole content of ethics, right, duties, and laws-and so is evil, indeed inherently and quite universally evil – but in addition its form is a subjective void [*Eitelkeit*], i.e. it knows itself as this contentless void and in this knowledge knows itself as absolute." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (Oxford [UK], New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149 (§140.f)

negative theology of Kierkegaard and converges with the *Negative Dialectics* of Adorno and

with de Man's theory of ironic allegory as a mechanism of inscription. In his study of the

Trauerspiel he writes that:

> Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else. With this
> possibility a destructive, but just verdict is passed on the profane world: it is
> characterized as a world in which the detail is of no great importance.[204]

He proceeds to describe allegory in a manner that is very close to Hegel's account of irony:

> Evil as such . . . exists only in allegory, is nothing other than allegory, and means
> something different from what it is. It means precisely the non-existence of what it
> presents. . . . It is 'nonsense' [*Geschwatz*] in the profound sense in which Kierkegaard
> conceived the word. [205]

For Benjamin, what is allegorical "is conceived from the outset as a ruin, a fragment." As he

suggests through the figure of the shattered amphora in "The Task of the Translator" – these

fragments do not belong to one another. They do not form a symbolic whole but, rather, a

monadic "constellation." We are unable to grasp the fragment as such except through the

experience of translation in which we *read* history *prosaically* rather than *experience* it

aesthetically. This fragmentary and yet nonsymbolic character is what separates Benjamin's

notion of the "dialectical image" from the Hegelian "shapes" of consciousness and virtually all

other dialectical structures.

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[204] Jede Person, jedwedes Ding, jedes Verhältnis kann ein beliebiges anderes bedeuten. Diese Möglichkeit spricht der profanen Welt ein vernichtendes doch gerechtes Urteil: sie wird gekennzeichnet als eine Welt, in der es aufs Detail so streng nicht ankommt. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften 1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 350; Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London, New York: Verso, 1998), 175
[205] Benjamin, *Origin*, 233–36

In the "Concept of Irony," de Man writes of Benjamin's "authentic language" à propos of Friedrich Schlegel's fragments on irony.[206] His argument is quite similar to the one concerning "absolute irony" in "The Rhetoric of Temporality" but, here, the "authenticity" of language is no longer associated with a pseudo-dialectical, ironic self-consciousness. He shifts from the latter "reflexive model" toward the "radical arbitrariness" of the text machine and the "mere[ly] semiotic" character of *reelle Sprache*. What Schlegel calls *reelle Sprache* is, for de Man, quite close to what Benjamin calls *reine Sprache*. In the latter formulation, however, the emphasis falls on the question of whether translations are more "canonical" than the texts they translate.

> Both criticism and translation are caught in the gesture which Benjamin calls ironic, a gesture which undoes the stability of the original by giving it a definitive, canonical form in the translation or in the theorization. In a curious way, translation canonizes its own version more than the original was canonical. That the original was not purely canonical is clear from the fact that it demands translation; it cannot be definitive since it can be translated. But you cannot, says Benjamin, translate the translation; once you have a translation you cannot translate it any more. You can translate only an original. The translation canonizes, freezes, an original and shows in the original a mobility, an instability, which at first one did not notice. The act of critical, theoretical reading performed by a critic like Friedrich Schlegel and performed by literary theory in general – by means of which the original work is not imitated or reproduced but is to some extent put in motion, de-canonized, questioned in a way which undoes its claim to canonical authority – is similar to what a translator performs.[207]

The "irreversibility" of certain translations, like that of the unreadability of certain allegories, seems to take on a specific intensity. Translation arrests the tropological play of the original in a way that the aesthetic reading animates it. Here it is helpful to recall de Man's response to Tom

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[206] "The authentic language is the language of madness, the language of error, and the language of stupidity. (*Bouvard et Pécuchet*, if you want – that's the authentic language, what he really means by *reelle Sprache*.) It is such because this authentic language is a mere semiotic entity, open to the radical arbitrariness of any sign system and as such capable of circulation, but which as such is profoundly unreliable." Man, *Aesthetic*, 181
[207] Man, *Resistance*, 82–83

Reinert during the Q&A after the final Messenger Lecture on Benjamin's "Task of the

Translator" :

> Most of the translations that are on the market are not translations in Benjamin's sense.
> When Luther translated, translated the Bible, something occurred – at that moment,
> something happened – not in the immediate sense that from then on there were wars
> and then the course of history was changed – that is a by-product. What really occurred
> was that . . . translation. Then there are, in the history of texts, texts which are
> occurrences. I think Rousseau's *Social Contract* is an occurrence, not because it is a
> political text, but something that occurs, in that sense. I realize this is difficult – a little
> obscure, and not well formulated. But I feel it, that there is something there. Something
> being said there which is kind of important to me, which I think . . . which isn't clear. [208]

It is likely that if de Man had time to edit this lecture, he would have cut much of this. But it is

interesting, nonetheless, to consider this idea that the more "immediate sense" of an historical

"occurrence" is a "by-product" and that the *textual* productivity of *The Social Contract* and

Luther's translation of the Bible is somehow more material than what commonly passes as an

historical, empirical event. Obviously, such texts could not be said to inscribe history if they

were never read but, for de Man, the actual historical circumstances and consequences are to

be regarded as a "byproduct." In this he is much closer to Benjamin for whom allegory provides

the only means of accessing the essence of the past and the only way of engaging it

"politically."[209] In view of our implacable tendency to humanize and historicize everything, the

difficulty of reading history as we know it as a "byproduct" of inscription has a sort of

prophylactic value, but one that will always be contested by more orthodox theories of

dialectical materialism.

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[208] Man, *Resistance*, 104
[209] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 392

Dialectics / Deconstruction

Jameson's attempt to develop a historical materialist hermeneutic by adapting the fourfold typology of allegory is one of the most ambitious attempts to achieve a "metaironic" perspective. As he argues in "On Interpretation," political-historical interpretation is "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation."[210] "Everything" (!) can ultimately be viewed as "social and historical" and, consequently, "political."[211] Marxist interpretation preserves the "essential mystery" of the past and is fundamentally directed towards a "construction of some new and more adequate, immanent or antitranscendent hermeneutic model."[212] He maps the orthodox Marxist interpretive structure onto the fourfold structure of Medieval Christian exegesis as follows:

> Anagogical: political reading (collective "meaning" of history)
> Moral: psychological reading (individual subject)
> Allegorical: allegorical key or interpretive code
> Literal: historical or textual referent[213]

"Transcoding," is "the strategic choice of a particular code or language [that] can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or 'texts,' or two very different structural levels of reality."[214] For Jameson, Marxism differs from other post-structural modes of interpretation because it focuses on the "interference between levels" of the cultural text as a stage in the dialectic rather than as an insurmountable "discontinuity" or "heterogeneity." The interference is "only provisionally extrinsic" and requires a "hypothetical *reconstruction*."[215]

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[210] Jameson, *Political*, 17
[211] Jameson, *Political*, 20
[212] Jameson, *Political*, 23
[213] Jameson, *Political*, 31
[214] Jameson, *Political*, 40
[215] Jameson, *Political*, 56–57

"Garden-variety literary criticism," which includes psychologism and psychoanalysis, is termed

"ethical," while Marxism alone is distinguished by its potential to transcend the "ethical"

dimension.[216] Psychoanalysis fails to see that "the structure of the psyche is historical" and is

not a universal ground for the interpretation of culture.[217] Unlike conventional "explication de

texte," which seeks to decode content by way of ideology, Marxism seeks to interpret the

"ideology of form" in the "symbolic act."[218] The kinds of "aporia" or "antinomy" that arise are

regarded as indices of a subtending "social contradiction."[219] The "minimal units" and "raw

material" of this "contradiction" are called "ideologemes." They take the *form* of a

"pseudoidea" or "protonarrative" rather than a simple 'content' or 'object.' According to

Jameson, by focusing too much on the "all-embracing unity of a single code" and the

contradictions at work in the various modes of production, one "projects a long view of history

which is inconsistent with concrete political action and class struggle."[220] "Cultural revolution"

must, therefore be seen as a "moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production

becomes visibly antagonistic" and not as a definitive moment of passage from one mode to the

next.[221] The materialist must attempt to think of History "in such a way as to resist such

thematization or reification" – moving "beyond" the simple opposition of synchrony and

diachrony to reach "a kind of metasynchronicity." It is here that history becomes the

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[216] Jameson, *Political*, 60
[217] Jameson, *Political*, 62
[218] Jameson, *Political*, 76
[219] Jameson, *Political*, 82
[220] Jameson, *Political*, 87–91
[221] Jameson, *Political*, 95

"experience of Necessity . . . only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force."[222]

In the chapter of *Postmodernism* on "Immanence and Nominalism," Jameson reads de Man as "an eighteenth-century mechanical materialist," a "nominalist," and a theorist of an "incompletely liquidated modernism" in which the "arguments are 'postmodern' … even if the conclusions are not."[223] He writes of "de Man's metaphysics," arguing that the theory of allegory is "fatally menaced at every point by a resurgence of some notion of self-consciousness that its language vigilantly attempts to ward off."[224] De Man would agree, of course, that all metaphor is metaphysical and involves a "violent yoking together of distinct and heterogeneous objects." But to say that it is "the crucial locus of . . . transcoding in de Man," makes it seem as if transcoding is not the crucial locus of metaphor in general.[225] While Jameson admits "there is no way that even the most suspicious and alert theoretician can take sufficient precautions to exclude such slippage into ideology and metaphysics," he does not clarify whether there is anything about de Man's metaphysics that cannot be attributed to "language itself."[226] What he really finds most objectionable is not the metaphysical violence of metaphor but, rather, the "terminology of error" that accompanies it.[227] He argues that what de Man calls error is not

> a narrowly tropological concept but rather the place in which the dynamics of the tropes is pronounced to be 'the same' as a whole range of phenomena identified by other codes or theoretical discourses in utterly unrelated and unrelatable ways.[228]

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[222] Jameson, *Political*, 102
[223] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 246, 250, 255
[224] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 225, 245
[225] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 238
[226] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 246–47
[227] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 237
[228] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 238

If there is no way to communicate without it, why must we still think of metaphor in terms of

error? Why not speak in terms of value and evaluation? Jameson initially claims that "the

structural fact of metaphorization has eventlike consequences . . . that will eventually be sorted

out and typologized in the various kinds of allegories," but he concludes that a "new typology"

of allegory is an "evident temptation" that de Man ultimately "resists."[229] If allegory could be

rigorously typologized, then a kind of bridge might be forged between de Manian

deconstruction and Jamesonian dialectics:

> if de Man's exploration of the consequences of the inaugural metaphorical moment has
> deeper affinities with Marx's staging of the emergence of value, then this affinity also
> opens up a possible relationship between the former's notions of textuality and those
> more postmodern concerns with the peculiar dynamics of media signification that at
> first seem so distant from him.[230]

This relationship is "possible," so long as de Manian "error" can be transcoded as Marxian

"value." But for allegory to be typologized, unreadability must finally become readable. The

types of allegorical unreadability must eventually be assimilated to a level (or valence) of the

dialectical understanding capable of "reading" unreadability without also succumbing to it. In

de Man's "view of language," however, grammar is not simply a code and "error" is not simply

a failure to transcode "strategically." In insisting on the "terminology of error" de Man does

everything he can to challenge the idea "that we could somehow get rid of [error] by one last

effort of the mind." He maintains that error is a ceaseless and irreversible process "that no

language would be possible without."[231] "Aberration" is the technical term he uses for the

infinite catachrestic event without which language would be unable to 'function' referentially.

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[229] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 230, 242
[230] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 236
[231] Man, *Allegories*, 152

Aberration 'means' that all translations and transcodings are not only *in error* but must be read

as (allegories of) history itself. As de Man writes in the penultimate essay of *Allegories of*

Reading on Rousseau's *Social Contract*:

> we are not here concerned with the technically political significance of this text, still less
> with an evaluation of the political and ethical praxis that can be derived from it. Our
> reading merely tries to define the rhetorical patterns that organize the distribution and
> the movement of the key terms – while contending that questions of valorization can be
> relevantly considered only after the rhetorical status of the text has been clarified.[232]

But the "rhetorical status of the text" cannot, in the final analysis, be "clarified" – at least not in

terms of Marxist 'value' or 'valorization.' The overdetermination of the both history and

rhetoric render it impossible to talk of a "properly political *allegory*."[233] De Man speaks, instead,

of a "practical ethical dimension of allegory," which he attributes to *Julie*'s "allegory of

unreadability" and in which

> the concatenation of the categories of truth and falsehood with the values of right and
> wrong is disrupted, affecting the economy of the narration in decisive ways. We can call
> this shift in economy *ethical*, since it indeed involves a displacement from *pathos* to
> *ethos*. Allegories are always ethical, the term ethical designating the structural
> interference of two distinct value systems. In this sense, ethics has nothing to do with
> the will (thwarted or free) of a subject, nor *a fortiori*, with a relationship between
> subjects. The ethical category is imperative (i.e., a category rather than a value) to the
> extent that it is linguistic and not subjective.[234]

The "practical ethical dimension of allegory" has to do with the way allegory "speaks out with

the referential efficacy of a praxis." [235] This is not a methodological, political or even a human

praxis. It is an authentically historical occurrence, a textual machination, a material event. De

Man shows how a technical praxis in which method plays no part is not only possible, but

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[232] Man, *Allegories*, 258
[233] Jameson, *Political*, 80
[234] Man, *Allegories*, 206
[235] Man, *Allegories*, 208–9

unavoidable and out of our control. Because it has nothing to do with our conscious desires, it

functions as an imperative that is as categorical as it is rhetorical. While the "categorical

imperative" of which Kant speaks would, at first glance, seem utterly foreign to the allegorical

imperative we encounter in de Man, they are, from an etymological standpoint, quite close. As

Heidegger reminds us, both terms share the common root of $αγορεύω$, the latter of which

recalls the $αγορά$ – the $ορισμός$ of ethical life.[236]

Contrary to Jameson's expectations, the possibility of "radical revolution" is not

foreclosed by de Man's theory of language. While it might not take the Marxian form of a

"transformation of the social system," this does not mean that another sort of transformation is

"inconceivable."[237] Material events are "radical transformations," not of the "social system"

necessarily, but of the mnemotechnical substrate of "history itself." They do not simply

transcode text from one structural level to another or translate it from one language into

another; they bring about an intensification of (mis)reading and (mis)interpretation. Rousseau's

Social Contract, Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles and Luther's translation of the Bible are

"occurrences" insofar as they generate or, at least, *have the potential* to "generate history" – a

history in which politics, society and humanity (as they are commonly conceived) exercise only

a marginal influence.

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[236] "The interpretation of the primary structures constituting the being of Da understood as such – namely, its mode of existing – is the existential analytic of Da-sein. "Existential" is used as opposed to "categorical." In contemporary usage, category means a class or group in which certain things belong. For instance, one says: He belongs to this or that category. "Category" is derived from the Greek verb ἀγορευειν, meaning "to speak publicly in the market" (ἀγορα), especially in a judicial trial. The preposition κατα means "from above down toward something." It is equivalent to our "about" – to say something *about* something. In the special case of a public, judicial trial, it means to tell the accused "to his face." Accordingly, κατηγορία really means "predication."" Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols - conversations - letters* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 121–22

[237] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 237

This is where Jameson identifies de Man's "metaphysics" and "high modernist aesthetic" of error. Although he realizes that it cannot be typologized, Jameson is convinced that there is "surely an assertion of value (if not of a kind of canonicity)" at play in de Man's notion of allegory, but he is careful to add that this "is not exactly an assertion of *aesthetic* value." He writes that de Man's preoccupation with allegorical texts amounts to "something like a 'deconstructive' aesthetic," and that

> de Man's form of deconstruction can be seen as a last-minute rescue operation and a salvaging of the aesthetic – even a defense and valorization of literary study and a privileging of specifically literary language – at the moment in which it seemed about to disappear without a trace.[238]

While he (mis)reads allegory here as an aesthetic category, this critique is helpful insofar as it raises the question from which there can be no escape: even if all text is allegorically inscribed, does the intensity of this inscription not vary between texts? It is difficult to say whether some texts are more allegorical than others for the same reasons it is difficult, if not impossible, to extricate a text from the texture of its 'reception.'

Literature, for de Man, is a peculiar kind of anti-genre capable of receiving any and all grammatical texts singular enough to resist other, more conventional genres. But, evidently, this category of the uncategorizable is prone to being misread as a category of the aesthetic. The different allegorical 'types' (e.g. unreadable, figural, ironic) do not correspond to categories; they respond to the grammatical singularity, complexity, intensity and unreadability of the text in question. Because complex texts have the power to generate more texts, they promise a certain quantum of history which, for the time being at least, remains immeasurable.

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[238] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 253, 251

But if, in texts as grammatically and allegorically complex as Baudelaire's and Rilke's, for instance, aesthetic and ideological categories such as 'good' and 'bad' or 'beautiful' and 'ugly' can be "subsumed . . . under the common rubric of the interesting," then what "interests" de Man about these texts may be less qualitative than it first appears.[239] Here one might imagine a quasi-quantitative approach to literary history that would seek to measure the historical magnitude of (misreading generated by) grammatically, allegorically and interestingly unreadable texts – an approach in which "interest" would have to be seen as a kind of absolute value (in a mathematical rather than Marxian sense).

Even the most negative dialectic, while it might acknowledge that we are without the possibility of *ever reaching* truth, is unable to tolerate de Man's conclusion that we are without hope of *ever approaching nearer* – that we might read and translate infinitely and with infinite rigor and still come no closer to truth. As James Joyce writes in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

> . . . Ah! without a possibility of ever approaching nearer. That's heresy. . . .
>
> – I meant without a possibility of ever reaching.
>
> – O . . . Ah! ever reaching. That's another story.[240]

While it is only human to err, Jameson seems unwilling to forgive de Man his theory of aberration because doing so would require him to accept that there is an inhuman, mechanical and pseudo-political dimension of language that falls outside the horizon of the Marxist hermeneutic.

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[239] Man, *Allegories*, 22

[240] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man & Dubliners*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004). Last ellipsis is original.

What is most illuminating in Jameson's reading is his continued interest in the dialectical

potential of thematization, which he rightly flags as one of de Man's "shrewdest terminological

moves." But it is not exactly de Man's. The history of thematization is hopelessly bound up with

the thematization of history. Like madness, the theme escapes history, narration, and citation.

When de Man speaks of thematization he is being very "shrewd" indeed. He is citing the

uncitable – performing an impossible speech act. More often than not, he does so in the

manner of a ventriloquist – speaking by way of a dummy. But, as he reminds us, "the smart guy

[eiron], who is by necessity the speaker, always turns out to be the dumb guy [alazon]."[241] So

we must be careful not to regard thematization simply as an attempt to deflect onto the other

what he would otherwise have to say himself. But this is, of course, part of it. There would be

no irony without allegory, no comedy without the fall into otherness, no material event

[Ereignis] without a dialectical set-up [Ge-stell].

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[241] Man, *Aesthetic*, 165

III. Semiontology

Promise / Articulation

Reading Heidegger's fundamental ontology often feels like being trapped in a revolving door –

caught up in the vertiginous acceleration of a textual "tourniquet."[242] In order to know what

reference means one must know what Being is and in order to know what Being is one must

know what reference means. But, according to Heidegger, this hermeneutic circle need not be

"vicious" so long as one approach it the right way. The thematization of Being is, fundamentally,

a question of "access." In *Being and Time*, Heidegger maintains the prospect that critical

philosophy might engage in a productive relationship with the sciences once it has illuminated

the fundamental, ontological "structures" of Being.

> Laying the foundations for the sciences in this way is different in principle from the kind
> of 'logic' which limps along after, investigating the status of some science as it chances
> to find it, in order to discover its 'method'. Laying the foundations, as we have described
> it, is rather a productive logic – in the sense that it leaps ahead, as it were, into some
> area of Being, discloses it for the first time in the constitution of its Being, and, after
> thus arriving at the structures within it, makes these available to the positive sciences as
> transparent assignments for their inquiry [durchsichtige Anweisungen des Fragens].[243]

But in truth, conceived as ἀ-λήθεια, the "area" in which Being resides is always already dis-

closed. It cannot appear for the "first time." The leap already presumes to have landed upon

the structures toward which it pretends to leap. They are as "transparent" here, in the

introduction to *Being and Time*, as they will ever be. This is to say that the theme of Being never

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[242] Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 50n1; Man, *Rhetoric*, 69–70
[243] Heidegger, *Being*, 30–31

reaches a firm, logical foundation [Grund]. It is destined to remain suspended in the abyss

[Abgrund] of language – in the performative, promissory structure of a more authentic,

rhetorical temporality. But such a temporality always promises more than it can (con)state. It is

fatally 'circumscribed' by the question of the structure of causality, the causality of the question

of the structure and the structure of the causality of the question. These three terms trope

themselves, *metaleptically*, en abyme.

Like Ferdinand de Saussure's famous figure of the relationship between Language and

Speech, Language and Being articulate one another like the wind and the sea. At the boundary

of these fluid media, 'identities' are formed that must be regarded both as wavelengths

radiating throughout the expanse and as waves crashing against a distant shore. To thematize is

to favor one side of this duality over the other, but this can never be done without turning a

blind eye to the system or the event. Heidegger's attempt to derive everyday temporality from

authentic temporality in *Being and Time* never actually materializes and, perhaps, could never

have materialized for all of the reasons that Saussure insists on the *critical* partitioning of

synchronic and diachronic linguistics. Heidegger argues that the essence of history, like

diachronic linguistics, cannot be thought historiologically because "authentic temporality" is an

essentially synchronic structure. The "veritas transcendentalis" of existential phenomenology

entails the transcendence of (synchronic) "possibility" over (diachronic) "actuality."[244]

Saussure's model of diachronic linguistics, on the other hand, *derives* from the synchronic,

which *derives* from everyday speech and is, thus, *doubly* removed from actuality. While

Heidegger intends to show how "everyday" (diachronic) temporality and "authentic"

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[244] "Higher than actuality stands *possibility*" Heidegger, *Being*, 63

(synchronic) temporality are, from an ontological perspective, one and the same, the promise of fundamental ontology as a linguistic science is deferred indefinitely.

Throughout his later writings and seminars, Heidegger tells us "die Sprache spricht" ("Language speaks," "Speech speaks," "Language languages"). At the conclusion of "Promises," de Man writes "die Sprache (ver)spricht sich." This not only reformulates the Heideggerian saying, it rearticulates it against the background of Saussurian linguistics. In deconstructing the textual machination at work in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, de Man is essentially reading the *political* state as an allegory of the *linguistic* state theorized by Saussure in the *Course*. It is the incompatibility of the performative, promissory speech act with the constative, grammatical law that ultimately (dis)articulates the synchronic and diachronic models of language. Thinking the (dis)articulation of Language and Speech – like thinking the tautology of Language and Being – is an infinite task. Like Heidegger, Saussure promises and fails to deliver a more authentic, model of linguistic temporality because of the ironic-allegorical force that disrupts the division of every synchronic-diachronic perspective. Even if Saussure is unable to think the "mechanism of language" as a "text machine" it is, nevertheless, this non-tropological trope of the promise that materially inscribes the historical course of the *Course*.

The text machine is, fundamentally, the metaleptical machination of a *semiontological* promise – the science-*fiction* of a semiologico-ontological reconciliation that ends up being only a *semi*-ontology and a *semi*-semiology. Semiontological structures must be rearticulated at every possible juncture, but every time we speak of them their disarticulation is bespoke. It is this (dis)articulation that might be said to "generate history."

Synchrony / Diachrony

Linguistics, according to Saussure, is responsible for tracing the genealogies of languages,

postulating the laws behind linguistic forces and defining itself as a science. This self-definition

depends on its installation within a general science of semiology in which language plays the

"most important part."[245] The relevance of anthropology, ethnography and "prehistory," are

dismissed from the outset:

> no society has ever known its language to be anything other than something inherited
> from previous generations, which it has no choice but to accept. That is why the
> question of the origins of language does not have the importance generally attributed to
> it.[246]

The brusqueness of this statement is rather remarkable in light of the foundational importance

these questions take on for deconstruction.[247] Sociology (social psychology in particular) is of

interest because even the most "physical and mechanical processes" have a "psychological

aspect."[248] Semiology can never fully separate itself from what we might call the

psycholinguistic mechanism of mnemotechnical inscription. Saussure insists, however, that the

"mechanism of language" is something else entirely. In attempting to grasp the difference

between these two machines and the importance of this difference for de Man's critical

linguistic analysis we must carefully follow the, at times, rather jaunting narrative of the *Course*

from its most fundamental principles to its most general temporal structures.

What really defines semiology as an independent system of science [Wissenschaft] is its

profound circularity. Like Hegel who, in the *Logic*, likens the "absolute concept" to a "circle of

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[245] Ferdinand d. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 15-17
[246] Saussure, *Course*, 71-73
[247] Derrida, *Grammatology*
[248] Saussure, *Course*, 6-7

circles"[249] and Heidegger who, in *Being and Time*, confronts the "manifest circularity" of the question of Being,[250] Saussure, too, announces semiology as an annular science:

> Why is it that semiology is not yet recognised as an autonomous science with its own object of study, like other sciences? The fact is that here we go round in a circle. On the one hand, nothing is more appropriate than the study of languages to bring out the nature of the semiological problem. But to formulate the problem suitably, it would be necessary to study what a language is in itself: whereas hitherto a language has usually been considered as a function of something else, from other points of view.[251]

This circularity not only concerns the position of semiology amongst the sciences, it defines the structure of the semiological fact as such. From the outset, semiology becomes a question of whether this circular, metaleptical trope will allow for a rigorous science of signs and whether such a science might ever be capable of thinking the trope by which it is defined. After identifying the "arbitrariness" of the sign as the "organising principle for the whole of linguistics," Saussure remarks:

> The consequences which flow from this principle . . . do not all appear at first sight equally evident. One discovers them after many circuitous deviations, and so realises the fundamental importance of the principle.[252]

In arguing that the sign is "arbitrary," Saussure means that it is "unmotivated" – that there is no "natural" relationship between the concept and the sound pattern by which it is signified. It is not a matter of the "free choice of the speaker" who has "no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in a linguistic community." He distinguishes this arbitrariness from onomatopoeia and exclamation in which it might be argued that the signifier is motivated by the nature of what it aims to signify (though he questions the extent of this

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[249] Hegel, *Science*, 751; Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, §15
[250] Heidegger, *Being*, 27
[251] Saussure, *Course*, 15–17
[252] Saussure, *Course*, 67–68

motivation). The sign is "not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern."[253] The latter is the "psychological impression of a sound" that "may be called a 'material element' only in that it is the representation of our sensory impression." It is not the raw materiality of sound. It is our only access thereto. In calling this materiality he is implicitly acknowledging a difference between *being* material and being *called* material. He is suggesting that "*language itself is a form, not a substance.*"[254] The importance of this distinction "cannot be overemphasized" – almost as if it were, itself, *motivated* – materially predisposed to engender precisely this confusion.

Language, as Saussure famously argues, is "a system of which all the parts can and must be considered as synchronically interdependent" – a system in which "there are only differences, *and no positive terms.*"[255] From the synchronic perspective, "[t]wo signs, each comprising a signification and a signal, are not different from each other, but only distinct. They are simply in *opposition* to each other." But, in order to 'understand' linguistic entities in the common sense, one must turn away from the purely formal, synchronic "mechanism of language" that "turns entirely on identities and differences" toward a model of conceptual, semiotic "oppositions."[256] When one begins to think the "opposition" of signs one *turns away* from the mechanism that *turns on* identity and difference to a tropological, model based on the interplay *between* identity and difference. One does not think "identity" and "difference" tautologically as "counterparts" but, rather, dialectically as a process in which differences turn

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[253] Saussure, *Course*, 65–66
[254] Saussure, *Course*, 118–19
[255] Saussure, *Course*, 83–86
[256] Saussure, *Course*, 106–8

into identities and vice versa. Thinking language synchronically as a state, requires that

linguistic units, realities, concrete entities, values and even facts be regarded as one and the

same (non-phenomenal) phenomenon in which "*the characteristics of the unit merge with the*

unit itself." The linguistic state is not an absolute stasis so much as a metastable "equilibrium."

> the language system as such is never directly altered. It is in itself unchangeable. Only certain elements change, but without regard to the connexions which integrate them as part of the whole. It is as if one of the planets circling the sun underwent a change of dimensions and weight: this isolated event would have general consequences for the whole solar system, and disturb its equilibrium.[257]

If linguistic change really had such an event-like character, the mechanism of language would

be relatively easy to detect and might be studied in a more straightforward, historiological

manner. But the fact that the history of the sign far exceeds the scope of what might be

registered by any individual or collective consciousness necessitates an internal division in

semiology (and all sciences dealing with values).

> […] the more complex and rigorously organised a system of values is, the more essential it becomes, on account of this very complexity, to study it separately in terms of the two axes. Of no system is this as true as it is of a language. Nowhere else do we find comparable precision of values, or such a large number and diversity of terms involved, or such a strict mutual dependence between them. The multiplicity of signs, which we have already invoked to explain linguistic continuity, precludes absolutely any attempt to study simultaneously relations in time and relations within the system.[258]

> Since changes are never made to the system as a whole, but only to its individual elements, they must be studied independently of the system. It is true that every change has a repercussion on the system. But initially only one point is affected. The change is unrelated to the internal consequences which may follow for the system as a whole. This difference in nature between chronological succession and simultaneous coexistence, between facts affecting parts and facts affecting the whole, makes it impossible to include both as subject matter of one and the same science.[259]

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[257] Saussure, *Course*, 83–86
[258] Saussure, *Course*, 79–80
[259] Saussure, *Course*, 83–86

Saussure partitions linguistics into a synchronic branch that deals with linguistic states and the

diachronic branch which deals with linguistic evolution. [260] He suggests that the arbitrariness of

the linguistic sign, insofar as it necessitates this division, makes linguistics the exemplary model

for semiology as a whole. It forces the semiologist to develop a model of time that is no longer

based on the paradigm of narrative in which a majority of historical examinations of language

remain ensnared.[261] Both synchrony and diachrony partake of time, but we cannot simply

regard the opposition as a contrast between the historical past and the present moment. We

cannot make projections about the future based on the history of language in the same way

that we can with the history of meaningful, narrativized, hermeneutic time. The history of

language is about as predictive as the fossil record: "The diachronic developments are in no way

directed towards providing a new sign to mark a given value."[262] If it happens to do so this is to

be regarded as an unintentional byproduct of the mechanism that in no way changes the

synchronic state or affords us any insight into its mechanism: "the reason for a diachronic

development lies in the development itself. The particular synchronic consequences which may

ensue have nothing to do with it."[263] Diachronic developments and synchronic consequences

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[260] "*Synchronic linguistics* will be concerned with logical and psychological connexions between coexisting items constituting a system, as perceived by the same collective consciousness.
Diachronic linguistics on the other hand will be concerned with connexions between sequences of items not perceived by the same collective consciousness, which replace one another without themselves constituting a system." Saussure, *Course*, 96–97

[261] 'History' and 'historical linguistics' cannot be used, for the ideas associated with them are too vague. Just as political history includes the description of periods as well as the narration of events, it might be supposed by describing a sequence of states of a language one was studying the language along the temporal axis. But in order to do that, it would be necessary to consider separately the factors of transition involved in passing from one linguistic state to the next. The terms *evolution* and *evolutionary linguistics* are more exact, and we shall make frequent use of these terms. By contrast, one may speak of the science of linguistic *states,* or *static linguistics.* . . . Everything is synchronic which relates to the static aspect of our science, and diachronic everything which concerns evolution." Saussure, *Course*, 79–80

[262] Saussure, *Course*, 79–80

[263] Saussure, *Course*, 83–86

must be thought as ends in themselves but in a manner that is radically divorced from the logic of history and of dialectics.

The model of causality that results from this division of the synchronic and diachronic is strange indeed. It departs from every chronological, historiological, narratological and dialectical model. Ultimately, the temporality of the linguistic mechanism can only be expressed rhetorically because it is impossible to purge rational argument of all traces of consequentiality, seriality, temporality, diachronicity, etc. One can only speak paradoxically of "synchronic consequences," especially if one accepts that

> This mechanism, which involves interrelations of successive terms, is like the functioning of a machine in which the components all act upon one other, even though they are arranged in one dimension only.[264]

We are no longer dealing here with the (simple) mechanistic causality of Newtonian and Galilean physics, nor the "expressive causality" of Leibnizian and Hegelian philosophy but, rather, the "structural causality" theorized by Spinoza and revolutionized by Marx.[265] According to Althusser, the latter specifically concerns the causality of linguistic structures through which the causality of historical events can be thought. But, as Jameson suggests, both structural and expressive models of causality have a tendency to relapse into simpler models of mechanicity, which leaves us wondering whether this kind of relapse is, itself, a mechanism.

When one takes the mechanism of language seriously, one can only regard diachronic developments and synchronic consequences as ends in themselves. They are characterized by the rhetorical, "autotelic" temporality that de Man, after Friedrich Nietzsche and Gerard

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[264] Saussure, *Course*, 126
[265] Cf. Chapter II "Causality / Tropology"

Genette, calls "metaleptic."[266] Metalepsis is less a structure or trope than a singular point in

which the diachronic movement of causality is inscribed and around which it gets troped. It is

here that the "mechanism of language" of which Saussure writes becomes a text machine in

the de Manian sense. The former can no longer be regarded tropo*logically* because it is this

mechanism that articulates the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of language through

which all tropes are understood.

De man writes, à propos of Friedrich Schlegel theory of the "irony of irony," of the "total

arbitrariness" of textual machination:

> Words have a way of saying things which are not at all what you want them to say. You
> are writing a splendid and coherent philosophical argument but, lo and behold, you are
> describing sexual intercourse. Or you are writing a fine compliment for somebody and
> without your knowledge, just because words have a way of doing things, it's sheer insult
> and obscenity that you are really saying. There is a machine there, a text machine, an
> implacable determination and a total arbitrariness, *unbedingter Willkür*; he says, which
> inhabits words on the level of the play of the signifier, which undoes any narrative
> consistency of lines, and which undoes the reflexive and the dialectical model, both of
> which are, as you know, the basis of any narration. There is no narration without
> reflection, no narrative without dialectic, and what irony disrupts (according to Friedrich
> Schlegel) is precisely that dialectic and that reflexivity, the tropes. The reflexive and the
> dialectical are the tropological system, the Fichtean system, and that is what irony
> undoes.[267]

De Man qualifies the term "total arbitrariness" with Schlegel's formulation, *Unbedingter*

Willkür, because arbitrariness is what disarticulates every dialectical model of totalization. It is

between "total arbitrariness" and "implacable determination" that the machination of the text

machine must be read. It is, thus, between what Saussure calls "absolute" and "relative"

arbitrariness that we must attempt to read the textual machination at work in the *Course*.

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[266] Man, *Allegories*, 5
[267] Man, *Aesthetic*, 181

What Saussure calls 'arbitrariness' is at odds with every one of its presumed 'definitions.' To witness the mechanism of language at work we need look no further than this term by which Saussure seeks to define it. It is certainly not something that is "based on random choice or personal whim."[268] The mechanism of language is directly opposed to this most common signification of the term: "Languages are not mechanisms created and organised with a view to the concepts to be expressed." He would appear, then, to be using it more in the juridical sense of ('autocratic') or the mathematical sense ('of unspecified value'), but this is not exactly the case either. That language is not a matter of human judgment does not imply that it is the sole arbiter of its own destiny or that it is entirely resistant to the kind of mathematical formalization that might serve as the basis for an algorithm. Arbitrariness does concern the laws of language, but these diverge fundamentally from the laws of the physical and natural sciences. It is not a universal or natural law. It does not concern "relations which hold in all cases and for ever" since when it "comes down to particular, tangible facts, there is no panchronic point of view" and, even if there were, it would not be able to grasp "specific facts of language structure."[269] Laws in linguistics are social rather than scientific in that they have an "imperative" and "general" character.

> synchronic facts of whatever kind present a certain regularity, but they have no imperative character. Diachronic facts, on the contrary, are forced upon the language, but there is nothing general about them. . . . If, none the less, one insists on speaking of linguistic laws, the term will mean something entirely different as applied to synchronic facts and to diachronic facts.[270]

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[268] *OED Online* (Oxford University Press)
[269] Saussure, *Course*, 94
[270] Saussure, *Course*, 90–93

This imperative character of the diachronic law is what de Man calls "ethicity,"[271] what Derrida identifies as the "mystical foundation of authority"[272] and what Stiegler characterizes as the "necessary default" [défaut qu'il faut]. Each refers to the lawlessness by which the law is instituted. The principle of arbitrariness that governs the formation of linguistic laws has to do with a particular kind of inhumanity that only emerges in the institutional functioning of human society. If the mechanism of language is regarded as inhuman we must add that it, nevertheless, requires humanity. It is in the strangely human inhumanity of the juridico-linguistic institution that we can discern a certain phantomaticity (of which I will have more say later).[273] Saussure writes that "[t]o speak of a 'linguistic law' in general is like trying to lay hands on a ghost."[274] To say that what exists *de jure* is haunted suggests that the origin of the 'law' is manufactured, machined by a *de facto* imperative that it cannot account for because the linguistic forces involved cannot be psychologized in terms of individual or collective means and ends.

In tracing this "social crystallisation" of language through the "associative center" of the brain, Saussure pushes beyond the sociology of the "individual [speech] act, which is merely language in embryo," in search of a more concrete (i.e. complex) ground for linguistic facticity. In passing from the embryonic act to a state of fact, language enters a matrix by which it is differentiated on an individual and collective level.[275] This process of differentiation is by no means structured according to concentric or symmetrical oppositions (internal/external,

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[271] Man, *Allegories*, 206
[272] Derrida, *Acts*
[273] Cf. Chapter V "Thematization / Citation"
[274] Saussure, *Course*, 90–93
[275] Saussure, *Course*, 101

psychological/non-psychological, executive/passive) nor does it proceed sequentially by way of

such oppositions. It would be better to regard it less as an communicative, intersubjective act

than as a recursive, "interobjective" process of "transindividuation" of the sort described by

Simondon, Deleuze, Stiegler and Hui.[276]

> the synchronic point of view takes precedence over the diachronic, since for the community of language users that is the one and only reality . . . The same is true for the linguist. If he takes a diachronic point of view, he is no longer examining the language, but a series of events which modify it. . . . No synchronic phenomenon has anything in common with any diachronic phenomenon. One is a relationship between simultaneous elements, and the other a substitution of one element for another in time, that is to say an event.[277]

Because linguistics cannot lay claim to the reality of speech, the formulation of the state

requires some degree of thematization and, thus, technical intervention. The division between

synchronic and diachronic linguistics is characterized by the sort of "artifactuality" and

"actuvirtuality" that Derrida and Stiegler discuss in *Echographies of Television.*[278] In attempting

to thematize the temporality of linguistic change, Saussure must avoid the temptation of

generality represented by the "panchronic" perspective as well as the overspecialization that

would compromise the model of linguistic facticity. It must capture the idiom without giving

way to the idiosyncrasies of individualized narrative or specialized study ("interference by

experts"). This necessitates a certain degree of play between the synchronic and diachronic.

> The object of synchronic study does not comprise everything which is simultaneous, but only the set of facts corresponding to any particular language. In this, it will take into account where necessary a division into dialects and sub-dialects. The term *synchronic,* in fact, is not sufficiently precise. *Idiosynchronic* would be a better term, even though it

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[276] Yuk Hui, *On the Existence of Digital Objects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 151–86; Simondon, *L*

[277] Saussure, *Course*, 89

[278] Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies*, 3

is somewhat cumbersome. Diachronic linguistics, on the contrary, needs no such particularisation, and indeed rejects it.[279]

In practice, a linguistic state occupies not a point in time, but a period of time of varying length, during which the sum total of changes occurring is minimal. It may be ten years, a generation, a century, or even longer. A language may hardly change at all for a long period, only to undergo considerable changes in the next few years. Of two contemporary languages, one may evolve considerably and the other hardly at all over the same period. In the latter case, any study will necessarily be synchronic, but in the former case diachronic. An absolute state is defined by lack of change. But since languages are always changing, however minimally, studying a linguistic state amounts in practice to ignoring unimportant changes. Mathematicians do likewise when they ignore very small fractions for certain purposes, such as logarithmic calculation. . . . Demarcation in time is not the only problem encountered in defining a linguistic state. Exactly the same question arises over demarcation in space. So the notion of a linguistic state can only be an approximation. In static linguistics, as in most sciences, no demonstration is possible without a conventional simplification of the data. [280]

From the perspective of the individual, one can choose to use the available signs or not, but one cannot choose what the language signifies. It is more difficult, however, to understand this insistence on the level of the community. Surely the community is bound to language, but does this really mean that it cannot "exercise its authority to change even a single word"? What does it mean to change a "single word"? Certainly, academic institutions can exert some influence on language and the norms of proper and profane speech can be policed to some extent. The possibility of doing so is even more heightened today where "speech" increasingly takes the form of "chat" instant messaging and is, thus, subject to the intervention of recommendation and autocomplete algorithms. But, perhaps, none of this changes the validity of Saussure's statement if by "authority" over a "single word" he means the power to change *only* a "single word" – that we might enforce changes on any number of words, but never without these

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[279] Saussure, *Course*, 89
[280] Saussure, *Course*, 99–100

changes rippling throughout the synchronic system as it adjusts to accommodate and reconstitute whatever is 'added' or 'lost.'

What is strange is that language, despite being "something in which everyone participates all the time" and something that is "constantly open to the influence of all," diverges greatly from the ideal of liberal democracy. It is much closer to the bureaucracy or technocracy in which there is only a simulacrum of "revolution" – in which "revolution" has already been accounted for as a cost of operation, factored and manufactured within the state of fact. While language is "immune from arbitrary alteration" by individual speakers it is, nevertheless "intrinsically defenceless against the factors which constantly tend to shift relationships between signal and signification."[281] Why does language need an immune system? If we agree with Saussure that we are individually and collectively incapable of influencing it because there is only an arbitrary relation between the arbitrariness of the sign and the arbitrariness of the individual and collective will, then what could possibly account for this strange autoimmunity? What would language have to lose in becoming less arbitrary (or more arbitrary, depending on how we 'understand' the term 'arbitrariness)? The more obvious answer recapitulates the mythology of the Fall and of Babel – we would grow more factious as we decline into more and more idiomatic speech. But, assuming that we did not spontaneously discard our inheritance all at once, there is also the possibility that another system, similar to language – call it the economy, technoscience, algorithmic governmentality – might begin to neutralize the arbitrariness of linguistic values that do not generate monetary value. If an algorithm could evaluate the correlation between the economy (i.e. arbitrariness) of language

[281] Saussure, *Course*, 71–73

with the financial economy then it may very well work to efface every linguistic value with the (rhetorical) potential to disrupt and disarticulate monetary value. This would imply that the "general economy" of language as différance is not the sovereign (non-)entity that Derrida and Bataille have led us to believe.[282] While it may have maintained an almost absolute arbitrariness up till now, the inscriptional power of the algorithm now poses the possibility that this sovereign power might finally give way, *log-arithmically*, to calculation and control – that it might allow the hitherto "restricted" economy to become sovereign, effectively deposing arbitrariness by way of automation. Thus, while it might, at first, appear to be a rather inauspicious first principle for linguistics, it is by denying us a "basis for discussion" that arbitrariness prevents us from changing language in ways that might undermine its ability to function as a basis for the kind of psychosocial, mnemotechnical transindividuation that Stiegler, after Simondon, regards as the essence of noetic life. The default of the basis of language is that on the basis of which we desire to think, learn and do.

Arbitrariness / Machination

The division of synchronic and diachronic linguistics has certain similarities with Kant's partitioning of critical philosophy.[283] Synchronic linguistics, like the *Critique of Pure Reason*, assumes priority over all other partitions, but what it excludes cannot entirely be accommodated by diachronic linguistics, which strives to approach the question of linguistic time from a purely practical point of view. It deals only with the observable facts of language change and not the singular aesthetic experience of semiotic temporality as such. Such a

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[282] Derrida, *Writing*, 270–73
[283] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Pub. Co, 1987)

concept of aesthetic temporality, however, is integral to the articulation of the synchronic and diachronic. Any attempt to partition it results in a considerable stress on the system. For Kant, it necessitates a third critique in which he attempts to conceive a temporality that is no longer transcendental or dialectical in nature. For Saussure, the *critical* problem of linguistic temporality also gives rise to additional, supplemental partitions of linguistics (i.e. geographical and retrospective), but neither of these really offers a critical rethinking of linguistic temporality. If we wanted to find something like the analytic of the sublime in the *Course* we must take our direction from the very important qualifications he provides in the discussion of the synchronic view of language regarding "absolute" and "relative" arbitrariness.[284] The sign cannot be absolutely arbitrary because it is comprised of synchronic interdependencies that are always grammatical to some extent. The relativity of motivation is similar in many ways to the relative idiomaticity of the idiosynchronic state. Saussure tends to regard the former as the

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[284] "Everything having to do with languages as systems needs to be approached, we are convinced, with a view to examining the limitations of arbitrariness. It is an approach which linguists have neglected. But it offers the best possible basis for linguistic studies. For the entire linguistic system is founded upon the irrational principle that the sign is arbitrary. Applied without restriction, this principle would lead to utter chaos. But the mind succeeds in introducing a principle of order and regularity into certain areas of the mass of signs. That is the role of relative motivation. If languages had a mechanism which were entirely rational, that mechanism could be studied in its own right. But it provides only a partial correction to a system which is chaotic by nature. Hence we must adopt the point of view demanded by the nature of linguistic structure itself, and study this mechanism as a way of imposing a limitation upon what is arbitrary

There exists no language in which nothing at all is motivated. Even to conceive of such a language is an impossibility by definition. Between the two extremes – minimum of organisation and minimum of arbitrariness – all possible varieties are found. Languages always exhibit features of both kinds – intrinsically arbitrary and relatively motivated – but in very varying proportions. This is an important characteristic, which may have to be taken into account in classifying languages.

In one sense – this must not be pressed too far, but it brings out one aspect of the contrast – a distinction could be drawn between *lexicological* languages, in which absence of motivation reaches a maximum, and *grammatical* languages, in which it falls to a minimum. This is not to imply that 'lexical' and 'arbitrary' are always synonymous, or 'grammar' and 'relative motivation' either. But they go together in principle. There are, one might say, two opposite poles towards which the whole system is drawn, or two contrary currents sweeping through it. On the one hand there is a tendency to use lexicological means, which favours the unmotivated sign. On the other hand there is a tendency to use grammatical means, which favours regular construction." Saussure, *Course*, 130–32

mechanism of language as such and the latter as a more mnemotechnical, psycholinguistic kind of mechanism. It is very tempting to relate these mechanisms by way of their common relativity and it is in Saussure's refusal to do so that we can register the critical blindness of his insight.

The idea of the continuum between lexical/arbitrary and grammatical/motivated forms something of a basis for Roman Jakobson's idea of the poles of metaphor and metonymy but it is important to note that Saussure is speaking of languages as totalities and not in terms of the tropological relationships between signs. To attempt to read the linguistic mechanism in the latter would represent an attempt to study the mechanism of language as it manifests in an individual speech act and not as a state adopted by the linguistic community. Absolute arbitrariness is a theoretical fiction – a prophylactic blindness intended to steer the semiologist in training away from the blind pursuit of a more tropological articulation of the synchronic and diachronic. Very few readers of the *Course* have taken the limitations of diachronic linguistics very seriously and, as we will see, there are many moments where Saussure himself seems unable to distinguish the latter from a more tropological, human model of time. But, again, it would be naïve to say that Saussure simply fails to think the relationship between the two mechanisms since his formulation is *clear enough* to reveal their critical difference in the first place. This is what makes the (dis)articulation of the synchronic and the diachronic "unreadable" in the de Manian sense, which is to say, a machination capable of generating a textual history of misreading.

From the synchronic perspective, the mechanism of language operates between groups

(i.e. linguistic identities) and differences.[285]

> In its place in a syntagma, any unit acquires its value simply in opposition to what
> precedes, or to what follows, or to both.
>
> Outside the context of discourse, words having something in common are associated
> together in the memory.
>
> Syntagmatic relations hold *in praesentia.* They hold between two or more terms co-
> present in a sequence. Associative relations, on the contrary, hold *in absentia.* They hold
> between terms constituting a mnemonic group.[286]

Just as we questioned the temporal breadth of the synchronic we might here question the

presence of the syntagmatic. How many terms can really be present in their immediacy without

requiring a mnemonic buffering and rapid shuttling between presence and absence of mind?

The materiality of the sound pattern implies a structure of protention and retention of the sort

described by Husserl in his account of the consciousness of internal time.[287] The recognition of

the pattern always implies a mnemotechnical mechanism of inscription and recognition that is

different from what we would typically regard as consciousness. Even when presented with the

syntagmatic totality of a printed page there is a complex parsing and storing of its visual data in

memory that would appear to be related to, but different from, the associative relations

between concepts. Saussure does not explicitly address the potential mediation of a

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[285] "The whole set of phonetic and conceptual differences which constitute a language are thus the product of two kinds of comparison, associative and syntagmatic. Groups of both kinds are in large measure established by the language. This set of habitual relations is what constitutes linguistic structure and determines how the language functions. . . .
In linguistic structure everything in the end comes down to differences, and also to groups. This mechanism, which involves interrelations of successive terms, is like the functioning of a machine in which the components all act upon one other, even though they are arranged in one dimension only." Saussure, *Course*, 126

[286] Saussure, *Course*, 121

[287] Husserl, *Internal Time*

mnemotechnical mechanism here, but he does suggest that syntagmatic relations might be

doubled by associative relations:

> there is a double associative link based on form and meaning, but in other cases just one associative link based on form or meaning alone. Any word can evoke in the mind whatever is capable of being associated with it in some way or other.[288]

Because syntagmatic and associative relations do not conform to more dialectical oppositions

(e.g. form/meaning, presence/absence, memory/forgetting) Saussure seeks to clarify the

distinction in terms of number.

> While a syntagma brings in straight away the idea of a fixed sequence, with a specific number of elements, an associative group has no particular number of items in it; nor do they occur in any particular order. In a series like *désir-eux* ('desirous'), *chaleur-eux* ('warm'), *peur-eux* ('fearful'), etc. it is impossible to say in advance how many words the memory will suggest, or in what order. Any given term acts as the centre of a constellation, from which connected terms radiate *ad infinitum.* [289]

While one might argue that the number of syntagma depends on the way the sound patterns

are subdivided and combined, they do appear more finite than the concepts with which they

are associated. But the unquantifiability of the latter depends on whether we are treating the

associative group as a combination or as permutation. A permutation in which the sequence

matters could be reiterated indefinitely.[290] But Saussure stresses that they do not have any

particular order which means that they must be regarded as a combination, which means that

one could, potentially, combine every term available within a synchronic state without reaching

infinity. Can the associative group really be regarded as infinite without also becoming, to some

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[288] Saussure, *Course*, 123–24
[289] Saussure, *Course*, 123–24
290 Here we might recall the conclusion to Borges' "Library of Babel" in which he writes that: "The Library is unlimited but periodic. If an eternal traveler should journey in any direction, he would find after untold centuries that the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder – which, repeated, becomes order: the Order. My solitude is cheered by that elegant hope" Borges, *Collected*, 118

extent, serial and, thus, syntagmatic? The radioactivity of the associative constellation reveals

the extent to which the possibility of infinite conceptual linkage is informed by the retentional

(in)finitude of the mnemotechnical substrate. What appears infinite for a human may be finite

for a machine. A supercomputer might yet be capable of indexing all the possible combinations

of an associative group (or even an entire language) in a manner that would allow for a less

arbitrary arbitration of linguistic evolution.

The infinitude of the associative group, thus, presumes a certain seriality imposed by

human recollection. Saussure vacillates between the term "associative group" and "associative

series" in a manner that might be construed as symptomatic of this uncertainty. The

articulation of syntagmatic and associative groups (dis)articulates synchronic and diachronic

linguistics in a manner reminiscent of the mathematical sublime in Kant's *Third Critique*. It is not

really about quantifiability and unquantifiability but rather the (a)phenomenality of what

exceeds all measure. It is here – where a sort of zero degree diachronicity slips, subreptitiously,

between "syntagmatic" and "associative" groups – that synchronic linguistics shifts from the

more abstract model of a linguistic state based on a "collective consciousness" into the more

discrete psychology of the individual speech act

> Where syntagmas are concerned, however, one must recognise the fact that there is no
> clear boundary separating the language, as confirmed by communal usage, from speech,
> marked by freedom of the individual. In many cases it is difficult to assign a combination
> of units to one or the other. Many combinations are the product of both, in proportions
> which cannot be accurately measured.[291]

The sequentiality of the syntagma inevitably gets misread as a sort of link between the

psychical experience of diachronic time and the more circumscribed study of diachronic

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[291] Saussure, *Course*, 122

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linguistics. If the relationship between the syntagmatic sequence and the associative group

corresponds with the relationship between synchronic and diachronic linguistics, then an

analogical bridge might be formed between the tropological microcosm the mind and the

macrocosm of linguistic evolution. In the section on diachronic linguistics, it is by way of

"analogy" that the psychological, hermeneutic process intermingles with the absolute

arbitrariness of "sound change" :

> Sound change . . . is a source of linguistic disturbance. Wherever it does not give rise to
> alternations, it contributes towards loosening the grammatical connexions which link
> words together. It increases the sum total of linguistic forms to no purpose. The
> linguistic mechanism becomes obscure and complicated inasmuch as irregularities
> produced by sound change take precedence over forms grouped under general types; in
> other words, inasmuch as what is absolutely arbitrary takes precedence over what is
> only relatively arbitrary.

> Fortunately, the effect of these changes is counterbalanced by analogy. Analogy is
> responsible for all the normal modifications of the external aspect of words which are
> not due to sound change.[292]

> in analogy, everything is grammatical. But to this it must immediately be added that the
> creation which results can only belong at first to speech. It is the work of a single
> speaker. This is the sphere, on the fringe of the language [en marge de la langue], where
> the phenomenon must first be located. . . . analogy in itself is simply one aspect of the
> phenomenon of interpretation, a manifestation of the general activity which analyses
> units in order then to make use of them. That is why we say that analogy is entirely
> grammatical and synchronic.[293]

Analogy is where the psychological, hermeneutic process might be said to mediate the absolute

arbitrariness of "agglutination." But, according to Saussure, it is not, itself, a sound change (i.e.

diachronic development) so much as a synchronic consequence thereof. The two are of

different orders.[294]

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[292] Saussure, *Course*, 160–61
[293] Saussure, *Course*, 164–65
[294] If there is a commingling of the synchronic, hermeneutic and arbitrary, diachronic processes it would have to be
located in the passive memory of what Saussure calls popular etymology.

> Agglutination operates solely in the syntagmatic sphere. Its action affects a given group: nothing else is involved. Analogy, on the contrary, involves associative series as well as syntagmas. . . . In particular, agglutination is totally involuntary. It is not a positive action, but merely a mechanical process, in which the blending takes place of its own accord. Analogy, on the contrary is a procedure, presupposing analyses and combinations, an activity of the intelligence, an intention.[295]

The absolute arbitrariness of agglutinative sound change pushes the semiotic system out of equilibrium and must be "counterbalanced" by the hermeneutic process of analogization – a process by which what is lexicological becomes grammatical. But since the word 'lexicological' implies a construction that is unmotivated and, thus, illogical from the perspective of grammar, it might be tempting to think of what Saussure calls analogy as that which makes the lexico*graphical* grammato*logical*. To say this is to substitute Saussure's sense of 'lexicological' for 'lexicographical' and to supplement 'grammatical' with '-logical' to fill out an apparent parallelism that is somewhat obscured by his rather arbitrary choice of terms. The term 'grammatical,' after all, has only a weak, associative link to the morpheme 'logos,' unlike 'lexicological' which bears a direct syntagmatic relation to the latter (albeit one that runs counter to the classical opposition of logos and lexis). Thus, one might argue that the term 'lexicographical' better expresses the more mechanical, non-psychological arbitrariness at work in agglutination – a process that stands at the furthest remove from logic as it is conventionally understood. In a sense, this could be seen as an attempt to *analogize* the term 'lexicological' itself. The analogical modification helps to (logically) regulate the arbitrary relation between the terms 'grammatical,' 'lexicological,' 'motivated,' 'unmotivated,' 'absolute arbitrariness,' 'relative arbitrariness,' etc.

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[295] Saussure, *Course*, 176

But the relationship between 'analogy' and 'logic' ends up being less arbitrary than the

relationship between 'arbitrary' and 'lexicological.' In pursuing the analogical reasoning above

we inadvertently, arbitrarily and literally sever the bond between grammar and logic implicit in

the initial term, 'lexico-logical,' and, thus, undermine the structural integrity of the trivium

(logic, grammar, rhetoric) and, a fortiori, the logicality of logic. Ironically, this kind of 'analogy'

turns out to be illogical, anti-logical or, to avoid the logic of opposition entirely, alogical. In

question here is the relationship between the logic of grammar and the force by which Logos,

as such, is inscribed. The absolutely arbitrary, mechanical process of agglutination that Saussure

associates with lexicological languages is closer to de Man's sense of grammar as the

inscriptional, lexicographical force that (dis)articulates the trivium. It is this a(na)logical

movement by which de Man 'translates' lexicological agglutination as grammatical inscription

and 'reinterprets' the relationship between logos and lexis, grammar and gramme, and in a

certain sense, 'proves' the arbitrariness of every hermeneutic act. And it goes without saying

that it is also this 'same' movement by which Derrida initiates the grammatological

deconstruction of every division of writing and speech.[296]

Insofar as sound change "increases the sum total of linguistic forms to no purpose" we

might expect analogy to restore grammaticality by *reducing* the number of forms. But while

analogy does, eventually, lead to a reduction of forms it does so, rather paradoxically, by way of

addition. This is why Saussure insists that analogy is more of a "creative" destruction than a

substitutive "change".

> Every analogy is a drama involving three characters. They are: (i) the legitimate heir to
> the succession (e.g. Latin *honōs*), (ii) the rival (*honor*), (iii) a collective character, made

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[296] Derrida, *Grammatology*

up of the forms which sponsored this rival (*honōrem, ōrātor, o-rātōrem,* etc.). *Honor* is often regarded as a modification or 'metaplasm' of *honōs,* from which it derives most of its substance. But the one form which plays no part at all in the genesis of *honor* is *honōs* itself! . . . It is clear that this is a case of 'paraplasm', of the installation of a rival alongside the traditional form – in short, of creation. Whereas sound change introduces nothing new without eliminating what formerly existed (as with *honōrem* replacing *honōsem*), an analogical form does not necessarily eliminate its rival. *Honor* and *honōs* coexisted for a time and were interchangeable. However, since a language dislikes maintaining two signals for a single idea, it usually turns out that the primitive, less regular form falls into disuse and disappears. It is this outcome which makes it look as if a change of form has taken place: once the analogical process is completed, the old state of affairs (*honōs* : *honōrem*) and the new (*honor* : *honōrem*) appear to be opposed in the same way as would have resulted from sound change.[297]

Here, again, we encounter the uncertain interval between creation and adoption that separates speech from language – the same uncertainty that characterizes the pseudo-seriality of the associative group. One of the many strange features of this "drama" of analogy is that there is nothing very dramatic about it. The rival does not stage a violent coup but simply waits around for the heir to die. Sound change would appear to be the more compelling drama were it not for the fact that, as machination, it remains imperceptible to the collective consciousness. Analogy cannot really be dramatic because it involves a human, hermeneutic process and an act of creation. Clearly, this creation of the rival entails the destruction of the heir to some extent but it cannot mean that the linguistic community can simply sponsor and depose terms at will. The drama needs to be as baroque as linguistic evolution is overdetermined. It is a kind of *Trauerspiel* in which the human plays no vital part. The "collective character" is not the collective psyche but, rather, the linguistic mechanism personified. Really, all three of the dramatis personae are one and the same mechanism.

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[297] Saussure, *Course*, 162–63

Prosopopeia, as de Man has argued, is the "master trope" at work behind every

inscription.[298] In this Saussurian drama of analogy it serves as the *deus ex machina* by which

language speaks, performs, faces itself as a tripartite entity. It is a testament to Saussure's

humanism that he insists on an interval in which the linguistic community might 'interpret' this

drama and, to some extent, 'decide' whether it is the heir or the rival who dies. De Man, like

Benjamin, would insist that such a death only really takes place, allegorically, in language. This

would suggest that the interval between the rise of the rival and the fall of the heir is an

allegorical and, thus, inhuman temporality. It is only by succumbing to the trope of prosopopeia

that we walk away from this drama with a sense of hermeneutic catharsis. But what Saussure

calls 'interpretation' – is, to a great extent, pre-programmed, pre-inscribed by the mechanism

of language ("language dislikes maintaining two signals for a single idea…").

The pseudo-relationship between analogy and agglutination in diachronic linguistics, like

the pseudo-division of syntagmatic and associative groups in synchronic linguistics, works to

undermine Saussure's insistence that synchronic and diachronic phenomena are totally

unrelated. While he is rather explicit in partitioning the synchronic and diachronic, he cannot

help suggesting a more aesthetic, ideological experience of temporality in which they are

'understood' as part of the same phenomenon. Perhaps it would be better to say that language

itself, however technical and linguistic its self-representation may be, is destined to speak this

other temporality – this allegory. One cannot build a model of the linguistic mechanism that

would not, to some extent, perform this mechanism. The "ironic allegory" or "allegory of

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[298] Man, *Resistance*

reading" is the narrative of our inevitable failure to make (analogical) sense of these

machinations.

IV. 'Good' Nihilism

> Diese zu erstreben, auch für diejenigen Stufen des Menschen,
> welche Natur sind, ist die Aufgabe der Weltpolitik, deren
> Methode Nihilismus zu heißen hat.
>
> – Benjamin[299]

Positionality / Event

In previous epochs, one might have had to think about the influence of technology on the

essence of humanity. Today, technology has become so ubiquitous that it is tiresome even to

remark upon it – as if saying that technology programs humanity is no more rousing than saying

that the sky is blue. It is almost more surprising to hear that the sky is blue when it is more

often tinged yellow by smog.

> Today it at least appears that one no longer requires laborious references
> [*umständlicher Hinweise*], as was the case for years, to catch sight of the constellation in
> which the human and being belong together. One would like to imagine that it is
> enough to say the name "atomic age" in order to find out which being [*Sein*] it is that
> presences for us today.[300]

Modifying this formulation slightly, we might say that it is now the "automatic age" that

presences for us today – the age in which artificial intelligence and machine learning have

rendered so much of our thinking obsolete – the age in which we begin to speculate on the

"end of work" or the "end of employment" as such.[301] Not only are the "clues" [Hinweise] of

this no longer "laborious" [umständlicher], they are automatic. One ends up looking rather

clueless whenever one insists today upon some hidden, mysterious essence of technology. All

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[299] "To strive for such a passing away – even the passing away of those stages of man that are nature – is the task of world politics, whose method must be called nihilism." Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings {3}: 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass., London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 305–6

[300] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 115

[301] Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work: The decline of the global work-force and the dawn of the post-market era* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995); Stiegler, *Automatic*

that was once dark has been revealed. We are scarcely even capable of regarding our

technological future through a glass darkly. The specular prism of dialectical reflection now

speculates upon itself automatically. We are left now to gaze upon this "self-suspending

structure" of the event like tourists or, rather, like a band of transients living in the shadow of

the bridge on which we used to commute – now a monument to our lost auto-mobility.[302]

> With this representation [Vorstellung] of the whole of the technological world [Ganzen der technischen], one winds {screws} everything back upon the human [schraubt man alles auf den Menschen] and, at best, arrives at the demand for an ethics of the technological world. Caught up in this conception [In dieser Vorstellung befangen], one opines that technology would be merely the affair of humans, no claim of being would speak in it. Obsessed with this opinion [Meinung], we still do not even attend just once to the togetherness of the human and being, much less do we attempt to listen for the belonging that first extends both of these, the human and being, *to* one another.[303]

When we regard technology as the totality [Ganzen] that lies present before us today, we screw

ourselves into the framework of this totality. This is to say that any attempt at an ethical,

autonomous, authentic human reaction to this technological state of fact is *totally screwed*

from the outset. We are so screwed, in fact, that even the sober recognition of *how* screwed we

are only screws us even further. All attempts to extract ourselves from this position remain

essentially dis-tracted. The only way out, it seems, is through.

> Positionality lets the human and being belong to each other in a bewildering manner [befremdliche Weise]. It is bewildering because we no longer find what positionality means within the representational horizon that lets us think the being of beings.[304]

While the idea of "uncanniness" [Unheimlichkeit] is quite familiar to readers of Heidegger and

Freud, the thought that the uncanniness of Being is essentially the *same* as the uncanniness of

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[302] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 118
[303] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 115
[304] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 116

technology proves "bewildering" indeed. What is most bewildering is that we are both *hosts*

and *hostages* of positionality.[305]

> For at one time, that which is to be thought in the word "positionality" did not lie over
> against the human. Positionality no longer concernfully approaches us [geht uns . . . an]
> like being as presencing [An-wesen]. Positionality first determines being in a
> togetherness with the human. But what is to be thought in the word "positionality" is
> bewildering above all because it itself is nothing final, but first playfully solicits of us that
> which genuinely reigns through the contemporary constellation of the human and being
> [Das Ge-Stell bestimmt erst das Sein in ein Zusammen mit dem Menschen. Befremdlich
> aber ist das im Wort Ge-Stell zu-Denkende vor allem deshalb, weil es selber nicht ein
> Letztes ist, sondern uns erst Jenes zuspielt, was die jetzige Konstellation von Mensch
> und Sein eigentlich durchwaltet].[306]

Positionality cannot be anything "final" because it is that which grounds all modes of

temporality or, rather, *is grounds* for their confusion. The "inceptual" [anfanglich] structure

from which all causal reckoning derives is "caught up" [befangen] in its own motion. We can no

more fix positionality to a point in a sequence than we can point out the origin of a body of

water. It "derives from derivation" as Derrida writes of Valery's "point d'eau."[307] Positionality

posits itself, we might say. It is the structure in which humans can catch sight of themselves in a

way that is not simply 'reflective' in a specular, dialectical sense. It allows for the "mirror-play"

[Spiegel-Spiel] of propriative forces that do not converge upon a recognizable identity – the

forces that constitute the "self-suspending resonance of the event" [Schwingung im

schwebenden Bau des Ereignisses]. [308] Positionality is what makes it possible to see the

constellation of Being within the Abyss of language in the first place. It grants identity to the

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[305] Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond* (Stanford, Calif:
  Stanford University Press, 2000)
[306] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 116–17
[307] Derrida, *Margins*, 280
[308] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 18ff.

"nothing." It sets the nothing apart from the oblivion of dialectical sameness. The event is nothing other than the nihilation of the nothing.

The "challenging forth" [herausforden] of the Thinking-Being through positionality is only a modification and intensification of the "reciprocal challenging forth" at work in the event.

> Event of appropriation names the letting belong that is to be thought from it, and thus the authentic letting belong that brings the human and being into the ownership of each other. In positionality, what we experience as the essence of this constellation in the modern technological world is a prelude [Vorspiel] to what is called the event of appropriation.[309]

It is a *Vorspiel* to the event that "playfully solicits" [zuspielt] the human and leaves its essence in play. There is nothing particularly fun or pleasurable about this Vorspiel. It entails the most horrifying [entsetzlich] dislocation of our human essence. It is to find ourselves hazarded like Mallarméan dice against an opponent we can no longer be sure is human in a competition that we can no longer assume is a game. Positionality is the doorkeeper that grants us a glance down the interminable hall of mirrors we inevitably mistake for a series of doorways through which we might finally reach ourselves. It enframes us en abyme. So much so that the true extent and nature of positionality scarcely *occurs* to us even at the moment of our death. Having lost all standing in a distanceless world where nothing is ever forgotten and the event of thinking never properly takes place, we grow even more impatient than Josef K. Receding into the bustle of activity that is the standing reserve, we shield ourselves from a more authentic experience of death. In fear of perishing, we can never really die a death that is our own or live

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[309] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 117

a life that is more than a replaceable stock part within a global economic machinery. But

Heidegger always entertains the possibility that we might still come out on top.

> Whatever and however we attempt to think, we think in the play-space of a tradition. It reigns when, from out of our retrospective thinking, it releases us for a thinking ahead that is no longer a planning. Indeed only when we turn ourselves toward [zuwenden] what has already been thought will we be brought around to [verwendet; used for] what is yet to be thought.[310]

He speaks optimistically of our "conversion" by way of the event.

> The event of appropriation does not necessarily or even merely remain in its prelude [Vorspiel] so as to let the human and being belong together in the manner of positionality. Rather, in the event of appropriation, the possibility arises that the event as the sheer reign [bloße Walten] of positionality is converted [verwindet] into a more inceptual appropriating. One such conversion of positionality from the event of appropriation – something never accomplishable by humans alone – would result in the appropriative retraction of the technological world from its position of mastery into one of servitude within a realm [Bereiches], where the human more authentically reaches [reicht] into the event of appropriation.

> It appears as though we fell prey to the danger of all too casually directing our thinking toward some far-off universal, while under the name "event of appropriation" only what is the nearest of the near – that within which we already reside – immediately avows itself to us. But what could be nearer to us than that which brings us near to what we belong to – wherein we are what belongs – that is, the event of appropriation?[311]

The "realm" [Reich] in which our essence is suspended together with the essence of technology

is not a human realm. It is the realm of language – the "house of Being."[312] The "transformation

of sense [Wandlung des Sinnes] at work in the concept of identity is less a mystical

"transubstantiation" than a juridical voiding of contractual property [eigentum] – even the

annihiliation of the propriety as such in which we abandon our *selves* so that we may be spoken

by language.[313] This is to say that identity cannot be conceived beyond the event in which

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[310] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 120–21
[311] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 117–18
[312] Heidegger, *Basic*, 217
[313] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 128–42

language slips, rhetorically, from our grasp. Even by naming the event, Heidegger risks reifying it. The metonymic play at work in his discussion of the "Realm" of appropriation (Reich, reicht, Bereich, reichen, zureichen) falls, all too easily, within the *reach* of anthropomorphic hands. He must insist that what takes place here cannot be grasped as a present-at-hand entity. The realm in which this event takes place is properly unreachable. It can never be grasped as something near or far because it opens distance itself as positionality. It is the abyss [Abrund] from which the phenomena of distance [Abstand] and presence spring. Any world historical warping of this realm cannot be accomplished by "humans alone." It is here that we must seek our identity by way of a sort of metaphysical denouement – by unravelling the technico-linguistic self all the way back to the warp and woof of a more essential tautology – the "belonging-together" of Thinking-Being-Language.

> A strange leap [Seltsamer Sprung] that presumably brings us the insight [Einblick] that we still do not sufficiently reside there where we authentically already are. Where are we? In which constellation of the human and being? Which belonging-together, which identity, and what kind, pervades the essence of being and the human? Out of what region does the claim of this identity, thought as belonging-together, speak?[314]

"Where are we?" We are not *in* the world as an object of scientific or even specular reflection. We are *inasmuch as* we belong together with the positing of the world as world. We are in positionality – posited in a realm that can only be reached in and as language. We are in danger – in the "absolute danger" that Derrida calls a "monstrosity" – the monstrosity of the opening of the future as Ereignis.

The essence of technology is positionality. The essence of positionality is danger. Not just any danger but *the* danger which is most dangerous because it is in constant danger of

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[314] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 114–15

being forgotten entirely. Heidegger, evoking Hölderlin, reminds us that this danger, if we were only able to think it as such, is the only thing that can save us now. Forgetting and remembering this danger is our essence, our existence. But to insist that this existence is simply ours – our doing, our making, our technology – is to lose the world and ourselves with it.

Rhetoric is in danger whenever we regard this question of the "where" of positionality as rhetorical. For us, as humans, to be "in danger" means that we can never know whether we, as humans, are being referred to as a "who," a "what" or even as a "that" – a "that" that can only be indicated, identified and posited, in principle, according to the grammatical mechanism of the question. The rhetoric of this question should never be neutralized, disambiguated, levelled off. The positionality of the human must always be read within this "self-suspending structure" [sich schwebenden Bau] that Heidegger calls the event [Er-eignis]. Only such a deconstructing structure can provide a "bridgeless entrance" [brückenlosen Einkehr] into that belonging which alone will allocate the reciprocality of the human and being and thus the constellation of the two."[315]

The danger of rhetoric lies in the suspension of the positionality of the human. The danger of rhetoric if it is, indeed, *the* danger, exceeds all grammar and, ultimately, all questioning, all dialectics. Rhetoric remains sovereign so long as the positionality of the human remains suspended in language. Rhetoric is endangered, however, by the possibility of hitherto unimaginable text machines that threaten to reconfigure language on a planetary scale. A comprehensive inscription of linguistic possibility has never seemed more possible. But is it even possible to say whether something is becoming more or less possible? Perhaps not. And

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[315] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 118, 114-115

would this not really be all the more dangerous: that we would not necessarily know whether or not it was still possible to question our own positionality? That we might never realize, in drifting off to sleep, that we would never again question the positionality of the human. Would it ever occur to us to wake ourselves from such a dreamless night? Would that waking being still be human? Who would remain to say in an arctic summer with no hope of nocturn?

Reification / Forgetting

It is always something of a relief to come up short of "absolute knowing." We can never be sure whether it would entail the highest humanity and the "end of history" or whether it would be the total enframing of history and human being. We are so assured of our unsublatable selves that we convince ourselves there is no danger. But this is what is *really* dangerous, if not downright horrifying [entsetzlich] – the extent to which we take this unspeculatable margin of humanity for granted as if it were a law [Gesetz]. We hear this now more vehemently and less convincingly than ever in all the talk about what machines will never be able to do. We prattle on about the 'impossibility' of what takes place before our very eyes – in the inhumanity of the avatars that take our place and command our eyes. We gobble it up, unthinkingly, from our 'feeds' – those inexhaustible novelty machines – those astoundingly modular trough-latrine-mass-graves in which whatever remains of the 'spirit' or 'art' of journalism is excreted, liquidated and consumed 'afresh.' We never tire of expatiating on why machines will never be able to experience emotions such as love, only to dream, in the alienation of the private interiors we call 'homes,' of screwing and being screwed by 'whatever' even remotely resembles a 'whomever' (let alone acts, thinks or loves like one).

One might say that even the bleakest house remains a human home so long as it shelters some shadow of class consciousness and, hence, the hope of resisting this implacable technological requisitioning. On the other hand, one could say with Heidegger and especially the Heidegger of the Bremen lectures, that this margin of humanity is much slimmer than this self-consoling sublation might have us believe. This is to say that nothing is really marginal anymore and that all 'humanistic' works have always already been requisitioned by the culture industry to engender precisely this mythology of human essentiality that is, essentially, aesthetic ideology – so much white noise to drown out the cognitive dissonance of such bad faith – so much aspartame to sweeten up the sour grapes.

We seem hopelessly immured within this condominium of 'modern living.' Any revolutionary power ubiquitous computing might once have promised has been diverted at its source. It has been dammed up and monetized by the various channels of social media just as the majesty of the Rhine river, for Heidegger, has become a component of the hydroelectric plant, a fixture of the "vacation industry," a standing reserve of kilowatt hours, a photo op.[316] As Adorno and Horkheimer observed long ago:

> The power of industrial society is imprinted on people once and for all. The products of the culture industry are such that they can be alertly consumed even in a state of distraction. But each one is a model of the gigantic economic machinery, which, from the first, keeps everyone on their toes, both at work and in the leisure time which resembles it. [317]

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[316] "Alan Liu argues that Marx, in over assessing the tragic nature of the working class, failed to foresee the ubiquity of "corporate culture." : "Like some Oedipus of the suburb who never actually gets around to killing his father or marrying his mother because he has to work late at the office, white-collars posed a Sphinx's riddle for alienation theory: what is estranged from its "labour process" and "species-being" (the middle stages in Marx's fourfold derivation) but not from its "product" and "other men" (the initial and terminal stages)?" Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge work and the culture of information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 83

[317] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic*, 100

That the culture industry is "imprinted once and for all" means "once and for all." To be

revolutionary is to have patiently awaited one's turn in the lobby of the Hays Office. Any

'revolution' must now be approved by the board and scheduled by the sysadmin.

But it is important to realize that Adorno's antipathy to the "culture industry" is not as

absolute as it might seem. In attempting to distinguish the negativity of *Negative Dialectics*

from the nihilism of fundamental ontology, which he regards, somewhat symptomatically, as an

"ontologization of the ontical," Adorno writes that:

> An ontology of culture would above all have to take up, where culture at large failed.
> Philosophically legitimate ontology would have its place more in the construction of the
> culture-industry than in that of being; good, only that which has escaped ontology.[318]

The point is that there is a critical, material, political difference between the cultural Zeitgeist

and its metaphysical architecture (i.e. Gestell). For Adorno, *building, dwelling and thinking* are

not the 'same,' however much the ideology of 'corporate culture' would have us believe

otherwise. While his critique of fundamental ontology generally follows along the lines of his

critique of speculative dialectics – maintaining that "the whole is the false" – he takes

Heidegger seriously enough to read beyond *Being and Time* and is, at times, willing to allow

some rather surprising affinities between his materialist critique of identity theory and the

more "tautological thinking" that characterizes Heidegger's writings on the Event.[319]

Suffice it to say that Heidegger's "jargon of authenticity" deserves much more attention

than many materialists have granted it. It is a particularly important point of comparison when

questioning whether a materialist theory of memory is compatible with the mnemotechnics of

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[318] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), 125–28
[319] Cf. Chapter V "Thematization / Tautology"

Benjamin, de Man, Heidegger or even Hegel. While Adorno famously identifies speculative

dialectics as the "Spirit turned Belly,"[320] Slavoj Žižek is right to argue that

> Hegel was not a sublimated coprophagist, as the usual notion of the dialectical process
> would lead us to believe. The matrix of the dialectical process is not that of
> excrementation externalization followed by a swallowing (reappropriation) of the
> externalized content, but, on the contrary, of appropriation followed by the
> excremental move of dropping it, releasing it, letting it go. What this means is that one
> should not equate externalization with alienation. The externalization which concludes a
> cycle of dialectical process is not alienation, it is the highest point of dis-alienation: one
> really reconciles oneself with some objective content not when one still has to strive to
> master and control it, but when one can afford the supreme sovereign gesture of
> releasing this content from oneself, of setting it free.[321]

According to Žižek, when Spirit stops clenching on to the natural world and releases it by way of

"speculative abrogation" (or "Hegelian shitting"), it becomes possible to think of dialectics as a

surprisingly ecological form of self-consciousness.[322] Once nature passes through the dialectic,

in other words, Spirit is free to regard it no longer as something to be mastered and consumed

but, rather, as something vital to the system and worthy of being preserved in its own right.

This is an interesting counterpoint to Adorno and Heidegger's more apocalyptic depiction of a

world enframed by a gigantic dialogistical machine that is, to a great extent, Hegelian in its

functioning. Žižek even muses whether "speculative abrogation" can be regarded as a "Hegelian

version of Gelassenheit."[323] For now, let me just suggest that this reading of Hegel might

proceed along the lines that de Man explores in his late lectures and posthumous essays.

Before tackling this question of Gelassenheit, we should first compare Adorno's more orthodox

theory of reification with the more nihilistic versions we find in Benjamin and de Man.

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[320] Adorno, *Negative*, 33–35
[321] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, New York: Verso, 2008), xxi
[322] Žižek, *Sublime*, xii–xiv
[323] Žižek, *Sublime*, 15

In his critique of Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Adorno is more interested in the Brechtian, "epic" forgetting, in which he sees a semblance of a "dialectical theory of forgetting," than the Freudian, "reflex" forgetting, which he regards as a weak point of the study. The former has to do with the reification of memory proper [Gedächtnis] (the extent to which forgetting "is capable of shaping experience" on the level of mass culture), while the latter concerns the "enormously complex problem . . . concerning the unconscious nature of the fundamental impression" and the psychological "defence mechanism" at work in its remembrance [Erinnerung] (conceived as *Erfahrung* or *memoire involuntaire*). Generally speaking, Erinnerung refers to the act of re-membering – the mental act of reaching for or seeking after a memory so as to retrieve it and reintegrate it into the sum total of knowledge. Gedächtnis, on the other hand, is more the faculty of memory itself rather than the act of remembering.

Adorno is skeptical of Benjamin's theory of Erinnerung because it enables him to speak of the Madeleine episode in Proust as an "unconscious impression." It is here that a "dialectical element has dropped out," that is, "the element of forgetting itself." The question is whether the involuntariness of remembrance triggered by sensory experience is really unconscious – whether the involuntariness of memory really entails the unconsciousness of sensory impressions. "All reification," according to Adorno, "is a forgetting" in which "objects become purely thing-like the moment they are retained for us without the continued presence of their other aspects."[324] Adorno suggests that if we are, to some extent, conscious of the sensation

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[324] Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence: 1928-1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 321

that makes us involuntarily remember, then we are also, to some extent, conscious of what has been forgotten. Otherwise, it would be difficult to imagine how a sensory impression could recall an 'involuntary' memory in the first place. If memory were truly destroyed by brain damage – the "destructive plasticity" of the sort described by Catherine Malabou – it must necessarily remain unthought [Ungedacht] and merely unconscious.[325] No amount of sensuous coaxing would be able to *re*-member it.

For Adorno, the forgetting of reification is voluntary and conscious even if the memories of it are involuntary. The fact that our more or less conscious impressions can trigger such memories in the first place suggests a deeper complicity between fetishism and forgetting. This raises the often inane but inescapable question of whether the 'author' is aware of the forgetting and reification he inscribes. (Is it not a bit silly to imagine Marcel Proust mulling over what kind of reified labor would come rushing back with the taste of the madeleine? Or to imagine Shakespeare pondering, in the past perfect tense, about which of his plays will have become political allegories?) The problem is that a truly unconscious impression allows for a truly involuntary participation in the work of reification. If we could really be unconscious of forgetting then we could also be unconscious of the entire machination of the culture industry at large – we could claim no responsibility for all of the strife and oppression that gets forgotten and reified into the material world.

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[325] Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident: An essay on destructive plasticity* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2016)

Reification / Personification

While de Man never completed the reading of Marx's *German Ideology* that he mentioned

before his death, we find hints of what such a reading might entail strewn throughout his later

works. In *Resistance to Theory*, for instance, he writes that

> literary theory can be said to come into being when the approach to literary texts is no
> longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations or,
> to put it somewhat less crudely, when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning
> or the value but the modalities of production and of reception of meaning and of value
> prior to their establishment. . . . those who reproach literary theory for being oblivious
> to social and historical (that is to say ideological) reality are merely stating their fear at
> having their own ideological mystifications exposed by the tool they are trying to
> discredit. They are, in short, very poor readers of Marx's *German Ideology.*[326]

Because it is uncertain "whether aesthetic [i.e. ideological] values can be compatible with the

linguistic structures that make up the entities from which these values are derived," it is

doubtful that de Manian theory or literature itself can be read productively alongside the

modalities of production.[327] But what exactly does de Man mean when he speaks of "the

modalities of production and of reception of meaning and of value prior to their

establishment"?

In "The Epistemology of Metaphor," he identifies reification as "the opposite figure of

prosopopeia."[328] This recalls the formulation of commodity fetishism, in *Capital*, as "the

conversion of things into persons and the conversion of persons into things" [Personifizierung

der Sachen und Versachlichung der Personen].[329] Here we might ask whether de Man would

have challenged this symmetrical reversibility of personification and reification. Unlike the

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[326] Man, *Resistance*, 7–11
[327] Man, *Resistance*, 25
[328] Man, *Aesthetic*, 48
[329] Karl Marx, *Capital I: A critique of political economy* (London, New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1990), 209

more conventional, reversible tropes (e.g. metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche), prosopopeia

takes on a privileged status as "the master trope of poetic discourse." De Man argues that it is

"a particularly effective way by which to be drawn into the entire transformational system of

tropes."[330]

Throughout *Capital,* Marx uses personification to express the "fantastic" and

"mysterious character" of the commodity and the "riddle" and "magic" of the money form.[331]

In the second chapter on "The Process of Exchange" he writes that "the characters who appear

on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations."[332] Who (or what) are

the "characters" on the "economic stage" or "bearers" [Träger] of these economic relations?

Obviously, they are personifications, but what are personifications if they are neither people

nor things? Marx sheds some light on this problem in the preface to the first edition:

> To prevent possible misunderstandings, let me say this. I do not by any means depict the
> capitalist and the landowner in rosy colours. But individuals are dealt with here only in
> so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers [Träger] of
> particular class-relations and interests. My standpoint, from which the development of
> the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less
> than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he remains,
> socially speaking, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.[333]

In the first edition at least, the bearers of economic relations are generic "class-relations and

interests" that do not necessarily represent the species-being of any individual member of

society.[334] While *mere* personifications should have little effect on the underlying structure of

economic relations, personification also brings these relations into language qua practical

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[330] Man, *Resistance*, 48; Man, *Aesthetic*, 115
[331] Marx, *Capital*, 164, 187
[332] Marx, *Capital*, 170
[333] Marx, *Capital*, 90
[334] Marx, *Capital*, 92

consciousness: "it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they [the characters] come into contact with each other."[335] Personifications grant economic relations a generic personhood distinct from the living reality of the individual. The commodity itself is no mere illusion because in it our own "relations of production … assume a material shape, which is independent of [our] control and [our] conscious individual action"[336] In chapter three, personification is one of the two vectors that make up the "motion" of an "immanent contradiction." The alienation that springs from the personification of economic relations is potentially more complicated and fundamental than that which takes place between man and things (that are "in themselves external" to him) or man and man ("as the private owners of those alienable things").[337] This is because it separates the individual from his own personhood and redistributes this personhood between linguistic abstractions that allow for the articulation of economic relations:

> What appears to happen is not that a particular commodity becomes money because all other commodities express their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in a particular commodity because it is money. The movement through which this process has been mediated vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind. Without any initiative on their part the commodities find their own value configuration ready to hand, in the form of a physical commodity existing outside but also alongside them. This physical object, gold or silver in its crude state, becomes, immediately on its emergence from the bowels of the earth, the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money.[338]

When we take Marx at his word, we regard the "immanent contradiction" of personification and reification as the historical origin of the commodity and the money form. Marx shows us what could never have been seen from within capitalism: the "movement" through which

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[335] Marx, *Capital*, 179
[336] Marx, *Capital*, 187
[337] Marx, *Capital*, 182
[338] Marx, *Capital*, 187

commodification "vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind." Personification "vanishes in its own result" because the result or, at least, a significant part of the result, is the aberrant reification of personification as a historical event. This is not to say that the historical advent of commodity culture can be perfectly understood as something latent in language, only that the historical specificity of commodification cannot be articulated by way of a linguistic trope.

Marx struggles to formulate the precise connection between personification and commodification because he wants commodification to make sense as a real historical shift in the political economy without becoming a trope coeval with the advent of language. According to Žižek, we must attempt to reconceive this process as an event that only takes place within a "structured network" of the sort that Althusser proposes in his theory of "structural causality":

> the essential feature of commodity fetishism does not consist of the famous replacement of men with things ('a relation between men assumes the form of a relation between things'); rather, it consists of a certain misrecognition which concerns the relation between a structured network and one of its elements: what is really a structural effect, an effect of the network of relations between elements, appears as an immediate property of one of the elements, as if this property also belongs to it outside its relation with other elements.[339]

Althusser claims that, "in reality, the theory of fetishism in Marx is merely a kind of parable" and that it is nonsensical "to talk about the fetishism of the commodity, as if the commodity could be the source [l'auteur] 'of' fetishism."[340] This "parable" of commodity fetishism is what de Man would call an allegory. What is being personified, is not a world-historical, human entity. It is the device by which we give face to a name: prosopopeia. It is by way of

[339] Žižek, *Sublime*, 19
[340] Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later writings, 1978-87*, ed. François Matheron and Olivier Corpet (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 129, 134

prosopopeia that language assumes a human face but, as a mechanism of language, this face is fundamentally inhuman.

> *prosopon-poiein* means to *give* a face and therefore implies that the original face can be missing or nonexistent. The trope which coins a name for a still unnamed entity, which gives face to the faceless is, of course, catachresis. That a catachresis can be a prosopopeia, in the etymological sense of "giving face," is clear from such ordinary instances as the *face* of a mountain or the *eye* of a hurricane. But it is possible that, instead of prosopopeia being a subspecies of the generic type catachresis (or the reverse), the relationship between them is more disruptive than that between genus and species.[341]

> Something monstrous lurks in the most innocent of catachreses: when one speaks of the legs of the table or the face of the mountain, catachresis is already turning into prosopopeia, and one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts and monsters.[342]

There is nothing preventing personification, as a trope, from being reversed, reified, revealed as the mechanism out of which it arose. We do not control the mechanism through which the commodity assumes a face. Nor can we prevent anything that assumes a human face from being de-faced.

Reification / Constellation

While Adorno is no optimist when it comes to the chances of making discernible "progress" toward the end of class struggle, he often finds Benjamin's outlook too "weak," "messianic," and *nihilistic* insofar as it threatens to turn the task of the historical materialist into something of an *Aufgabe*. Here we must ask whether Benjamin's increasing interest in thinking the "dialectical image" as a form of citation is ultimately antithetical to the idea of reification and forgetting proposed by Adorno. As Benjamin writes in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History" :

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[341] Man, *Blindness*, 44
[342] Man, *Aesthetic*, 42

History deals with connections and with arbitrarily elaborated causal chains. But since history affords an idea of the fundamental citability of its object, this object must present itself, in its ultimate form, as a moment of humanity. In this moment, time must be brought to a standstill.

The dialectical image is an occurrence of ball-lightning that runs across the whole horizon of the past.

Articulating the past historically means recognizing those elements of the past which come together in the constellation of a single moment. Historical knowledge is possible only within the historical moment. But knowledge within the historical moment is always knowledge of a moment. In drawing itself together in the moment-in the dialectical image-the past becomes part of humanity's involuntary memory.

The dialectical image can be defined as the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity.

The notion of a universal history is bound up with the notion of progress and the notion of culture. In order for all the moments in the history of humanity to be incorporated in the chain of history, they must be reduced to a common denominator - "culture," "enlightenment," "the objective spirit," or whatever one wishes to call it.[343]

The "dialectical image" is, essentially, the "constellation" in which forgetting is inscribed on an "epic" scale. It is that which undoes all possibility of "dialectical movement" and makes of the historical materialist a permanent exile for whom all progress remains Utopic. What would be alarming to Adorno here is the idea that "historical knowledge is possible only within the historical moment" and that this moment "becomes part of humanity's involuntary memory" only in the "dialectical image." This is to say that we can only ever think the historical moment, from within history, as a citation of history – that the "moment" of reification is the moment we gain knowledge of history as a moment.

Benjamin's great unfinished *Arcades Project* [*Passagenwerk*], is an attempt to inscribe the allegory of history as a history of citations – to show the history in the structure of

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[343] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings {4}: 1938-1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 403

commentary – the materiality that amasses in the passage of so many passages. It is,

essentially, a print database containing thousands of citations categorized into dozens of

"convolutes" and transcategorical topics and keywords. We are dealing with an historical

materialism that takes the "necessity of paying heed over many years to every casual citation,

every fleeting mention of a book" very seriously.[344] Both in its arguments and composition, the

Arcades Project illustrates just how literally Benjamin thinks the "fundamental citability" of

history. Convolute N is both a theorization and implementation of what it means to think "the

construction of history as such" in "the structure of commentary."

> A central problem of historical materialism that ought to be seen in the end: Must the
> Marxist understanding of history necessarily be acquired at the expense of the
> perceptibility of history? Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened
> graphicness <*Anschaulichkeit*> to the realization of the Marxist method? The first stage
> in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to
> assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut
> components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the
> crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To
> grasp the construction of history as such. In the structure of commentary. [Refuse of
> History] [N2,6] [345]

Somewhere between the ephemerality of the citation and the contingency of the historical

"moment" in which it gets commented upon, we can begin to "grasp the construction of history

as such" as a "dialectical image" that illuminates the "involuntary memory of a redeemed

humanity." Every citation reifies the historical moment in which it is written. In voluntarily

arranging them into a "large-scale" construction, however, Benjamin seeks to reveal the

constellation of history in their intertext.

> Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall
> purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse-

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[344] Benjamin, *Arcades*, 470
[345] Benjamin, *Arcades*, 461

these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. [N1a,8][346]

Simply by happening upon them, by selecting them, Benjamin illuminates the reification of each textual fragment. Even if they were voluntarily chosen and arranged, an overarching involuntariness still pervades the *Arcades Project* since Benjamin does not control what it is in each of the citations that illuminates them. These moments of illumination can be gathered, voluntarily, into a constellation only because they just happened, involuntarily, to illuminate a reified moment of history in the first place. In refusing to "*say* anything" Benjamin presents these illuminations as dialectical images rather than as a commentary organized around some overarching purpose. He fans the sparks of contingency that are not predetermined by the design of the project as a whole.

This idea of constellation is more than the 'astral projection' of the culture industry that Adorno has taught us to despise. The difficulty today is differentiating it from the equally nuanced concept of constellation we find in Adorno, Heidegger and so many other thinkers. Perhaps constellation was always a star-crossed concept – fated to perform the positionality of theoretical ideation without ever being able to posit it as such. This is to say that the very concept of reification becomes interminable whenever we try to project it within some anthropocentric planetarium of concepts. One might justifiably object that constellation is the most metaphysical concept under the sun – that it only reifies reification even further – but it is precisely here that it becomes the most tactical concept with which to critique

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346 Benjamin, *Arcades*, 460

conceptualization as such. It reveals the metaphysics of every position, especially those that claim to stand beyond metaphysics.

Taking the constellational, dialectical image seriously means regarding history as an endless chain of citations that can only be partially and involuntarily redeemed. It also means questioning the relationship between the "weak messianic power" and "the process of rescue" which, according to Benjamin, is characterized by "the firm, seemingly brutal grasp."[347] Does the historical materialist grasp secular events and human affairs or does he only clasp the ruins of the past all the more tightly as he loses hold of the future and, perhaps, humanity as such? Does he grasp on to the past as a kind of talisman in an attempt to stave off annihilation or does he grasp the inadequacy of our human powers in assuming a nihilistic view of what is to come? There is an almost irrepressible temptation to read in Benjamin a nostalgic hope to change the course of human affairs. De Man challenges this tendency in underscoring the "prosaic nature of the inhuman" in Benjamin's theory of history and, particularly, his theory of translation.[348] He suggests that, "with all kinds of precautions" and in "very small company,"

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[347] Benjamin, *Arcades*, 473

[348] "The 'inhuman,' however, is not some kind of mystery, or some kind of secret; the inhuman is: linguistic structures, the play of linguistic tensions, linguistic events that occur, possibilities which are inherent in language – independently of any intent or any drive or any wish or any desire we might have. So that, more than nature, toward which one can have, toward which one sets up, a human rapport – which is illegitimate, as illegitimate as turns out to be, in the final run, the interpersonal rapport, which is illegitimate too, since there is, in a very radical sense, no such thing as the human. If one speaks of the inhuman, the fundamental non-human character of language, one also speaks of the fundamental non-definition of the human as such, since the word human doesn't correspond to anything like that. So by extension, any . . . but let's not go that far – I'm now ahead of the statement .... What in language does not pertain to the human, what in language is unlike nature and is not assimilable, or doesn't resemble, what in language does not resemble the human in any way, is totally indifferent in relation to the human, is not therefore mysterious; it is eminently prosaic, and what happens – what is precisely interesting, I think – is that Benjamin's language of pathos, language of historical pathos, language of the messianic, the pathos of exile and so on and so forth, really describes linguistic events which are by no means human. So that what he calls the pains of the original become structural deficiencies which are best analyzed in terms of the inhuman, dehumanized language of linguistics, rather than into the language of imagery, or tropes, of pathos, or drama, which he chooses to use in a very peculiar way. To the extent that this text is human, all too

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one might regard Benjamin's concept of history as "nihilistic" which, he adds, "would have to be understood as a very positive statement about it."[349] The singularity of what Benjamin calls "nihilism" is best approached through the singularity of what he calls "happiness" in the "Theologico-Political Fragment":

> Only the Messiah himself consummates all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, creates its relation to the Messianic. For this reason nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground, to anything messianic. . . . In its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away.
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> To strive for such a passing away – even the passing away of those stages of man that are nature – is the task of world politics, whose method must be called nihilism.[350]

From this 'perspective' even "absolute knowing" need not be regarded as an historiological event in the common sense so much as the promissory structure of the idea that grants directionality to history and enables one to speak of an 'end' of history.

Nihilism / Dialectics

While the term 'nihilism' is not without its entanglements, it at least registers as something other than the negativity of determinate negation. Here it may be helpful to distinguish between a 'good' nihilism and a 'bad' nihilism somewhat like the 'good' and 'bad' infinity of

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human in the appeal it makes to you, and its messianic overtones to name something which is essentially nonhuman, it displaces our sense of what is human, both in ourselves and in our relationship to other humans. In a very fundamental way, I think. So that, from the statement that language is not human, that history is not human, which is made at the beginning, we are now brought to see something about the human which goes beyond that in that sense . . . whether it is mysterious, whether that is inhuman, or whether that is . . . the sacred, or something, one is impelled to read reine Sprache as that which is the most sacred, which is the most divine, when in fact in Benjamin it means a language completely devoid of any kind of meaning function, language which would be pure signifier, which would be completely devoid of any semantic function whatsoever, a purely technical linguistic language – and it would be purely limited to its own linguistic characteristics. You can call that divine or sacred, if you want, but it is not mysterious in that sense, I think, though it is paradoxical in the extreme. . . ." Man, *Resistance*, 96–97
[349] Man, *Resistance*, 103
[350] Benjamin, *Selected*, 305–6

which Hegel writes in the *Logic*.[351] 'Good' nihilism, of the sort de Man identifies in Benjamin's concept of history, is the task of thinking that Heidegger associates with a leap into the abyss of language. It is to maintain critical linguistic rigor in the face of that which we know, ahead of time, must be given up.

When it comes to thinking the shadow cast by the light of Hegelian (or Marxian) dialectics, no 'experience' can be negative enough. In the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," Marx writes "To be radical is to grasp the matter by the root. But for man the root is man himself." According to Heidegger it is here that Marx, like Sartre, makes a "strange leap" over the materiality of the matter [Sache] to the materiality of man.[352] The idea of "the self-production of man raises the danger of self-destruction."[353] To the self-production of man corresponds the "imperative of progress" and the "imperative of ever-new needs" according to which the previous needs become "immediately obsolete and outmoded." This is to say that in associating the materiality of matter with the productivity of man, Marx reifies 'Man' and his relationship to history, a move that entails the reduction of energetics to ergonomics and, eventually, economics. This is *the* danger – that Man will never be able to question the nature of that which he presumes to have produced (e.g. the technoscientific institution). In making man the root of the matter, one ends up in the bad nihilism that consists of the total devaluation of all human values rather than the more 'authentic' nihilism that seeks to confront the *immateriality* of Man as a matter of mnemotechnics.

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[351] Hegel, *Science*, 109, 190, 192, 202, 210, 212, 276, 499, 572, 596, 613, 733
[352] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 77
[353] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 73

Too much memory, as Nietzsche famously argues in the "Use and Abuse of History," leads to spiritual "indigestion." It is an "unhistorical…art and power of forgetting," that allows history to be "dominated and directed" by forces greater than history itself – forces he refers to as "life."[354] This kind of active, vital forgetting places a "bounded horizon" on memory that insulates would-be epigones from the sort of egocentric nihilism brought on by the looming apocalypse. Forgetting, far from being a simply negative and unconscious process, amounts to the "will's memory."[355] 'Good' nihilism would be an attempt to steer the course of world history by way of an "active forgetfulness" – a force capable of reprograming cultural memory and nudging us, however slightly, off our apocalyptic course. It is the reality [Wirklichkeit] of history as the "forgetting of being" – the work of "active forgetting" as the possibility of collectively reprograming our spiritual destiny [Geschick]. Good nihilism risks the self and, thus, the propriety of everything proper. It is "authentic" [eigentlich] only insofar as it annihilates the dialectical opposition of "who" and "what."

In this paradoxical nihilism, the being of nothingness requires an exorbitant amount of care [Sorge]. Ideology and aestheticism must be hacked away constantly if the vigilance of the *clearing* [Lichtung] is to be maintained.[356] This is to say that nihilism can never annihilate

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[354] Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67, 120. Might the humanities benefit from such an active forgetting? To what extent might it already be at work in the construction and policing of the western canon? Would such a forgetting necessarily imply political action? Would it necessarily spring from an ideological program? Today, this extends to the digitizing, annotating, indexing, citing, translating and archiving texts.

[355] Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35–36

[356] If Heidegger's is the most rigorous formulation of aestheticism, or, the most rigorous opening of its beyond, it would not be unreasonable to ask which of his inheritors has done the most to maintain this clearing. But how does one curate nothingness without aestheticizing or idealizing it? In asking whether Derrida, de Man or Stiegler has been the better curator of this nothingness we lapse, inevitably, into aestheticism. But the point is that we can only leverage one form of aestheticism against another.

aestheticism. Aestheticism, however, *can* functionally negate nihilism. For Heidegger, Man is less the root of the matter than the "placeholder of the nothing."[357] The nihilism that is most appropriate and exappropriating for Man, is the nihilism that drives Him to question his radicality and to reconceive his rootedness in relation to the earth, to the idiom [Mundart].[358] This thinking of autochthony, poses considerable problems, but it does not necessarily entail a valorization of fascism (as is too often assumed). It requires an unimaginable, perhaps inhuman, resolve to release one's self not only from all possessions but from self-possession – from the proprietary structure of selfhood as such. This is what Heidegger means by the term "authenticity" and, later, "releasement" [Gelassenheit].

Gelassenheit is an "inceptual thinking" [anfangliche Denken] that attempts to escape the closure of metaphysical, technological, scientific calculation and exactitude. It does not simply 'occur' in a way that can be registered and handed down through the traditions of pedagogical and cultural institutions. When asked in the 1966 Der Spiegel interview, whether he envisions "a world movement which either leads up to or has already led up to the absolute technological state," Heidegger first responds, simply, with a "yes." Elaborating, he says "only a god can save us" from this. [359] Inceptual thinking is so tenuous that it may "take 300 years for it 'to have an effect.'"[360] This proves incredibly disappointing for political philosophers (interviewer included), but Heidegger will not mitigate this claim. Doing so would trivialize the technological question. We, as mortals, cannot simply "think him [the messiah] into being, we

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[357] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 63
[358] Derrida, *Psyche*, 61–63
[359] Martin Heidegger, *The Heidegger Controversy: A critical reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.]: MIT Press, 1998), 106–10
[360] Heidegger, *Controversy*, 110

can at most awaken the readiness of expectation." The task of thinking cannot hope for the more immediate effects that philosophy might once have presumed to produce. These have been "taken over by the sciences," cybernetics in particular. Philosophy is no longer sovereign within the university, but has been "dissolve[d] into the individual sciences: psychology, logic, and political science." The inceptual thinking of Gelassenheit, thus, marks an extreme humility of thought in view of the technological.

While *Gelassenheit* is not some ontotheological kind of prophecy, it might, perhaps, be associated with the "weak messianic power" of which Benjamin writes in the "Theses." As Derrida has pointed out, there is a rather uncanny similarity between what Benjamin calls "destruction" [Zerstörung] and Heideggerian "Destruktion."[361] While the two are universes apart, they each stress the insignificance of the individual thinker in the face of world historical, technological powers.[362] But this nihilistic tendency does not mean that we are justified in saying anything we please on the 'basis' of the fundamental nothingness of everything. This would be a 'bad,' egotistical, anthropocentric nihilism – a bad reading of Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence" and Hegel's "bad infinity." It is to cling onto an uncritical notion of the will as a value in itself and, thus, to forget that, without the self, the 'will' is no longer a 'value' or even an 'instinct' (since even animals have self enough to preserve themselves). The idea of the "will to power" as a "will to willing" is a kind of zero degree aesthetic ideology which, in disavowing critical linguistic thinking, adheres, unthinkingly, to a script that any 'good' nihilist could have read in advance.

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[361] Derrida, *Acts*, 292 n46
[362] Benjamin, *Selected*, 390

A critical, nihilistic reading of history reveals the whole choreography of feints and arabesques philosophers will resort to in order to avoid the sobering realization that what they call nihilism is really just an aesthetic, ideological machination. But how many times must this dance between the (all too) human subject and the inhumanity of language be performed for the inscription to become visible (if not readable)? How many misreadings constitute an event? At least one, presumably, but, as they say, '*Einmal ist Keinmal.'* It would be naïve to think that any of us can assume, in propria persona, the role of the good nihilist. This is precisely what de Man critiques in "The Concept of Irony" – the bad faith with which we presume to be the spectator of irony, madness, etc. Eventually, we must concede that there is a little of the bad nihilist in all of us. We're only human after all. But, while it is doubtful whether any self-undoing machination could be counted in a strictly numerical, chronological sense, there are, as Andrzej Warminski suggests, certain ways of accounting for it.[363] Perhaps there is even a singular arithmetic by which the text machine might be clocked. But the question of number, as it is formulated here must necessarily remain blind to what makes the text machine tick.

De Man might, perhaps, have agreed with Stiegler that humans and technology are always already prosthetic, cybernetic organisms, but he would certainly have insisted that every technology of memory is equally a technology of forgetting. De Man's startling insistence on error is a tactical resistance to the aesthetic ideology that inevitably twists the materiality of forgetting back into some form of humanism, dialectics, progress, science, etc. These are the tropes that make us feel good about ourselves, they are incredibly consoling but, in a profound way, inhuman. They are the gears of the text machine. What at first appears, in de Man, as an

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[363] Warminski, *Ideology*, 11ff.

aesthetic ideology of linguistic nihilism – the seductive power of so many "lurid figures" and a generally "apocalyptic tone" – ends up being a remarkably ascetic pursuit of a "purely technical linguistic language." Like the nihilism of Benjamin and Heidegger, De Man's nihilism deconstructs itself. To *read* 'nihilism' deconstructively (i.e. nihilistically) is to resist aestheticism as far as humanly possible, to the point where language and, with it, the tropes holding 'humanity' together are denatured and disfigured into inhuman machinations. One might say, in a Heraclitan vein, that the thinking of what is inhuman in language and in memory is the strife (ἔρις) that holds humanity together. It is what disjoins us from ourselves so that we might have justice (δίκη) for the future – so that we might just have a future. The inhuman is the Πόλεμος of mnemotechnics – the battleground on which the possibility of any future justice is inscribed. 'Inhumanity,' as should be clear by now, is a polemical term. But it is important that, in saying this, we do not dismiss it as some rhetorical 'device.' If it is merely a device, then so are 'we.'

Automation / Autoimmunity

The tactical value of the "inhuman" increases the closer we come to an anthropogenic demise. Good nihilism is all the more urgent today when algorithmic governance provides aesthetic programming on a global scale and 'life' can only be regarded as a world-historical flux in which the 'human' and 'inhuman' are translating, transindividuating, transhumanizing one another *en abyme*. The primary ethical political question is no longer how to prevent mass death in the form of genocide and terror but, rather, how to make billions of humans 'work' within a society that is increasingly automatic. The age of "cyberunemployment" has only just begun and it has never been more necessary to rethink the way in which "superfluous labour time" conditions

"necessary labour time." This is, as Marx realized, "a question of life or death." The superfluity of human labor becomes the superfluity of human life. If the entirety of the working class cannot be reskilled in a vocation capable of outclimbing the rising tide of automatic labor, then it will die. Not immediately, perhaps, but by subjecting the human to the kind of 'living' that drives it to take up arms against humanity as such.

How then to keep the human in the loop, in circulation, in a way that prevents it (us) from atrophy, necrosis, death? We seem to be incapable of accepting the possibility of a self-amputation or auto-surgery – the kind of "scientific medicine"[364] and "positive pharmacology"[365] of which Husserl and Stiegler write (respectively). These options may very well require the amputation of necrotic corpora(tions) rather than their rehabilitation. [366] Many have likened our current economy to a "zombie capitalism" governed by a need to keep undead tissues animated rather than making the kind of de-cision or ex-cision that the prognosis seems to require.[367] But, while it is easy to blame the impersonality of shareholders and other corporate 'persons,' we should also recognize that, in every case, the pathology always points back to 'humanism' as such.

We can no longer cite a conscious desire to destroy human life as the primary cause of escalating violence. It has more to do with the unthought desire to maintain the positionality of the human in the face of a growing obsolescence. 'Humanism' seeks to shore itself up against the rising tide of machine intelligence but, in so doing, creates a tension that is irreconcilable

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[364] Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1965), 269
[365] Stiegler, *Neganthropocene*, 221-223, 229
[366] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology;: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 270
[367] Chris Harman, *Zombie capitalism: Global crisis and the relevance of Marx* (Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2010)

with the system itself and, thus, gets discharged in increasingly 'senseless' acts of violence. But

however senseless the individual acts of violence may seem, there is a sort of sense, a curious

"autoimmunitary logic" at work. Derrida identifies "autoimmunity" as a "strange behavior

where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to

immunize itself against its 'own' immunity." It does not concern the present or the past so

much as the future. Or, rather, it is the idea of the present, past, and "worldhood of the world"

regarded as the 'consequence' of a futural wound:

> A weapon wounds and leaves forever open an unconscious scar; but this weapon is
> terrifying because it comes from the to-come, from the future, a future so radically to
> come that it resists even the grammar of the future anterior. . . . Traumatism is
> produced by the future, by the to come, by the threat of the worst to come, rather than
> by an aggression that is "over and done with." . . . what is thus put at risk by this
> *terrifying* autoimmunitary logic is nothing less than the existence of the world, of the
> worldwide itself.[368]

The "logic" of autoimmunity requires the thoroughgoing deconstruction of selfhood, autonomy,

automobility, auto-affectivity – all of the "heterotautological" 'structures' that constitute the

axiomatic 'ground' of Western thought. What's interesting is that out of all the possible

paradigms of aberrant, metaleptical, deconstructive causality, Derrida seems to grant the

mechanical a certain priority in much the same way that de Man does in his formulation of the

text machine. In *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, he describes autoimmunity as

> a mode that . . . is neither . . . a cause- effect relation, nor an infrastructure-
> superstructure relation, nor that of a symptomatology, but of another structural
> concatenation – the technical possibility of the wheel, as a circular, auto- hetero-
> affective machine, and the possibility of the auto- affective and auto- biographical
> relation to self in confession, repentance, prayer; between the reinvention of the wheel

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[368] Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), 95–99

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and the reinvention of prayer as the reinvention of two auto- mobile and auto- affective machines) [369]

> And the machination of this machine, the origin of all *tekhnē,* and in it of any *turn,* each turn, each return, each wheel, is that each time we trace a trace, each time a trace, however singular, is left behind, and even before we trace it actively or deliberately, a gestural, verbal, written, or other trace, well, this machinality virtually entrusts the trace to the survival in which the opposition of the living and the dead loses and must lose all pertinence, all its edge. The book lives its beautiful death. That's also finitude, the chance and the threat of finitude, this alliance of the dead and the living.[370]

In the term autoimmunity, we find a veritable anthology of deconstructive thought resounding

within the linguistic abyss that opens between dialectics and nihilism, Hegel and Heidegger,

Derrida and de Man, etc. It reads like a curriculum vitae in which Derrida's most exorbitant,

deconstructive itineraries are knotted together. To tease out but a few: the profound circularity

of phenomenology which Hegel, in the *Greater Logic* likens to a "circle of circles"; the

tautological resonance that pervades Heidegger's Bremen lectures; the elliptical trope of the

promise and "performative excuse" in de Man's reading of Rousseau (as well as his reading of

autobiography as "de-facement" in Wordsworth's "Essays on Epitaphs"). We can only begin to

catalogue the discrete resonances of this term here and must defer to other efforts[371] made in

this direction as we hasten toward one of Derrida's last formulations of autoimmunity, in

Rogues, where we return once again, as if by fate, to the Heideggerian meditation on Geschick

as a thinking of a "democracy to come":

> "Democracy to come" : one will have been able to hear in this a response to the sending of the sender. In being sent back or sent off as soon as it is sent, the send back [*renvoi*] affecting differantially and leaving intact no originary sending, everything beginning by sending back or by responding, it will have been necessary to take note of what time, and thus history, must be lacking, unless history is made up of this time that is lacking and that is necessary. Time must always be lacking for democracy because democracy

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[369] Derrida, *Beast II*, 83
[370] Derrida, *Beast II*, 130
[371] J. Hillis Miller, *For Derrida* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2009), 222–44

does not wait and yet makes one wait for it. It waits for nothing and loses everything for waiting. . . . however one understands *cratic* sovereignty, it has appeared as a stigmatic indivisibility that always contracts duration into the timeless instant of the exceptional decision. Sovereignty neither gives nor gives itself the time; it does not take time. Here is where the cruel autoimmunity with which sovereignty is affected begins, the autoimmunity with which sovereignty at once sovereignly affects and cruelly infects itself. Autoimmunity is always, in the same time without duration, cruelty itself, the autoinfection of all autoaffection. It is not some particular thing that is affected in autoimmunity but the self, the *ipse,* the *autos* that finds itself infected. As soon as it needs heteronomy, the event, time and the other.[372]

Autoimmunity is the fate of democracy – the Geschick that afflicts every anthropological structure from the individual self, to the political institution, to history as such. The autoimmune response is governed by the "non-knowledge" of "cratic sovereignty" that Derrida, after Georges Bataille, opposes to Hegel's valorization of the slave as the model of self-consciousness. "Sovereignty" marks "the blind spot of Hegelianism . . . an expenditure and a negativity *without reserve* – that . . . can no longer be determined as negativity in a process or a system."[373] Autoimmunity, then, can be regarded as the "general economy" over which cratic sovereignty holds sway. Its 'cruelty' must also be thought in terms of the "economy of violence" of which Derrida writes in "Violence and Metaphysics." It is a general economy indeed.[374] Its borders are coextensive with what Derrida calls the "general text" – of which he once dared to write that there was "no outside." Once the relations and forces of production are thought in terms of general economy, as an "absolute production and destruction of value," the Marxian

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[372] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two essays on reason* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 108–9

[373] Derrida, *Writing*, 259

[374] Even amongst Derridians, the breadth and range of citations gathered (without quotation marks) under the name 'autoimmunity' may justifiably be regarded as an act of bibliographic cruelty. It is as if the autoimmune response extended even to the act of reading the word 'autoimmunity'.

concept of a "mode of production" can no longer be restricted to a "circuit of reproductive

consumption."[375] Such an economy "*does not govern itself.*"[376]

If we are to agree with Louis Althusser that the "conception of the economic object"

cannot be "determined *from the outside by a non-economic structure,*" then we must regard

economic structure in terms of this general economy of autoimmunity.[377] The autoimmune

response, like the machination of the text machine, disrupts all metaphorical claims to originary

productivity. Marx's organological reading of mechanization comes up short of a

mnemotechnical critique of cybernetic society insofar as it fails to think the autoimmunity of

textual machination. It is with such a critique in mind that we might begin to read the

"Fragment on Machines" in the *Grundrisse* where Marx discusses the transformation by which

> the production process has ceased to be a labour process in the sense that labour is no
> longer the unity dominating and transcending it. Rather labour appears merely to be a
> conscious organ, composed of individual living workers at a number of points in the
> mechanical system; dispersed, subjected to the general process of the machinery itself,
> it is itself only a limb of the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers but in
> the living (active) machinery, which seems to be a powerful organism when compared
> to their individual, insignificant activities. With the stage of machinery, objectified
> labour appears in the labour process itself as the dominating force opposed to living
> labour, a force represented by capital in so far as it appropriates living labour.[378]

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[375] Derrida, *Writing*, 271

[376] "Since it relates the successive figures of phenomenality to a knowledge of meaning that always already has
been anticipated, the phenomenology of the mind (and phenomenology in general) corresponds to a restricted
economy: restricted to commercial values, one might say, picking up on the terms of the definition, a science
dealing with the utilization of wealth," limited to the meaning and the established value of objects, and to their
circulation. The *circularity* of absolute knowledge could dominate, could comprehend only this circulation, only
the *circuit of reproductive consumption*. The absolute production and destruction of value, the exceeding energy
as such, the energy which 'can only be lost without the slightest aim, consequently without any meaning' – all
this escapes phenomenology as restricted economy. The latter can determine difference and negativity only as
facets, moments, or conditions of meanings as work. Now the nonmeaning of the sovereign operation is neither
the negative of, nor the condition for, meaning, even if it is this *also*, and even if this is what its name gives us to
understand. It is not a reserve of meaning. It keeps itself beyond the opposition of the positive and the negative,
for the act of consumption, although it induces the loss of sense, is not the *negative* of presence, presence
maintained or looked on in the *truth* of its meaning (its *bewahren*)." Derrida, *Writing*, 264

[377] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading*, 208

[378] Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 409

This involves a fundamental transformation of the relationship between the human and social

body. It is the 'origin' of the cybernetic relation between man and machine in which

> The worker no longer inserts transformed natural objects as intermediaries between the material and himself; he now inserts the natural process that he has transformed into an industrial one between himself and inorganic nature, over which he has achieved mastery. He is no longer the principal agent of the production process: he exists alongside it.[379]

In a utopian society, this means that "all members of society can develop their education in the

arts, sciences, etc., thanks to the free time and means available to all." But, as we know, this is

not exactly how the story goes. The divergence between the hypercapitalistic reality in which

we currently reside and the utopian prospect Marx outlines here has primarily to do with his

failure to *thematize* technology in a manner that might allow him to prescribe a "scientific

medicine" for the cybernetic totality (of the sort Edmund Husserl will call for less than a century

later). Marx shows some awareness of this when he observes how "invention . . . becomes a

branch of business, and the application of science to immediate production aims at determining

the inventions at the same time as it solicits them."[380] The consequences of such research are

much graver than Marx lets on. When educational institutions are no longer autonomous

enclaves of theoretical inquiry and are requisitioned to meet the needs of a global,

technoscientific market we encounter the mnemotechnical crisis in its purest form as a crisis of

thematization:

> The unacceptability of a discourse, the noncertification of a research project, the illegitimacy of a course offering are declared by evaluative actions: studying such

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[379] Marx, *Selected*, 415
[380] Marx, *Selected*, 414

evaluations is, it seems to me, one of the tasks most indispensable to the exercise of academic responsibility, most urgent for the maintenance of its dignity.[381]

the most novel and strongest responsibility, for someone belonging to a research or teaching institution, is perhaps to make such a political implication, its system and its aporias, as clear and thematic as possible. . . . By the clearest possible thematization I mean the following: that with students and the research community, in every operation we pursue together (a reading, an interpretation, the construction of a theoretical model, the rhetoric of an argumentation, the treatment of historical material, and even a mathematical formalization), we posit or acknowledge that an institutional concept is at play, a type of contract signed, an image of the ideal seminar constructed, a socius implied, repeated, or displaced, invented, transformed, threatened, or destroyed. An institution is not merely a few walls or some outer structures surrounding, protecting, guaranteeing, or restricting the freedom of our work; it is also and already the structure of our interpretation.[382]

To thematize is to make explicit that there can be "no university architecture without architectonics." This is to say that institutional structure is coextensive with the structure of reason itself. The "Conflict of the Faculties" of which Kant writes is the "mnemotechnical crisis" par excellence. Faculties are both administrative departments and organs of a larger cybernetic totality. Thus, the "architectonic" structure of the university is also "bio-technological," which is to say, organological.[383]

According to Stiegler, to educate is not simply to give and receive directions but, rather, to force one another through a network of pathways which, as they bifurcate (trifurcate, quadrifurcate, etc.), have a *tendency* to return to and, thus, demarcate, deterritorialize and reterritorialize a certain region of noetic activity while allowing for entirely unforeseen and unforeseeable passages into the unknown. It is a certain intonation and syncopation of these critical passages that allows for the vital transindividuation of noetic souls. He insists, therefore,

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[381] Jacques Derrida, *Right to Philosophy II: Eyes of the University* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 144–45

[382] Derrida, *Right II*, 102

[383] Derrida, *Right II*, 57–58

that "[t]he current educational system must be profoundly re-thought" as a "mnemotechnical system [that] is not integrated into a technical system [or] immersed in the market." It is the immersion of the educational system within the market that constitutes the essence and crisis of technoscience as a "mnemo-techno-logic confusion."[384] This crisis culminates in the "Neganthropocene," the age in which the entropic tendencies of the Anthropocene must be reversed.

> the economy [becomes] a cosmic factor on a local scale (a dimension of the cosmos) and therefore an ecology, must lead to a process of transvaluation, such that both economic values and those moral devaluations that result when nihilism is set loose as consumerism are 'transvaluated' by a new value of all values, that is, by negentropy - or negative entropy, or anti-entropy.[385]

In the Neganthropocene, education is overtaken and outstripped in advance by the "algorithmic governmentality" that Stiegler, after Berns and Rouvroy, identifies as the latest turn of our hyperindustrial, hypercapitalistic, technoscientific society.[386] This coercion of theory within the educational marketplace endangers the idiomaticity and autochthony of memory together with the institutions in charge of preserving it. It entails the disapprenticeship and proletarianization of noetic life in general. 'Knowledge' is now calculated as a stock of skills with algorithmic precision and efficacy. 'Teaching' is prescribed as the lifelong learning of the employee. Matriculation is, to an alarming extent, incorporation within corporations in which the alma mater is, itself, incorporated.

In the 1969 Le Thor Seminar, Heidegger examines how "theory," under the technoscientific regime of the modern physical sciences, becomes "essentially changeable and

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[384] Stiegler, *Technics 3*, 167–68
[385] Stiegler, *Automatic*, 10
[386] Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns, "Gouvernementalité algorithmique et perspectives d'émancipation," *Réseaux* 177, no. 1 (2013), https://doi.org/10.3917/res.177.0163

thus purely methodological . . . no more than another one of the variable factors in research."

To acknowledge this enframing of theory is to recognize that "physics is grounded upon the essence of technology" and not the reverse – that the essence of technology is the enframing of theory by scientific praxis.[387] At stake in this enframing of theory is a shift in the understanding of causality as a "development" [Auseinanderfolge] to "succession" [Aufeinanderfolge] according to which "physics ever only observes nature as a succession of things that follow upon one another, and no longer as a course of things emerging from each other." The meaning of the term 'effect' is understood as:

> 1) the result of that which is "previously posited" in a theory.

> 2) The objective establishment of reality upon the basis of the arbitrary repeatability of an experiment.[388]

This is most evident in Max Planck's thesis that "the real is what is measurable" and in the quantum theory of Bohr and Heisenberg but, according to Heidegger, its most inceptual origins trace back to Newton and Galileo. The "universal world formula" is the telos of modern physics – the grail-like "theory of everything" that has driven scientific quest(ion)ing from Einstein to Hawking. Such a "discovery" could either "open up to an entirely new relation to nature" or "settle into [a] mere thoughtless exploitation" that would bring about the "end of physics."[389] To follow the latter path is to expedite the "conquest of space" and "the transformation of biology into *biophysics*" – the expansion of enframing beyond the biosphere and into the biological makeup of the human organism. Here we find the most disquieting overtones of Marx's thesis about the "self-production of man" by man – the possibility that a human could

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[387] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 53–54
[388] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 54
[389] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 55

be "produced according to a definite plan just like any other technological object."[390] It is both

"natural" and "impossible" to ascribe a cause or 'end' to this kind of productivity. As Derrida

argues, "the end-orientation [*finalisation*] of research is limitless."[391] Its sovereign power

exceeds all conventional limits imposed by natural, human, and divine law: "the emergence of a

new form of nationalism [that] is grounded upon technological power and no longer . . . on the

characteristics of a people."[392] This total, biotechnological form of enframing uproots the very

ground of national identity and prevents us from understanding the world-historical

significance of so-called 'world powers.' In this regard, 'America' is less an autonomous political

entity than it is a "collusion between industry and the military (the economic development and

the armament that it requires)." If "man is not a being that makes himself," then the

"supposedly political opposition between civil and industrial society" does not necessarily hold

for all cultures and all times.

We cannot directly influence the positionality of modern technology any more than we

can spontaneously alter the grammar of language. Recapitulating the "danger" of positionality

explored in the Bremen lectures and the "leap" discussed in *What Calls for Thinking*, Heidegger

implores us

> to understand that physics cannot leap beyond itself. Such a leap can just as little be
> accomplished by politics, insofar as it lives today in and for the dimension of science.
> The most extreme danger is that man, insofar as he produces himself, no longer feels
> any other necessities than the demands of his self-production. Hence, we once again
> come to the question of the language of the computer.
>
> In these suppositions, the end of language and the end of tradition are equally visible.
> What is uncanny, however, is not so much that everything will be extinguished, but

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[390] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 73; Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 90
[391] Derrida, *Right II*, 143
[392] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 55

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instead that this does not actually come to light. The surge of information veils the disappearance of what has been [*des Gewesenen*]*,* and prospective planning is only a name for the obstruction of the future.[393]

Its unguarded apprehension would be the most "ruinous," absolute form of knowing – the "most extreme danger" that short-circuits the ecstatic temporality of Dasein itself. The human must be guarded [wahrhen] from this 'truth' [Wahrheit]. The darkness that looms over our future is nothing other than the spectral, specular shadow of dialectical Enlightenment. The future only ek-sists in and as the danger of this shadow. The "most extreme danger" is not the shadow itself but its oblivion – the possibility that the dialectical machination of history might grow so efficient as to efface itself. The task is to think this (re)doubtable danger of the (im)possibility of danger. While it is tempting to envision this as something impending from afar or from above – a deadly Apollo or a voracious Minerva – the truth is that it radiates from out of Dasein itself. So much depends on the angle and orientation of this specular shadow. The possibility of thinking (the future of thinking) requires an *acute* awareness of a *certain slant of light*. The inhuman nature of our technological existence must loom *acutely* if it is to cast any shadow at all. As the dawn of artificial intelligence wears on toward midday, the shadow is in danger of receding into nothingness.

Does Heidegger's thinking of technology not partake of this danger? Is it not a kind of machine? A machine capable of cracking and reprograming its dialectical source code, appropriating anyone or anything that claims to think the event, wrapping its fiber optic tendrils around the world of Western Metaphysics and rewiring the Platonic theater of the Cave with an entirely different kind of light? Is it still possible for us to build, dwell and think or is

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[393] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 56

everything we might like to say always already allegorized in advance by this most inceptual

[anfänglich] of machines? What are we troglodytes of this algorithmic age to do when every

'inception' is shadowed by a *ceptual* logic – a logic of conceptualization enframed by the

"referential function" of language which, as Paul de Man writes, "e*st un piège*, *mais*

inévitable?"[394]

This is to suggest that the ironic intransigence of even the most deconstructive

theoretical insight is allegorized by the technoscientific enframing that has, with alarming

efficacy, capitalized on the unthinkability of the future and bankrolled the institutions in which

such theoretical inquiry lingers on without apparent *end*. At first, this almost sounds like a good

thing. Knowledge would be pursued as an end in itself and theory would remain at a healthy

distance from praxis – this is the spirit of the university as it is inscribed in the charter of the

University of Bologna and the kind of freedom championed by Kant in the "Conflict of the

Faculties." But this anthropocentric model presumes that the human beings that take part in

the various educational faculties and the mercantile agencies that seek to appropriate them

are, in fact, the *end* of the line. It overlooks the possibility that, in a truly automatic, algorithmic

society, the 'principles' are little more than technicians and the 'chairs' are really just

ergonomically arranged furniture, which is to say, *furniturata* and not *furniturans*.

Even when we acknowledge the extent to which the "rhetoric of temporality" pervades

every understanding of causality and deconstruct this understanding to reveal an aesthetic,

ideological mechanism hardwired into language itself, we still cannot lay claim to what de Man

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[394] Man, *Aesthetic*, 1

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once called the "allegory of irony."[395] Doing so would entail a mastery of the "absolute, infinite

negativity" that Kierkegaard regards as the 'essence' of irony. De Man asks whether we can

> think of certain texts . . . as being truly meta-ironical, as having transcended irony
> without falling into the myth of an organic totality or bypassing the temporality of all
> language? And, if we call these texts "allegorical," would the language of allegory then
> be the overcoming of irony?[396]

He stresses that "it is better to speak . . . of texts than of individual names" because the relation

between allegory and irony can only be thought as a machine and not as a dialectical model

conceivable by a human consciousness. It would take a very *strong force* indeed, to overcome

the ironic, allegorical "resistance" that inheres in every theoretical, metalinguistic pursuit. The

splitting of an atomic unit, be it physical or linguistic, entails the splitting of the consciousness

of the observer. This theoretical fission reveals a materiality that is no longer adequate to the

subject-object relations out of which it precipitates – a materiality that no longer obeys the

laws of physics or grammar. The materiality of the material inscription or event is calls for a

thinking of a "materiality without matter," as Derrida has pointed out.[397] But we can no longer

say that this materiality of inscription is simply *immaterial* in the sense of being a purely

linguistic, unscientific phenomenon. On the contrary, it is in the thinking of inscription that the

practico-theoretical force of linguistic and scientific events becomes less and less discernible.

The radical uncertainty of the quantum event, like all radically theoretical inquiries in physics,

mathematics and linguistics, reveals an ironic temporality "that is definitely not organic, in that

it relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference and allows for no end, for no

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[395] Man, *Blindness*, 228
[396] Man, *Blindness*, 223
[397] Derrida, *Alibi*, 128ff.

totality." In reducing "time … to one single moment . . . it comes closer to the pattern of factual

experience . . . know[ing] neither memory nor prefigurative duration."[398] The structure of the

linguistic abyss becomes readable in the annihilation of the empirical self. On the way to

annihilation, the self disintegrates into structures in which we are given to read something like

the 'grammar' of being, similar to the way in which particle physicists attempt to read in the

collision of hadrons the essential structure of the universe. While it may seem preposterous to

regard the latter as a nihilistic process, doing so helps illustrate why theorists like de Man,

Heidegger and Benjamin are so interested in reducing everything to nothingness.

Even if it is not in the power of the *human* to overcome irony, can we really be so sure

that this is beyond the reach of technoscience? If every theorist remains radically blind to the

nature of his own insight, as de Man argues, then is this radical blindness not integral to the

functioning of the technoscientific machine? Is invention not unthinkable without the

institutionalized blindness of specialization? Theoretical fission reveals the almost unimaginable

power of dialectical reappropriation, its ability to harness the ironic energy of theory to

produce a technoscientific fusion. While there are always exceptions, the greatest scientific

insights of our age are less often the work of an individual genius than a cybernetic totality.

Insofar as it entails the convergence of the restricted and general economies, the modern

technoscientific machine could be regarded as the quintessential ironic allegory. However far

'end-oriented' research has taken us, its end remains allegorical. We only know that it will be

profitable and conducive to the advancement of the machine (since it is through this machine

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[398] Man, *Blindness*, 222, 226

the ends are oriented). Ironically, it is no longer within our power to say whether the algorithmic pursuit of profit will, in the end, bankrupt us all.

Digestion / Translation

It is scarcely possible to speak of a crisis today without irony. Without irony the world is just too difficult to digest, which is ironic because the world, by many accounts, is beginning to digest itself. Thinkers of the transhumanist movement since Eric Drexler have spoken of a scenario in which swarms of nanobots, incapable of seeing the cosmos as anything other than a vast reserve of "programmable matter," set to rearranging every atom into "computronium" or, in a more technical parlance, "grey goo."[399] Benjamin Bratton makes similar observations regarding

> a transformation in the technical infrastructure of global systems, whereby planetary-scale computation has so thoroughly and fundamentally transformed the logics of political geography in its own image that it has produced new geographies and new territories that can enforce themselves.[400]

He calls this "consolidated metaplatform" and "accidental megastructure" "the Stack" – arguing that "there is no Stack without a vast immolation and involution of the Earth's mineral cavities [that] terraform[s] the host planet by drinking and vomiting its elemental juices and spitting up mobile phones."[401] This process of planetary digestion threatens the ecological infrastructure, the "earth layer" on which all mnemotechnical infrastructures are based. In its most brutal form, the Stack poses the question of how we are going to supply it with enough clean energy to prevent the planet from being consumed by its functioning. The prospects here are quite bleak indeed. A propos of the ecocomputational research of Saul Griffith, Bratton writes:

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[399] Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When humans transcend biology* (New York: Viking, 2005), 400; K. Eric Drexler, *Engines of Creation 2.0: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology* (Wowio, 2006), 355–56
[400] Benjamin H. Bratton, *The Stack - On Software and Sovereignty* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016), 375
[401] Bratton, *Stack*, 83

Getting 10 new terawatts of clean energy in twenty-five years, however, may mean the immediate, simultaneous, and comprehensive transformation of almost all of our entire industrial infrastructure. We would need one 3 gigawatt nuclear plant to go online every week for the next two decades. Plus we would need to install 100 square meters of solar cells every second. Plus we would need twelve 3 megawatts of wind turbines every hour. Plus, to grow enough biofuel-producing algae, we would need to fill a space the size of Wyoming. To have a chance of accomplishing these feats, he [Griffith] says, Coke and Pepsi would have to switch entirely to making sheets of reflective mirrors instead of sheets of aluminum for cans of sugar water. GM, Ford, and Toyota would have to team up to achieve the goal of one wind turbine every five minutes. Obviously such lurches would bring their own negative consequences, and so even "solving for carbon" is sure to cause other problems. In other words, it seems impossible. It is true, he concludes, that we have brought 10 terawatts online in the last forty years, and so who knows?[402]

Such predictions unquestionably change the way we read the Anthropocene narrative at large. Like de Man, Bratton eschews any nostalgic mourning of the loss of organic unity, approaching it instead as a problem of "design." On the level of planetary computation, however, architecture is less a building within the confines of Cartesian space than a programming between the layers out of which our sense of geospatiality is enframed and consumed. The ancient symbol of the "Ouroboros" represents the design logic of the Stack. It poses the question of whether "*The Stack* [can] be *built fast enough to save us from the costs of building The Stack.*"[403] In order to answer such a question, Bratton argues that "we have to first imagine [the Earth] in ruins and work backward from this as both a conclusion and a starting point." The "Angelus Novus is gone" and it is us (or our Stacks) that must now fan the sparks of hope in the smoldering rubble of history.

In gazing backward upon these ruins, what is the humanist to do?[404] In all likelihood we will keep publishing until the academic presses finally and literally go under. But in our 'leisure'

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[402] Bratton, *Stack*, 259
[403] Bratton, *Stack*, 96
[404] Bratton, *Stack*, 251

time we are left contemplating the meaning of all anthropogenic production hitherto and whether even an instantaneous and thoroughgoing transvaluation of all values would be enough to turn back the tides. Tom Cohen rejects the kind of reaction that leads to the thought that "arrived at a geo-bio-technic impasse that [would require] the total retirement of literary interests from the scientific-philosophical-economic stage." He argues that we were kidding ourselves in believing "that it was ever a matter of scientifically bringing to light an unwelcome truth in order to get a global response that would over-ride corporate media denialism and addictogenic accelerations."[405] He suggest that there might even be "something like a literary structure to "climate change," one that even guarantees ecocide."[406]

Along similar lines, Claire Colebrook argues that "De Man's mode of deconstruction is radically futural in that it aims to imagine a text without us, or a text that would not be redeemed in some future where meaning would be revealed."[407] She contrasts this with Derrida's theory of temporality, insinuating that "a messianic without messianism" is really the last thing we need right now since, even though it is impossible to deny that the future bears the aporetic structure of a promise, this knowledge tends to inure us to the inevitability of the Anthropocene. This is to say that more sober outlooks on the future are forgotten because they lack the requisite "rhetorical flair." This all serves to reinforce Man's remark about Benjamin's messianic rhetoric: that "one can only really get excited if one writes in an apocalyptic mode"[408] In asking why we seem incapable of facing the future as such, Colebrook suggests that our

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[405] J. Hillis Miller, Claire Colebrook and Tom Cohen, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols* (Open Humanities Press, 2016), 26–27
[406] Miller, Colebrook and Cohen, *Twilight*, 26n9
[407] Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller, eds., *Theory and the Disappearing Future: On De Man, on Benjamin* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2012), 8
[408] Man, *Resistance*, 79

potential to remember what the future holds for us has to do with the mode in which it

addresses us as an "us" :

> 'we' can only hear those who offer a future to come, a promise of a blessed humanity that will rightly inherit the earth. Indeed, there is no "we" outside this rhetorical call to arms.[409]

> For can we be so certain today that good thinking and good reading will lead us to ethical norms? Has there not been a surfeit of such faith, and might not a dose of nihilism alert 'us' to all the ways in which our morality has been destructive or, at least, violent with regard to this good earth that we have treated as our ethical environ?[410]

What is the task of the translator, the enfeebled messiah, the deconstructed zealot, today?

Does striving for the "passing away" of "nature" mean letting ourselves dissolve within the

cybernetic organism?[411] While the assimilation of the (predominantly human) work of linguistic

and cultural analysis within a cybernetic system might be seen as a great leap forward for the

dialectical capacities of our collective Spirit, it also threatens to reify the meaning of our

humanistic work and the singularity of our socio-political existence. Everything depends on

what is meant by letting go (Gelassenheit) – whether it means the culmination of an irreducibly

human Spirit or the sublation of 'the human' by some hitherto unimaginable intelligence. This is

essentially what Derrida asks of de Man's theory of material inscription – whether it would be

possible to think the event and the machine together.

In a certain sense, we are only human insofar as we fail to think the inhumanity of the

text machine. To think the text machine is to read the history of inscription as "inhuman." It is

to acknowledge that what we call 'human' is (was) a fundamentally linguistic mechanism.

Whether this will continue to be the case is difficult to say. It depends on the irreducibility and

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[409] Miller, Colebrook and Cohen, *Twilight*, 87
[410] Cohen, Colebrook and Miller, *Theory*, 13
[411] Benjamin, *Selected*, 306

undecidability of language and the rhetorical margin that separates human, natural language from machine-readable code. This mystery is our inheritance – this aspect of language and memory over which we have no control – the inhumanity that speaks and writes through us – inscribing the horizons within which we think the world.

If 'we' were to succeed in thinking this inhumanity as such, then 'humanity' would be subject to the kind of *machine translation* that we have long entertained as a speculative fiction but, in view of which, we grow increasingly uneasy. But how does the advent of machine reading influence our reading of the 'human'? Will the tools for digital scholarship in the humanities allow us to better detect material events or will they be effaced in a more general push to mine all of textual history for semantic content? That our translation algorithms are beginning to map even the more idiomatic reaches of language does not necessarily make them any more human. They succeed because, rather than trying to understand a specific context in isolation, they instead make local decisions based on a statistical analysis of the global corpus of digitized text. It would be easy to say that there is no interpretation at all transpiring in such a process – that it is essentially non-hermeneutic and, hence, inhuman. But the brute functionality of the results – the extent to which we have come to depend on them in lieu of conversation, immersion, academic study – suggests that the implicit humanism of the hermeneutic arts might have been analytic, mechanical and inhuman all along. Machine translation is, thus, the "most absolute danger" and the uncanniest configuration of the text machine. It suggests that sooner or later, what is most idiomatic in our language will be decoded and encoded – described and inscribed. But such a "practical deconstruction" of the

human is not necessarily something to fear. [412] It is, perhaps, even something to look forward to – a future in which we might find, in this late hour of the Anthropocene, some measure of "happiness" in relinquishing this most *dispiriting* of tasks – being human. Perhaps, by the time our machines figure out how to translate 'nihilism,' we will all have had occasion to look back and reflect on whether there could have been anything more nihilistic than clinging to the untranslatability of the human.

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[412] Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies*, 36

V. Thematization of Themes

Thematization / Recursivity

The theme recedes into the monadic interiority of consciousness that, today, marks the burial

site of theoretical inquiry – the cognitive scientific and computational linguistic terrain on which

some of the most exciting and violent exhumations of human memory are being conducted.

While we must tread cautiously here, we mustn't hesitate in breaking hallowed ground if we

are to construct a mnemotechnical infrastructure that would retain some margin of sovereignty

in the face of the algorithmic, technoscientific machine. In attempting to thematize this

question of thematization, we should heed Derrida's admonition:

> Nothing would seem more violent or naive than to call for more frontality, more thesis
> or more thematization, to suppose that one can find a standard here. How can one
> choose between the economy or the discretion of the *ellipse* with which one credits a
> writing, and an *a-thematicity*, an insufficiently thematic explanation of which some
> believe it is possible to accuse a philosopher?[413]

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[413] "N'*y allons pas par quatre chemins* [an almost untranslatable French expression which invokes the cross or the
crucial, the crossing of ways, the four and the fork of a crossroad (*quadrifurcum*) in order to say: let us proceed
directly, without detour, without ruse and without calculation]: *what is at issue* [il s'agit de] *is the concept of.* and
knowing whether.' What is implied by an expression of such an imperative order? That one could and one should
tackle a concept or a problem frontally, in a nonoblique way. There would be a concept and a problem (of this or
that, of duty, for example, it matters little for the moment), that is to say, something determinable by a knowing
('what matters is knowing whether') and that lies before you, there before you (*problema*)*, in front of you* [in
English in the original – Tr.]; from which comes the necessity to approach from the front, facing towards, in a way
which is at once direct, frontal, and head on [*capitale*]*, what is before your eyes, your mouth, your hands (and
not behind your back), there, before you, like an *object* pro-posed or posed in advance [*pro-posi ou pré-pose*]*, a
question to deal with, therefore quite as much a *subject* proposed (that is to say, surrendered, offered up: in
principle one always offers from the front, surely? in principle). Continuing the semantics of *problema,* there
would also be the question of an *ob-subject extended* like a jetty or the promontory of a headland [*cap*],[4] an
armor, or protective garment. *Problema also* means, in certain contexts, the excuse given in advance to shirk or
clear oneself of blame, but also something else that would perhaps interest us here more. By metonymy, if you

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The theme resonates from within the innermost sanctum of phenomenology throughout its aesthetic, ideological foundations. Like Bach's 'ever rising canon,' it carries us ever outward and inward to the singular point at which dialectics collapses into a tautology and we are given to think the fugal structure of memory – a "self-suspending structure" [sich schwebenden Bau] in which the phenomenon of progress is sustained by an infinite recursion.[414]

The concept of recursion or recursivity, is, in itself, recursive. It refers to all manner of self-referential structures in optics, music, language, mathematics, computing and neuroscience. In *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, Douglas Hofstadter catalogues the kind of "strange loop" that "occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started." Elaborating, he writes:

> Sometimes I use the term Tangled Hierarchy to describe a system in which a Strange Loop occurs. As we go on, the theme of Strange Loops will recur again and again. Sometimes it will be hidden, other times it will be out in the open; sometimes it will be

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will, *problema* can come to designate that which, as we say in French, serves as a 'cover' when assuming responsibility for another or passing oneself off as the other, or while speaking in the name of the other, that which one places before one or behind which one hides.

If the experience of responsibility could not be reduced to one of duty or of debt, if the 'response' of responsibility no longer appeared in a concept with respect to which we must 'know whether . if all this were to challenge the space of the *problem* and returned not only to within the pro-positional form of the response but even to within the '*question*' form of thought or language, and thus what is no longer or not yet problematic or questionable, i.e., critique, namely of the order of judicative decision, we could no longer, we *should not above all* approach in a direct, frontal *projectivey* that is, thetic or thematic way. And this 'do not do it,' this 'should not above all,' which seems to give the slip to the problem, the project, the question, the theme, the thesis, the critique, would have nothing to do with a shortcoming, a lapse in logical or demonstrative rigor, quite the contrary (always supposing chat the imperative of rigor, *stricto sensu, of* the most *strict* rigor, is sheltered from all questioning[6]). I f there was a shortcoming, and a shortcoming of justice as much as of reading, it would occur rather on the side where one would want to summon such a 'do-not-do-it,' a 'should-not-above-all-do-it,' to appear before some philosophical or moral tribunal, that is to say, before proceedings both critical and juridical. Nothing would seem more violent or naive than to call for more frontality, more thesis or more thematization, to suppose that one can find a standard here. How can one choose between the economy or the discretion of the *ellipse* with which one credits a writing, and an *a-thematicity*, an insufficiently thematic explanation of which some believe it is possible to accuse a philosopher?" Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 8–11

[414] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 118

right side up, other times it will be upside down, or backwards. "Quaerendo invenietis" is my advice to the reader.[415]

The Latin phrase, often translated as "seek and ye shall find," is remarkable in several respects. Not only is it a citation of Christ's sermon on the mount, it is also the name of a canon composed by Bach that Hofstadter refers to throughout the text in examining the "fugal" structure of the strange loop. "Quarendo invenietis" is not only sage advice, it is also an allegory of what we might find in following it. Hofstadter preemptively, metonymically, recursively substitutes the searching for the finding. But does this not, to some extent, devalue the search? If strange loops are so ubiquitous that the very exhortation to seek them out can literally be cited as an end in itself, do we really even need to seek in the first place? Is it not rather naive to speak of 'finding' a recursive structure? The answer to these questions depends on whether we decide to read 'searching' and 'finding' as a gerunds or substantives but, for Hofstadter as for de Man, it is just such a reading that 'ultimately' proves undecidable. The interminable movement of these strange, grammatical loops suspends our ability to decide whether there is anything particularly profound about them. In seeking them out, the one thing we do not find is a 'ground' against which we might rigorously delineate their contours. Regardless of whether we find ourselves marveling at the sublime recursivity of all that exists or adopting a 'seen one loop, seen them all' attitude – we end up fixating on some loops and ignoring others without much rhyme or reason. Or, perhaps, we find ourselves seeking the ῥυθμός of their λόγος, which is to say, criteria that would be both analytical *and* aesthetic in nature.

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[415] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An eternal golden braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 10

In his profound inventory of narrative recursivity, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale

asks "[h]ow deep does a recursive structure need to go before the tug of infinite regress begins

to be felt?" What, in other words, makes one discrete 'instance' of recursivity (e.g. irony,

allegory, metalepsis, parekbasis, anacolouthon, mise-en-abyme, trompe l'oeil, etc.) stand out

against the background of a particular literary or historical narrative. In identifying the recursive

phenomenon as something "felt" rather than comprehended, McHale leaves the question open

to the vagaries of aesthetic 'reception.' In a literary analysis one might attempt to delimit a

recursive structure (e.g. the phrase "quaerendo invenietis") within a larger narrative (e.g. the

Bible, Bach's autobiography, or *Gödel, Escher, Bach* itself), but Hofstadter's recursive allusion to

Bach's canon suggests the difficulty (if not the impossibility) of separating out a particular trope

of self-reference from the more general referential illusion of narrativity.'Quarendo invenietis'

is, at once, an invitation to search for recursive figures throughout the book and a figure of the

recursivity of a search that extends well beyond the volume. It is an ironic allegorical narrative

in which we find ourselves frenetically rereading fragmentary passages to the point that the

narrative illusion begins to dissipate. Perhaps this is only to say that an ironic allegory is a

narrative in which we find ourselves reading – enframed by an inceptual inscription that need

scarcely be sought – a *Kehr* without *Einkehr*.

Thematization / Facticity

We might say that the function of the theme is to re-present the sequential, narrative

movement of representation recursively. In its most general, phenomenological sense,

thematization marks the possibility of differentiating the narrative of consciousness from the

reading of the philosophical observer. To retain an awareness of a previous state of

consciousness while thinking proceeds into the future is the essence of speculative dialectics.

While Hegel rarely speaks of themes as such, he does offer a particularly incisive meditation on

the mnemotechnical function of the musical theme in the *Aesthetics*:

> music, in distinction from the other arts, lies too near the essence of that formal
> freedom of the inner life to be denied the right of turning more or less away above the
> content, above what is given. Recollection [Erinnerung] of the theme adopted is at the
> same time the artist's inner collection [Er-innerung] of *himself*, i.e. an inner conviction
> that *he* is the artist and can expatiate in the theme at will and move hither and thither in
> it.[416]

In recalling the theme, the artist recalls himself. Themes are not only gathered in memory,

memory is gathered like a theme. Themes are gathered as a kind of "standing reserve"

[Bestand], ready-to-hand, ready to leap from hand to bow to string, in such a way that the

aspect of novelty might emerge from the familiar. The mnemotechnical composition of themes

resonates with the composition of the artist himself. The musical nature of the "theme" seems

to debar it from the more serious philosophical consideration Hegel devotes to other

tautological structures (e.g. the 'laws' of chemistry or the "I am I" of self-consciousness). He

mutes its resonance by restricting it to a brief moment in the *Aesthetics*. We might then speak

of a 'resistance to themes' in the way de Man speaks of a "resistance to theory." We might also

suggest that to thematize the theme is to "tympanize" the membrane separating aesthetics

from critical philosophy.[417]

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[416] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics {Hegel}: Lectures on fine art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 897
[417] Derrida, *Margins*, x

Thematization, for Edmund Husserl, is a question of whether "*reason and that-which-is*

[can] *be separated, where reason, as knowing, determines what is.*"[418] It is that mechanism by

which phenomenology rationalizes and establishes itself as a science:

> Reason itself and its [object,] "that which is," become more and more enigmatic –
> reason as giving, of itself, meaning to the existing world and, correlatively, the world as
> existing through reason – until finally the consciously recognized world-problem of the
> deepest essential interrelation between reason and what is in general, the enigma of all
> enigmas, has to become the actual theme of inquiry.[419]

As he argues in the "Origin of Geometry,"

> the whole of the cultural present, understood as a totality, "implies" the whole of the
> cultural past in an undetermined but structurally determined generality. . . . history is
> from the start nothing other than the vital movement of the coexistence and the
> interweaving of original formations and sedimentations of meaning. . . . Only [through
> the disclosure of this a priori] can there be an a priori science extending beyond all
> historical facticities, all historical surrounding worlds, peoples, times, civilizations; only
> in this way can a science as aeterna veritas appear. Only on this fundament is based the
> secured capacity of inquiring back from the temporarily depleted self-evidence of a
> science to the primal self-evidences.[420]

In seeking a thematic ground of phenomenology, Husserl confronts the "crisis" of the sciences

and European humanity in general:

> the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences as members of the
> philosophical universe: at first a latent, then a more and more prominent crisis of
> European humanity itself in respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its
> total 'Existenz.'[421]

To thematize is to rethink the fundamental structure of egoity as a crisis of mnemotechnics. It is

only through such a *critique* that we have any hope of developing a "scientific medicine . . . for

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[418] Husserl, *Crisis*, 11
[419] Husserl, *Crisis*, 13
[420] Husserl, *Crisis*, 371
[421] Husserl, *Crisis*, 12

nations and supranational communities."[422] The failure to deliver such a prognosis allows the

unmitigated spread of the spiritual sickness of the modern world that Stiegler calls "mal-être."

For Heidegger, the question of thematization also has to do with the possibility of a

phenomenological science. It is the need to make the question of being an explicit "theme for

actual investigation" [*als thematische Frage wirklicher Untersuchung*].[423] In thematizing Being,

fundamental ontology distinguishes itself from other sciences:

> The real 'movement' of the sciences takes place when their basic concepts undergo a
> more or less radical revision which is transparent to itself. The level which a science has
> reached is determined by how far it is *capable* of a crisis in its basic concepts.[424]

To thematize Being is to prevent the question of Being from being "trivialized" as a

metaphysical object or subject. The thematic resonance or "attunement" [Stimmung] between

Being and World is the ground from which all further inquiries into subjective-objective

structures must spring. This is what Heidegger means by ontological difference – the difference

between the ontic relations that make up the "worldhood of the world" and the ontological

(i.e. conceptual, linguistic) structures by which we refer to them: Dasein, World, Anxiety, Guilt,

Death and, of course, Stimmung itself.

Fundamental ontology, as existential phenomenology, is an attempt to grasp the

phenomenon not as an object of cognition but as a "theme" – not *as* the phenomenon that

reveals itself but *on the basis of* the ontological structure of revealing-concealing as ἀ-λήθεια. It

would hardly be overstating matters to say that the 'essence' of existential phenomenology *is*

the "rhetoric of temporality." It might also be helpful to regard "apophantic discourse" as the

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[422] Husserl, *Crisis*, 270
[423] Heidegger, *Basic*, 21
[424] Heidegger, *Being*, 29

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most phenomenal speech act imaginable. The thematic aim of "hermeneutic discourse"

(ἑρμηνεύειν) would then be a kind of constative representation of apophantic truth.[425] But one

does not extract such a truth by way of passive contemplation: "The way in which Being and its

structures are encountered in the mode of phenomenon is one which must first of all be

wrested from the objects of phenomenology."[426] "Wresting" the structures of Being from the

phenomenon entails the Destruktion of the entire history of metaphysics hitherto. It is an

attempt to turn the violence of metaphysics back on itself – to rethink it from within what

Derrida calls an "economy of violence." In order to "overturn" metaphysics one must overleap

even oneself. Every attempt at thematization *must,* as a hermeneutic discourse *act*, do violence

to the rhetorical 'truth' of apophantic discourse. To the transcendence of "possibility" over

"actuality"[427] corresponds the transcendence of the "primordial" sense of the hermeneutic over

the "derivative sense," that is, "the methodology of those *humane sciences which are*

historiological in character."[428] While all dialectical, scientific modes of inquiry are

hermeneutical in nature, Heidegger seeks to distinguish them from "the primordial signification

of this word" (hermeneutic) in which the "interpretation" of being would be tantamount to

"destroying the history of metaphysics" from within.[429]

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[425] Heidegger, *Being*, 201–2
[426] Heidegger, *Being*, 61
[427] "Higher than actuality stands *possibility*" Heidegger, *Being*, 63
[428] "analytic of the existentiality of existence" Heidegger, *Being*, 62
[429] "The existential-historical source of historiology may be presented concretely by analysing the thematization which is constitutive for this science. In historiological thematizing, the main point is the cultivation of the hermeneutical Situation which – once the historically existent Dasein has made its resolution – opens itself to the repetitive disclosure of what has-been-there. The possibility and the structure of *historiological truth* are to be expounded in terms of the *authentic disclosedness* ('truth') of *historical existence.* But since the basic concepts of the historiological sciences – whether they pertain to the Objects of these sciences or to the way in which these are treated – are concepts of existence, the theory of the humane science presupposes an existential Interpretation which has as its theme the *historicality* of Dasein. Such an Interpretation is the constant goal to

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The phenomenon cannot be grasped as a 'fact' in the common sense of the term – it can only be thought thematically. The theme appears here as a sort of second-order, ontological concept. But it is, first and foremost, this phenomenon of *conceptual graspability* that must be thematized if facticity and objectivity are to be thought at all. We might attempt to clarify this point by comparing *themes* with *categories* and *topics*. According to Heidegger, the entire history of philosophy forgets that "the being of beings 'is' not itself a being" and, thus,

> All ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.[430]

Fundamental ontology is, thus, a questioning of the category, but we should take great care in attempting to determine what exactly Heidegger means when he speaks of 'categories.'

> Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the 'there is'[431]

While we might assume that the topic is more superficial, more topical than the category, this is just what Heidegger seeks to reverse in defining the "understanding" of "facticity" as the "already-thereness" of the "equipmental totality" and our "thrownness" therein :

> [Dasein] is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the "there". The expression "thrownness" is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*. The 'that it is and has to be' which is disclosed in Dasein's state-of-mind is not the same 'that-it-as' which expresses ontologico-categorially the factuality belonging to presence-at-hand. This factuality becomes accessible only if we ascertain it by looking at it. The "that-it-is" which is disclosed in Dasein's state-of-mind must rather be conceived as an existential attribute of the entity which has Being-in-the-world as its way of Being. *Facticity is not the factuality of the factum brutum of something present-at-hand, but a*

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which the researches of Wilhelm Dilthey seek to bring us closer, and which gets illumined in a more penetrating fashion by the ideas of Count Yorck von Wartenburg." Heidegger, *Being*, 449
[430] Heidegger, *Being*, 31
[431] Heidegger, *Being*, 26

characteristic of Dasein's Being – one which has been taken up into existence, even if proximally it has been thrust aside. The "that-it-is" of facticity never becomes something that we can come across by beholding it.[432]

This "facticity" does not refer to the 'facts' that get quoted and bandied about in a journalistic manner; it refers to the entire world out of which such 'facts' are manufactured – institutions, equipment, affiliations, rivalries, fears, anxieties, etc. The facticity on which understanding is based is the "worldhood of the world" itself. While many would consider such an understanding 'deep,' for Heidegger it remains topical. To speak of a 'deep' understanding of the facts is to abstract oneself from the World and make the Mind the measure of truth. For Heidegger, facticity, like truth, is *topological*.[433] It nestles into the topology of the world – a topology is closer to what Deleuze and Guattari call a "plane of immanence" than it is to the view from Google Earth.[434] It is the planarization of all that is commonly regarded as immanent. Categorization, then, is not an excavation but an immersion in the topology (i.e. phenomenology) of the world. As Heidegger writes in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

> The goal of all ontology is the theory of categories. Today it is taken to be self-evident, as it has been for a long time, that the essential characteristics of Being are categories. But at bottom, this is strange. It becomes intelligible only when we grasp that, and how, logos not only separates itself from *phusis*, but at the same time comes forth *over against phusis* as *the* standard-setting domain that becomes the place of origin for the determinations of Being.[435]

In our common understanding of the category, "the *originary* opening up of the Being of beings has been suspended, with the transformation of *phusis* into *eidos* and of *logos* into

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[432] Heidegger, *Being*, 174

[433] Cf. "topology of being" [Topologie des Seyns]" and Heidegger's claim that we need "to recognize that things themselves are places and do not merely belong to a place."Martin Heidegger, "Art and Space," in *Man and World* (1973)

[434] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 35–60

[435] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 200

katēgoria."[436] The worldhood and temporality of Being has undergone a "levelling off"

[nivelierung][437] and a "leveling down" [einebnung].[438] When science reaches a global scale, the

resolution of its 'world' must shrink. The horizons of Being-in-the-world are necessarily

economized so that hermeneutic discourse (i.e. information, data, metadata) can circulate at

near instantaneous speeds. Insofar as "Dasein is as it factically is," this kind of levelling would

not necessarily entail the loss of something that was previously "present-at-hand" [vorhanden]

– at least not from the perspective of an individual consciousness. [439] The context of relations

that makes up our 'understanding' of the worldhood of the world – facticity in the inceptual

sense – is what Heidegger refers to as "ready-to-hand" [zuhanden].

> The ready-to-hand is not grasped theoretically at all, nor is it itself the sort of thing that circumspection takes proximally as a circumspective theme. The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [zurückzuziehen] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves [die Werkzeuge selbst]. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work – that which is to be produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too. The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered.[440]

The temporality of "concernful dealings never dwell with any individual item of equipment."

Every "definite item of equipment still remains oriented towards some equipmental

context."[441] We grasp equipment within the "equipmental totality" in sight of the work to be

done. The Self must forget itself if, lost in the world of equipment, it is to be able 'actually' to go

to work and manipulate something. When equipment seems to stand out obtrusively as

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[436] Heidegger, *Introduction*, 201
[437] Heidegger, *Being*, 329, 405, 422, 424–426, 431n.xxx, 435
[438] Heidegger, *Being*, 165–66
[439] Heidegger, *Being*, 237
[440] Heidegger, *Being*, 99
[441] Heidegger, *Being*, 403

something missing or broken, it is never actually this one thing, in-itself, that stands out but, rather, the totality of which it is a part. It is only broken in light of the work to be done.[442] Heidegger distinguishes between the forgetting that constitutes the facticity of involvement and the more mundane, hermeneutic sense of forgetting. It is only missing *within* the more generalized landscape of forgetting that constitutes Dasein's worldly involvement. Things are only missing within this totality.

Heidegger contrasts the "absorption of concern in its equipmental world" with the "thematic" character of "goals" and "completion."[443] Both are structured around that "towards-which" we await, but the former does not consist in "getting something thematically into one's grasp" but, rather, in "letting-things-be-involved." It entails a specific kind of forgetting that is a fundamental structure of Dasein's temporality. It is only on this basis that it passes into the "everyday stock or content of the factically disclosed environment" [alltäglichen Bestand der faktisch erschlossenen Umwelt]. To see things thematically is to remember them only in the

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[442] "Even by the sharpest and most persevering 'perception' and 'representation' of Things, one can never discover anything like the damaging of a tool. If we are to encounter anything unmanageable, the handling must be of such a sort that it can be disturbed. But what does this signify ontologically? The making-present which awaits and retains, gets held up with regard to its absorption in relationships of involvement, and it gets held up by what will exhibit itself afterwards as damage. . . . "what is missing [Fehlendem]… is discovered circumspectively – that is to say, un-ready-to-hand, not just ready-to-hand in an unmanageable way? That which is un-ready-to-hand is discovered circumspectively when we miss it [im Vermissen]." The 'affirmation' that something is not present-at-hand, is founded upon our missing it; and both our missing it and our affirmation have their own existential presuppositions. Such missing is by no means a not-making-present [Nichtgegenwärtigen]; it is rather a deficient mode of the Present in the sense of the making-unpresent [Ungegenwärtigens] of something which one has expected or which one has always had at one's disposal." Heidegger, *Being*, 406–7

[443] "Letting things be involved makes up the existential structure of concern. But concern, as Being alongside something, belongs to the essential constitution of care; and care, in turn, is grounded in temporality. If all this is so, then the existential condition of the possibility of letting things be involved must be sought in a mode of the temporalizing of temporality. . . .
Thematical perception of Things [thematisches Wahrnehmen von Dingen] is precisely not the way equipment ready-to-hand is encountered in its 'true "in-itself" '; it is encountered rather in the inconspicuousness of what we can come across 'obviously' and 'Objectively' [»selbstverständlich« »objektiv« Vorfindlichen.]." Heidegger, *Being*, 405

context of a reified causal network in which the authentic milieu of their involvement is forgotten.[444] While the everyday 'understanding' forgets how to let beings be, authentic understanding is what lets beings be in the first place. The forgetting at work in this 'letting be' is the is the is not a deficiency or privation but, rather, the "independence" [Selbstandikeit] or "releasement" [Gelassenheit] that Heidegger associates with the more authentic, inceptual mode of being.

The difference between this vaguely Greek immersion in the thingly world and the vaguely modern experience of being adrift on a sea of facticity is not entirely clear in *Being and Time* and is something he seeks to clarify throughout his later writings on technology.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger translates the term πράγματα with *Zeug*, in an attempt to preserve something of its etymological relation to πρᾶξις. To "understand" the world as Zuhandenheit is to *grasp* it practico-pragmatically as opposed to *seeing* it theoretically (as Vorhandenheit). While Macquarrie and Robinson translate 'Zeug' as "tools" or "equipment," it is more often translated as "things" or "stuff." It is not too difficult to grasp what Heidegger is getting at when he writes that there is "no such thing as 'an equipment,'" but the notion that there is 'no such thing as a thing' is far more paradoxical. This is, however, almost exactly what Heidegger will later argue in "Das Ding." In the meditation on the "fourfold" (or "the single fold of the four" [die Einfalt der Vier]"), lies the essence or essencing [Wesen] of the "thing" [das

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[444] "Not reckoning with" something, is a mode of "taking into one's reckoning" that which one cannot cling to. That which one has "not reckoned with" does not get forgotten; it gets retained, so that in its very unsuitability it remains ready-to-hand.[37] That which is ready-to-hand in this manner belongs to the everyday stock or content of the factically disclosed environment." [Das Nichtrechnen mit… ist ein Modus des Rechnungtragens dem gegenüber, woran man sich nicht halten kann. Es wird nicht vergessen, sondern behalten, so daß es gerade in seiner Ungeeignetheit zuhanden bleibt. Dergleichen Zuhande-nes gehört zum alltäglichen Bestand der faktisch erschlossenen Umwelt.] Heidegger, *Being*, 407

Ding].[445] The fourfold is comprised of an inceptually tropological relationship between "heaven"

and "earth," "divinities" and "mortals." What might, at first seem quaintly vitalistic is, in fact,

profoundly allegorical. The complex system of chiastic exchanges that constitute the fourfold

may well be regarded as *the* crux of Heidegger's late thinking. However similar das Zeug and

das Ding may be, it is only in the latter that it becomes possible to think the difference between

the "earthly" "World" [Welt] and the heavenly "Realm" [Reich], which is to say, mortal and

immortal temporality. The question is whether the various "in-order-to" [um-zu] relations

comprising the environment [Umwelt] and, thus, the World [Welt], in *Being and Time*, retain a

pseudo-anthropomorphic or pseudo-zoomorphic orientation.[446] Even though Dasein is not

explicitly a human being it is, nevertheless, a Being-toward-Death, which means that the

ontological structure of the World is oriented around an entity that is at least mortal, regardless

of whether and to what extent this entity is 'conscious' of its mortality or not. Even if we posit a

living entity completely unselfconscious of its own death, we might still insist upon the

legitimacy of Being-toward-Death as a fundamental ontological structure insofar as the

evolutionary history of the species exhibits a tendency toward self-preservation and, thus,

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[445] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 11ff.

[446] "Taken strictly, there 'is' no such thing as an equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is. Equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to...' ["etwas um-zu..."]. A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.

In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something. Only in the analyses which are to follow can the phenomenon which this term 'assignment' indicates be made visible in its ontological genesis. Provisionally, it is enough to take a look phenomenally at a manifold of such assignments. Equipment – in accordance with its equipmentality – always is *in terms of* [*aus*] its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These 'Things' never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of *realia* and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us (though not as something taken as a theme) is the room; and we encounter it not as something 'between four walls' in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing. Out of this the 'arrangement' emerges, and it is in this that any 'individual' item of equipment shows itself. *Before* it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered." Heidegger, *Being*, 97–98

toward death.[447] What is excluded from the equipmental totality of the World in *Being and Time*, then, is the possibility of an inorganic or technical temporality beyond the reach of Dasein.

Thematization / Blindness

In more public engagements, Heidegger will continue to preach the dogma of fundamental ontology. In more intimate gatherings, however, cloistered within the "secrecy" of the seminar, he will revise and even reverse some of its most essential theses. In the 1969 Le Thor seminar, he states that the "understanding of being" and the "renewal of language" proposed in *Being and Time* "lacks assurance" because there are too many awkwardly preserved metaphysical expressions and infelicitous "new coinings."[448] He reflects that it is "through Hölderlin [that] he came to understand how useless it is to coin new words" and that "only after *Being and Time* was the necessity of a return to the essential simplicity of language clear to him."[449] It is also with Hölderlin that the *Auseinandersetzung* between de Man and Heidegger begins and ends. A friend of de Man's once referred to him as "Hölderlin in America."[450] Despite the irony of this epithet, de Man's thinking shares with Heidegger's a devotion to this "poet of poets." He remarks how "Hölderlin is the only one whom Heidegger cites as a believer cites Holy Writ."[451] Remarking on this remark, Derrida adds that

> for Paul de Man, as for Heidegger, the figure of Hölderlin retains a sort of sacred singularity . . . Like a categorical imperative of reading, Hölderlin's voice commands from

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[447] The phrase 'unselfconscious of its own death' may even be regarded as a tautology since it is Death that makes the Self a self in the first place (as Heidegger, Hegel and many others would attest).

[448] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 51

[449] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 51

[450] Derrida, *Memoires*, 9-10, 128, 246; Derrida, *Alibi*, 174–75

[451] Man, *Blindness*, 250

both Heidegger and de Man a sort of absolute respect, although not necessarily a movement of identification.[452]

De Man argues that even though "Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin" fundamentally "reverse" Hölderlin's thought, they manage, in spite of, or, perhaps, *because of* this reversal to "speak of the same thing."[453] This aligns with de Man's central 'thesis' of *Blindness and Insight* – that blindness stands in *direct* (and not inverse) proportion to the strength of the reading. When de Man writes, in "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," for instance, of "an excess of rigor," on the part of the philosopher, we have yet another version of a blinded insight.[454] This is quite close to Harold Bloom's argument about "misprision" – that we are all misreaders of Shakespeare and that the best we can hope for is to be a "strong" misreader and not a "weak" one.[455] It is also what Heidegger suggests when he asks, in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," whether

> we [can] still believe that Hölderlin is trapped in an empty and excessive self-contemplation owing to the lack of worldly content? Or do we recognize that this poet, because of an excess of impetus, poetically thinks through to the ground and center of being.[456]

We can trace this lineage all the way back to Hölderlin himself when he writes, in the "Ground of Empedocles," of an "excess of inwardness" [Übermaß der Innigkeit].[457] What we might regard as de Man's "contribution" [Beiträge] to this tradition of blinded insight is a more rigorous (I dare say "authentic") model of *literary* history. While de Man does not attempt to distill from him Hölderlin the essence of poetry or position him as a latter-day Parmenides he

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[452] Derrida, *Memoires*, 7
[453] Man, *Blindness*, 255
[454] Man, *Aesthetic*, 53–54
[455] Bloom, *Anxiety*
[456] Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Amherst, N.Y: Humanity Books, 2000), 64
[457] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 50

also does not simply reject or repress the "excessive" rigor of Heidegger's readings. Instead, he

underscores how "their great merit remains to have brought out precisely the central 'concern'

of Hölderlin' s work; and in this, they surpass other studies."[458]

In "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," Heidegger elucidates Hölderlin's insight into "the

fourfold" [das Geviert] along the lines he has been pursuing in the Bremen lectures, "Insight

into that which Is" [Einblick in das was Ist]. In the preface to the Stuttgart lecture he explains

that he is

> attempt[ing] to transform our accustomed way of representing things into an
> unaccustomed, because simple, thinking experience. (The transformation into the
> thinking experience of the center of the infinite relation – out of the collected
> framework [Gestell] as the self-dissimulating event [Ereignis] of the fourfold [das
> Geviert])[459]

While it would be naïve to speak of an 'origin' of this fourfold, it is unquestionably 'rooted' in

the inceptual soil of Hölderlin's Fall 1802 letter to Böhlendorff, which Heidegger elucidates as

follows

> "That all holy places of the earth are together around one place . . . is now my joy."
> Through the place in which the poet now dwells, the earth becomes for him earth in a
> new way. The earth, as the structure of the heavenly ones, shelters and supports the
> holy, the sphere of the god. The earth is earth only as the earth of heaven; the heaven is
> heaven only insofar as it acts downward upon the earth. The heavens manifestations,
> from the highest, the lightning flash, to the "other forms," are mentioned in the
> preceding sentences of the letter. *Blitz* [lightning-flash] is the same word as *Blick*
> [glance]. In the glance, there is existence [Dasein]*.* That is why the thunderstorm is
> called "the existence of God" [Daseyn Gottes]*.* For the quiet-joyous mood of the poet,
> earth and heaven and the gods concealed within the holy, are all present in the whole of
> primordially rising nature. Nature appears to him in a special light.

> "And the philosophical light around my window is now my joy." This light is that
> brightness which, in the capacity which permits reflecting, in the power of reflection,
> endows all that comes to presence with the brilliance of its presence. What is special

[458] Man, *Blindness*, 255
[459] Heidegger, *Elucidations*, 176

about this light, that it is "philosophical," arises out of Greece, as its name φιλοσοφία discloses. There the truth of being originally opened itself up as the shining revelation of what comes to presence. There truth was beauty itself.[460]

Such passages can easily leave the critic dumbstruck or, better, "lightstruck."[461] To offer but a few remarks, we might begin with the archaic form of "Beyng" [Seyn] that Heidegger explores outside the purview of his published works in various notebooks and seminars. In the difference between Being and Beyng, Dasein and Daseyn, there appears to be an attempt to rethink ontological difference and world-historiality in terms of the "epochality" of what Heidegger calls "the history of Beyng" [Geschichte des Seyns][462] The tautological resonance of the fourfold is similar to the kind of "gathering" [versammlung] that constitutes the phenomenological horizon of the "clearing" [lichtung] in *Being and Time*, but it also evinces a more ephemeral kind of light. The *Blitz* of the lightening flash is less susceptible to the "heliotropism" or "white mythology" to which some of Heidegger's other meditations on phenomenology seem to succumb. The pun on *Blick* and *Blitz*, moreover, works to collapse the metaphysical boundary between the poet and his world together with the boundary between the mortality and immortality of his word. The humanity and inhumanity of the technopoetic utterance are gathered up into the world's worlding. Thus understood, the flash of insight is not something that can be *grounded* in any dialectical system. It may even be regarded as *anti*philosophical insofar as it overexposes the phenomenological aperture and blurs the horizon of heaven and earth upon which all rational, architectonic grounding depends. What the *Einblick* illuminates is not so much the "house of being" as its uncanny foundation. To call it a "philosophical light" is

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[460] Heidegger, *Elucidations*, 186
[461] Warminski, *Ideology*, 79ff.
[462] Heidegger, *Event*, 237ff.

to attempt to name that to which all philosophers, especially the most insightful, must, necessarily, remain blind.

Does the bolt of this *Einblick* not span the abyss between de Man's thinking of the "material event" and the "event of appropriation"? Aside from a furtive allusion to Heidegger's lectures in the title of his essay "Heaven and Earth in Wordsworth and Hölderlin" [1965], de Man never directly cites the texts in which Heidegger speaks of the fourfold, but I believe that it is in these most unreadable reaches of the Heideggerian oeuvre that we can make out a sort of "dark precursor" to his theory of inscription and the material event.[463] Like the *Augenschein* or *Augenblick* of which Kant writes in the *Third Critique*, the *Einblick* into the fourfold exemplifies the kind of "material vision" which, for de Man, offers the most critical insight into a materially inscribed world.[464] We may even say that Hölderlin *is* this flash and that those who, like de Man or Heidegger, seem most touched by it are somehow twinned to the same destiny, orbiting round the same material inscription regardless of whether they actually cite one another's insights or not. This is, admittedly, too poetic to be true, but the point is that the gravity of the Hölderlinian inscription can never be underestimated in de Man, Heidegger and, as I would argue, the abyss that only appears to separate them. For, as Heidegger argues, the abyss in question is none other than that of language – an abyss in which each of the three are very much at home.

Neither the Heidegger of *Being and Time* nor the de Man of the "Rhetoric of Temporality" have really begun to think the linguistic abyss as an explicitly mnemotechnical

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[463] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London, New York: Continuum, 2001), 119
[464] Man, *Aesthetic*, 80

substrate, but they begin to do so rather shortly after, as Gestell and as inscription, respectively. In neither case is this 'turn' to mnemotechnics to be regarded as a radical departure. We might say that the mnemotechnical question 'follows' from the critical energy of these earlier insights, but we must quickly add that what's at stake here is precisely what it means for one text to 'follow' another.

The possibility of "transcendence" of which de Man speaks in some of his earlier essays is not to be confused with the movement of sublation. He is using it more in the manner of Heidegger when he writes that "being is *transcendens*, pure and simple."[465] He means that it is in the very nature of Rhetoric, like Being, to be beyond, outside, beside *itself* – ek-static, ex-temporaneous, ex-orbitant – not beyond worldly, temporal *things* in a position of priority or superiority. The authentic experience of transcendence is not the experience of divine presence but, rather, of a nothingness that might be *called* 'sublime,' but less in the manner of Longinus than of Kant (as read by de Man). If de Man speaks less frequently of "authenticity" it has more to do with the fact that it fails to translate *Eigentlichkeit*. In critiquing this previous formulation of irony in his lecture on "The Concept of Irony," de Man is not suggesting that authentic temporality, as it is formulated by Heidegger, is in any way dialectical. Rather, he is critiquing his own failure to properly distinguish the latter from dialectics. He is acknowledging the extent to which it was misleading to speak of authentic temporality as an "experience," especially a "negative" one. He explicitly retracts the dialectical model of specular reflection that he flirted with in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," but he does not say anything about the "authentic experience of temporality" of which he writes in the earlier essay:

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[465] Heidegger, *Being*, 62

> Both [allegory and irony] are determined by an authentic experience of temporality which, seen from the point of view of the self engaged in the world, is a negative one. The dialectical play between the two modes, as well as their common interplay with mystified forms of language (such as symbolic or mimetic representation), which it is not in their power to eradicate, make up what is called literary history.[466]

Both uses of the possessive pronoun ("their") work to disjoin allegory and irony from all manner of play. Allegory and irony, "linked in their common discovery of a truly temporal predicament," *would each* seek to disjoin *itself* from *both* the "common interplay with mystified forms" *and* the "dialectical play" that takes place between them but, lacking the "power to eradicate" either, they (i.e. the two forms of play) "make up" (i.e. generate) "what is called literary history." To be "linked" in the "discovery" of a "predicament" is in no way to be joined dialectically through a determinate negation. And yet, allegory and irony only take place historically in their con-fusion – in the supremely seductive possibility of aesthetic reunification suggested by the "allegory of irony." When we 'read' the phrase "allegory of irony," however, we realize that while the genitive ("of") represents the possibility of reciprocity or conciliation, it *inscribes* something else entirely – the very impossibility of what it claims to represent. We might say that allegory and irony generate history as the "jointure of the dis-joint" [Un-Fug]. Perhaps this is why de Man, in the final chapter of *Allegories of Reading*, drops the "of" and writes "ironic allegory."

Distinguishing the transcendence of "authentic" and "rhetorical" temporalities proves as difficult as distinguishing ontological and semiological difference. For Heidegger and de Man, the possibility of transcendence is inexorably bound up with the thinking of a certain nihilism. This is what I have been calling 'good' nihilism (and not without irony, of course). To think

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[466] Man, *Blindness*, 226

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nihilistically, for Heidegger as for de Man, is the task of thinking the abyss of language. What separates this from garden-variety nihilism is the insistence that 'we' can only really be undone linguistically. The abyss is no *mere* figure of speech to which we might pay homage while drawing up the tenets of the next aesthetic ideology. It is, rather, a linguistic 'structure' – a metaleptical trope – a mise-en-abyme.

Thematization / Tautology

Poised between the existential phenomenology of *Being and Time* and the "phenomenology of the inapparent," the lectures on the *Basic Principles of Thinking* [*Grundsätze des Denken*] provide a crucial point of articulation – a "crossroads" [Wegkreuzung] in which Heidegger's thinking of being, logic, dialectics, materialism, history, technology and language converge and open onto an abyss.[467] The "path" he follows through these lectures leaves us wondering if we are following anything at all – whether it is not the path that trails after us, inscribing what we only imagined lying before us, leading the way.

The "abyss" [Abgrund] is the ungrounding of all metaphysical grounds. It stands in lieu of all quantifiable "distance" [Abstand]. It is only in the abyss that we can begin to think distance without measure [Maßstab] and dwell within the "neighborhood" [Nähe] of "nearness" [Nähe] as such. This "essential realm" [Wesenbereich] to which "thinking-being" [Wesen] is called "from the outset" [von Hause] is what Heidegger, in the "Letter on Humanism," first names the "house of being."[468] To think *von Hause* is to spring selfhood from the metaphysical closure of 'the self' – to let selfhood (re)sound (in) the abyss.

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[467] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 149
[468] Heidegger, *Basic*, 217

thinking must properly reach [reichen] into the abyss [Abgrund] in order to be able to release the essential realm [Wesensbereich] for the ground and our relation to it. If we attend to this more carefully, then the statement that thinking as founding would have an essential relation to the abyss loses its nonsensical character.

At the abyss, thinking finds no more ground. It falls into the bottomless [Bodenlose], where nothing bears [trägt] any longer. But must thinking necessarily be borne? Apparently so, since thinking is no self-mastering activity encapsulated in itself nor a self-propelled toy [kein für sich ablaufendes Spielwerk ist]. Thinking remains from the outset [von Hause] referred to what is to be thought; it is called by this [geheißen].[469]

In the abyss, language sets itself apart from the "activity of speech organs" [Betätigung der Sprechwerkzeuge]. The tautological intransitivity of Language mirrors the unreachability [Unerreichbarkeit] of the abyssal realm [Bereich].

Language speaks [Die Sprache spricht]. At first, this sounds like a tautology, outside of which one cannot conceive how language is supposed to speak, since indeed it itself is not equipped with speech organs. What proffers itself as a tautology, however, i.e., that language speaks, is the indication that the essence of language itself is playful, though it thereby does not get tangled up in itself, but releases itself into the free space of that inceptual freedom that is determined by itself alone [Was sich wie eine Tautologie ausnimmt, die Sprache spricht, ist jedoch der Hinweis darauf, daß das Sprachwesen in sich selber spielt, dadurch freilich nicht sich in sich verstrickt, sondern sich freigibt in das allein durch es selbst bestimmte Freie der anfänglichen Freiheit.][470]

The Event of exappropriation and the Enframing of technoscience are suspended most precariously in this apophantic, hypogrammatical abyss. It is here that Heidegger poses the question of whether what is essentially tautological can even be posited on a pro*positional,* hypothetical 'ground' or whether this kind of "belonging-together" is not better heard than grasped. The moment we try to grasp it as a 'concept' [Begriff], we lapse back into the merely objective 'stance' for which it functions as a 'ground' in the more naïve, metaphysical sense. The moment he utters the threefold reciprocal, tautological formulation, *thinking-being-*

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[469] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 145
[470] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 159

language, Heidegger immediately points out its inability to function as a theme: "there appears

at a stroke the whole quandary our enterprise has gotten itself into. For obviously *thinking,*

being, and *language* cannot be placed together like three things."[471] But this does not mean

that the essence of tautology is otherworldly or that the realm in which it resides is

unthinkable. It means that *essential tautology transforms logic essentially*.

While metaphysical thinking takes the principles of identity, (non) contradiction and the

excluded middle axiomatically, it is haunted by their "hidden contrariety" :

> Every time, the laws of thinking already stand behind us, behind our back, so to speak,
> and guide every step of our reflections concerning them. At first glance, this reference is
> illuminating. But with a single stroke it appears to undermine every attempt to
> appropriately consider the laws of thinking.[472]

The language by which identity is expressed is not identical to itself. Identity both resists and

depends on the grammatical and typographical substrate in which it is inscribed. To insist that

essence is tautological is to transform the logical ground on which our understanding of

sameness is based.

> Thinking is never only "logical" in that it follows the laws of thought, rather there are
> these laws as basic principles because thinking is from the outset "logical," i.e., is
> ground-positing [Grund-setzend] and so is referred to the ground, i.e., to the Λόγος as
> the being of beings.[473]

Even in the most formulaic statement of the principle of identity (A = A), identity *within* the one

is readily confused with identity *between* the two (i.e. equivalence, likeness, mimesis, etc.). To

hear this difference, one must attend to the way identity is spoken in the *Sophist*:

> "Now it is indeed the case for you that each of the two is another, but itself the same as
> itself."

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[471] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 155
[472] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 78
[473] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 141

[Οὐκοῦν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον τοῖν μὲν δυοῖν ἕτερόν ἐστιν, αὐτὸ δ' ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν.]

Plato says not merely ἕκαστον αὐτὸ ταὐτόν "each itself the same" but αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν, "each itself *to itself* the same.[474]

The dative in Greek expresses the difference between selfsameness and likeness: between "A is

A" and "A *is* A." Not only do languages speak differently about the same thing, they remain

confused as to the difference between sameness and identity. Heidegger also discerns this

tautological resonance in the Visitor's question:

> Aren't thought and speech the same, except that what we call thought is speech that occurs without the voice, inside the soul in conversation with itself?[475]
>
> [Οὐκοῦν διάνοια μὲν καὶ λόγος ταὐτόν: πλὴν ὁ μὲν ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς αὐτὴν διάλογος ἄνευ φωνῆς γιγνόμενος τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἡμῖν ἐπωνομάσθη, διάνοια]

The essential, tautological structure of language takes the form of a "conversation," "dialogue"

[Gespräch] and "soliloquy" [Selbstgespräch]. In essence, "Being belongs with thinking in the

same [and] is defined by an identity as a characteristic of identity."

> Logic is not only the doctrine of thinking. Logic is not only the site for the primordial conflict between thinking and being. Logic is – now thought from λόγος as saying and this experienced as the essential resonance of language – logic is the soliloquy [Selbstgespräch] of language with its essence.
>
> The abyss into which thinking leaps is the essence of language. This essence conceals itself in the essence of saying. Through its leaping, thinking alters itself, insofar as it more inceptually enters into its essence as saying. At the same time as this, the talk of "essence" receives a correspondingly transformed sense.[476]

Language is an inceptual "saying" [Sagen, Sagan] that is also a hinting, showing, reaching and a

singing.[477] It is "not merely the use of signs, but rather [what] first makes possible the

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[474] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 109
[475] Plato, *Plato*, 287 (263e)
[476] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 153–54
[477] "Language speaks as pronouncement [Spruch], as appeal [Zuspruch], and as claim [Anspruch]. Language is so playful that speaking, as in this case, means the same as saying. Otherwise linguistic doctrine teaches something

institution and use of signs."[478] The poetic epode is "legendary" [Sagenhaften] because it partakes of a more all-encompassing poiesis that also speaks by way of the "gestural" and the wordless."[479] In the saga of the *Odyssey*, Heidegger finds a "gentle power" [sanfte Gewalt] that he associates with the *Grundform des Denkens*. Like his elucidations of Hölderlin, his translations of Homer exhibit the blinded insight of a strong misreading. Within the martial law and economy of violence that characterizes the history of translation, however, Heidegger's

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else in explaining that the verbs "to speak" and "to talk" can be used absolutely [intransitively], in distinction from the verb "to say." In saying there constantly lies a relation to something to be said and to what is said. Saying is relative to that [transitive]. If we consider more closely the sense of the verbs "to speak," "to talk," "to say," then we must surely emphasize against linguistic doctrine that ever only in saying does the whole essence of language come to appearance, and in this sense absolutely so. Only externally, grammatically represented, are speaking and talking used absolutely [intransitively], i.e., here: separated and cut off from the whole essence of language." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 159

[478] "We humans can only say insofar as we are already accorded, promised, to the essence of language as saying. Indeed what does "saying" authentically mean? We attain a first answer by listening to what the Greek λέγειν and λόγος say: appearing – and letting appear – conjuring. The same is meant by our word *sagan;* it means to show, to point, to see – and to let be perceived. Saying is a disclosive-concealing showing and pointing, a so-defined extending toward . . . , and a reaching back and forth. Saying is the realm [*Be-reich*] of this hinting-showing reaching [Sagen ist das entbergend-verbergende Zeigen und Weisen, das so bestimmte Dar-reichen zu . . . und hin- und her-Reichen. Die Sage ist der Be-reich dieses winkend-zeigenden Reichens..].

Showing [Zeigen], according to its original essence, precisely does not have need of signs, i.e., showing is not merely the use of signs [Zeichen], but rather showing as letting appear first makes possible the institution and use of signs [Zeigen ist nicht nur das Benützen von Zeichen, sondern das Zeigen als Erscheinenlassen ermöglicht erst Stiftung und Nutzung von Zeichen]. Only because language is in its essence saying, a showing in the original sense, are there vocal signs and written signs for talking and speaking. Only because language is in its essence saying and as such shows, can this showing become a letting be seen of views and points of view, which we name images and which writing evokes not only as phonetic writing, but also as pictographic writing.

Only through an adequate discussion of saying can we understand the original λόγος-character of thinking. Thinking is in its essence saying. Poetizing is singing. Every singing is a saying, but not every saying a singing. [Das Denken ist im Wesen das Sagen. Das Dichten ist das Singen. Jedes Singen ist ein Sagen, aber nicht jedes Sagen ist Singen." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 160–61

[479] "Gestural bearing is determined by saying and is thereby constantly the resonance of restraint. The gestural first attunes all movements. The nonessence of the gesture is the gesticulation. Pure gestures are speechless, but they are not wordless [Die reinen Gebärden sind sprachlos, aber sie nicht nicht wortlos].. They are so little this that they constantly are achieved in terms of and through such a saying. The nonspeaking essence of language resonates in saying. Saying constantly says something and only thereby from time to time also says nothing. Saying something is invariably and simultaneously a saying to a hearing. Language speaks from out of a saying [Aus dem Sagen spricht die Sprache]. The essence of language is the saying [*die Sage*]. We use this word "saying" now – like many words of our language – mostly in a disparaging sense: saying as mere saying, something not confirmed and thereby unbelievable. Saying is not so meant here, if this word is to hint at the essence of language. It is meant more in the sense of legend, which as fable [*Mär*] is connected with the fairy tale [*Märchen*]. The essence of language is presumably the genuinely fabulous [*Märchenhafte*]." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 160

translation might be regarded as an attempt to free the essence of language so that it might

speak for itself. He galvanizes the "tongue" [φωνή, γλῶσσα, *lingua*] of the poet so that it might

resist

> the metalinguistic treatment of language that is now coming to predominance in the Anglo- Saxon countries, the production of "metalanguages," is surely not the liberation from linguistics, but rather its perfect reification, just as metaphysics is the perfection of physics.[480]

Still, the aestheticism that pervades Heidegger's account of "the entire fullness and breadth

that blossomed in the Greek experience of the world" leaves us to wonder whether the Greeks

ever encountered the abyss of language or whether they simply beheld the world,

apophantically, by the manifold light of the logos.[481] For Heidegger, what is "Greek" is what

opens and suspends time.

> the word, "Greek" designates neither an ethnic nor national, neither a cultural nor an anthropological characteristic. What is Greek is that dawn of destiny as which being itself lights itself up in beings and lays claim to an essence of humanity, a humanity which, as destined, receives its historical path, a path sometimes preserved in, sometimes released from, but never separated from being. . . . Chronological distance and causal sequence belong to historiography, but not to history. When we are historical we are at neither a large nor a small distance from the Greek. But we are in errancy toward them. . . . Out of the *epochē* of being comes the epochal essence of its destining in which authentic world-history lies. Each time that being keeps to itself in its destiny, suddenly and unexpectedly, world happens. Every epoch of world-history is an epoch of errancy. The epochal essence of being belongs to the concealed temporal character of being and indicates the essence of "time" thought from within being. What one may otherwise represent by this term is only the vacuity of the appearance of time derived from beings thought of as objects.[482]

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[480] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 153 cf. Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht IV: Heidegger's Ear, Philopolemology," in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)

[481] "If we were once capable of thinking what is named in the word "presence" according to the entire fullness and breadth that blossomed in the Greek experience of the world, then and only then would we be permitted to say instead of presence also: *being.* Otherwise – i.e. without the heartful, fulfilled, and thoroughly considered commemoration of the destiny of being from the Greek world – the word "being" remains an empty sound, a deaf nut [eine taube Nuß], or the name of a confused representation." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 139

[482] Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 253–54

The epochality of Greek history "invests being with errancy" without which "there would be no connection from destiny to destiny, no history." Errancy is the epochality of truth as translation – what Derrida would call its "destinerrancy."[483] In transporting ourselves back to the Greeks we translate ourselves historically. The errancy of translation is our being-historical.

> Every attempt at a "literal" translation of such foundational words as "truth," "Being," "semblance," etc. immediately arrives within the radius of an intention reaching essentially beyond the clever fabrication of literally matched words. We could appreciate this sooner and in a more serious way if we reflected on what it is to "translate." At first we conceive of this process in an external and technico-philological way. It is said that "translating" is the transposing of one language into another, of the foreign language into the mother tongue or vice versa. What we fail to recognize, however, is that we are also already constantly translating our own language, our native tongue, into its genuine word. To speak and to say is in itself a translation, the essence of which can by no means be divided without remainder into those situations where the translating and translated words belong to different languages. In every dialogue and in every soliloquy an original translating holds sway [In jedem Gespräch und Selbstgespräch waltet ein ursprüngliches übersetze]. . . .
>
> So-called translation and paraphrase are always subsequent and follow upon the transporting of our whole being into the realm of a transformed truth. Only if we are already appropriated by this transporting are we in the care of the word. Only on the basis of a respect for language grounded in this way can we assume the generally lighter and more limited task of translating a foreign word into our own language.
>
> But the more difficult task is always the translation of one's own language into its ownmost word.[484]

When heard by the tin ear of dialectics, the history of translation cannot be resolved into its essential movements [Sätze]. In failing to mediate and sublate the unity of what is essentially tautological, dialectics ends up with a "bland emptiness of a relationless monotony." It is important to realize, however, that the inceptual tautology and dialectical monotony cannot be

[483] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 2005), 216–17
[484] Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 12–13

opposed because opposition remains fundamentally dialectical. The monotony of dialectics has

always already taken root in this utopian soil of the Greeks.

> The incident whereby our Western-European thinking has achieved the dimension of
> dialectic prefigured for it since Plato is a world-historical one. It comes to the humans of
> this age everywhere and in various forms as the present.[485]

> for this relationship within the same to finally come to the fore – the relationship
> reigning in identity, already resounding from early on, decided and cast *as* a mediation
> within itself – indeed, for even an accommodation to be found for this shining forth of
> mediation within identity, Western thinking required more than two thousand years.[486]

> All thinking, in some way, even if as yet undefined, is a thinking of itself and is
> nevertheless no mere self-mirroring. In accordance with the return relation to itself that
> is characteristic of it, thinking can revolve around itself, at times in a lofty sense, at
> times in a superficial one; ultimately, in the grand style, thinking itself can even draw the
> circle along which it revolves around itself in its orbiting.

> Along a long and convoluted path, Western-European thinking finally and wittingly
> reached the ambit of light formed by it and its reflection-character. This light-dimension
> is speculative dialectics that, after the precedent of Kant, develops itself into a system in
> the thinking of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The system to be contemplated here would
> remain misunderstood were we to represent it as merely a woven net of concepts
> thrown over actuality. As "the thought" [der Gedanke] the system is being itself,
> dissolving all beings in itself and thus sketching out the preliminary form of what now
> comes to the fore as the essence of the technological world.[487]

The world-historical 'event' in which the specular circularity of 'remembrance' [Erinnerung]

condenses into the reified 'memory' [Gedächtnis] of *der Gedanke* is what de Man would call a

"material event" or "inscription." As an inscription, speculative dialectics cannot simply be

regarded as a "worldview." Nor can it be "refuted" by a dialectical materialism that is "only a

slightly modified style of the same thinking."[488] The dialectical inscription, properly conceived,

is what directs the world "from afar," which is to say, from an allegorical distance that no longer

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[485] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 81
[486] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 109
[487] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 131–32
[488] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 84

falls within the horizons of the globalized world because it is that which circumscribes these

horizons as such. As technoscience, speculative dialectic becomes "world reality."

> whether out in the open or hidden, conceived or caricatured, ossified or renovated[,] the power of reflective-dialectical thinking . . . though originally European, has multifariously spread across the entire earth.[489]

The illumination of speculative dialectics, realized in the ever-present danger of an atomic blast,

is so bright that it threatens to swallow up the "illuminated clearing" [Lichtung] of truth just as

"monotony" threatens to drown out the "tonic pitch" [Grundton] of tautology. When the

essential tautology is leveled off into the purely calculative thinking that now predominates, we

remain tone deaf to the difference that pervades the various philosophies of the world. The

question is how to hear the authentic claim [Anspruch] of history in its "tonic pitch"

[Grundton].[490]

> This question becomes all the more burning as European thinking also threatens to become planetary, in that the contemporary Indians, Chinese, and Japanese in many cases report their experiences to us only in our European way of thinking. Thus from there and from here everything is stirred up in a gigantic mishmash wherein it is no longer discernible whether or not the ancient Indians were English empiricists and Lao Tzu a Kantian.[491]

While Heidegger tends to think the essence of language as an inceptually Greek Event, is it not

also possible to approach it as a machination of technoscientific enframing?[492] In his "Letter on

Humanism," Heidegger speaks of the "turning" [Kehre] that "abandons subjectivity" as an

"other thinking."[493] At the conclusion of the *Grundsatze*, he discerns this "other thinking" in

Novalis' "Monologue" :

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[489] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 133
[490] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 110
[491] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 137
[492] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 161
[493] Heidegger, *Basic*, 231

Much remains dark and confusing in this monologue of λόγος, especially since he thinks in another direction and speaks in another language than what is attempted in these lectures [er nach einer anderen Richtung denkt und in einer anderen Sprache spricht als die in diesen Vorträgen versuchte][494]

Novalis lets the essence of technology and tautology resonate together – a leap that Heidegger,

even in these relatively late lectures – seems unwilling to take:

If one could only make people understand that it is the same with language as with mathematical formulae. These constitute a world of their own. They play only with themselves, express nothing but their own marvelous nature, and just for this reason they are so expressive – just for this reason the strange play of relations between things is mirrored in them. Only through their freedom are they elements of nature and only in their free movements does the world-soul manifest itself in them and make them a sensitive measure and ground plan of things.[495]

Is this merely an analogy or is Novalis suggesting that there is an inherently formal logic at the

heart of all that appears playful in language – that the "ground plan of things" might, at bottom,

be mathematical and formulaic?

A look to this, however, charges our thinking with once again examining whether the states of affairs named by the words "relationship," "realm," "saying," "event of appropriation" are still to be represented by concepts. A meditation is roused as to whether a thinking is not required whose language would correspond to the essence of the saying and the saying of essence and therefore would not be able to make use of modified metaphysical terminology. This other thinking must listen back into the unspent vocabulary of our language wherein an unused saying waits in order to help the thinking of what is unthought come into words. Yet this vocabulary by itself can never take away from thinking the risk of its path.

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[494] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 164

[495] "Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln sei. - Sie machen eine Welt für sich aus - sie spielennur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus, und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll - eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnisspiel der Dinge.Nur durch i hre Freiheit sind sie Glieder der Natur, und nur in ihren freien Bewegungen äußert sich die Weltseele und macht sie zu einem zarten Maßstab und Grundriß der Dinge" Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 163

Thinking, however, does not deliver itself over to language, but situates the essence of language in the essential provenance of saying, that relationship within which we are included.[496]

In letting Novalis' "other thinking" resound throughout these final pages Heidegger leaves open the possibility of a thinking that would be both tautological and allegorical, both allegorical and algorithmic – "tautegorical" as Lyotard and Derrida might say[497] or "allegorithmic," to cite Alexander Galloway.[498]

> The abyss of thinking is the essence of language. Its essence is the saying. The saying is the realm of the hinting-showing-reaching. The realm *is* as the location of the belonging together of thinking and being – when we say this, it appears as though we only followed a chain of utterances. What so appears and can even be taken exclusively in this way every time is nevertheless simultaneously a hint into a saying that encircles itself and thereby directly remains open, just like a ring, which as a ring is indeed closed, but precisely as closed preserves all around a light and free space wherein perhaps something unsaid might make an address without showing itself.[499]

In these concluding remarks Heidegger refers subtly to the tautological (ge)ringen of "Das Ding." How does it differentiate itself within the monotony of history? To what extent does it circumscribe the thinking of tautology, Monolog, Selbstgestprache? These questions are subtle

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[496] "Der Hinblick darauf bringt jedoch unser Denken vor den Anspruch, einmal zu prüfen, ob die in den Worten Verhältnis, Bereich, Sage, Ereignis genannten Sachverhalte noch durch Begriffe vorzustellen sind. Die Besinnung erwacht, ob nicht ein Denken verlangt ist, dessen Sprache dem Wesen der Sage und der Sage des Wesens entspricht und darum auch keine abgewandelte Terminologie der Metaphysik benützen kann. Dieses andere Denken muß in den unverbrauchten Wortschatz unserer Sprache zurückhören, darin ein ungebrauchtes Sagen wartet, um dem Denken des Ungedachten ins Wort zu helfen. Niemals j edoch kann dieser Wortschatz von sich aus dem Denken schon das Wagnis seines Weges abnehmen.
Das Denken liefert sich j edoch auch nicht der Sprache aus, sondern erörtert das Sprachwesen in die Wesensherkunft der Sage, j enes Verhältnis, in das wir einbehalten sind." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 164–65

[497] Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995), 18; Derrida, *Psyche*, 12

[498] Alexander R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 72

[499] "Der Abgrund des Denkens ist das Wesen der Sprache. Ihr Wesen ist die Sage. Die Sage ist der Bereich des winkend-zeigenden Reichens. Der Bereich ist als die Ortschaft des Zusammengehörens von Denken und Sein - wenn wir dies sagen, sieht es so aus, als folgten wir nur einer Kette von Aussagen. Was so aussieht und auch j ederzeit ausschließlich so genommen warden kann, ist j edoch zugleich ein Wink in ein Sagen, das von ihm selber umringt und dadurch gerade offen bleibt, wie eben ein Ring, der als Ring zwar geschlossen, aber als geschlossener gerade rundum ein Lichtes und Freies verwahrt, darin vielleicht Ungesagtes anspricht, ohne sich selbst zu zeigen." Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 165–66

indeed. They resound throughout Derrida's oeuvre from *The Truth in Painting* to *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Heidegger and Derrida both insist that the self-sameness of the one with itself should not be reduced to the sameness of the one and other. But it is almost impossible *not* to confuse the more nihilistic thinking of tautology with the "heterotautological" movement of the speculative dialectic. Derrida captures this tautological resonance of speculative and ontological difference with the remarkably economical formulation – "*tout autre est tout autre*" – but confesses that the explanatory power of such an utterance is almost nil – that it functions only as a "secret" – a shibboleth readable only by the initiated.[500]

In the 1966 Le Thor Seminar, Heidegger seeks to clarify the difference between existential and Hegelian phenomenology by way of Aeschylus and Heraclitus:

> "Just as Aeschylus says, "Dark and light are contrarily distributed to one another." The conception of standing opposites presupposes the statement as proposition, within which they both appear through the play of negation. The investigation of the

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[500] "'Every other (one) is every (bit) other' – the stakes seem to be altered by the trembling of this dictum. It is no doubt too economical, too elliptical, and hence, like any formula so isolated and capable of being transmitted out of its context, too close to the coded language of a password. One uses it to play with the rules, to cut someone or something short, to aggressively circumscribe a domain of discourse. It becomes the secret of all secrets. Is it not sufficient to transform what one complacently calls a context in order to demystify the shibboleth or decipher all the secrets of the world ?

Is not this dictum – *tout autre est tout autre* – in the first place a tautology? It doesn't signify anything that one doesn't already know, if by that one simply refers to the repetition of a subject in its complement and if by so doing one avoids bringing to bear upon it an interpretation that would distinguish between the two homonyms *tout* and *tout*, an indefinite pronominal adjective (some, someone, some other one) and an adverb of quantity (totally, absolutely, radically, infinitely other). But once one appeals to the supplement of a contextual sign in order to mark a distinction between the two grammatical functions and the two senses of what appears to be the same word – tout – then one must also distinguish between the two *autres.* If the first *tout* is an indefinite pronominal adjective, then the first *autre* becomes a noun and the second, in all probability, an adjective or attribute. One no longer has a case of tautology but instead a radical heterology; indeed this introduces the principle of the most irreducible heterology. Or else, as a further alternative, one might consider that in both cases (tautology and heterology, with or without the homonym) the two *autres* are repeated in the monotony of a tautology that wins out after all, the monotony of a principle of identity that, thanks to the copula and sense of being, would here take over alterity itself, nothing less than that, in order to say: the other is the other, that is always so, the alterity of the other is the alterity of the other. And the secret of that formula would close upon a heterotautological speculation that always risks meaning nothing. But we know from experience that the speculative always requires a hetero-tautological position. That is its definition according to Hegel's speculative idealism, and it is the impetus for the dialectic within the horizon of absolute knowledge. The hetero-tautological position introduces the law of speculation, and of speculation on every secret." Derrida, *Gift*, 82–83

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proposition is the business of logic, which is the art of preserving the λόγος from contradiction as a disagreement pushed to the extreme – at least as long as logic does not reverse its basic intention and become dialectic, for which contradiction, as Marx says, makes up the "font" of truth itself. It is characteristic of dialectic to play the two terms of a relation against each other, with the intent of bringing about a reversal in a situation previously determined by these terms. So for Hegel, as an example, day is the thesis, night is the antithesis, and so the spring board is found for a synthesis of day and night. It is a synthesis in the sense that the conflict of being and nothing is equalized by the appearance of becoming, which arises dialectically from their collision.

With Heraclitus, however, the reverse occurs. Instead of combining the opposites methodically, so that both terms of a relation play out against one another, he names the διαφερόμενον as the συμφερόμενον: "The God? – Day-Night!" This is the sense of φύσις. In other words, Heraclitus names a belonging to a singular presence of everything that separates itself from another, in order to turn all the more intimately to the other, . . .

1) With Heraclitus there is no dialectic – even if his word provides the impetus for this, since, in this sense, what began after him is literally that "which the morning first found."

2) All thinking is "for the sake of being," which is certainly not to say that this would only be an object of thought." [501]

In speculative dialectics, "tearing" [Zerrissenheit] entails the "necessary conjoining" of "a *living*

unity." It is this "dichotomy" [Entzweiung] that constitutes the "*need for philosophy*."[502] This

conjoining power is "in-finite" not so much in the sense of an "endless" "ad infinitum" but as a

"the sublation of the finite."[503] In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel asserts that "contradiction is the

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[501] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 5–6

[502] "everything lies in the antagonism of a positing activity – and consequently a counter-positing activity – with the force that is capable of holding the unity of the two together, and this is due to the *positing* of unity, which for its part brings forth what is counter- posited [*das Entgegen-Gesetzte*], which also must be "conjoined" and so forth . . ." Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 11–12

[503] "It is important to see that "infinite" can mean "*ad infinitum*," in other words: to see the "endless" character of the finite. But then one has what Hegel calls the bad infinite. The opposite of this is the true infinite, where infinite means: in-finite, i.e., the sublation of the finite. The true infinite is the one where the finite is *abandoned.* That infinite is no longer the lack of ends, but rather the power of conjoining itself."Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 12

root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity."[504] In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, he claims that

> the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It <spirit> wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment [Zerrissenheit] <i.e., in contradiction>, it finds itself.[505]

Heidegger prefers the more "sober" passage from the *Logic* to the "better known, because catchier and thus often cited," illustration in the *Phenomenology* since it does not make of this fundamentally tautological structure an aesthetic phenomenon. He acknowledges the extent to which the *Logic* engages in the tautological thinking of the origin of differentiation, especially when Hegel writes that that "pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same." But he maintains that, in the context of this work, Hegel's concept of the 'nothing' is still too dialectical (i.e. not tautological enough).[506] It "does not concern the ontological difference" per se :

> the entire *Logic* is a unity of ontological statements which are stated in a dialectical-speculative form, whereby it is understandable that the *Logic* presents God's thought before the creation.[507]

Because the totality of the *Logic* remains grounded in the ontotheology of the "eidos," even the seemingly radical formulation of tautology falls to "the ontological side" of difference at the expense of the ontic. While Hegel fails to think the "place" of tautology beyond consciousness

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[504] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 82
[505] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 82
[506] "Will someone not object, however, that these formulations, whose strange character we have just emphasized, in fact already arise in metaphysics? Does not Hegel say, for example at the beginning of the *Logic:* "Pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same"? The task here is, first of all, to understand the statement correctly. Even more intently then: what relation could there be between being and nothing for Hegel and this formulation, to which the extra-metaphysical grounding of the ontological difference as concealed source of metaphysics has led?" Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 48
[507] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 48–49

and "extra-metaphysical grounding," Heidegger, as early as "What is Metaphysics?," claims to

think the "nihilating nothing [nichtendes Nichts]" *as* Being (and not as the negation thereof).[508]

> is it not necessary to utter the strange statement, "being is not a being," which means, "being is nothing"?

> The statement is estranging in the sense that it says of being that it "is," while indeed the being alone *is.* Difference stubbornly resists the attempt to say it *as* difference; and being likewise resists the attempt to say it *as* being.

> Heidegger indicates that it is better here to give up the "is" – and to simply write:

> being : nothing[509]

The quasi-mathematical formality of "being : nothing" (later expanded to "Being : Nothing : The

Same") seeks to inscribe what nihilism means in a manner less likely to result in its confusion

with the mediating, dialectical kind of being on which all nihilistic worldviews are based. The

"nihilating nothing" is not determinate negation. Nor is its manner of negating [Nichten] a

"total nothingness" [οὐκ, nihil negativum] or a "privative-negative" "denying" [μή,

Verneinen].[510] The 'nothingness' in question is, as Heidegger attests, "not nothing," but neither

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[508] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 57

[509] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 48

[510] "If negating belongs to the Greek οὐκ, then nothing signifies total nothingness (nihil negativum); beings are simply denied: there are no beings. If, on the contrary, one understands the nothing in negating according to the meaning of μή, then it should indicate a certain defect in regard to being. But if being and nothing are the same, then the nothing in question cannot signify a lack. Therefore, one should not understand negating in a privative-negative way. It is a matter of something other, completely specific and unique.
We keep the guiding statement ever in view:
Being : Nothing : The Same
 Nothing is a characteristic of being. It is not a being, but this in a manner that is thoroughly different from the sentence: The being is not (which would be an ontic proposition). On the contrary, one says: the nothing characterizes being, this is therefore an ontological proposition. Viewed from the ontic horizon, being is precisely not some being; viewed from the categories, it *is* not. Otherwise said: insofar as the nothing and its negating are not understood negatively, being is something entirely other than a being. It is essential to the participle form "nihilating" [*nichtend*] that the participle show a determinate "activity" of being, through which alone the particular being *is.* One can name it an origin, assuming that all ontic-causal overtones are excluded: it is the event [*Ereignis*] of being as condition for the arrival of beings: being lets beings presence." Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 58–59

is it a negativity that may be sublated into a higher positivity (i.e. a subject-object relation).

Hegel must "annihilate the principle of contradiction in order to save contradiction as the law of

the actuality of the actual."[511] The difference between dialectical and tautological thinking,

then, is the difference between mediating nothingness and annihilating mediation. Tautological

thinking annihilates the dia-logical "becoming" that mediates being and nothingness. This

'good' nihilism of tautological thinking is, to a great extent, the only tactical alternative to the

"good infinity" of Hegelian dialectics.

　　　Even though he acknowledges the tautological nature of some of Hegel's theses in the

Logic, Heidegger still distinguishes them from the inceptual, tautological thinking of the Greeks.

He asserts that, within the totality of the philosophical system, the Hegelian treatment of

tautology tends to fall toward the ontic side of ontological difference. This distinction is rather

remarkable given the authority Heidegger is willing to grant the fragmentary texts of the

Presocratics – even citing single words, morphemes, and letters as definitive proof of a more

inceptual Truth. Here we must ask whether the thinking of the Presocratics is *essentially* more

tautological than Hegel's or whether it simply appears as such on the basis of a more material,

textual fragmentation. Put more simply: would he have thought Parmenides and Heraclitus to

be so inceptually tautological if their works were preserved intact?

　　　In the Grundsatze des Denken (1957), Heidegger commends Parmenides for stating

what is manifestly different, tautologically, as the "selfsame" [das Selbe] and not merely as

"likeness" [das Gleiche] :

　　　τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι.

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[511] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 83

"The same, namely, is perceiving (thinking) as well as also being."[512]

In "Kant's Thesis about Being" (1961), he elaborates the implications of Parmenides' dictum in terms of the ontological difference, arguing that the 'truth' of tautology is that "being cannot be" :

> If we consider that in the είναι, presencing, it is really revealing, Αλήθεια, that speaks, then the presencing that in the ἐστίν is said emphatically of the είναι means *letting be present.* Being - is properly that which grants presence.

> Is being, being that is, here passed off as some entity, or is being, τό αυτό (the Same), here said καθ αυτό, with reference to itself? Does a tautology speak here? Indeed. However, it is tautology in that highest sense, which says not nothing but everything: that which originarily was and throughout the future will be decisive for thought. That is why this tautology conceals within it something unsaid, unthought, unquestioned. "There is present, namely, presencing.[513]

In "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" (1964), Heidegger writes:

> We must think *aletheia,* unconcealment, as the clearing that first grants Being and thinking and their presencing to and for each other. The quiet heart of the clearing is the place of stillness from which alone the possibility of the belonging together of Being and thinking, that is, presence and apprehending, can arise at all. [514]

To think this "place of stillness" at the heart of truth in Parmenides' poem is to think the "task of thinking at the end of philosophy." It is to realize that, contrary to some of the suggestions in *Being and Time*, the uncovering of truth will never become scientific evidence, certainty, *veritas*, *orthotes*, *homoiosis, adaequatio, ratio,* etc.

> to raise the question of *aletheia,* of unconcealment as such, is not the same as raising the question of truth. For this reason, it was immaterial and therefore misleading to call *aletheia,* in the sense of clearing, "truth." [515]

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[512] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 111

[513] Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 362

[514] Heidegger, *Basic*, 445

[515] Heidegger, *Basic*, 446–47

Still unsatisfied with the translation of 'truth' as "aletheia" and "unconcealment," Heidegger

"*turns towards* Parmenides" yet again at the conclusion of the 1973 seminar in Zähringen. Even

though he has traversed this ground many times before, "[i]t is not a question of returning to

Parmenides" as a point of origin but, rather, an *Einkehr* – a contemplative retreat within the

"heart of truth."[516] It is a leap beyond the positedness of the metaphysical and historical

towards the non-phenomenal, inhuman, materiality of history. It is also where the thinking of

tautology is most explicitly put forth as the task of thinking itself.

The transcriptions (protocols) of these lectures inform us that "Heidegger reads slowly."

He circles around the "well-rounded heart of truth" [Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὼς ἦτορ]

resisting as much as possible the allegorical inertia that always seems to speak "too quickly."[517]

> Parmenides now says: being is. This unprecedented saying marks exactly the distance
> between ordinary thinking and the unusual path of Parmenides. The question now is to
> know if we are capable of hearing with a Greek ear this Greek saying which speaks of
> ἔστι and εἶναι. Thought in a Greek manner, εἶναι means to presence. It cannot be
> stressed enough how the Greek speaks so much *more revealingly* and thus more
> precisely than we do. What is to be thought is thus: ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι – "presencing namely
> presences" [anwest nämlich Anwesen]. A new difficulty arises: this is clearly a tautology.
> Indeed! This is a genuine tautology: it names the Same only once, and indeed as itself.
> We are here in the domain of the inapparent: presencing itself presences. The name for
> what is addressed in this state of affairs is: τὸ ἐόν, which is neither beings, nor simply
> being, but : presencing: presencing itself [Anwesend: Anwesen selbst].[518]

ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι – this truth encircles the essential tautology. What is indicated by τὸ ἐόν is not an

ontic entity or even an ontological construct such as Dasein, it is merely "this one" – this *being-*

indicated. Heidegger emphasizes the strangeness of Parmenides attempt to *point out* what is, in

truth, ubiquitous – "this domain of the inapparent" which is, at the same time and in the same

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[516] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 77, 94
[517] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 61
[518] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 79

gesture, the appearing of everything that appears – the phenomenality of the phenomenon as such. It is this tautological 'this' (τὸ ἐόν) in which we can discern the resonance at the heart of truth.

> ἀλήθεια is no empty opening, no motionless chasm. One must think it as the disclosure which fittingly encircles the ἐόν, that is, the presencing: presencing itself." . . .
>
> ἠμέν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὼς ἦτορ
>
> This itself, presencing-presencing, thoroughly attunes the fitting encircling unconcealment that discloses it.[519]

Much of the difficulty of this translation derives from the centripetal force exerted by the εὐκυκλέοζ, which does not pertain to the "well-rounded" nature of things as they are "usually understood" (i.e. ob-jectively, Gegen-standlich). The "well-roundedness" that appears, at first glance, to be a more accurate translation of ἀληθείηζ εὐκυκλέοζ ἀτρεμὼζ ἦτορ is neither circular nor even cyclical. The εὐκυκλέοζ only appears, in its most manifest literality, as a 'well-roundedness' when, in truth, it is ex-centric, ex-orbitant. The "heart of truth" is neither circulatory nor systematic. It departs inceptually from the circuitry of Ge-stell – the self-re-productive feedback loop of logistical, cybernetic thought.

Heidegger's translation is almost painful to read – a heart-rending translation of a translation. It rips apart the idiomatic poetry that dwells within the heart of truth by prosifying it. But, as de Man suggests in his reading of Benjamin's "Task of the Translator," it is only by prosifying the poetry of truth that one can finally speak truthfully about translation. In translating it, Heidegger transfuses the heart of truth with an inhuman materiality and grafts it upon the history (of) inscription. It is the heart of truth that gets torn open over and over again

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[519] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 80

like the liver of Prometheus by the thinking-being that circles it like a bird of prey, stopping only

to gorge itself on the lifeblood of tautology, departing only to return again, day after day,

insatiable.

It is here that Heidegger announces "tautological thinking" as a "phenomenology of the

inapparent" and the "only possibility for thinking what dialectic can only veil."

> I name the thinking here in question tautological thinking. It is the primordial sense of
> phenomenology. Further, this kind of thinking is before any possible distinction between
> theory and praxis. To understand this, we need to learn to distinguish between path and
> method. In philosophy, there are only paths; in the sciences, on the contrary, there are
> only methods, that is, modes of procedure.

> Thus understood, phenomenology is a path that leads away to come before . . . and it
> lets that before which it is led show itself. This phenomenology is a phenomenology of
> the inapparent. Only now can one understand that there were no concepts for the
> Greeks. Indeed, in conceiving [Be-greifen], there is the gesture of taking possession. The
> Greek ὁρισμός on the contrary surrounds firmly and delicately that which sight takes
> into view; it does not con-ceive.[520]

As Jean Beaufret remarks after the "silence" that follows the reading of Parmenides in

Zahringen, the "primacy" of Heraclitus and Parmenides seems to be reversed.[521] Where the

logos of Heraclitus once stood by itself at the crossing of paths marking the chiasmus of

thinking and the short-circuiting of dialectics, the truth of Parmenides now occupies the same

inceptual ground. Parmenides' thinking is now more "skewed" than that of Heraclitus. Here we

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[520] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 80–81

[521] "Heidegger: From a mere historical perspective, Heraclitus signified the first step towards dialectic. From this
perspective, then, Parmenides is more profound and essential (if it is the case that dialectic, as is said in *Being
and Time,* is "a genuine philosophic embarrassment") In this regard, we must thoroughly recognize that
tautology is the only possibility for thinking what dialectic can only veil.

However, if one is able to read Heraclitus on the basis of the Parmenidean tautology, he himself then appears in
the closest vicinity to that same tautology, he himself then appears in the course of an exclusive approach
presenting access to being." Heidegger, *Four Seminars*

recall an interlude in the *Grundsatze* where Heidegger suggests that even the most inceptual,

Heraclitan Logos is only a "signpost"

> With signposts [Wegweisern], anyway, it is a peculiar matter. They certainly provide a directive [Weisung], but remain away from the path [Weg]. Instead of going along with us, they leave us to our own devices in going along the path.)[522]

> The signpost bears the name "logic." It points us along the path that lets be known: Thinking is determined by the λόγος. Pointing further, the signpost shows: Logic unveils itself now as the name for the meditation upon the λόγος, as the site of the primordial conflict between thinking and being. Pointing further still, the signpost [Wegweiser], as mentioned, should lead us to a crossroads [Wegkreuzung].

> This is a place where the path along which our meditation concerning the essential provenance of thinking is already proceeding, is crossed [durchquert] by another one. To go crosscountry [querfeldein] means to cut through the fields. Another path cuts across our path hitherto. We would have already noticed that something of this sort could befall our path, had we followed attentively enough the first characterization of the course of the discussion.[523]

Heidegger leads us on so many excursions into this Black Forest of tautological thought only to

bring us back to the 'same' signpost. Why not just remain here? Why bother wandering?

Certainly we can always conclude, glibly, that '*the journey is the destination*.' But can we really

be so sure that this 'insight' could not have been grasped (dialectically) along any number of

the convoluted paths we have been made to traverse? If this were our 'take-away' from these

late lectures, would we even have learned anything at all? Or, rather, since the point is not so

much to *learn* as to *think* – would we not remain *thoughtless* after all that? To regard him as

the kind of 'Zen master' who lets us 'experience' for ourselves a 'knowledge' that can only be

'learned' along the way is to think very little of Heidegger. But to think tautologically is, in a

certain sense, to hear the difference *and* identity of the acyclic "well-roundedness" of

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[522] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 98
[523] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 149

Parmenidean truth and the 'Zen' that is sold under the cover of "motorcycle maintenance" –

the speaking of Speech and the mouthing of sound bites – the resonance that fills the house of

Being and the resonance of a ten minute TED talk.

What does the roundabout path of this ring-like truth really tell us about the materiality

(or immateriality) of history as such? At the very least, that in reading history tautologically, we

should never lose our ear for irony. If Hegel's dialectic has made a Kantian of Lao Tzu then the

phenomenology of the inapparent will, inevitably, make Heideggerians of the Presocratics. The

truth of tautology is inceptually allegorical or, as Derrida might say, "*tautegorical*."[524] The truth

of tautology is that the only method worth following is reading. Which is to say that *merely* by

reading, we remain *On the Way to Language – Unterwegs zur Sprache –* (to) *read literall*y *is*

methodology – μετα-οδός-λόγος.

What de Man calls "mere reading," however, turns out to be no mean task. To merely

read is to closely read, but close reading requires a vertiginous, peripheral awareness of a most

recursive depth of field. Mere reading claims to "add nothing" to a text and, in this, it may be

regarded as a pragmatic, *thingly* reading. Heidegger writes that "only what is slight [gering] of

world becomes a thing."[525] De Man suggests that only what is slight of matter becomes an

event. The history of inscription only materializes when what has merely been thematized is

merely read. The tropological movement by which we might read the thingly essence of the

theme is subtle indeed. Mere is close. Close is deep. Deep is abyssal. Abyssal is nihilistic.

Nihilistic is nothing. Nothing is something ("not nothing"). Something unobjectifiable,

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[524] Derrida, *Psyche*, 12
[525] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 20

unsublatable, undialectical, is the Thing. It is not a circle or even a "circle of circles" so much as

a ring(ing) (ge)ring. It is a subtle resonance like the re-memberance of the musical theme that

Hegel cannot sublate into a "shape" of aesthetic consciousness. The theme is structured like a

Thing. To thematize is to attempt to inscribe a harmonic structure from out of the abyss of

language – a 'structure' that appears (only) to (de)compose itself ex nihlo.

Thematization / Sacrifice

In thematizing Being, one thematizes a being capable of thematization. Rather than attempting

to transcend this hermeneutic circle, one might strive to produce a resonance between

apophantic and hermeneutic discourse that would not require another 'level' (i.e. sublation) of

understanding so much as a *collapse* of levels into the grammatical materiality from whence

they sprang. The difference between transcendence and collapse is what de Man is getting at

when he shifts, subtly, from the thinking of the "allegory of irony" as the possibility of a "meta-

ironic" perspective to the thinking of "ironic allegory" as the "permanent parabasis of the

allegory of tropes." It is the difference between Jameson's historical materialist allegoresis –

predicated on a negative dialectical praxis of "transcoding" between the *homology* of political,

economic, social and literary forms – and de Man's critical linguistic allegoresis – in which there

is only the *cohomology* of linguistic structures revealed by language's ironic allegorical failure to

speak of anything other than itself.[526]

      The "algorithm" of de Man's deconstruction is a trope resonating in itself in a manner

that de-composes the thematic progression of the reading out of which it arose and, thus,

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[526] For 'cohomology' see Chapter VI "Inscription / Magnitude"

postpones the composition indefinitely. In demonstrating how (not) to read Rilke's themes, de

Man transports us into the chamber of the violin of "Am Rande der Nacht" in which we are

given to read the trope resonating in itself.

> The inwardness that should belong, per definition, to the subject is located instead within things. Instead of being opaque and full, things are hollow and contain, as in a box, the dark mass of sentiments and of history. . . . Instead of conceiving of the poem's rhetoric as the instrument of the subject, of the object, or of the relationship between them, it is preferable to reverse the perspective and to conceive of these categories as standing in the service of the language that has produced them. The metaphor of the violin fits the dramatic action of the text so perfectly and the image seems so flawlessly right because its external structure (box, string, cleft that produces and liberates the sound) triggers and orders the entire figural play that articulates the poem. The metaphorical entity is not selected because it corresponds analogically to the inner experience of a subject but because its structure corresponds to that of a linguistic figure: the violin is *like* a metaphor because it transforms an interior content into an outward sonorous "thing." The openings in the box (so fittingly shaped like the algorithm of the integral calculus of totalization) correspond precisely to the outside-directed turn that occurs in all metaphorical representations. The musical instrument does not represent the subjectivity of a consciousness but a potential inherent in language; it is the metaphor of a metaphor. . . . Perfect adjustment can take place only because the totality was established beforehand and in an entirely formal manner.[527]

In his eulogy for de Man, perhaps with this reading of Rilke in mind, Derrida reminds us that

> the "soul" is the name one gives in French to the small and fragile piece of wood – always very exposed, very vulnerable – that is placed within the body of these instruments to support the bridge and assure the resonant communication of the two sounding boards.[528]

He also encourages us to follow the theme of "sacrifice" in Heidegger's writing – a theme that

composes itself around this tropological, tautological resonance. According to Heidegger's

account of "Das Ding," we are vesicular, sacrificial, contractual, nodal, annular, harmonic,

linguistic "things." Language is the slightest thing in the world – the slighting of the world – the

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[527] Man, *Allegories*, 36–38
[528] Derrida, *Memoires*, xx

worlding of the world – the thinging of the thing.[529] As vessels of language we are filled with our

own emptying. To follow the theme of the sacrifice is to become the sacrificial chalice through

which language pours – the mnemotechnical instruments through which language speaks. It is

to think oneself as a prosthetic or cybernetic organism – a bearer of tradition and a conduit of

history. We sacrifice the need to understand what is spoken so that we may devote ourselves

to the resonance of themes. The emptier we make ourselves, the more profound this

resonance becomes until it becomes unbearable, madness, the "clamor of Being."[530]

It is here that I would locate a furtive rapport between the Heideggerian meditation on

technopoiesis and de Man's theory of prosopopeia as a catachrestic, ur-tropological "event."

Both regard physis and poiesis as aspects of the 'same' linguistic force that reaches out beyond

the closed system of signs toward some transcendent entity. Catachresis does not just emerge

superficially at the boundary between the literal and the thingly world. It is this very surfacing –

this *interface*. And it is no accident that the most powerful figure for this interface is the face

that rests perfectly contiguous to it. The *figure* is never just a gap in relation to usage. It is also

the face – the facing – the vis-à-vis with the Other which, for Levinas as for Derrida, constitutes

the possibility of ethics:

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[529] In his *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno speaks of the formal materialism of thought as a musical structure. He argues, a propos of Schoenberg, in favor of a more musical approach to thematization in which the theme could never be reduced to a "declaration of intention" : "philosophy ought not to reduce itself to categories but in a certain sense should compose itself [komponieren: to compose musically]. It must continually renew itself in its course, out of its own power just as much as out of the friction with that which it measures itself by; what it bears within itself is decisive, not the thesis or position; the web, not the inductive or deductive, one-track course of thought." In asserting the "fragility of truth" he seeks to distinguish negative dialectics from the "abyss . . . of which the fundamentalists of metaphysics prattle." but, in this, he comes quite close to Heidegger's account of Das Ding: "The open thought is unprotected against the risk of going astray into what is popular; nothing notifies it that it has adequately satisfied itself in the thing, in order to withstand that risk. The consistency of its execution, however, the density of the web, enables it to hit what it should. The function of the concept of certainty in philosophy has utterly recoiled." Adorno, *Negative*, 43–45

[530] Deleuze, *Difference*, 35, 304

"Face to face without intermediary'' and without "communion'' . . . neither mediate nor immediate [in the] absolute proximity and absolute distance [of a] community of nonpresence, and therefore of non-phenomenality. Not a community without light, not a blindfolded synagogue, but a community anterior to Platonic light.[531]

For de Man, the emphasis tends to fall on a *dis*figuration and *de*facement that seems to foreclose the ethical relationship at the very moment that it opens. Prosopopeia is the "master trope of poetic discourse," the "ethicity" of the allegorical inscription or, to borrow from a lexicon that is no longer strictly de Manian, the "allegorithm" of "theointerfaciality."[532]

The "theotropic" allegory that de Man suppresses from the manuscript of *Allegories of Reading* returns with a vengeance in "Hegel on the Sublime" where he examines the "interference of a dialectical with another, not necessarily compatible, pattern of narration."[533] This interference takes place between the asymmetrical modes of representation and apostrophe: "Whereas representation can be shown to be a form of apostrophe, the reverse is not true."[534] This asymmetry has to do with the positional power that apostrophe assumes when we no longer regard it as a trope but as the *irreversible*, catachrestic movement in which the circulation of tropes is inscribed. But how are we to face this inceptual movement by which we are (dis)figured and (de)faced?

> If the word is said to speak through us, then we speak only as a ventriloquist's dummy, also and especially when we pretend to talk back. If we say that language speaks, that the grammatical subject of a proposition is language rather than a self, we are not fallaciously anthropomorphizing language but rigorously grammatizing the self. The self is deprived of any locutionary power; to all intents and purposes it may as well be mute.[535]

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[531] Derrida, *Margins*, 91
[532] Galloway, *Interface*, ix, 30, 72
[533] Man, "Textual," 98ff; Man, *Aesthetic*, 112
[534] Man, *Aesthetic*, 114
[535] Man, *Aesthetic*, 112

In grammatizing the self we strip the speaking Speech of its aesthetic, anthropomorphic guise. The mechanism of prosopopeia reveals the inhumanity of the prosopon as a linguistic entity predicated entirely on citation:

> The sign does not *actually* say what it means to say, or, to drop the misleading anthropomorphic metaphor of a *speaking* sign endowed with a voice, the predication involved in a sign is always citational.[536]

In the infamous conclusion to his reading of the *Social Contract,* de Man promises (and excuses himself from) a reading of the text machine that would (dis)articulate Saussurian and Heideggerian temporality.[537] The mechanism of the promise operates in spite of citational evidence ("sections and passages that can be isolated and quoted by themselves") but it is, nevertheless, inscribed grammatically and historically as "text."[538] This is the aporia of every thematic *act*. It is always possible to proffer textual evidence of the text machine, but its essence, or better, its *materiality*, lies elsewhere. This 'elsewhere' is both a structure and an allegory of structure. The question of the historical generativity of the allegorical inscription is *the* metaleptical question, par excellence: the question of the structure of causality, the structure of the question of causality, the causality of the structure of the question.

> The redoubtable efficacy of the text is due to the rhetorical model of which it is a version. This model is a fact of language over which Rousseau himself has no control. Just as any other reader, he is bound to misread his text as a promise of political change. The error is not within the reader; language itself dissociates the cognition from the act. *Die Sprache verspricht* (*sich*)*;* to the extent that is necessarily misleading, language just as necessarily conveys the promise of its own truth. This is also why textual allegories on this level of rhetorical complexity generate history.[539]

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536 Man, *Aesthetic*, 96
537 Cf. Chapter III "Promise / Articulation"
538 Man, *Allegories*, 276–77
539 Man, *Allegories*, 277

Is de Man not saying that the inscription that "generates history" cannot be thought within the horizons of history thus inscribed? Yes and no. Such a statement might be compared with Heidegger's assertion that the "essence" [Wesen] of history – the essencing of destiny [Geschick] – is nothing historiological. This is, perhaps, the Heideggerian trope par excellence: the Being of being is not a being, the essence of technology is nothing technological, etc. Derrida has pointed out the pseudo-metaphysical, proto-dialectical character of these statements. Everything depends on whether we can channel their energy into a thinking that avoids the Scylla and Charybdis of the good and bad infinity by leaping, critically, into the abyss of language – an abyss that can only be thought on the basis of the (linguistic) structures it annihilates. In order to really be deconstructive, in order to have any kind of effect within the metaphysical tradition, the trope must be properly intonated so as to hit the right harmonic. Otherwise, it will be nothing but a "mere ripple."

Sprache, Gesprach, Selbstgestprach, heterotautology, ironic allegory, tautegory, prosopopeia, catachresis – these are all overtones of the same event. But the understanding they seem to promise is, as Derrida argues, the *Versprechen* and *Verwesen* of understanding:

> pretending to play without playing with Heidegger's famous formula (*Die Sprache spricht*)*, Paul de Man wrote: *Die Sprache verspricht* He was not playing, the game is at work in language itself. One day he sharpened up this formula as *Die Sprache verspricht sich:* language or speech promises, promises *itself* but also goes back on its word, becomes undone or unhinged, derails or becomes delirious, deteriorates, becomes corrupt just as immediately and just as essentially. It cannot not promise as soon as it speaks, it is promise, but it cannot fail to break its promise – and this comes of the structure of the promise, as of the event it nonetheless institutes. The *Verwesen* is a *Versprechen.* . . . It remains to find out whether this *Versprechen* is not the promise which, opening every speaking, makes possible the very question and therefore precedes it without belonging to it: the dissymmetry of an affirmation, of a *yes* before all opposition of *yes* and *no.* The call of Being – every question already responds to it, the promise has already taken place wherever language comes. Language always, *before*

any question,[5] and in the very question, comes down to [*revient* à] the promise. This would also be a promise *of spirit.*[540]

The Verwesen of de Man's Verspechen inheres in this aberrant citation of the Heideggerian Sprache – in the "destinerrancy" of the history it "generates." However much it seems to speak, ironically and allegorically, the very 'essence' of ironic allegory, in citing it, excising it from this definitive, self-defining *text* of "Promises," our grasp on the more intricate machinations of the text machine at work in the *Social Contract* tends to disintegrate – as if we might, in true dialectical fashion, dispense with all the dense political theory having arrived at this most citable of conclusions. And one need hardly point out that de Man's conclusions are nothing if not citable.

Thematization / Citation

The relationship between thematization and citation is best approached by way of an anecdote – an anecdote of a citation that questions the boundary of the anecdotal and the citational. It concerns a particular line from Hegel's *Differenzschrift* that Heidegger fails to get right on several occasions. In the 1966 seminar in Le Thor he endeavors to think the inceptual phenomenon of differentiation by way of a "confrontation" [Auseinandersetzung] with Hegel.[541] It is necessary to confront Hegel in order to avoid "personal interpretation" and let him actually *speak* to us. This "confrontation" can also be viewed, allegorically, as a confrontation between the earlier and later Heidegger – a confrontation in which the early Heidegger, in the guise of Hegel, is reprimanded for failing to differentiate speculative and

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[540] Derrida, *Spirit*, 93–94
[541] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 10

ontological difference, which is to say, the ontic-ontological difference of existential

phenomenology and the "absolute difference" of Hegelian phenomenology.

Heidegger recalls how his students at Marburg bridled at the task of reading the *Sophist*

line by line for an entire semester, but he maintains that this is, in fact, "the secret of the

seminar" [Geheimnis des Seminars]. The careful consideration of a few lines opens the "whole

book" – presumably not just the *Differenzschrift* but the totality of the system of speculative

dialectical logic as a whole – the total, encyclopedic book. The "secret of the seminar," then,

would be the opening of an oeuvre by way of a particularly resonant selection – a kind of

citational alchemy by which one distills from the ponderous volumes of a philosophical system

a passage with which to elucidate the whole. But the seminars in Le Thor are secretive in yet

another sense. They are a kind of contemplative retreat – an *Einkehr* removed from the bustle

of the world and the grinding of the academic machine. Heidegger remarks at the close of the

1966 seminar: "What remains essential is to continue along the same path without concern for

any of the publicness around us."[542] It is difficult not to politicize such claims especially since

they come up again in the 1969 seminar in the context of a critique of the Marxist dialectic.[543]

While it would not be wrong to read this air of secrecy as a result of Heidegger's brief and

disastrous political 'career' at Freiburg, we must also consider the secrecy at work in the

technoscientific enframing of the university at large. If the substitution of a few 'key passages'

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[542] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 9

[543] "What practical consequences are to be drawn from this state of affairs? In other words: what remains for the thinker to do?

The current seminar already presents a kind of response, and, Heidegger says, "that is why I am here." It is a matter for a few of us to untiringly work outside of all publicness to keep alive a thinking that is attentive to being, knowing that this work must concern itself with laying the foundation, for a distant future, of a possibility of tradition – since obviously one cannot settle a two millennia heritage in ten or twenty years." Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 51

for an entire bibliography is a secret, it is one that almost every educator in history has failed to

keep. But is there not something genuinely "mysterious" about the thematic function of

citation? Does the secrecy of the seminar maintain a secret complicity with the cloistering,

within the university, of a purportedly 'universal' knowledge? Is this paradoxically public secret,

perhaps, the secret of publication itself? What Heidegger refers to as the "phenomenology of

the inapparent," indeed, seems to call for an ethics of secrecy. The "inapparent" character of

the phenomenon is, apparently, the only ethical conclusion to be drawn from the inceptual

strife of the κόσμος in Heraclitus and the tautological heart of truth in Parmenides. It is

perhaps, by the obscure light of this Eleatic secrecy that we should read Heidegger's claim, in

the *Der Spiegel* interview, that thinking has no public political role to play in the destiny of

cybernetics.

What Heidegger calls an exercise in "phenomenological kindergarten" becomes

embarrassingly convoluted when he proceeds to misquote the very passage he claims to

"confront."

> After having circumscribed the exterior, we now need to "leap into the matter itself."
> On this point, Heidegger begins with a citation from Hegel: "a torn sock is better than a
> mended one . . ." [Ein zerrissener Strumpf ist besser als ein geflickter] and asks, why is
> that so? A moment of hesitation follows, for the auditors know another version of that
> same sentence. Heidegger explains that the sentence just cited was "corrected" by the
> printer into the one we know. [544]

Hegel's text *should* read: "[a] mended sock is better than a torn one, but not so for self-

consciousness." To say that "a torn sock is better than a mended one," while leaving out the

mediating power of self-consciousness, is to insist on the Zerrissenheit of Aufhebung over the

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[544] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 11

Aufhebung of Zerrissenheit – the Aufgabe of tautology over the Aufhebung of dialectics. It is to

tear the Aufhebung out of phenomenology in such a way that it can no longer tend to the

wounds it inflicts upon itself during its self-construction. This inceptual event of differentiation

is reflected or, better, allegorized in Heidegger's aberrant attempts to cite it.

Curd Ochwadt, translator and editor of the German edition, attempts to clarify the

mystery of this misquotation and offers something of an apologia for it.[545] He suggests that,

regardless of any error on the part of the printer, Heidegger's error would at least be congruent

with the thinking of the text in question. On the one hand, it is not so difficult to see how

Heidegger is effectively collapsing the two sentences and paraphrasing the perspective of self-

consciousness rather than that of practical consciousness. On the other hand, it is still

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[545] "On August 30, 1968, Heidegger delivered the self-made abridgment – "A torn sock is better than a mended one" – as an early note of Hegel's that was familiar to him for years. He had used that very passage in the lecture course *What Is Called Thinking?* and during its printing either he or an editorial assistant had replaced it with the original text as presented by Rosenkranz. In Le Thor, François Vezin recalled this formulation of Hegel's text, which Heidegger explained at the time as a "correction" by the "printer." If no misunderstanding arose here in the bilingually held session, it would be obvious that the printer's acting proofreader, in French *prote*, was meant. Otto Pöggeler imparted in 1978 that "printer" could refer back to an erroneous recollection of a conversation in the Hegel Archive about the printing history of Hegel's "Wastebook," which took place in the early summer of 1964 as Heidegger visited the archive. I see no other explanation.

Heidegger cites Hegel's wording in *Off the Beaten Track;* so Heidegger would have retained "Hegel's" version more than once. Heidegger's formulation probably appealed to him due to the pleasure he took in the raw imagery of Hegel's words, even carrying it too far. It should provide us with an indication of his intensive engagement with Hegel's language. We should not explain away Heidegger's own coinage as simply false – we would instead, perhaps, offer the reproach that Hegel makes to his contemporary "would-be philosophers," that they are "letter-bound men." Hegel's *thought* – the fact that what is torn and thus "open to admit the absolute," is "better" than the "mended consciousness" of everyday self-satisfaction – is retained in Heidegger's formulation. It changes nothing that the 1968 citation is, in the first place, only for an "exercise in phenomenological kindergarten." Both times, in 1952 and in 1968, delivered *without* the additional phrase, the passage says the same as Hegel's note *with* the additional phrase, even if it does not agree with it *literally*. In 1952, Heidegger was prompted by a number of those listening to move from the "tear of consciousness" to the self-satisfied "mended consciousness," a fact mentioned in the notes of the editor, since it was not entered into the printed protocol. Twice the audience laughed over the "torn sock" saying. At first Heidegger answered pedantically, "I do not know why you are laughing. You must learn to endure the scope of a sentence such as the one I have cited." Wishing to continue and repeating the saying, but once again being met with laughter, Heidegger reacted in angered disappointment: "Perhaps you all live with a mended consciousness." – Heidegger's coining first becomes false if the additional phrase is appended, and only insofar as the "tear" would then be denied to self-consciousness." Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 98–99

confounding to see Heidegger insist on the accuracy of the misquotation for decades despite numerous attempts at correction and requests for clarification. While it is no doubt deeply lodged in the Heideggerian unconscious, the *motivation* of the error seems to exceed the explanatory powers of the Freudian slip or parapraxis. The misquotation is caught in the gears of the text machine – in the inscription of what de Man would call a "material event."

What to make of the uncanny persistence of this error? Does it begin with Hegel's printer and his assistant? Heidegger and his students and editors? Or is it most inceptually Hegelian insofar as it materially inscribes the dialectical play of identity and difference between the published version of the *Differenzschrift* and the "Wastebook"? Ochwadt is right to say that we cannot simply explain away these errors and differences. They bear directly upon the formulation of differentiation itself in the différance that takes place between Hegel and Heidegger. In reading too closely, Heidegger ends up saying too much, but this "excess of rigor" is compelling because it allows error to inscribe itself between the Heideggerian-Hegelian signature. The misquotation of Hegel's earliest thinking is cosigned by a secret movement of identification at work in Heidegger's latest. We would struggle to find a more appropriate parable for the event of exappropriation as the Zerrissenheit of citation and thematization.

In these late seminars, one senses that Heidegger would almost be willing to abandon "ontological difference" if *Being and Time* had not forever inscribed it into the lexicon and the pedagogical infrastructure of his philosophy.

> The difference between being and beings reigns through all philosophy, fundamentally concealed and never thematized. But since the thinking of *Being and Time* sought to achieve the hearing of being as being, since accordingly the ontological difference

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> becomes an explicit theme, is it not necessary to utter the strange statement, "being is not a being," which means, "being is nothing"?[546]

> If being necessarily remains unthematized in human life, if, in other words, the aim of *Being and Time* does not lead everyday Dasein to a thematization of being – something which would not constitute its ownness anyway – it nevertheless remains the case that "human life" as such would not be possible without the prior and unacknowledged clearing of being.

> This is the meaning of the celebrated and yet misunderstood analysis of equipmentality in *Being and Time.* The equipmental character of the thing does not need to become thematized in order to exist, and nevertheless, it is in the chair *as* chair that I am seated.[547]

Thematization is often an embarrassingly and, perhaps, *inherently* dogmatic procedure. For Heidegger, it is an attempt to find a 'grammar' for the rhetorical vagaries of ontological difference without equating them by way of *adaequatio*. The 'grammar of being' must be made to resonate with the inceptual, tautological 'structures' it describes. The theme does not guide the questioner to the answer as a map might guide one to a destination. It "fittingly encircles" truth itself.[548] The ultimate ambition of fundamental ontology is to escape the "circle of circles" and the "good infinity" of Hegel's *Logic*, which is why we must *stress* the harmonic sense of musical progression that Hegel mutes in the *Aesthetics* over the more orthodox sense of dialectical progress as sublation. The difference between the thematization of Being for Heidegger and the thematization of Spirit [Geist] for Hegel can never be absolute. It is more of a matter of timbre and intonation – the inherent tension between theme and event – between the technoscientific tendency of thematization and the aporetic, mystical character of language that Heidegger often attributes to the event of appropriation.

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[546] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 48
[547] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 58
[548] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 78

The apocalyptic rhetoric of revealing-concealing [ἀ-λήθεια] and the "clearing of being" [lichtung des Seins] in *Being and Time* tends to foreground the manifest openness of the event as if it could be grasped apophantically without any kind of thematic infrastructure. Being should be able to partake of worldly "stuff" [Zeug] without any thematic understanding. At times, Heidegger almost makes it sound as if the event *is* the default of thematic understanding. But if thematic 'knowledge' is factual and metaphysical in the common, insufficiently ontological sense, then the question is whether and to what extent the event is thinkable at all. Even if we allow that Dasein essentially partakes of the nothingness of worldly things, it is very mysterious how this non-experience would allow for a more authentic, inceptual, ontological thinking. How could thinking ever occur without some accumulation of thematic 'knowledge,' philosophical architecture, mnemotechnical infrastructure, which is to say, reification, enframing, inscription, citation, etc.? Clearly, Heidegger does not want to distinguish between 'intellectual' and 'inceptual' events because this can always be construed as a relapse into metaphysics. A metaphysical proposition, as logical ground, never reaches the abyssal ground of the event. He does not want to say that thematization grants greater access to the abyss of thinking. But he does sometimes suggest that some of the more brutally metaphysical thinkers (e.g. Descartes and Leibniz) inadvertently bring us closer to its event horizon than some of the more subtle dialecticians. It is as if he wanted the theme to be meta-dialectical without being meta-physical. But the notion that thematization could somehow avoid being construed as a mediation of ontic and ontological difference is what seems most preposterous today in an age of ubiquitous enframing. The moment one regards thematization as requisite for the 'experience' of a more essential tautology, tautological thinking degrades

into the dialectical procession of "shapes" and splits into the specular difference between natural consciousness and the phenomenological observer.

Thematization attempts and, with startling efficacity, succeeds in rendering the performative aspect of tautological thinking constative. It posits the identity of narrative difference and makes it possible to refer to the diachronic unfolding of an idea throughout and between texts synchronically. As such, it appears utterly ontic, aesthetic and ideological, but it is somehow distinctively *prosaic*. It lacks the poetry we would normally associate with the event but is, nevertheless, essential to its formulation. The theme involves a simultaneous forgetting and memorization of the grammaticality of citation that permits the aesthetic illusion of narrativity. Thematization is the gathering of citations into a memory that is no longer citable in itself. The imperative of thematization arises from the fact that we cannot cite Being, only beings. Like every ontological 'structure,' the theme is essentially allegorical, which means that the apophantic citation is essentially metaphorical. It is not a direct quotation but, rather, the metaphorical translation or transcoding of the grammatical inscription [γράμμα] into a logical, constative, ontic entity – a 'literal' meaning. Thematization may then be seen as the phenomenological, hermeneutic citation of the inceptual, apophantic citation of the grammar of being.

Ultimately, there can be no absolute difference between quotation, citation, reference and even thematization. The latter is nothing more (and nothing less) than the *promise* of ontological structure. This means that the essence of the citation is neither ontic nor ontological because every ontic 'presence' is really just a concealed interpretation and every ontological structure is really just the structure of interpretation revealed when we read what

appears to be ontic *as* interpretation, which is to say, the rhetorical movement that emerges between what is grammatically inscribed and its (ontic) signification. This rhetorical structure, this errancy of structure, is what de Man refers to as "grammar." Grammar is paradoxical in the 'same' way that the sign is arbitrary. While it allows for no logical, symbolic union of the signifier and the signified, it mechanically inscribes the fateful course [Geschick] of their illogical aberration.

'Citationality' here refers not only to the ability to place language within quotation marks but also the way such grammatical enclosures are read (or not read). If we regard 'referentiality' as synonymous with 'citationality' and (direct) quotation as the most material, grammatical form of the latter, then we might say that thematization involves the passage between the quotable and unquotable. I generally use the term 'citation' interchangeably with 'quotation,' and 'citationality' for the referential structure common to both. In certain cases, though, I find it useful to stress the more arithmetical sense of 'quotation' as that which can be counted and accounted for (e.g. price quotes, fiscal quotas) in contradistinction to 'citation' and the more phenomenological connotations of the Latin root *citare* (e.g. to call, invoke, summon, appeal, arouse, stir, agitate, excite, etc).

A citation is a node in which the identity and difference of a text is bound. It is bound in itself and for another, as Hegel would say. This relation to the 'other,' may very well refer intertextually, to the 'same' text citing itself, or intertextually, to another text in which it is cited. For there to be anything like a philosophical perception of time one must be able to place consciousness within quotation marks. This is what is at stake in Husserl's theory of "internal time consciousness" in which the subject, immersed in the primordial flow of time, becomes

conscious of this immersion by narrowing the breadth of primary retention (perception) by way of secondary retention (memory). This is what he refers to as the "epochal" suspension of subjectivity in the *Cartesian Meditations*. A phenomenological science, especially one of the Husserlian variety, may be likened to an ontological programming language in which each term must be delimited and positioned within a syntax rigorous enough to allow for the citation of the most discrete psychical phenomena alongside the most abstract philosophical and world historical events. Thematization involves an epochal suspension that is tantamount to placing the 'meaning' of 'being' between brackets, parentheses or inverted commas. Unlike quotation marks, however, the latter do not signify grammatical identity but, rather, non-identity – identity in différance. Phenomenological discourse can only be regarded as 'logical' so long as we suspend the meaning of every being and, thus, every word. Marking this suspension grammatically would be tiresome and entirely redundant and so the phenomenologist tends only to emphasize the suspension in certain cases and at certain junctures. But this 'means' that the words that *do* bear these pseudo-citational marks are actually 'doubly' or 'meta-' citational. Does the superaddition or superimposition of these (in)visible marks ever amount to a direct quotation? Would it make things any clearer if the mark of irony and technical usage were more clearly distinguished? Or if inverted commas were not frequently used interchangeably with quotation marks?

The most *direct* answer, of course, is 'no.' As we have (hopefully) learned by now from "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote" (i.e. 'Borges'), even a direct re-presentation of grammar in its noetic, typographic, orthothetic actuality, identity, materiality, etc., is not *exactly* equivalent to that to which it refers. On the most basic 'level' of understanding this is

because the 'objectivity' of quotation is intonated by the 'subjectivity' of the reader and the hermeneutic horizon in which it is being read: the sentence from which it has been excerpted, the paragraph into which it is inserted, the narrative of which it is a part, the bibliography with which it is juxtaposed, the 'autobiography' into which it is inscribed, the historical compendium of which would be Time itself. For a quotation to really be 'direct' it would have to enclose all of these 'structures' as well as their discrete causality and relationality. The map would become the territory, the moment, time, the simulation, reality, etc. This is to say that *absolute directness deconstructs quotation* (just as absolute arbitrariness deconstructs language and absolute irony deconstructs allegory). Neither the subject nor the object of quotation can be absolutely direct. Even the 'authorial' subject is not a sub-jectum (hypo-keimenon), a 'foundation' on which to 'ground' toward which a quotation might be directed but, rather, a fiction, a persona, function, trope, *machine*.

While the 'undecidability' of reference and the 'death' of the author have been 'poststructuralist' dogma for ages, we will always be a little scandalized by the idea that we cannot even quote the structures we claim to 'transcend.' The entire enterprise of academia and the textual machinery of the technoscientific univers(ity) is held together by the aesthetic ideology of 'direct' quotation. We can devote seminars to the 'aporia of reference' and hold colloquia on the 'parasitism of citation' but only so long as we believe, on some level, in the fundamental quotability of such 'events.' For, otherwise, what would be the point? At some point we must, in the manner of Archie Bunker, throw up our hands in exasperation and ask "what's the difference?" without any hope (or desire) for a response. Between every statement and its citation there is a "truly temporal predicament," which is to say, a predicational

predicament – a predicamentum. Every 'direct' quotation, like every 'direct' reference, is a misdirection, aberration, exappropriation, event, etc.

As Derrida attests, there is "no citation without iteration."[549] Iteration is the otherness that inheres in any act of repetition. It is the différance or the parasitism of citation. The perlocutionary speech act, if it is in fact an act, does not simply yield itself to the constativity of a statement. In responding to John Searle's critique of "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida enacts this parasitism by quoting the entirety of Searle's text without having procured the rights. Aside from the many theoretical disagreements at stake in their quarrel, what offends Derrida most is Searle's apparent refusal to even read "Signature, Event, Context" before making of it a summary show trial for deconstruction as a whole. Even if he has transgressed the law in responding line by line Derrida is, nevertheless, enacting an "ethic of discussion" – repaying lack of citation with a hyperabundance that reveals the scarcity of what is given to be thought.[550] Anything that obstructs or distracts one from responding as completely and exhaustively as necessary is, for Derrida, unethical and irresponsible. The property rights governing the practice of citation are a significant deterrent to the absolute responsibility Derrida has in mind. He simultaneously confesses and excuses himself from the transgression of Searle's intellectual property. The elocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of property rights parasitize one another. As J. Hillis Miller has pointed out, the "simple act of citation" is one of Derrida's most powerfully deconstructive maneuvers:

> Citation, as the exact repetition of what the other has said or written, always carries an element of ironic insolence, along with solemn respect for the literality of exactly what the other has put down on paper. . . . Citation, followed by exact paraphrase,

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[549] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 100
[550] Derrida, *Limited*, 111

undermines as well as celebrates. An example is the extremely disquieting experience of reading a student paper or examination that quotes exactly what you have said in class but somehow makes it sound perverse and stupid, in any case entirely unpersuasive.[551]

I would go even further and say that, beyond any particular antagonism between deconstruction and other schools of thought, there is nothing more universally despised than this singular deployment of citation which, as Miller is quite aware, is really not that "simple" after all. At risk of sounding perverse, I would even say that the singularity of citation approximates the 'essence' of deconstruction as such. Every *ré-cit* carries the possibility of infinite citation – an interminable deconstruction:

> A citation in the strict sense implies all sorts of contextual conventions, precautions and protocols in the mode of reiteration, of coded signs such as quotation marks or other typographical devices used for writing a citation. The same holds no doubt for the *récit* as a form, mode, or genre of discourse, even . . . as a literary type. And yet the law that protects the usage, in *stricto sensu,* of the words *citation* and *récit,* is threatened intimately and in advance by a counterlaw that constitutes this very law, renders it possible, conditions it and thereby makes itself . . . impossible to edge through, to edge away from or to hedge around. The law and the counter-law serve each other citations summoning each other to appear, and each re-cites the other in these proceedings. There would be no cause for concern if one were rigorously assured of being able to distinguish with rigor between a citation and a non-citation, a *récit* and a *non-récit* or a repetition within the form of one or the other.[552]

For de Man, thematization involves the positing of a narrative, historical structure against which the materiality of inscription can be read. It is one of the more aesthetic moments in a "critical linguistic reading" insofar as it attempts to speak of a structure that is no longer strictly grammatical. De Man's strategy for overcoming this weakness is, sensibly enough, to cite the thematic readings of other critics rather than doing the thematizing himself. Thematization, then, is the mechanism by which an allegory of reading becomes citable. It is the historical,

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[551] Miller, *For*, 293
[552] Derrida, *Literature*, 226

allegorical process by which every attempt to refer to an 'intratextual' structure from outside is unknowingly implicated *within* and woven back *into* this very texture.

In his reading of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, de Man identifies the citational regress that transpires between the Petrarchan epigraph and its thematization in the "Second Preface." It is here that a pseudo-authorial figure refuses to provide his interlocutor with a simple answer to the question of whether he wrote the text himself or composed it from existing letters. According to de Man,

> it is impossible to say where quotation ends and 'truth' begins, if by truth we understand the possibility of referential verification. The very statement by which we assert that the narrative is rooted in reality can be an unreliable quotation; the very document, the manuscript, produced in evidence may point back, not to an actual event, but to an endless chain of quotations reaching as far back as the ultimate transcendental signified God, none of which can lay claim to referential authority.[553]

This is not so much a critique of the importance of citation as a critique of the referential "statement by which we assert that the narrative is rooted in reality." Just because de Man does not believe in an absolute referential authority does not mean that the act of citation can be taken lightly. On the contrary, it underscores how carefully the deconstructive reader must *solicit* each citation.[554]

Thematization lies at the very heart of every allegory of reading but it is, strangely, not something that de Man really thematizes as such (probably because it is already implicit in the phrase allegory of reading). Thematism, for de Man, is synonymous with aesthetically-responsive, ideologically-motivated reading. An "allegory of reading," thematically 'understood,' is our failure to read the thematic movement of our own reading. To read

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[553] Man, *Allegories*, 204
[554] Derrida, *Writing*, 6

allegorically is to 'understand' the hubris of every claim to thematic understanding: "Reading is a praxis that thematizes its own thesis about the impossibility of thematization and this makes it unavoidable, though hardly legitimate, for allegories to be interpreted in thematic terms."[555] "Unavoidable, though hardly legitimate," then, is the entire mechanism of legitimation on which the humanities are based.

But how can we regard the practice of reading as an allegory of thematic violence and still profess ourselves to be scholars, theorists, professors? De Man here provides us with too much and too little direction in advocating a "return to philology." If 'good' reading is reading that comes closest to demonstrating the singularity of a text then there can be no method for 'good' reading other than "mere reading."[556] While this formulation is nearly tautological it is, nevertheless, a fair summation of de Man's methodology. In "The Resistance to Theory," he argues that

> if there is indeed something about literature, as such, which allows for a discrepancy between truth and method, between *Warheit* and *Methode*, then scholarship and theory are no longer necessarily compatible.[557]

This "discrepancy between truth and method" must also be seen as a discrepancy between the kind of "scholarship [which] has, in principle, to be eminently teachable" and the "deeply subversive" kind of "reading," which "cannot fail to respond to structures of language which it is the more or less secret aim of literary teaching to keep hidden" – a discrepancy which gives us reason to doubt whether de Man's style of deconstructive reading can even be considered scholarly – if scholarship must, by definition, be capable of being taught.[558]

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[555] Man, *Allegories*, 209
[556] Man, *Resistance*, 24
[557] Man, *Resistance*, 4
[558] Man, *Resistance*, 24

While works of criticism are often accused of treating works of literature "thematically,"

it would be rather naïve to see the thematic reduction of literary singularity as a charge that

can be leveled at any individual literary critic without also implicating the entire business of

criticism. It is a difference in degree and not of kind that separates the thematism *in* literature

from the thematism *of* literature. Even the most "realistic" literature cannot recall in its

plentitude the "reality" that gave it shape and so it too can be said to thematize the

experiences, ideas and grammatical possibilities out of which it is hewn. One would always like

to leave themes behind and remember the text immediately, but this would require the

fabulous memory of Ireneo Funes.[559]

By translating the singularity of grammar into conceptual generality, we gain a certain

'memory' of a book without necessarily being able to recall precisely any passage from it. This

leads to quite a double bind: in the history of literary reception, works that resist thematization

are in danger of being forgotten while works too easily thematized are remembered *only*

thematically, which is to say, *scarcely* remembered – their themes memorized and their

singularity forgotten. If, however, a work that initially resists thematization continues to haunt

our critical consciousness, it may give rise to an intensification in thematization and, hence, a

more critical reading. This is what de Man is getting at when he speaks of the generative,

inscriptional power of allegorical unreadability – that to some extent, unreadable texts inscribe

themselves more profoundly in the mnemotechnical substrate of our literary history because,

unlike readable texts, the desire to read them (and their aberrant refusal to be read) is that

much more conspicuous and, thus, *material*.

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[559] Borges, *Collected*, 131–37

According to de Man, it is "the apparently crooked byways" that take us more quickly to

the materiality of inscription than the "itinerary that starts out from studies of individual cases

and progresses from there to synthetic generalizations."[560] A deconstructive reading can only

hope to be as "crooked" and "polemical" as the ground it traverses – a *Πόλεμος* that is as

theological as it is technological.[561] No mortal being can bypass the act of reading and, thus, the

"heresy of the paraphrase."[562] Borges was not joking when he spoke of the sectarian violence

amongst the librarians of Babel, nor did he simply forget to include quotation marks when

listing the characters comprising every book.[563] Citation is less a typographical *character* than a

"theotropic" *act*. In thematizing, we presume to "justify the ways of God to men."[564] The

justification of themes can never be predicated on any kind of divine Law. We might

approximate the Law by way of citation, but citation can only deliver *justesse*. The idea of

absolute justice takes us beyond the *limes* of reference toward the *end* of hypertext – the

dream of a truly "borderless text" – a text in which no passage would be marginal.[565] But it is

here that absolute justice passes over into de Maniacal irony. In citing such a text, one would be

citing everything at once which, from a practical perspective, amounts to babbling, speaking in

tongues.

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[560] Man, *Allegories*, 103; Andrzej Warminski, *Material Inscriptions: Rhetorical reading in practice & theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 124

[561] "in the language of polemics the crooked path often travels faster than the straight one." Man, *Blindness*, 14

[562] Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Dobson Books, 1947), 176ff.

[563] "The original manuscript has neither numbers nor capital letters; punctuation is limited to the comma and the period. Those two marks, the space, and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet are the twenty-five sufficient symbols that our unknown author is referring to. [Ed. note.]" Borges, *Collected*, 113. (Editorial note originally within quotations).

[564] John Milton, "Paradise Lost," in *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2003), I.26

[565] George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical theory and new media in an Era of Globalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 115

For de Man, as for Luther, it is the holy ghost that babbles through us.[566] Wherever this

divine Nonsense disrupts the dialectical course of reason, Irony, "suttl'st Beast of all the

field,"[567] slithers into our *parole* and becomes all but indistinguishable from our *langue*. We are

stricken with a *mal de langue,* or what Proust identifies in Giotto's fresco of Charity and Envy as

"une tumeur de la langue."[568] In recalling a letter of de Man's from shortly before his death (of

a brain tumor), in which he writes that "the word 'tumeur' . . . is more terrible, more

insinuating and menacing in French than in any other language,"[569] Derrida says nothing of this

Proustian passage. This is rather surprising since this text can easily be regarded as the

frontispiece for everything de Man has written on allegory.[570] But this occlusion of (or occulted

allusion to) the Proustian *tu-meur* is hardly accidental. In profoundly allegorical inscriptions

such as these, we find a metastasis of citation that cannot be pathologized, only thematized.

Thematization is our primary mechanism for coping with the mnemotechnical crisis. It

entails the balancing of the temporal, financial and even physical costs of philological rigor

against the demands of academic production, the marshaling of research along disciplinary

lines, the 'critical' sampling of citation that must somehow stand, synecdochally, for the totality

of an oeuvre. It involves a necessary reduction of textual material to communicable questions

and concepts and may even be regarded as a kind of institutional *branding*. Themes are what

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[566] "We ought, forsooth, to be contented with the words of God, and simply to believe what they affirm; since the works of God quite surpass all description. But, by way of humouring reason, which is another name for human folly, I am content to be silly and foolish, and to try if I can at all move her by turning babbler [*Balbatiendo*]." Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (J. Hamilton, 1823), 266.

[567] Milton, "Paradise" in *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, VII.495 (cf. *Gen* 3:1)

[568] Proust, *Recherche*, 73

[569] Derrida, *Memoires*, xix

[570] Perhaps on account de Man's more direct citation of the line from Mallarmé's "Tombeau de Verlaine" that speaks of the "peu profond ruisseau calomnié la mort,"

we are 'about.' We are all about themes. But the timbre of the theme, insofar as it is *composed*

of innumerable references and citations, is deceptively subtle.

Like all mnemotechnical acts, thematization can only be thought within an economy of

speed. This is the first thing we are given to read in *Allegories of Reading* : "quand on lit trop

vite ou trop doucement, on n'entend rien."[571] In thematizing, we presume to have followed the

text closely enough to know the quickest way through to the passages that matter the most.

The speed with which the thematic understanding passes over a majority of the text is justified

by the time it frees up for more extensive citation and closer reading. All reading is

deconstructive up to the point that it inevitably lets itself off the thematico-citational hook.

Deconstruction distinguishes itself from 'deconstructionism' only to the extent that the

resistance to themes is woven into the very fiber of the text. It mobilizes every typographical

resource to forestall the relapse into thematization. Hence: the metastasis of citation, the

indivisible blocks of quotation, the gnomic intertextuality of footnotes, the obsessive

compulsion to articulate each citation within the history of the *oeuvre* and the equally

obsessive compulsion to disarticulate these citations by showing the thematic impulses at work

in their selection. Far from transcending themes, deconstruction gives us the most rigorous (i.e.

citationally-grounded) thematization possible. But here, again, 'possible' must be read within

inverted commas, because it is always possible (and necessary) to continue the task of

deconstructing the thematic coherence again and again. We cannot help thematizing, but we

can at least *cite* ourselves for doing so. Such a reading, de Man argues, would attain (or at least

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[571] Man, *Allegories*. If we are to treat this Pascalian epigraph like the Petrarchan epigraph in *Julie*, we would have to ask whether the thematic narrative that weaves *Allegories of Reading* together is something that de Man wrote himself or found in the texts of others.

approximate) some degree of technical "correctness." While it is difficult to regard de Man's

notion of technical 'correctness' without irony, we cannot deny that he provides us practical or,

at least, practicable directives for "critical linguistic reading" which, even if they do not amount

to a method, are invaluable for anyone who seriously believes in the inevitability of our relapse

into aesthetics and ideology. "Mere reading," then, is, perhaps, the only remedy for (overly)

thematic reading.

The materiality of the deconstructive critique hinges on a certain *phantomaticity* – the

possibility of reconciling "hauntology"[572] and "mechanology"[573] – ghost and machine. *Specters*

of Marx is not *all* about ghosts after all. It is an attempt to conceive a "politics of memory" that

could "think the political beyond the political, as it were, or the democratic beyond democracy -

by technics concretely, urgently, every day - both as a threat and as a chance."[574] Derrida's

entire political project can be outlined in what he refers to as the "disjointure of the *Un-Fug*"

> The necessary disjointure, the de-totalizing condition of justice, is indeed here that of
> the present – and by the same token the very condition of the present and of the
> presence of the present. This is where deconstruction would always begin to take shape
> as the thinking of the gift and of undeconstructible justice, the undeconstructible
> condition of any deconstruction, to be sure, but a condition that is itself in
> *deconstruction* and remains, and must remain (that is the injunction) in the disjointure
> of the *Un-Fug*. . . . in the waiting or calling for what we have nicknamed here without
> knowing the messianic: the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable
> singularity of the *arrivant as justice. We* believe that this messianic remains an
> *ineffaceable* mark – a mark one neither can nor should efface – of Marx's legacy, and
> doubtless of *inheriting,* of the experience of inheritance in general. Otherwise, one
> would reduce the event-ness of the event, the singularity and the alterity of the
> other.[575]

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[572] Derrida, *Specters*, 10
[573] Stiegler, *Technics 1*, 67–69; Hui, *Digital Objects*, 248–52
[574] Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies*, 65
[575] Derrida, *Specters*, 33

Behind this theory of justice lies an incredibly intricate reading of "The Saying of Anaximander" which, as Frederic Jameson attests, is "virtually the dead center of all of Derrida's meditations on Heidegger."[576] The Un-Fug of which Heidegger writes in his reading of Anaximander resounds throughout his readings of Heraclitus as well – in the inceptual ἔρις of Δίκη and Ἀδικία that is "virtually the dead center" of Heidegger's meditations on just about everything. It is in the very nature of this Un-Fug that we can only surmise its epicenter. Clearly there is much more going on under the theme of "justice" than Derrida cares to cite here, which is rather curious since, when deconstructing a text, citation is tantamount to Ἀνάγκη. But, to be fair, we must also allow that Derrida's summary conclusions here might be justified by virtue of the extraordinary rigor with which he (and Heidegger) expound them elsewhere. Here we might ask whether Derrida, in "conjuring" Marxism to the theme of justice, presumes a common citational horizon that is radically out of joint with the apparent 'disparateness' of their respective canons – whether it is even possible to speak of a "politics of memory" when it is scarcely possible to recall all of the citations through which it is articulated? To even begin to follow this theme of justice is a big ask and, perhaps, this radical faith in the possibility of a conjuration *of* and concordance *with* Marxism is a somewhat perverse enactment of precisely that which, according to Derrida, in profound accord with Heidegger, calls for "justice" and, thus, deserves to be called "justice." This is to say that Derrida projects a "messianic" future based on what Marxists *will have had to have read* rather than what he suspects them to have read – that the prospect of having read enough to know what 'justice' means must, to a point approaching madness, remain spectral.

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[576] Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London, Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010), 148

To maintain the fidelity of the singularity of style, materiality of inscription, gravity of engraving, is the singular *point* of deconstruction – the *stylus* that inscribes the deconstructive *text*. The question of justice – the "hinge" [brisure] that articulates Δίκη and Ἀδικία – hinges on the relationship between citation and thematization – on how much context might, justifiably, be expected (or demanded) of the Other (Reader). In placing thematization and citation in the balance, we see how terms like 'justice' (or 'autoimmunity') become "unreadable" in the vaguely laudatory, de Manian sense. The burden and monotony of paraphrase and recapitulation that Derrida is, to a large extent, shirking in the passage above is precisely what we (as scholars) *must* shirk if the works of Derrida and Marx are to remain open to future reading. At this present juncture, according to the "imperative of progress" and "ever-new needs," at a rate dictated by the machinations of the institutional text machine that we mistake for a humanistic organism, the future of the profession requires more than "mere reading" – annotation, citational concordance, indexing, archiving, etc. – it requires text! It is a "matter of life or death" – of publishing or perishing. But what happens when the amount of paraphrase and context expected by this machine cannot possibly be provided within the very material limits it imposes? What happens when academic labor time falls "out of joint" with itself – when the rhythm of production falls out of sync with the work-to-come? The answer, in too many cases, is that certain modes of questioning are foreclosed because they cannot be opened within the space provided – the dissertation, conference paper, journal article, academic blog, seminar, colloquium and, above all, attention span. This is not to say that scholars do not still write monomaniacally monographic treatises, only that such works, within

the mode of academic knowledge production we are currently enframed, are *con*signed to oblivion.

If there is a future in which Marxists and Derridians can conjure one another to citational-thematic justice, it will have to be one in which the Other reader can encounter the disjointure of this kind of intertext (Derrida-Heidegger-Anaximander-Heraclitus) while somehow balancing the (general) economics of professionalization and the askesis of critical rigor. If *Specters of Marx* fails, perhaps willfully, to conjure Marxism, it may yet be justified by the kind of mnemotechnical prosthesis that would allow a Marxist scholar to see past the thematic closure of the too-dense context and into the more discrete rifts *within* this density – t*o see past the present thematic knot of the past into the past opened up by prosthetic memory*. We can only hope that such a prosthesis arrives quickly enough to draw Marxists and Derridians into the future of this questioning – binding them into this knot. For speed is absolutely of the essence here, as Stiegler contends. From the standpoint of mnemotechnics, the future and, hence, the possibility of a citational-thematic justice might only remain open for a fraction of a second. If a citational knot cannot be thematized (which is not to say untangled) before institutional (thematic) pressure pushes one to read on, then it will not really have taken place at all. It will not have been an event. What Derrida calls justice can only be supported by a mnemotechical infrastructure that responds to and resounds with the event of exappropriation.

Thematization / Solicitation

If the internet as we know it today is the 'end' of hypertext, it has fallen far short of the visionary, utopian, "trailblazing" potential of the "skip trail" put forth by Vannevar Bush in "As

We May Think" and subsequently elaborated by Ted Nelson, George Landow, Jerome

McGannn, Johanna Drucker, Bernard Stiegler and Yuk Hui.[577] Despite the proliferation of

modern computing, the World Wide Web and the various databases that comprise it, we are

still in very much the same state that Bush bemoaned in 1945:

> we can enormously extend the record; yet even in its present bulk we can hardly consult it. This is a much larger matter than merely the extraction of data for the purposes of scientific research; it involves the entire process by which man profits by his inheritance of acquired knowledge. The prime action of use is selection, and here we are halting indeed. There may be millions of fine thoughts, and the account of the experience on which they are based, all encased within stone walls of acceptable architectural form;

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[577] Cf. Bush "Ah, here is a side trail, and on it are a sequence of striking remarks, by friends, authors, even himself, in which the concept of gentleman is part of the central theme. And, along this path appears the statement by Cardinal Newman of the definition of gentleman, as the term should apply in modern society. This is what he sought. And it gives him what he needs to pursue the line of thought which caused him to enter. So he pins a side trail onto the Newman quotation, and speaks some of his own elaborations of the thought into the record. And, in succeeding days, as his concept develops, he follows that same trail again several times, and adds new matter, of his own, and that he has garnered elsewhere. Can he find it again after a lapse of years? In several ways, by remembering an individual there quoted, from his subject index, or just by again browsing vaguely as he did before." Vannevar Bush, *From Memex to Hypertext: Vannevar Bush and the mind's machine*, ed. James M. Nyce and Paul Kahn (Boston: Academic Press, 1991), 175. Cf. also Landow: "The standard scholarly article in the humanities or physical sciences perfectly embodies the underlying notions of hypertext as multisequentially read text. For example, in reading an article on, say, James Joyce's *Ulysses,* one reads through what is conventionally known as the main text, encounters a number or symbol that indicates the presence of a footnote or endnote, and leaves the main text to read that note, which can contain a citation of passages in *Ulysses* that supposedly support the argument in question or information about the scholarly author's indebtedness to other authors, disagreement with them, and so on. The note can also summon up information about sources, influences, and parallels in other literary texts. In each case, the reader can follow the link to another text indicated by the note and thus move entirely outside the scholarly article itself. Having completed reading the note or having decided that it does not warrant a careful reading at the moment, one returns to the main text and continues reading until one encounters another note, at which point one again leaves the main text. This kind of reading constitutes the basic experience and starting point of hypertext. Suppose now that one could simply touch the page where the symbol of a note, reference, or annotation appeared, and thus instantly bring into view the material contained in a note or even the entire other text-here all of *Ulysses-to* which that note refers. Scholarly articles situate themselves within a field of relations, most of which the print medium keeps out of sight and relatively difficult to follow, because in print technology the referenced (or linked) materials lie spatially distant from the references to them. Electronic hypertext, in contrast, makes individual references easy to follow and the entire field of interconnections obvious and easy to navigate. Changing the ease with which one can orient oneself within such a context and pursue individual references radically changes both the experience of reading and ultimately the nature of that which is read. For example, if one possessed a hypertext system in which our putative Joyce article was linked to all the other materials it cited, it would exist as part of a much larger system in which the totality might count more than the individual document; the article would now be woven more tightly into its context than would a printed counterpart." Landow, *Hypertext*, 3–4

but if the scholar can get at only one a week by diligent search, his syntheses are not likely to keep up with the current scene.[578]

Beyond the basic capacity for linking one digital document to another, Bush is preoccupied with the possibility of balancing the thematic interests of scholarly research with the more contingent associations and linkages that occur in the process. What seems to be a passing joke about the archaic architecture of the modern research library is actually a penetrating critique of the sepulchral quality of informational space and the skeletal shape of academic-institutional *Gestell*.

Might it be that the academic publication (*qua* fundamental unit of scholarly work) is too long. If it were possible to further atomize and nodalize this structure, would we necessarily lose the integrity of the text or would the cumulative scholarly work that went into it become more readable overall for a greater community of scholars interested in related ideas, but without the time to commit to sitting down and reading linearly what is only interesting in an oblique way? Such "radial reading," as Jerome McGann argues, is "a function of the historicity of texts."[579]

> It necessitates some kind of abstraction from what appears most immediately. The person who temporarily stops "reading" to look up the meaning of a word is properly an emblem of radial reading because that kind of "radial" operation is repeatedly taking place even while one remains absorbed with a text.[580]

In every reading, insights and problems may arise that are too tangential to be included in the published work, but which may be incredibly valuable in themselves. Perhaps these insights and problems are never even recorded in the first place because they fall outside the scope of the

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[578] Bush, *Memex*, 99
[579] Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 125
[580] McGann, *Textual*, 119

project at hand. The "Memex," according to Bush, would allow scholars to transition seamlessly between "browsing vaguely" and collaboratively annotating. He calls this process "associative indexing," which he contrasts with the more common form of hierarchical indexing that we find in a standard alphabetical index. Channeling Nietzsche, he writes:

> Presumably man's spirit should be elevated if he can better review his shady past and analyze more completely and objectively his present problems. He [Man] has built a civilization so complex that he needs to mechanize his records more fully if he is to push his experiment to its logical conclusion and not merely become bogged down part way there by overtaxing his limited memory. His excursions may be more enjoyable if he can reacquire the privilege of forgetting the manifold things he does not need to have immediately at hand, with some assurance that he can find them again if they prove important.[581]

The Memex enables us to "forget" what we have *not yet* read by directing us to that which we were seeking to read in the first place and, without which, we would *first* have to have read any number of things in full and then, in all likelihood, forgotten. Today, almost all of us eventually end up publishing online, but this typically does not happen until we have already done a majority of the thematizing in our preferred mode and medium of study which, in the humanities at least, is often offline. So many of the implicit impressions, questions, conceptual linkages and organizational groupings that may have existed in the heat of the readerly moment are levelled off in the process of digitization. Any scholar can go back, retroactively, and hyperlink published essays with the drafts, outlines, references and citations from which they were composed, but this tends to make the work of linking something supplemental rather than essential – as if the hypertextual development of the intertext only becomes worthwhile *after* the work has found an audience. This is not how Bush envisioned it. What he

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[581] Bush, *Memex*, 106–7

foresaw, rather, was a workflow in which all of the intellectual labor leading up to the final

publication would be embedded in a collaborative text in more or less 'real' time. The main

point of the side trail is to render the constructedness of research transparent even in its

earliest stages so that scholars might begin to find and interact with their audience prior to

publication.

If modern hypertextual scholarship really lived up to Bush's vision, then the rhythm of

scholarly production would look quite different. There would no longer be such a clearly

defined phase of research and outlining prior to the 'final' publication. The workflow of the

Memex assumes that a researcher will cross paths with "friends, authors [and] even himself"

the moment he begins to read a text that they have in common. This means that any number of

scholars working closely on the same or similar texts would necessarily have a chance to

approach one another regardless of whether or not their research is approaching publication

(or even conference) readiness. Such engagements would provide amateurs, undergraduates

and professionals an opportunity to be read widely without necessarily going through the

machinery of scholarly publication which, as we know, has some significant latency. The

readability and citability of scholarship would no longer depend on whether and where it gets

published but, instead, on how skillfully and how acutely it engages a specific text or textual

community: "The inheritance from the master becomes, not only his additions to the world's

record, but for his disciples the entire scaffolding by which they were erected."[582] This

"scaffolding" is nothing other than the teacher's implicit organization of discrete pieces of

information (or citations) into thematic hierarchies or groups. It is what would now be regarded

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[582] Bush, *Memex*, 105

as a database. The database is, indeed, one of the most promising sites for collaboration

because even scholars with contradictory methodological and ideological positions could

potentially come to a consensus on what materials are thematically relevant to the area of

research, enhancing one another's 'field vision' along the way. A Freudian could potentially

learn more from the Marxist's database than his published drafts. While the latter may treat

the material of interest to the Freudian in a summary, thematic or polemical fashion, the

database itself might offer a more neutral, thematically relevant and citationally grounded basis

on which to begin a conversation.

While it is impossible to deny that Google's PageRank algorithm is based on an

associative indexing of human attention and browsing habits, that Wikipedia often exceeds our

expectations of collaborative, crowdsourced knowledge and that pre-print repositories like

Arxive.org have significantly transformed our understanding of 'published' work, the vast

majority of users seldom explore the potential of these technologies at the level of granularity

proposed by Bush – at the level of the citation or passage – a level that falls strangely outside

the scope of a tweet or a post but falls well short of the massive textual corpora on which some

of the most powerful language algorithms are being trained.

In "Memex II," Bush speaks of a profoundly recursive mnemotechnical prosthesis that

might be tailored to the mind of a single user:

> What will be accomplished by Memex II? Going beyond the extension and ordering of
> man's memory, it can also touch those subtle processes of the mind, its logical and
> rational processes, its ability to form judgments in the presence of incomplete and
> contradictory data, as these become facilitated by better memory. The machine's
> primary service lies primarily in extending the mass of recollection, and in rendering this
> explicit rather than vague. It also provides a memory which does not fade, and by
> causing it to be more promptly accessible than by the somewhat haphazard trails of
> association in the brain itself. Its trails are formed deliberately, under full control of the

user, ultimately in accordance with the dictates of experience in the art of trail architecture. This, in turn, remolds the trails of the user's brain, as one lives and works in close interconnection with a machine of scanned records and transistors. For the trails of the machine become duplicated in the brain of the user, vaguely as all human memory is vague, but with a concomitant emphasis by repetition, creation and discard, refinement, as the cells of the brain become realigned and reconnected, better to utilize the massive explicit memory which is its servant.[583]

N. Katherine Hayles argues similarly in *How We Became Posthuman* :

> the more we understand the flexible, adaptive structures that coordinate our environments and the metaphors that we ourselves are, the better we can fashion images of ourselves that accurately reflect the complex interplays that ultimately make the entire world one system.[584]

Elaborating upon this cybernetic, Memexian theme and the idea of an "algorithmic criticism" of the sort proposed by Stephen Ramsay in *As We Think*, Hayles explores the "crucial questions" of "how to convert the increased digital reading into increased reading ability, and how to make effective bridges between digital reading and the literacy traditionally associated with print."[585]

> Close reading typically occurs in a monolocal context (that is, with a single text). Here the context is quite rich, including the entire text and other texts connected with it through networks of allusions, citations, and iterative quotations. Hyper reading, by contrast, typically occurs in a multilocal context. Because many textual fragments are juxtaposed, context is truncated, often consisting of a single phrase or sentence, as in a Google search. In machine reading, the context may be limited to a few words or eliminated altogether, as in a word-frequency list. Relatively context poor, machine reading is enriched by context-rich close reading when close reading provides guidance for the construction of algorithms. . . . The more the emphasis falls on pattern (as in machine reading), the more likely it is that context must be supplied from outside (by a human interpreter) to connect pattern with meaning; the more the emphasis falls on meaning (as in close reading), the more pattern assumes a subordinate role. In general, the different distributions among pattern, meaning, and context provide ways to think about interrelations among close, hyper, and machine reading.[586]

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[583] Bush, *Memex*, 177–78
[584] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 290
[585] Hayles, *How We Think*, 56
[586] Hayles, *How We Think*, 74

In many cases, the mechanism by which the computer "understands" the content of these texts

is based on the statistical frequency and propinquity of words. The kind of context one might

gain by machine reading thousands of texts seems wildly incompatible with the sense of

context that, for us, renders only the smallest fraction of words and passages remarkable. As

the experiments of Matthew Jockers, Franco Moretti and countless digital humanists have

shown, this kind of macroanalysis can grant a powerful prosthetic insight into genres, canons

and archives worth of texts, but these algorithms still seem to be quite a ways from knowing

what it is that makes a citation citable in the first place let alone the singular resonance by

which the history of citation condenses into a theme.

Alan Liu examines the network architecture of the modern university as a kind of

mnemotechnical impedance between "managerial" and "reproductive" citations:

> Literary history . . . is a system of remote citations designed to control the connection between literary-historical subjects and objects. But how does primary literature get fed into the system in the first place as a subject able to be distributed and, thereby, abridged and steered? What if the initial charge of literature were simply too large to be handled by the literary-historical circuits and could discharge only in a lightning strike of literal presentation? . . . Without some impedance or, better, buffer (in current technologese: *flow control*) able to compensate for this imbalance, all the delicate narrative forks of literary history would be flooded by an initial surge of primary narrative that becomes unmanageable simply because it saturates *all* the forks in the literary-historical decision tree, . . . How can the citational connection between literary history and primary literature be monitored, therefore, so as to control the entry of reproductive citations into the network of managerial citations? Indeed, how are managerial citations themselves controlled so that they do not suddenly turn reproductive and ask us to see too much of the remote authority? If each relay in a literary-historical narrative is a sentry controlling the actions of literature as "hero," in short, what prior sentry with a master on / off switch can from the first either cut literature down to size (phrased qualitatively: limit and organize the use of reproductive

devices) or buffer it with flow-control techniques (storing the signal in the cache of history and tradition) so that it becomes narratively tractable?[587]

Is it possible to map the "unthought" [Ungedacht] by which thinking is conducted? Is it possible to constellate the inhuman inscriptions of memory? If so, our mnemotechnical infrastructure would need to include more than the nebulae of 'big' ideas. It would need to somehow show the singularities around which they revolve – the translational movements out of which they precipitate or, rather, fail to precipitate – the anti-matter that engraves the gravity of this cosmos by withdrawing from every materiality and materialism known to man. Such a text machine would allow us to analyze the state of academic institutional enframing more materially than ever before on a scale hitherto unimaginable. It would allow us to rigorously encode tropological movement within an infrastructure of citations.

Thematization must always seek to 'ground' itself in citation – in the kind of *Passagenwerk* on which Benjamin based his entire theory of knowledge. Only by animating the constellation of citations at scale can we gain any insight into thematization – that most ubiquitous and elusive of mnemotechniques. Imagine a text machine that would grant us, in the very act of reading, instantaneous and immanent access to all of the thematically-relevant citations available within a given database. This would be nothing less than the technological actualization of the "active forgetting" propounded by Nietzsche. If every citation leads to (a specific point within) the cited text, every text within a given library could be indexed accordingly.

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[587] Alan Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on postmodern historicism and the database* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 196–98

- Any instance of an author's name could recall all available works and all works in which these works are referenced

- Any instance of a work could recall all the works in which this work is referenced (down to the specific phrase being cited)

- Any instance of a word could be linked with its definition in any available dictionary

- Any key word or phrase could be cross-correlated

- Any translation, version or draft could be cross-correlated and displayed as interlinear or side-by-side comparison.

While this much is entirely within range of our current machines, we still have not reached the kingdom of *Xanadu* Ted Nelson announced long ago.[588] With the right kind of textual interfacing and indexing, scholarly works would no longer be separated from the works upon which they work. Even book-length arguments could be written into the interstices of the texts being cited. You would no longer need to cite anything directly. This much would be automated. You could simply begin typing a phrase and, after a certain statistical threshold has been reached, a drop-down auto-complete menu would enable you to select however much more or less of the indexed passage you want in your quotation. It would not only format citations and generate bibliographies automatically, as so many reference management platforms already do, it would embed this within the work so that, by clicking on the line in the work cited you would be led to the work in which it is cited (and vice versa). Before even consciously trying to cite another work, the substance of what you are writing might trigger recommendations the 'relevance' of which could be determined and adjusted both manually

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588 At least not a cloud-compatible Xanadu – but what is Xanadu if not a kingdom of the cloud?

and algorithmically over time. In other words, based on a vague constellation of key words and phrases, such an algorithm could present you with a reference that you read, forgot, and were in the process of re-membering as your own intellectual property or, perhaps, a passage within your library that you never read, but really ought to have read, since you are now in the process of (re)inventing it independently. This sort of autocitational recommendation algorithm would constitute a *solicitation* in the Derridian sense – a textual machination by which the "structure" of intellectual property and the foundation of academic propriety would be

> *methodically* threatened in order to be comprehended more clearly . . . not only its supports but also that secret place in which it is neither construction nor ruin but lability. This operation is called (from the Latin) *soliciting.* In other words, *shaking* in a way related to the *whole* (from *sollus,* in archaic Latin "the whole," and from *citare,* "to put in motion"). The structuralist solicitude and solicitation give themselves only the illusion of technical liberty when they become methodical. In truth, they reproduce, in the register of method, a solicitude and solicitation of Being, a historico-metaphysical threatening of foundations. It is during the epochs of historical dislocation, when we are expelled from the *site*, that this structuralist passion, which is simultaneously a frenzy of experimentation and a proliferation of schematizations, develops for itself. [589]

An algorithm of solicitation would mechanistically expose our (equally mechanistic) aesthetic, ideological tendencies by directing us toward the texts in which similar tropes turn up and the texts in which they are most rigorously overturned (i.e. deconstructed). This *Solicitor* would cite us for not citing, for thematizing where we should be citing, for failing to follow *and failing to stray* from the most trodden pathways through the Library of Babel.

A critical mnemotechnical infrastructure of this sort would allow us to reflect upon the power of the metadata we generate and, perhaps, wield it more conscientiously in such a way that it is not collected, monetized, and deployed for distinctly anti-humanistic ends. It would

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[589] Derrida, *Writing*, 6

also traverse undergraduate and post-graduate discourse in a way that bridges the gap between humanities students and humanities professionals. The teaching of language and composition is the critical front along which the ideology of 'seamless' technological adoption faces the reality of the classroom – the site at which the appreciation of rhetorical nuance is often overshadowed by the difficulty of understanding the literal, grammatical meaning of a text. It is here that we are forced to ask whether the teaching of rhetorical 'awareness' necessarily coincides with the writing competency expected in the world of science and business where clarity, exactness, and polish are at a premium. If rhetorical insight exceeds and, in many cases, challenges the logical coherence of a final draft, then it is essential that we document the difference between the quality of thought and the quality of writing that can be produced within the semester or quarter. Exercises in 'reflective' writing are helpful to an extent, but are they really objective enough to establish the value of rhetoric according to the metrics by which academic funding is being assessed and distributed? From this perspective, the disorientation that necessarily accompanies experimental digital workflows can be justified inasmuch as they afford a vital opportunity for us to figure out how the value of rhetorical education might be quantified on our own humanistic terms.

Like 'art' in Hegel's *Aesthetics,* rhetoric is, increasingly, for our students at least, a thing of the past. But this is only so long as rhetoric remains aloof from the modern data economy and the language in which it is encoded. If we can embrace the extent to which the *danger* of rhetoric necessitates that "other," "allegorithmic" thinking that fascinated and scandalized Heidegger from in his reading of Novalis, we must ask:

- How can we justify the rigorous teaching of rhetoric (grounded in the practice of close reading) in a data-driven economy that relies increasingly on "distant," machine reading?

- How might we take advantage of the incredible power of digital memory without reifying humanistic "truth"?

- How can we ensure that the algorithmic intelligence drawing on ontological web languages can register the singularity of literature?

If deconstruction must, today, be reduced to the theme of "play," would it be possible to design a game that might unfold as an ironic allegory of this term? – a rigorously ludic *and* technical play that would

- *Illustrate how the value of rhetorical analysis is not entirely relativistic* – even if the value of a reading can only be established socially and contextually, encoding social evaluation and contextualization as rules of the game itself could allow certain readings to "win" out over others without ever winning in an absolute sense.

- *Encourage distributed attention* – so that the most striking rhetorical sites within a text are the first to be mapped, becoming increasingly competitive and nuanced over time, encouraging new readers to explore unmapped regions.

- *Encode the act of semantic disambiguation using existing web ontologies* – requiring humanists to map their readings within a resource description framework (RDF), exposing them to the inherent limitations of this framework and enabling them to participate in its elaboration.

- Diagnose areas of aesthetic, ideological blindness in humanistic knowledge production and encourage these to self-correct according to the very rules of the game.

VI. Machine Reading

Inscription / Magnitude

Despite its insurmountable unreadability, 'rhetoric' is one of Paul de Man's most *technical* terms. In "The Resistance to Theory" he asserts that "technically correct rhetorical readings may be boring, monotonous, predictable and unpleasant, but they are irrefutable."[591] It is in statements like this that we realize how much he resembles the text machine of which he writes. Derrida even refers to him as "irony itself" – a figure that would be difficult to regard as a personification in the common sense, though, perhaps, not in the technical sense in which de Man spoke of prosopopoeia.

If Derrida was haunted by a spectral otherness, de Man was automated by a tautological sameness. In this pseudo-opposition we might seek to trace the différance of sovereignty and arbitrariness, autonomy and automaticity, autoimmunity and mechanicity, etc. In Derrida, as in Heidegger, we often find moments of unbridled poetizing, but de Man never lets us forget that

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[590] "If one could only make people understand that it is the same with language as with mathematical formulae. These constitute a world of their own. They play only with themselves, express nothing but their own marvelous nature, and just for this reason they are so expressive – just for this reason the strange play of relations between things is mirrored in them. Only through their freedom are they elements of nature and only in their free movements does the world-soul manifest itself in them and make them a sensitive measure and ground plan of things." Quoted in Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*, 163

[591] Man, *Resistance*, 37

the 'poetry' of thinking is really a prosaic, mechanical and inhuman script. While it is often

suppressed in many of their published works, this difference can be gleaned in more occasional

remarks – in the interview with Maurizio Ferraris, for instance, where Derrida states:

> I do the best I can to mark the limits of the linguistic and the limits of the rhetorical - this
> was the crux of my profound debate with Paul de Man, who had a more 'rhetoricist'
> interpretation of deconstruction.

> As you know, I take great interest in questions of language and rhetoric, and I think they
> deserve enormous consideration; but there is a point where the authority of final
> jurisdiction is neither rhetorical nor linguistic, nor even discursive.[592]

We know that whenever Derrida speaks of "authority" and "final jurisdiction" something

strange is going on. De Man may well have been the only one capable of driving him into this

rather pedantic mood. But even though Derrida challenges some of his most mechanistic

hypotheses, it is quite clear that he greatly admired de Man's technical rhetorical approach to

deconstruction. In "Acts: The Meaning of a given word," the last of the three 1984 Wellek

lectures given shortly after de Man's death in 1983, he writes that

> every reading proposed by Paul de Man, and recently rendered more and more
> explicitly, says something about institutional structures and the political stakes of
> hermeneutic conflicts. The characteristics of these readings are most often discreet, but
> always clear and incisive, and always directed not so much against the profession or the
> institution, but against the academisms of the right and the left, against the
> conservatism that apolitical traditionalists and activists share in common.[593]

Derrida here reads de Man's deconstruction, and deconstruction in general, as "a discourse and

a practice on the subject of the academic institution, professionalization, and departmental

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[592] Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, ed. Giacomo Donis and David Webb (Malden, MA:
Polity Press, 2001), 76
[593] Derrida, *Memoires*, 142

structures that can no longer contain it."[594] It is in this context that he broaches the

"redoubtable problem of *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*" and the "immense question of artificial

memory."[595] This is the question through which we have attempted to think the text machine

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[594] "How could a narrative account for a phenomenon in progress? This particular phenomenon also proceeds like a set of narratives which could have no closure, and which would be exceedingly difficult to situate. Geopolitics does not suffice. Can we speak of "deconstruction in America"? Does it take place in the United States? First in Europe, and then in America-as some too quickly conclude, thereby raising the questions (which are themselves not without interest) of reception, translation, appropriation, etc? Do we know first of all what deconstruction represents in Europe? We cannot know without drawing out all the threads of a knot where we see tangled with each other the history of philosophies, the histories of "Philosophy," of literatures, of sciences, of technologies, of cultural and university institutions, and of socio-political history and the structure of a multitude of linguistic or so-called personal idioms. These entanglements are multiple; they meet nowhere, neither in a point nor in a memory. There is no singular memory. . . . If I had to risk a single definition of deconstruction, one as brief, elliptical, and economical as a password, I would say simply and without overstatement: plus d'une langue-both more than a language and no more of a language. In fact it is neither a statement nor a sentence. It is sententious, it makes no sense if, at least as Austin would have it, words in isolation have no meaning. What makes sense is the sentence. How many sentences can be made with "deconstruction"? . . . for deconstruction is also, and increasingly so, a discourse and a practice on the subject of the academic institution, professionalization, and departmental structures that can no longer contain it." Derrida, *Memoires*, 13–16

[595] "Where does the provocative force of de Manian interpretation reside? In at least this: that in order to distinguish *Gedächtnis* (thinking memory) from *Erinnerung* (interiorizing memory), whether he does it in the name of Hegel or by focusing on some "cornerstone" of the Hegelian system, de Man marks the irreducible link between thought as memory and the technical dimension of memorization, the art of writing, of "material" inscription, in short, of all that exteriority which, after Plato, we call hypomnesic, the exteriority of Mnemon, rather than that of Mneme. In recalling this unity between thought and technology (that is to say, as well, between thought *and* the exteriority of the graphic inscription – de Man speaks of the "art of writing" – between thought and techno-science) through memory, de Manian deconstruction resembles, in the same act, a double decision. Very schematically: *on the one hand,* it in principle gives itself the means to not drive out into the exterior and inferior dark regions of thought, the immense question of artificial memory and of the modern modalities of archivation which today affects, according to a rhythm and with dimensions that have no common measure with those of the past, the totality of our relation to the world (on this side of or beyond its anthropological determination): habitat, all languages, writing, "culture," art (beyond picture galleries, film libraries, video libraries, record libraries), literature (beyond libraries), all information or informatization (beyond "memory" data banks), techno-sciences, philosophy (beyond university institutions), and everything within the transformation which affects all relations to the future. This prodigious mutation not only heightens the stature, the quantitative economy of so-called artificial memory, but also its qualitative structure – and in doing so it obliges us to rethink what relates this artificial memory to man's so-called psychical and interior memory, to truth, to the simulacrum and simulation of truth, etc. Let it be quickly said in passing that, if we wish to analyze that nebula named "deconstruction in America," it is necessary *also,* not only, but also, to take account of this problematic under all of its aspects. There is no deconstruction which does not begin by tackling this problematic or by preparing itself to tackle this problematic, and which does not begin by again calling into question the dissociation between thought and technology, especially when it has a hierarchical vocation, however secret, subtle, sublime, or denied it may be. This leads me to the second point: *on the other hand,* in fact, the attention accorded to this link between *Gedächtnis* and hypomnesic writing no doubt leads to our no longer being able to subscribe (for my part, I have never done so) to Heidegger's sentence and to all that it supposes: *Die Wissenschaft denkt nicht,* science does not think. . . .

and upon which any rigorous thinking of our mnemotechnical infrastructure must be based. If what de Man refers to as 'inscriptions' are, to some extent, technological, then the material events they might be said to "generate" are mnemotechnical. Allegories of reading are, at least potentially, allegories of a writing that involves the flow of photons and electrons and the switching of logical gates. That this was not exactly what de Man had in mind should not prevent us from inquiring along this path, but it should, at the very least, make us very curious about the "unreadability" of the mnemotechnical inscription. How could a machine, of the sort that possesses a CPU and RAM, inscribe anything other than what it has been programmed to inscribe? At first glance, it seems doubtful that 'mechanical' errors could take on the allegorical complexity that arises from the disruption of the cognitive-tropological model of language. The question here is whether and to what extent the mechanicity of the text machine is compatible with the technicity of tertiary retention – whether mechanicity and technicity, in these highly determinate contexts, are reducible or even compatible with one another.

The materiality of the inscription, however abstract it may appear, consists of its immanent citability. It is possible, in other words, to cite some particular tropological structure

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What refers to science here also goes for technology ("Modern science grounds itself upon the essence of technology"). The Heideggerian argument which operates everywhere to justify this division and hierarchy, when it is reduced to its essential schema, has the following form and can be transposed everywhere: "The essence of technology is nothing technological." The thinking of this essence therefore is in no way "technological" or "technicist"; it is free of all technicity because it thinks technicity, it is not scientific because it thinks the scientificity of science. Heidegger would say the same thing of all determined sciences, for example, of linguistics, rhetoric, etc. The thinking of the rhetoricity of rhetoric (within the history of philosophy, a derived and belated technological knowledge) is in no way a rhetoric.

Perhaps we can measure the stakes of de Manian interpretation. It delineates a gesture quite different from that of Heidegger by recalling that the relation of *Gedächtnis* to technique, artifice, writing, the sign, etc., could not be one of exteriority or heterogeneity. This amounts to saying that the exteriority or the division, the dis-junction, *is the relation,* the essential juncture between thinking memory and the so-called techno-scientific, indeed literary outside (for literature, literary writing, is, for Heidegger, in the same position as technoscience with regard to thought or poetry). I would say that this gesture is quite different from Heidegger's and that it gives rise to quite different intonations" Derrida, *Memoires*, 106–10

as the quasi-cause of an event that radiates into history – an event that *irradiates* history. Insofar as textual history is grammatically inscribed, it affords a kind of parallax in which to read the inscription – some means for triangulating in on those sites of tropological activity complex enough to "generate history." We should at least be able to 'see' (if not read) the inscription by way of the mnemotechnical prosthesis afforded by the text machine – in the sedimentary accumulation of error in the archive. If a text is frequently misread over a significant period of time we should be able to detect a kind of material eventuality – not directly, but in the way certain passages refuse to be 'received' and bend the course of interpretation away from what is literally, grammatically inscribed in patterns that may, eventually, be read, allegorically, as if through a glass, darkly [ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι].[596]

As J. Hillis Miller and Tom Cohen have pointed out, the inscription functions like a black hole. It can only be read by the false light that escapes its singularity – in the penumbra of error that shrouds its event horizon. It is this anti-matter of inscription, much more than the materiality of words and things, that holds the universe of reference together. It distorts the continuum of dialectical space-time, providing the aesthetic, ideological 'centers' around which meaning revolves. It repulses, apotropaically, anyone or anything that approaches its singularity into metaphysics. If de Man aestheticizes error, it is to allegorize the solar myth of ideology. Contrary to what Jameson has argued, de Man's theory of language is less a "metaphysics" of error than a *physics* of error.[597]

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[596] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1 Corinthians 13:12

[597] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 225

In asking whether it will be possible "to join the thinking of the event to the thinking of

the machine,"[598] Derrida is essentially asking whether the spectrality of the event is compatible

with the mechanicity of inscription. For de Man, history is a textual device made up of so many

tropological gears that are, at bottom, "inhuman."[599] Does the inhuman still haunt? This is,

perhaps, *the* ethical question as it concerns the mnemotechnics of de Man and Derrida. While

we cannot simply equate what de Man calls "ethicity"[600] with what Derrida calls "hauntology,"

it is helpful to approach mnemotechnics as a question of the ghost and the machine.[601] In the

final analysis, Derrida believes in something beyond this machination of language. Whether or

not to call it "God" is open to debate but it is clear that, for him, the event is a question of

haunting and of spirit whereas, for de Man, it is more a question of an arithmetical

"accounting" of the sort described by Andrzej Warminski.[602] We might say that de Man plays

the Heisenberg to Derrida's Einstein. Even though the God of "Plato's Pharmacy" *does* play dice,

Derrida resists the sort of "uncertainty principle" that de Man postulates in the singular

encounter between a reader and a text. According to this principle: it is possible to chart the

singular momentum of a reading in the way it swerves, aberrantly, from a grammatical code

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[598] "Will we one day be able, and in a single gesture, to join the thinking of the event to the thinking of the machine? Will we be able to think, what is called thinking, at one and the same time, *both* what is happening (we call that an event) *and* the calculable programming of an automatic repetition (we call that a machine)? . . . the new figure of an event-machine would no longer be even a figure. It would not resemble, it would resemble nothing, not even what we call, in a still familiar way, a monster. But it would therefore be, by virtue of this very novelty, an event, the only and the first possible event, because impossible. That is why I ventured to say that this thinking could belong only to the future – and even that it makes the future possible. An event does not come about unless its irruption interrupts the course of the possible and, as the impossible itself, surprises any foreseeability. But such a super-monster of eventness would be, this time, for the first time, *also* produced by the machine." Derrida, *Alibi*, 72–73

[599] Man, *Resistance*, 85ff.

[600] Man, *Allegories*, 206

[601] Derrida, *Specters*, 10

[602] Warminski, *Ideology*, 11ff.

and, also, to cite the finite locations in which the singularity of grammar allows for such an

aberration. But despite being able to perform these operations independently we can never,

with absolute certainty, assert a causal relationship between them. In "Pascal's Allegory of

Persuasion," de Man provides a quasi-mathematical formulation of this principle:

> The notion of language as sign is dependent on, and derived from, a different notion in which language functions as rudderless signification and transforms what it denominates into the linguistic equivalent of the arithmetical zero. It is as sign that language is capable of engendering the principles of infinity, of genus, species, and homogeneity, which allow for synecdochal totalizations, but none of these tropes could come about without the systematic effacement of the zero and its reconversion into a name. There can be no *one* without zero, but the zero always appears in the guise of a *one,* of a (some)thing. The name is the trope of the zero. The zero is always *called* a one, when the zero is actually nameless, "innommable." . . .

> Calling this structure ironic can be more misleading than helpful, since *irony,* like *zero,* is a term that is not susceptible to nominal or real definition. To say then, as we are actually saying, that allegory (as sequential narration) is the trope of irony (as the one is the trope of zero) is to say something that is true enough but not intelligible, which also implies that it cannot be put to work as a device of textual analysis. . . .

> The dialectic has been flattened out into tautology, in the endlessly circular repetition of the same, and the teleological form of infinite transcendence has been replaced by this monotony.[603]

The ironic turn of allegory, as "trope of the zero," becomes more resistant to the rhetoric of

scientific progress and human pathos than ever before. "Like a stutter, or a broken record, it

makes what it keeps repeating worthless and meaningless."[604]

From such a perspective it is misleading to think of the machine, inscription, event as a

'what.' Even after taking all precautions to dissociate this 'what' with any particular, present-at-

hand entity, even when we insist on the anomie of a blank 'whomever' (*n'importe qui*) or

'whatever' (*n'importe quoi*), the possibility of error remains. It would be better, perhaps, to

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[603] Man, *Aesthetic*, 59–65
[604] Man, *Aesthetic*, 116

refer to it as a 'that' were it not for the fact that '*that*' to which we are referring is reference

itself. By insisting on the mechanicity and inhumanity of this event, de Man sets up a tactical

resistance to the aesthetic ideological reappropriation he knows is inevitable. Here, allegory can

no longer be thought of as an insight capable of being "put to work as a device of textual

analysis." If we were hoping that he might show us how to conduct a "technically correct,

rhetorical reading," this passage should prove rather chastening.

In the final essays, however, de Man seems to reach beyond physics into a realm where

poiesis and mathesis converge, *logarithmically*, on a theory of language that is, perhaps, closer

to the number theory of Évariste Galois or Alexander Grothendiek than the quantum theory of

Heisenberg. In the "fragmentation of sentences and propositions into discrete words, or the

fragmentation of words into syllables or finally letters"[605] we find something like a prime

factorization of language that opens the possibility of an "anabelian geometry" of the letter – a

geometry by which we might arrive at a 'proof' of the structure of language by mapping the

hyperbolic arc of allegory over the grammatized textual field.[606] It is this possibility to which I

have been alluding in using the term "cohomology" – the idea that de Man's approach to the

material inscription falls somewhere between the "topology of being" described by Heidegger

and the topological analysis described by Grothendiek. While the correspondence between the

latter's use of this term and de Man's is tenuous at best, I merely mean to suggest that they

each approach the structure of the unknowable with the spirit of the geometrician. De Man's

theory of tautology is, in many ways, closer to this mathematical sense of cohomology as it

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[605] Man, *Aesthetic*, 89

[606] Alexandre Grothendieck, "Esquisse d'un Programme," in *Geometric galois actions*, ed. Leila Schneps and Pierre
Lochak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997-)

applies to the field of topology than it is to the Jamesonian sense of homology as it applies to the dialectical, typological approach to allegory as "cognitive mapping." In this regard, the rather redundant, even tautological prefix of *co*homology proves fortuitous. It works to inscribe the subtle difference between de Man's theory of tautological cohomology and Jameson's theory of dialectical homology – a difference that is, itself, no less tautological than that which separates Heideggerian and Hegelian phenomenology – a difference that Derrida is right to call "heterotautological" and "tautegorical."

In analyzing the idea of the "tautology of essential art" in the late essay on Kleist, de Man entertains the idea that there may be "systems of formalization and notation rigorous enough to be patterned on the model of mathematical language." We do not participate in this system as autonomous agents but, rather, as machines – marionettes executing their aesthetic ideological programming – the allegorical *script* of the text machine. De Man here writes of a

> model . . . of analytical geometry, rather than of calculus, as an attempt to articulate the phenomenal particularity of a spatial entity (line or curve) with the formalized computation of number: the curve belongs to the order of the aesthetic or of the word (logos), the formal computation that produces it to the order of number (arithmos). . . .
>
> This text is the transformational system, the anamorphosis of the line as it twists and turns into the tropes of ellipses, parabola, and hyperbole. Tropes are quantified systems of motion. The indeterminations of imitation and of hermeneutics have at last been formalized into a mathematics that no longer depends on role models or on semantic intentions. . . .
>
> By freeing the tropes of their semantic function, one eliminates the discontinuities of dialectical irony and the teleology of a meaning grounded in the weightiness of conceptual understanding. The aesthetic form "needs the ground only ... in order to skirt it, to recharge the elasticity of the limbs by momentary friction; we [dancers, that is, that are not puppets] need it in order to rest on it." The puppet's ground is not the ground of a stable cognition, but another anamorphosis of the line as it becomes the asymptote of a hyperbolic trope.

Thus conceived, tropes certainly acquire a machinelike, mechanical predictability. They animate the forms like the crank turned by an organ-grinder. This does not prevent the creation of a dialogue between the puppet and the crank-turning puppeteer. [607]

Ellipsis, parabola, hyperbole, asymptote, logarithm – these pseudo-mathematical vectors suggest that, even if reading follows an allegorical course, we might still graph this aberration with some technical precision. It is a very fine line that separates anamorphosis from the Platonic myth of anamnesis. The ana-logical, ana-tropic dimension in which we are encouraged to think inscription inevitably evokes a more metaphysical temporality. To regard inscription as a static substrate of tropological movement would allow it to serve as a quasi-metaphysical 'foundation.' But, in stressing that this line is more geometrical than it is temporal, de Man is attempting to 'ground' memory in a singular sort of mnemotechnical substrate without levelling off its tropism. Even if it cannot be thought tropologically, this does not necessarily mean that the anamorphosis is static or that it is simply anterior to the movement of tropes. It requires that we think the trope of stasis (the trope of the zero) as that which allows for the positing of every tropological ground. The hypostasis of the tropological system with which de Man associates this anamorphosis, is not a ground in the sense of a sub-jectum (hypo-keimenon) but, rather, a sub-stance in the sense of subsistence. It refers to the non-tropological movement by which the tropological system is generated.

Thus, we might say that the tropological system set in motion by the material inscription, like all mnemotechnical systems, can be approached as a question of what Yuk Hui calls "orders of magnitude."[608] From the microcosmic perspective of the psychobiographical

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[607] Man, *Rhetoric*, 266–88

[608] Hui, *Digital Objects*, 29–32

reader, the event is characterized by an uncertainty principle. From the macrocosmic perspective of material history we can begin to trace the gravitational fields governing the textual universe. From the quasi-mathematical perspective outlined in the essays on Pascal and Kleist, there is a claim to "aesthetic formalism" that would seem to bypass the antinomy of the prior microcosmic/macrocosmic perspectives by removing the humanity of the reader from the equation, so to speak.

Inscription / Singularity

We might formalize some of the aesthetic, ideological structures discussed above in the following matrix – essentially a semiotic square in which the axis of contrariety (typically the horizontal) has been upended and extended.

logic	rhetoric
fact	error
truth	lie
reality	fiction
actuality	possibility
objectivity	subjectivity
mathematics	aesthetics
sciences	humanities
machine	human

There is a text machine at work here – a kind of heuristic, stochastic hermeneutic of least resistance. Each column forms a series in which the strength of the association between each term tends to diminish the further one moves from the immediately consecutive terms. The intensity of the association mutually conditions the intensity of the contradiction in a manner that animates the tensions between logic and rhetoric. The relationship between what is

concealed and revealed here has as much to do with the logical and rhetorical associations

between the ideas as it does with the graphical structure in which they are presented. Our

ability to understand contradiction seems to rely on our ability to isolate and abstract it from

the series. Similarity, on the other hand, seems to follow the material grain of what we are

given to read. We broaden our retentional horizon in an attempt to find something that would

make it easier to think the relationship between contradictions. The moment we recognize that

there is a pattern that can be mapped vertically and horizontally, we diverge from the line-by-

line movement by which we read paragraphs. We begin to read or 'scan' up and down columns

looking for context that might make it easier to understand the contradiction at work between

the rows. The reading would proceed differently if we were presented with a wide matrix or

linear series of pairs. A series of contradictions would be something else entirely.[609]

This matrix stages, on a microcosmic scale, the mnemotechnical forces governing our

noetic universe. The theme is a complex resonance of contradiction and association that is

often distorted by a seriality that is not simply conceptual or grammatical. The seriality of the

theme is constructed *ad hoc* on the basis of a protentional scan of the available materials.

There is an initial locking in of the pattern (i.e. citation) that will come to govern its dialectical,

narratological, historiological composition (i.e. thematization). Since themes only really mature

within institutional structures (e.g. canons, genres, curricula, etc.) they tend to privilege

contradiction over sameness because sameness is pseudo-phenomenal. It is what Heidegger

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[609] But is it, perhaps, misleading to speak of a series of contradictions? Is there not an inescapable seriality to every reading? Is seriality not easier to read than contradiction? Is it more difficult to see the similarities between what is apparently contradictory than the differences between the apparently similar, especially when similarity approaches sameness?

might refer to as the 'phenomenality of the inapparent'[610] and de Man, the materiality of inscription. The sameness of the similar tabulates, charts or scores the theme of reading. This becomes more *exacting* the further the mnemonic horizon of the readerly mind extends, but it does not necessarily become *exact*. Even as themes, after centuries of reading, take on a concreteness within institutions, there is no guarantee that they take us any closer to the essentiality or singularity of the work. Or at least they do not point directly to this singularity, but warp around it like a magnetic field. What the historical concretion of themes reveals is the mnemotechnical tendency of reading. It reveals the ur-tropological movement de Man often spoke of as a "hypostasis"[611] or "anamorphosis."[612] The latter are recursive processes by which what is materially inscribed (ir)radiates history and, thus, *generates* aberrant dialectical lines, loops, rings, spirals, arabesques, etc. While de Man exhibits an uncanny knack for detecting the singularity of inscription, he does not and, perhaps, cannot teach this because doing so would require him to posit a concrete theme for deconstruction. The closest thing he gives us to a theme is rhetoric, which is ubiquitous. However much we may insist upon this theme, it refuses to become a fact – a basis for instruction.

In the brute graphicality of what "merely . . . appears to the eye" [bloß . . . Augenschein zeigt] as we read the matrix above, we can find a kind of "material sublime" of the sort de Man has identified in Kant's third Critique.[613] But doing "as the poets do" [wie die Dichter es tun] – *finding* what is material sublime – is not the same as having a poetic 'vision.' And it is precisely

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[610] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 80
[611] Man, *Allegories*, 81,109, 120, 126, 170,198; Man, *Blindness*, 25–26
[612] Man, *Allegories*, 294; Man, *Aesthetic*, 42, 176ff; Man, *Rhetoric*, 285ff.
[613] Man, *Aesthetic*, 70-90, 119-128; Warminski, *Ideology*, 38–64

this difference between finding and seeing the same – between theoretical and practical vision

– that makes the *Augenschien* critical for Kant. Heidegger speaks similarly of the *Augenblick* of

the poet (i.e. Hölderlin) and, eventually, in *Einblick in das was Ist*, of the positionality [Gestell] of

every Thing [Ding] and the mnemotechnicity of every vision.[614] The materiality of this kind of

'vision' is less a cognitive bitmapping than a vector quantization,[615] which is to say, an

algorithmic process that has already gotten an a priori glimpse of what it claims to perceive

'directly'. De Man leaves us to wonder whether the capacity to "find sublime" would be capable

of algorithmic formalization since, for him, the sublime is not a transcendent being or even an

external phenomenon but, rather, a machination that inscribes the allegorical interface of

mnemotechnics.

Once reduced to formal logic, any statement can be encoded and computed by any

number of machines running in series or in parallel. Today we go further by saying that such

statements are *machine-readable*, suggesting that, *actually*, reading and writing cannot *really*

be regarded as essentially human capacities. A reading machine is a machine that automatically

translates natural language into programming language into writable code. The word processor

in which I am now writing, for instance, reads the statement above as a deviation from

grammatical norms of American English and, depending on the syntax, identifies either 'really'

or 'actually' as superfluous. But, as the matrix above suggests, there may be a significant

difference between what *really* and *actually* exists which, as we can 'see,' is in danger of being

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[614] Heidegger, *Bremen & Freiburg*

[615] "Vector quantization (VQ) is a classical quantization technique from signal processing that allows the modeling of probability density functions by the distribution of prototype vectors. It was originally used for data compression." (Wiki)

levelled off algorithmically. The danger does not *appear* grave. The underline is as unobtrusive

as the recommendation is tentative ("consider using concise language"). But the *real* danger

has more to do with the *inapparent* effects of such algorithms. At work in the latter is what Yuk

Hui, (trans)individuating himself from Stiegler and Husserl, calls "tertiary protention."[616]

Tertiary retention and tertiary protention might be regarded as 'loops' (i.e. tropes) within a

more complex recursive process of *machine learning*. The latter is an algorithmic process

capable of reprograming (i.e. rewriting) itself according to the data (i.e. meaning) that it

computes (i.e. reads) by way of Markov chains, tensors, neural networks, etc. While an

algorithm is, by definition, nothing more than "a process or set of rules to be followed in

calculations or other problem-solving operations," it is more often this process of machine

learning to which we are referring when we speak of algorithms today.[617]

The difference between machine learning and human learning, then, might be

approached as a question of *recursive 'depth.'* Can a *deep learning* algorithm probe so deeply

into the brain that it might begin to reveal the mysteries of the mind and, if so, would it be

capable of emulating or surpassing the human by way of an *artificial general intelligence* (AGI)?

Perhaps more importantly, how specific would the model of the brain need to be in order to

put AGI within reach? Much depends on whether we regard the singularity of human

intelligence as something that exists independently for each individual or as a collective, social

phenomenon. Even if we reject the idea of a strict opposition of subjectivity and objectivity we

might still speak of the "worldhood of the world" [Weltlichkeit der Welt] as an "environment"

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[616] Hui, *Digital Objects*, 38, 43, 221ff; Hui, *Recursivity*, §36-37, 39
[617] *OED*

[Umwelt][618] or an "associated," mnemotechnical "milieu" as a substrate of noetic differentiation.[619] Even when we insist upon a radical dualism of Mind and Body, we struggle to deny that the singularity of our experience is predicated upon the particularity of the Self. For, if the Self were only singular in its 'Self,' there could be no self-consciousness of experience and, hence, no diaphora, diachrony, dialectic, etc. While we might disagree on the depth or level at which singularity is inscribed, very few of us question that it exists as a fundamental trait of human consciousness. Even the prophets of 'transhumanism' tend to regard the "technological singularity" as a reproduction or representation of an anthropological singularity.[620] To turn the Turing test backward and inward upon ourselves is to think "the turning" [die Kehr] as such. It is to pursue an allegory of (human and machine) reading to an interminable "degree" by way of a "rhetorical deconstruction of psycholinguistics."[621] If the essence of human intelligence is singular, then AGI can only be approached asymptotically – or logarithmically – depending on whether we read the event of singularity as a triumph or a fall.[622] Rhetoric is either the force by which our human singularity is inscribed or the force preventing us from knowing whether we are singular at all. Perhaps they are one and the same.

Any attempt to design, let alone realize a mnemotechnical infrastructure suitable for thought in the present age must attempt to think this inceptual tautology – this primordial knot in which the destiny of human and machine are gathered. According to Heidegger, it is less a

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[618] Heidegger, *Being*; Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1972)

[619] Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (Minneapolis, MN, [Minneapolis, Minn.]: Univocal Publishing; University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 59–81

[620] Kurzweil, *Singularity*; Ben Goertzel and Ted G. Goertzel, eds., *The End of the Beginning: Life, society and economy on the brink of the singularity* ([Los Angeles, California]: Humanity+ Press, 2015); Murray Shanahan, *The Technological Singularity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015)

[621] Man, *Allegories*, 19

[622] Man, *Resistance*, 20

knot than a ring or ringing – a resonance that "fittingly encircles" truth.[623] The idea that we

might extricate ourselves from this *mnemotextual* interface and develop a tropological model

of the mind remains, for now, a fantasy of social media and algorithmic governance. In the

latter we find a technological *uptake* so rapid that it systematically *takes apart* our knowledge

of how to think, do and live – a growth unthinkable by every chronological, teleological and

historiological reckoning.[624] In this *growing unthinkability* lies the *danger* [Gefahr] and *saving

power* [rettende] that Heidegger, after Hölderlin, regards as the essential truth [Wesen] of

modern technology.[625] The thought that some hitherto unimaginable text machine might cite

our singularity and thematize thinking as such is not only dangerous, it is the "absolute danger"

of "that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed,

presented, as a sort of monstrosity."[626] Whether we call this AGI or *absolute Wissenschaft*

makes little difference and, from such a perspective, neither do we. If we are to be saved, we

need to think the event and positionality tautologically. Mnemotechnical infrastructure is an

infrastructure that can withstand and, perhaps, amplify the tautological resonance of the event

without destroying its timbre or trivializing its rhetoric. Such an infrastructure can only be

'constructed' by way of a mnemotechnical exappropriation – by deconstructing the very code in

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[623] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 78

[624] "This outstripping or overtaking [*prise de vitesse*], which is an *abandoning or taking-apart of form* [*déprise de forme*] creates a performativity inasmuch as it generates automatic protentions by liquidating conventional categories and normativity. Here we find the functional integration of marketing and ideology operating through the functional integration of consumers into the infrastructures of 24/7 capitalism." Stiegler, *Automatic*, 114, cf. 119, 149

[625] "Where danger is, grows / The saving power also." "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das rettende" (Holderlin, Patmos). Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings: From Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*, ed. David F. Krell (New York: Harper, 2008)ng Technology," in *Basic Writings: From Being and time* (*1927*) *to The task of thinking* (*1964*), ed. David F. Krell (New York: Harper, 2008) "But where danger threatens / That which saves from it also grows"

[626] Derrida, *Grammatology*, 5

which it is inscribed – by disarticulating facticity and truth – thematization and citation – ghost and machine.

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