

Exuded sap

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The following pages answer to a simple question. Why do we act in ways that are unfulfilling? This is not a question of religion. Fulfillment is not a special spiritual state promised by a religious doctrine. It is nothing more than the realization of those desires and capacities that, together, compose a human being. To eat, sleep, make love, enjoy friendship and companionship, sing, dance, think, experience beauty, participate in politics, laugh and make jokes, debate, create art and poetry and crafts, make music, dress up, act, barter, hunt, garden, have children, win honor and fame, even to fight. These are but a few of these capacities and desires. Not all may appeal to us; we do not all want the same thing, nor everything. But perhaps, if we are not entirely jaded, all of us can understand how these activities might be fulfilling to someone. Or, contrariwise; in what sense would we still be human if we are capable of none of these?

Our lives are unfulfilling when we spend most of our time doing things that don't realize any of these human capacities or desires, or only realize them in a very fragmentary and limited way, or when we satisfy only a very small part of ourselves, or when we do things without being able to say why.

This problem is both personal and political; the personal and political cannot be separated, unless one is willing to believe either that people could not only exist, but live, outside of a community, or that communities and social organizations can exist without people. And it is urgent. We live in a world that produces ever more things and fulfills ever fewer needs, that breeds misery for the poor and depression for the affluent, that exploits finite resources at an ever greater rate, and celebrates its triumph over mental illness while medicates away the vacant lives that it has left in its wake.

This is what we want to know: how have human beings created a world for themselves that is not only not in their best interest, but that may in the end lead to catastrophe? How is it that our world has become mad?

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Reading the papers these days and following what pass for political debates, one finds two pictures of human nature. Played off against each other, these are presented as irreconcilable opposites, and we are given to think that we have become “intellectuals” once we decide ourselves for one or the other. Each is rooted in scientific theories, but have a practical significance for political life, for each offers a very different explanation of how humans come to act in the way they do, and, in turn, of how we can act to change the actions of others. And politics, in germ, is exactly this; acting to change the actions of others. All action within a community of people is political. While the actions of some may carry vastly more influence than the actions of others, there is no one alive who does not, from moment of birth, act as a political agent. We do so whenever we convince, teach, guide, compel, rape, coerce, trick, murder, pity or seek to be pitied, cry to be fed, buy or sell. An owner of a multinational corporation, a community activist, a beggar on the street, or a mother, are no less *responsible* as political agents than Bill Clinton or New Gingrich.

The first of these pictures tells us that humans are “blank slates” at birth, and determined to be what they become almost entirely by outside forces. A child imitates the behavior of others and assumes their values, without any real freedom on its part. Even freedom, this picture suggests, is a social construct, and has no real bearing on human agency. We only think we are free.

The second of these pictures tells us that humans are “rational agents” who are entirely free to determine who they are through their actions.

Both of these pictures make for stupid and silly science.

If our behavior is almost entirely determined by our environment, why is this environment itself always in flux. Why do people constantly invent new ways to act, reinventing themselves as political beings? Why do people so often feel the need to express themselves in ways that are not only not encouraged by their ostensive environment, but are actively censured? In short; if we were almost perfectly determined by our environment, how could we explain why there has never been a single society that has ever been perfectly, or even remotely, successful at molding all of its children into members who, without coercion, always act uniformly and to their mutual benefit. If such a social organization had ever existed, it would likely have survived into our own time. Being perfectly able to reproduce its forms of life, how could it not endure --- unless an arrangement of such a static nature were unable to compete with other, more adaptable cultures.

With just as little right can we think of ourselves as perfectly free rational agents. When we act, do indeed feel as though our actions are free, and this feeling of freedom is deeply interwoven into the way we act and speak about our actions. No one who is not completely jaded by book-learning and abstractions could deny this about human consciousness. We act as free agents, considering different possibilities and choosing between them. And we know ourselves to be responsible for the choices we have made. Yet even if all of our actions were perfectly free in this way, --- which is probably the case for most significant political actions committed by sane, sober, and mature

individuals --- and even if our decisions were also guided by reason, this would not yet make us into perfectly free moral agents. For we are perfectly free only in our ability to choose once choices have been given to us. A far more limited freedom presents itself in the choice of these choices, and in our ability, over the course of our lives, to present ourselves with possibilities for action. If these choices were constrained only by the rigid nature of physical reality and our body, this might be a trivial point. Yet this is not the case. The kinds of choices we have available at any given moment are determined by an extraordinarily complicated interaction between our social environment, our position within it, accidents and chance events, our genetic disposition, and the political actions of ourselves as well as others.

Political agency, as I suggested, is action directed towards the action of others. Politics is nothing else than the total environment created by people in their mutual interaction, and thus political action is nothing else than an action that transforms this environment. This suggests that the freedom of rational agency is in fact only the most limited, flat and impoverished kind of political action, since it acts within the possibilities of a world that has been created, but only in turn creates the world as a passive reflex of this action. In this way, we can distinguish genuinely free political agency from the vacant and impotent freedom of merely “rational agency.” True political freedom freely forms the world in which we live, and which guide our choices. It is informed, creative, and comprehensive. Informed, for unless we understand how it is possible to act in our environment, we cannot hope that our actions will be effective --- or we must even fear that they will work against our wishes. Creative, for we must conceive possibilities that

don't yet exist. And comprehensive, for we can only act reliable in ways that will change the whole of our political environment if we have a view to this whole.

While people may vary in their ability to make good decisions, and some may be presented by a vastly greater variety of choices, others with almost none, everyone who is sane and sober, a prisoner no less than a business-man, can act as a free political agent. Yet while every who belongs to a human community and speaks a human tongue is a political being, and potentially free in their actions, this capacity is not always realized to the same degree. Becoming informed, creative, and comprehending takes effort; we are, by nature, political animals, but we are not so easily.

Birth, wealth, and talents bless some with a more influential station in life, while others it condemns to obscurity. Yet we should not think that, even in our society, those in so-called "positions of power" are more meaningfully politically free than the disenfranchised. For political freedom, as we have said, is an action which forms the environment in which action is possible. If it is to be effective in the long run, and not undermine itself, it must produce its very own possibility. We are only truly free as human agents when we create a world in which political freedom is possible. When the president of a multinational soft-drink firm decides to increase their market share by investing one hundred million dollars in advertising, he is merely making a "rational choice" in proxy for an entity whose choices have been dictated by market forces. When an ad-executive decides on a new, hip, innovative way to get Viewer X to choose tweedle-dee over tweedle-dum, he not acting creatively in any sincere and meaningful way, for his actions do not themselves create creativity. The politician who, at the pinnacle of power, is swayed hither and thither by special interest groups and voter

preferences like a lonely tree atop a mountain peak, is more slavish than the lowliest slave --- his is the rashness and inconstancy of our entire political life.

The marketing expert who has surveyed the “soft-drink preferences” of 10,000 individuals with rigorous statistical methods has neither a comprehensive view of social reality nor a informed understanding of human action; if he thinks of people as soft-drink drinkers, he knows less about human nature than the beggar on the street, who asks us for what he wants, rather than telling us what we need, and who is not granted a captive audience, but must summon our attention. A beggar *is* a free political agent; in asking us to *give*, he seeks nothing less than that we take something that has been destined by birth to serve a very limited role --- the free choice to purchase the labor of others form an endless array of objects and services --- transforming it into the lime of a political relationship. A political relationship, because to give implies the trust that him to whom it was given will use it wisely, and there can not be a true community without this trust. Free political action is possible only in the anticipation of a community where the freedom of mere rational choice --- the momentary form in which even true freedom must express itself --- will not be abused.

It is by no means easy for us to realize our capacity to act as free political beings, and it may even become more difficult the more power and privilege we possess. A homeless man or woman cannot walk on the sidewalk, stand on the corner, or sleep in open view without at least forcing those passing by to confront the possibility of entering into a political relationship through an act of charity. For those in control of the institutions and wealth that, to a large degree, determines the “rational choices” that are possible within our society, on the other hand, it requires an almost superhuman effort to

wield their power to any other end than the untiring production of the unpolitical, antipolitical, empty freedoms that these choices allow. Perhaps you have noticed; politicians speak the cant of politicians, corporate presidents of corporations, philanthropists of philanthropic institutions, and academics of the academy. Only mendicants, children, and madmen, it seems, still speak human.

The difficulty of becoming a free political agent is not that of learning a new scientific vocabulary and objective, abstract methods of analysis. The language of politics is human language, and to become political is nothing more than to address the reality that surrounds us as a human reality. To be informed, to understand what it means to act in a political environment, we must relearn the rich human language of agency. We know this still as a set of semantic possibilities; we do remember what it means to “convince,” or “give,” or “ask,” or “beg,” or even “murder,” “rape,” “steal” ---and beyond all legalistic subtleties. And there is even something reassuring in the thought that these capacities of “ordinary language” might be innate and ineradicable, a biology reserve of human freedom that no brutalizing of the human spirit could ever completely destroy. No, we have not forgotten the words of politics, nor their meanings; only that these might apply to the world around us.

What I hope to provide, in these pages, is nothing more than one possible perspective through which we might become informed in this way. This perspective is offered as an alternative to the “empty slate” and the “free agent.” By now, it should already be evident why these are not only silly and stupid as scientific theories, but useless and dangerous as a guides to political action. If politics is the building of environments of action through the interaction of agents, then both the all-powerful

environment of the former and the perfectly free rational agents of the latter obstruct every path to a true politics. The choice between them, like all merely free choices of pre-chosen possibilities, is a non-choice. One may take you through the “Modern Language Association,” bring you into the company of the tenured so-called radicals, and get you laid in college. And the other may get you a job at a so-called conservative so-called think-tank, or an appearance on the Christian Broadcasting Network. But either way, you’ll end up in the same place; political impotence and feeble-mindedness, a purely passive attitude to all that happens. Whether you spill your ink admonishing the poor to be less lazy, or deconstructing “power relations” in convoluted prose, you won’t change anything --- and this, as we will see, is what *it* needs.

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This *it* is the problem that we have to address; what does *it* mean, and how do we deal with *it* in a theory of politics. Let me explain.

We all know that some things happen that are not caused by human agency. When an event takes place, and we neither can say who did it or why, nor believe that the search for a who and why could be fruitful, we just shrug and say “it happened.” “it thundered,” “it rained,” “there was an earthquake,” “there was a stock market crash,” “there was a war.” Sometimes, even our body becomes an “it”; “it hurts.”

Perhaps every language and culture have some capacity for “itness,” for purely impersonal expressions. Yet even if this is so, the “reach” of this “itness” varies tremendously from one culture to another. In archaic Greece, thunder and lightning were expressions of Zeus’s wrath, not mere facts of an impersonal nature. The forces of nature, heavenly bodies, and earth were personified as Gods and Goddesses. And when

Herodotus, the great story-teller and multiculturalist of the already enlightened 5th Century, narrated the incredibly complex and often gruesome events that led up to Persian War, he did not speak of “political tensions,” “casualties of war,” “imperialist expansion,” let alone “market forces,” or “depressions” and “recessions”; but told of the words, actions, feelings, and choices of men and woman.

Such cultures, we now say, are superstitious; it is almost impossible for them to explain anything but in terms of human agency. Nearly everything, for them, becomes political; the political community within which they act, and which they hope to transform through their actions, includes not only people, but divinities, and even what we think of as natural phenomenon. As a result they were ill-informed about political action; by extending their community so far into the inhuman, they blocked off view to the reciprocal relations between people. Since people believed they were dominated by superhuman personalities whose wills were obscure and who could not, in the end, be convinced to do anything, neither could they fully esteem political actions directed towards the actions of other humans, nor recognize the tremendous power that these could have to transform their environment. And thus, even if politics operated at every level of their political life, they were never able to appropriate it in an informed, creative, or comprehensive way. Athenian political life did have moments that were comprehensive (Herodotus), creative (Plato), and informative (Aristotle), yet these never coalesced into the possibility of truly free, transformative, action.

While there are still many, and even some in positions of power, who cling on to superstitious beliefs, our own age --- the age of multinational capitalism and consumer culture ---, is, on the whole, no longer superstitious. Rather, we tend too far in the

opposite direction. If earlier the political comprehended far too much of the inhuman, now the inhuman comprehends a great extent of the political. Every institutional language --- be it of the military, government, science, or even philanthropy --- translates political events into inhuman relations between theoretical abstractions. These are produced and consumed by specialists, and intended only for internal use. Such institutions have forgotten how to speak humanly of the events in which they are implicated, and if they must communicate their “motives” to an outside audience, they resort, without fail, to speechwriters and advertisers versed in the clichés which, following the latest and most scientific market research, they think will speak to our hearts.

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Homer’s Iliad begins with these famous lines;

Rage --- Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters’ soles, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds,
and the will of Zeus was moving towards its end.

Homer did not see the world with rosy spectacles. The world was brutal and precarious; the bodies of fighters, first among mortals, became carrion scattered through the elements. But he did not hesitate to call the wages of war murderous, and even when he conceived of war, in all the horror that no one since has described so well, as the fulfillment of Zeus’s will. Everything in world, and even its greatness savagery, was the political action of a superhuman agent. Their world was sane, and madness appeared only when, either through prophesy or in their actions, people expressed a divine will that could not be comprehended by mortals.

Our world, on the other, is mad. We try to understand it in political terms, but find only impersonal forces that control our lives without rhyme or reason, without a purpose or will of their own. And the only people who appear sane are those scientists and technocrats --- the prophets and divine agents of our age --- who are able to speak of these events from the limited, inhuman, intra-institutional perspective from which alone they could make any sense.

How is it that our world has become mad?

It is perhaps only as a response to the madness of world that people came to think of human agency as either a “blank slate” or “rational agency.” Both try to explain the power of an environment that acts on us without our reciprocation, and that no longer speaks a human tongue. The social determinist believes in many little things which all amount, if brought to their furthest consequence, to one incredibly silly idea. He knows all about all the forces that together form our environment --- an environment that comprehends all human agency, and where freedom no longer expresses itself through people in a community, but rather as a totality with the absolute power to determine the values and behavior of the individuals. We are *all* free to make ourselves slaves to our freedom. The advocate of human rationality and freedom, on the other hand, believing in only one single absurdity, take a less round-about path to ignorance. By attaching an absurd value to the freedom of choice, however desolate the array of these choices may be, however ill-suited to serve human fulfillment, the environment is neutralized and rendered politically insignificant. Those who would base politics on “free agency” want students at the Universities to read the “Great Books of Western Literature.” Have they

read these themselves? Where do they find the shadow of freedom they worship. Perhaps only in the receipt of purchase that they left as a bookmark on the first page.

Both perspectives render political action impossible; neither can conceive of how an environment for action can be reciprocally created by human action. With the latter, this leads pseudo-politics that celebrates our “human” freedom and rights without even trying to change a world which is, and ever more rapidly, spinning out of control. With the former, this leads either to an institutionalized radicalism that, from within the safe confines of the University, tries to comprehend all phenomenon in an essentially bureaucratic academese, or to totalitarian pseudo-revolutionary politics, that, no longer content on its academic fictions, transforms these into the facts of a totalitarian state, a system within which no one exists but as an operational variable. The totalitarian states of the Twentieth Century anticipate the new order being produced under all of those noses held up above the stink and decay of men turned to carrion and pointed resolutely towards the lofty ideal of human freedom. If you need prophesies for the “Next Millennium,” just look at the history books.

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How can we become free political agents in a world that no longer makes sense? How can we become informed about the nature of political action, comprehend this world in its totality, and creatively transform this world into a better world? How is it possible to conceive of our environment as a political world, that, even if it does not directly present the possibility of truly free political action, was nevertheless created from reciprocal human interrelations, and, if properly understood, is still open to transformation?

We must reject two kinds of approaches. On the one hand, we cannot hope to reanimate and re-enchant a human world that has become inhuman simply by forcing it back into the mold of human agency. If we have forgotten in so many places how to speak human, it is not because of some mental lapse. Human words no longer fit. If a bureaucrat tried to speak outside of bureaucratic cant, he would sound like a lunatic. Speechwriters, if you listen carefully --- much to ask when it is so hard to listen at all --- sound like prophets who have lost the gift of imagination and fallen upon a treasure-chest of hackneyed clichés.

Nor, however, can we rely on a specialized scientific discourse. Because these are constrained by a limited set of precisely defined theoretical entities, they do not communicate with each other easily, nor without a great loss of meaning. Yet it is just this communication that is needed for a theory of political action, and not the descriptive or explanatory power of any given scientific theory.

Let me explain. Everything that I have said thus far drives at one single point; politics can no longer shy away from dealing with aspects of our environment which, while not immediately accessible through the terms of politics, are yet still political, since they arose through, bear upon, and can be transformed by human agency. Politics, in other words, concerns the interrelation of free political activity with an *artificial environment* that has been created through the convergence of political agency, the natural world, and *human nature*. Since almost the entire natural world, even into the heavens, has been transformed into our artificial environment, and since, moreover, practically every aspect of communal life has come to be mediated through institutions that are not directly responsive to any form of human agency, a valid politics --- a theory,

in other words, which gives us a synoptic view of our situation and allows us to create viable strategies for change --- must allow every science to communicate fluently with an informed account of political action. What is human action, what is inhuman action, and how do they interact? How does inhuman become human? This is a problem of natural history, which brings us from the first beginnings of the universe to human evolution. But it also concerns biology and ecology and the history of agriculture and the technologies that serve to transform the inhuman into the conditions of human existence. How does the human become inhuman? This is not only the concern of medicine and the study of mortality, but, as I have suggested and will argue, the central problem of history. How can human communities that have become inhuman institutions, and that nevertheless satisfy essential, or seemingly essential needs, be transformed into human institutions? The totality of inhuman institutions, at this point, have become entirely indispensable to our survival, and so closely intertwined that it would be impossible to remove some and have others survive. Even more disturbingly, the system as a whole is dependent, for its very survival, on a rate of growth that cannot be sustained. If either immediate or eventual catastrophe is to be avoided, it is perhaps only because we will have found a way to transform the very force of economic growth into a transformative and creative human activity. Merely economic growth must be transformed into a political labor.

Before continuing, it is necessary to stress that our appropriation of science is not satisfied merely by statistics and isolated facts. What we seek is a non-mathematical, non-exact conceptual representation of the mode of activity expressed by the entities explained and described by a given scientific discipline. What we wish to know, in other words, is how the kinds of entities that science describes act as agents in a more common

political world. This mode of activity must not be described in terms of human agency, but, at the same time, it cannot stretch past the limits of common sense. To this end, the subtlety of philosophy will serve us well. Philosophy, as I have tried to show elsewhere, develops and elaborates the resources of ordinary language without ever departing from its domain. Whereas scientific concepts are bundled together into very discreet theoretical systems that have only a very limited ability to communicate beyond themselves, philosophical concepts are always in dialogue with each other, even if they are found in different systems, written in different ages, and in different tongues. Philosophy, in this way, replicates the action of language and articulates its possibilities, and thus will allow us to find conceptual representations of scientific systems that will fluidly communicate with the political categories of ordinary language.

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An informed account of political agency must begin with a scientifically motivated understanding of human nature. Human nature is the basis of an interactive relationship amongst humans, and between humans and their environment. This environment is to be understood in the broadest *ecological* sense, and consists neither in what we think of as the merely natural, rocks, rivers, tree, sunlight, nor in a world of perfectly free human agents with unlimited needs --- the environment of “free choice” as conceived by conventional economists. Rather, it is the totality of the available possibilities of fulfillment for human beings. These possibilities are not a naturally given, but have been produced, and are still being produced, through a political agency that brings together a community of humans with a merely natural environment. Each of these represents the potential for a certain degree and manner of human fulfillment, realizable

over certain circumstances and in the course of a certain period of time --- ranging from death, the zero degree, to divinity. With this, we do not wish to claim that divinity has ever been or could ever be realized, or favor any sort of religious conception, but only to reject the view that man is a monstrosity with infinite, insatiable needs. Man has a limit; divinity. Divinity, moreover, might be described as the highest degree of true political freedom --- but this only suggests that genuine freedom and fulfillment are intimately related. Absolute freedom is not absolute dominance and absence of constrain --- the ability to do whatever one wants --- but rather a human potential which can only be fulfilled within a community. Freedom is nothing less and nothing more than our fulfillment *as* humans.

Our environment thus is historical, and it is an artifact of human labor; it has been made by transforming mere nature into something that stands in a relation to human nature, something towards which we act, and which acts towards us. All “mere nature” has already been transformed in this way. A simple mountain path, for example, turns the mountain into something that provides the possibilities of humans expressing their natural capacity for certain manner of aesthetic enjoyment. By naming and identifying the celestial bodies, and examining the way they relate to each other and the passage of the seasons, we have transformed a part of the world that seems almost not to touch us at all, whose effects we can scarce feel through our senses, into something at once meaningful and useful. All science, however legitimate its pretensions of objectivity, transforms what is merely “out there” into something that can be manipulated by complex symbolic systems, providing both fulfillment for our inquisitiveness and aiding the development of the technologies that, through various mechanisms and procedures,

appropriate latent or inaccessible energy sources to our needs. But we may go even further; the most basic innate capacities of human nature, our ability to perceive the world in the ways that we do, to construct symbolic systems to communicate with others, to feel in certain ways, and have certain moods, and even to desire things --- all of these capacities build “mere nature” into an environment.

All environment-building may be thought of as a form of technology, and this, in turn, as political action in the broadest sense. Likewise, every development of a new political community or a new cultural form, every reorganization of the social relations that create the possibilities of human fulfillment, is a technological development.

Technology, in the broadest sense, is the transformation of the action of nature such that it enters into a new kind of relation of agency to the action of humans. For example, the development of technologies that transform matter into energy has created the possibility of a new kind of relation between human and inhuman agency; actions of the natural world, which previously had effected all life on this planet (through the production of sunlight) but could not be effected or controlled, can now be forced to yield in a more or less predictable, controllable way to our command. While we do not ordinarily think of the capacities of the human mind and body for nourishment, respiration, perception, thought, and language as technologies, in just this same way they too represent transformative processes that bring the action of nature into relation with human nature. Likewise, the development of the human organism, indeed, the development of all life forms, is nothing less than a natural history of those technologies which have turned “mere nature” into an environment. It follows from this that there can be no essential opposition between the “natural” and “human” environment, between humankind and

other life forms, and that the development of human technologies, from fire to the hydrogen bomb, is simply an outgrowth of the evolution of species and their innate capacities.

This may seem to lead to an absolute moral relativism, relieving us of any responsibility to act as anything more than selfish beasts. But this need not be. Properly grasped, this approach will not disburden us of our moral responsibility, but instead will deepen this and extend it towards the entire ecosystem. No longer will we be able to deny that we are a part of this. For, as we will see, political action is such that it cannot be conceived logically otherwise than in relation to all life on the planet, indeed to the entire system of nature. Nor can we shirk the responsibility to political action, for it is rooted in human nature. What we will discover, taking this tact, is that the human species has evolved towards the need to express all of nature in its communal life. If we choose to be human, and we cannot choose otherwise without contradiction, we become responsible as political agents for all of nature. The only alternative is an inhuman passivity.

The technological forms that we have *consciously* developed in order to manipulate the world represent the furthest reach of our political agency. With these we are able to extract hidden potentials for energy, bring the reaches of the heavens into clearer view, or discern the subtle details of our world, venture into the ocean depths, or grasp our own earth's construction. And through these, we are able to compel nature to work towards our own needs. Yet our relation to these technologies is not itself always freely political. Science fiction often depicts a world in which the things we produce have gotten out of control --- having wills of their own and no longer heeding human commands. Yet such doomsday scenarios in fact reassure in the face of the existing state

of affairs, for they only concern the absence of “rational freedom,” not “political freedom.” We have good reason to believe not only that with certain safeguards modern society could avoid producing unservile machines, but that, in fact, true freedom is not something that, within the foreseeable future, could be imitated mechanically. Yet even if we do succeed in maintaining rational freedom in our relation with our technologies --- even if our nuclear bombs do not drop themselves, but have to be dropped --- this does not yet imply political freedom. Rational freedom requires only that technologies, even in the automatic operation, serve the functions that have been assigned to them. Political freedom asks that, through them, human beings actually become more capable of free human agency, and thus ultimately more fulfilled as human beings; they must actually develop our environment towards greater possibilities of fulfillment. The implementation of a new technology can only be considered to be a free political action when, through it, the polis --- the entire community of human agents --- develops towards a deeper and more fulfilling freedom.

How is it that technology can make us less free? How can technologies that have emerged from the free intercourse of a community act against this very freedom --- not by failing to heed our control, but by directing our human potentials away from human ends? To answer this question is to begin to understand how our world has become mad. What is clear, to begin with, is that new technologies make us susceptible in new ways --- every technology involves a new mode of interaction. All of the technologies of human nature, from nourishment all the way to language and artistic creativity, as well as all those that have been consciously and creatively developed by humans, have made of us a being that is open to and capable of being acted on by our environment.

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Human nature, simply put, is the sum of technologies that, instantiated in individual bodies, express themselves as forms of communal life which, taken together, comprise the potential of the human species to adaptively create an environment for itself. Human nature is not something universal to all human beings as individuals, if only as some sort of potential. Nor does it belong to individuals as such as some sort of innate faculty. While innate capacities of unique bodies are essential to the realization of the potential of a species, human nature, as a whole, expresses itself through the whole of a species and its communities, and not in any particular body.

Thus grasped, it is the starting point for both human history --- the history of the development of the technologies which transform our environment --- as well as of each individual life. All of our learning, adapting, creating and destroying amounts to creating an environment and adapting to our environment in ways that express what it means to be human.

In trying to articulate a theory of human nature, my approach will be deductive rather than empirical, yet nevertheless informed by a scientific perspective. For our purposes, it is not necessary to catalog and systematize all that is biologically innate --- which could only result from empirical research so extensive that it is not even within the competence of today's scientists. What we seek, instead, is an account of the most basic qualitative differences.

The deduction of human nature is a deduction of the biologically-innate technologies that have transformed our world into a human world. These technologies have been formed, and in turn they inform our world. How did this formation take place?

One answer is; we were created by God. Were this so, we would have to understand our own nature by asking what were God's intentions in creating us. God, this approach dictates, created us to be in a certain relation both to himself and to the world --- a relation which is enabled by and reflected in our nature. Because He, for some reason, intended us to relate to the world as "created beings," creating us as creations to live among other creations of his, he gave us the faculty of "sensibility"; this is our created nature, and enables an interaction with the created world. But He also wanted us to relate to Himself, and participate in the eternal --- and so he endowed us with the faculty of reason.

We must reject this approach, not because we are positive that God doesn't exist, but because any approach that begins with our createdness cannot be scientifically informed; it cannot explain anything without recourse to teleology, and to the imposition of human forms of agency on nature. We wish to understand human nature not in opposition to, but in interaction with, our environment. If man and the world are juxtaposed as two different creations originating from a creator who stands outside of both, their interaction would be nothing more than a possibility to be realized after the fact of creation, and not something that informs --- contributes to the formation --- of both. Against this, the interaction of both must appear as essential to their mutual formation. We must be able to describe, and explain, the content of both as if it were constituted by their interaction. While this may not affect the content itself --- while we might be able to discover the same truths about man and the world from a "creationist" outlook --- it significantly changes the nature of their interpretation, and only in this way

does it become possible, as we will see, to assign a truly political significance to what would otherwise be mere facts.

This suggests the second, and proper approach; to consider man not as created by God, but as having evolved through an interaction with an environment. This evolution proceeds the appearance of human nature, --- it is its prehistory, --- but it invests it with its primary political significance in relation to its environment. The evolution of the human species is already a political fact.

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If we are to gain a concept of the most basic possibilities of human nature, we should begin by trying to understand the manner of our evolution. Evolution is the adaptation of an evolved nature to an evolved environment, the production of the technologies enabling interactions between the two. Human nature is to be found at the level of the species, and thus the evolution of human nature is the evolution of the human species. A species consists in the entire system of genetic material, distributed among individuals capable of sexual reproduction, which combine together to form new individuals with innate capacities to development technologies, which, over the course of their lifetime, adapt to their environment. Each of these is, as it were, an individual expression of possibilities contained in the whole.

This adaptation is not directed towards a telos. For the most part, organisms do not possess the need to adapt themselves better to their environment and thereby become “fitter.” Nor does “life” as a whole “will” for higher forms of life to develop; and in fact, more highly developed life forms are only better in a very technical and specific sense. Rather, evolution is simply a way of explaining how the particular organizations of

matter that are found in nature at any given point of time have survived up till then. Complex organizations of matter do not, for the most part, if ever, fall together by chance; and since we have excluded the possibility that the entire universe was created by a deity standing outside of nature, we must suppose that a) forms are able to perpetuate themselves --- either simply by enduring, or by appearing through a confluence of regularly repeating circumstances, or by asexual or sexual reproduction, or, finally, by being reproduced or regularly produced through another medium. b) that there is a process through which more complex organisms can be seen to result from simpler processes, or, in other words, to develop from simpler forms. c) that the forms that exist now will reflect the forms that were able to develop and then survive to reproduce themselves.

What we are interested in, then, is these conditions of survival; how is a species --- the total system of genetic material that is able to combine together and express itself in individuals with their own particular set of adaptive capacities relative to their environment --- able to survive in order to reproduce.

The answer to this question depends on our understanding of “environment.” Were the environment something stable and static, it stands to reason that these conditions for survival would consist in nothing more than a fixed set of routines for coping with a fixed set of situations. An organisms would be, in essence, a computer; a finite program designed to deal with a limited set of possible inputs. Evolution, then, would tend towards a, perhaps unreachable, ideal of “perfect fitness.” Yet this cannot be the case.

On the one hand, the environment with which the evolution of all life begins, that which comes as close as possible to an unevolved and “bare” nature, is chaotic to an extraordinary degree. It contains none of the regularity that belongs to life, but at most certain recurrent strings of organic compounds. Since their surroundings are chaotic, and don’t in any way contain (by definition) the kind of regularity found within even the most primitive life, their survival would require a potential for adaptivity. In other words, instead of possessing merely a certain set of procedures for dealing with a limited set of phenomenon, they must possess the capacity to adapt themselves to a range of chaotic situations. This range can be extremely limited --- there might be only a very narrow field of situations in which the organism could survive; and yet within this range, it must be able to adapt itself to maintain an internal regularity. This adaptive potential should be thought of as a transformative, rather than merely computational operation. While a computation merely rearranges information that has been presented to it in an organized form, an adaptive potential enables the transformation from chaos to regularity. Or, simply put, the most basic organisms to develop enact, as it were, the most fundamental transformation from non-living to the living. We might compare these with the input and output devices of a computer, the keyboard and monitor, for example, which transform one form of action into another, translating the physical impact against a keyboard into digital signals, or digital signals into a visual experience.

On the other hand, as life evolves over time, the environment is no longer constituted merely by the not-yet-living of a nature “out there,” but rather by the organisms themselves. Living beings, interwoven with what was originally mere “nature,” create a world for each other. And thus we may ask: as evolution progresses,

does this environment itself become more or less chaotic? The answer to this question is complex. As we have seen, organisms are, from the beginning, of a two-fold character. They possess both an adaptive potential which relates to the world outside of them, but also an internal regularity produced through the transformation of the comparative chaos and disorganized. From this it follows that the shared environment which arise from their reciprocal interaction would evolve in two contradictory directions. Certainly, in some respects it would become less chaotic, ever more standardized through the internal regularity of organisms. Organisms, in this way, would adapt to that element of their environment which has become more predictable in the kind of “inputs” that it provided, or, conversely, transform their environment into one that is more predictable. Since the environment is itself constituted through the technologies of adaptation, these both amount to the same thing.

Yet to the extent that the adaptive mechanisms themselves represent an essentially unpredictable potential, expressing chaos in their very capacity to transform chaos, the environment would itself evolve to become more chaotic. And once the environment itself includes an adaptation towards a greater level of chaos expressed through this adaptive potential, even higher levels of chaos would be reached, and so to infinity. One might suppose, perhaps, that these two tendencies would cancel themselves out. It is easy to show why this is not the case. The development of regularity, I would suggest, is concentrated within the nutritive, sensorial, and perceptive capacities --- in short, what we might call receptivity. Or, in other words, the receptivity of an organism amounts to all of those potentials that transform an external chaos into an internal regularity; this is simply what it means to “receive” from the environment. While this receptivity itself

evolves an ever greater potential to adapt to the outside, turned inwards, it tends towards a limit of regularity and organization. Contrast this, now, with the so-called “active” faculties; the ways in which an organism pursues sources of nutrition and possibilities of reproduction, or evades appropriation through another. These must evolve as an adaptation towards the adaptive potential of other organisms within the environment, without tending towards any kind of limit, and at a higher level of organization than receptivity, and thus, the outcome must be a sort of exponential increase.

Each of these two modes of adaptation gives a very different explanation of how species capable of reproduction survive to reproduce themselves. Either they could be perfectly adapted to a “consistent” environment, or they could possess a high degree of adaptability. Since no absolute distinction can be drawn between the adaptive potential and the environment, and since, moreover, the stability of the environment is always relative to the potential to adapt, this distinction may seem to stand on shaky territory. In order to distinguish between the two, we must consider the evolutionary tendencies that follow from these different adaptive strategies. Whereas the former tends towards an ever more stable environment with a restricted range of adaptive potentials, the latter opens up to an exponential increase in adaptability.

With this criterion in place, we can now discern the basic texture --- the qualitative differentiation --- of human nature. Which of the environment-constituting technologies of human nature evolve towards a certain environmental stability, and which towards what we might call meta-adaptability --- an adaptability that anticipates adaptation? Under the first category, it seems likely, belongs all that is commonly spoken of as our “receptive” nature; all that receives the world into a regular form, either for our

nutritive, sensual, or perceptive faculties. Under the second, on the other hand, all those capacities which, because they have adapted to anticipate the possibility of adaptation, --- or moreover, because they have evolved in anticipation of an environment that itself anticipates an anticipatory evolution, are themselves capable of creating new strategies and systems for coping with the world, either in the course of an individual life, or in the life of a community, or over the whole of human history. This constitutes the highest expression of our adaptive potential. In this way, we can characterize all of the human capacities that are traditionally conceived as belonging to our “active,” “rational” or “spontaneous” nature. The capacity to think logically, for example, or to interpret the world teleologically, or to act freely and with a certain goal in mind, or even our phantasy and imagination and artistic creativity--- these are all part and parcel of an ability to develop evolving strategies for coping with world. That we can form abstractions, or generalize universals from particular traits, allows us to identify recurrent situations, and formulate ways of dealing with them. And even the ability of individuals to form a discrete culture may be understood in this way; a culture is like a depository for specific adaptive strategies that have evolved, and continue to evolve, towards a specific environment. And finally, holding cultures together, and intertwined with practically every form of meta-adaptive strategy, is human language. Human language is, in essence, free and creative; it is not to be defined by a specific medium, or even by certain hard-wired grammatical structures. Rather, it is to be understood as the capacity to produce a potentially infinite number of context appropriate responses, and to respond, in like manner, to every response. Or in other words, the basic trait of human language, and thus of human freedom and fulfillment, is conversation.

Because these free activities still tend towards some form of stability, they provide the basis of what we might call “derivative” philosophical interpretations. Such interpretations try to understand human language in terms of some more stable, less adaptable, structure, such as the principles of logic (language understood in terms of true or false propositions and rules of inference, or as derivative of the principle of non-contradiction and sufficient reason), or the teleological projections of ordinary language (language is seen as something that is used by people in order to “do something”), or the idea of self-hood expressed in personal pronouns.

In thus conceiving of human nature, it may seem as though we have simply reproduces the “creationist” account of the opposition between sensibility and reason. Yet there is a crucial difference. Whereas before, our sensual nature was identified with that which tends towards disunity and disarray, and which is the source of strife and discord, and our rational nature, on the other hand, with what unifies us under a common humanity, now things are reversed. Our sensual natures are essentially similar, the source of great commonality, whereas language --- while bound within certain limits which may ultimately allow for a universal fluid communication --- contains an almost infinite potential for what we might call creative disagreement. Language-users, in their reciprocal anticipatory adaptation, create ever new formulations, ever new modes of expression; no one can ever have the last word. Language recreates the chaos of an environment formed by reciprocal interaction. It is the highest natural expression of human freedom; the native form of free political agency.

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Evolution, we said earlier, is itself a form of political agency. To begin, at every level, evolution is the creation of a community; the environment produced through the reciprocal interactions of individual expressions of different species (an organism that reproduces purely asexually is, as it were, a species unto itself). This community, the ecosystem, involves the creation and circulation of the organic and inorganic compounds and materials necessary to sustain life; and it involves both inputs from the outside and deposits to the outside; energy from the sun is received, and organic compounds, through natural processes, form fossil fuels. Every act of nourishment and excretion is of consequence to the entire system, and to the extent that humans consume fuels and fuels and leave behind waste products of any kind --- from the simplest act of defecation to the disposal of toxic waste or exhaust from an automobile --- they are involved as political agents with the entire ecosystem. There is, in this respect, no essential difference between the photosynthesis of a weed and the energy production of a coal plant.

If they differ, it is in the responsibility that they entail; human agents are responsible for their actions in a way that plants and other animals are not. This is a point of great confusion. For some, human responsibility and freedom are expressions of a mental faculty which we possess as individuals and outside of any relation either to a community, or to the human species, or to nature as a whole. In this way, our freedom and responsibility are rendered absolute at the same time as they are absolved of any relation to a context that could give them meaning. It becomes the inescapable duty of each individual to be free --- though only as an individual. Freedom is now an end in itself; we no longer have any idea why we should be free, nor could we even broach such

questions, and if freedom is nevertheless still associated with a responsibility towards others, this is only a responsibility towards the freedom of others. We have the both the duty and the right to act as free as is possible without infringing on the freedom of others.

If freedom is thought to rest purely on itself as a given of human nature, we could not conceive of its content as having evolved with the evolution of the human species and in reciprocal intercourse with nature. At best, taking some form of natural law as our starting point, we could show how social organizations have emerged through contracts -- through the trade of freedom for security. In the end, however, freedom must be thought of as something that has been *created* --- which is, of course, implicit in every conception of “natural law” --- and its true content and meaning rests on the intentions of our creator. So conceived, freedom must in the end come into contradiction with itself --- to be anything but an empty self-abstraction, it must have been intentionally created by a God who, being by definition all-powerful and all-knowing with respect to his creation, must have anticipated and pre-ordained every individual expression of our freedom.

If traditional forms of religion were able to avoid this paradox, it was only by subordinating man’s freedom to his responsibility towards God --- a responsibility communicated not by through inborn ideas, but through specific acts of revelation. Man, in other words, is responsible before he is free. Once religion is submitted to the demands of reason, God can no longer survive as a viable extrinsic explanation for things --- he is either the whole of nature, or nothing. With God “dead,” ethics is left devoid of content. We are absolved of responsibility, and must begin the work of reinventing man through his interactive relation to nature. This nihilistic consequence, if it is not bravely accepted by those with enough courage to follow their premises through to their last consequence,

is distorted and obscured into the two pictures of human nature which we discussed at the beginning; “determinism” and “rational choice.” With the first, the creative force of God is transformed into the omnipotence of an environment which determines our values while leaving us without a trace of responsibility. In the case of the second, our freedom and responsibility remains, but without any content; since it is absolved of all responsibility for our environment, the only context in which true freedom is possible, it is, in fact, without any responsibility for responsibility, reduced to a mere rational choice between available options.

If we are to gain a rich and full conception of human agency, we need to think of it as having evolved through an interaction with our environment. And indeed, not only is this the only way to gain a rich concept of human nature --- one that contains more than that which is derived from the application of the moral categories of ordinary language --- but without recourse to God as a transcendent cause, this is the only way. If evolution had not been developed as a “scientific” theory with an empirical basis, it would have had to have been invented as “philosophy” --- as indeed it was, in the thought of Lessing, Herder, and Schelling and Hegel, and before them Herecleites and Lucretius. There are only two possibilities; revelation or evolution. The thought of the Enlightenment, which stood between these two, --- is at most a transitional moment; and so brief that it scarcely exists.

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Human responsibility and freedom are simply modalities of the evolving community of nature; particular forms of expression of the political life of all organisms and species. It is impossible to limit responsibility to humans without undermining the foundation of all ethics.

How are we then to fix the limits and scope of man's free and responsible political agency? His political agency comprises all the ways that he participates in the entire system of nature as an exchange of resources. Is man, accordingly, responsible for all that happens through his nature? Or is his responsibility somehow more confined? Before we broach this question, a brief clarification is necessary regarding our method. Earlier, we stated that there is no absolute limit that can be drawn between the evolution of the human species, and the evolution of technologies on a historical scale; the technologies we create are not only realizations and extensions of our innate potential of adaptability, but may even open up a whole new kind of environment and adaptive potential, and thus belong within our evolution as a species. Our survival as the species that we are depends on all the ways that we adapt our environment, and not just those which are born into our bodies. And since a species is nothing else than its adaptive potential in its realizations, we cannot limit human evolution to some sort of pre-history.

For purely methodological purposes, however, we will deal with these two processes as if they were distinct phases, first trying to establish the potential for free political action that is innate to our species, and only then attempting to account for the further evolution. Such an approach is necessary if we are to pose the question that stands at the very center of our inquiry. Namely, to what extent are the evolved, historical, forms

of technology (conceived in the broadest sense) expressions of free political action? Do they confirm, or do they undermine true human freedom. What we ultimately want to know is this; to what extent are the evolution of specific forms of technology guided by a free community and directed towards human ends, and to what extent do they no longer belong within human evolution, but rather merely subsist and perpetuate themselves through human communities, even while, at the same time, undermining them. We do not wish to claim that this evolutionary process, if it exists, is wrong or evil, but only that it speaks against a specifically human responsibility, and thus that --- to the degree that we can still be politically engaged as humans --- we are summoned to act in resistance to it.

Our innate potential for free and responsible political action rests in human language. Human language, as we have seen, is a system that has adapted towards the potential for adaptation, and indeed to an extraordinary degree; it is not merely a capacity for utterances referring to a finite set of possible arrangements of states of affairs out there in the world. Through language, we are able to make conversation; the confrontation of linguistic expressions that, unbounded in their possibilities, nevertheless demand a response --- responsible openness to infinity. Innately polemical, even when it happens only “in our heads,” conversation institutes an entirely new level both of creative freedom and responsibility. This reciprocal, responsible freedom --- what we call human freedom --- is the basis of free political action. It allows, for example, a community of people to converge and for shared cultural forms to develop among them --- these may still be coercive, but they remain human and freely political, at least to the extent that they do not silence language and repress its operation as the medium of communal organization. But even thinking, even a private conversation within our head, is political,

stitching all the disparate expressions of our active and passive nature --- our ideas, desires, passions, and so forth, into a more cohesive self. Self-hood is the process of dialogue between these interior elements and the larger community; it is neither purely individual nor dictated from the outside. It rests neither in a psychological process nor in an act of transcendental apperception, but is built out through language.

We should not think, however, that the political action of language extends only to either the convocation of people into communities or the gathering of scattered mental acts into individuals. To the degree that language reaches throughout our environment, expressing actions that take place outside of human agency --- to the degree, in other words, that it is able to grasp the action of nature --- language has always already extended our responsibility beyond ourselves. Or rather, we are ourselves always extended beyond what we had wrongly thought ourselves to be. As soon as there is language, we have become politically responsible for all of nature. Within different cultures and languages, however, this political responsibility takes very different forms; in animism, the structure of human agency is extended throughout almost the entirety of the natural world. Nature is almost entirely besouled, and every part of it converses with every other in a human tongue. In a theistic culture, both man and the world are conceived of as created, and the nature of both their mutual responsibility and their form of converse is established through God's will. Modern scientific culture, however, begins with the refusal, and refusal, of theism; a creation which has not only been voided of all innate meaning, but also orphaned from its creator. Amidst these ruins, it seeks to discover forms of causality which no longer assume the structure of human agency, refusing to explain things by attributing a will either to nature or to God. The different causal systems that it discovers

are fragments that do not yet speak to each other. These it must stitch together with human agency into a cohesive whole, joining the agency of man and his environment, the human and the inhuman, into a single political community.

This community, while anticipated within nature, is made explicit in the medium of human language. Language, we must note, is not authentically and properly restricted to the human; the language of man, to use Walter Benjamin's expression, is itself just a specific mode of language as such, and this includes every system of elements that communicates with each other. Every scientific object domain, as it is described by a coherent theory, involves such a system of elements; matter and energy in nuclear physics, atoms and molecules in chemistry, all the different levels of organization, from the cellular to the ecological, that belong to biology. These systems describe possibilities of action, and such action, ultimately, is expressive; a real system is active to the extent that it expresses its combinatorial possibilities. Expression, in the most general sense, means the realization of a potential which is conceived neither teleological (as a final cause that is realized when a thing becomes most fully what it, by nature, is), nor dynamically (as a latent force that realizes itself by becoming active), but as possibilities of combination and communication.¹

All of nature, as a real system, expresses itself through the interaction between these different languages; matter is created from energy, forming a complex of atoms, which fluidly enter into every changing relations to each through chemical processes, communicating energy between them, and also, through nuclear reactions, transforming matter back into energy. Chemical processes create organic compounds which become

¹ Teleological and dynamical causality --- indeed every form of causality and action --- may be regarded as a special case of expression, operating with a more narrowly defined matrix of combinatorial possibilities.

the building blocks of life, and as life evolves, these compounds come to be circulated in ever more complicated ways. The language of man is a way in which the whole of nature expresses itself, yet it opens up an entirely new horizon of expressive, adaptive potential. For through the language of man, the language of nature --- language as such ---, can be recreated, and express itself in its totality.

This is first of all the task of ordinary language. Yet ordinary language presents the action of nature in terms of the action of man --- and when no easy analogy with human nature is forthcoming, it simply resorts to negatives, like “itness.” The task of a scientific culture, however, is to transform merely human language so that it expresses the action of all of nature *in the manner of action that is proper to it*. Human language must be able to translate into the language of nature, and express the very transformation that takes place between human and inhuman agency. This is the work of rigorous science, which attempts as much as possible to express the action of nature beyond the ontological constraints imposed by human language through discrete symbolic systems with a precisely determined signifiers. In this, science is aided by mathematics, which develops new possibilities for discrete symbolic systems without any regard for their empirical applicability. But it is also the work of philosophy, which brings these discrete systems into communication with each other through the medium of natural language, and thus at the same time discloses their relation to human agency. And finally, it is the work of poetry and dance --- what we will call *dramatics* --- which, as we shall see, provide a kind of synoptic experience of the whole of these interactions. A culture of science is the shared work of mathematics, science, philosophy, and drama.

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The basis of free political action is language, an inborn creative potential that connects our nature with the nature outside of us, joining them together in a reciprocal responsibility. Since human nature consists both in activity and receptivity, our sensuality, perceptivity, emotions, must all become responsible and enter into commerce with the rest of nature. Everything, in other words, is called upon to express itself, and a political community is nothing else than a community of people, which, through the common and polemical use of language, are constantly in the process of convening on cultural forms which will allow all of nature to come to self-expression through the self-expressions of humans in their freedom. Every form of self-hood is itself such a cultural form, just as, likewise, no culture can be conceived outside of its realization in individuals. These cultural forms may be entirely ineffective --- as is the case with magic --- but as long as they are arrived at through the give and take of a discourse which responsibly grasps nature as a whole, a community is freely political. The language of such a community, simply put, must stretch over all of nature, showing its interrelation and interaction, and then allow for the open negotiation of all actions which express this interconnectedness.

This innate potential for free political action is the starting point for the historical evolution of human social organizations. To understand this evolution, we must rigorously determine how a community differs from a mere social organization. And since a community is itself a form of social organization, first we must try to understand the nature of an organization as such, and then provide a genetic account of how its different modalities emerge.

An organization is simply any arrangement that mediates between and organizes forms of agency into a reciprocal commerce. Organizations, in this sense, are expressions of language as such, and may be found throughout the whole of nature --- inanimate, animate, and human --- and also as discrete symbolic systems within human language. Organizations can be either real or ideal, according to whether they express the combinatorial possibility of different recurrent patterns, or of their individual instantiations. And they can be either concrete or abstract, according to whether they involve an organization found within nature, or one which, while composed of a system of signs which is in itself a real organization, nevertheless refers to something outside of itself. These are the different modalities of organization; their formal, or relational structure.

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The whole of nature is a real, concrete organization --- and as such it is absolute and purely relational. Nature, in this sense, refers to the whole of reality once we have abstracted away from all the forms imposed by ordinary language --- reality, in other words, as it is *in itself*, and as the perhaps unreachable ideal object of scientific inquiry. That it is purely relational is simply a consequence of the abstraction from all the forms of human agency. Scientific understanding is a retreat from the logic inherent in the most highly evolved forms to the logic of those that are less so; the scientist, simply put, is someone who tries to speak the language of things stupider than himself. To do this, he must try to abstract away from those structures imposed by the meta-adaptive structure of ordinary language, and at the same time --- and this is the difficult part --- produce a new

language that can communicate with nature through experimental verification. Ordinary language is, in essence, a perspective of the world that allows for strategic interaction by conceiving of all actions either as the actions of agents that act against each other with intentions, desires, essentially like our own, and thus predictable and alterable, or, if need be, and as a last resort when this paradigm clearly fails, in terms of modes of agency derived from this privileged model, and conceived only through the negation of its attributed (as inanimate, senseless, purposeless.) In this way, the perspective of ordinary language allows us to act in anticipation of the action of others.² There is a way, in other words, in which ordinary language conceives of all reality as a game, and one that for the most part makes sense, although occasionally it is interrupted by murmuring of idiots. Once we accept that world is evolved, and has not been created by an agent-God, there can be no disputing the need to abstract away from every suggestion of agency in describing the very system from which human agency emerges. And afterwards, what we are left with is action without agency, a purely verbal language. Here, an action is simply what implies possibilities for action, and a possibility for action a set of actions left undetermined because our framework does not yet encompass the whole.

Every part of the whole, in this way, is to be conceived as a possibility for action - -- a set of combinatorial possibilities among actions, which themselves imply further sets of combinatorial possibilities. This suggests the sense in which the whole of nature is real; every part is determined as a part of the whole, it expresses its relation to the other

² The very idea that the scientific revolution caused the disenchantment of the world results from the stubborn insistence on the forms of agency privileged through ordinary language. For it is in no way clear why reality has necessarily become empty, voided of meaning, simply because it is no longer regarded either as animate in itself, or as the creation of a theistic God. Stranger yet is the disenchantment attributed to Darwin; doesn't the "concept" of man become infinitely richer once it is understood as the outgrowth of a creative universe, rather than the creation of a God that we could only understand after our own nature?

parts of the whole. And thus, it would make no sense to speak of the same thing existing in more than one way --- with different accidental qualities, in a different time or space -- - but only of greater or lesser degrees of similarity between different perspectives of the whole.

In this way, the system is also concrete and absolute. Nothing gains its meaning by referring to something outside of the system, nor does the system as a whole have any meaning beyond the possibilities expressed within itself.

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Human language, as we have suggested, is simply another expression of nature; and in this way, it is also concrete and real. A properly scientific theory of spoken language must, ultimately, tie it into the mental facilities that are located within individual minds and that perform computations on what begins and ends with an individual sound wave conveyed through the vibrations of particular particles of air. However, if we consider language not just as an activity of living organisms, but according its own, internal rules of operation --- if, in other words, we try to grasp the action that takes place within language, we recognize a concrete, but ideal system. While it doesn't refer necessarily and originally to anything outside of itself, it brings patterns, and not individuals, into relation. When we speak of an "individual word," we do not mean the particular occurrence of a pattern of sound at a specific time and place --- it almost impossible, and nonsensical to refer to such a thing. What we speak of, instead, is a set of phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and graphic possibilities --- the potential to generate different patterns of sound, meaning, grammar, and written marks.

And isn't there an infinitely greater need to rejoice in existence, once we realize its fragile and perilous character?

The action of language is not, in and of itself, referential. It combines linguistic signs --- representations of semantic, syntactic, phonetic and graphic possibilities --- into expressions, and it moves fluidly between these four levels, but it does not establish relations between words and things. Rather, the ways in which language is utilized --- referring to things, creating mellifluous sounds, expressing feelings, commanding others, forming relationships between people --- belong, to use Chomsky's term, to the level of interpretation. Language gives us tools, without telling us how they should be used. The kind of "potential tools" that are produced may be guided by some kind of exigency emerging from out of another part of the mind and ultimately rooted in the context of our utterances, and the expressions that are produced in our thoughts have to pass by a sentry post of inhibitions, and attest to a degree of usefulness and relevance before they are uttered as speech, even when there is no one around to listen. Yet this pragmatic dimension does not determine the action of language from within; words are not marked according to their use, but only according to combinatorial possibilities and their semantic implications.

These days, scientists and philosophers don't just disagree about everything, but seem incapable of even finding a common mode of discourse in which their disagreements might assume a coherent form. Philosophy and science, we are told --- as if this were a {fait accompli} --- are two worlds, completely irreconcilable, and incapable of communicating with each other but on terms that are almost entirely unsatisfactory to each. Such a position can only be satisfying to the self-satisfied, and if so many in the Universities are will to believe it (just as so many outside the Universities are willing to believe nothing), it is only because the academy, like practically every other institution of

modern life, has become not only specialized, but self-gratifying, content with its results and the particular form of institutionalized rigor that they express. But no serious *thinker* --- no one who has given him or herself over to the infinite political responsibility of language --- can be content with mere fragments.

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Human language is the medium where the real and ideal converge; it is an expression of the system of nature, but also contains the possibility of human freedom in all of its expressions, not the least among which is philosophy. Like a skin, it enfolds both the inside and the outside, and allows both to touch even while keeping them completely separate. And because language is like a skin, it is almost impossible to approach; or indeed, it cannot truly be approached, but only adopted, worn --- or rather, as it were, we must come to realize that it is what we always have on. If scientists and philosophers can find no common ground, it is, above all, because they are unable to convene on a single approach to language. Each tries to approach this meeting ground of the real and ideal from one of the two sides, and distorts the phenomenon accordingly. What they disagree about, above all, is the place of the pragmatic dimension. For a purely scientific approach, the use and application of language is a free human activity, and falls outside the purvey of science; linguistics is to be restricted to the study of a calculus with an enormous creative potential to enable free political action by projecting “human agency” onto the world and allowing for communication between human agents. Every interpretation of language in terms of human agency is to be rejected as inherently non-scientific. Philosophers, on the other hand, wish precisely to attribute to the activity of language the freedom of willed, rational, agency. We bring words together into sentences

and communicate these to others in order to “do things”; through language, we try to realize certain kinds of intentions, and our utterance are successful, if, in the end, they did what they were supposed to. Such “ordinary language philosophers” and “pragmatists,” though, not content merely to describe different ways in which linguistic expressions can serve as tools, feel compelled to explain human language as such, and thus come to the absurd conclusion that linguistic utterances, and languages as a whole, are themselves created to serve these needs. Absurd, because in the end it leads to the deterministic result that if we know what all our needs are, we could exhaustively describe the possibilities of language. In their zeal to attribute rationalistic “free” agency to the action of language, not only have they excluded creative, infinitely deep, and truly political freedom, but they have undermined their own already shallow foundations. An example, once again, of how the two pictures of human nature conspire together to obscure human potential and human responsibility.

So long as linguistics simply places the questions of pragmatics beyond the range of science, it can neither guard against these misunderstandings, nor succeed in making its own higher conception of freedom available to science. And thus, it forfeits all hope of discourse that would unify, by translating between, philosophy and science. Moreover, by assuming that all pragmatics is in fact governed by human freedom, it, on the one hand, accepts the merely “rationalist” notion as decisive for the domain of human activity, and, on the other hand, makes it impossible even to ask whether the evolution of forms of social organization out of possibilities contained in human language has upheld true political freedom. And in this way it obscures beyond recognition the boundary between a community and a mere social organization. For these kinds of questions to make sense,

it will be necessary to overcome the most fundamental flaw of modern scientific linguistics; namely, its failure to provide an account of freedom which encompasses both the creative freedom of language --- our ability to produce an unbounded number of context-relevant utterances --- and the freedom which is projected into the world. The former can be empirically discerned and scientifically explained, and latter can only be discovered through the intuitions given us by natural language. Unless we are able to translate between the perspectives of science and the perspectives of ordinary language, these two kinds of freedom will remain mutually opaque.

What we need, to begin with, is a scientifically-informed account of the pragmatic dimension of language. To this end, we will approach language from the perspective of evolution --- not, of course, as a biological theory, but as way of understanding the genesis of every organizational structure. Through such a perspective, it is possible to conceive of the convergence of the real and the ideal by understanding each in terms of their interaction with the other, rather than as isolated, created, possibilities.³

Let us then begin by considering human language as the totality of words which now exist or have every existed. To the extent that we treat words not only as parts within a hypothetically-conceived model of natural language, not merely as theoretical entities, but as things that actually exist, then we must ask both in what way they exist --- what is the manner of being of a word --- and what are the conditions of their existence. The first question involves great subtleties, which cannot be broached in this context. Suffice it to say, consistent with our earlier remarks, that words exist neither as graphic or phonetic entities --- a sound that can be pronounced with silence at the beginning and end, and set

of letters written down with spaces or punctuation marks in front and in back, a single pictorial representation --- but as the smallest meaningful, though not necessarily independently meaningful, element of a linguistic expression; and that furthermore, they are not real but ideal, and finally, that they are not primarily either graphic, phonetic, semantic, or syntactic, but involve a bundle set of representations at all these levels, and perhaps not only these. For example, they might also include a certain limited number of pragmatic representations; their degree of politeness, or their metrical value (which is not always reducible to the phonetic representation). What these bundles of representations express is a set of combinatorial and transformative possibilities; each word, in other words, expresses the possibility of entering into relation with other words and producing linguistic expressions which allow for the translation back and forth from grammar to meaning to sound to writing. Which brings us to our second question; what are the conditions for their individual existence. What is it that allows an individual word to survive as the word that it is? Why do some words thrive, while others disappear from use? How are some words even able, as it were, to outlive the language to which they seem to owe their origin and become international or canonical terms? What is the relation between the survival of words and social organizations?

³ In a sense, the “deterministic” and “rationalistic” views take the paradigm of creator and created that once applied to the relation of God, Man, and the World, and apply it to the relation of Man and his

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These are questions which begin to emerge once we approach pragmatics from this angle. Together, they constitute the scientifically-informed, if not scientifically rigorous discipline of “evolutionary philology.” Without trying to exhaust all of the implications of this term, I will just try to list the different levels of inquiry which open up when we begin to consider how individual words survive. We begin at the molecular level, not because we believe that language is merely a fragmentary phenomenon, but that we may systematically describe all of the levels of organizational unity, and all the way up to the unity of the language of man, and language as such.

- a) The innate language faculty; the capacity to perform operations on individual word-units, producing utterances, and the inborn semantic system.
- b) The idiolect of an individual speaker; a set of words inhabits an individual speaker his own individual language. Each word within this idiolect survives as a word through its ability to come into relation with other words. Some words are more central, others more peripheral; the most central are those that serve syntactic functions, and the second most central are those that express the most basic native semantic relations. The more frequently a word is used, the more central it tends to be.
- c) A dialect, which consists in a number of idiolects spoken by people who are able to communicate with each other, and thus form a community bound, above all, by the spoken word. Such communities have more central and less central members (the town gossip, for example, is very central), and can be nestled within each other. The important thing for us is; one of the primary ways in which words survive is by being in commerce among a community of speakers. This, of course, is of consequence for the kind of words

that we can expect to find their conditions of survival in such a community; they will generally express the political organization within the community, the way in which they interact with each other and with their environment, understood in the broadest sense. Religious terms, for example, have no less justification than words describing familial relations or foodstuffs or the natural environment. If part of the political life of the community involves interacting with Gods through sacrifices, or manipulating natural forces through magic, than these are no more “metaphysical,” no less “concrete” than anything else.

d) Within a free political community, people must always expect to have to pay account of the words that they use. Thus, words used within a community may have a referential value; the use of words in a free political community may carry with it the expectation that one know what one is talking about, and is able to justify the use of a word to someone else.⁴ Words refer to things simply through the kinds of explicit definitions which may be given by one speaker and accepted by another, and not through some kind of privileged act of pointing to an object in the world. God may be referred to with no more difficulty than man or cheese; as linguistic acts, both are equally easy; as things in need of philosophical explanation, equally complicated. Such definitions provide the conditions of survival for words; an individual word may survive, in part, because people are able to explain its use to others and agree on this explanation.

It would be necessary, then, to account for all of the ways in which words can be defined, and their use explained and justified.

⁴ Not only is there no reason to suppose that this is a function merely of modern democracies with free speech and political accountability, but it may be far less important in such apparently open, yet actually institutionalized, societies than in the most primitive cultures. Who ever asks a physicist to pay account for his terms; only other physicists. Lay-men assume that specialists know what they are talking about.

In general, these explanations are built around systems of interrelated elements.

Among these are;

- i) the systems of communal organization.
 - ii) systems of geographical orientation.
 - iii) systems of neighboring peoples, with themselves at the center.
 - iv) systems of human aging.
 - v) systems of time and seasonal change.
 - vii) systems of the conditions of the human body (various modalities of sickness and health)
 - viii) systems of different animals in relation to man.
 - ix) systems of celestial bodies in relation to the earth.
 - x) systems of emotions, moods, feelings.
 - xi) systems of food in relation to the human body.
 - xii) systems of moral qualities, norms, values.
 - xiii) systems arising from the specialization of labor and political organization.
 - xiv) systems of Gods (which of course overlap with other systems, and bring them all into interrelation) and Heroes.
 - xv) systems of numbers.
 - xvi) ontological systems --- the essential qualitative differences discovered in reality.
- e) Oral narratives, in a constant process of transformation, which establish the continuity of a community over time. Such an oral tradition, can, in particular, account for the preservation of proper names, and indeed, several of the systems mentioned in (d) may in fact be formed from out of such an oral tradition.

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This brings us to the end of our discussion of what, roughly speaking, we might call ordinary language; language as an ideal, concrete system. Ordinary language develops out of a community of speakers. Our use of language in a community is involved in systems which do not simply belong to the innate faculty for language, even if, at least in some cases, they may be anticipated through inborn semantic structures. We refer to these systems in trying to explain what we mean by a word, clarify ourselves to others, or justify a particular way of speaking. In an institution, these systems are no longer openly and fluidly established through a linguistic community either by drawing from phenomenon accessible more or less to all through some form of common sense, or reflecting the very conventions through which a community is formed, and which are constantly being reaffirmed in everyday life. It is above all in this way that institutional language differs from the language of the everyday. Violence and coercion are not the issue; the open and fluid use of language is possible when there is coercion, while an institution may exist entirely without any use of violent force or even subtle manipulation. Reproductive relations, for example, may be enforced only through compulsion and violation, yet the very need for continual reinforcement and compulsion, or even to continually justify these structures by referring to norms and religion, suggests that these are “open” and “fluid.” Open, communal discourse is polemical, and may involve acts of physical violence, no less than words that evoke reasons or emotions. Even silencing the voice of some potential speakers can be part of a free political community.

The difference between a community and an institution --- and this cannot be emphasized enough --- neither depends on, nor should be described in terms of, the relation between the organizational form and human subjectivity. It is not a question of how the individual subject is made to comply in its actions with the larger organization. What is at issue, rather, is whether it allows or permits agency to take the form of linguistic interaction; whether it allows for the saturation of reality by free political interaction. An institution abstracts action from language; it ties words to forms of agency that cannot in any way be secured merely through discourse, and in this way creates words which no longer speak, immediately, to their seeming fellows. Through this abstraction, it opens up a new level of organization and form of language develops; one that is ideal and abstract.

Institutions perform this abstraction through two kinds of procedures; the one referential and the other systematic. The former establish the reference of a word by bringing it into relation, through some kind of empirical procedure, to something outside of itself. The latter develop the meanings of a set of words by developing systematic interactions. These two procedures operate together, and through them, an institution exists, in a sense, as a kind of sub-language, which translates the action of the world outside of itself into a system of discreet system of interaction, a set of terms which are understood in terms of how they interact with each other, and thus through a mode of action which can take place in complete isolation from the outside world. Only in this way is it possible to approach the action of nature beyond the limits of ordinary language, and thus, true science is always institutional in form.

Institutions can be either real or ideal; a real institution depends on some kind of actual physical embodiment --- machines and individuals --- as well as relations to specific event in the outside world. A corporations or government bureaucracy is a real institution; it consists in part in an actual physical plant, certain objects that are owned, certain individuals that are on the payroll, and relations to a specific society or market. In contrast, an ideal institution consists only in a system of patterns set in relation to patterns in the outside world. Such ideal systems stand at the heart of almost every science, even though they can themselves only exist through a real institution of actual scientists interacting with each other and actual machines producing the empirical information feeding theory. The real and ideal institutions of a given science each, in a way, provide the conditions of survival --- the ecological niche for the other.

Institutions can be either mechanical or creative, in both their interface and their internal operations. They are creative to the extent that the actions they perform are infinite and open rather than routine and predictable. It is, however, always a matter of degree, and not of an absolute, qualitative difference. Baring the possibility of true artificial intelligence, creative institutions involve the labor of actual people who manipulate signs internal to a system or interface with the world in ways that are not entirely predetermined by any set routine.

Finally, institutions can be either open or closed, and either cultivating or ineffectual. An open institution is adaptive --- it is able to adapt itself to its environment -- whereas a closed institution is rigid in its conditions of survival. A cultivating institution is able to transform its environment into one in which it can thrive. These factors our of great significance for our project. Only an open, cultivating institution, we

will see, is able to be integrated into a community --- though, at the same time, these also present the greatest danger.

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Corporations and bureaucracies are examples of largely creative, real institutions. While some aspects of internal regulation and organization may be settled through almost mechanical procedures, they depend, in large part, on creative processes. This is so because the world that they deal with involves people and free human agency; it is changing and unpredictable, and constantly in the process of adapting, and thus to be able to relate to it, the corporation must itself be capable of infinite adaptation --- it must be open, and this openness requires not only the fluidity of capital --- the ability to rapidly reapply its resources to new purpose --- but also the appropriation of human creativity. Likewise, just as a corporation may survive by being open to a changing environment, it may also try to cultivate its environment to suite its purposes. This is achieved by advertising and marketing, by political interventions, by investments in infrastructure and the development of human resources --- but in every case, through strategic initiatives towards a changing environment, that, once again, require human creativity. And so long as a company has people working for it, and relies on a human creative potential, it must also be organized not just merely through mechanical procedures, but rather, through the strategies enabled by language. Every company, in other words, creates a community within itself, a limited sphere within which free political speech is itself operative.

This free political speech operates in tandem with what we have previously identified as an institutional language, a language formed through processes of

abstraction. Consider the case of a corporation; certain terms like “commodity,” “capital,” “consumer,” “market share,” “net profit,” “gross profit,” and so forth, gain there meaning through actual procedures which relate it as a system to its external environment and are then manipulated within a system that determines its actions and responses to whatever changes occur in its environment. These signs do not themselves constitute freely political language, and yet they are nevertheless manipulated by human agents who are communicate with each other and apply human creativity to solving the problems that confront them. Ultimately, the manipulation of these signs is guided by principles that exempt themselves from and abstract away from a larger community, and yet it nevertheless itself proceeds creatively.

This results in a free political community that, in a certain way, is essentially isolated from other political communities. The actions that it is capable of are essentially limited by the kind of action articulated through the institutional language, and this, moreover, is itself incapable of entering the flow of a broader community of discourse. The political discourse within a corporation, or within any institution, can never embrace the entire range of actions within the world; it can never enter into relation with the entire community of action, but is limited and relative. And in this way, it in the end contradicts its own conditions, and cannot count as truly free; it does not affirm, but rather destroys the possibility of reciprocally free agency. Evidence of this is the strange fact that, in the United States, where a hostility to socialism is so deeply entrenched in almost every discussion of politics, and where, moreover, it seems almost impossible for us even to consider the ways in which our society is organized, let alone subject these to critique and change, --- where, in other words, we no longer really seem to possess a free political

discourse capable of comprehending the system of social relations as a whole, --- there is nevertheless a comparatively great deal of innovation within the work place, and even the development of quasi-socialist forms within corporations. Corporations, in other words, are beginning to realize the need to fully exploit human creativity through more management techniques that allow for a true community, where innovation and change flows in both up and down --- but only in order to become even more effective in their own limited, ultimately non-political, forms of agency.

Real mechanical institutions are technology in the narrowest sense. In its broadest sense, technology includes any form of political action, any way of action that helps build some kind of environment. This includes the labor of man as well as of nature; historical, conscious, unconscious, living, organic, and even entirely inorganic processes. In addition, we may also speak of *techniques*. These refer to any form of specifically conscious, human intervention in the natural world; for example, the use of tools, the building of shelter, and the cultivation of the land. Through these, human beings extend their communication with nature; each technique, as it were, builds a new kind of rapport with our natural environment, creating a new way in which the action of nature interacts with the action of man. In this way, techniques work together with ordinary language, in order to build our political community into nature. In similar manner, techniques differ from technologies (in the narrowest sense) in just the same way as ordinary language differs from institutional language; techniques, like ordinary language, are concrete rather than abstract.

As we mentioned earlier, institutions become abstract in two different ways; the one referential, the other systematic. Following this distinction, we can specify the two

characteristic traits of real mechanical institutions. First, they *refer* to nature by translating one form of energy into another. The radicality of this transformation varies greatly; it may involve simply transforming one form of physical motion --- the blowing of the wind, the downward rush of water --- into another form of mechanical motion --- the regular turning of a wheel. Or it may even involve a transformation so extreme as that from matter to energy. In either case, their goal is to realize a form of energy which can be manipulated within the system. This brings us to the second point. Technologies, in the narrowest sense, require a system with a form of activity that, to a degree, operates independent of human activity. It is not difficult to see how these two facets of technology are closely interrelated, and sometimes, they even coincide perfectly. This, we will see, is the case with the first technology --- fire --- as well as what, perhaps, will be the last --- the nuclear weapon. Technologies become developed and refined, however, to the extent that their functions are separated and distinguished from each other --- a possibility granted, above all, by the discovery of electricity.

{ At this point, I should discuss money as an abstract real institution. This will complete the schematic discussion of the different basic forms of organization. Money is abstract in so far as its functionality consists in referring to something outside of itself. It is real, however, in that only an actual, existent quantity of money can have a referential function --- unlike language, which is potentially infinite and infinitely repeatable, money can only function as money in so far as it is limited in quantity, and that limited quantity is designated as authentic, in such a way that it cannot be imitated. }

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We have thus far provided a schematic outline of different forms of organization. Yet we are not concerned with these in isolation, but as evolutionary possibility that emerge and develop, and, therefore, we must attempt to show how they are joined together into a continuity. This does not mean demonstrating the exploring the chain of efficient causes that allowed them to come into being; such a task belongs, of course, within the province of science. Rather, what we wish to do is exhibit the forms of specifically human *praxis*, that build connections between these different levels of organization. The question guiding our investigation is as follows; assuming the basic givenness of nature --- human nature and exterior nature alike --- how is it that human actions have built themselves into their environment, realizing the different forms of organization as possibilities of human activity. Treating every organization as a possibility for action, we wish to understand the kinds of human actions that created the organizations that create possibilities for action that are particularly relevant to humans. Such an investigation is not concerned with specific events within human history, but rather as it were, with the outermost limit of human *praxis* treated more or less in isolation from their actual historical genesis --- in a way, and roughly speaking, as "ideal types" of agency. Since the human body, with its individual actions, is at the center of our real, concrete existence and interaction with nature, we will begin with a discussion of *somatic* language, and then continue on to a discussion of the *techniques* that emerge out of *somatic* language, cultivating a human community in physical space and time. The language of words shall ultimately be treated as just such a technique.

The human species interacts with nature --- and it does so, first of all, through an organization of human bodies. The human body, with its innate potentials, --- including the brain and the nervous system --- is the starting point for all further development into the physical world. Our body, like every body, communicates with the language of action spoken by the whole of nature. There is nothing mystifying or obscure or essentially unscientific about this language of action; as already suggested, it merely means the entire system composed of all the separate forms in which energy is stored, released, and communicated. Nuclear physics, mechanics, electromagnetism, light, chemistry, and biology (at different levels) are abstract, ideal systems that describe these forms of real interaction. Their interactions are both layered and interwoven; and in their communication they constitute the real language of the whole of nature.

The way that man fits in is, of course, not much less complicated than the system as a whole. For our own purposes, however, it suffices merely to think of the human body as a nodal point within the whole, and to list the different “inputs” and “outputs” through which it communicates with its environment. The inputs include sensory stimuli (light which acts against our retina, as well as on our skin, vibrations conveyed through the air, tastes, smells, tactile sensations), oxygen, water, minerals, various kinds of organic compounds. Our outputs include energy in the form of heat, carbon dioxide, solid and liquid waste products and perspiration, mechanical movements and sounds, sperm, and babies.

These inputs and outputs may be characterized in the following way. First, while all of these inputs and outputs belong to the life of the human body, some are more immanently necessary for our survival than others. The inability to respire, for example,

brings death in a matter of minutes, while drinking water can be withheld for several days, and food for even longer. Secondly, some are absolutely necessary for the survival of the individual while others can be satisfied collectively. The capacities of movement and sensory perception, for example, may be absolutely necessary for a community of people facing the challenges of its environment, but certain individuals may be deficient in some, or even perhaps all, of them, and still survive within a community. They serve not for the survival of the human organisms, but for the satisfaction of its needs. Thirdly, some inputs and outputs function seem to function more voluntarily than others. Without resorting to the idea of the free will as either an isolated mental faculty or a metaphysical absolute, we can explain this simply by considering the extent to which its operation is itself implicated in free political discourse.

Politeness, in the broadest sense, is the name given to those forms of freely political language that regulate and control the impulses of the body; it guides the inputs and the outputs of different bodies into forms that can coexist within a polis, a community of people sharing a limited physical space. While mimicry and physical coercion may be necessary to guide a child towards polite behavior, what is essential, above all, is the interweaving of human language into the seemingly a-political actions of the body. The actions of the body become political through words that allow them to communicate with a larger system of human agency.

Perhaps this explains the tremendous power that vulgar words associated with bodily functions, and especially the release of waste, possess. Such words would stand at the root of politics; and it is in the very nature of polite speech to forbid naming directly the very things that it is above all concerned with. Shit is one of the root problem of

politics; and just as politics mediates the production of human waste products through social protocols, it insists that the words associated with excrement are themselves only spoken of in a round-about way.

The functions of human waste disposal --- which leave a strong mark on the world, yet at first resist bodily control --- form the basis of politics, and of political language. Proof of this is that even animals can join participate in the center of a community as long as they are able to control their urination and defecation. This is, fundamentally, what it means to be domesticated. Those animals that cannot be domesticated in this way must be kept in kennels, stalls, or relegated entirely outside of the home.

Other actions of the body are at once more open in their possibilities and more receptive to voluntary control. Consider, above all, the system of world-oriented bodily movements --- of the limbs and neck and torso and the outer extremities, and of the very refined complex of facial muscles. Often our body moves impulsively, nor do we direct every aspect of every movement --- even the most complicated physical actions are performed only under vague guidance. We choose to run, walk, jump, and skip; not to perform a complicated repeated series of movements. Nor can we ever completely control the way in which our body communicates our mood. Despite all of this, however, we are able to apply our body to an unlimited variety of tasks. Our body is capable of infinite expressiveness not only despite, but because our outer-directed movements are so deeply intertwined with almost all our passive (?) and active capacities. From the most rudimentary to the most sophisticated and free, there is almost no action of the body that cannot be expressed in a physical language. The beating of the heart, the circulation of

the blood, the vocalization of human language, cramping, bleeding --- all of this can be communicated directly through movement, without abstract symbolism.

Politics is, above all, about sharing the same real time and space. This time and space is that part of the real system of nature with which we interact through our inputs and outputs. Thus it is physical as well as chemical, biological, and so forth. This shared space is what sustains a community and guides and limits actions, and through the language of a community --- word-based as well as somatic --- this space and time is negotiated. This is true of the simplest community and of the most complex; the polis of free political activity must extend as far as our scientific conception of the limits of agency, and once we realize that we share a space and time of action with all life on this planet, we can no longer limit our politics to national boundaries and parochial, human-centered concerns.

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Simple communities are those which are defined through physical boundaries (which may be quite fluid or mobile), and where people interact not at a distance, through a medium of communication, but face-to-face; they are structured through a complex array of more common and more private spaces, and every event of political life takes place as an actual encounter of people. Beyond the most rudimentary problems of waste disposal, the sharing of space in such a community requires the development and refinement of outer-directed bodily movements. The movements of the body must be cultivated in a way that allows for people to interact in shared space without conflict; this cultivation must enable all of the political activities, conceived in the broadest sense, that take place in the community. Some of these activities are quite simple; walking upon the

same path, the use of dwelling spaces, even sleeping --- all of these are political activities that require certain physical protocols. Other activities, however, involve the formation and reformation of relationships between people. These include courtship rituals, religious rites and sacrifices to the Gods, communal discussions, any festivals which endow members of a community with a new rank or strips them of their privileges, and even, and perhaps above all else, war, which reforms the relationship between two communities or divides a community against itself. Yet, in every case, the language of physical movement is no more referential than the language of words. It consists not in a set of gestures which correspond one-to-one with a set of possible "statements," but of a system of ways of moving that allow for people to interact through a shared physical space. Such interaction is reciprocal, creative and responsive; we are open and receptive to an infinite range of possible gestures, and can respond, in turn, with equal freedom. Often, a physical language opens the way to a word-language; people might configure themselves within a common space in a way that allows for a political discussion. Or physical language might complement, complicate, or even contradict the spoken word.

While the language of the body is no less expressive, creative, or free than the language of the tongue, it differs in many respects, and only through these differences may we begin to conceive of the full range of political experience. All language, to begin, is limited. Only because there are constraints to permissible expressions is it possible for an infinite number to be creatively produced and comprehended. Yet these limitations vary vastly among different types of language. Speech and writing are based on words; communication involves a set of discreet elements specified according to their combinatorial possibilities, and which can be concatenated into an infinite variety of

infinitely long strings, producing expressions through a linear arrangement. Somatic communication, in contrast, is limited by the flexibility and strength of the muscles in body, and the outermost range of movements allowed by the joints. The torso, as it were, provides a center for the limbs, outer extremities, as well as the neck and head. These all work together to allow for infinitely varied expressive possibilities within these *physical* confines. The body is *limited* by being centered.

Owing to these differences, the language of the body and the language of the word allow for very different forms of free political interaction. Neither of these forms is either logically prior or reducible to the other, and any concept of politics that addresses itself only to one of these is entirely inadequate. We note, to begin, that the action of the body is not built around a concatenation of individual elements. If we try to think of any bodily movement as composed from a series of smaller movements, we are led down an infinite regress. Nor can we discover any specific elements of movement that are “willed” as discreet entities; we do not mentally construct even very complicated movements out of parts, except, perhaps, when we are learning to move, and not yet actually moving. We simply move, and whatever the degree of conscious direction, our movements flow together. If there is still a sense in which we might speak of units of movement, this can only be discovered in the logic of the body, and not of the mind or a word-language.

The logic of the body is dictated by the nature of the skeletal and muscular system, and their coordinated by the mind and nervous system. It is a sum of potentials; what bodies in general, human bodies, specific human bodies, and specific bodies at specific times are capable of. At any given moment, the potentials of a given body for movement are determined by the state that it is in. If our weight is resting evenly on both

feet, for example, we are not yet able to lift one into the air without falling over. If our back is oddly hunched over, our capacity to jump without falling is limited. This is indeed the most fundamental principle of somatic action; movements determine the possibility of movements, a successful movement is one which allows us to move again, which returns us to an equal or higher potential for movement.

Following this principle, we can rigorously determine how the “unit” of word-languages differs from that of body-languages, and also begin to grasp, at a deeper level, how their action and political nature also contrast. A unit, in any language, is simply an element that opens up possibilities. Languages do not create a mere artifact, a thing that could be over and done with, or a tool intended only for a narrow range of purposes. Its work is never finished; it creates nothing else than new possibilities for creation. In constructing a sentence, for example, no single word can bring a sentence to a point of rest --- every new element allows for new expansion. The only linguistic mark that really brings closure is the “period,” and yet this is not only completely foreign to speech, but only finishes one sentence by introducing another. It does not so much contribute to the composition of a sentence as mark a more or less abrupt transition that has been made. Punctuation marks, in effect, all come after the fact, and simply show how the words flow into each other. And even a seemingly finished work of poetry or prose is only the seed for the conversations that takes place among their readers and hearers.

Every level of a given form of language, all this suggests, may ultimately be regarded as a unit, since in one way or another it helps to open up possibilities. Among all these, however, the most *basic* unit is that which, to the greatest extent, opens up specific possibilities. This explains the privilege of the word in speech and writing, and

why we speak of a language of words rather than phonemes, graphemes, or sentences. In constructing an individual word, individual phonemes provide a very small number of specific choices. A sentence, on the other hand, only offers rather vague restrictions on what will follow. An individual word, however, opens up an infinite range of possibilities, and yet with specific limitations.

Most important, for our purposes, is to understand how words open up possibilities. At first glance, the answer seems simple. New possibilities emerge when we add a new word to the existing chain, or, other words, through a serial, paratactic construction. The possibilities may, in part, be determined by other words lying farther back in the sentence, but, to a great extent, the simple act of concatenation is able to create an entirely new beginning. And at the same time, it is impossible to erase the words that are already in place. In short, it is always possible to start over, but never to undo what's been done. While this seems a very simple principle, it is of enormous consequence for the kind of meaning that a word language produces.

These consequences, and their broader implications, appear more clearly if we draw a contrast with somatic language. The possibilities for movement, unlike those of the word, are not given through elements strung on what after another, but are contained, as we have seen, in the momentary state of the body, or in other words, its momentum. This momentary state is determined not by a free choice that could be made in the instant --- the decision, for example, to speak "and" and either allow a new independent clause to begin or repeat a sentence element in a parallel construction --- but instead by the continuous flow of events that preceded it and have led up to a specific configuration of muscles and bones in space. The unit of somatic language, it follows, is any flowing line

of action that end with the possibility of its repetition. Not only is the language of the body centered, but its movement is circular in structure; it does not add to a series, but returns to a point of departure. This circular, circulating unit can be discovered at many levels.

We see it, first of all, over the course of the entire life of the body. Physical abilities can only be learned and retained through repetition; it is only by doing them that one becomes capable of doing them. In a highly demanding activity such as ballet, even professionals can only maintain their level of facility through a daily regime of practice.

This roundaboutness also comes into play in longer series of movements that change our position within physical space; we wish to continue in such movement, we must make sure that we move towards a place where it is possible to continue moving. For this reason, movement in space, in the long term, always involves turning, and in fact, if one would record all the movements in space that an individual performs over the course of his life, one would find that he is constantly moving in circles. Moving in circles is, indeed, essential to any kind of physical community. It is politics in the very most fundamental and radical sense, which applies not only to human life but every form or organic, and even inorganic organization. If we did not always come back to where we started from, but just bounced around like random particles, we would not be human, or even animal, but instead our life would approach the inorganic and wholly unorganized -- the beams of light that, emanating from the center of our solar system with its rounding orbits, jet forth into infinity. To live is, in a sense, at every level to be involved in processes of circulation. Likewise, a polis, a physical community, is not a space demarcated by some outside limit, but a nested system of centers --- furniture, rooms,

houses, public places, parks, neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities and networks of cities --- around which life flows.

None of this should be thought either to privilege rootedness to the soil as the basis of political life, or question the validity of nomadic or even Diaspora tic communities. If anything, these involve a higher, more fluid, expression of the circularity of politics. And in a way, it is impossible for any human activity on this planet, or even within this solar system, to escape from the form of circularity imposed by the very roundness of the earth. Wherever we go, we are always returning to where we started; an obvious fact, and yet we seldom think about this.

The basic unit of somatic language is to be found at that level which, to the greatest extent, yields determinate possibilities. This, I would suggest, is the *step* --- of walking, jumping, skipping, running and the like. A step ends either in the possibility of repeating the same step, or in its symmetrical opposite, or in a state in which it is possible to embark upon a new step. When we walk, for example, moving one leg forward conditions us to advance the other leg. Steps, in other words, are iterative actions; and some, like walking in a circle, can, hypothetically at least, be repeated infinitely. We speak fluently with our bodies when we are able to move from step to step without crashing; without temporality, or permanently, losing our capacity for movement. It might seem peculiar that we should privilege the step over the far more articulate and subtle movements of the hand and the upper torso. Yet these, I would suggest, are already to open and free in their expressive possibilities --- and begin to approach word-language in their structure. In sign-language, for examples, gestures of the hands and arms become

the basis of a serial, paratactic construction which is no less a word-language than that spoken through the mouth.

A clearer picture now emerges of how the political interaction of the body differs from that of the word. Free political action, we have seen, is a reciprocal action that confirms the possibility of action. The step not only has a privileged place in the language of the body, but is, in this way, at the root of all political action; the basic unit of politics, as it were, is the step. In its broadest sense, comprehending the activity of every agent within a community, political action is the upkeep of a fluid system of interactions, a system that will not crash; it is to act in a way that retains and develops the existing circulations, preserving and building the possibility of a communication and circulation among the parts of the system. Or simply put, politics is the avoidance of catastrophe. And accordingly, the movement of the body expresses its most basic principle and *modus operandi* --- fluidity.

Nevertheless, the most developed systems of circulation emerge out of a word-language, which, precisely because of its essentially paratactic structure, --- the fact that each new word can open up endless possibilities ---, is open to infinity in a very different way. Words are free in a way that the body is not, and thus provide the basis for the greatest extension of free political action. It is true, indeed, that both the body and words are infinite, creative, and reciprocal. Yet the infinitude of the former is confined in both space and time. Bodies are only able to avoid catastrophe by always circulating back to the same space; they cannot, as it were, go off on an infinite tangent. And because a successful movement in effect always returns to the same position --- the possibility of new movement --- their movements are not, in the end, submitted to linear temporality. A

movement may seem to proceed as a series of partial movements, and yet the very linearity of this sequence dissolves in the very possibility of its reproduction. A successful movement is one that has not changed anything; time is lifted away as a veil concealing the true essence of motion. Words, in contrast, reproduce the structure of linear temporality, or even condition its very possibility, and preserve the past as the entire series of words that have proceeded. The new beginning that each added word provides is new only against this back-drop, and the possibilities that it opens cannot be determined but in this contrast. Words branch off into infinity like a tree.

The language of the body is intensive; details are infinitely important, the infinite is to be found in details. Every detail, however, small --- opens on to the infinite. Fluency exists as the operation of an infinite calculus, which integrates the partial moments into a smooth line. The language of the word is, in contrast, extensive; time preserves details as the dust of half-forgotten words, stripped of potential, while it races on towards the infinite. Human politics, however, involves both, and each complements the other. The language of the body is the basis of free political action, for only as this fluency does it avoid self-contradiction; the language of the word is the highest expression of freedom itself. Freedom rests on fluency, and they converge as truly political action. The verbal discourse must bow back upon itself; it must become a system of circulation and not just of infinite expansion --- it must become fluent. And at the same time, the fluency of the body must come to express itself more freely.

With this thought, a vista opens towards what we might call art and aesthetics. Such terms, though, do not speak to our purposes. We are here concerned neither with the creation of a particular privileged form of artifact, nor with its reception through the

senses, but only in how each of these languages, that of the body and that of the word, is *cultivated* to assume the qualities of the other, creating a model of a functional political community. This cultivation is *culture*; the rapprochement of the two opposite ends of free political discourse.

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The culture of the body, the cultivation of the language of movement towards the expressive potential and freedom of speech, is dance. Dance, of course, has a wide and vast history, and exists in every culture where it has not been violently suppressed by unnatural and inhuman prudishness. I will limit my discussion to ballet, however. While ballet is based upon kinds of movements and a body position which contrast sharply with other dance forms, it is not merely one form among others, but an entire system of dancing with the ability to incorporate, at least at its periphery, any kind of movement, and thus acquire an expressive potential which is not only infinitely subtle, but also infinitely expansive.

At the heart of ballet is a codification of steps; a step, a *pas* in the most general sense, means any movement or set of movements that returns to a state from which a new movement is possible. It is the movement not of one part of the body --- the foot or the leg --- but of the body as a whole. What allows for a successful movement is not the engagement of a specific muscle group, but a stillness throughout the body that can only be maintained through the proper cultivation and action of the entire muscular system; the body must be supported both within itself, and also in relation to the floor. This is achieved through the position of the feet --- which serve above all to properly distribute

the weight of the body in relation to the floor --- and the carriage of the entire body. Because the carriage of the arms and neck, and even of the back, can change to a certain degree without affecting the possibilities of movement of the body as a whole, the definition of the *pas* is oriented around the positions of the feet, and the *port de bras* functions as a partially independent, but related system. Each is learned in part independently of the other, in part in coordination, and sometimes, for either aesthetic or physical reasons, a specific *port de bras* is directly connected with a *pas*.

The language of the body, we have seen, has one simple principle; avoid catastrophe. This is the rule in everyday life as well as on the dancing stage. In the language of ordinary movements --- the walking, running, jumping, bending, kneeling, and arm extensions through which we “get by” --- this operates principally as a regulative principle. Not so much at the level of consciousness, but rather through a trepidation which resides in the body itself. We limit our movements to those that “won’t kill ourselves,” to a impoverished vocabulary of non-crashing movements that cope with our physical environment. In ballet, on the other hand, this principle is internal rather than external; it is not an outside constraint, but rather the germ out of which a system of movements develops. Every *pas* is built around the necessity of preserving the center of gravity and the proper relation of parts within the body as a whole; it is a movement which preserves the very greatest degree of support. By maintaining this internal coherence, it becomes possible to engage in ever more *drastic* movements, ever higher forms of somatic activity, without crashing. And these movements can be linked together in series and fluently, flowing together into a single action. The entire system of ballet, realized in the act of dancing, expresses the somatic principle, and to an extraordinary

degree. It realizes a purified form of the fluidity of movement, a fluidity whose criterion is not external, not the mere absence of catastrophe, but internal, involving the preservation of the center of gravity and of a smooth line down through the body. And at the same time, because this fluidity allows for a vastly extended range of movements, it is freely expressive, and approaches the expressiveness of words.

Ballet, we now see, allows for a fluid, yet serial connection of actions. Different steps are joined together into a combination, the different combinations of dancers integrated into the *pas seul*, and the *pas de deux*, or the *corps de ballet*, or dramatic scenes, and these brought together into an entire ballet. In this way, these concatenations of movement allow for an intricate narrative structure. In the effect, they open up the language of the body to the dimension of temporality. The present moment becomes rich with a past and with a future --- yet, nevertheless, let us not think that this proceeds in a fashion identical to verbal language. Whereas verbal language is, at first, more temporal than spatial --- it begins with the paratactic construction of speech, of words conveyed through sound --- the language of ballet develops temporality out of spatiality.

The language of the body, we have seen, makes it possible for people to circle around the centers of political life, and it is indeed, in the widest sense, the system of circulation of all that communicates through movement in space. While ballet does provide a tremendous extension in the expressive range of this language, it also and at the same time concentrates the entire polis into the unified space of the stage. And just as the polis is not merely a bounded territory, neither is the stage merely a flat floor surrounded by scenery and draped with a curtain. Rather, it is itself a complicated, involved space of interstled circulations created, at each instant, by the dancers. Through their

movements, the dancers spontaneously create their world, and in this way exemplify true political action.

Thus dance enacts a perfect community --- a world which is formed entirely through its own interaction --- and for this reason, there can be no before and after. The time that dance creates takes place entirely within its space, and indeed the two are so seamlessly interwoven that one may only really speak of an absolutely unified space-time. There is no past before the events begin, and no future once they have ended. Unlike dramas, which must of necessity be situated within a mythic continuum of events, ballets should not and need not involve past events in their action; their plot --- if we can speak of such --- does not take place within a history determined by an agency outside of its limits. And likewise, a ballet trilogy or tetralogy, even if technically feasible, is absurd through the very expectation that the audience would preserve narrative details beyond the synoptic event of the performance, or that a detail could have any life beyond this context. Narration through words involves a series of discreet, causally linked events. While these events may comprise an ineluctable fate, they nevertheless result from choices. And through their causes and consequences they are tied to the beginnings and ends of time. The body, in contrast, narrates by compressing an infinity of detail into a perfectly accomplished movement. Time and space exist neither as empty forms, nor as a network of relations between events, but as detail. The grandest ballet is, in the end, but the exposition of a single step.

Thus ballet is an almost completely *expressive* medium, and in the technical sense of which we have spoken. This does not mean that it brings to view the emotions of the dancers, or involves particular strong and primal feelings, but rather that it expresses the

system of the body --- the body-politic --- through the fluent circulation of its possibilities. These possibilities, as should be clear, do not consist merely in certain human ways of acting, but range over nature; they are what allows for the transformation from the inorganic all the way to the human, and for the reciprocal interaction of almost every form of agency. Or rather, they are this very transformation and interaction. Ballet expresses by fluently moving across these possibilities, from the lowest degree of activity to the highest. It passes from stone-like rigidity on to mechanical movement, and, at its peak, expresses true human freedom --- a free action which begets the possibility of freedom --- and then returns back to the dead and inorganic. Every ballet is, in essence, a leap through these gradations of activity. Performing this leap with perfect grace, it reveals that even the extremes are fully continuous; their difference is merely of intensity, quantitative rather than qualitative. Nor can fate and freedom stand in any sort of lasting opposition. For this reason, a freedom of mere choice --- a conception, which, as we have seen, results in the two incompatible pictures of human nature --- has no place in classical dance.

The action of an entire ballet is called a scenario, not a plot. Since a true theatrical dance neither plods nor presses forward, it cannot have a plot. Rather, it gives us a synoptic view of an entire scene of action. Classical dance is irredeemably spectacular; turning the Aristotelian categories on its head, it presents us with an “opsis” rather than a “mythos.” Yet spectacle is only superficial when considered from the perspective of the *pathos* of the audience. It is, indeed, least of all able to evoke feelings of fear and pity in the audience, and precisely because it does not show us a human being who makes choices and suffers for them. As we are not presented with an agent that we can relate to

through our own practical reason, neither can we fear that his fate might also befall us, nor pity the misfortune of someone like ourselves. What spectacle exhibits is not rational human agency, but all agency; the reciprocal interaction of all action. Thus the fear of the audience becomes terror --- openness to the possibility of catastrophe befalling the system of all things. And its pity becomes sympathy with the suffering and exaltation, the action and reaction, of all nature. Nor does ballet reach its goal with the production of these affects. For the true experience of spectacle rests not in an affect or a response, but in a synoptic glance of how the world, in all its commotion, expresses the simplicity and unity of nature --- it is the experience of the continuum.

The affects of fear and pity provide the basis for a politics of manipulation; they regard individuals as free agents who must be led to “do the right thing” by stirring up patriotic feelings, but who are to act morally purely through reason alone. Drama, as conceived by Aristotle, is not itself a free political action, but contradicts the very possibility of freedom by refusing to treat the audience as if they were truly free. In contrast, ballet provides at a glance the insight that would arise from a comprehensive grasp of reality. A dancer approaches divinity as no other artist can --- and yet this approach is itself nothing more than the fluidity of all human movement brought to an extreme. Dancers become gods as men --- and thus realize what is but the outermost human potential --- divinity.

Despite the centrality to ballet of such an absolute language of movement, this is not all that it can communicate. For there are also, without doubt, gestures of the hands and legs, comportments of the limbs, torso, and neck, and miens of the face, which are remarkably evocative, yet nevertheless quite simple and unambiguous in their

interpretation, and which in this way seem to convey a fact which can be grasped in isolation --- happiness, sadness, flirtation, deceit, to give some examples. And just as these tend to be concentrated in the outer extremities of the body, they likewise belong to the periphery of ballet as an expressive medium. Here the language of movement reaches into the registers of the language of words. For the first time it becomes possible to translate more or less directly between one and another, describing movements directly through words. We look at the way a ballerina moves her wrist, and can say “she is being flirtatious”; a certain bend in her torso shows us, immediately and without hesitation, that she is distraught.

Such expressions, peripheral to the language of movement, are nevertheless the most central to the language of words. Reflecting the most basic possibilities of human agency and interaction, we may indeed speculate that they would overlap nicely with those aspects of semantics which universal to all languages and wired into the brain. This helps explain their tremendous power; they tap into the deepest resources of natural language, the ontologies, or better, dramalogies that structure and texture reality. Let us compare, for example, how ballet and drama present compulsion. Drama, to the extent that it is void of all spectacle, and depends on words, is incapable of showing compulsion in a simple and direct way. Words insist on freedom. When a speaker speaks --- be they king or slave --- they become free; to strip their language of its freedom would be to render it ugly and unsuitable to a work of art. Compulsion --- which should not be confused with moral necessity --- therefore, can only be presented through complicated ruses woven by Gods or men; only at the level of plot, through involved conspiracies. Such representations, however, remain in essence superficial; they only present a series

of events that leads up to compulsion, or the structure of a world in which compulsion is possible, but they do not present the bare fact of compulsion itself.⁵ Ballet, in contrast, does just this, and with remarkable ease. One dancer seems, through the position of his hands and the attitude of his entire body, to push another, who likewise seems to be pushed, or drag him across the stage. Nothing more than this is needed for us to see what it means to be compelled.

Now that the body *means* in the same way as words, its expressiveness is no longer regulated by the centering structures of the polis. Rather, it begins to break open into temporal infinity.

This happens, above all, through the gestures, comportments and miens that are exchanged between the dancers in a ballet. These form what we might call the libretto --- a narrative dialogue which, in a sense, is built within the scenario and fills out its details. This narrative closely resembles the action of a drama, and to an extent it transforms the dancers into characters with rational agency. But even here, where ballet seems most decisively to assume the qualities of tragedy, it nevertheless rejects its primary impulses. For the hero of a tragic ballet is not offered a choice of actions, he is not made responsible for what he does as a free agent, but rather is faced with the necessity of correctly discerning the proper object of his affection. We see this most clearly in *Swan Lake*. Here, the denouement hangs on the inability to distinguish between two swans, one white and the other black, with names different by just a single syllable --- a thread so tenuous that it seems absurd, especially if we apply Aristotle's concept of "unity of

⁵ We might compare this with the tendency to interpret or conceive of political events in terms of conspiracies wrought through the machinations of an individual or secret organization. Unable to properly understand the impersonal forms of compulsion that guide our everyday life, we interpret these in terms of some kind of hidden human agency. The modern cinema provides a perfect medium for this.

action.” Yet *Swan Lake* has no need for such a criterion; the tragedy, ultimately, rests in the inattentiveness to detail. Because the difference among action is always continuous, and thus expressed only through details, truly free political action within the body-politic requires just this manner of attentiveness. Only so can we grasp the difference between love and coquettishness, naiveté and foolishness, wisdom and sophistication, compulsion and freedom. This also applies to the difference between the inorganic, mechanical, bestial and human; Clara, in the *Nutcracker*, becomes the hero through her capacity to distinguish between the inhuman and human. While she treats the dancing automata with an indifference, her attention to the details of the nutcracker which opens into a world of phantasy. And it applies even to the distinction between the living and the dead, as we see not only in *Romeo and Juliet*, but in *La Bayedera*, where the hero visits the realm of shades, or in *Giselle*.

The hero of the ballet appears not first of all as a human, freely willing agent, but as an observer. His actions flow out of his perceptions, and the mood of the whole is contemplative. This contemplation is sympathetic, in the broadest sense, for it requires an absolute responsiveness to all action --- everything that happens on stage must touch the hero in all its details. Yet it is not dominated by any particular affects, but is, rather, a state of almost perfect openness. In this way, the hero himself becomes the ideal spectator; he is as the audience should be, open to every detail. That he nevertheless dances simply expresses how all actions flow out of the state of perfect contemplation. His actions, indeed, are always at the same time passions; there can be no absolute difference between the two. Love, hatred, compulsion, sorrow, joy --- these are all expressed in the movements of the dancer.

Since the audience and the hero are both in essence contemplative, their identification is absolute; the hero does nothing more than translate the passions of the audience into movement, expressing their own private feelings as life of the polis, and transforming these into a public and open experience.⁶ And since these passions do not emerge from the give and take of dialogue, since they are never faced with resistance, and have neither need nor opportunity to adapt and be mollified, they must always tend to the extreme and the simple. No one has ever “liked” in a ballet, and the audience, likewise, cannot simply like what they see, if they see at all. In contrast, the identification of the audience with the dramatic protagonist is complicated by the contradiction between his activity and their passive receptivity, and in this way expresses the contradiction between the absolute rational freedom of choice, and the absolute determinism of fate. The audience and the protagonist jockey back and forth between these two sides of the equation; the heroes activity is experience only through the audiences passivity, and his ultimate submission to fate only through a freedom that allows them to stand beyond the stage of action. If we experience fate as the work of the Gods, we nevertheless experience it as Gods, and in their absolute distinction from men.

What in the end allows for the perfect contemplative unity of the audience with all the dancers, and not just the hero, is music. Both are bound together through the shared attentiveness to this. We expect all the dancers to be perfectly responsive to the element, and that every nuance, every change in tempo or mood, every quality of rhythm, and even the contrapuntal texture is expressed through their body; not a single detail can be lost in the translation. It is not a virtuosic display of superhuman ability that we seek, however,

⁶ The audience should be understood not as a mere consumer of a certain aesthetic experience, for which a certain price was paid at the box office, but rather as part of the performance, whose task --- and one that

but only that they *show* their responses and their perceptiveness to be the same as ours. It is, indeed, infinitely more difficult to dance than to listen --- we cannot, in the end, help but listen. The mind is of nature almost incomprehensibly rich in its subtlety and the delicacy of its perceptions, while body can only become supple through a rigorous regime of training. Yet even the coarsest body also cannot help but dance, and even when it finds itself completely hapless. For it is also impossible not to dance; in the end, we can tolerate everything but our being given over to gravity.

As a language of movement, ballet, on the one hand, perfects the principle of continuity, fluidity; a good dance, in the end, is one where no one falls down. Yet even as it presents a perfect community, where nothing crashes, still, at the limit of its expressive potential, it opens us up to the very possibility of a catastrophe that would bring down the whole. This is the tragic dimension of ballet; it exposes us to the terror that things, indeed everything, falls apart. The tragic denouement is *Swan Lake*, for example, is absolute --- become the scenario stands outside of history as a world unto itself, nothing could survive its demise. And yet the world explodes not through the schemings of Gods or men, nor because it is sinful and sick through and through, nor because it is mere creation, unable to sustain itself but through the Creator --- but simply because of a lapse of attentiveness. The world is no more when we fail to take notice of the splendor of its nuances. No longer ornate, no longer a spectacle, the world ceases.

At the outermost reach of balletic language are gestures, comportments and miens which point beyond this world, and even beyond its down-fall. The most beautiful of these is the climax of an *arabesque penchéé en pointe* --- the neck and back of the ballerina arc towards the ground, but her legs form a straight line pointing directly

must treated with great respect --- is to produce a receptive silence.

upwards. No movement in ballet is possible unless the torso support the legs rather than the legs the torso, and in this sense, the art of ballet is a *relevé* which lifts the feet and legs off from the bondage of gravity. This is achieved by proper body placement, by having the entire body lifted upwards, and in leaps --- where the quiet relation of parts is transformed into the movement of the whole. But above all, it is expressed through the alternation between a supporting and moving leg. One leg, released from the burden of holding the weight of the body, is free to move in an arc away from the earth. In an *arabesque penché*, the supporting and moving legs join together at the out limit of extension, becoming a single, perfectly straight line. In this instant, the legs are transformed; they no longer bare any trace of their wearying life as supports for the weight of the torso with its heart and lungs, kidney, liver and digestive tract. No longer succumbing to the human organism and tending to its needs, they are as a string hung from the heavens; weightless.

For a moment --- and it will always only be for a moment --- there is release from the terror of catastrophe. Weightless, nothing could fall; gravity has been suspended. This gestures towards the infinity of the language of words, that, at its own periphery, is no longer enmeshed in the body-politics and no longer given over to gravity and catastrophe. Yet even this point of transcendence is only reached gradually, and through a continuity of movements, and is not an absolute departure from the language of movement, but only expresses its innermost principle with the utmost purity. In ballet there are no leaps of faith.

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Der Baum erwächst
Dem heimatlichen Boden, aber es sinkem ihm
Die liebenden, die jugendlichen
Arme, un trauernd neigt er sein Haupt.
Hölderlin

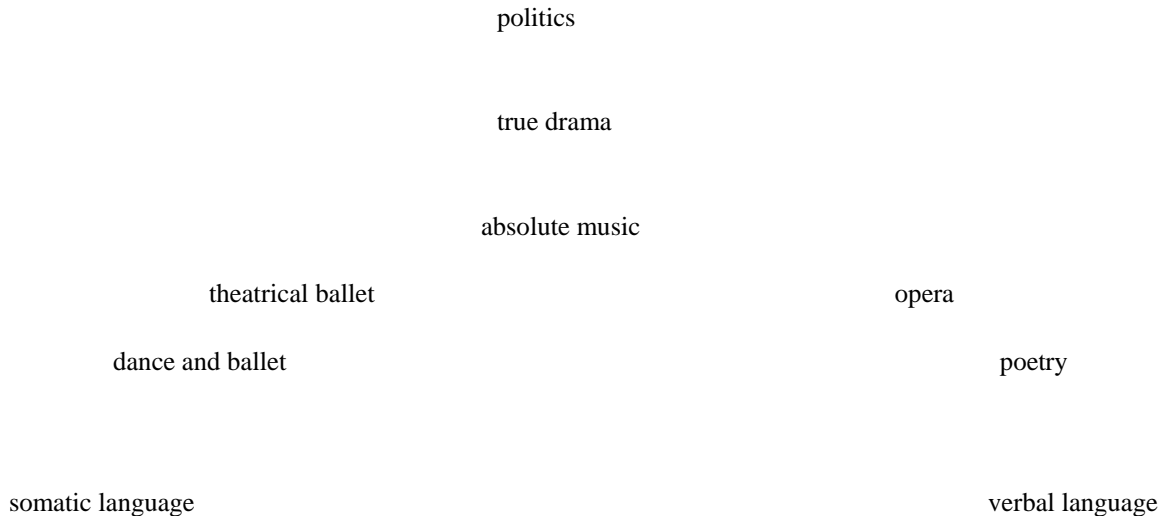
Dance, by cultivating the language of the body towards the free expressive potential of verbal language, exhibits the body-politic as a perfectly free community. This is one side of the rapprochement of the two poles of politics. The other side is poetry, which transforms the freedom of words into the fluid mechanics of meter. The essence of poetic meter is the strophe; this puts a twist in the linear arrangement of words. Words, which otherwise would accumulate into an infinite sequence, are made recursive, continually turning back after a set distance. In this way, the language of words, otherwise purely temporal in its composition --- existing only as a series of “nows” --- is given a spatial form; narrative and prose become verse. Like ballet, this spatialized form depends on a kind of *pas* --- the foot or measure. Yet here an almost total uniformity, with only slight possibilities for variation, prevails. Whereas in classical dance the *pas* brings the principle of stasis --- the preservation of possibilities --- towards freedom of expression, poetic meter imposes a rigid, recurrent form to a medium where, ordinarily, new possibilities emerge anew from every new beginning. Meter, in other words, creates a form of movement within verbal language that is successful only when it returns to the possibility of its repetition. This requires a mechanical fluidity; the flow of the meter must not be interrupted, else it is no longer possible to continue. And just as balletic fluidity expresses the action of the body-politic, poetic fluidity expresses the action of language; the syntactic interaction which transforms words into meaningful expressions. Words are discrete elements, but meaning is only possible where there is a continuous

movement between them. Since words --- at least as they are perceived --- take place in time, only such a continuity could rescue them from isolation. Time, the medium of speech, is just such a movement --- and possesses a quasi-spatial structure that unites all “nows” into a single, fluid, continuum.

Between the cultivated language of the body --- the temporalization of space --- and the cultivated language of words --- the spatialization of time --- lies absolute music. Music, it is important to see, is no more temporal than spatial; it articulates time into space and space into time, uniting the two seamlessly into a time-space of absolutely pure continuity. Yet while absolute music is infinitely detailed, subtle, and intricate in its construction, and cannot be regarded just as an empty form, it lacks both bodies and words, and thus might be regarded as merely the schema for the unification of somatic and verbal language. It offers an example of how these could be united according to their formal properties without sacrificing the nuances of either, but it does not yet present this unification itself. What, in the end, presents the perfect rapprochement of somatic and verbal language could only be the actual political system in its totality, and if there is a form of art which provides a premonition of the perfect political system, it is what we must call *true*, rather than *Aristotelian*, drama. Its nature remains obscure, and we can not even be sure of what media it will require. Drama concerns itself with action in the very broadest sense; it need not take the form of theater.

The following diagram should help clarify the relation between the different *cultural* forms. Keep in mind, however; these do not belong under the heading of aesthetics, but, in the broadest sense, dramatics. Aesthetics concerns itself with how an object, natural or manmade, is perceived through the senses. Whatever manner of activity

it is thought to possess emerges out of its synthesis as a phenomenon in space and time. Dramatic forms, in contrast, are forms of activity whose spatio-temporal configuration --- there aesthetic palpability --- emerge out of their ways of being active.



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We have tarried so long --- if not nearly long enough --- with a discussion of classical dance not in order to valorize a particular art form, but in order to show how the real, concrete system of nature is stitched together with the ideal, concrete system of human language. The body, with its specific inputs and outputs, is what weaves an endlessly subtle web of links between the real and the ideal. If human language enfolds these two into each other like a skin, the human body is its real substance and fabric. Human language has its real existence at the periphery of our body --- through particular vocalizations of words spoken out of the mouth, and movements that appear the way they do through the unique way in which skin fills out space --- yet it expresses, first of all, the way it which the body itself communicates with nature through food, waste, actions in space and time, words, and the senses. And nature is not primarily either what we

perceive through our senses or understand through our mind, but the entire system of bodies, real or ideal, abstract or concrete, in communication with each other. To avoid confusion, however, we will speak of these as organizations, and limit the term “body” to its narrower meaning.

The human body is an imperfect microcosm. Understood dramatically rather than mimetically, this claim loses its mystical, fantastic, or romantic aspect. For clearly, the body does not contain the universe in all its details, it does not represent the whole or contain it in germinal form. Nor is it a monad that expresses everything with imperfect clarity. But as a real, concrete organization through which the real and concrete, real and abstract, ideal and concrete and ideal and abstract all interact with each other, it is, as it were, the center for the communication of every kind of activity within the system. Not that it is capable of every sort of activity; a plant, for example, does something that we could never do --- bring the energy producing fusion of the sun into a real relation with the mineral deposits of the earth through the photosynthetic production of organic compounds and the building of cells. But it is able to bring some kind of relation into effect between different forms of activity, if only by speaking of them in language or describing them as scientific processes.

The human body, as such an imperfect microcosm, is the center of a community. A community is an organization of human bodies that bring the activities of nature as a whole --- including human nature --- into relation with each other and with itself, under the orchestration of human bodies that are in constant reciprocal political interaction and dialogue about different ways to express their potential. Such a community might extend through all nature and to all human bodies, or it might be much more limited in scope ---

a single village with its Gods and natural forces. But it must be centered around the fulfillment of the human body. It is not that it must privilege human activities over the activities of nature, or install mankind as a self-serving master of the universe, but only that the activity of nature passes through the human body as a central node. The body becomes, as it were, an eddy; a self-maintaining circulation within the flow of nature. And this, once again, is what we mean by expression; not the realization and explication of some sort of inner content of a system, but a fluent communication among its elements.

A community, like a ballet, is centered around human bodies; only these are no longer conceived first of all as mechanical entities within a physical space, but in all of their *organic* complexity --- as organisms living among organizations. And the principle of community life, like that of ballet, is to act in a way that preserves the possibilities of action. Yet this action is no longer simply physical movement in time and space, but comprehends everything that expresses the potential of the human body. Which returns us to our definition of free political action. Free political action is action that preserves or develops community life; an act, in other words, that produces a community in which it is possible to act freely.

In a performance of dance, actions are of more or less immediate consequence --- catastrophe is always an immanent possibility. A community, in contrast, not only realizes its possibilities and impossibilities very slowly, but it would be impossible even to speak of a chain of actions and their results, but only of spheres of activity intersteeled within the life of the whole. Cultivation, this suggests, is the primary form of political activity. We have already spoken of the cultivation of the language of the body and the

language of words, but now we may conceive *cultivation*, more generally, as any act directed towards creating the possibilities for activity.

If as a performance, ballet exhibits the perfection of activity, it is as a discipline that it exemplifies the meaning of cultivation. In the beginning, very little is learned for its own sake, but rather, almost everything is learned in order to develop the body in such a way that it becomes capable of executing an ever greater range of movements without causing injury. It is not a matter just of learning simple parts that can strung together into a whole, not of building of physical strength of coordination, but above all of transforming the body into an instrument capable of maintaining the correct relation of its parts through even the most difficult of movements. In a sense, the point is not even to lean ever more complicated movements, but rather, how to keep still as these happen. The dancer's individuality expresses itself not through the affected movements of his extremities, but in a constancy that survives even the most difficult choreography, the most trying turns of fate, as it were. It is not personality, but substance and character.

Cultivation can be directed either towards human nature as human nature or towards mere things. In the case of the first, it builds character, in the second, substance. And furthermore, human nature may be cultivated as a thing, by undermining its freedom rather than building this towards stable expression. Neither character nor substance, however, should be understood as metaphysical abstractions; rather, they speak of nothing more than stable possibilities --- possibilities that can be expressed without undermining their foundation. Since ballet, to an extent, is directed towards the human body as a mere mechanism, it involves both of these.

The different forms of cultivation are diverse; education in reading, arithmetic, and the like creates the possibility of thinking --- it cultivates the mind. The arts don't merely create artifacts, but cultivate the expressive possibilities of different media. Agriculture cultivates the soil towards the production of foods, and animal husbandry cultivates animals towards our material needs. A craftsman does not merely make things, but cultivates the inorganic or dead to become useful for humans. An architect does not just build houses, but develops the physical world in a way that allows for community. Military training does not teach people how to kill each other, but cultivates the qualities that are necessary to defend the community against its enemies. Parents do not mere raise children, but cultivate them towards participation in a community.

Politics includes all of these, and indeed every kind of community-building activity. No one kind of activity within a true community is of necessity more political than others; politics is not the work of specialists, but of all who interact with each other through their work. Nor even are children excluded --- far from being will-less blank slates, ready to absorb whatever values are pressed upon them, they are faced with the most difficult political activity of all --- becoming people.

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Techniques, it is now clear, are forms of *cultivation*. They build up the relationship between the activities of the human body and the activities of nature, and thus allow for new forms of communication between the two. Because it occurs in the medium of natural causality rather than human language, this communication is real, not ideal, and while *techniques* may require new forms of inter-human organizations, or the

teaching of new skills and knowledge, their primary goal is the cultivation of things of substance, or better yet, a nature with more stable possibilities.

Nature as a whole, --- regarded from the very widest perspective --- is perfect. Since this includes the totality of time and space, and regards nature as an absolute, without relation to anything outside of itself, there is no sense in which we could speak of unfulfilled possibilities. However, as either a species or as an individual, man only touches nature at certain points and at certain ways. All of his innate technologies, and likewise all those of every animal, build a rapport with a natural environment, or rather, create an environment through development of certain forms of rapport. It is, indeed, often astounding to think how far these bonds can reach; we look towards the heavens, and the far corners of the universe and distant times reach us through subtle beams of light.

These limitations give man, both as individual or as species, a perspective on nature, and this perspective, determined ultimately by the positions of bodies in relation to themselves and to the rest of nature, comprises a set of potentials for interaction. These interactions take the form of an exchange between the inputs and of a body and of nature at the point where it touches this body. Perceiving through our sense, touching with our hands, moving to another space, eating food, vocalizing with our mouth, respiring, defecating, or even just standing still are all forms of such interaction.

A technique, we might now say, is a kind of step; it realizes a possibility for action within such a perspective, and through this creates a new set of possibilities and thus at the same time shifts perspectives. Because every human activity requires some quantity of time, and our position in time helps determine our perspective, this shift is

inevitable. Essential to a technique, then, is that it sustain and develop our possibilities towards nature, and in this regard, it may truly be seen as an extension of somatic language. And true interaction between man and nature must take the form of a technique; as reciprocal, it must not undermine the possibility of continuing action.

How is it then, we may ask, that such interaction is either yet impossible, or becomes so. One way might be if either nature or man is too inert with respect to a given kind of action, and doesn't allow for its possibilities. This inertness is not meant to imply any sort of precise scientifically-conceived state of affairs, but simply, and tautologically, the impossibility of a certain way of acting. An object may be too far away to see, or its details too fine to perceive at a given distance or without magnification; a piece of rock may be too soft, or ill-shaped, for a certain task; a body of water may be too close to the ground to be able to flow in a certain way, a chemical might not be found in the proper concentration, or a piece of firewood is so wet that it is unable to burn --- and so one might go on and on. In every case, however, we could speak of too little organization (relative to a given purpose) at either the beginning or the end of an action. But it might also happen that either man or nature is too volatile. A powerful stream or gust of wind, for example, may act in a way that overwhelms our body's inputs and outputs; we are unable to bring its actions into relation with our own in a way that allows for a certain kind of activity, and may even find ourselves overwhelmed and endangered, and incapacitated --- even through death --- in a way that vastly, or absolutely, reduces the potentials of our perspective. Even a dead corpse is not entirely without a perspective on nature; only that it has become much more limited. Or, likewise, our own actions might be too volatile in relation to what they are directed towards; we try to prod a soap bubble

into movement, and end up bursting it. In either case, volatility implies too little organization in the process. Volatility and inertness are, indeed, closely connected; a volatile action often leads to an inert result. A hurricane, typhoon, earthquake, or explosion leave corpses in their wake.

All techniques, in other words, make man and nature more organized, or better, reorganize them towards specific possibilities of interaction. Either they cultivate an inert perspective towards greater possibilities of activity, or a volatile action towards greater stability.

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The most basic techniques involve breathing, the preparation and consumption of food and water, digesting, copulating, and defecating. It may seem strange to speak of these as techniques at all, since they are common, in one form or another, to all animal life, and, in essence, all life. Yet, as we have already suggested, their regulation not only provides the basis of communal life, but also may be developed and refined to extraordinary degrees of subtlety. What they involve, above all, is a rapport with nature as a system of nourishment, of the exchange of organic and inorganic substances necessary or harmful, but in either case of consequence, for life. These techniques are closely related to our senses of taste and smell. Usually considered the most brutish and unrefined, taste and smell tie us into the world of chemicals; through them, we communicate with nature as a language that combines, dissolves, and recombines molecules into longer chains --- a language that reaches the greatest degree of expressiveness with carbon-based compounds. And through the above-mentioned techniques, we built out this communication, and often to almost absurd degrees of scope

and refinement; sophisticated cuisine, for example, might combine food-stuffs from all over the globe into the same meal.

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Next we might speak of those techniques that involve moving the body in relation to space and time, and in relation to other things and bodies. These include walking, running, touching, grasping, throwing, embracing, striking, and even coloring and vocalizing sounds. These, too, are common more or less to all animals, though we note that different species vary vastly in the range of possibilities they have available, and some of these seem to belong uniquely to higher primates, or even humans. Whereas the first techniques we mentioned relate to nature in essence as a system of chemicals, or --- in the ordinary way of speaking --- as substances which sustain, nourish, heal or poison us, these touch upon nature as a system of physical forces located in time and space, and natural phenomenon such as light and sound.

All of these techniques, we notice, belong to the dramatic arts, and yet, as I have suggested, drama is not itself a technique. A technique must involve a change of perspective, --- as for example, when we move from one place or another. And while dramatics cannot avoid taking place as an event, and thus every performance changes perspective in trivial sense that it allows a certain time elapse and expends energy, the real work, if it is not, indeed, a mere "pastime," takes place within a perspective that has been fixed by the physical limits of the stage and silence and immobility of the audience. Within this set frame, activity is developed in extraordinary detail, but without repercussions for the world outside. Consider, in this light, the movement of a dancer. This, as we have already discussed, does not take them to a new point of space, but is confined within the

limits of the stage, and thus, in essence, circular. In similar fashion, however, we might characterize all those strange traits that distinguish a dramatic performance from an ordinary human action, and are the cause of such wonder among children and adults alike; for example, that a performance has a beginning and end and invokes its own sense of time and place, that the actors don't wear clothing but costumes, that they don't really hurt themselves when they fight. Everything belonging to the very pretense and playfulness of a play contributes to the isolation of actions from the broader action of the world.

Such a description of drama, one notices, stands in brazen contrast to Aristotle's famous definition. For Aristotle, drama was to be understood, ultimately, as an action directed towards a definite end; the purification of the *παθοι* of fear and pity in the audience through these very *παθοι*. It was, in other words, a technique performed by the actors on the audience, not as freely human, but as "human nature" in the quality of thingness. This supposes not only that the audience doesn't belong to the performance, standing outside of it in a purely receptive capacity, but --- because it speaks only to emotions, and thus sunders these from their intellect --- that they are not human in the same sense as the actors. In the end, the actors and audience could not even be said to belong to same freely political community. Indeed the audience, split into a reason and sensibility that no longer partake of a common experience, could no longer be said to form a community unto himself. The forms that drama has taken in the West since Aristotle --- that is to say, since the death of Greek tragedy --- testify to this two-fold schizophrenia. Whether social outcasts deprived of all bourgeois respectability, or stars and celebrities, never are actors treated as peers with their audience. And audience,

likewise, has always been forced to fill out one of two roles --- the critic, or the mob --- pure reason, or pure passion. And never has this been worse than at present; now, actors no longer even appear in corporeal form and in a common space, but as celluloid projections and beams of light, infinitely removed from our touch, and if there are still real people behind these images, they are hidden behind their wealth and fame, tucked away in gated mansions on uncharted streets, and it is left to stalkers and lunatics to discover if they truly exist.⁷ But at the same time, the split between reason and emotion has become so entrenched that the popular audience is itself divided into a mob and critics. The critics have become a viewing population unto themselves --- a critical mob, as it were, and each is serviced with its own form of entertainment. For the former, pure and manipulative sentimentality and affect, and for the latter, irony, self-referentiality, and cynical humor. These may even be hopelessly blurred together, creating genre that seem to activate both functions simultaneously; never, however, is their ultimate sundering of these two ways of being human challenged.

With Aristotle, in short, drama became an institution. This, in germ, is what his famous definition of tragedy amounts to; it communicates within itself as a closed system, and at the same time, with the outside. Starkly opposed is drama as spectacle; here, the very greatest degree of abstraction is applied to isolate the dramatic action, but not in order to act towards the audience with particular efficiency, but rather to invoke the

⁷ It follows from this that cartoons and claymation are the only truly honest forms of modern media --- unlike more conventional forms, which try to hide the fact that their actors no longer confront us as humans, cartoons wear on their sleeve the conditions of their creation. It should not surprise us, then, that of all forms of popular entertainment, they not only often command the greatest expressive range --- the "Peanuts" specials, for example, attained a purity and subtlety of mood unequalled by more adult formats --- but also have proved adept at offering sustained and genuine critique, and above all of media and advertising. This is apparent to a degree even in programs aimed almost exclusively at children, such as "Tom and Jerry." The endless repetition of violent scenarios expresses the nature of the fantastic, image-

very spectacle of nature as a whole. Spectacle is not a play of costumes and stage effect, but the most comprehensive form of action --- action as a self-involved and absolute totality. While the foundation of spectacle is, in a certain sense, ritual and magic --- invoking the activity of the macrocosm through an action within a microcosm --- spectacle itself is the product of an enlightened, scientific age.

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The third form of technique deals with nature neither as a chemical, nor as a physical system, but as an ecology --- a world of living creatures and the cyclical exchange of elements upon which they depend. From a modern scientific perspective, this may seem like a rather odd grouping. What these all have in common, however, is that they confront us as seemingly vital forces, coming and going, and obeying a certain discernable, if never entirely predictable, logic in their actions. Animals, of course, seem to respond in a far more direct and predictable fashion to our actions than other natural forces, yet it is perhaps because of the ultimate analogy of their actions that humans tend to treat all of these as besouled and responsive to human initiative.

Because these techniques deal with vital forces, with a nature that appears immediately and explicitly as kind of agent akin to ourselves, and because, moreover, the manner of initiative depends on knowledge of how these agents will act, it is of great significance whether the conditions are too inert, or the action too volatile, and the techniques falling under this heading divide themselves up accordingly. Belong to the first category is agriculture. This confronts a nature that is too inert; seeds, for example, need to be properly dispersed into a field, and the earth itself properly nourished and

created world of all media with a brutal honesty; nauseating repetitiveness is the enduring mood of a “virtual” world that has divorced itself from the richness and constraints of physical reality.

watered, in order for their active potential to be realized. Belonging to the second are hunting and fishing and sheltering --- these confront a nature that is too volatile; before wild animals nourish us, they must be killed. And too protect ourselves from the elements, and from the cold, we obtain shelters and clothing, creating, as it were, a further barrier between the activities within and beyond the body.

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The fourth form of technique involves the manufacture of artifacts. Artifacts include not only what we ordinarily regard as tools and implements, but also clothing, furniture, houses, roads, and so forth --- everything, in other words, that is created through human initiative, from some kind of pre-existing material, and that possesses a real body, abiding in space and time.

Every part of nature, as we have seen, implies a perspective of potential actions, the ultimate extent of which is determined by the lifespan of a given object. Through the process of manufacture, different parts of nature are gathered together and transformed in such a way as to create a new perspective. Ordinarily, artifacts are regarded as things that serve a purpose, means to some or another human end, and they are classified according to their use. And indeed, we cannot deny that artifacts do normally serve towards some other purpose; they do not ordinarily exist for their own sake, but are applied towards other techniques, and not least of all the manufacture of new artifacts. Yet conceived in this light, they appear only in relation to “rational agency,” and not in their deeper political significance. A political community, as we have seen, is not merely a collection of rational agents negotiating their reciprocal freedoms through contracts and utilizing things to serve either individual or common ends. Rather, it is a group of people

who express each-others freedom, and through their freedom, --- through both language and outward-directed techniques --- the activity of nature as a whole. Communal life circulates around a natural world that has been cultivated to provide possibilities for the interaction between man and nature. This cultivation produces artifacts --- in truth, all of nature that surrounds a community is already thus transformed ---, and these, thus, could be said to provide the *centers* of communal political life --- new bodies, as it were, around which a body-politic of greater scope revolves. To distinguish between different kinds of artifacts, we should ask what kind of community they serve through their potentials for action; how long does their particular form of organization endure, and how many people is it used by, and --- more generally --- in what way does it become the center of some form of communal activity?

I will not try to enumerate all the subtle gradations we would discover were we to classify artifacts in this way, but will limit myself to a few observations. Most importantly, and to begin with, we should become more clear on the need to reject what we might call the Aristotelian definition of an artifact --- that they are made by people with some end in mind. Were we to follow this through, we would have to conclude that communities are logically and genetically prior to artifacts. Through either collective or individual labor, the members of a community would create objects to serve pre-existent ends. Since only an already existing community could assign the purposes to objects, and these assigned purposes provide artifacts with their essence, it would be impossible for artifact to play an essential role in constituting a community. Nature, as we have said, comes into relation with man through artifacts; through these, the human community is extended into nature. If, then, a community is not simply a consequence of our created

nature, or ordained through the direct intervention of God, it could only have created itself from the labor and interactions of man towards man --- through social contracts, coercion, or education --- but not, in any essential way, out of the interaction of humans with their environment. And if a community is to involve human freedom, then it stands to reason that, since, following these assumptions, it would be impossible for human to create something greater than themselves, something greater than what they could have had in mind, then freedom must simply be a given of our nature, and could not itself have arisen through intercourse with nature. These Aristotelian assumptions, in other words, result in the isolation of human freedom and responsibility from the rest of nature.

Before communities can create artifacts, artifacts must create communities. The perspective that a new artifact allows, the possibilities that it contains, emerge only with its use --- they are not necessarily preordained or presaged by their creator, nor is it necessary that an artifact be created by a single agent --- a stone wall might be the work of an entire community, even spread out over generations --- or that the act of labor is in any way equal to the possibilities that it contains. Through these possibilities, the artifact becomes the center of a certain kind of community activity. Or as we might say, an artifact becomes part of the environment in which communal life takes place, and which indeed provides a home and niche for communal life, just as, in the end, this environment is itself composed of artifacts. We do not wish to deny the role of human purposefulness in the making of things, but only to suggest that there is not an essential, but only a gradual, difference between the action of nature and the action of man in this regard. Natural evolution involves the creation of new environments; every species, every organism, creates an environment for others, just as the appearance of the earth created an

environment in which, ultimately, life would be possible. But the same, we now see, may also be said of specifically human techniques --- these differ only in the manner in which they do so, and this, again, is a matter of degree and not essence. *Humans create environments with a view towards the possibility of a human community, and communities are themselves constantly at work developing and sustaining --- in a word, cultivating --- this possibility.* Community-building is a freely political action. This does not mean that they have a certain vision of a final result in view, but only that they try, in every action, to preserve and build this possibility. In this way, a community works towards the cultivation of stable techniques, and every deployment of technique, the making of every artifact, may be considered a freely political act. Human purposefulness and human freedom are merely traits of a particular organization with its own way of doing what every organization does if it is to survive; free political communications are simply organizations that perpetuate freedom through freedom.

Human purposefulness is precarious, and dark in its ways. It does not belong exclusively, or even primarily, to individual agents; and it may often be quite difficult for people to articulate why they do things the way they do, or to what end; the purposive actions of a community might exist only as customs that no one can entirely justify. And even radical changes may emerge in just as dim fashion. Yet this should only seem perplexing if we hold on to the idea that human freedom is some kind of faculty of the mind or universal essence of man as individual; once we realize that human freedom is the function of a political communicating, and that it has developed gradually as the development of the human species in its interaction with nature, than every glimmer of strangeness should disappear. There is no reason to think that freedom, as the expression

of a communication, would not often assume forms that are obscure to the individual. The idea, and ideal of “rational freedom,” --- of a human freedom that can be perfectly comprehended in all its implications as the essence of human nature, and then claimed as an individual right --- is derivative and essentially misguided, for it cannot but come into contradiction with itself.

Before, we described this self-contradiction as a contradiction of logic; rational freedom, as a given of human nature, must have been created by a willing agent who thus makes it dependent on his will. On the basis of what we have just said, we may now begin to understand this also as a real contradiction --- seeing how, in other words, a community that is either itself explicitly founded on the rational conception of freedom, or increasingly understands itself through such a conception, will tend to evolve in directions that contradict its own principles. We speak here only of a tendency, and not of a fixed and absolute rule, but nevertheless of a tendency rooted in the inadequacy of its principles, and their failure to realize a true political community. It is also important to note that this “real contradiction” is, in a certain sense, the most basic concern of our entire inquiry. To have insight into this, is to begin to know, in germ, how the world has become mad. Here, however, we limit ourselves to one rather narrow dimension of the problem, with the hope, however to lead the way towards an illumination of the whole.

The free rational agent, as was explained at the very beginning, is, in essence, the ideal *consumer*. His freedom is not creative, it does not work towards new possibilities, but, as we might say, merely optative --- it exhausts itself in the act of choosing between a set of pre-given choices. Only because of the tremendous importance attached to this rather paltry sort of freedom could we make sense of the bazaar idea that a society is free

above all when everyone has the right to vote. Yet while this rational agent, in his capacity as consumer-elect, does not in any meaningful sense work towards creating an environment, while he does not act, either communally or individually, with an awareness of his communal responsibility, nevertheless a world springs up around him. And what a world it is! A panoply of things appear and offer themselves at every turn. Wonderful in their diversity and ingenuity, none, however, could gather back to itself the freedom with which he chooses them; none, in other words, could equip this freedom with anything to equal its promise. In each, his rational freedom finds itself reflected back to itself as a mere thing. And thus, at the same time as these gratify the needs, desires, whims and fancies of the individual, they compromise the very reason which his sensibility should serve. The artifacts, we have said, create communities; but those that congregate and busy themselves around freedom of choice, rather than building that freedom into something more, can't even create a community equal to that freedom. Instead, they transform the self into an aggregate of isolated needs and desires, bumping about around the head like sperm in the scrotum, beside itself in expectation of the moment when it will couple with the one thing that would satisfy its needs. Meanwhile, artifacts become ever more limited in their possibilities, ever more short-lived, tending towards absolute disposability --- but at the same time, each carries with it, as if a token of its provenance, the promise of absolute fulfillment, of absolute freedom. And the more ephemeral an object is, the more noisily it screams out this promise.

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Artifaction involves the transformation, through human labor, of one set of object-bound perspectives into another, where each perspective describes not only a set

of potential uses, but also the lifetime of an artifact, and thus suggests the kind of community that would form around it. Because this definition involves several variables, it allows for a variety of different limit phenomenon.

The first of these we have already mentioned; the disposable object. Here both the outlay and the final result, and the invested labor tend towards zero, though, nevertheless, labor stills adds something; the perspective has increased as a result of manufacture. The direct opposite of the disposable object is what we might call infrastructure --- roads, bridges, sea-faring craft, and the like. Here, the invested labor is very large, and both the usefulness and lifespan tend towards infinity, and far beyond a human generation.

Next is the aesthetic object. These involve a tremendous investment of labor, and while usefulness tends towards zero, their lifespan and community-building potential reaches towards infinity. In our earlier discussion, we tried to work against the notion that drama is a purposive activity and not a pure spectacle. Now, turning to aesthetics, we must confront a similar, and similarly founded, prejudice. This expresses itself, above all, through the idea that pure art must be distinguished absolutely from mere decoration and handiwork. An object, simply put, cannot be servant to two masters; if it was created for a human purpose, it cannot be purely aesthetic. Traditionally, this idea has taken two forms.

The first, which we might call classical, starts off from a mimetic conception of art. The work of art, this claims, should be an imitation of nature; either it should show nature the way that it appears to senses (empirical), or it should somehow present the ideal essence of things (Platonic), or it, finally, convey nature in its very mode of activity

(Aristotelian). None of these, it would seem, necessarily implies conflict with the utility of the object; a Greek vase, for example, can present a mimetic representation on its surfaces, and at the same time serve hold water. Yet the contradiction emerges in full force in both the act of artistic creation and its reception. For both the former and latter demand an attitude of free contemplation that excludes the base interests associates with an object's usefulness. To capture either the appearance, of essence, or activity of nature, we must abstract away from our own interests; we must cease to regard nature as either good or bad *for us*, and experience it as it is in itself. And similarly if we are to witness, as viewers, nature as it is presented through a work of art. In either case, the freedom of contemplation is purely rational, and not truly political --- it exhausts itself in the absence of all compulsion through needs. Aesthetics, in other words, is turned into a "liberal art" -- or rather, gives the mold to the liberal arts as the whole; no longer an extension and development of the artisan's labors, it is a pursuit of leisure and gentility --- of those who have been lifting off from life's more pressing concerns.

The second form, --- we shall call this the romantic --- regards the artwork not as an imitation either of nature or anything else, but as an expression of the subjectivity and the inner life of the artist. Just as historically this makes a later appearance, logically it may also be regarded as a development from the classical conception, and one that is not so radical as may at first seem. What is does it take the mental attitude of the artist and viewer, and, in effect, turn this into the object of the artwork. Inner, rather than outer nature, becomes the basis of aesthetic experience. The rational freedom that previously expressed itself in contemplation has itself become the immediate and direct concern, and thus the artist must be all the more compromising in his rejection of all instrumentality.

The concern however, may take two forms, which correspond perfectly with the two visions of human nature that, as we have shown, are both rooted in a purely rationalistic conception of human freedom. In the one, the artist is called upon to express this to the very highest degree --- he must be a genius, or in other words, bring this conception to its limit, and to the point where it seems to verge on real, political creativity. The name given to this limit-case of freedom is imagination; bound neither to imitate its object, nor arrange its material according to either logical principles or utilitarian concerns, imagination allows for highest possible experience of rational freedom; its choices are constrained merely by sensibility, alone by the fact that its original materials are given to it. And at the absolute limit is intellectual intuition, where the material of thought is itself freely produced. Intellectual intuition indeed comes very close to what we mean by political, creative freedom --- for here, indeed, the most elemental choices are themselves produced. Yet because this was not yet conceived of in evolutionary terms, because man was still conceived as created, and his freedom in abstraction from nature, this idea --- powerful as it was --- could not be given any content, and was left to flounder in its apparent absurdity and enthusiastic pretensions.

The other form, in contrast, seeks to present the zero degree of human freedom, regarding both the artist and the artwork as an expression of the absolute dependence of the individual on his environment. The artist becomes pathological. If before his genius had approached such a degree of freedom that, transcending individual subjectivity, it could no longer be regarded as a fully conscious activity, now, on the contrary, it is transformed into the tumult of unconscious and even subconscious forces. The artist's work comes to be seen as, and it turn becomes, obsessive, disturbed, guided only by the

soul's hidden undulations. No longer granted the dignity of freedom, but at most rash excess and inconstancy, he could neither deliberately and carefully exclude instrumental values through the purity of his art, nor overleap them one and all through a single bound of genius. Rather, the artwork is useless simply because the artist is insane --- or, more likely, has contrived access to the subconscious --- and is no longer able in the act of creation to assign things a place within the everyday weave of human purposes. For no longer is it in the artist's power either to bar entry to merely useful objects or transfigure them beneath the veil of beauty, and so the things of the world return to us, torn out of the context that alone gave them meaning, and yet naked, exposed to the indiscretion of our gaze --- no longer do they seem entirely familiar to us, as they had when they passed so lightly through our hand while serving our needs, and in this new and strange aspect, they seem to raise a murmur of protest. Indisposed of their own disposability, they sit with the same heaviness on the surfaces of a canvass or installation as the homeless sit on our streets.

With each of these misguided conceptions, we find that their rejection of utility, their need to draw an absolute distinction between the realm of art and the everyday world of ordinary things, stems ultimately from the inability to gain a positive conception of a human activity not directed towards rational, individual, conscious ends. Unable, in other words, to conceive of human freedom as a truly political activity --- one that builds and develops communities rather realizing choices --- and yet aware nevertheless of the ways in which art complicates the rational model, their only choice was to conceive of artistic freedom simply as the negative of rational freedom, thus denying either its interestedness, or the limitation of its choices through receptivity, or, finally, its very

rationality. Since their concept was, at origin, purely negative, it could only survive by contrasting itself with use-guided and rational freedom --- only by defining itself, in one or another of its aspects, as absolutely not that.

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A better conception of aesthetics takes its starting point from decorative art, and shows that even those works that seem to stand at the furthest remove from all utilitarian functionality differ from decoration and handiwork only by a matter of degree. Decoration builds itself onto useful objects, and is not, in any essential way, threatened or distorted by their usefulness. For it is not merely a question of changing the way a thing appears to the senses, making it more pleasing to the eye --- but of investing into it more labor than is necessary for it to perform its given function. This is, in the very strictest sense, a freely political activity, for it endows things with a life beyond their mere functionality, beyond their station. It transforms them into heirlooms that, handed from generation to generation, become the centers of a communal activity surpassing a single generation's span. Beauty or aesthetic pleasure is not the goal of decoration, but merely provides a receptacle for this added and seemingly needless labor; it provides a way, as it were, for work to cleave to things and appear as work, rather than become subsumed in their use. And for this reason, above all, we should not confuse decoration with design. Design seeks to maximize the aesthetic qualities of a mass-produced thing against fixed production costs; it explicitly seeks aesthetic beauty, but limited always by the conditions of mass production and of the market. Reconciling these contrary demands, it has chanced upon the happy formulation "form follows function," and the beauty it produces, following this mantra, is almost always sculpted and rounded towards geometric

monotony, flatness with texture, coldness and sterility --- in a word, sleek.⁸ It exhausts its possibilities in aerodynamics; here, form no longer follows or expresses, but *is* its function. Decoration, on the other hand, tends towards the baroque, gauche, and tasteless; towards the overdeveloped, excessively intricate, towards strange, even grotesque involutions and details. Beauty, as aesthetic pleasure, it seems, has been left behind in the very labor of making things costly.

⁸ A perfect analogy could be drawn between decoration and design, and the decorative clothing worn by unmarried girls and brides of yore, *Zierde* and *Schmuck*, in the German, and the “sexy clothing” of today. Whereas the former – heirlooms and artifacts of great labor --- were employed to display woman as themselves a sort of heirloom, passed from one family to another, and, through the act of giving birth, founding the link between generations, the latter, on the other hand, both explicitly tries to maximize the beauty of the human body and also display its utility for performing the sexual act. This aesthetic beauty tends towards the same ideal as the design of products; a lack of detail, a purely formal aesthetic of curves and shapeliness --- ultimately, in other words, sleekness. Of course, a measure of detail is preserved in make-up, with its endlessly refined palette of colors, and here, as in the manner and quality of fabrics, the subtle language of class distinctions and wealth sneaks in. Yet even in cosmetics --- quite literally the transformation of the surface of the body into a reflection of the cosmos --- we discover a tendency away from the aesthetics of decoration and towards an aesthetics of design. Parts of the face are colored as if to illuminate surfaces, bringing out an underlying geometric symmetry and structure. Curiously, however, the male physical ideal --- which to a limited extent influences the female, as *visa versa* --- does depend on a sort of detail. Namely, the male body is supposed to show off the musculature as vividly as possible, and so the muscles are built out until they almost want to burst out of the skin. Such details, it is clear, serve only to display the utility of the body as a machine, and of a very limited kind --- possessing only strength, but almost no flexibility, and able only to perform the very functions, lifting, pulling, which these days are far better performed by real machines. As a result of these two ideals, the human body has been sundered into two ridiculous extremes; on the one hand, flexibility and sleek curvaceousness, and on the other hand, pure strength expressed through a grotesque excess of detail --- with every vein and even the very fabric of the muscles rippling beneath the skin. It is as if the human body, split off into caricatures of the male and female, has been transformed into the visual demonstration of a machine -- a technology – and with only one purpose; the sexual act. Its different functions have been separated, and no longer present themselves through a fluid interaction, but, as it were, in a linear sequence. Strength feeds into flexibility as a piston turning a system of gears --- the act of copulation is merely the moment in which the entire machine comes into operation. The aesthetics of the motorcycle is the perfect counterpart to the contemporary ideals of male and female beauty. Unlike an automobile, which is sleek to the outside, but conceals its motor --- its own musculature --- beneath the hood, the motorcycle exhibits an aerodynamic, even flexible form, with a sumptuously curvy body and a visible joint, while at the same time its motor and gears are in large part visible. Its actions as a vehicle follow directly and visibly from the motions of its body; it turns because its torso is twisted, it moves because its gears turn. In this way, it approaches the human, or animal, body, whose movements in space are expressed throughout the body as a whole, and not through the restricted motion of a certain part. Yet like a machine, its operations are nevertheless divided up --- the production of power, steering, and continuing in motion are all separate actions. This might explain the mystique of the motorcycle; almost universally acclaimed to be sexiest of all man-made objects, it is the visual realization of the “iron horse” we were promised at the beginning of the industrial age.

But let us disabuse ourselves of the very notion that beauty is first of all something experienced by the individual, that the beautiful object, by properly stimulating the senses, produces an *aesthetic pleasure*. For beauty is, first of all, just this overgrowth of detail, and in essence has nothing to do with the harmony and happy proportions perceived through the eyes and the ears. This definition applies to both the beauty of nature and of artifacts, but it also allows us to properly grasp their difference. Nature – and this should be clear to anyone who has opened their eyes or ears at least once – is almost endlessly detailed; the simplest insect possesses a complexity that exceeds the finest craftsmanship. Look where you will --- new details open themselves up. It would be impossible for us to remember, or record, even the smallest sliver of these --- for nature is always surprising us. Yet the details that we see before our eyes are only the superficial semblance of those that are to be discovered in its workings. In their totality, these details express all of nature as an evolutionary system; evolution is, as it were, nothing less than their creation and sustenance. This applies to the first beginnings of the universe --- the galaxies and stars are nebulae scattered through the night sky, spat out from the big bang --- and to its physical and composition, but above all, to organic life. Nature is always and everywhere at work --- since every part is an expression of the whole, is interwoven into its fabric, nothing could be said to be inert; from the perspective of totality, there is no mere potentiality. This is simply to stress, once more, that the activity of nature does not take the form of human agency, it is not the activity of things working against each other, each with its own agenda, but is purely relational, defused over the entire system. One can only speak, therefore, of different organizations that draw together the activity of their infinitesimally divisible parts into expressions of

agency that are greater or lesser relative to each other. By building and maintaining stability and expressing nature through a certain recurrent circulation, these organizations preserve details, and thus allow for the system of nature as a whole to be built out in ever more detail. This is what we mean by evolution, using this term both for inorganic and organic processes --- indeed for all natural processes. Every higher form of evolution is akin to a new language, which, with an even greater capacity to preserve details --- as we see quite clearly, if, for example, we were to compare inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, and genetics --- allows for a new, and even greater and more infinitely refined accumulation of details to take place.

Compare, then, the activity of nature with that of the artisan. *Techniques*, as we have stressed, are extensions of somatic language; the artisan not only makes artifacts through a transformative labor, but he must do so, specifically, through his body, and by applying its movements, with or without the mediation of tools, to raw materials. In nearly every case, and always if the artifact is to be decorous, this requires investing it with details, and thus demands a refined movement of the body. For most people, such refined movement comes easiest to the hands, and more easily to one hand than another; -- and while the entire musculature, and even sometimes our breathing, comes into play in the artisan's labors, it is primarily through the hands that the material is *manipulated*, and subtlety and refinement achieved. Artisanshhip is thus *handiwork* or *handicraft*, human force and strength channeled through the hands.

Thus concentrated into a single part of the body --- the hands ---, which, working together, can't normally do two things at once, the labor of the artisan towards his material must assume a linear form; it can be divided into a sequence of steps that,

executed in the proper order, yield the desired product. Or rather, labor, in essence, is just this --- a serial activity towards a material that is different than us, and offers only passive resistance, neither speaking up against us or acting out, but being, at worst, stubborn. Because labor produces detail through a series of steps, each of which takes time, no matter how efficient an artisan becomes relative to others in his guild, there remains a direct correlation between the time expended on labor and the quality of the final work. This helps explain decoration as a political act. The excessive labor-time invested in an artifact becomes the seed around which an enduring community builds.

The opposite of work is play, and together these constitute the two poles of somatic language, as indeed of all human activity. In play, the body is not constrained to a serial activity, but is simultaneously active in all its parts, and through them. Play is not without details, but these appear simultaneously through our movements, in a reciprocal relation to others, and without even being crystallized into an object. Between play and work are many forms, and it is perhaps, indeed, only in extreme cases that they appear in any sort of pure opposition. We shall now describe these in some detail, in order to give a fuller sense for the range of somatic language, and the complexities of the human relation to detail.

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These fall into two categories. The first includes sports, games, and toys. The second: video games, musical instruments, singing and dance. The former tend from play towards work, the latter from work towards play --- and thus all together, and in the given sequence, they describe a circle that begins and ends with play.

Sports, to begin, are a form of play that involves both a full and simultaneous range of bodily movement, and reciprocal interaction, but nevertheless works towards a product different than the activity, --- the score. The score expresses the activity itself, the simultaneous and reciprocal movement of bodies, the *playing* of a game, as a sequence of events unfolding in a linear sequence of time and adding up to a numerical result. Since scoring proceeds through abstraction, it tends to develop towards essentially institutional forms --- the use of referees and precise timing devices, for example, or ever more elaborate systems of rules --- while the result itself, the product of this abstraction, is a sort of deficient artifact, possessing almost absolute permanence, yet expressing few details, --- only those that can assume the form of statistics.

This suggests a peculiar contradiction that we discover wherever sports are played and enjoyed. Details are absolute necessary, the very substance of the game; athletes must not only possess certain physical attributes, but, above all, an extraordinary attentiveness to their bodies and to every nuance of a situation unfolding in time --- they are expected to be able to “read defenses,” “read offences,” or anticipate a pitch before the ball has left the hand. Yet these same details are also, in the end, rendered meaningless, dissolved into the finality of the score. Nowhere, however, is this contradiction clearer than in the two mutually opposed founding principles; “Winning is everything,” and “Its not whether you win or loose, but how you play the game.”

A game is simply a sport without play. The full, free, playful movement of the body is replaced by a linear series of action, performed either through the action of the hand, or through some other signifier. Games involve either reciprocal human agency, or some kind of medium that, involving randomness, surprises us, or some combination of

both. There are also some games involving the reciprocal manipulation of a merely passive medium --- players are supposed to stack blocks until they fall over, or extract a tiny object from a hole with prongs without touching the sides. In these, details of physical movement play an important role, but otherwise the physical actions and physical representation (the deck of cards and the actions of play, or the chess board and the movement of pieces) merely signify an already abstract content, expressible through a finite number of variables. And thus there is no need to translate from the action to the result through some kind of institutional procedure; the action is already the result, and nothing could happen that is not of direct consequence to the final outcome. Games of this sort are not only capable of being represented perfectly by computers, but, moreover, since the game can always be expressed through a finite number of variables, their play is always reducible to a mathematical problem, and with sufficient computing power, it would be possible outdo even the best human opponents.

While sports and games produce a result, they remain otherwise aloof from the practical concerns of everyday life. If their particular forms of activity imitate anything, they imitate war, which does not belong within, but rather at the limit of, the quotidian. But they do not, in general, follow the model of any of the forms of technique that we have mentioned, and least of all handicrafts. Toys, on the other hand, turn play into an imitation of work, either by offering miniaturized versions of the things that are the concern of everyday life --- babies, houses, cars, trucks, machines, and the like --- or by allowing the handcraft of actual things, either ephemeral or enduring. In this way, they institute a form of play that is, at once, both real and symbolic. For on the one hand, it involves either the entire movement of the body, or a subtler, concentrated manual

dexterity, and, in this way, invests the play world with endless details. Toy-play has no need for rules that give order and coherence to games and sports, but rather builds up around scenarios where the individual details of a given situation or object an almost endless source of fascination and interest to the participants. A tea party plays out the subtleties of etiquette, dolls and doll-houses acquire the decorations that give substance to domestic life, a train set or sand lot becomes a microcosm of human productivity. A herd of stuffed animals shows off the animal kingdom in its wonderful diversity of shapes and colors. Yet at the same time toys remain symbols of something else, and thus these details not only fascinate in their own right, but acquire as special, almost magical significance. Through these details, the things themselves seem present before the child's hand, at its grasp --- they allow the first contact with the world that had been promised them.

Perhaps, at their limit, toys would allow not merely for the imitation of human labor, but of nature in its spectacle. Play, having become work, would again become play. Here, perhaps, we find the marionette theater --- the most involved, intricate, worked out kind of toy, but also the most playful. Thus within the world of toys we would find, in miniature, the very same trajectory that, picking up the thread of our discussion, we will continue now to describe.

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Because they do not involve the simultaneous movements of the body, games do not, of necessity, take place in "real time." Time limits, if they are invoked, concern processes that, strictly, take place entirely outside of the game itself; the strategic thinking of a chess player, for example, between moves. This suggests that video games

should not be understood as pure games, but rather as a strange fusion of a sport, a game, and a handicraft. For they take place in real time, yet not through the immediate and reciprocal interaction of real bodies, but instead require the translation of refined hand motions into the purely symbolic medium of the computer, and then back into a real time video image. In this translation, the original details of the movement are lost --- they are represented through variables of a limited range. Yet manipulating these according to a fixed rule, the video game builds a finitely detailed world around them, limited only by the speed of the microprocessor and the resolution of the screen.

The skeleton of every sport, we could say, is a game; if a sport involves coherent rules, and does not depend on some form of qualitative judgment, it must be possible to represent it through a purely symbolic medium, without relation to real bodies. Video-games reconstruct this skeleton back into something approximating a sport.⁹

Musical instruments also translate a concentrated somatic movement—a movement of the body that is focused in certain parts and does not express its movement as a whole—into a real time event. Yet they do not result in any loss of the detail of these movements, but instead make even the slightest difference, so slight as to be imperceptible to the eye, manifest to the untrained ear. In the very process of translating a physical action into an acoustic event, they amplify the language of the body; the subtlest gradations of grace, of touch and rhythm seem to come alive in the texture of sounds. And just as there is a ranking of instrumentalists, so also there is a ranking of the different instruments, according to their sensitivity to the movements of their player. All

⁹ The speed of microprocessors itself increases as the circuit boards become ever finer in their details. In this way, video games provide a visual representation of technological advances that have become part of our everyday life. Progress, nowadays, is felt through Moore's law --- history, in the age of virtual reality

instruments are extraordinarily sensitive, though some even more so than others, and with the strings, tremendous skill is required simply to produce a sound that is not hideous.

And so with the violin – the most sensitive of all—a detailed hierarchy emerges even among individual instruments, and the first among these have become household names.

Arranged after their sensitivity, suppleness, and expressive range, with pride of place given to the violins, the panoply of musical instruments, --- as varied and peculiar in their qualities as the animals of Noah's ark, --- assemble to become an orchestra.

Almost inconceivable is the amount of human labor that has been gathered here. Every instrument is the work of the finest craftsmanship; they draw together the diverse stuff of nature --- metals both noble and base, woods, reeds, the skin and guts of animals, ivory from elephants tusks, resin --- and not for the sake of mere decoration. For they don't simply show off the surface of things --- absorbing, reflecting, and transmitting light --- but allow density and constitution of the material itself to resonate, to ring true. Each musician has dedicated his life to the proper play of the instrument; his life has become a love towards a thing, the infinite task of coaxing every nuance of potential contained in its materials. And finally, there is the composition itself, which expresses not merely the work as an individual act of creation, but the entire labor of the history of music, of the unfolding of its system of harmonic relation towards the limit of tonality, --- and even past these limits --- of ever greater complexities of rhythm and orchestration; a detail and expressiveness that could only work itself out slowly, building up like a Gothic cathedral.

The principle violinist rises, the players tune their instruments, the conductor takes his stand, and, suddenly, all this detail, like the agitated vapors of a storm cloud,

--- is punctuated every 18 months by the doubling of processor speed. Through video games, we see our world unfold.

bursts into life, and just as a lightening bolt's path reflects the earth that draws away its energy, so the music conducts itself through his hands or his baton, and shapes itself after their every nuance, unfolding the qualities of movement into rhythm. Rhythm is the confluence of details into the simultaneity of "play time," and it is here, above all, that the conductor must prove master; if the first violinist allows the orchestra to agree on the subtle question of pitch --- all harmony, of course, depends on this --- the conductor, on the other hand, invokes all towards a common meter. In this way, he stands at the very limit of artisanship; unlike the musicians, whose play is concentrated in certain parts of their body, he conducts through his entire body --- his hands and his baton, indeed, are only at the periphery, but every movement, from heaving his torso to winking his eye, becomes significant. His gestures no longer suggest the peculiar stuff and shape of a particular instrument, but rather the sonorous possibilities of the entire orchestra, freed of all trace of the mechanical awkwardness that mars even the most accomplished violinist. Yet nevertheless, like a craftsman, he acts towards a medium outside of himself, --- though only playfully, since its product remains always ephemeral.

The conductor, we might say, is the opposite of the referee. For rather than taking play and transforming it into a score, he takes a composition, --- a score --- written down in an abstract symbolic medium, and with only a few, peripheral qualitative descriptions --- in other words, something which in large part could be interpreted by a computer and manipulated according to a set rule --- and transforms this into play. And in doing this, he becomes almost a dancer. Fixed to the dais between the audience and the musicians, only this steadfastness binds his movements, keeps him from leaping, evaporating into the music. And so the theater remains a workplace, is not yet a stage.

The orchestra recreates the spectacle of nature; not that it would paint tableaux of a spring day or a summer storm, producing their individual features one by one. Rather, it makes manifest its quickening. Like a lightning rod, it draws the silent workings of nature, channeled through the craftsman's labor and the musician's cultivations, towards a single instance where it explodes before ear and eye. Yet this activity, and this spectacle, remains lopsided; it is of a nature that has only been worked over by man and that works against him, that agitates and is agitated, but that does not yet interact with us. Nature has not yet been spoken to, and it does not yet speak to us; it has not yet been suffused with human language. Instrumental solos, to an extent, work to overcome this limitation, adding a more lyric quality, but no instrument is able to form musical tones into the articulated textures of spoken language. Music remains murmuring.¹⁰

The nature and cause of this articulateness allows for very precise formulation; it is not merely a subjective observation. Music, as already stated, develops from a purely abstract musical representation towards an event that takes place in the flow of time. The representational system itself is quite simple; a key signature, the indication of the rhythmic division, and individual notes, each representing a certain position on the scale as well as a duration relative to the rhythmic unit. Music is composed by the simultaneous and subsequent combination of notes and rests, and even in the simplest case, a melody of whole notes played by a single instrument within a single seven-tone scale and without raising or falling an octave, the possibilities that emerge increase by powers of seven with each note, and soon become unfathomable. A single measure of orchestral music, with numerous instruments playing together, and several simultaneous

¹⁰ The Jazz trumpet, when played with a muffler (?), comes closest to overcoming this limitation, imitating, effect, approximating the stopping motion of the lips. And Jazz, in general, seems to come closest to a

melodic lines, allows for absolutely unimaginable, bewildering detail. Thus the listener finds himself constantly startled with surprises. While he is able to gather these together into a coherent experience, and is reminded of them when they return, and while they always seem, in a way, familiar, even when they are thoroughly unheard-of, he is never able to keep pace with what happens --- the music rushes him along, and if he is able to describe anything that happened through words, it is only in a limited way, and only either through vague metaphors or through the precise terminology of the musician.

The experience of instrumental music is restless; it does not give the mind a chance to consciously recollect it as it proceeds, but tears us along. And this is so for the very reason that, between its simplest elements --- individual notes --- and its overarching structure --- key changes and compositional forms --- it does not articulate itself into units of a middling complexity that, without preserving every detail, could reconstruct the whole. At best, one could blur these details together, as when one whistles a simplified version of a tune one has heard. But there is no natural division that gives us a handle on things; it is without steps, moves, or words.

Human language, as we have seen, is of a double nature, and thus this inarticulateness is itself overcome in two very different ways. First, through singing. The singing voice is richer in overtones than any instrument, and has an expressive range that suggests the possibilities of each --- it can be flowing or percussive, pure like a flute or gritty like a trumpet, shrill or soothing. Yet even the simplest voice, untrained and unversatile, gives music an articulation that it could never achieve on its own. For if the orchestra is like a storm cloud, and the audience, a lightning rod, the words of music are capacitors. Concentrating the discharged energy around themselves and releasing it in a

dialogical, conversational form, through the freely improvised interaction of its solos.

purely linear, no longer simultaneous, sequence, they make the music comprehensible. For the first time, we have a hold on it.

This is both the strength of lyrics, and their liability. Since it involves the linear arrangement of pre-given material, and since it is concentrated in a certain bodily organ, speech is itself a form of handicraft. Words, as we will explore in more detail, are among the limit cases of artifaction. Without getting ahead of ourselves, let it suffice to mention that, while a word-language, no less than absolute music, is playful in its details, this playfulness takes different form. Both do, indeed, share similar potentials for expressive phrasing, intonation, accent, and so forth, and both allow for playful interaction across the linear dimension. But unlike music, speech tends away from simultaneity. Our minds, largely incapable of processing more than one extended sequence of words at any given moment, wouldn't allow two simultaneous but contrary voices to harmonize. Instead, they could only babble. Nor could music possess anything like the "meaning" of speech --- any attempt to provide a one-to-one correspondence between musical events and human "meanings" ends in absurdities. For these reasons, it is impossible to translate the perfectly playful detail from speech to music, or from music to speech. It is not only that there is no mechanical rule that we might apply, --- this would be impossible in any case, --- but that every attempt at a translation, regardless of which direction it moves, will prove reductive. It is as if one were to project a triangle from a sphere onto a plane, or from a plane onto a sphere.

Dance does not face this same limitation. For as we have already explained, ballet cultivates the body towards an infinitely refined expressiveness, and while this expressiveness is articulated into steps, it nevertheless allows for infinitely subtle

gradations of simultaneous detail, and thus the perfect representation of rhythmic flow. In other words, while it articulates music and gives it hold, there is no formal obstacle to the perfect expression of its every detail. This does not mean that a dance could be *recorded* as music, or music as dance, and that we could perfectly reconstruct one from the other, but only that they may appear as perfectly equal partners, neither forcing the other, and neither inattentive; every step, as it were, becomes a *pas de deux*.¹¹

Practically the first thing a beginning student is told is to “make the foot as articulate as the hand” --- a simple thought, an infinite task. For it demands nothing less than that we cultivate the body away from its natural one-sidedness, overcoming the lopsidedness that concentrates its subtlety in the dexterity of a single limb. The step, the movement of the entire body, must become as articulate and expressive as the hand; the *pas* becomes word.

The dancer labors to develop his body towards this ideal, struggling against an element that would constantly return to its former state. This work could never be finished, since it works against a condition that is both innate and ever confirmed by the tedium of the everyday. Man, indeed, became lopsided as soon as he stood erect and applied his opposable thumbs in labor towards the world. It became his fate; at his hands, he has built up his world, enticing the secrets away from nature, unlocking its gems and minerals. And at his hands, perhaps, this world will perish. His hands are able to imitate nature in all its details, reproducing its finery, but, in the end, all his handiwork is uneven with an unevenness that presses through all that we have made for ourselves. One-sided

¹¹ This point is rather subtle, and might require a good deal more explanation. There is neither a one-to-one equivalence between musical events and dance events, nor any sort of mechanical rule of translation, but formal analogy, a harmony of mediums, understood by the dancers and choreographers, and felt by the audience.

in its action towards nature as well as its relation to our own body, all human agency, if it models itself after handicraft, is lopsided, and thus becomes laborious, tedious, and dull. Even spoken language, concentrated in the voice, is an expression of this --- and if singing makes the voice more sonorous and rich by transforming the entire body cavity into an instrument, ballet goes further. Just as the foot becomes as articulate as the hand, so the entire body as articulate as the voice --- and thus, the expressiveness even of language is no longer focused at a single point, but spread evenly over our entire skin. The body is not only perfected as instrument, but its very instrumentality is overcome --- it becomes playful, pliant. The playful body is alone able to express nature in its reciprocation with human activity, transforming the infinitely rich details of music into the details of a movement suffused through with human language, and thus recreating not simply mere nature, but the world's spectacle. If man became one sided when he stood erect, the dancer's comportment, perfectly balanced and centered, with feet become hands, the entire body, indeed, a single, no longer lopsided, hand, approaches divinity, ... nature as a whole.

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Nature, or God works playfully, its work is play and its play work. It allows no difference between the two, for its details are produced through a perfectly playfully activity, diffused equally throughout. Man, on the other hand, either works or plays, but cannot do both at the same time. There are, indeed, *techniques*, such as hunting, gathering, even agriculture, which lie between the two extremes, and it is also possible to mix to two. And, on the other hand, the performance of music or dance creates a world of tremendous detail before the eyes and ears of the audience --- yet this world is ephemeral,

it cannot survive the moment. As soon as man invests things with detail by his hands, and so gives these details an enduring home, his body must be still and its forces concentrated; he can no longer be at play. Thus: to speak of the playful work of nature is not to force it into the mold of human agency, but to burst this mold open. Formulated in the terms of ordinary language, it points beyond its limits, towards an activity that belongs to rigorous science to describe and understand.

Because our work is never truly playful, the fruits of the artisan's labor will always appear labored and artificial; belabored, in a word. The time invested in them sits heavy on their surface, for it appears to us, through every detail, as labor --- we touch them, and it is as if we had touched time itself. Like words penned on a scroll, the time of its making unfolds before us. To an extent, this tedium disappears when we put things to use --- but then we fear ruining what had been so carefully wrought. So the decorous thing sits alone, and oppresses us; or sinking into the king's skull, or resting in his hand, becomes the very token of a top-heavy, oppressive politics.

Thus the artisan, as a political creature, faces a peculiar kind of dilemma. To create the things of value that would become the centers of communal life is, at the same time, to make life tedious, and politics oppressive. And the more that an object's artifice outweighs its utility, the more pressing this dilemma becomes.

His answer? To approach nature not only in its details, but in the arrangement of these details. Let us explain.

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Because nature produces its unfathomable subtleties through a playful activity, spread *evenly* throughout, these details could never appear tedious, and do not weary the

eye. No longer are we able to read off the sequence of its construction from the *finished* project, and thus, it would not expose itself as a certain duration of linear work-time. Instead, the natural object --- as indeed all of nature --- appears to be built up of details from the inside, through an activity, which, while it still takes time, is simultaneous rather than serial, taking place everywhere all at once. We discover this at every level of natural organization; from the interaction of gravitational and electromagnetic forces, to mechanics of fluids, to the formation of crystallization and other chemical processes, and geological formations, and organic life, and, above all, in the operation of the ecosystem as a whole.

The activity of nature, in other words, is always circular, is always a circulation. Circulation is nothing else than a non-lopsided relation. The simplest form of a circulation involves relatively discreet elements in a reciprocal relation, where each acts on the other simultaneously; the orbit of one heavy body around another, or of the electrons around the nuclear kernel, or even a more static relation --- the two protons in a Helium nucleus, for example. Thus, even the matter within a single unmoving heavy body is in circulation with itself, in so far as all of the gravitational forces emanating from its different relative parts all mutually interact. The simplest physical expression of this is the notion of the center of gravity; only because all the forces are in a mutual relation can they be thought to act out of a single point, thus allowing the force exerted by a body against other bodies to be described as a vector. Complex systems involve ever more subtle forms of this reciprocal action, but they remain circulations.

Circulation, in other words, involves an originally non-linear temporality. This is not to deny that natural processes also take place within a linear temporality, and may be

described as a sequence of actions, as if they had been performed by a demiurge. Physics, for example, might describe the collision of billiard balls as a chain of events; a chemist divides the synthesis of a complex compound into a series of smaller processes. The biologist might speak of the genesis of the fetus as a sequence of stages. And the geologist, examining a cross-section of earth, lists in order the different processes that led to its formation. And even the earth and all its unique manifestations of life have their own natural history, as likewise, cosmology traces the development of the universe from its first beginnings. But in every case, the linear time only develops out of a circular time and a circular activity. The *zugleich* precedes the *nacheinander*.

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This is what we mean by *play-time*. If we experience time as fundamentally linear, as a chain of now-moments, with effect always following cause, it is because we model time after the work of the craftsman, who orients himself in the world through handicraft, applying his force to things through his hands. Opposite the artisan, we saw, is the dancer. Preserving his center of gravity, and allowing an infinity of detail, his steps, each in essence circular, link together into a sequence that always remains a circulation, cycling back to the same position in space, and never in the end proceeding forwards. He does not direct himself towards a world, not even through his whole body (as we might say of the conductor, who remains always firm in his orientation); but a world unfolds out of his body. History and a purely linear temporality, if they appear at all, only emerge at his extremities.

The emblem of the work-time of the everyday is *Μοίρα* spinning and cutting human lives, --- curious, indeed, that the gods would mortalize men through such a

common handiwork. In contrast, the emblem of play-time, we might say, might be a cross section of tree. Every new layer of growth gradually encircles the last, together creating the weave through which the vital juices circulate. Together, these record a natural history; the passage and strength of the seasons, times of drought and times of growth. They build outwards into a linear sequence, but one that radiates out in every direction, and that only a narrowed perspective could make appear lopsided. The linear sequence, in other words, is always a diameter; it cross-measures what has formed itself circularly through circular activity, and thus marks out its circulations as a chain of events. And this diameter could only appear through a cross section; it presupposes the dissection of the tree, and thus its death.¹²

The time we experience in our workaday world is itself, perhaps, but the cross-measure of nature. But we could also say the same of the time of animals; for man is unique only in the detail of his labors and the degree to which they have refashioned his world, but all animal life, nay, all life, even all partial organization, is lopsided and laborious. Least so, perhaps, the one-cell and asexual organism, which communicates with the outside through a spherical wall, and less so the plant, which branches out both into the soil and into the air, like a thread frayed at both ends, absorbing sun light and respiring through all its leaves, and sucking up nutrients and water through its roots, and reproducing not by seeking out its mate, but simply by dispersing its pollen (?) and seeds. Yet as soon as animals acquire digestive tracts and movement, their lopsidedness became of a different order. For their inputs and outputs are now not only divided, but concentrated at two ends --- the mouth and the ass. Life became a matter of ever moving towards food and away from shit; it became tedious

¹² Foot Dilthey.

Perhaps this is why the earthworm, the most useful of animals --- for it does nothing less than transform the remains of death into the conditions of life --- disgusts us, and seems to forbode our mortality. Its form, with two orifices, functionally distinct and yet scarcely discernable to the eye, is the simplest representation of what we are and of our origin, yet seems even to confuse the very distinction upon which all our activity is founded. Jerking itself across the wet pavement with a motion that confuses means and end --- the mouth, for which it moves, is itself the source of motion --- we see never more clearly the tedium that belongs to all earth-bound life.

And this might also explain why the snake is the most sinister, and the most wise. His entire body is a single vector that focuses itself in the mouth and fangs towards which it points; thus he exemplifies the cunning that orients us in the world as we pursue our needs. Perfectly sleek (his shape reproduces itself throughout the modern world; in hoses, wires, trains, even the Boeing 747, which looks rather like a winged snake), its body seem to know no leisure or fat or play --- it is but one muscle joining its ends, and expresses only its ceaseless labor. Its body is always taught, never in repose. If it rests, it is only in a coil, returning to a form that, almost perfectly symmetrical, approaches the effortless circulation of the inorganic. Only because the snake's purpose appears in such purity, stripped of all fat and of every tangential line, could it also have become a symbol of eternity. Biting its tail, its own singular orientation comes to contradict itself. In this way, it expresses a linear infinity that has been bent back upon itself; the paradoxical grasp of eternity that becomes necessary when the action of nature is conceived after man's labor.

Nature, as a whole, is perfect. Every part of nature, every partial perspective, however, is not only a circulation, as we have said, but now, as we see, a lopsided circulation. For as much detail as it contains and brings into commerce and circulation, its activity is only part of the whole. Every such perspective is, as it were, a cross-section through which the time of nature becomes lopsided, straightened out into a linear sequence. Human activity, oriented around our lopsided manual dexterity, is only the outermost natural expression of linear time, the straightest bisection that nature gives of itself as it evolves ever more narrow yet detailed perspectives on its own activity.

If the individual organism is thus always a rectification of nature's circulation, political activity, at every level, is its restoration. Political activity simply accomplishes the strange interaction between lopsidedness and symmetry that is the universe. Every organism is political in so far as it participates in the ecology of the earth, or even of the entire universe, the most perfect οἶκος, and thus partakes of the circulation of the whole, through which all the partial activities, the partial perspectives of the activity of the whole, are brought back into relation. Man's true freely political activity is no different; as we have suggested, it begins with problem of waste disposal, and through language, both somatic and wordy, and through his techniques, which bring him into a real relation with the activity of nature, it comes to express and reconcile ever greater natural communities. Since the circulations of nature extend in both time and space, this requires founding communities that express every greater temporal perspectives. At its limit, man's truly free political activity grasps what we might call eternity, the action of the universe in its perfection, or, indeed, true religion --- the extension of human community to the absolute. This explains the significance of artisanship, which makes the tools that

allow him to touch nature in new ways and with new efficiency, --- extending the reach of his hand, as it were ---, and above all, of decoration. For, as we have seen, it is through the decorative arts, by investing surplus labor into objects, that man seeds the *long times* of political life.

Yet even as the temporal frame of the community is in this way extended towards infinity, the very fact that it appears to us as human labor makes its time appear all the more lopsided, all the less capable of grasping the true circulation of nature as a whole. If the decorous object should become the foundation of politics, it will be a top-heavy politics; the king or leader will appear as the center of all activity, the entire mass of communal labor will rectify itself into a single vector of regal might. And if the decorous object --- a temple or tabernacle --- should become the foundation of religion, it could only be a top-heavy religion, in which God appears as a craftsman, having created the world of his own labor and separate from himself, and in which it becomes ever more impossible to assign any true efficacy to the work of men as men.

This infinity, in all its glory as the outermost expression of man's labor, must be curved back into eternity, expressing nature not only as the most perfect creation, but as absolute self-creation, as complete, fully-filled and, thus, full-filled. The decorous object must become a work of art, and the craftsman create an object in which details appear as if they had come forth from the object itself. They must not appear worked in and belabored, but as if they came emerged playfully and of their own accord, having developed to just the point that suits their nature. Thus far, we have spoken of the circular action of nature in terms that assume the advances of modern science; but these same natural processes, and hard as they are to discern through the fog of ordinary

language, show themselves through visual traits that can be registered, if not always articulated, by anyone. Owing to these traits, the things of nature have always seemed to be of a different order than man-made artifacts, even if man neither assumed a sentimental attitude towards them, nor had the slightest inkling why this might be so. Of these, let us restrict our discussion to two, which might be considered the most fundamental.

The first of these is the way that nature *curves*. Neither wholly predictable like the precise geometric figures of the craftsman, nor chaotic, like the random squiggle, the curves of nature seem to possess a subtlety and flowing detail that defies description and challenges even the most cultivated hand. Smooth, but not sleek, but seem rather to possess a luxuriant fullness and grace. Rather than being constructed from a simple generative procedure, as are the point, line, and circle --- the basis of Euclidean geometry ---, their patterns arise as tendencies from interaction of infinite detail. The river winds in an ever-changing pattern, for example, because the earth, with its multitude of grains, offers resistance to the downward flow of water and sediment.

Dance becomes flowing through the step, music through rhythm, and poetry through the meter. The fine arts, on the other hand, flow forth from the stroke. If the artisan's labor tends to divide itself between the heavy work of the arms, beating metal into shape, stretching out hides, and the fine work of the fingers, sewing, spinning and weaving, the artist unifies both the fingers and the arms into a single, graceful, motion. In this way, through combined action of all the six joints the runs from his shoulder blade to each finger tip, through, indeed, the entire body engaged at once, he is able to replicate the subtle curves of nature. And while the artisan's tools tend either to be blunt or

pointed, the painter's brush is itself made of hairs that, delicately curling as they are pressed, impress carefully articulated streams of paint unto the canvass.

Second is the way that nature *colors*. Light, reaching us directly from the sun or reflected off of the moon, its beams filtered through the atmosphere in its countless permutations, or emitted from heat and conflagration, shows of nature's surfaces through a varied and splendid display of hues and shades. A single surface shows the most unfathomable variation, with colors either passing over into each other through variations so subtle they cannot be discerned, or standing in a stark and strange contrast. Yet however slight or rash their juxtaposition, two colors need no other reason to touch than the very fact of their juxtaposition. It is as if, sitting atop the world of natural bodies and artifacts is another world, and with another law. With ease, our language reaches out towards things and events. It gives them names and explains how they act against each other. But though colors help us discern and name things as the things that they are, our words touch them but crassly. Scarcely infusing them with the form of agency that it elsewhere imposes on the world, it leaves them to exist and converse among each other on their own terms, and in their own way. And in these interactions, colors know nothing of the limits that divide the world of things against itself. For while men march against each other under banners of different hue, and even the animal kingdom has its shields and insignia, colors themselves know only peace. Each becomes the other through a continuum of gradations, and associates happily with its every kin. If colors clash, it is only in relation to a particular thing, within a perspective limited through worldly things; they seem not both to belong on the same face or body, or in the same room, or even in

the same landscape. In other words, only because we ask of them that they reflect the differences in the world that we discover and give names to.

If the painter approximates the nature's curves through the form of his stroke, he approaches its colors through the material from which he takes his name; that is, his paint. The pigments and dyes that invested the artisan's works with their subtle distinctions of quality, worth, and significance, that gave each local dress its character, and that even gave the king his purple, were won from nature, and not without great difficulty. Whether drawn from the juices of flowers and plants, or generated through chemical procedures, they are the fruit of carefully refined and slowly-developing techniques, and thus represent a real and laborious relation to the activity of nature. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of these techniques, and the most significant for our purposes, was the fixing of the colors after they had been extracted. Most of the colors of nature appear in rather ephemeral forms. The colors of the sky and water last only for a moment, the pure white of rushing water last only momentarily, and of ice and snow only under the conditions of cold. The brighter colors of flowers and trees are, apart from the ever-greens, are given over to the passing of the seasons, and even the skin of animals lose their distinction with time. Colors fade, in other words, and this fading is among the ways we experience the lopsidedness of life, the mortality of the things of nature and of ourselves. With the sparing exception of gemstones, which, perhaps for this reason are considered precious, the more permanent a thing is, the more earthy, dark or metallic its tones. The brighter colors, radiant greens, blues, reds, are of the moment, and might even be said to belong to a language of nature which unfolds between the brown of the earth and the transient shades of the heavens. The first tone is the green of leaves. Capturing

the light of the sun, these are given over to its march across the Zodiac.¹³ Some animals are colored as camouflage, others to frighten; and some that they may be seen through a more opaque medium. The peacock attracts his mates with his brilliant plumage, just as varied colors and scents of flowers speak to bees. Nature's varied surface has itself evolved as a communication among its species.

By fixing the hues that have been pressed out of plants and flowers, the dye maker transforms nature's ephemeral surface into an enduring artifact, and thus allows the artisan to dye and stain his materials, and bring these together into intricate details. The fine artist, on the other hand, if he is to express nature's details in their natural organization, must exhibit the way that they merge into each other with the subtlest gradations, or contrast in the most brilliant intensity. And furthermore, he must be able to express the way that light itself act towards the surface of things; whether they are shiny, or dull, mirror-like or white, opaque or translucent, or even clear. For this, it is necessary to have a system of colors that could produce an infinite, if limited, range of variations, which, however, even in the most extreme juxtapositions, seem to belong together. The different medium of painting --- watercolor, ink, gouache, encaustic, casein, acrylics, and oil --- each represent such systems, joining pigments, --- inorganic, organic, and even synthetic,--- together with a common base. By combining diverse elements within this substrate, thus allowing for their interaction and circulation within a more or less fluid medium, each system may be seen as a language, a partial perspective on humanly perceived color in its entirety. As we said earlier, colors clash not in and of themselves,

¹³ We must agree with Kermit; it isn't easy being green. For green is the color of the labor with which the entire food chain begins, and the first act of communication between the organic and the inorganic. It doesn't merely symbolize this work, but is this; photosynthesis involves the absorption of light, and thus the color belongs intimately to the action.

but only in their relation to a thing; they seem to disagree with a thing, either because of its predominant color scheme or on account of some other quality, such as its use, or mood, or the things with which it converses. Because it almost entirely lacks the qualities that define its relation to colors as colors, the base, on the other hand, allows the pigments to agree and interact freely; it is neutral, determined only through its relative fluidity (from almost solid to completely liquid) and drying qualities, the surfaces to which it can be applied, its translucence, opaqueness or reflectivity, and its longevity and color-fixing properties.

Every system of painting is a prelude to the world of pure colors, just as this world, like ballet, and like poetry, is a prelude to a *truly* cosmopolitan politics. Or is such a politics, *at a glance*. Of all these mediums, oil is most expressive. Viscous, it allows for subtle texturing and modification of its surface, and also for a complex overlaying of different colors and glazes. Thinned with turpentine, however, it takes on the qualities of more fluid medium without losing its underlying characteristic. Yet even oil paint cannot express all the entire range of color, and remains but a fragment of the whole. Thus every system is needed, and remains so; none should be treated as a mere historical relic.

Mixing together his paints on his palette, and stroking them onto a canvass with his camel-haired brush, the artist becomes a conduit through which the colors and curves of nature assemble together and enter into a mutual commerce. No longer of necessity mediated in their interaction by the things of the world and their lopsided transactions and perspectives, these curves and colors flow together into a playful spectacle, representing, though never in its totality, the *complete* circulation of all of nature's activities. For these have now been curved back towards eternity; no longer constrained to the purposes that

adhere to the parts, they translate freely each into the other. No longer limited to certain inputs or outputs --- submitted to a linear temporality that divides the before and the after of an event --- each moment within the frame gives way to every other. We do not stare straight at a painting, but rather, our eye traces over its countless details of stroke and color, each time describing a new path through the details, and thus each every curve and color translates into every other. It draws us in; no longer do we rest on the earth with the solid feet of a critic, but are as autumn leaves in an eddy.

It might seem strange to speak of painting as an activity that has nothing to do either with the conscious activity of the artist or the viewer. Painters seem to paint for a reason; to depict human beings and natural objects as they appear to the eye, or relive great battles and scenes from secular and religious history, or produce symbolic representations of moral qualities, or explore the play of light and color off of surfaces, or capture the mood of a moment, or to explore abstract formal principles, or as agitprop, or, simply, to create beauty? And no painter, perhaps, paints simply that the curves and colors of nature commune with each other.

True. Painting, *as a human activity*, is not merely one form of artisanship among many but the most exquisite blossom of handicraft. Everything, from the preparation of the canvass, the manufacture of the paints, to their mixing and application, and the final glazing and framing, involves skills and know-how that have been cultivated only slowly and with great labor, and every step must be performed with clear purpose and painstaking care. And even the viewing of a work of art takes a training of the eye and attention to detail; thus most children, while they suck in movies and television like sponges, are seldom more bored and restless than when in an art museum. To be

enraptured itself requires a laborious preparation; the eye must have learned not to let the world's details race by, but tarry with them, submitting to their own movement.

Yet no activity is just human, or feline, or simian, or solar, or lunar, or galactic, but always universal; an expression of the manifold unifold of nature as a whole. If we speak of activities only in terms of their proximate cause, it is only because this is easiest, since, for the time, their wider significance remains obscure. And this was also the case with aesthetics. Lacking the perspective to see how man's activity belonged within nature, we were forced to sunder his freedom from his surroundings, and so came to understand fine art through one of two misconceptions. Having now gained this perspective, we begin to see that art not only must be thought of as freely political, extending man's purposes towards nature, but that it has significance as an event purely removed from any human end.

The production and reception of paintings, seen as a real event, brings nature's colors into a new kind of organization. If, previously, we have not spoken univocally of color as either subjective or objective, psychological or physical, this is because both terms are misguided; color, first of all, is an event, a communication between light, matter, and the perceptive faculties of biological organisms. We can describe this event in terms of discrete processes through a rigorous scientific method, but this, in fact, only obscures the evolutionary significance of color; namely, as we already in part suggested, that it is one of the ways in which animal and plants, as individuals and species, relate, with each other and with inorganic nature. Evolution, thus, itself involves the circulation of colors through the senses; colors develop both towards vibrancy (with flowers, peacocks, and the like), subtlety and nuance (as with natural camouflage), and even

variability (the chameleon, but also the masks and make-up of humans). And at the same time, the eyes develop towards subtlety of perception, opening to view and action those features of the environment that are relevant to the survival. The visual surface of the world is reflected in the endless varied perceptive faculties of different species and individuals; each of these is a different perspective on nature as a whole, and each may be regarded as a real event, a real organization. In this way, new sets of color enter into new possibilities of communication. In every case, however, the communication of colors is mediated through the particular forms of activity of different organisms and organizations. It is through this activity that it sees the world.

And this is true also of men, to a degree. But sometimes the world alights as spectacle. Colors shine before us, disencumbered of the gravity that cleaved them to things and drew them towards the ground and its earthy tones. Flowing upwards like dawn's rosy fingers at the ephemeral moment that splits night and day, they communicate with each other freely, joining together into countless subtle permutations. As if relieved from every other purpose, they no longer speak to us, but only to themselves. Such moments, though, are brief; steeling from the master's bedroom where they lived out the passions they must swallow in silence as they go about the business of the day, the sheets are clean, and no trace remains of their deed, and their children, all these fantastic mixtures, have dissolved into the instant.¹⁴

Perhaps men first began painting to capture this moment of wonder, whose subtleties elude the word. But we need not make such a conjecture. All that matters is that it is alone through artisanship, and above all, through painting, that the free commerce of the colors of nature was able to take on a more enduring form, and that, in

this way, the human manipulation of colors allows them to interact in a way that nature, before then, had never known. Every new work is unheard of.¹⁵

But what is the relation between this real event and the human work and human ends through which and towards which it was made? If we no longer speak of the artist's activity in and of itself, what becomes of the particular distinction between the artifact and the work of art? How are we to understand the painter's brush stroke and palette, if not as something that he does?

What we might say is this. All the many techniques that gather together in the finished painting, and all the various purposes and interests that gives artisanship and painting value as a political activity, --- not least of all which is the investment of an object with labor ---; all of these provide an occasion for the pure communion of color. While this could never appear explicitly as the goal of human endeavor without coming into contradiction with itself, it nevertheless comes into being through our colorful activities, and through crafts and artworks especially, acquires an enduring home. And as the techniques of artisanship develop to ever higher degrees of refinement, becoming the fine arts --- a process that is gradual, without any leaps of genius --- this communion becomes ever more free and varied. And here also, we may speak of an evolution of organizational forms, without, of course, wishing to imply any sort of teleological principle, but at most a process in which each stage builds upon those that come before. Representational painting, through its fidelity to the ways things appeared to the eye, brought a wide range of colors into circulation on the compass. Yet since these works of art were largely imitative in intent, and most of the technique was directed towards this

¹⁴ Compare Novalis, Hoffmanstahl.

¹⁵ Footnote Heidegger (I think)

end, they also reproduced the very things that divide colors against themselves and keep them from their purest association. Only to the extent that painting either abandoned or complicating the world of things, presenting relations of color and form rather than identifiable objects, or displacing the forms of objects and discombobulating their colors, could art allow the freest commerce of colors and become pure spectacle.

Art never abandons craftsmanship, or if it does so it becomes mere “conceptual art,” which is to say didactic; no longer art at all. And thus it remains always divided between two kinds of activity; on the one hand, a human technique towards human purposes, and on the other hand, the activity of nature appearing before itself in all its splendor. Yet it is possible for these two hands to join each other in the work of the artist. Without ever intending anything more than the rigorous cultivation of his technique, he is able, nevertheless, to approach the way that nature acts. Or indeed, this would only be possible through the most rigorous technique, one that is no longer guided by any purpose beyond his medium, enacting nothing more than its inner possibilities; allowing the colors to mix and the brush stroke according to their own, hidden law. This, in a deeper sense, is what it would mean to approach nature not just in its details, but in its organization. It is no longer a question of imitating these details as they appear towards the eye, but of allowing the colors to curve and blend together after their own rule, organizing before our eyes in ways that make vain every attempt of our perceptive apparatus to structure it into a world of things, and thus presenting the spectacle of an activity that does not take the form of human agency. Through such ambidextrousness it would be possible to overcome man’s lopsidedness; the shaking of these two hands broadens man’s freely political activity, --- that it might approach all of nature.

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Every human activity involves the bifurcation between the activity of man and nature. And with every *art* emerges a new way that these activities are brought together. Art in this way, is the essence of political activity --- unless purely didactic, where an overgrown slogan is given aesthetic values only in order to catch eyes.¹⁶ Yet among different arts, this bifurcation assumes different forms and is overcome in different ways. Every new configuration of these parameters creates the possibility of a new art form, and neither in this context, nor, indeed, any context, could we speak of a dialect that exhausts itself in a certain configuration of logically-derived possibilities. For let us again stress; we are not concerned with a teleological, but an evolutionary system that expresses itself through confluences. With the human species and the human individual, new confluential possibilities emerge; man's activity is able, in a way that is perhaps unique, to allow the confluence of the whole, to become a node through which the whole passes, and in this way, expresses itself. This, above all, is what we mean by spectacle. Yet this possibility is in no way the purpose of the system, in no way guaranteed by some kind of mechanical or logical law, or divine purpose. It happens, through our labor, though not as our will. Which is why it must be cultivated, and cherished --- tended, in a word.

Nevertheless, among the arts that we have discussed --- the arts of technique and not technology --- we might distinguish between artisanship, on the one hand, and the performing arts, on the other. In their purest forms --- namely painting, and ballet-technique --- these two hands are, once again, to be thought of as extremities that, shaken,

¹⁶ Footnote Benjamin (Art in the age of mechanical reproduction) What I am saying should not be confused with the aestheticization of politics.

come together into more ambidextrous forms. But each considered according to its own possibilities, a clear distinction emerges. Whereas artisanship starts with a strong opposition between man's work and nature's play, and advances towards its overcoming, ballet is based on steps that, in a sense, represent the fusion of play and labor, not only because each must be cultivated at the barre through laborious exercises, but because they involve at their periphery an irreducible linearity; they do not always end with the same possibilities as which they began.¹⁷ This is true of music, but to a far lesser degree; it a factor of the technique of a particular instrument (each action of playing limits the possibilities of the next action), and the laws of harmony, but not of the symbolic medium of music itself. Any rhythmic or melodic interval is not only reversible, but in theory could be played back in any order. Choreography, in contrast, does not exist as a symbolic medium beyond the specific possibilities of the dancer's body at a specific moment, and thus, while a certain combination may be reversible, it would make no little or know sense to speak of reversing the choreography of a dance as whole.

A third kind of art of technique, and one that we have only mentioned briefly, is poetry. Poetry involves both a work and a performance; what has been created, and endures beyond the act of creation, is itself performed. This may be said of drama, and of musical composition, as well as to a much lesser degree, the choreography of dance. But with each of these, the performance of the work depends on real conditions that may disappear in the course of things, and thus even its conception as a work remains tethered

¹⁷ Because the barre is ordinarily held by one-hand, each combination concentrates on only one side of the body, and thus must be scrupulously repeated on the opposite side. And the barre exercises themselves often represent only one part of a movement that, during a performance, is always performed as a whole. The *plie*, for example, stretches the Achilles tendon and develops the fluid motion of the legs and stability of turnout necessary for jumps, while the proper movement of the foot is developed through the *frappe*, which requires the stability of a supporting leg and is not generally performed on stage. The highly

to the specific possibilities given to the artist by his world. Some works --- one thinks of Beethoven's later symphonies, or Wagner's operas --- may have strained these possibilities to their limits, or may have even been created explicitly with an eye towards the future. But performance remains a tacit restraint. Poetry, on the other hand, has no real conditions, but only ideal conditions --- namely, a language of words --- and these conditions it creates through its very work. Or rather, as we will see, it creates the very ideality of language as its condition. Thus, whereas the other performing arts work towards a performance, just as painting performs a work, poetry is always at once a work and a performance, though not exactly in the same time. And in this way, poetry allows a confluence between the possibilities of artisanship and the performing arts.

But let us not race ahead of ourselves. For before we can discuss poetry, we must first treat the third limit case of the artifact. Words, the raw material of the poet's craft.

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Already we have spoken of a word language both as part of the real system of nature, but also as an ideal system unto itself. And we saw furthermore how we could understand words through the lens of evolution, in terms of the conditions of survival. Such an approach, it was suggested, would help explain not only the diverse phenomena unearthed by the taxonomic methods of the philologist, but also the very nature of the relation between the real and ideal. Yet if we are to truly grasp this relation, we cannot regard words simply as pre-given idealities, concerning ourselves only with how they "stick around" to enter dictionaries and archives and provide the raw material for philology. We must ask; how do words come to be? How did they happen?

regimented order of the ballet class, involves a progression towards ever more symmetrical kinds of movements.

The first answer is easy. God, we insist, is neither a transcendent nor an occasional cause. Thus, the famous question of the origin of human language disappears; human language is a possibility that first emerged with human beings, and every phenomenon of human language is, in some sense, a human creation. Words, therefore, must be artifacts. Yet of a special kind.

For they are not made out of some kind of stuff, but, as it were, shaped from the very air; they are winged, windy, and endless. Their survival depends not on the durability of a raw material, but solely on a combination of real and ideal conditions. Thus they could either last forever, or disappear instantly. At the moment of their birth, --- when they first become possible --- neither of these possibilities is determined, nor could they ever be. A word, in and of itself, is without momentum. And because there is no material to be labored over, word-craft, in and of itself, requires neither time nor effort; words appear effortlessly and instantly. We might go to great pains to invent a word that is right for a certain purpose, and yet these pains are purely negative. New words line up before us, unheard combinations of sounds burst to mind --- soon a whole mob has congregated, and like Helen's suitors, we put them to the test.¹⁸ But we can only summons them by emptying our mind of other things, or perhaps by setting it into commotion. We do not ourselves *will* them into being.

A spoken word, all of this suggests, appears only as an ideal possibility. Words appear only as the possibility of being words, which is to say, of appearing again. If we could speak of a real event, it is only the instant in which the ideal possibility emerges. And yet the ideal possibility is itself unthinkable otherwise than as the repetition of the ideal event. It follows that wordcraft is a real event that creates an ideal artifact. It is the

real act of making the ideal, and thus enacts the very transaction between the two, indeed is this very transaction. Or, at least, one side of this transaction.

This transaction is the very basis of politics, and word-craft, thus, the eminently human political action. We become free political agents when words start popping into our head, even if they are never spoken. For already we are no longer acting merely as isolated individuals, and have entered into a potential relationship with a community that will survive the cohesion of our parts. Yet at the same time, since the durability of words bears no immediate relation either to human labor or nature's stuff, it seems impossible to conceive of this political action as the action of man. And thus, *to the extent that we conceive of labor as a human labor, we must conceive of words as the work of a superhuman artisan, working through a kind of craft that is essentially impossible for us to conceive.* Every theistic or deistic conception of God has at its origin the peculiar nature of the political action of language, and we can only begin to unravel this error, a sin no less against true religion than true science, through a proper understanding of the nature of language as a human artifact. Since anyone who reflect on their own cognition would soon realize that new, strange, unheard of words constantly move in and out of consciousness like insects beneath a lamp, it becomes necessary for theistically-oriented cultures to explain away this evidence of linguistic evolution. To this end, three concepts emerged; magic, prophesy, and babble. Unheard-of words were either forgotten formula with an efficacy beyond that of ordinary language, or were inserted into our minds by Gods. And if languages appear to be in constant evolution and to assume such a diversity of forms, it is only because God confused them and perhaps continues to do so, reducing man to a kind of babble, that they not understand each other, nor grow too mighty.

¹⁸ A more rigorous explanation for this phenomenon as we proceed.

Vestiges of this remain even in a more secular age --- above all in the absurd idea of a *Schriftsprache*, namely, that a cultivated language is fixed in its forms and vocabulary by past usage. Top-heavy in the worst way, for it is time itself that weighs on us when we submit living language to the tribunal of dead judges.

Here as everywhere, we must open our ears to the yet unheard. So let's begin.

*

Left unheard, above all, was the sonorous language of nature. While Herder showed that the language of man grew out of the language of animals, he did not go so far as to realize that even inorganic things speak through sounds. And while Walter Benjamin wagered the thought that language belongs to all things, and not merely by metaphor, he entrusted this language to God's creation. And so, in each case, sonority, the substance through which nature speaks, remained unexplored.

What we wish to show is how human speech evolved out of the sonorous language of nature, and thus, despite its unique structure, is itself but an expression this whole, just one of its possibilities.

If we start by conceiving sounds psychologically; are what are heard through human ears and brains, we have already strayed. For this makes it senseless to speak of sound but in relation to human beings; we have no access to the perception of other animals, or even other people, but can only speak through an analogy with our own experience, and since this experience is itself only available to us in its purity in the present moment, if at all, we are obliged to conceive all spoken language in terms of a solitary and momentary act of self-communication.¹⁹

¹⁹ Footnote: Derrida.

Sound, instead, must be conceived scientifically, as a fact about the natural world as it is in and of itself.²⁰ We do not, of course, intend to appropriate the terms of science with any sort of precision, but only through the roughest qualitative approximation --- what anyone should remember from high school, or could learn from an encyclopedia. Our wish is not to reach nature in its details, --- these, if they are not to be mere factoids have no life outside an abstract framework --- but to blast open cracks through the granite of ordinary language, and allow juices to begin to flow from one side to another as roots and veins grow through the fissures. These words are dynamite.²¹

To cite the online version of Encyclopedia Britannica, sound is “a mechanical disturbance from a state of equilibrium that propagates through an elastic material medium.” It continues; “A purely subjective definition of sound is also possible, as that which is perceived by the ear, but it is not particularly illuminating and is unduly restrictive, for it is useful to speak of sounds that cannot be heard by the human ear, such as those that are produced by dog whistles or by sonar equipment.” This disturbance and its propagation involves a vibration, which, elsewhere, is defined as a “periodic back-and-forth motion of the particles of an elastic body or medium, commonly resulting when almost any physical system is displaced from its equilibrium condition and allowed to respond to the forces that tend to restore equilibrium.” From these qualitative scientific

²⁰ This is not a confession to a “Realist” “Epistemology.” Since I do not ascribe to a referential theory of language. Nature, for us, means all that potentially encompassed in free political activity through a transaction with human language. “In and of itself,” simply means, in the manner of action that belong to it when it has not been obscured through the constructs of that ordinary language, with its specifically human terms of agency, imposes on things. Of course, we will never penetrate this dumb language completely, but to say that we cannot approach it through rigorous mathematical models and research technologies is absurd, a purely abstract, ideological claim, which flies in the face of the tremendous success that human beings have had in harnessing the activities of nature through the application of scientifically-informed theories. What could it possibly mean to deny the “objectivity” of scientific language when it is able to reach nature where it hides. Bacon, the founder of experimental method, understood this well when he quotes Herecleites. A map is accurate when it helps us get around; a scientific theory, likewise, when it orients us towards the way that nature acts.

descriptions, presented through a language whose meaning, indeed, could only be fully grasped through a rigorous method, we may glean several important points.

First, the more-or-less objective phenomenon of sound is not limited to the audible range of the human ear, or to a certain kind of material, but refers to any disturbance propagated between any “elastic material medium.” Elasticity is defined by the Encyclopedia as “the ability of a deformed material body to return to its original shape and size when the forces causing the deformation are removed.” Thus, it seems, an elastic material medium is simply one that is capable of vibrating. Second, sound involves a kind of communication; this is simply what it means to speak of the “propagation” or disturbance or vibration. This propagation is a form of radiation, and is subject to attenuation according to a mathematical law. The impedance of a material describes the ease with which a sound travels through a medium, the degree of the attenuation. Thirdly, sound always occurs in a medium; and since its propagation through a medium involves spreading a disturbance, it could be said, in this way, to bring about a communication among the parts of the medium. And finally, since sound begins with a disturbance of equilibrium, and end with a return to equilibrium, and since the strength of the disturbance is attenuated as it spreads; or indeed, very roughly speaking, it is through the propagation of the disturbance throughout the parts that equilibrium is restored to the whole, we may not only speak of sounds as necessarily transient, but as formally akin to steps. Every sound event involves the restoration of the possibility of another sound-event. A tuning-fork offers a simple example of this. Striking a tuning fork lightly will produce a more or less pure tone of its given frequency. Yet if we strike it again while it is sounding with an equal intensity, its tone will become distorted. Each

²¹ That no one understood this better than Nietzsche...

action of “ringing out,” in other words, returns it to a state where it be struck again with the maximum degree of force without distortion.

Applying these principles to our planet as an inorganic system, we begin to gain a sense for the first level of sonorousness. Just as the inorganic earth is the basis of the evolution of organic forms, it is from this language of sound that all other possibilities arise. Following the insights of modern science, the earth can be divided into several different layers; a solid inner core composed mostly of iron, a molten outer core, a lithosphere and outer crust, with a mosaic of plates, a large quantity of mostly liquid water, and an atmosphere consisting in a mixture of various gasses. Pressure increases towards the center, and decreases towards the outermost periphery of the atmosphere.

All of these layers interact dynamically, and in extraordinarily complicated ways; not just a “big rock,” the earth involves the complex interactions and circulations among many different substances --- it has its own language. Roughly speaking, however, we could speak of two kinds of communication; the circulation of particles, and the transmission of disturbances --- the one language we may call material, the other sonorous. Both of these are ways in which the earth as an inorganic system expresses itself, but there is a very essential difference, and one which might justify us in speaking, if only with a certain poetic license, of the latter as a higher form of expression of the former. For the former, we see, begins with a displacement from equilibrium, which is only rectified, if ever, through a higher level of organization, the level of the οἶκος. Of course, within such a system, every displacement is itself always a rectification; yet, still, with respect to a given part at a given moment, the action is remains one-sided. The latter, on the other hand, as we have already seen, begins with the return to equilibrium

after a disturbance; the communication of a disturbance is nothing but such counter-action. Instead of moving to another location, the parts of the system oscillate back and forth while retaining a relatively static relation to the other parts of the system, and in this respect, their action is circular in form rather than linear.

Sonorous communication is, in all its aspects, circular, radial --- radioactive. And because it does not produce the deformation of a system, but instead returns it to its equilibrium, it is able to bring the parts of a system into communication not only without disturbing the possibility of a new act of communication, but through its very restoration. Sounds, the events of sonorous communication, thus have an evolutionary trait. On the one hand, a stable equilibrium system, to the extent that it is subject to disturbance either through the commotion of its parts or through interaction with other systems, creates an environment in which sound is possible. On the other hand, however, sounds themselves create the possibility for such a stable equilibrium. One hand shakes the other.

Let us now apply this evolutionary concept of sonority to the earth as an inorganic system. Recall, to begin, that sound is dependent on a medium, each with different sound conducting possibilities. The interface of two different media creates an impedance mismatch, with the result that only part of the sound wave is transmitted from one medium to the other.²² In this way, then, each relatively discrete layer within the earth creates its own sound system, and as they disturb each other at their boundaries, and are even disturbed from without the stratosphere, through gravitational, material, thermal, radioactive, and sonorous forces, different sounds pass through them. Sounds, as it were, are the expression of the earth's stability as a dynamic system. Like all true expression, this happens *step-wise*, not by indicating a fact to something else, but by continually

restoring the very possibility that it gives voice to. Language is, in root, has nothing to do with words, or meanings, or signs, or any other such anthropomorphic residua. Rather, it is the *in-gathering of the potentials of a whole*.

Consider, then, our planet as the whole, in a form more or less like the present, with its various layers, everything in a constant motion and tumult, a precarious solidity to be found only in its core, its icy caps, and the thin crust which separates the mantle from the oceans and atmosphere. What sounds emerge? Without pursuing either comprehensiveness or detail --- speaking only roughly, that is to say --- we divide the earth's native sonorities according to the origin of the disturbances that is their cause.

The first of these are the chthonic sounds; those that arise from the actions and pressures of the outer core and mantle and that ultimately influence the outer crust and atmosphere through volcanoes, earthquakes. The vibrations produced by the sudden disruptions of the plates travel both within the earth and across the surface, or translated into tidal waves, traverse the ocean, and through their rumbling, they even sound into the atmosphere. Thus they communicate a material, elastic, relation throughout the whole earth; or indeed, they communicate this very wholeness. Strangely, then, while to the human being trying to make his stand in the world, the earthquake seems the most terrible disruption, it in fact expresses that most extraordinary fact that is the starting point of all life on this planet; namely, that things don't fall apart. Nothing is stronger proof of the fitness of the world for man, and of its coherence. If it appeared as a threat to this, and a challenge to reason, it is only because we fashioned God after ourselves, and saw his work as a handiwork rather than the craft of the whole of nature. Heard rightly, it is like a belly roar --- a sign of health and life.

²² That this principle is operative in the construction of musical instruments...

Secondly, we might speak of gravitational sounds, or, in other words, sounds that originate through the gravitational action of the moon and sun against the earth, and above all, the cycles of the tides. Thirdly, there are those that originate from the heating action of the sun against the earth's atmosphere and surface. And finally, there are sounds that arise when bodies from beyond the atmosphere collide with the earth.

With the exception of the last, all of these stand in a very close relation to the movement of the earth as an orbital body, and above all its diurnal rotation. And thus, in a way, they all reflect the cyclical patterns of movement that are among the most basic preconditions for life on this planet. Their periodicity, whether heard over the course of a day or through the seasons of the year, is lulling, for it reminds us of the recurring dynamic upon which our livelihood on earth depends. Meteors, however, open up the earth to far more precarious relation with the outside. It becomes possible for the earth to be acted on in a way that it cannot grapple with; that would permanently disturb its equilibrium. Indeed --- comets and meteors are heavenly messengers. But they no longer indicate anything beyond themselves, but simply express the possibility that threatens us through their orbit.

What these earthly sounds all share is their noisiness; since they reflect the earth's inordinately complex and dynamic details --- all the manifold interactions that take place throughout the whole --- they tend towards both randomness in their pattern and an extremely wide dispersion through the spectrum of tones. The rushing of water, and crashing of waves against the shore, the roar of thunder and wind, or the pattering of rain; all of these approach white noise. Since these sounds arise from disturbances, they could not possess any more order than the system of inorganic nature as a whole, and thus,

while a degree of regularity might be discovered through a perspective wide-enough to represent the circulative organization of an οἶκος over time, the sound itself will always express the relatively chaotic condition of the parts.

Contrast these, now, with the sounds of that are produced by the interaction of nature and organic life. The wind blows through reeds whistles; resonating at narrower range of frequencies, they radiate this tonal regularity out through the air. Or consider the chirping of insects. These seem to obey a regular cycle and rhythm. Listening to the sounds produced by inorganic phenomenon, the only order we observe is the tendency of similar sounds to follow in proximity to each other; the individual plops of rain on a puddle cluster around each other, as do claps of thunder, or even seismic disturbances, but the individual spacing between sounds does not seem to obey any predictable rule. Every instance surprises. And finally, with living animals we not only recognize repeated pattern, but even sense that the sound of one animal responds to another. A flock of geese flying over head seem to maintain a communication among each other, or the screeching of the prey follow the roar of the predator. In the case of human beings, both the sounds and their ordering seems to display a new order of complexity; we observe the same elements of sound being combined in ways that cannot be predicted and yet which seem, nevertheless, to answer to each other.²³

Nature's sounds, like its colors, are an evolved system; through the polemical interaction of species and individuals, with others and with nature, sounds emerge with ever greater clarity out of the white noise of nature, and also acquire more harmonic subtlety; they become both less random but more complex --- more ordered, in other

words. And at the same time, these sounds enter into more complex systems of interaction both with themselves and with other patterns of organic life.

Combining these different factors, we might produce the following list of the different natural systems of sonic communication;

- i) The simple propagation of a vibration through a medium following a disturbance.
- ii) Motion linked to a sensitivity to vibration.
- iii) Sensitivity to vibrations produced by the bodily movement of other organisms, either of the same or a different species.
- iv) Sensitivity of an organism to vibrations that are self-produced and reflected off the surroundings, reflecting its features and allowing for an appropriate motive response.
- v) Sensitivity to sounds that are produced by other organisms, of the same or a different species, and the ability to respond to these through movement or action.
- vi) Sensitivity to sounds that are produced by other organisms, of the same or a different species, with the ability to respond to these with the production of sound.
- vii) The ability to perceive patterned combinations of a fixed number of sonic elements produced through individuals of the same species, and either respond through an action, or through a pattern of sounds.
- viii) The ability to produce and respond to varied patterns of sound with varied patterns of sound, according to a determinable rule.
- ix) The ability to imitate an infinite range of sound patterns within a certain range of parameters.
- x) The ability to perceive an infinite number of possible combinations of a fixed set of sonic elements and respond accordingly with a combination that could not be fully determined according to a fixed rule.

²³ We speak here only of subjective phenomenon, but these same facts about our experience of sound could be given a precise mathematical formulation. It is a question simply of the degree of randomness. And it is

Considering these all together and applying our previous insights with a greater degree of generality, we might speak of an ever increasing degree of responsiveness. This should not be understood merely as a phenomenon that we observe through our senses, but as a more-or-less objectively accessible aspect of an organizational system. Nor is it limited merely to organic, let alone human languages, but rather, every sonorous language is responsive, to an extent. What responsiveness consists in, then, is simply a relation between parts that can be described through a law simpler than that which describes the organization as a whole. In this way, even acoustic waves involve a degree of responsiveness. This is what distinguishes them from purely chaotic phenomenon and allows their physical properties, the speed that a wave travels through a given element, the rate of attenuation, to be described with a high degree of accuracy through fairly simple models. The principles of refraction, reflection, diffraction, which describe how a wave communicates through a complex medium, are, in this way, aspects of the responsiveness that govern acoustic phenomenon. The individual droplets of rain emitted from a storm cloud, might be considered to a very high degree mutually irresponsive; they express the whole, rather the parts.

Applying the terminology from before, we could say that a responsive system is one in which each part, each partial action, describes a perspective that involves the possibility of the other parts. In other words, a system of interactions that obey a law, or better, express an organization, simpler than the whole to which it belongs (which may, itself be relative to another whole, and so forth). The greater the degree of

clear, furthermore, that the psychological of the mind, by and large reflects objective mathematical traits.

responsiveness, the more complicated the organization that is expressed through the parts. The simplest kind of pattern, then, is simply a more-or-less similar event that repeats at a more-or-less regular interval. A pulsar, for example, is an extraordinarily complicated phenomenon, but because of its regular cycle of rotation, it emits a beam of radiation that is perceivable to the astronomer's observational equipment with extreme regularity, thus generating a pattern that can be described through a simple mathematical equation. An earthworm is also quite sophisticated in its organization, and biologists still are far from being able to understand how the genomes of multi-cellular organisms explain its organization and activities. Yet its response to stimuli such as vibrations or mild electric shocks, while far more complicated than a simple rhythmic interval, nevertheless displays a high-degree of regularity. And finally, consider human language. No one could possibly begin to grasp all the subtleties of a single human brain, let alone of the totality of brains and bodies in their interaction with each other and with their natural environment. And yet human speech, while extraordinarily complex, nevertheless displays a great deal of regularity. This is apparent not only as a psychological fact --- for without this, how could we converse in any sort of coherent fashion --- but as an objective phenomenon. If individual sound patterns, for example, did not obey a high degree of regularity, it would be impossible for speech recognition software, which depends solely on mathematical models, to discern the individual syllables of human speech. Or if the grammar of individual languages, and of all human language in general, did not display organizational regularity, despite the infinite creativity that they allow, then the project of structural linguistics would be completely in vain, and would never have enjoyed the success that it has.

Thus understood, this concept of responsibility help explains what it means to speak of every organization as a political system. An organization is nothing else than a system of responsiveness, and thus it is political, since politics itself simply means the responsive interaction of the parts; politics is, in ground, ecological. In fact, all of these terms --- πολις, οικος, responsibility, organization, system, whole, circulation, amount to the same thing approached from a slightly different angle. Every formula identifying one with another is purely tautological, serving only to move us away from our workaday assumptions.

Free political action is nothing more than a peculiarly human form of the responsiveness of nature as a whole. This peculiar form of responsibility expresses itself in everything that human beings do *as human beings* --- in their work, their play, their body language, and their perceptions, their eating and shitting and breathing and sweating, their copulation and birthing, and their speech. Man's *sonorous language* is but one form of his responsibility --- it would be wrong to credit it with an absolute privilege. But nevertheless, through his sonority, he enters into an extremely wide commerce with nature, organic and inorganic, as with other humans. The earthquake resonates through the entire planet, bringing its parts into commotion, and so the far greater responsibility of man's *sonority* binds his activities to each other and to their environment, giving him his *soundness*, and entrusting him, the youngest of nature's offspring, with a *seniority* over his kin.

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The basis of this commerce, it would seem, is the human word, and thus the artifice of words an eminently human, responsible activity. Testifying to this is the wall that cinctures our thoughts and controls their passage to speech. To repeat a word in the earshot of others is create it anew, for no words exists but through its continued recreation, and it follows from the responsibility of this act that it must be subject to a tremendous amount of control.²⁴ All soundness of mind and sanity depends on this barrier, just as the health of the body depends on the cohesiveness of its skin.²⁵

But words are themselves just one part of our distinctly human *sonority*. Man's sonorous language doesn't exhaust itself in word-craft. Let us turn back to our list of evolved language forms. When we refer to man as ζοον λογικον (check), we place particular emphasis on the tenth characteristic; but in fact, man partakes of all these, and none may be regarded as either completely essential or completely inessential to his *sonority*. To these we might also add an eleventh; the play of instruments. Man's

²⁴ This control takes very different forms in different human political organizations. A meaningful approach to the question of "free speech" cannot treat it as a mere abstraction, as the right to say whatever one wants whenever one wants, but as an extraordinarily subtle political question. Speech is not an individual act but implies always not only a listener, but a larger community in which the words will resonate. As tricky and dangerous as this formulation may sound, and as leery as the author is of its potential for misinterpretation, the conclusion is inescapable; free speech is not a right of the individual, but the right of the community. This has two very clear consequences. First, a community has an absolute interest in forbidding forms of speech that threaten its very possibility of a community. If a real political community is able to forego enforcing this but when the threat represents a "real and present danger," this could only be either because it is sound enough to allow for a great degree of inner disturbance, and has developed a sufficient confidence in this soundness. This soundness can either represent the vitality of true political life within the community, or its complete ineffectualness. At the same time, though, a real political community also has an absolute interest in allowing for a transformative political discourse; a discourse which would increase its political vitality. And this requires not only that it be open to the exchange of politically significant (organizationally transforming) ideas, but that it consider the real distribution of speech-power. Not content merely with defending the right to speak in private, it must insure a fair and open public discourse. Simply put, and in terms every one may understand; money must be quieted, voices heard.

²⁵ This concept of madness is directly related to the madness of an *inhuman* world. For in such a world, crazy words enter into circulation. This is evident in both the language of advertising and Racism, both of

handiwork enables a new relation to sound, independent of his speech and yet no less unique in the animal kingdom. Perhaps its closest analogue is a gorilla beating his chest, transforming his entire body into a drum.

If we are to describe man's sonorous language as a whole, it must be in terms that encompass, and give room to, all of these. Not, in other words, through a single type of organization, but rather through the commerce of all the arrangements of sound that reach man, *and in the manner that they reach him*. For we can no longer speak of these sounds as purely objective phenomenon (mere vibrations), but as what we call, roughly speaking, *subjective*.

But what is the nature of this subjectivity, the conscious awareness? We must not think of subjectivity as a special sort of *thing*. As we have already seen, there are no things, only actions, only infinite detailed interactions. What we think of, ordinarily, as things are, in fact, merely perspectives on the actions of the whole. Or, in other words, responsibilities. And thus our subjectivity itself is merely a system of interactions, its unity is not logical, but circulative, economic.

Accordingly, the different forms of sound perception do not become subjective through some kind of special magical admixture, the metaphysical abstractum *par excellant* of consciousness, but rather through the very forms of responsibility they involve; through the way they are organized, and nothing more.

The sonorous language of man, in other words, is the gathering together of all the ways that *human* beings interact with sound. It is the communication *through man* of all the sounds that could act either towards or against, or in any way influence his actions.

which take what we might call "disposable thoughts" --- thoughts which express a reaction to the moment, but contradict the conditions of free political discourse --- and coin them in the iron of everyday life.

Nor are man's actions limited to what he perceives either as his own will-full act, or as the actions, willed or involuntary, of others. We are not interested in man primarily as a craftsman, good or ill, but, first of all, simply as a biological organism. Rather, they include all the physical interactions of his individual particles among themselves and with the outside world, the chemical processes within him, the actions of his musculature, the firing of the neurons in his brain and throughout his nervous system.

Not a single one of these systems of activity, we see, is completely incapable of interacting with man's sonorous language. Light striking our eyes allows for visual experiences that we then translate into speech. And sounds reaching us through the ears enter into complex relations both with our bodily movements and speech, and may even immediately effect bodily functions over which we normally have little or no control. Even ultra-violet radiation, beyond the scope of our vision, causes disruptions at a molecular level of our skin, provoking the production of pigment or causing skin cancer -- and in either case becoming subject to our words. And so too with the movement and feelings produced within our muscles or through our sense, or with the agents that affect our body chemistry. And finally, the firing of our neurons join together into mental events that strongly influence both our perceptions and our actions, and also guide the interaction of words and sound-patterns within our head, and indeed, when we dream, of all our sensory experiences.

Sonorous language allows for all these manner of action to interact, and thus it brings the world, as it reaches us through our senses, and through the interior of our body, into a commune with our own inner configuration. And indeed, if we extend *sonority* to include all forms of vibrations, including light and electro-magnetic radiation, as well as

the vibrations of particles, we might then conclude that, in this sense, all language, all interaction, is *sonorous* language; and that nothing exists outside of vibrating patterns. But such speculations do not concern us. All that is important, for our purposes, is that we begin to understand human sonorous language itself as the medium that allows for the broadest scope of interactions between different systems, within and without his body. Sonorous language is simply a *sound-stage*, where all of these different forms of action join together and relate to each other. It is not, indeed, the only forum where this is possible; a deaf person, for example, may develop a purely visual and motive intercourse. And everyone may act without the mediation of word-formed thoughts or sounds. Yet for most people, most of the time, sound provides the most versatile go-between among all the different systems, and thus provides insight into the nature of consciousness as a whole, which is itself nothing else than the totality of fields of convergence and interaction.²⁶

²⁶ What I am getting at, here, is an account of consciousness that is radically functionalist, and yet should put to rest the entire question of reductionism. There is no essential difference between the actions possible through consciousness as a whole (free will, creativity, language usage, and so forth) and the individual actions (neurons firing, cellular functions, molecular and submolecular processes) that compose a given individual, or the actions of nature as a whole. The very concept of action and evolution forbids such an essential differentiation; in essence, there is no essence. But one system of action can never be reduced another, since its form of action consists in an organizational structure that, precisely because it works, is the kind of action that it is, through its organization, could never be expressed through a different kind of organization. All action is perspectival, and all perspectives active; and perspectives are irreducible by definition. Consciousness, then, might be thought of as an organizing perspective that emerges out of all the actions of the body, and allows for certain forms of interaction, and also exerts a more positive pressure in some case, actually guiding the interaction. It is, as it were, the simplest expression of the unity between complex, and non-hierarchically arranged, systems. If we follow this line of reasoning, there need not be anything mystifying about the concept of free will. If a series of organizations are not arranged in a clear hierarchy, but, as it were, stand in a circle, it is necessary for their interaction to assume a free form. Free will, is itself, in other words, but one form of free political activity; the former should be understood through the latter, and not visa-versa. But what do we do with that sense we have of being aware of these things. This is the most difficult and obscure aspect of the philosophy of the mind, and one where I believe my approach will prove most illuminating. For once we realize that there could be no simpler freely interactive organization of the different converging systems than precisely this felt experience of being aware of things in relationship to themselves, to our body and its sensations, and to our thoughts, then the veils of mystery begin to dissipate. Just think of it this way; how else could all our different forms of experience be present to ourselves such that we could act the way we do than in the form of consciousness that we are aware of. This is not merely a vague psychological intuition, but suggests what may, one day,

To understand man's sonorous language is to realize that it stands in an extraordinarily complex relation to what we might, roughly speaking, call the individuality of human consciousness. Individuality is not the same as subjectivity; whereas subjectivity refers to the extent to which physical events are organized biologically, and thus may operate at the level of an individual organism, species, or across several species, individuality, on the other hand, indicates the centralization of an organization around a specific body and nervous system. Since this body is a real system, individuality means nothing less than reality, non-ideality. An action is experienced individually to the extent that it remains resistant to ideality. The real expression of ideality is memorability; an event of a given level of complexity is memorable within a given real system to the extent that it can be repeated, thus passing into ideality.²⁷ We already spoke of the word, in its ideality, as a trans-individual, though, --- as we now see --- nevertheless subjective, phenomenon. Yet to the extent that sonorous language is more than just word-language, we must make out, if only roughly,

be understood mathematically; that human awareness is the simplest mathematical model for the organization that emerges out of the confluence of inputs and outputs of all the complex systems of the mind.

²⁷ This ideality can take many forms; there is ideality of the muscles, called muscle memory by dancers and athletes, involving the ability of the muscles to return to certain configuration, without specific conscious volition. There is also a ideality of feelings which occurs through the repetition of the more-or-less similar sensations, and which, for the most part, depends on recurrence of similar states within the body and similar situations in relation the outside. There is also an ideality of perceived colors, which depends on the stability of our visual apparatus and the repetition of certain configurations within our perceived environment. But there is also a voluntary and involuntary occurrence of mental events that no longer have a direct relation to our bodily experience, but seem to come and go on their own, and which, at most, are motivated by other events, but where a clear relation of causality --- responsibility, in other words, --- is not forthcoming, almost as if they resulted from a general mental discombobulation or commotion, but not from anything specific action that took place. These may involve sounds, colors, feelings, pains, words, word-strings, ideas, or even inarticulate thought-sensations. Finally, we since memory refers to a real system in general, and not specifically the human body, the term may be applied to larger political institutions --- one may speak of a historical memory that is not concentrated in any individual or text but only involves through the intercourse of individuals ---, and indeed to any kind of organization. A rotating body may be assigned a very simple kind of memory and ideality, just as a far more complicated sort might be said to belong to a complex ecological system, with its recurrent cycles and complex equilibrium, or even a species as a system of genetic materials.

the different degrees of individuality or privacy. Or in other words, we must try to conceive human *sonority* as a gradual transition from reality to ideality.

Our sonorous experience as such consists of three components; hearing, sound-memory, and vocalization. While we can respond directly to sounds with bodily motions, or to visual, tactile, olfactory, or gustative sensations through sounds, the interaction of these three specifically sonic systems of action allows for auditory events that are perceived in nature, and that may or may not repeat themselves in their real context, to acquire a higher degree of ideality, no longer bound to specific real conditions of interaction between man and his environment, but either taking on a life of their own within his memory (the individual, real form of consciousness in its ideal extension), or exchanged as a kind of common currency. According to this three fold distinction, we can produce the following list of the different levels of ideality within human language.

- i) sounds from nature (or the human body) we hear without retaining in memory. For example; noise in the back-round that is effectively filtered out.
- ii) sounds that we here, and to a degree retain in our memory, but which we cannot even approximately render through our vocal facility. (One might argue whether a category exists --- but we can at least allow it as a hypothetical category.)
- iii) sounds that are not fully articulate, to a degree conventional though with extreme individual variations, and which most people have a command over (cries, screams, laughter, pouting, and so forth)
- iv) sounds that we hear and can approximately imitate with our vocal facilities, producing a sound that can then be approximately imitated by another.
- v) sounds that approximate phonemes or strings of phonemes, but involve an accentuated length and an extreme extension of the mouth. (“ooh”, “ah” and so forth)²⁸
- vi) a system of phonemes that can be strung together according to certain rules.
- vii) words; a set of distinct combinations of phonemes.

²⁸ Often very subtle difference come into play in actual interaction. Consider the difference between “hearty laughter” and “belly laughter” --- laughter that is genuine, welling up from inside --- and “Ha Ha” laughter intended either sarcastically or meanly, and all the minute gradations that lie in between.

We will stop with words, since these involve, for reasons that we have already suggested, the highest degree of ideality. But we might also mention several other systems which are less directly relevant to our purposes, and don't stand in any clear relation to the given ordering, but nevertheless are important aspects of man's sonorous language as a whole. These include;

- a) Sounds created through musical instruments.
- b) Sounds created through a special vocal facility in imitation of noises made by animals.
- c) Sounds created through recording media.
- d) Singing.

Returning to the first list, we must mention, to begin, that we do not wish to suggest that human word-language originates with the imitation of the sounds of nature. This might or might be true; but whatever the case may be, it involves a kind of empirical claim that lies completely outside our intentions. When we speak of evolution, here as always, we refer not to the real genesis of one form out of another, but rather of a progression of increasing ideality. Thus, if we speak of approximation and imitation of noises and sounds from the outside, we mean nothing more than an ideal potential that is contained within the innate faculties of our sonorous language. Imitation, as we understand, involves either a mental act or physical act that expresses, to some degree, the pattern of a sonic event that reaches us through our sense. Strictly speaking, one cannot speak of a true or false here, but only of degree, although it stands to reason that, since aural perception involves innate capacities for pattern recognition, we readily grasp some imitations as correct, and others as incorrect.

The imitation of nature, in other words, interests us not as an event in the natural history of speech acquisition, but rather as an ideal possibility of non-private, vocalized,

communication. Leaving aside the nature of aural perception, the real condition of this ideal possibility is the simple fact that the mouth and nature share the same acoustic medium and the same basic laws of physics. Our voice box partakes in some, though not all, of the processes that are at work in both inorganic and organic nature; it involves the disruption of the flow of a gas through a resonating object, causing vibration at a certain frequency, the passage of air through a cavity articulated into various shapes, and the contact of hard and moist surfaces. For this reason, we often find that the same word applies to both human and natural noises; the wind and the mouth both blow, the reeds and the lips whistle, the lips and air-filled sacks pop, teeth and hard objects grind and chatter, the throat and a stream bed gurgle, and man and the sea alike roar. Human vocalization, in this sense, is an imperfect microcosm, just as was the body in relation to the activities of nature. It is able to repeat, in miniature, some of the sonic events of the world around us, and in this way --- and this is the important point --- brings them into new kinds of circulations. Often, for example, we see people almost instinctively imitating natural sounds, and deriving a great deal of pleasure doing so. They echo thunder claps, and bark back at dogs, meow at their cats, moo at cows, hiss at snakes, even beep at automobiles, as if they had to answer nature back at every turn.

The approximation of natural sounds and noises tends to involve extreme actions of our vocal capacities; it is necessary, above all, to create an effect of distortion, approaching, in this way, the more chaotic generation of sound patterns. Or, in some cases, it is necessary to create volume through the physical action of the articulators, rather than by the strength of one breath and the resonance of the body cavity. As a result, it temporally places it in a condition where it is impossible to realize other

potentials. Between one action and another, a transitional period is necessary. And while this may be only amount to a second, or a fraction thereof, it is long enough to render a flowing, fluent chain of sounds impossible.

Because, in this way, these extreme actions remain simple, unable to combine either simultaneously or consecutively, they represent the fewest, most elemental possibilities of human vocalization, and each appears, as it were, as a single event, unable to join with its fellows into more complex organizations. While each may be infinitely varied, these variations will tend to reflect to unique qualities of a particular occurrence. This, in turn, may be imitated by another, and so forth, but it remains unlikely that any such sound would attain the degree of ideality necessary for it to become a recurrent feature of political life. Rather, each, like the natural events they approximate, are given over to the moment from which they arose, with the language they invoke tending towards a simple binary responsiveness.

What we ordinarily think of as human speech, in contrast, consists not in mere isolated tones and their echoing, but of a complex and infinitely varied, but nevertheless patterned, and not merely random, enchainment of sounds. Even if we had no access to the meaning of words, and could only parse the sounds we hear into recurrent patterns, we would nevertheless discover an organizational system of a new order of complexity. To begin, we discern a fairly limited set of more-or-less similar sounds that combine with each other in a series, and with a certain regularity determining individual combinations; not every sound pattern is followed by every other, but each seems to impose certain restrictions on its subsequent combination.²⁹ And these sounds themselves, we would then

²⁹ We are speaking roughly here. According to the principles of contemporary Linguistic theory, a phoneme is not given a purely phonetic definition, but is defined as the smallest lexically significant unit of

notice, appear in a far larger set of recurring clusters, and these, in turn, display new regularities in their sequential ordering.

So it strikes us; speech is a dance; a fluid, linked passage through a series of sounds, circling from like to like through an entire range of possibilities, and describing new forms of patterns at ever higher levels, thus bringing the most basic elements into a system of circulation. Within each clause, nouns, pronouns, and adverbs tend to congregate around verbs, articles and adjectives around nouns, and adverbs around adjectives. Or in a language where the grammar is determined more by morphology, recurrent patterns emerge among the different forms of a given words, and within a given clause, we often notice the repetition of the same morphological index.

This dance does not spring from nowhere, but like every ballet, orbits around the body and its specific potentials. If it is possible for these sounds to enter into such fluent commerce, endowing speech with a high degree of ideality, it could only because the mouth, in the act of vocalizing, allows for their enchainment. Or rather, the extreme actions of before must be mollified into gentler sounds, passing one to the other without the interruption of transitional moments. Its elemental sounds become steps, movements towards a new set of possibilities. Fluency in speech and dance alike forbid that one break off the series of movements in order to regain one's composure. A phoneme is not simply a sonic event, nor an abstract representation of the most basic set of linked characteristics that differentiate words, but an action that continually restores the mouth to a physical state in which new actions are possible. Speech, we might even wager, is

speech. This means, in other words, that two sounds (phones) are to be distinguished as different phonemes if and only if they actually serve to distinguish one word from another. Each phoneme includes different allophones --- individual representations of a single phoneme determined by their context in relation to

not so much the movement of the mouth as its continuity. Left to its own, the muscles of the mouth are subject to disturbances, jerking wide open into a yawn, gnashing the teeth together, flapping the tongue about --- all the actions, in other words, that serve its first and most basic task, the consumption of food. Talking brings these into a more graceful circulation; it is, as it were, the first step towards its quiescence, towards keeping one's mouth shut.

The fluent language of the body, as we saw, expresses the preservation of our center of gravity. The fluidity of speech, in contrast, requires not only a smooth linking of the movements of the articulators --- the organs that change the shape of the vocal cavity --- but also a continuous flow of air resonating at a certain frequency.³⁰ Contoured into vowels through the shape of the mouth and lips and throat, or into fricatives through an interference produced by the friction of air passing over the mouth opening, or into nasals, or even briefly interrupted through the popping sound of plosives, the breath is the element through which sounds join together into a single stream. Thus, the flowing, continuous breath is the medium through which the extreme elements of nature, expressed through the imperfect microcosm of human vocalization, enter into a new kind of flowing circulation; it is the stream where nature's sounds eddy. Breath in this respect is analogous, above all, to the liquid and oily media of painting; and the communion of nature's colors in painting to that of its sounds in speech. If before they had known only

other sounds (in English, for example, the aspirated and non-aspirated P sounds) --- and also allows for free variation.

³⁰ Compare with Lucretius, p. 194: "These voices, therefore, when from deep within
Our frame we drive them forth, and send them on
Straight through the gateway of the mouth, forthwith
The nimble tongue, artificer of words,
Doth shape apart, and in their turn the lips
By molding give them form."

strife, meeting only through the altercation of partial perspectives, now they touch peacefully; they are at ease.

Dance, as we saw, cultivates the movements of the body, and classical ballet, in turn, creates a fluent and expressive system of somatic language. In quite a similar fashion, singing and operatic technique develop vocalization towards the fluid intercourse between an ever increasing scope of actions. Through great coordination of the lungs, larynx, the cavities of the chest and head, and the tongue and other articulators, it becomes possible not only to far extend the tonal range and volume, but also achieve nuances of timbre and expression unknown to the spoken voice. At the heart of this is the control of the breath.³¹ Through a rigorously cultivated technique, it becomes possible to sustain a fluent continuity of notes for so long that the function of respiration itself seems without bearing; the breath seems to come free of the body, becoming, as it were, purely spiritual. Just as the dancer, through the proper understanding of gravity, looses its tether, the operatic singer gets such a hold on his breath that he no longer has to catch it.

Opera and ballet, however, differ in one crucial respect. Whether singing began with speech, or speech with singer, they remain always at cross-purposes. The phonemes of speech lie in a narrower circulation, and as the expressive range of the voice is expanded and its actions brought towards the periphery, the articulation of sounds into syllables is obscured to the point of incomprehensibility. At the same time, the increased volume and continuity of breath either forbids or overwhelming the plosives and fricatives. Dance, in contrast, does not know of any such conflict; the maximum expressiveness is realized at its periphery, through both an increase in the lyrical subtlety

of movements, and the range of its vocabulary. It does not collude with words only to betray their trust in the end, but approaches them with the quite cultivation of sure-footedness.

All of this is an aside, though. For now, let us return to the thrust of our argument. Every spoken natural language, modern linguistics suggests, involves a set of phonemes with combinatorial rules functionally discrete from the words that they compose. Thus we are able to recognize a nonsensical combination of phonemes as nevertheless a possible word in our language, not through some vague sort of family resemblance, but according to a rule that is acquired along with all the other parametric conditions of our native tongue. At the basis of each language, in other words, is its own unique dance of phonemes. Following our evolutionary method, we could say that these individual phonemes survive only in cahoots with their fellows; their mutual commerce provides a mutual environment. These could then play into each other into an infinity of combinations without ever assembling together into recurrent words. Each new group of sounds would seem like a word, but repeating only haphazardly if ever, it would dissipate in the instant, a wave crashing on the beach. The action of language, like that of inorganic nature, would remain cataclysmic.

How do phonemes become words? How do they acquire the ideality that belongs to spoken language as a language of words, and involves, at minimum, the regular appearance of a limited set of phoneme-chains? The first answer is simple, and tautological --- they just need to be repeated, over and over. Such a chance recurrence, however, is in and of itself extraordinary unlikely, and also defies our experience of human language. As our method thus dictates, we must explain an individual set of

³¹ {As the Italians say, "he who knows how to breathe can sing."}

phonemes is able itself to survive --- not, of course, referring to some kind of will on its part, but merely to the *natural* conditions of survival that its very existence, once we have wholly banished the last vestiges of creationism, implies. To say that this happens because “people use language,” the response that guides the pragmatic approach, is to beg the question. For as we have already seen, people, as practical agents, are but one rather limited perspective on the particularly human forms of political agency invoked through verbal and somatic language.

Instead, developing our earlier remarks with greater tenacity, we must begin to explain how words themselves gain the particular form of responsibility that is the groundwork for all free, human, political life. Before we listed some of the different organizations that give a home to words. Now we might speak more generally, and say that, in every case, every word-event --- meaning, simply, the regular recurrence of a set of phonemes --- requires the regular recurrence of some other activity. This is not to suggest any sort of relation of direct causality. It is not as if one pattern were persistently provoked by another pattern by a crass empirical determinism of the speaking individual, but rather that every pattern develops in, and as, a responsiveness to other patterns. To speak here of simple causality would be to make human beings no more complicated than the swirling eddies which form of the surface of a stream --- which is already far too complicated a process to be fully comprehended by existing mathematical models. Nor do we wish to suggest that the patterns of language *refer to* or *depict* recurrent structure out in the world; this may be true to a very limited degree --- few things, at least in philosophy, are ever completely false. But the impression of referentiality is only a consequence of a far more complicated, subtle, interaction. In short, we have no

pretensions of giving any explanation about *how* the pattern of a word became interlaced with an outside, but merely wish, on the one hand, to insist on the necessity of such an interweaving, and on the other hand, take the first steps towards a fuller picture.

Relevant to our present purpose, in fact, is two consequences of such a conception of verbal language.

On the one hand, it suggests that words only *gain their ideality as words* through a certain affiliation with other circulations of parts, other perspectives. The entire system of human language would build itself up out of such affiliations, working its way into the processes of the human mind, conscious and unconscious, bodily feelings and motions, sensual perceptions, as well as into the circulations of nature that present themselves to us through our mind and body and the political life as a whole that binds us with ourselves and with nature, as well as through the languages, verbal and somatic, with which this is stitched together. These circulations, as we already suggested, may be thought of as partial perspectives on the whole of nature. When a perspective is concentrated enough, when the possibilities it expresses enter into a dense reciprocal relationship, it provides a good home for nouns --- pronouns at the lower limit, and proper nouns at the upper. A noun thus comes to express an interrelated set of actions; and tends, in this way, to become the center of the orbit of verbs and other semantic elements.

It is this, above all, that prompts the explicit belief that we live in a world of things, or, to put it more precisely, allows for a perspective on political agency to arise that conceives of this primarily as the interaction of human beings --- man-things --- with the other kinds of things of the world, thus in the end leading to the isolation of politics and nature. Before such a politics can emerge, the language of words must have already

become a language of things, primarily nominal in its orientation; it must begin to function as if it were primarily governed by the interrelation of things, isolatable and unitary forces within a system of interaction. Perhaps the beliefs in magic and animism reflect this condition no less than Aristotle's *Ontology* or the tenets of modern Analytic philosophy. In any case, though, it is not a question of either diagnosing or lamenting some misstep in the history of human culture or philosophy, but of understanding the self-contradictory nature of ideality of word languages. Namely, that words tend to gain their ideality by congregating around what we might call realities, real natural organizations.

On the other hand, while words might only gain their ideality by themselves circulating through the circulations of the reality with which human beings, as political agents, interact, no word, in the end, could ever be absolutely constrained to a limited set of relations.³² Since words only gain their ideality through specific interactions, possessing their ideality, as it were, as a movement conferred on them by repeatedly cycling through the same orbit, --- since, as it were, words possess no momentum in and of themselves but only through a trajectory that tends towards its repetition, every word would possess, as its outermost potential, an absolute ideality. Born into rootlessness and exile from the moment it was spoken, it remains always a vagrant, a wanderer, able to enter into every orbit, join relations with any other sort of word or activity, and make and quit any company as it pleases. This is not to be confused with the claim that language is purely a social construct, or any of the forms of linguistic empiricism to which the arguments of Chomsky have already yielded a fatal blow; the orbits of ordinary language may be rooted in the *a priori* operations of the mind, or even some sort of *Universal*

Grammar, or they may represent facts so basic to the construction of a particular language as to resist all change. Rather, it is a fact about words considered simply as artifacts, in their outermost political potential. Considered as a combination of phonemes that pop almost effortlessly into existence, and know no other continuity than their regular repetition, there is nothing that could limit or constrain them in any way, or, for that matter, insure their survival. They are weightless, their craft is effortless, and their very ease makes them the most precarious of actions. In and of themselves, they possess nothing that would weigh them down to the world of things.

Ordinary language is simply the sum total of all the semantic representations that words enter into through such orbits; in the past, present, future, and in every existing or even merely possible language. To differentiate *a priori* between possible and impossible meanings, or explain meaning through a specific sort of relation between specific sorts of entities, is to explain ordinary language through the mechanisms of institutional language, as if one were to expect its phenomenon to justify themselves with a sort of clarity that belongs only to artificial, contrived systems. And semantics, this suggests, is not ever simply a property of words, nor of *things* outside of words, but belongs to the extraordinary complex system of interactions that constitutes nature as a whole, and that converges in *human*, though not merely *individual*, consciousness. Words only provide a particularly fluid interaction between the interactions that they themselves participate in -- they allow these patterns of interactions to enter into new kinds of relations. Ideality is

³² Quote the passage from Quine (as cited in Michael Friedman's article.)

not opposed to reality, but merely an offshoot; a new system of organization, a new mode of responsibility.³³

Or in other words; we should not think of the semantics of ordinary language as an offshoot of everyday life and its *forms of life*, as if it were somehow produced as a tool to allow people to interact, and as if its usage were at once limited and justified in this way. No; ordinary language is itself the gravitation of words away from the purity of ideality, and towards its domestication to a narrower οἶκος, a narrower expression of nature of the system of all life. Each word, we might imagine, is like a steel ball set in perpetual lateral motion around the edge of a bowl infinitely subtle in its contours and with innumerable worm-holes leading from one place to another; as it slowly descends, its fall moderated by the centrifugal force born of its motion, it enters into every narrower circulations, changing from one region to another, until, perhaps, it ends up back at the edge.

Yet, as we see, this ideality is not simple, but two-fold. Ordinary language hangs between two poles; the commerce between a set of phonemes in fluid communication, on the one hand, and the absolute semantic openness of every word. As they are born into their everyday existence as the expression of a narrower set of semantic possibility, words also fix the phonetic sounds, microcosmic expressions of the sounds of nature, into a *working* configuration. No longer gushing into myriad couplings like water from a

³³ We must reject the notion that thinking is either necessarily bound to words or to individual conscious acts. Thinking is simply an ideal communication, and all animals (as well as computers) can be said to think to the degree that they respond translate real events into cognitive patterns that in turn motivate a response. Words are simply a medium in which this ideality expresses itself in a way that gives it greater mobility, allowing it to communicate across time (memory) and among individual minds. And thus, to the extent that thinking becomes verbal, its ideality is no longer confined to individual minds, and it itself becomes the shared activity of a wider community. Yet even here there is no essential difference between the communicative forms of other animals and the language of man; only a continuum of degrees of ideality (and not necessarily coinciding with the real evolution of species).

fountain, the sounds repeat with a regularity that reflects the regularity of the meaning; they become what someday will be thought of as a mere “phonetic representation” corresponding to a meaning. Their own specific vitality, --- their own two-fold ideal organization --- is obscured.

This ideal organization, like the world of colors, is peaceful. Sounds couple together freely, not in a Dionysian frenzy, as if all vitality were to be compressed in a single moment, but with the ease and grace of a *Kettentanz*. Words open towards infinity, but free of all the pomp and grandeur that, through sheer self-importance, lays its claim on the absolute. Crossing in and out of every partial perspective like a needle drawn through folds of fabric, they stitch through life at every point, and with the slightest tug everything curves back together into a single knot.

With the slightest tug; for like the world of colors, its own ideality remains yet unheard and unseen; it still awaits its realization.

This is the task of all *extraordinary human language*, but above all, of poetry.

*

Poetry is both a work and performance, and just as all art is at once both the spectacle of nature and the labor of man, these two moments of poetry, existing as they do as separate moments, must both divide into two convergent forms of activity. Spectacle belongs equally to both performance and fine artisanship, and at its artistic height --- one thinks, above all, of the *Ballet Russe* of Diaghelev --- dance, music, painting, and all sorts of crafts, join hands and share in the applause.³⁴

Poetry is, at heart, a word-craft, and all word-craft begins with a form of artisanship that is effortless and purposeless and yet still human --- and that involves, as it

were, the farthest extension of our political agency. Thus the opposition between man's activities and nature's is different than in painting and the other *handicrafts*. These are, to begin with, ever mindful of their end, and only overcome the constraints of their purpose, converging with the spectacle of curves and colors that takes place through their medium, by cultivating a rigorous method. Poetry, in contrast, grows only gradually towards an explicit distinction between the two forms of activity; only in the fullness of time does their differentiation become a guide to method.³⁵ And so too with the contrast between the work and the performance --- while this belongs to the ideality of words as such, it is at first concealed in the activity of the poet.

To comprehend how poetry realizes the ideality of language, let us begin by asking three questions. How do poems evolve from the medium of ordinary language? How does this effortless and end-less artisanship become laborious? And, at last, how does the work become a performance?

*

Let us approach the first question. Till now we have spoken mainly of the evolution of words and their semantic possibilities, perhaps giving rise to the impression that ordinary language is simply a collection of words. Yet, as should already be evident, words never exist singly, but only in sentences, paragraphs, conversations, harangues, diatribes, and even just in private thoughts. They live in relation to each other and to speakers in a community and in a world. Thus, if we speak of ordinary language as the environment for workaday words, we must include grammar as well as decorum. At the same time, if ordinary language involves the transformation from the pure ideality of

³⁴ Even the making of a tutu, for example, requires great labor. {Perhaps a citation}

³⁵ Footnote on the strange relation between representational poetry and representational painting.

words to a more constrained ideality, this must be thought of as a free activity, guided by past usages, but essentially unconstrained, an unfathomable wellspring of ever new combinations of words. That either a group of words, or a pattern through which words are connected, would itself gel together into a combination that repeats itself ever anew, becoming part and parcel to the workaday commerce of words, is, itself, an amazing event. It represents a new artifact of language, a new form of ideality, and the basis of a new sort of human politics. Since the order of ordinary language is the free combination of repeated elements, such an event is, simply, extraordinary.

We will refer to these repeated word-combinations and patterns as *sayings*, understanding by this not only pithy expressions of encrusted common sense, but any *way of speaking* that lodges itself in a community of speakers. These are many and diverse. It is important that we speak at once both of word-groupings and grouping-patterns, since the two are quite closely related, not only in their genesis, but in their ideality. Each, as it were, provides the niche for the other.

A. Connections of Words.

i. social orientations.

- a. names.
 - α . names of family member.
 - β . proper names.
- b. specialization of labor, social divisions, age categories.
- c. moral qualities and epithets.
- d. words that establish relations: swears, promises, vows, coronation formula.
- e. insults.

ii. natural orientations.

- a. descriptions of the relations of spiritual beings, forces.
- b. descriptions of the relations of things that we interact with through techniques.
 - α . animals and plants.
 - β . orientations in space.
 - γ . orientations in time.
 - δ . causal sequences.
 - ϵ . geometric relations.
 - ζ . algebraic sequences
 - η . animals and natural
 - θ . tools.
 - ι . consumable goods.
 - κ . shelters.
 - λ . clothing.
 - μ . ritual objects.
 - ν . sounds.
 - ξ . colors
 - \omicron . meteorological events.
 - π . features of the natural landscape.
 - ρ . distinctions of natural materials.
 - σ . language.

iii. political orientations (joining together social relations and natural relations)

The connection of words in relation to the connection of events

- α . common sense wisdom and sentential.
- β . modes of argumentation.
- γ . story telling and narration--- sacred and profane.
- δ . jokes.
- ϵ . tropes.

B. Connections of Sounds.

i. according to the sounds of phonemes.

α. onomatopoetic word combinations.

β. rhymes.

γ. melody,

δ. puns.

ε. diminutives.

ii. according to metrical schemes.

iii. in relation to the speaker as speaker.

tongue twisters.

iv. in relation to nature.

spells and incantations.

This list is neither decisive nor complete; these are not meant as categories that would exhaustively cover the phenomena in question, allowing them to be grouped after their place in the order of things, but only as land-markers, guides that help us find our way across the rough terrain of language. In this sense, all we wish to do is display a work that has already been done. These designations themselves could have only evolved in circulation with a set of terms that have entered into a nearer relation to teach other, and thus they already express man's efforts to orient himself within the ever-evolving medium of language. And indeed, some of these *sayings* may have originally been united, or stood in a very near relationship to one another. In a totemic religion, for example, animals are brought into familiar relations with communities and individuals. And proper names may have reflected the division of labor or even more fluid social groupings, changing over the course of a persons life, or as they entered into new sets of relationships. Or in an animistic culture, practically everything appears as a spiritual force. Human activities that we nowadays think of a mere techniques may also have a

ritual function, entering into an immanent relation to spiritual forces. Furthermore, though, many of these functions may come to combine together, if they were not so originally; rhythmic patterns of words and melodies the most obvious example.

Considering all these together, however, we might draw a rather fundamental distinction. Some, it seems, are far more *crafty* --- oriented more directly towards political interaction in the broadest sense, between human beings and with nature as a whole. Others, more *playful*. And in the general, the *sayings* listed under *A* tend towards the former, and those listed under *B* towards the latter, though at the same time *A iii* and *B iv* both appear to include more transitional forms. That it should turn out this way follows from the nature of ordinary language. While the words of ordinary language acquire their meaning by circulating around narrower perspective, they remain, as sounds, close kin to the pure ideality of phonemes. The playful interaction of meanings stands at a farther remove from ordinary language, and requires relatively involved and belabored forms, such as story-telling. But as phonetic combinations, words contain an almost irrepressible, explosive ideal potency; they are always able to burst into puns or alliterations or rhyme --- and of a sudden they simply sound, and sound simple. Before they needed two feet to stand in the world, but now, relieved from the graveness of things, they throw up their leg and their toes point obliquely at the ground... and they spin; a pirouette, that *spots* the world.

All of these *sayings* are extraordinary, and all look askance at the graveness of ordinary language, tending towards a pure ideality of meanings and sounds. The difference between the crafty and the playful rests only in the time and labor needed for spiritual effluvium of language to evaporate off from its particular concentrations. Puns

and jokes are like flashes of heat against a droplet of water; story telling, speechifying, and argumentation a more tedious distillation.

The various genre of human language stitch together these different *sayings*, and in this way move towards the truly extraordinary --- the fluid interaction of all words, and in every language. This need not ever appear as anyone's explicit goal, and yet it emerges as the common tendency of all their labors; as when the snow on a high peak melts away under the breath of all-promising spring, and gathers into the little rivulets that, forcing their passage through the beds of snow and ice, resurface into streams and, converging like the branches of a tree as they gather strength and weave between the mountain's shoulders, wend their way to the valley and to the coast, and empty into the lakes and seas and oceans, where, among their fellows, they await the rays of a rejuvenated sun, and, born up towards the heavens, enjoy at last their freest intercourse.

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First and foremost among these genre --- we will name and arrange them in due time --- is poetry. It earns its rank not as the noblest, nor as a work of genius, but simply on account of its ideality. For not only does it contain the possibilities of all the other modes of language that have been *worked out*, but, as we shall see, also provides a real moment of transition.

The different *sayings* that we mentioned all flow together in the course of workaday life. Their combinations thus realize a degree of organization and ideality, and yet, nevertheless, they remain joined to a context, a real arrangement of activities outside of language itself. This does not mean, as some would propose, that their significance is exhausted in the arrangement of phenomena beyond *mere words*, or that the mere playful

fusion of words should be treated as derivative or parasitic; only that more complicated confluences of saying *seldom appear* and reappear without finding some kind of environment in extraneous modes of activity. The most idle, empty talk, in this way, tends also towards the most *mundane*; it circumambulates around either the earth's meteorological peregrinations, the activity of nature that most nearly touches us, or around the private lives of *other people*.

Talking about the weather, and gossip, are, as it were, the playful limits of workaday language, which, even here, is always *about* something.³⁶ But because they emerge effortlessly whenever people's intercourse is not focused around a specific activity, they are also the most ordinary, and common --- the white noise of daily life. Poetry, in contrast, is *seldom, rare* --- and if it earns its name and its keep, precious. For to begin, let us define poetry negatively, and in contrast to the ideality of workaday of language.³⁷ It is simply the *potential* for an *occasionless*, though not necessarily *unoccasioned*, fusion of sayings. Of sayings, we stress, and not simply of words. The free fusion of words --- rhyme and meter, jokes, puns, --- belongs among the different sayings, and, in and of themselves, would produce only random, sporadic linkages. As such, it could not explain how an extremely long chain of words --- tens of thousands --- is able to repeat itself outside of the context of its provenance. But this is precisely what we must be able to explain; this, simply put, is the particular ideality of poetry, which can practically be observed when we consider the after-life of the great works of lyric, epic, and drama.³⁸

³⁶ Footnote, *Sein und Zeit*.

³⁷ We must vigorously disagree with the claim that poetry came before more prosaic forms of speech...

³⁸ Footnote, Benjamin on the *Nachleben*.

Regarding poetry in its proper mode of ideality, or rather, and better, simply as this ideality, we see, first of all, that poetry allows for all of the different *sayings* to come together. Man's activity is, as we have seen, bound up with his body and its limitations; the body only touches against nature and other bodies through a narrow perspective of activity, or rather, it is this perspective. Expressing itself only through configurations of sayings that gel together as we go about our business, busying ourselves with our bodies and their needs, human language must itself come to appear fragmented. Poetry, however, if free, if only potentially, of all extrinsic contextualization, must allow for the confluence of all of these different forms of saying. The index of this capacity is its very ability to outlive its author; poetry, indeed, presupposes the death of its author. Yet while this, ultimately, is a possibility of all words, and belongs to their very existence as artifacts, it nevertheless is a possibility that must be realized. Or indeed, the potential of poetry is itself but an extraordinary realization of the ideality of words; and this potential must itself be realized, and not without great labor --- as we shall see ---, by the poet.

Stitching together all the different ways that people have of speaking about things, and thus joining in a single action the different perspectives through which man relates to his environment, poetry seems to have the unique ability to represent not merely individual feelings, situations, or objects, but an entire world. And since poetry emerges out of a community bound together by a fairly homogenous language --- which is to say, a set of common words that flow through the mouths and ears of a fairly large number of speakers, who most likely are situated in a given region and time, and drawn together into certain common community-sustaining activities --- it seems, moreover, to convey not just any world, or *the* world, but the world of certain historical people. This has been

said, above all about epic, and has almost become a *common-place* of the German philosophic tradition, from Herder, through Schiller and Hegel, to Lukacs and even Heidegger.³⁹ And it is, in a sense, true. But it must be properly understood, and outside of all mystifications. It is first of all a function of the ideality of poetry, the free commerce that it allows between *sayings*, and, strictly speaking, it does not involve the representation of a reality extrinsic to the language of words, but merely of the potentials for speaking that have evolved in communication with such reality, but now, as it were, have come into their own. Thus, while such a work of poetry might only be able to emerge through the consciousness of an exceptional individual with a particularly far-ranging grasp of the interconnectedness of human activity, it is meaningless to speak of it as a work of genius, as if the potential were created through some kind of wholly extraordinary creative act, and did not already rest latent in language. And equally senseless is the conviction that it expresses the *genius* of a people blessed with a particularly fortunate relation to nature. There are reasons why such a confluence has become almost, if not wholly, impossible in the modern world, but this rests not in some kind of “spirit of the people,” a wholly untenable metaphysical abstraction, but rather in the institutionalization of society and language.

It is also wrong, or meaningless, to say that a work of poetry, or even a given language --- as if we could speak of such a thing with any rigor, contains the possibilities for the historical life of a community. The real life of a community reaches far farther, and contains infinitely greater details, than even the greatest work of epic poetry, or even an entire language at any given point of time, could express.

³⁹ Footnote, if only giving references.

And finally, we should not think that only *epic poetry* possesses this capacity. It belongs to all poetry, lyric no less than epic. And often, the former proves far more agile than its more austere counterpart. Compare Catallus's little love songs and praises to the joys of the everyday with Vergil's plodding epic; the first effervesces and overflows with life, the latter sits like a heavy scaffold around an edifice already succumbing to the time that it protests.

If the poem is to disburden the sayings of men from their *workaday* world and join them together freely, and if these freely-linked sayings are to survive to be spoken by the mouths of men, it must be playful in its composition. Not that it need have been created without an ulterior motive on the part of the poet --- this, indeed, is neither a sufficient nor necessary cause of playfulness.⁴⁰ Rather, true playfulness concerns the way the words and sayings of a poem themselves interact; these must involve within themselves limitless and deep possibilities. Every part of the poem, as it were, must allow a different, and perhaps multiple, perspective upon the whole; it must forbid any sort of synoptic gaze, but like the painting, all its aspects must circulate and pair off freely. The ear, as before the eye, must dance. For only in this way could a poem outlive its world, and even its language, living on into an age where its own words would only be understood through the rigorous work of the philologue, perhaps only through the evidence that it itself provides. The *hapax legomena*; spoken once, heard endlessly, brings poetry to the limit of its ideality.⁴¹

Playfulness is simply the *adaptability* of poems, and no less objective a fact than the endless ways in which an individual organism is able to behave towards its

⁴⁰ Footnote on Pindar.

⁴¹ The silliness of denying multiple readings.

environment, or the manifold combinatorial possibilities present in the genetic material of a species. And yet poems, unlike animals, are not, first of all, the products of a natural evolution, but human artifacts, and thus we must ask how the poet, as an artisan, makes his works playful, even if this is not his explicit intention.

This playfulness, it would seem, should be the very easiest thing in the world. For aren't words born naked and frolicking, and doesn't a free commerce belong to their outermost potential, and thus to their innermost being? Surely. Yet words must become saying before they can be poems; they must be baptized into the world outside, gravitating towards narrowed perspectives, before they could congregate to themselves and commune in their ideality.

And so it is, in fact, the most difficult thing on earth, and the poet's craft by far the most tedious.

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Embroidered into the Iliad and Odyssey are many tender and loving descriptions of human labor and craft. Yet the most attentive eye rests upon the handwork of women, and perhaps there is no image so famous or so beautiful as Penelope unweaving by night the labors of the day. What could be more tedious? It seems to demand an almost inhuman patience --- inhuman, truly, for it is to labor as nature labors --- ever undoing its own work, running circles around itself. But aren't all our doings futile and inhuman in just this way? The labors of the everyday are, in the end, nothing more than a gaily-colored shroud we weave to cover a corpse --- and, soon, both shall find their home beneath the earth. And so, to unweave what we weave is not only the most tedious of labors, but also the most playful. For it squeezes itself between birth and death, and

allows life to appear as our own play-time. Only by submitting to our mortality, and becoming as nature, could our life become playful, become life.

Homer, no less than Sophocles, knew what all men know; namely, that none of man's ways and machinations could evade death. Here nature's work touches us back with an unyielding, yet tireless efficiency. And where would Odysseus's twists and turns, devises and schemes, have brought him, in the end, were it not for Penelope. Patience was, perhaps, her only craft, and yet this alone could crown his hoary years with the fleeting joys that had been deprived him by war and wandering. Undoing his father's shroud, she tugged together the restless squiggles of his life back into a single knot.

Penelope's playful patience is a mirror held up to the poet's own work; in this image the entire poet's craft is reflected, and yet its polarity reversed. For rather than creating playtime from the tedium of the everyday, of man's limited οἶκος, the poet makes the most effervescent play, the play of words, labored, in order, in this way, to overcome the very elaboration to which, on their own, they tend. Let us explain.

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Before it was suggested that we do not contrive to have words come to mind. They simple do. It should now be clear why this is so. Because words are, to begin with, and of essence, purely ideal, lacking any semantic determination, and existing, as it were, only as a phonetic representation, they are empty, involving nothing that would guide their intercourse.⁴² If they gain a degree of stability in their meaning, it is only by entering into circulations with other words and real activities.⁴³ In and of themselves

⁴² This actually contradicts my earlier discussion of words. I must mention that the first discussion is provisional.

⁴³ I think that this might explain several easily observed phenomena of mental life. First, that it can sometimes be so extraordinarily difficult to recall words. Secondly, that it is almost impossible the flow of

they are always παντοπορος. A specific speech or thought situation opens up like a vortex in the word-scape of our minds, and more or less appropriate words, bubbling forth, pour into it. This is how all our sayings come about, and institute themselves, allowing for workaday language. But if we have nothing specific to do or say, if our thoughts wander, words continue to bubble forth, only now with a restless agitation. Sitting still, at our leisure, surrounded by nothing, without worry or concern, with nothing on our mind, --- nothing pressing against and influencing its activity like a finger on a plasma bulb --- this condition becomes almost insufferable; we feel as though we were verging on madness.⁴⁴

If poetry were nothing more than madness, it would be easy. Mere wordplay is but the restless state of our mind at rest. Yet poetry, as we know, requires the playful confluence of *sayings*. How could these be brought forth, without being, at once, pulled away towards some particularly activity?

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Needed, simply, is an opening, a playground where sayings, called into existence, could interact amidst themselves without being pulled off into the sphere of extrinsic activities, where they could play off, and resonate with, through, and against each other. Playful composition, in other words, requires, first of all, a distance from the everyday. To a degree, it is irrelevant *how* sayings are called into existence as long as they are able to commerce freely before being composed; above all, in other words, they must simply have the room to develop a life of their own.

words that constantly seems to invade our consciousness. Thirdly, that non-sense words and bazaar, senseless combinations constantly gel together and dissolve. Forth, that our sanity depends not so much on the absence of crazy thoughts, as on inhibitions that keep us from saying everything that comes to mind.

⁴⁴ Footnote: Karl Philipp Moritz.

How do human communities create such a space?

We should not think that it must be private and individual. It is quite possible, for example, that certain ritualized forms of activity could create a communal playground by excluding the more pressing concerns of daily life. And perhaps, indeed, the notion of the sacred, and of sacred, ritual spaces, rigidly separated from a profane realm, might even play a role in creating the collective conditions for poetry. Nor, indeed, need we suppose that there must only one possible way of creating such a *playground*, or that there is any sort of straightforward genesis of forms. Rather, there might be many, working either together, or separately, and may include either more-or-less purposeful techniques of bodily cultivation, such as meditation, or evolve as an offshoot of human labor, or even through purely physiological conditions, such as blindness.

But among all these different methods, one has been of particularly decisive significance for we ordinarily speak of as poetry. Namely, *meter* and *verse*. It may seem strange even to speak of *meter* and *verse* as poetics methods, --- paths, as it were, to poetic composition. Normally, they are thought to belong to the definition of genre. Verse is what distinguishes poetry, as a specific genre of literature, from prose, and the differing sub-genre of poetry are further differentiated, at least in part, according to their metrical conventions. Meter and verse, in other words, are what allow us to identify something as poetry simply through the recognition of a repeating pattern. They refer only to the poem as a finished product, and have nothing to do with its genesis. Such an understanding must prove inadequate. For in effect, it reduces poetic creativity to an aspect of its createdness; the rules of versification, as they appear in the poem as a finished product, are seen as a limit and constraint to the poet's creativity. This sets up a

false opposition between formalism and anti-formalism. In the former, the poet is legitimated as poet by following the conventions. In the latter, they are seen as hindrances to a true creativity, which, however, rather than remaining freely playful, inevitably submits to some other extrinsic purpose.⁴⁵ As soon as we regard verse and meter not as facts about poems, but as *possible* conditions of their genesis, this opposition disappears, and we can begin to see the *mechanism* of poetry as a path towards genuine, which is to say freely political, creativity.

How is it, then, that verse and meter create such an opening and playground? Simply by creating a space for words.

As they appear in sayings, volleyed back and forth in the talk that belongs to the everyday, words are without a room of their own. This is not to say that they are crowded together; in fact they circulate throughout the entire outside world, but this is not their own space, but the space of an extrinsic activity, --- roughly speaking, the space of other things, or even other words. And thus it does not give them room to mingle freely on their own; they are as servants, always shuffling about from one task or another, scarcely able even to look askance at each other as they go about their daily routine. They do have their own time, yet this orders them one after another, each giving way to the next. While it does allow them to respond to each other, not only through a conversation, but within every action of speech, this responsiveness is not yet playful; it does not tarry in an ongoing dialogue between words and sayings, but always rushes towards the next things, opening towards infinity, and seldom curving back towards what was said.

⁴⁵ Footnote: Dichtungstheorie of the German Enlightenment. Lessing as returning to Aristotle to provide a mediation between the two.

Verse and meter transform this restless sequentiality, the ever-needy, thirsty time of an endless, never satisfied conversation into a spacious time; *dürftige Zeit* into *geraume Zeit*.

Through metrification, words are articulated into syllables. The ideality that belonged to the pure commerce of phonemes, we recall, was obscured and forgotten as phonemes joined together into words, fixing the sonority around a repeated pattern. While a syllable does not yet express potential of a phoneme, it marks a movement towards its restoration.

These syllables, moreover, acquire a temporal-spatial index; they are either long or short. Duration, indeed, always belongs to a spacious time; for it implies a gradual progression, rather than the mere one-after-another of moments. Space itself unfolds, as it were, as the time that can always be discovered between times, linking together every now and then into a continuum.

Joined together into feet, the long and short syllables open up to the dimension of height. They become either iambic or trochaic; lifting or liting, and as they flow together, they seem as waves, either rising to or dropping from the crest.

These feet are then gathered together into a single metrical line, and these metrical patterns are repeated through *versification*. Verse, literally, represents a curving-back of the linear advance of speech. By turning from one line to the next, a space emerges into which words may fit, and in which they gain a playful proximity to each other. No longer does one word rush on to the next, but it seems almost as if they were all communicating with each other at once, reciprocally developing their possibilities. Their *collection* within the space of verse allows for each to read the other; for the first time,

words become legible. And it is just such a legibility that allows the very composition of the poem. Sayings enter into this meandering space of versification and communicate with each other; playing off of each other, testing each other out, they enter into ever changing configurations. Some sayings make their exit, while others take their place. Through this playful interaction, an arrangement of sayings and words emerge that sound off each other with an almost endlessly subtlety. Every word, perhaps every syllable, seems to resonate with its companions; they harmonize. Such an arrangement is able to survive beyond a particular context within a community of speakers; it seems to have a life of its own, and needs neither reason nor occasion to be repeated.⁴⁶

We might simply think of these playgrounds as environments where poems can evolve. This evolution may simply be the effortless result of a confluence of speakers in a community; sayings join together and are communicated from speaker to speaker in ever mutating forms, and sometimes, from out of this constant interchange, combinations appear that have, as it were, a particularly high degree of resonance. These become relatively resistant to change, and able, therefore, to perpetuate themselves in an abiding form.

Poetry, in other words, is not necessarily laborious. It only becomes so as the work of an individual poet, cultivating a private playground as the soil from which his poems will grow. Moving back and forth across the field opened up by versification, he must test every saying against the others, constantly reconfiguring them, and by dint only of his own toil, weeding out the less seemly formations. He must, in other words, perform Penelope's work, unweaving by night what he has woven by day, and constantly holding his work up to a touchstone to see if it rings true. Only by laboriously *duplicating* the

⁴⁶ The laws of harmony in music serve an analogous function.

playful work of nature could the poet create a poem that itself bursts forth with the life of nature, the constant, infinitely subtle, interplay of part with part. *Duplication*, not *imitation*, is the proper mode of *poesis*; poetry is the unweaving weaving *duplication* through words of nature's infinitely involved folds.

The poet has always striven after immortality through his words, and, sometimes, though seldom, these have obliged. Yet unlike the hero's far-flung fame, this immortality is not gained for the individual, is never his possession, but belongs only to his words themselves, in and of themselves. For it is the ideality that words gain once they have divested themselves of their every tether, and have come into their own. The poet, as it were, becomes immortal only by unweaving his own shroud.

In the words of Hölderlin;

Denn die Sterbliches nur besorgt, es empfäng sie die Erde,
Aber näher zum Licht wandern, zum Aether hinauf
Sie, die inniger Liebe treu, und göttlichem Geiste
Hoffend und duldend und still über das Schicksal gesiegt.

Hopeful, and patient, and quiet --- removed from the screams of men --- the poet tends not to mortal things, but wanders up towards the pure ideality of light, of words as words.

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Die Eichbäume

Aus den Gärten komm ich zu euch, ihr Söhne des Berges!
Aus den Gärten, da lebt die Natur geduldig und häuslich,
Pflegend und wieder geflegt mit dem fleißigen Menschen zusammen.
Aber ihr, ihr Herrlichen! steht, wie ein Volk von Titanen
In der zahmeren Welt und gehört nur euch und dem Himmel,
Der euch nährt' und erzog, und der Erde, die euch geboren.
Keiner von euch ist noch in die Schule der Menschen gegengen,
Und ihr drängt euch fröhlich und frei, aus der kräftigen Wurzel,
Unter einander herauf und ergreift, wie der Adler die Beute,
Mit gewaltigem Arme den Raum, und gegen Wolken
Ist euch heiter und groß die sonnige Krone gerichtet.
Eine Welt ist jeder von euch, wie die Sterne des Himmels
Lebt ihr, jeder ein Gott, in freiem Bunde zusammen.
Könnt ich die Knechtschaft nur erdulden, ich neidete nimmer
Diesen Wald und schmiegte mich gern ans gesellige Leben.
Fesselte nur nich mehr ans gesellige Leben das Herz mich,
Das von Liebe nicht läßt, wie gern würd ich unter euch wohnen!

The garden is, simply, the meeting ground of man's labors and nature's. Here the two live together, tending each other and tended for in turn. It is the germ of a political community, and stands off from both the noisy screams and chastisements of the one and the deranging omnipotence of the other. Nature and man alike become patient and domestic, as he, through his industry, cultivates its growth towards his needs. And it is here too that the poet learns his patient and attentive craft. Yet poetry is also always a movement out of the garden, and towards nature as it lives gaily and freely, a world to itself. Stretching between the earth and the heavens, and bringing both into communication, the oak-tree touches the two poles between which all earthly nature, and man included, has evolved. And so the poem, approaching the tree's silent and playful labor, approaches nature as it is to itself, thus cultivating man's own community towards the *freier Bund*, the truly free and open politics that could emerge only when we no

longer work against nature, even if reciprocally, *pfliegend und wieder geflegt*, but as nature.

But how does the poet transform his garden, first into a *Hain* (grove) and then into a *Wald* (forest)?

Because the poet is himself bound by love to a lively society, to the business and machinations of the everyday, even if he has cultivated for himself a playground where the sayings of men might mingle freely and begin to live a life of their own, his poems, like a lovingly gardened apple-tree, will still grow towards human needs. No longer, indeed, in their parts, but as a whole. They will build themselves around an object, or a feeling, or an event, or even an idea, or even around Heroes and Gods; around anything, in other words, that has precedent in the commerce of men. And the very quiet and restfulness of the poet's playground makes it all the more difficult to keep the poem as a whole from entering into such an orbit. Or indeed, in this way, through a certain kind of *occasionality*, poets are first able to survive amidst the community of men, and thus their ideality is obscured at the very moment of their formation; they have succumbed to the same fate that has touched every word.

So it becomes the task of the poet: to overcome his love for man, to undo his attachment to every narrower perspective through which his labors are entwined with nature's. Only thus could he become open to nature in its totality, even towards the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of time, that causes all to crumble (*trümmert*) and shake, and makes vain all our labors. We are reminded of Zarathustra, ...

Yet this is the work of the poet, not the philosopher. Spoken with the words of men, it has already become too noisy. It would be better to profess an innocuous love for all mankind than enlist oneself to this fearsome task, for falling with the human words upon less subtle ears, it could only be misunderstood. And perhaps, indeed, even the poet must never hold this for his task, but must suppress it beneath his tongue as he goes patiently about his labors. Like Empedokles, he must lose his powers the moment he professes to them; that nature serves him --- and that he has become as nature, divine, could alone flow forth from the poetic word; it must become purely a question of technique.⁴⁷

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As with the dancer, as with the painter, as with the composer, everything rests on technique; for it is only through his techniques that man is in the world, and it only the techniques of the artist that could outstrip every narrower perspective, and open us towards the whole of nature. To submit the work of art to any other purpose, however lofty, is to have titans stand before the court of dwarves. And yet, technique can never become a purpose in and of itself. Purifying itself of every explicit goal, it must remain, simply, technique. And this is perhaps why even nowadays, as artistic technique, buttressed upon thousands of years of patient craft, has reached a truly extraordinary degree of purity, it has, at the same time, become ever more subject to the whims of heavy-handed and leaden-hearted didacticism; joylessness, at a word. That art might fulfill itself ever anew, and ever more gloriously, simply in the joyful, vital celebration of

⁴⁷ Nijinsky, too, lost his divinity as soon as it came to word, and his diary, written as the symptoms of schizophrenia slowly drew the curtain on a dancing career that had inaugurated this mournful, wayward century with so many hopeful sparks, is but a sad testimony to his own death-march towards the aetna's flames.

its medium, is a thought that troubles those who measure everything against the *things* they grasp.⁴⁸

The poet's technique realizes itself, first of all, in the purity of meter. Brought together into a meandering, lulling flow, and granted a free and playful communion, the *sayings* must be measured solely by the interaction of their sounds, and accepted or rejected accordingly. This requires not the strict fulfillment of the superficial rules of versification --- these, after all, are just derivative expressions of the creative act of poetry --- but an inly, inward appropriation of the fluence, the *rheos* that opens up the space where poetry becomes possible. Resonating among themselves, circulating around each other, bubbling over with the pure life of human sounds, the syllables become fluent --- a dance of the mouth, a spectacle that approaches the pure ideality of phonemes. The principle of versification appears not as an obscure artifice built around human language, but as an expression of the inner, secret life of words; the *sounder* existence that they forsook when they became meaningful by tarrying amidst the world of things, and that they now joyously renew under the cover of the poet's lucubrations. For remember: as soon as they joined into words, phonemes lost their playful converse. If this is to be restored, it is not enough simply to bring sounds into a haphazard array, suspending all order, but rather, one must submit the composition of sayings to the organization of their sounds. *Versification* concerns syllables only as they appear in words, and words only as they appear in sayings. Far from obliterating sayings and words, and reducing human language to its sounds, it allows it to express itself through and in its sonority.

Even as the playful intercourse of sounds approaches the absolute ideality of phonemes, the words and sayings do not, or must not, become meaningless. Rather, the

⁴⁸ Kirstein on Georg Balanchine.

words themselves mingle ever more freely, ever more playfully amidst themselves, and, leaving behind the everyday, approach their own pure ideality. Such poetry, in other words, reaches towards the ideal from both sides, and like two tendons emerging from the opposite ends of a muscle, the semantic and the phonetic brace each other, allowing the poem to join together each pole with a single, effortless tug.

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Lucretius was the gayest of the ancient poets. Though wrought with the precision of a philosopher, his verse cannot repress its delight; it overbrims with joy at the workings of nature. For nature, he knew, must not be measured against human purposes, and thus he dedicated his work, above all, to undoing creed that;

Not without a power divine in ways
So nicely tempered to the needs of men
Could nature bring her changing seasons round
And rouse to birth the crops, and all beside
Which goodly Pleasure, guide to life, doth tempt
Mankind to approach, and with her kindly hand
Still leading on, doth lure them with the arts
Of love their generations to renew,
Lest human kind should perish from the earth.⁴⁹

De Rerum Natura, indeed, seeks nothing less than to present the spectacle of nature, reaching to the limits of its activity, where it least of all resembles the ways of men. This may seem a rather mournful --- *tristior, triste, traurig* --- doctrine to the multitude, and thus needs the palliative of sweet-speaking Pierian song (*suaviloquenti carmine Pier*).⁵⁰ But for poet himself, wandering upon “dim, pathless haunts,” it is a loving, blissful labor. “My joy,” and where has joy burst so openly, so naively, onto the page, “it is to seek springs yet untasted, and drink my fill. I long to pluck fresh flowers, and crave top win a

⁴⁹ Lucretius, II, 167-174.

⁵⁰ Lucretius, I, 945-6.

glorious coronal to crown my head whence heretofore the holy sisterhood hath never wreathed the brows of mortal man.”⁵¹

For Lucretius, the poet’s task is to loose man’s mind (*exsolvere animum*) from his densely-worked tethers (*artis religionum ... nodis*) --- not only the superstitious beliefs of institutionalized religion, but all that binds man’s mind to the ways of a more restricted circulation of things. His poetry extricates itself from every narrower vortex --- the swirling combination of the primal elements that give things their form, --- and opens itself up the primal stream of infinite matter that, through the *clinamen*, the original swerving of atoms, brings birth and death to all things. And thus its words touch all things, that, however darkling, these might shine forth in the light of day. “On darksome ways verses so full of light, touching all things with music’s magic charm.” Truly, his words are magic; and their charm, wit, humor, and grace --- their *lepos* --- is not only to touch all things, but have all things touch. His words are leaping, as it were, and the work the most sublime *contingency*.

Not simply depicting the things of the world, *De Rerum Natura* enacts, through the poetic word, the very activity of nature; its topic is not the *things of nature*, but the *nature of things*, the very contingency and interaction of which they arise --- and thus it is always dislocating, deranging, and forbids the guidance of trodden paths or the support of a stable ground. This close bond between the work of words and the work of nature is

⁵¹ Lucretius, IV, 1-19. “Avia Peiridum peragro loca nullius ante trita solo. Iuvat integros accedere fontis atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam unde prius nulli velarint tempora musea; primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo, deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango carmina, musaeo contigens cuncta lepore.

evident, above all, in a frequently recurring motif. To explain how selfsame seeds could have given rise to an infinite variety of things, Lucretius compares their formation with his own versification;

And oft it mattereth greatly with what sort
Of other seeds these selfsame elements
Are linked, and in what order, and again,
What mutual motions they do give and take.
For selfsame seeds build sky and sea and earth,
Rivers, the sun, and likewise the crops and trees
And living creatures; but they needs must move
With varied minglings and in various ways.
Nay, even in my verses everywhere
Thou must confess that words and verses both
In sense and ring of sound stand far apart.
So much can letters do, if we but change
Naught save their order; but the seeds of things
Have powers more manifold to bring to bear
Whereby they can create each several thing.⁵²

Cum tamen inter se versus ad verba necesses confiteare et re et sonitu distare sonanti.

The translation, while admirable, doesn't capture the implications of the Latin. To begin, we see that the word for thing is *res*. This suggests not so much what simply is the case, a static fact about nature, but rather what is held to be so; it is derived from the deponent verb *reor*, to hold, deem, suppose. The *res*, in other words, is the things of the nature as they seem to us, which is to say, as they appear in their configurations as things. *Sonitus*, on the other hand, is not merely an inarticulate sound, like the sounds of nature, but

⁵² Lucretius, 817-829. "atque eadem magni refert primordial saepe
cum quibus et quae positura contineantur
et quos inter se dent motus accipiantque;
namque eadem caelum mare terras flumina solem
constituunt, eadem fruges arbusta animantis,
verum aliis alioque modo conmixta moventur.
Quin etiam passum nostris in versibus ipsis
Multa elementa vides multis communia verbis,
Cum tamen inter se versus ad verba necesses
Confiteare et re et sonitu distare sonanti.
tantum elementa queant permutato ordino solo;
at rerum quae sunt primordial, plura adhibere
possunt unde queant variae res quaeque creari.

suggests *speech* and *response*; it includes both the sonority of man and of nature, indeed every form of resonance and responsiveness. Finally, *distare* means both to differ from, but also, and more literally, to stand off from. Thus, taking note of the ablative forms of *re* and *sonitu*, (?) and the emphatic repetition of the root *sonus* through the dative participle, we might translate this passage in the following way; *that both verse and word, among themselves, stand off from each other, in respect to both the supposed thing and the responsive sound, in their sounding*. Verse and word resonate among, and off each other, and thus gain distance to each other even as they are brought together; they join into a community of responsibility, and only in this way might approach the far greater creative powers of nature.

Yet this nearing of *sonitus* and *res* also marks the limit of Lucretius's poetry. Though organized through the development of its themes and the recurrence of various *Leitmotif*, his work is, in the end, a vast streaming of words; not only deranging, but overwhelming. And in this respect, it duplicates the spectacle of nature that unfolds from its page. In the beginning, the particles of the universe move only in one direction, downwards into the depths of the void, and it is only through the slightest deviation from their course that they strike against each other and begin to course around each other, entering into the circulations and arrangement and reciprocal interchanges that give birth to things.

Because the universe is, at first, but one vast downward flowing stream, all things, in the end, are brought apart from themselves; they are, as it were, pulled off from themselves and towards infinity, submitting, at last, to an only ever slightly deranged unidirectionally, a *onewardness*, as we might say. The *declination* of nature, like the *verse* of

poetry, is the source of all creativity, curving, and curbing, the straightforwardness of the elements. Such a poetry, and such a nature, could never be comprehended by, and could never comprehend, a freely political community. For even as the agency of man is brought into a harmony with the agency of nature, both, at their fringe, veer off into a restless flowing. They are not yet curved back to eternity, but for this to be, they must have been curved to begin with. Rather than the eddy swirling out of the clashing waters of the stream, the streams must itself stream out of the eddy.

*

End rhyme is only one of the ways in which the poem's sonorities, fixed within the curving lines of verse, become responsive to one another. And indeed, it may seem rather to deaden than quicken the inner life of sounds. For its more striking, if not altogether monotonous, repetition easily overwhelms assonance, consonance, alliteration, euphony and cacophony, and all the more subtle, unnamed techniques of the poet. Yet here, as before, we must not regard rhyme as a mere genre-designation. Rhyme is, no more than meter, merely a superficial form applied either to brake a reckless creativity or fuel a barren craft. Rather, it is at once a space in which a new manner of poetic creativity becomes possible, and an expression of the inly, intimate sonority of words.

This new space, this new *playground* is built upon the groundwork laid by meter. This, as we saw, regulates the flow of syllables, the rhythm, in order that the sonorities of words might freely interact. The metrical qualities of the words and syllables thus almost disappear behind their sonorities; their feet become as quiet as possible, like the humblest waiters bringing food and wine to the king's banquet, or, indeed, like the feet of Balanchine's dancers. Rhyme, in similar fashion, has little to do with the sonority of

language. Rather, it covers and sets a table *around* which the different verses could assemble, each facing towards the others, mingling together, some coming, some going, until they settle upon the most agreeable company. The verses, in other words, become conversant, and if before they spiraled outwards into an infinite play of sound and meaning, now they converge upon the joy of a single moment. If the poetry of old had tended towards the weighty and all-encompassing, now, following the light footsteps of Sappho, Pindar, Catullus, it touches at the most ephemeral. The poet becomes what, before, had remained a wish; *totum nasum*, all nose, breathing in the fleeting scents of youth as they waft through the riven air. Yet these transient joys, concentrated into a single moment, are at once already curved back into eternity. Joined together with a sparing array of threads, the verses await the tug that will pull them together into a single not, folding each corner into the other, like an origami.⁵³

Rhyme, then, should never be thought of principally as a pattern of sounds, but as an index, almost empty of its own content or qualities, and serving simply to bind together, to tabulate the different verses, divide these into strophe, and knot them back into a single poem. Ideally, the end-rhymes should attract no special attention to themselves, but must grant a playful and equilibrial commerce amongst all the sonorities.

{discussion of the canzone}

Yet rhyme presents new dangers. Expressing the eternity of the most ephemeral moment, it stands in a near relation to true reason --- the reason, namely, of a free politics, that measures man's actions against the activity of all of nature, and that is thus always, in the end, cyclical, expressing nature as a system of circulations. Yet this true reason is easily confused with the mere *reasoning* of logical argumentation, itself but one

⁵³ Footnote: Tristan vs. Nibelunglied.

among many of the forms of *saying* which join together in poetry. Such reasoning exhibits itself, above all, in the syllogisms of Aristotle's logic. Bringing a major and minor premise together into a conclusion, they assume a tertiary form that is easily duplicated by the alternating patterns of end rhymes. It is, indeed, almost impossible for rhyme to keep from falling into furrows drawn through ordinary language by this narrower reasoning. The rushing onslaught of words caves in the sides of the light patterns that rhyme etches into the surface of language, revealing the subterranean labyrinths that order our thoughts.

Having lost its concentric equilibrium, its roundness and fullness, the poem could survive only by having a point. It becomes a vector, no longer expressing the circle of eternity, but only a unidirectional act of reasoning with a more or less clear meaning and purpose. In the extreme case, rhyming poetry collapses into the limerick; a joke with a *punch line*. Here, the rhyme serves no other end than to articulate an ever-predictable, syllogistic structure, and thus appears all the more emphatically, drowning out all the other sonorous qualities of the words, and forbidding their freer intercourse. The poem becomes disposable.

*

Walking along the *Ilissus*, beyond the walls of Athens, Phaedrus asks Socrates if he believes the story that Boreas carried off Oreithyia by the stream. Unlike the wise men, Socrates does not disbelieve the myth, and will not try to account for it through a chance series of natural events. Though charming (*χαριεντα*), such reasoning is too much the work of a crafty, pains-taking, and not altogether fortunate man (*λιαν δε δεινου και επιπονου και ου πανυ ευτυχους ανδρος*). Unfortunate, since now he must explain

the forms of the centaurs, chimera, Gorgons, and Pegas --- a task that would require a great deal of leisure (σχολη). Socrates does not have the leisure for all of this. As he explains;

I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things. And so I dismiss these matters and accepting the customary beliefs about them, as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself, to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature.

θηριον τυχανω Τυφονος πολυπλοκωτερον και μαλλον επιτεθυμμενον,
ειτε ἡμερωτερον τε και ἁπλουστερον ζων, θειας τινος και ατυφου
μοιρας φυσει μετεχον.

Hearing out the resonances of Plato's carefully crafted words, we might translate: whether I chance to be a brute more thickly tangled and more storm-struck than the raging storm wind, or a tamer, more everyday, and simpler living being, and having, by nature, a share in a divine and storm-less lot.

This question poses itself to both the philosopher and the poet, yet differently to each. For the philosopher, it is a question that --- so conceived --- could only be answered through knowledge of himself, of what he is *by nature*. And thus he retreats from the *mythos*, and turns inside himself, concerned only with the nature of man and no longer with nature as a whole; and so he confines within the city walls --- as Socrates explains to Phaedrus, τα μεν ουν χωρια και τα δενδρα ουδεν μ' εθελει διδασκειν, ὅτι δ' εν τω αστεί ανθρωποι. The open spaces of the country and the trees don't wish to teach me anything, but the men in the city do. The limits to his answer are thus marked out in advanced, prescribed through the method of his inquiry; for even if he finds

nothing at all, having turned from nature and its way of acting, he could never discover that he just *happens* to be. He is barred off from τυχη. The poet, on the other hand, seeks the answer by stepping outside, and outside himself, beyond the city walls and beyond the garden --- entering into a converse with nature and with its actions, and even if it means realizing that his own fate is storm-blown. But what is more: the poet understands that the answer is never to be found, only invented, worked out laboriously through his craft, and is to be sought only where the simplicity of the divine meets with the endlessly-wrought chaos of the storm-cloud; *deus sive natura*.

The poet, in other words, steps towards the tree. αταρ, ω εταιρε μεταξυ των λογων αρ' ου τοδε ην το δενδρον, εφ 'οπερ ηγεσ 'ημας. *But, my friend, amidst our words, was this not the tree to which you were leading us.* And in this way, he comes to understand that what nature is, and what man could be, is neither purely simply nor purely chaotic, nor half-way between the two extremes, but both at once ---- the most highest degree of complexity folded together into a single node.

Hölderlin, knew, as none before him, to listen to the trees, winds, and streams, and even centaurs; and perhaps, we might wager, this is what he meant by a *freier Bund*.

*

Both Classical meter and Romantic rhyme open man up towards a true, all-comprehending, politics; and yet, in the end, both lose their grip on the *freier Bund*. The former, because it opens too wide itself in the chaos (χαος) of the open country (χωρια), and the latter because it becomes too restricting, squeezing words into a simplicity that does them violence. Within the early tradition of German literature, these two poetic fates are brought to their disturbing consequence in its two great epics, both of which,

standing at the crossroads between Christianity and Paganism, mark out a separate path. Turning in the one direction, and falling back into the ever-receding heathen world is *Der Nibelunge Nôt*, whose verse itself marks the transition towards the rhyming forms of European poetry.⁵⁴ The first half is almost joyous in tone; raised amidst nature, blessed with its powers, and conversant in its speech Sîfrit, radiates hope across the grim and brutal world of men. When, leaning over to drink from a forest spring, he is slain with his own spear, the epic, as if divided by a caesura, takes a new path. With an extraordinary tact, the poet at once marks the incomparable sadness of his death, and draws attention to the *brunne*, the *Quelle*, and origin, from which hero and kind alike draw their life;

Die Sîfrides tugende wâren harte grôz.
 Den schilt er leite nider, aldâ der brunne vlôz.
 Swie harte sô in durste, der helt doch niene transc,
 ê daz der künic getrunke; des sagt er im vil boesen danc.

Der brunne der was küele, lûter unde guot.
 Gunther sich dô neichte nider zuo der flout.
 Als er het' getrunken, dô riht er sich von dan.
 Alsam het ouch gerne der küene Sîfrit getân.

Do engalt er sîner zûhte, den bogen unt daz swert,
 daz truoc allez Hagene von im dannewert.
 dô sprang er hîn wîdere, dâ er den gêr dâ vant.
 er sach nâch einem bilde an des küenen gewant.

Dâ der herre Sîfrit ob dem brunnen transc,
 er schôz in durch das kriuze, daz von der wunden spranc
 daz bluot im von dem herzen vaste an Hagene wât.
 sô grôze missewende ein helt nummer mêr begât⁵⁵

Not a wicked deed, but a *missewende*, a misturn or misstep. The poem hinges on this moment of catastrophe; afterwards, and with a brutal intensity, it declines towards the east, where the brothers, marching to their end, bring entire feudal world into their maelstrom.

⁵⁴ "Im rhythmischen Ablauf des Verses neigt der Dichter zu einer gebändigten Freiheit. Die höfische Dichtung erstrebt als Ideal den regelmäßigen Wechsel von Hebung und einsilbiger Senkung (Alternation). Zu einem starren Gesetz macht sie es nicht. Kein Dichter verzichtet auf die Freiheiten der mehrsilbigen Senkungsfüllung und der fehlenden Senkungssilbe." (Helmut de Boor, LV-LVI)

Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* is animated by a wholly other spirit, and cuts a different path. The mores of courtly life sink away into the distance as this fragmentary romance, like the two roses that twine above King Mark's grave, spirals towards a purer and purer experience of the lover's bliss. Finally, at the *Brunne* just outside the *Minnegrotte* that was cut into the mountain rock by a heathen age, the two lovers enjoy an idyllic bliss, opening up to the language of nature;

Des selben morgens was Tristan
 und sîn gespil geslichen dan
 bihanden gevangen
 und kâmen hin gegangen
 vil vruo und in dem touwe
 ûf die gebluoten ouwe
 und ûf das wunneclîche tal.
 gelander unde nahtegal
 die begunden organieren,
 ir gesinde salûieren.
 sie gruozten ie genôte.
 Tristanden unde Isôte.
 die wilden waltvogelîn
 hiezen sî willekomen sîn.
 vil suoze in ir latîne.
 mangem süezem vogelîne
 dem wâren sî dâ willekomen.
 si haeten sich alle an genomen
 eine wunneclîche unmuoze
 den gelieben zwein ze geuoze.
 si sungen von dem rîse
 ir wunne bernde wîse
 in maneger anderunge.
 dâ was manc süezie zunge,
 die dâ schantoit und discantoit
 ir schanzûne unr ir reflait
 den geliben z'einer wunne.
 si einpfie der küele brunne,
 der gegen ir ougen schône enspranc
 und schôner in ir ô ren clanc
 und rûnende alles gegen in gie
 und sî mit sîner rûne enpfie.
 er rûnete suoze
 den gelieben ze gruoze.
 si gruozten ouch die linden
 mit ir vil süezen winden.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Das Nibelungen Not, 978-981.

⁵⁶ Tristan, 2, 446-8.

But here, the poet's craft seems stretched to his limit. To describe the paradisiac language binding nature and man, he must resort to the learned, contrived, or French. Alone the *Brunne* seems to have found a tongue of its own, speaking simply through its movements and sounds; its springing forth, winding, and *rûnen*. No longer like the labored tongue of man, the well speaks a rune.⁵⁷

And in a way, this must be. After the *missegende*, *Der Nibelunge Nôt* becomes *drastic* in its intensity --- its episodes, like the overflowing Donau that the brothers must cross, gather the elements together and presses on towards its end with an ever greater force. Straßbourg's poetry, in contrast, moves in counter-point to the passion that is its theme; for even as it spirals towards the idyllic moment, it at the same time draws Tristan and Isolde's absolute and irrepressible love into the imbrolios of courtly life.

In a beautiful passage, Tristan reassures himself that no natural force is so great as to resist man's pains-taking labors;

des Rînes vlieze und sîn vlôz
der enist an keiner stat sô grôz,
man enmûge dervon gegiezen
mit einzelingen vliezen
sô vil, daz er sich gâr zerlât
und maezlîche craft hât.
sus wirt der michele Rîn
vil kûme ein cleinez rinnelîn.
kein viur hât ouch sô grôze craft,
ist man dar zuo gedanchaft,
man unmûge es sô vil zesenden
mit einzelnen brenden,
bz daz es swache brinnet.
als ist dem, der dâ minnet.
der hât dem ein gelîchez spil.
er mag als ofte und alse vil
sÎn gemüete zegiezen
mit einzelen vliezen,
sÎnen muot sô manegen enden
zeteilen und zesenden,
biz das sîn dâ sô lützel wirt,
daz er maezlîchen schaden birt.
als mag ez ouch mir wol ergân,

⁵⁷ Check to see: Rhein! rheo. Leibniz?

wil ich zeteilen und zelân
 mîne minne und mîne meine
 an maneger dame danne an eine.
 gewende ich mîne sinne
 mê danne an eine minne,
 ich wirde lîhte dervan
 ein triurelôser Tristan.
 Nu sol ich ez versuochen.
 wil mîn gelücke ruochen,
 so ist zît, daz ich's beginne.
 wan die triuwe und die minne,
 die in ze mîner vrouwen hân,
 die enmag mir niht ze staten gestân.
 ich swende an ir lîp unde leben
 und enmach mir keinen trôst geben
 ze lîbe noch ze lebene.⁵⁸

Perhaps, here, it is also the poet that speaks. His vast, though playful labor, --- his *spil*, as it were --- is directed against the overwhelming force of nature, and serves only to curb it, scattering its force, spilling out the mighty flood of the river into little rivulets. It is not the activity of nature that the romance describes, but rather a belabored technique of resource management. All the myriad rhymed couplets, with each verse restfully circling around its mate, are so many *einzelnen vliezen* in which the force of nature is dissipated and becomes of service to man. Each, as it were, enacts the transformation from *Rîn* to *rinnelîn*. Its technique is the diminutive.⁵⁹ The triurelôser Tristan, the anti-Tristan that results would be the undoing of the Gordian knot of tragedy. And here, perhaps, we catch scent of a freer air blowing that will blow from Renaissance and through the Baroque and Enlightenment, if only to vanish in final chords of Wagner's opera.

The next lines, though, bring a different nuance;

â sÛeze amîe, liebe Îsôt,
 diz leben ist under uns beiden
 alze sêre gescheiden.

⁵⁸ tristan, 2, 566-8.

⁵⁹ Footnote Leibniz.

Only because life is already too divided does it become necessary to divide it up infinitely if one is to live, unraveling a knot that first drew taught as eternity split against itself. The world is to sêre sêr.⁶⁰

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Sokrates und Alcibiades

“Warum huldigst du, heiliger Sokrates,
Diesem Jünglinge stets? Kennest du Größers nicht?
Warum siehet mit Liebe,
Wie auf Götter, dein Aug auf ihn?”

Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste,
Hohe Jugend versteht, wer in die Welt geblickt,
Und es neigen die Weisen
Of am Ende zu Schönem sich.

Plato taught the forms not as an abstract doctrine, but as an exercise in living. They took their mold from the γυμναστικῶν, the training of the body that was at the center of Athenian pedagogy. Not that they were not intended as truths, and yet their value, as truths, did not exhaust itself in the acceptance of a certain beliefs about the nature of things. For what was essential was the task and goal they pointed towards; the cultivation of man’s soul towards contact with the immortal and changeless, towards a converse with the gods. Nowhere is the practice described more clearly, and more beautifully, than in Diotima’s speech to Socrates;

Such is the right approach or induction to love-matters. Beginning from obvious beauties he must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observance to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know the very essence of beauty. In that state of life above all others... a man finds it truly worth while to live, as he contemplates essential beauty. This, when once beheld, will outshine your gold and your vesture, your

⁶⁰ On the meaning of sêre, sêr.

beautiful boys and striplings, whose aspect now so astounds you and makes you and many another, at the sight and constant society of your darlings, ready to do without either food or drink if that were any way possible, and only gaze upon them and have their company. But tell me, what would happen if one of you had the fortune to look upon essential beauty entire, pure and unalloyed; not infected with the flesh and color of humanity, and ever so much more of mortal trash? What if he could behold the divine beauty itself, in its unique form? Do you call it a pitiful life for a man to lead – looking that way, observing that vision by the proper means, and having it ever with him? Do but consider... that there only will it befall him, as he sees the beautiful through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to with the friendship of Heaven; he, above all me, is immortal.

To cultivate this skill is to become spiritual, δαιμονιος --- an enthusiast, or in German, a *Schwärmer*. And yet while Diotima opposes the man who is δαιμονιος to the βαναυσος --- the fire-worker and mechanic, master of crafts (τεχνας) and handiworks (χειρουργιας) --- nevertheless, ερωσ, the δαιμων that brings man into a converse with the divine, is himself not only a jack of all trades, but unites the hero's virility with the artfulness of the craftsman, the wisdom of the philosopher, and even a bit of sorcery: ανδρειος ων και ιτης και συντονος, θηρευτης δεινος, αι τινας πλεκων μηχανας, και φρονησεως επιθυμητης και ποριμος, φιλοσοφων δια παντας του βιου, δεινος γοης, και φαρμακευς και σοφιστης.

Philosophy, like poetry, is a belabored, and crafty playfulness. Yet whereas poetry opens itself up to the activity of nature, the movement of philosophy, this suggests, is εξ αλλου. It moves away from the otherness, what is always other than itself --- away, above all, from the body in its movement and vitality, with its constant circulation and interchange of material: 'ουτος μεντοι ουδεποτε τα αυτα εχων εν 'αυτω 'ομως 'ο αυτος καλειται, αλλα νεος αι γινομενος, τα δε απολλυς και κατα τας τριχας και σακρα και οστα 'αιμα και συμπαν το σωμα. It begins, as it

were, with the denial of the body in the very activity of the inputs and outputs through which it enters into relation with the world, becoming an imperfect microcosm of the activity of the world, a node in which the activity of nature as a whole expresses itself. It denies, in other words, the metabolism, the μεταβολη, or in German, *Stoffwechsel*.

As a result, the beauty in its higher manifestations is held to be unchanging. This is true not only for the pure and essentially unchanging forms, but also for the beauty of the body, which could only be grasped, εξ αλλου, as the beauty of all bodies, if one looked away from the movements and motions of a particular person in action, and considered only the static relation of proportions among the parts. One wonders, then, whether not only Alcibiades' startling entrance, but also the marvelous images of Aristophanes, might serve already as a tacit reproach to this one-sidedness. For Aristophane's primal humans, with two heads, four ears, four arms, four legs, and two genitalia --- wholly round, στρογγυλος, in form --- knew a quicker path to divinity; they danced. και ὅποτε τακυ ὀρμησειεν θειν ὄσπερ ὀι κυβιστωντες και εις ορθον τα σκελη περιφερομενοι κυβιστωσι κυκλω. Having, then, dared in their strength and speed to venture against the Olympian God, Zeus had them cut in two, and so they lost their symmetry, their globularity and *cubic* movement, and became what we are today: a mere *symbol* of a man: ἕκαστος ουν ἠμων εστιν ανθρωπου συμβολον. This is, as it became for Tristan, the origin of all piety and humbleness towards the divine. Strangely, it is the comedian, Aristophanes, who should tell the origin of tragedy, for it is just this need for humility before the gods that sets the protagonist up for his downfall; kai pro tou, ὄsper legô, ἔν ἐμεν, νυνι δε δια τὴν ἀδικίαν διὀκισθῆμεν ἔπο τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὰ περ Ἀρκάδες ἔπο Λακεδαιμονιῶν. phobos oun estin, ean mê kosmioi ômen pros tous theous,

‘opôs mh kai authis diasxisthêsometha, kai periimen exontes ‘ôesper ‘oi en tais stêlais
katagraphên ektetupômenoi, diapeprismenoi kata tas ‘rinas, gegonotes ‘ôesper lispai. alla
toutôn ‘eneka pant’ andra xrê ‘apanta parakeleuesthai eusebein peri theous, ‘ina ta men
ekphugômen, tôn de tuxômen, ‘ôs ‘o Erôs ‘êmin ‘êgemôn kai stratêgos. *diz leben ist
under uns beiden alze sêre gescheiden.*

*

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos,
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.

It would not be false to think of Hölderlin’s poetry, with its recurrent invocation of Diotima, as an ongoing conversation with the *Symposium*. At the center of this conversation is the group of fragments titled Reflexion, which provide the most developed, if nevertheless oblique, treatment of Plato’s text. The extent of this relation appears clearly in one of the concluding thoughts ; “Deswegen sollte alles Erkennen vom Studium des Schönen anfangen. Denn der hat viel gewonnen, der das Leben verstehen kann, ohne zu trauern.” This, without doubt, echoes the Symposium 211c, and above all, the last line: ενταυθα του βιου, ωιλε Σωκρατες, εφη ‘η Μαντικη ξενη, ειπερ που αλλοθι, βιοτον ανθρωπω, θεομενω αυτο το καλον. That life would become βιοτον, worthy of living, or, better, simply something that is to be lived, livable: or that one becomes able to understand life without mourning. These seem to be similar thoughts, and yet they also, in a way, stand opposite to one another. For the one suggests that life should become livable through understanding; the other that it should be possible, through poetry, to life with understanding. Plato’s symposium and Hölderlin’s

Reflection, as it were, stand at the opposite ends of the history that unfolds, as it were, ἐξ αλλου, into *Trauer*.

The place where philosopher and poet meet, and the point of departure for Hölderlin's radical transformation of Platonism, appears in the first passage;

Es gibt Grade der Begeisterung. Von der Lustigkeit an, die wohl der unterste ist, bis zur Begeisterung des Feldherrn, der mitten in der Schlacht unter Besonnenheit den Genius mächtig erhält, gibt es eine unendliche Stufenleiter. Auf dieser auf- und abzustiegen, ist Beruf und Wonner des Dichters.

The *Stufenleiter* recalls the ἐπαναβαθμοις of the Symposium, and as before, it allows for the movement and converse between the earthly and the divine. Yet for Hölderlin, passage on this ladder is the calling and bliss of the poet, and no longer, above all, the philosopher. And this changes everything.

For Plato's Socrates, as we saw, there is nothing to learn in the χωρία --- and thus the philosopher must ignore the trees and streams and return to the city, and to a conversation with humans. The implications of this *miszewende* appear throughout Diotima's speech to Socrates. Beauty is to be found, to start with, in the static forms of the human body and the even greater stability of the human soul --- and is to be reached through a process of abstraction that tries to realize the ἰδεα in its purity, removed from its situatedness in the ephemeral world of appearances. For Hölderlin, in contrast, the *höchste Poesie* is a system in which even the *Unpoetische* becomes poetic, if, indeed, it is said "zu rechter Zeit und am rechten Orte im Ganzen des Kunstwerks."⁶¹ The poetic work, in other words, is a system whose parts *hang together*, interrelating with one another, not only in space, but also in time. It is an organization of parts, and everything

⁶¹ Hölderlin, p. 502.

depends on the way the parts are fitted together. Within this system itself, the parts must themselves vary in the degree to which they are poetic, reaching all the way into the wholly unpoetic; but every part becomes poetic through its relation to the whole. The beauty of poetry is not thought of as an abstraction from the inorganic, the $\chi\alpha\omicron\varsigma$ of the $\chi\omega\rho\eta$, but as a composition, organization.

How is the poet to achieve this? What it requires, above all, is a *schneller Begriff* --- a quick grasp. As he explains;

Aber hierzu ist schneller Begriff am nötigsten. Wie kannst du die Sache am rechten Ort brauchen, wenn du noch scheu darüber verweilst, und nicht weißt, wie viel an ihr ist, wie viel oder wenig daraus zu machen. Das ist ewige Heiterkeit, ist Gottesfreude, daß man alles Einzelne in die Stelle des Ganzen setzt, wohin es gehört; deswegen ohne Verstand, ohne ein durch und durch organisiertes Gefühl keine Vortrefflichkeit, kein Leben.⁶²

This *schneller Begriff*, is not merely a quick comprehension, the ability to understand things in a lesser rather than greater quantity of time, but rather a wholly new idea of what the *Verstand*, itself, is. For here, the *Verstand* is no longer conceived of as the categorical synthesis of the material given through intuition, --- a process which results in forms of judgement that stand outside of the temporality of experience --- but as acting in a state of quickness, and performing an operation that, as it were, stands in an essential relation to time, both with respect to its input and its output. Not only does it confront something that, itself in motion, would not grant the leisure to shyly tarry, but it organizes the material that is given, the *Sache*, in both space and time.

The *schneller Verstand*, in other words, transforms man's understanding --- rather than his reason --- into something that communicates with the divine; it becomes an *ewige Heiterkeit* and *Gottesfreude*. Mated with the divine is the part of man's mental

faculties that is most workmanly in operation, operating, like Aristotle's craftsman, according to a rule. It is at once βανουσιος and δαίμωνιος; no longer do these qualities belong to the mediating δαίμων of ερωσ, but rather to the poet himself.

With this quickness, however, comes a danger: that one would lose one's grip, and stumble. If we are to keep a grip on things, our understanding must know its limit, and not try to move quicker. And so it is this limit that limits the degree of *Begeisterung* that must be obtained. The *Begeisterung* must remain *Nüchtern*. As Hölderling explains;

Das ist das Maß Begeisterung, das jedem Einzelnen gegeben ist, daß der eine bei größerem, der andere nur bei schwächerem Feuer die Besinnung noch im nötigen Grade behält. Da wo die Nüchternheit dich verläßt, da ist die Grenze deiner Begeisterung. Der große Dichter ist niemals von sich selbst verlassen, er mag sich so weit über sich selbst erheben, als er will. Man kann auch in die Höhe *fallen*, so wie in die Tiefe. Das Letztere verhindert der elastische Geist, das erstere die Schwerkraft, die in nüchternem Besinnen liegt. Das Gefühl ist aber wohl die beste Nüchternheit und Besinnung des Dichters, wenn es richtig und warm und klar und kräftig ist.⁶³

That one could fall in two directions, not just down but up, suggests that the poet has become as οἱ κίβιστωντος --- a tumblers, indeed dancers. Likewise, the two forces that give the poet a hold on things and keep him sober stand in the nearest relation to the physical basis of graceful, fluid, and non-catastrophic movement in dance. The *elastic spirit*, on the one hand, points to the elastic properties of the muscles, divided into agonists and antagonists that, working in a simultaneous opposition, allow the limbs to move both up and down with grace and control. On the other hand, the *Schwerkraft*, which does not so much originate from the earth as lie in the *nüchterne Besinnung* of the poet: his center of gravity, as it were. And finally, the *Gefühl* that is *richtig* and *warm*

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 503.

and *klar* and *kräftig* hints at a body that, properly cultivated and warmed-up, has become capable of an extended range of fluid movements.

For Hölderlin poetry becomes dance; the ballad, ballet.⁶⁴ That the *Studium des Schönen* is not the tarrying observation of a fixed beauty, but the dancing grasp of a moving, flowing beauty --- a dance around a dance, a *pas de deux*, as it were --- casts light upon all the ways in which he transforms the Platonic tendencies of Symposium. For Hölderlin, as we saw, *Begeisterung* involves a movement not just up, but both up and down the latter. In a later passage of *Reflexion*, this is brought together with a different, though related point. Rather than culminating and in the vision of “essential beauty entire, pure and unalloyed; not infected with the flesh and color of humanity, and ever so much more of mortal trash” (καλον ...ειλικρινες, καθαρων, αμεικτον, αλλα μη αναπλεων σακρων τε ανθρωπινων και χρωματων και αλλης πολλης φλυαριας θνητης), the task of poetry is endless. If the poet’s feeling, having become sick, is to regain its *Sicherheit* and *Konsistenz*, it must disabuse itself of notion that it could ever grasp everything in the moment;

Überhaupt muß er sich gewöhnen, nicht in den einzelnen Momenten das Ganze, was er vorhat, erreichen zu wollen, und das augenblicklich Unvollständige zu ertragen; seine Lust muß sein, daß er sich von einem Augenblicke zum Andern selber übertrifft, *in dem Maß und in der Art, wie es die Sache erfordert*, bis am Ende der Hauptton seines Ganzes gewinnt. Er muß aber ja nicht denken, daß er nur im *crescendo* vom Schwächern zum Stärkern sich selber übertreffen könne, so wird er unwahr werden, und sich überspannen; er muß fühlen, daß er an Leichtigkeit gewinnt, was er an Bedeutsamkeit verliert, daß Stille die Heftigkeit, und das Sinnige den Schwung gar schön ersetzt, und so wird es im Fortgang seines Werkes nicht einen notwendigen Ton geben, der nicht den vorhergehenden gewissermaßen überträfe, und der herrschende Ton wird es nur darum sein, weil das Ganze auf diese und keine andere Art komponiert ist.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., p. 501.

⁶⁴ Footnote on these words.

The moment will always be incomplete, for its incompleteness belongs, essentially, to the moment. Abandoning the hope that he might ever reach a single moment of *synoptic* vision, the poet proceeds by overleaping himself at every turn, and in both directions, --- upwards as well as downwards --- while at the same time always maintaining his consistency and security: his ability to make another move. The poet's leaps towards higher degrees of enthusiasm must always remain steps; as it were, steps that overleap themselves. *Sich übertreffen* is a constant self-surpassing, a self-overstepping. And if it is the *sich* that, at any moment, provides the basis of stability, then, at its limits, poetry would be a dance of catastrophe; each step overleaps itself and falls into another moment, with a new source of stability, and thus with the new possibility of an overleaping jump. This leads directly to heart of Hölderlin's poetic theory and practice; the idea of the *Wechsel der Töne*, of three catastrophes, each of which involves the dissolution of one tone into two another, and thus prepares the way for the next catastrophe. Just as ballet is a movement from step to step, poetry is a circulation from catastrophe to catastrophe --- and yet remains equally *sober*.

The catastrophic movement of poetry is an expression of what Hölderlin elsewhere will speak of as *Das Werden im Vergehen*;

Das untergehende Vaterland, Natur und Menschen, insofern sie in einer besonderen Wechselwirkung stehen, eine *besondere* ideal gewordene Welt, und Verbindung der Dinge ausmachen, und sich insofern auflösen, damit aus ihr und aus dem überbleibenden Geschlechte und den überbleibenden Kräften der Natur, die das andere, reale Prinzip sind, eine neue Welt, eine neu, aber auch besondere Wechselwirkung, sich bilde, so wie jener Untergang aus einer reinen, aber besondern Welt hervorging. Denn die Welt aller Welten, das Alles in Allen, welches immer *ist*, *stellt* sich nur in aller Zeit --- oder im Untergange oder im Moment, oder genetischer im Werden des Moments und Anfang von Zeit und Welt *dar*, und dieser Untergang und Anfang ist wie die Sprache Ausdruck Zeichen Darstellung eines lebendigen, aber besonderen Ganzen, welches eben wieder in seinen Wirkungen dazu

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 502.

wird, und zwar so, daß in ihm, sowie in der Sprache, von einer Seite weniger oder nichts lebendig Bestehendes, von der anderen Seite alles zu liegen scheint. Im lebendigen Bestehenden herrscht eine Beziehungsart, im übergehenden ist die Möglichkeit aller Beziehungen vorherrschend, doch die besondere ist daraus abzunehmen, zu schöpfen, so daß durch sie Unendlichkeit die endliche Wirkung hervorgeht.

We cannot hope to grasp the world of worlds, the totality of every possible world, as it *is*, but only as it *puts itself* into time; the highest of possibilities appears only through temporality, or indeed in the catastrophic transition from one world to another. This thought, strange as it may seem, seems almost simple when one tries to understand it in terms of the language of dance. How is it, we might ask, that one not only gains a knowledge, but truly feels, inwardly experiences, the possibilities in the body of the dancer? Not, we must answer, in the performance of any one step, or even by keeping track of all the steps singly performed. Since every step is only properly executed, is only truly a step, when the dancer preserves his ability to perform other steps, then a single step, in itself, could never even reveal its own possibility, and the accumulated knowledge of single steps could not tell us anything more, but would remain, at most, a superficial *indication* of the dancer's potential. Rather, the dancer's potential expresses itself above all in the *graceful*, fluent transition from one *pas* to another. In this moment of transition, the fullness of possibilities shines forth; every step seems possible, and thus, and here alone, the step appears as step.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ It is said, in the world of ballet, that one does not know any single step, unless one can perform in any combination. The step, as such, only exists through the possibility of a fluent combination with other steps. Yet this same principle is no less true of the phonemes of a given language, or its words --- though, since spoken language is easy to learn when we are young, it is seldom acknowledged, and is more difficult to discern. We could not be said to properly know how to pronounce the German "r," for example, unless we are able to use it in any permissible phonetic combination. Nor do we know a word (despite what the folks at the Educational Testing Service seem to think), unless we could use it in any context. And it is on account of this aspect of language, which, consistent with our terminology, we shall call its *expressiveness*, that makes vain any attempt to conceive of human language *first of all* as a system of reference. Words,

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Classical meter, as we saw, creates a work-space where sayings could mate freely and realize the reciprocal interaction of sounds and meanings. In this way, and through the painstaking labor of the poet, word-combinations could evolve that would express the free interaction of natural forces. Rhyme, in contrast, curves the verse into a relation with each other; they assemble together as if around a table set for a festival, and become conversant. By transforming the work of poetry into a dancing labor, Hölderlin is able to overcome the separate limitations of both classical meter and rhyme and achieve at once a free and playful expansiveness and a cyclical, rounded form. The work-space and festival-space join together to become a stage --- the space of performance, of dance. The *schneller Geist*, as it were, dances through the clearing opened up by meter, and fits his material, according to its nature, into this frame-work. And thus he allows his *Stoff* to interact with itself after its own nature, rather than according to the impositions of the poet. If, however, it is to express the temporality of the world, the *Werden im Vergehen*, his dance must always overleap itself, falling down from one catastrophic moment to the next --- and so his poetry becomes cyclic, even as it expresses the very openness of time, time as pure possibility.

The poet, fitting together the words of the poem as he dances through this stage, is able to express the way in which the world happens --- the worlding of the world, as Heidegger put it. Consider, again, the opening of *Das Werden im Vergehen*. A world, for Hölderlin, is a specific *Wechselwirkung* between nature and man; it builds itself out of the way that man and nature interact without each other, and involves neither the one-

sounds, colors, genetic materials, organic substances, animals, chemicals, atoms, particles --- all of these have at once a life unto themselves and a life among each other, and all of these lives together express life

sided determination of man by his environment, or the environment through man's labor. Man is as much a product of nature as nature is of man. Or, put simple; the world is a garden, an οἶκος; *da lebt die Natur geduldig und häuslich, pflegend und wieder gepflegt mit dem fleiß igen Menschen zusammen.*

Such a world or fatherland, as it is also called, consists both in a real and an ideal principle. The real principle are the forces of nature considered in and of themselves, the mere stuff of nature, --- or what he understands as the aorgic. The ideal principle, on the other hand, is simply the organization that this raw material enters into. It might seem as though this simply repeats the Aristotelian opposition between form and matter. Yet while Hölderlin certainly still thinks in terms of this distinction, as it was inherited through Kant, Fichte, and Schiller, and as it was beginning to be rethought and reconceived by the Tübinger Stift, he also begins to realize, --- though he was not alone in this --- that this very distinction was itself not original, not primary; but rather, evolved. Nowhere is this insight expressed with greater lucidity than in the opening paragraph of the *Grund zum Empedokles*;

Natur und Kunst sind sich im reinen Leben nur harmonisch entgegengesetzt . Die Kunst ist die Blüte, die Vollendung der Natur, Natur wird erst göttlich durch die Verbindung mit der verschiedenartigen aber harmonischen Kunst, wenn jenes ganz ist, was es sein kann, und eines verbindet sich mit dem andern, ersetzt den Mangel des andern, den es notwendig haben muß, um ganz zu sein, was es als besonderes sein kann, denn ist die Vollendung da, und das Göttliche ist in der Mitte von beiden. Der orgischere künstlichere Mensch ist die Blüte der Natur, die aorgischere Natur, wenn sie rein gefühlt wird, vom rein organisierten, rein in seiner Art gebildeten Menschen, gibt ihm das Gefühl der Vollendung. Aber dieses Leben ist nur im Gefühle und nicht für die Erkenntnis vorhanden. Soll es erkennbar sein, so muß es dadurch sich darstellen, daß es im Übermaße der Innigkeit, wo sich die Entgegengesetzten verwechseln, sich trennt, daß das Organischer, das sich zu sehr der Natur überließ und sein Wesen und Bewußtsein vergaß, in das Extrem der Selbsttätigkeit und Kunst und Reflexion, die Natur hingegen, wenigstens in ihren Wirkungen auf den reflektierenden Menschen, in das Extrem des

as a whole.

Aorgischen, des Unbegreiflichen, des Unfühlbaren, des Unbegrenzten übergeht, bis durch den Fortgang der entgegengesetzten Wechselwirkung die beiden ursprünglich einigen sich wie anfangs begegnen, nur daß die Natur organischer durch den bildenden kultivierenden Menschen, überhaupt der Bildungstriebe und Bildungskräfte, hingegen der Mensch aorgischer, allgemeiner, unendlicher geworden ist.

Man, with his techniques, has evolved, grown out of nature as its blossom, and perfection. He is opposed to nature neither absolutely, nor primordially, but only gradually; the entire world, as the reciprocal action between man and nature, consists only in gradual stages of increasing organization. Organization is, in this way, always a relative term, and properly speaking should be used, along with its contrary, only in the comparative; *aorgischer*. This suggests that we might even think of man's arts and devices, his *Kunst* in the most inclusive sense, as being themselves processes of organization, and in no way fundamentally opposed to his pre-given faculties.

Man is, in this way, the divinity of nature, and the feeling of perfection that occurs at the point of their confluence. This feeling of perfection is not merely a mode of man's subjective being, but an ideal possibility of nature that realizes itself through man; nature comes to feel itself and express itself through man. And yet this feeling is not yet recognizable, it is not there for the cognition. For this to be, it is necessary that nature and art separate absolutely from one another, confronting each other in an absolute opposition, but then, through the progression of opposed reciprocal interaction, build out of themselves a higher unity --- a work that must belong both to nature and to art, or rather, must be at once the play and work of both.

We now might begin to understand the deeper consequences of Hölderlin's conversation with, and interruption of, the *Symposium*, and the implications of his seemingly Platonic slogan. *Deswegen sollte alles Erkennen vom Studium des Schönen*

anfangen. Denn der hat viel gewonnen, der das Leben verstehen kann, ohne zu trauern.

To understand life, and not simply to feel it, is to be rented apart by the division between *Kunst* and *Natur* --- whose sundering appears in both the *Der Nibelungene Not* and *Tristan* as the origin of *Trauer*, of the life which is *alze sêre gescheiden*⁶⁷ To understand life *ohne zu trauern* is to build these two back together, or --- since this could never be a question simply of human artifice --- to live a life that has been built together out of their separation. In the two German epics, as we saw, the inability of man to speak nature's tongue is at the heart of life's mournfulness; even when man has come closest to his idyllic condition, and nature seems to speak to him, its speech remains a rûnen; murmuring, mysterious, rueful. For the one who has overcome this *Trauer*, not only naively, as Sifrît, but with a grasp on things, the language of nature again becomes comprehensible. As he writes of Empedokles, "bei ihm und für ihn [ist] das Sprachlose Sprache."

And yet *Empedokles* remains a tragedy, even if, for a moment, the philosopher-poet had overcome the mournfulness of life. That, even for the poet, life could be tragic has two causes, both of which both come together in Hölderlin's drama. On the one hand, there is a thought that reaches back to his first writings, and which follows as a logical consequence of his understanding of nature and man⁶⁸; namely, that poetry would rest on a *Naturzustand*, and thus, ultimately, on sheer luck. The poet's virtues are dependent on the grace of nature, and they can be taken away. On the other hand, there is an idea that is fully worked out in *Grund zum Empedokles*, and that presents a radical conception of the concept of tragedy. *Empedokles*, Hölderlin will claim, is sacrificed to

⁶⁷ Tristan as a "man of twists and turns."

⁶⁸ Check to make sure this is correct.

his time; the antagonistic forces that constitute his world --- the hostile reciprocal interaction of nature and art --- and concentrated itself and individualized itself in his life, which thus comes to appear as a solution to their strife. But only, indeed, a temporary solution, for through his down-fall, the merely temporary and seemly quality of this solution is revealed, while at the same time, through his individual catastrophe his world and time is dissolved, allowing for a new, and higher configuration, to appear in its place. Thus, precisely become Empedokles, above all men of his age, struggled with the problem of fate, his life is itself, in the end, submitted to fate. As Hölderlin explains;

So ist Empedokles, wie gesagt, das Resultat seiner Periode, und sein Charakter weist auf diese zurück, so wie er aus dieser hervorging. Sein Schicksal stellt sich in ihm dar, als in einer augenblicklichen Vereinigung, die aber sich auflösen muß, um mehr zu werden.⁶⁹

And further down;

Die Probleme des Schicksals, in dem er erwuchs, sollten in ihm sich scheinbar lösen, und diese Lösung sollte sich als eine scheinbare temporäre zeigen, wie mehr oder weniger bei allen tragischen Personen, die alle in ihrem Charakteren und Äußerungen mehr oder weniger versuche sind, die Probleme des Schicksals zu lösen...⁷⁰

Yet even this tragedy does not belong, inevitably, to the nature of things. Precisely because man and nature stand in a reciprocal interaction, man is at once given over to the fate of the world, and yet at the same time, able, even through his fate, to create a new world. This possibility is suggested, most clearly, in the last paragraph of *Reflexionen*. Here he explains how it would be possible for the *Schöneren, Vortrefflichen* to have an effect on the *Barbaric, Inferieure*: namely, it is necessary that the former “*die Distanz, die zwischen ihnen und den andern ist, bestimmt und leidenschaftslos erkennen, und aus*

⁶⁹ p. 550.

⁷⁰ p. 551.

dieser Erkenntnis wirken, und dulden.” Needed is a politics that recognizes the differences in the degree of organization throughout the world, and patiently works towards overcoming these differences. Such *Wirksamkeit* is truly transformative --- it is free political action in the highest sense; it does not act within the possibilities that have been given through one’s world, but in the furthest and deepest sense, works to transform the world precisely by overcoming the differences that make such *Wirksamkeit* impossible. Or in other words, its work is to create the possibility of effective, freely political action. This cultivation is the task, above all, of the poet; not that he enthusiastically dreams up an impossible ideal, but that he patiently brings the elements of the world closer. The poet only becomes a tragic figure when he loses his patience, and, like Empedocles, rushes to bring about a reconciliation that is not yet in his craft.

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In classical meter and romantic rhyme, the labor of the poet still stood in opposition to his play. The playful interaction amongst the sounds and meanings of words only grew out of the labored combination and recombination of sayings. And while, indeed, rhyme set up a playground, the space of festival and conversation on the groundwork of meter, the poet remained, as it were, a *servant* --- if only to *Minne* itself --- shuffling words in and out of place, a labor that takes place more in time, and is closer to a performance, a yet remains tedious; the host awaits his own *Feierabend*, apart his guests. For Hölderlin, in contrast, the work of the poet is itself a play, a dance, which must be executed in a performance space that, as it were, bends the work and play space, day and night, *Kunst* and *Natur*, back into one.

Just as his poetry reconciles work and play, or at least entrusts the poet with the task of their reconciliation, he always brings about a deeper unity between the ideality of sounds and meanings. While the metrical poet sought the ideality of word-meanings through the ideality of sounds, he could not help losing a grasp on the circulation of sounds as his words approach the open-ended and chaotic ideality. Sounds became so free and resonant in their interaction that their dance itself approached, like the ballerina's peripheral gestures and mimes, the sequentially unfolding and infinite potentiality of meanings. The rhyming poet, on the other, while treating the ending sounds only as an index, nevertheless brought them back to a circulation, and, in this way, also brought meanings into a centered and rounded, --- which is to say conversational --- intercourse. But as a result, the world of meanings lost its proper ideality and collapsed into the tropes of argumentation; linear fragments of a circular reasoning. With Hölderlin, however, this conflict disappears, or at least its disappearance first becomes possible. On the one hand, his sounds find a balance between a too great freedom and a too great restrictedness. Even if the *Wechsel der Töne* is not itself applied consistently to sounds, nevertheless, by giving the poem a rounded-ness that does not depend on the monotonous repetition of end rhymes, it makes this balance possible. On the other hand, the infinity of word-meanings is curved back without being curbed, and without collapsing into mere rhetoric.⁷¹

With this perfect union, the poem achieves what, in a certain way, and as we suggested before, is the outer limit and fulfillment of poetry: the playful work creates the

⁷¹ In *Reflexion*, for example, he explains: "Man hat Inversionen der Worte in der Periode. Größer und wirksamer muß aber dann auch die Inversion der Perioden selbst sein. Die logische Stellung der Perioden, wo dem Grunde (der Grundperiode) das Werden, dem Werden das Ziel, dem Ziele der Zweck folgt, und die

ideal possibility of its performance. Before, the performance of the poem had faltered on the very discrepancy between its laborious creation and playful reenactment. Since the labor that went into it functioned negatively, the poem always appeared simpler than the process of its production; like a weeded garden, one could only enjoy it as the work of nature, and not as the result of the gardener's toil. Or, on the other hand, the poem appeared too labored, too overworked --- and, like an overfinely-wrought arabesque (?) its performance always remains haunted by the poet's lucubrations, and could never grow wings and alight from the page; but rather, it falls back upon the eager hands of the learned, becomes literature. Literature or folk-*poesie*; the Charybdis and Skylla (?) that so few poems have successfully cleared on their way to eternity.

With Hölderlin's poetry, in contrast, the labor becomes playful, nimble, and quick --- a *scheller Begriff* --- and thus it can burst into life with every performance. This does not mean, of course, that the speaker or hearer will come to feel as he did, but only that none of the details of its creation need be lost to time. Nor does it suggest, in the least, that the poem was created instantaneously; the actual experience of the poet and his rhapsodists and admirers is irrelevant --- all that matters is the ideal potential of the poem. For the first time, the poem truly is a remembrance of the *time* of its fashioning. It recalls a play-work-time, the time of divinity, and the details that unfold from the moment when man and nature work together, *wechselseitig*, and when man, his one-sidedness overcome, is again rollicking, and ventures against the Gods. Precisely analogous to this is the spectacle of dance; it is not that we experience the vast labors that went into the

Nebensätze immer nur hinten angehängt sind an die Hauptsätze, worauf sie sich zunächst beziehen, --- ist dem Dichter gewiß nur höchst selten brauchbar."

performance, but that these labors play out before as details that, without ever becoming tedious, are nevertheless the work of men.

Through such a prosody, in other words, the human language of sounding words reaches its highest degree of ideality; the word, as artifact, combining a semantic and a phonetic representation, could now be repeated without one collapsing into other; without the sound disappearing into the meaning, or the meaning into the sound. And thus, in a sense, only with Hölderlin does the word first become a word. Yet this fulfillment should not be understood teleologically, but as the result of a creative evolution; the potential that is realized does not belong to word *as such* as some sort of essence, but is nothing more than the highest possibility of the word event repeating itself. It is this repetition, moreover, that transforms the poem into a political action; for the ideal world, *das Mögliche*, the worlding of the world that the poem captures through its creation, is now passed on to the future, open to its infinite repetition as the model of free political action, of a politics based on the reciprocal interaction of man and nature. The poem becomes, in the words of Schiller, a *Münze* that the present coins for the future, as the model of true freedom.⁷²

Or rather, we might say: the word, fulfilling its ideal potential through a playful, evolved and *human* labor, becomes writing. Or for the first time, true writing appears as the political possibility of a purely human agency. Earlier, the written word was, before all else, the holy script. For only this was able to preserve perfectly the relation between sound and meaning. Every other form of human word-language could only function referentially, and arbitrarily, referring to meanings through sounds, but without any ultimate rhyme or reason, and thus writing, to the extent that it preserved this merely

arbitrary relationship, was given over to time and decay, losing its vitality and force as the original tongue became moribund. Only revealed script, whose perfection was guaranteed by a divine origin, could live onto all ages and do the work of politics; thus free political action was, of necessity, messianic, and the messiah corrupted into the “Son of God,” and so, barely out of its swaddling clothes, it came into contradiction with itself. The freest work of man, his very ability to create possibilities for himself, was torn from his hands; and if this contradiction revealed its deepest absurdity Luther’s resurrection of Augustine’s anti-pelagian doctrine, one need not look far back into the history books to see its gruesome wages.⁷³

True writing, as the possibility of freely human agency, preserves language as a living language; through the perfect balance of meanings and sounds, the words is no longer arbitrary, indicative, but expressive --- and yet without expressing anything but its pure ideality, its very ability to be repeated. Language expresses eternity, and without reference to anything beyond itself. It is ideally repeatable as a living possibility, though its repetition is not secured through any ground outside of itself, but, rather, is always simply the repetition of its ideality.

This suggests the answer to our third question: how does the work of poetry become a performance? The answer, it seems, is through writing --- which is nothing else than the ideal possibility of poetry as a playful work.

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For the first time, Messianic politics has grown into a fully human, and fully free possibility --- a politics of human agency that encompasses the whole work of nature, the

⁷² Cite the passage from Schiller to which this refers.

⁷³ Footnote on the Science of Judaism.

worlding of the world, and realizes its openness to new possibility, or that, indeed, grasping the whole of its possibilities, even if only in the moment of demise, hints towards a new world. Human creativity has evolved into its most radical potential.

And yet, this politics remains precarious.

On the one hand, because it is rooted to poetry it remains limited to a certain group of phonemes, and thus is always tainted with the danger of nationalism. For the mother tongue does not consist in a set of words --- these, indeed, can be passed fluidly from one language to another, and are always cosmopolitan at the moment of its birth. Nor in rules of grammar. These, to the extent that they could be identified, are already abstractions that could be learned by anyone willing to put in the time. Rather, the root of every mother tongue is a set of sounds that can enter into a fluent commerce with one another. And since these sounds tend to be the common trade of a group of speakers situated in the same plot of land, the mother tongue is almost invariably *Vaterländisch*.

On the other hand, the two realms of poetry, sounds and meanings, having realized their proper ideality, are now perfectly independent. And likewise, through the rigorous technique of the painter, the world of colors come into a free commerce, becoming a world unto itself, and nature's curves also come into their own. Colors, sounds, curves and words all remain unto themselves, each expressing the bound freedom of the universe as a whole, but in each case as a separate universe. While the poet's language, through its playful work, involves a perfect correlation between sound and meaning, this correlation is utterly groundless and inimitable; it remains, as it were, a mere hint of the unity that binds the different realms together. The higher unity of nature,

upon which every *earthly* messianic politics must depend, remains obscure, and unsubstantiated; it is incapable of surviving beyond the poem that first offers it as a hope.

The poem's listeners, trying to make sense of the unity that they hear as if for the first time --- a unity that seems to be without precedent in the natural world outside of them --- are tempted to attribute it to its author. Correctly realizing that the poem's playful vitality could never be the work of man as mere craftsman, and yet lacking a higher conception of what man's potential could be, they imagine the poem to have been the work of a special sort of maker, possessing of a super-human creativity. The poet as an individual, as a creative personality, thus comes to be understood as a Genius, and if his accomplishments still seem to defy understanding, his genius is graciously attributed to an entire people. The term genius need not be abolished from aesthetic and poetic discourse, but properly, it should refer to what every human being, indeed what everything in nature is; namely, a partial perspective through which is responsible, to a degree, for all of nature. Genius, in this sense, is always only a matter of degree.

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Wie beim Turmbau zu Babel die Völker, als ihre Sprachen sich verwirrten und ihre Verständigung unmöglich wurde, sich schieden, um jenes seinen besonderen Weg zu gehen: so schieden die Kunstarten, als alles Nationalgemeinsame in tausend egoistische Besonderheiten sich zersplitterte, sich aus dem stolzen, bis in den Himmel ragenden Bau des Dramas, in welchem sie ihr gemeinsam beseelendes Verständnis verloren haben.

Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*.⁷⁴

These two dangers both come together in Richard Wagner's conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the very boldest attempt of any artist to explain the ultimate unity of the different languages. What Wagner sought was nothing less than that each of performing arts --- namely, *Tanzkunst*, *Tonkunst*, and *Dichtkunst* --- and each of the formative art --- *Baukunst*, *Bildhauerkunst*, *Malerkunst* --- surge together into a single expression of human life and its compulsive yearning, its *Drang*. Each of the single art forms most its stubborn independence and dissolves in love for the others. Echoing the *Liebestod*, he writes;

erst wenn jede sich selbst nur in der anderen zu lieben vermag; erst wenn sie selbst als einzelne Künste aufhören, werden sie alle fähig, das vollendete Kunstwerk zu schaffen; ja ihr Aufhören in diesem Sinne ist ganz von selbst schon dieses Kunstwerk, ihr Tod unmittelbar sein Leben.⁷⁵

The seed of this *Zusammendrängen* is the union between the feminine principle of music and the masculine principle of poetry; the true *Gesamtkunstwerk* begins with their mating, and what allows for their perfect erotic union is their original unity, and the perfect correspondence of their content. Both the word-language of the poet and the

⁷⁴ Wagner, VI, p. 45.

⁷⁵ Wagner, VI, p. 97.

tone-language of the musician share a common origin and source; the overflowing inner feeling and *Drang* --- the inner-most *expression* of human life.

Confronted with impressions caused by objects outside itself, this inner *Drang* tries to differentiate itself that it might clearly discern the different objects working against it from the outside and communicate to others about these objects --- not, however, for the sake of objective knowledge about the world, but in order to make its own compulsion to communicate comprehensible to itself. Impressions from the outside are merely the occasion for this inner compulsion towards expression to express to itself its own need for self-expression. At first, this compulsive self-expression takes the form of a pure *Tonsprache*, the most immediate and least arbitrary expression of the externally-agitated inner feeling. This consists purely in the varied and continuous transformation of vowel sounds supported by gestures; “mannigfaltigste Hebung und Senkung, Ausdehnung und Kürzung, Steigerung und Abnahme der tönenden Laute.” Yet this language is capable only of expressing the variations of the inner feeling, and is unable to differentiate between and indicate things outside of itself. Thus the *Tonsprache* weaves a clothing for itself from out of the consonants that enclose things on both ends in just the same way as the things are themselves separated off from each other through their skin and casements.⁷⁶ In the passage from *Tonsprache* to an articulate language, a one-sided feeling --- a compulsion arising from an inadequacy to itself --- expresses itself through a myriad of rounded words, each of which indicated a rounded thing. And in the transition from a mere world-language to word-poetry, these words are pressed together, *verdichtet*, into a point. Yet the poet’s words and work remain a mere yearning and unfulfilled intention; a one-sided, purely masculine act that awaits redemption

⁷⁶ Wagner, VII, p. 219-20.

through the female principle, the Tonsprache. The words, having emerged from musical tones, must again rediscover themselves in these, and at the same time, the concentrated content of the word-poem must be unfolded into its *vollem Gefühlsinhalt*.⁷⁷ This *voller Gefühlsinhalt* requires in the end nothing less than the expression of the primordial kinship between all tones; the all-encompassing unity of the world of feelings;

Der Tondichter hat nun die Töne des Verse nach ihrem verandtschaftlichen Ausdrucksvermögen so zu bestimmen, daß sie nicht nur den Gefühlsinhalt dieses oder jenes Vokales, als *besonderes* Vokales, kundgeben, sondern diesen Inhalt zugleich als einen *allen* Tönen des Verses verwandten, und diesen verwandten Inhalt als *ein besonderes Glied der Urverwandtschaft* aller Töne dem Gefühle darstellen.⁷⁸

True drama, for Wagner, is an expression of the overcoming of man's one-sidedness --- a one-sidedness that emerged when, for the first time, man felt himself to be in opposition to nature. Language, music, and poetry --- indeed all human life --- emerge from a feeling of one-sidedness, of *Unabhängigkeit*. Or rather, man's feeling is this one-sidedness --- and thus compulsive and restless. Knowledge begins with this error, and redeems itself by coming to understand the necessity of all appearances. With this higher knowledge, human life comes full circle --- only now he experiences nature consciously, through reason, gaining an explicit awareness of the unity that binds together man and nature.⁷⁹

Wagner's philosophy of art and politics develops towards the idea of a truly free political action, and yet this idea is corrupted, --- and in a way that will prove extraordinarily dangerous --- through the presumption of the artist to comprehend through his art the unity of the different languages. These languages are all rooted in the

⁷⁷ VII, p. 270.

⁷⁸ VII, p. 272.

human body and its feelings, and do not possess an ideality of their own. Or indeed, to the extent that they do develop independently, and acquire a semantic system that refers primarily to itself, and expresses above all its own combinatorial possibilities, they have become rootless and artistically barren. *Tanzkunst* and *Dichtkunst*, lacking an adequate inner principle, must remain in a state of incompleteness and yearning, awaiting their redemption through the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of drama. They stand at the outermost extremities of the human body, which need to be united together through its inner organs, its heart. As he explains;

Das Meer treunt und verbindet die Länder: so trennt und verbindet die Tonkunst die zwei äußersten Gegensätze menschlicher Kunst, die Tanz – und Dichtkunst. Sie ist das *Herz* des Menschen; das Blut, das von ihm aus seinen Umlauf nimmt, gibt dem nach außen gewandten Fleische seine warme, lebenvolle Farbe, --- die nach inne strebenden Nerven des Gehirnes nährt es aber mit wellender Schwungkraft. Ohne die Tätigkeit des Herzens bliebe die Tätigkeit des Gehirns nur ein mechanisches Kunststück; die Tätigkeit der äußeren Leibesglieder ein ebenso mechanisches, gefühloses Gebaren. Durch das Herz fühlt der Verstand sich dem ganzen Leibe verwandt, schwingt der bloße Sinnenmensch sich zur Verstandestätigkeit empor.⁸⁰

Likewise, *Tanzkunst* itself --- the art form that gives flesh to music and poetry --- is understood as the expression of the varied life of the inner sensations through an infinitely varied movement. The subtly-differentiated inner life of the more nobly cultivated (edlere gebildete) person expresses itself through rich and multifarious transitions from one movement to another; but in every case, there is a correspondence between the movement and the expressed sensations. Dance is rooted in man's pulsating inner life.

⁷⁹ VI, p. 8-10.

⁸⁰ VI, p. 51.

The body, for Wagner, is the locus of feelings, of life understood as affect, and is incapable of acquiring any authentic expressive possibilities beyond this; languages cannot be cultivated --- the true cultivated person simply speaks a more refined version of the same language, expressing subtler variations of the same primordial feeling. And thus, by reducing all human languages to somatic languages, he at the same time restricts the expressiveness of dance to mere affect; the language of dance mimics the limits of the Wagnerian body.

At the root of Wagner's notion of *Volk* --- the fateful basis of his politics --- is this limited body and its language. The *Volk* is not bound together by shared statehood and civic organizations, nor even by a common history, but rather by a *gemeinschaftliche Not*. Like the human body, it is united through a shared affect that pulsates through the whole and that enforces itself with necessity. Any *Bedürfnis* that lacks the *Kraft der Not* --- a *bloßes Bedürfnis der Erhaltung des Überflusses* --- could never serve as the foundation of the folk, and indeed, those who feel it must be regarded as its enemy.⁸¹ For a feeling to be common, however, it must be communicated through words, and thus a shared language is the necessary basis of the *folk*. Yet the expressive potential of words, however, lies not in either the referential value, or any even more independent form of ideality, but rather is rooted in the affective life of the body, which conveys itself through *Sprachwurzeln*. Only through these primordial word-roots is it possible to communicate feelings, and thus, above all, the feeling of a *gemeinsame Not*. Those languages where the root-meanings have become too far obscured, incapable of expressing themselves through poetry, could never become the basis of folkhood.

⁸¹ VI, p. 15.

Truly free political action and Wagner's aping of Messianism differ from each other as the balletic body differs from Wagner's body. Like the array of *Blutwurst* at the *Metzgerei*, the Wagnerian *corpus politicus* expresses one feeling in enumerable permutations and colorings --- but remains in every case indigestible. The body of the true dancer, in contrast, cultivates itself towards an ideal language that attains independence not only from the inner life of the body, but, in a way, from all earth-bound necessity; it becomes light, ethereal --- mocking and spotting gravity and catastrophe. Nor, however, is it limited to one language, one set of expressive possibilities. The gestures at the periphery need not bring more central movements to a greater degree of articulateness, but might even stand in a dissonant contrast. Or indeed, this dissonance may even appear more centrally as, for example, in the arabesque penché --- where the absolutely vertical line of the legs contrast with earth-bound drooping of the *port de bras*. And because its languages are multiple and complex, and their ideality not tied down to inner feelings, it is capable of true *dialogue*. Whereas Wagner's duets, and above all the *Liebestod*, could only express a shared *inner necessity*, ballet is able to convey the manifold forms of interaction; the different ways that one agent could act towards or against another. *Compulsion, falling in love, acting up, resistance, violence, mechanical movement, organic growth, even spasms and convulsions, even, perhaps, explosions* --- all forms of activity that constitute the universe as a system of forces. Yet at the same time, other forms of activity, such as the language of color and words, remain at the periphery of the dancing body, which makes no claim to grasp these for its own, but, at most, only to touch upon them.

The ballet dancer's body is a node; it touches upon everything, and, to a degree, expresses the different ways in which things touch, and even enters into a dialogic interaction with these things. But it does not try to grasp everything within itself or lay claim to every form of expressiveness. And thus it is, as it were, the premonition of a truly free political life; of the human body that understands itself as the spectacle of the universe, as a part through which the whole feels and expresses itself as a whole, but without ever being comprehended in its totality. Not exactly a monad, for it is not merely limited by a lack of clarity, but a knot which is part of the world-knot, and expresses its knottiness without finding release, without being loosed, *erlöst*.

Or in other words; the dancer's body expresses the *collaboration* between all beings, but above all, humanity and nature --- a co-laboring that runs through the universe, and is the origin of all things. Not surprisingly, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *ballet* should itself arise not from a single overriding creative will, but as the common work of set designers, composers, choreographers, dancers, libretticists and musicians --- a process that blossomed, above all, in the spectacles of Diaghilev's *Ballet Russe*. As Andrew Wachtel explains in his introduction to *Petrushka: Sources and Contexts*, neither Stravinsky, Fokine, Boison, or Nijinski --- let alone Diaghilev himself --- either agreed or the ultimate meaning of the work that they were creating, or claimed some sort of master code that would justify the interrelation between music, dancing, visual displays and costumes, and the various themes and folkloric content invokes through the libretto. If they were able "to find a common language and ... perceive a common symbolism," it was only through the long process the artistic collaboration. Just as meter and rhythm opened up a space in which the sayings of human language could gel together into a

poem, the stage unfolds into the arena of collective labor; here, the artist's different languages could communicate, and, through a creative dialogue, find ways of resonating with each other, if only through their dissonance. More a visionary than an artist, Diaghilev opened up a space in which a true spectacle could evolve, --- as the *spectacle of nature collaborating with man evolves* --- yet without claiming to encompass it.

Truly, the spirit of an open, comprehensive politics breathes through Diaghilev's *Ballet Russe* --- among its last breaths before the outbreak of World War I. In his well-known letter to the London Times (?), published July 6th, only a week after the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Francis Ferdinand and the duchess of Hohenberg, Fokine explains how the "new Russian Ballet" differs from both the staid conventionalism of the Bolshoi and Kirov as well as Isadora Duncan's modernist principles. The latter no less than the former, he suggests, restrict the language of dance, and its expressive potential, to a narrow idiom;

Every form of dancing is good in so far as it expresses the content or subject with which the dance deals; and that form is the most natural which is most suited to the purpose of the dancer. It would be equally unnatural to represent a Greek Bacchic dance with ballet-steps on the point of the toes, or to represent a characteristic Spanish national dance by running and jumping in a Greek tunic and falling into attitudes copied from paintings on ancient Greek vases. No one form of dancing should be accepted once and for all. Borrowing its subjects from the most varied historical periods, the ballet must create forms corresponding to the various periods represented. In the course of the ages man has repeatedly changed his plastic language and expressed his joys and sorrows and all his emotions under a great variety of forms, often of extreme beauty. For man is infinitely various, the manifold expressiveness of his gestures cannot be reduced to a single formula.⁸²

Against Wagner, and against Isadora Duncan --his 20th century avatar, Fokine understands all developed somatic language as conventional, possessing an ideality of its own. This does not exclude that there might be a certain underlying affective basis

common to all people, or that there could not be a universal comprehension of the expressive language of movement --- without this assumption, Fokine's spectacles would remain incomprehensible to the audience. Yet a given culture's somatic language does not exhaust its *authentic* expressive possibilities in this *natural* substrate; the feelings of the body are only the beginning, *not the beginning and the end*, of dance.

For Fokine, ballet was to be, above all, as we might say, the spectacle of history; its first rule was "to create in each case a new form corresponding to the subject, the most expressive form possible for the representation of the period and the character of the nation..." The choreographers and dancers were not just to recombine the possibilities of a pre-existing conventional idiom, let alone merely coax out the natural language of the body. Rather, they were to reinvent a new language, not for the sake of novelty, but to remember the past and the wonderful diversity of human life. *A new language is to be created for the sake of remembering the manifold expressiveness of man's gestures.* The art of ballet as whole is nothing else than a system capable, in this way, of ever reinventing itself into new idioms. Through an ideality cultivated by a rigorous, and at time brutal regime of training, it would become able to express the infinite freedom of man's body-language.

Like Wagner, and Duncan, Fokine advocates the expressiveness of the entire body. This expressiveness, however, is not rooted in an underlying feeling and thus limited to the individual body, but rather, it opens up towards dialogue, and even the life of the crowd. Echoing, if unwittingly, the words of Diotima, Fokine explains attitude of the new ballet towards groups and ensemble dancing;

⁸² Fokine, "Letter to 'The Times,'" ...

In the older ballet the dancers were ranged in groups only for the purpose of ornament, and the ballet master was not concerned with the expression of any sentiment in groups of characters or in ensemble dances. The new ballet, on the other hand, in developing the principle of expressiveness, advances from the expressiveness of the face to the expressiveness of the whole body, and from the expressiveness of the individual body to the expressiveness of a group of bodies and expressiveness of the combined dancing of a crowd.

Ballet, as it were, climbs on a ladder, with each rung a broader sphere of expressiveness --- and yet the movement is not of an abstraction and induction, ἐξ αλλου, away from the body, but a passage through the body, and each of these broader spheres contains all the expressive possibilities of those that proceed it. Unlike the traditional corps de ballet, and unlike Nietzsche's *dionysian chorus*, which realized its individuality only through conjuring up the masked tragic hero, *the crowd never becomes faceless*: and it would not be too much to *remember* in Fokine's ballet, sadly lost to time --- but this is a sad necessity of every art work that, like Achilles, *lives* in time --- as an apotropaic defiance against the crassly manipulative *mass politics* that would blight humanity in the years to come, that blights it still.

These are the first and fourth principles of Fokine's new ballet. The second and third concern the proper use of mimetic and conventional gestures. The first however, summarizing the spirit of his choreography, and the *Ballet Russe* as a whole, concerns the proper relation of the arts to one another;

The new ballet, refusing to be the slave either of music or of scenic decoration, and recognizing the alliance of the arts only on the condition of complete equality, allows a perfect freedom both to the scenic artist and to the musician. In contradistinction to the older ballet it does not demand "ballet music" of the composer as an accompaniment to dancing; it accepts music of every kind, provided only that it is good and expressive. It does not demand of the scenic artist that he should array the ballerinas in short skirts and pink slippers. It does not impose any specific "ballet" conditions on the composer or the decorative artist, but gives complete liberty to their creative powers.

An alliance between the arts, based on the condition of their complete equality: Hölderlin's *freier Bund* --- or Chomsky's anarchosyndicalism. The all-mastering genius banished to Germany to choreograph Hitler's festivals --- as if the path towards the Greek harmony of body and spirit had taken a detour through Acheron, drunk of the waters of Lethe, and joined the kingdom of the shades.

Sparkling forth from Fokine's words is nothing less than the most human tendencies of the German *Enlightenment*. And we are reminded of nothing so much as Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, an obscure and seldom understood text, and too little appreciated --- for like all the works of those striving after a true dialogue between Germans and Jews, it shatters against the impossibility of its task. Perhaps no German thinker accepted with such consequence the possibility that human languages cannot understand each other, but exist in a state of babble. This was implicit in his rejection of Lessing's idea of historical progress, and in his arguments against any politics or religion based on the need for unity of belief. Because the words that people use in their commerce with each other are tied to individual, private sensations, there is no way that we could ever be sure of our agreement about any of the terms we use in discussion, let alone the vaguest and most open of all of these: "God." And thus, rather than seeking unity of belief as the condition of a civic, and civil political life, --- an approach that, fatefully, Fichte will take in his piece on the French Revolution, and in order to exclude Jews from the national community --- Mendelssohn will advocate the need for an endless, and open conversation. In this way, indeed, he justifies Judaism, not as a set of beliefs, but as a strange, seemingly inexplicable, and yet absolutely binding ritual law; this law was given to the Jewish people that they might begin to question why they are

performing these ritual, and thus, that they would seed the conversation about God that would spread throughout the earth. This, ultimately, provides an answer the theodisic question that underlies Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechte*, and that, nearly forty years later (?), Schelling will again address in his own *Philosophie der Offenbarung*; namely, why God would not have united all people through one religion from the beginning, holding them together in a peaceful communion through a common tongue and shared beliefs, but instead, would allow for different, and divergent, revelations to come to pass. The answer, for Mendelssohn, does not rest in a dialectical conception of history, of history as the circumtuitous return to a higher unity, but in ongoing dialogue.

In similar fashion, Fokine confronts the babble of man's somatic languages --- the different body languages of the peoples of the earth. Politics, as we saw, is above all a question of sharing space --- not only a plot of land, but the air, water, the bodies of animals, and even, indeed most of all, the space of the body itself, whose violation is the subject of all reproduction, and the beginning and end of all war --- to the extent that it remains, in some way, a human institution, and not merely the conditions of survival of the military-industrial complex. An infinitely nuanced and infinitely varied language of physical interaction is at the heart of all political intercourse, providing the underlying foundation upon which is built the language of words.⁸³ And thus, the problem at the heart of Fokine's choreography --- the diverse ways in which human cultures express themselves physically --- is serious; for here, our hatreds are most deeply entrenched. Even if people might come to understand each other through their words, even if they

⁸³ The impossibility of politics ever to free itself from metaphors drawn from the body...

disagree, their bodies may still rise up and shatter all hope of concord. Fokine's choreography, we might say, was the first step, among many and diverse first steps, towards the realization of a body-politic that encompasses all of humankind, and all of nature --- a universalism large enough for the universe. Just as the art of painting casts our eye upon the more peaceful world of colors and curves, just as poetry realizes a free and playful, and frolicking, communion of both meanings and phonemes, just as, finally, Schönberg's *Harmonienlehre* will herald the liberation of tones from their dependence on the habituated ear of the listener, giving dissonances rights equal to consonances --- so the new Russian Ballet liberated the expressiveness of the body from the limits of earth-bound politics. In each case, the ideality of a language is realized by freeing it from the orbit of things. And in each case, the orbit of things itself orbits around the human body and the inputs and outputs through which it communicates with nature. And so too, the labor of the dance and of the dancer --- the ever so gradual development of technique at the barre, and the almost tedious development of the art of ballet itself --- is a labor against the graveness and gravity of the human body and the limits it puts to political life. And yet; with the other arts, the liberation towards ideality of its own language could not avoid an abstraction from, and forgetfulness of, the other languages. The modern technique of painting, truly the most concrete in relation to its own proper medium, is unavoidably abstract in relation both to things of the world and the other artistic languages. And likewise, atonal music, while often blossoming into the most marvelous worlds within itself, has found it almost impossible to shake off the impression of coldness and sterility that it leaves on the uninitiated. By correlating the open-ended ideality of meanings with the circulating dance of sounds, poetry is to able surmount the

danger of abstraction; and yet even with Hölderlin, it could not explain or justify their connection, but let a tempting and dangerous uncertainty linger in the air. With dance, however, the labor against the human body is always, and in equal measure, a labor towards the body --- freeing from the body nothing else than its ideal language. Freeing itself from the necessity that bound it to the its affects, its pain and joy, it becomes able to express these, as well as every other possibility of somatic communication, as a free possibility. Whereas Wagner, sensing the precarious isolation of the ever more ideal forms of artistic language, tried to unify them by enslaving them all, through his *Gesamtwerk*, to the *one feeling* of the situated, blood and earth-bound corpus, the *new ballet* of Fokine liberates the expressiveness of the body from its situation, --- from its bondage to the earth, and from all the strife that arises as we divide up the earth to serve our flesh. Without tyrannizing and compelling the other arts into its service, the liberated body would provide a center for their communication; the center of a spectacle in which they all, if only gradually, and not through any master-strokes of genius, become conversant with each other. The dancer touches all things without wishing to grasp them or curb them to his power; through him, they alight into spectacle, just as dancer, and the audience delight in them. The dancing body is a dilettante, as, in way, was Fokine.

The spectacles of the *Ballet Russe* anticipate a truly free, informed, comprehensive and creative human politics --- a politics in which humans would relate to each other and to nature as human beings, through their bodies, through all the emotions and affects and all the ideal possibilities that make of us what we are, and yet...without the strife that come from earthly limits. Not because we would refuse these limits and escape to a spiritual domain, but because, at last, we would accept these as they are, and

what they bind us to --- for if ever we were *all* to understand what it means that the earth, the universe, --- indeed, that all life, --- is round, and rounds back upon itself, we would see; the time is past when man could stand against man in strife... there is nothing left of time or world to squander. War was the mother of all things, and every thing was a rung on the ladder we climbed to realize that all is one, and each thing the expression of one of the infinite number of languages woven together into the universe. Now that we see this spectacle from above, --- and now that we realize, must realize that there are, in truth, no things --- we must make an about-face. No longer can our earthly doings stoke the fires of the war that blazes through nature, and that created the world outside and within ourselves, indeed made all that we are. Instead, they must conserve, preserve, maintain -- cherish; our politics must become a politics of remembrance. Every action that turns away from this is a *Missewende*, a *faux-pas*, towards oblivion.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ And the how fresh the winds of the *Ballet Russe*, in contrast to the stink of Isadora Duncan's Wagneriana. As she writes in "I See America Dancing," "It seems to me monstrous for anyone to believe that the Jazz rhythm expresses America. Jazz rhythm expresses the South African savage. America's music will be something different It has yet to be written. No composer has yet caught the rhythm of America --- it is too mightily for the eras of most. But some day it will gush forth from the great stretches of earth, rain down from the vast sky spaces of stars, and the American will be expressed in some mighty music that will shape its chaos to Harmony. Long-legged strong boys and girls will dance to this music --- not the tottering, ape-like convulsions of the Charleston, but a striking upward tremendous mounting, powerful mounting above the pyramids of Egypt, beyond the Parthenon of Greece, an expression of Beauty and Strength such as no civilization has ever known. That will be America dancing. And this dance will have nothing in either of the servile coquetry of the ballet or the sensual convulsion of the South African Negro. It will be clean..." That peculiarly German form of idiocy --- to seek to define oneself against French over-refinement and African savagery, at least as a temporary solution before one has wrapped them both together into the Jew --- seems to ape itself through Isadora's words. And one wonders what would be left of America once it had been wrested from everything French and African. --- Little more than the Rocky Mountains; but perhaps she hoped to repopulate with the German's exiled from the Europe which, by 1927, they had already made good strides towards destroying in their quest for national dignity. While one may justly credit Isadora Duncan with freeing up dance from artificial conventions and moving towards a realization of the expressive potential of the whole body, just as one may justly credit Wagner with opening new possibilities of composition by challenging the traditional principles of harmony, we must see the limits of her vision, and criticize, above all, her inability to see these limits herself. Of special significance are those inherent in her notion of the nature that is, in her eye's, the basis of all true dance. In 1903, when she seemed more Rousseauian or even Schillerian than Wagnerian, and still credited the savage with movements that are "unrestricted, natural and beautiful," she named Darwin as one of her "most revered teachers." And yet the nature of which she then spoke seems peculiarly static, unevolving --- and free of all relation to human activity. "A woman once asked me why I dance with bare feet and I replied, 'Madame, I

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It would be senseless to speak of a linear historical development in Jewish thought and culture. As Abraham Geiger noted, each moment of the Diaspora has imposed unique conditions and given birth to new ways of being and thinking. To eyes shaded by historicism, he knew, Jewish history could appear only as a geological cross-section --- layer piled upon layer. Still wishing, however, to hold on to the idea of a unitary and continuous tradition, Geiger struck upon a fortunate image; the tree --- here, the organic and geological, living and dead, become one.

With the Shoah, an epoch of the Jewish Diaspora came to an end. What was living at its periphery is now dead, and a new growth has begun to form around the old, cordoned off by an ashen barrier. So now, and perhaps for the first time, we can look back with eyes sobered by hindsight, and wonder what was the meaning of this age and its struggles. Perhaps, as Scholem believed, there never was never a true dialogue

believe in the religion of the beauty of the human foot.' The lady replied, 'But I do not,' and I said, 'Yet you must, Madam, for the expression and intelligence of the human foot is one of the greatest triumphs of the evolution of man.' ... 'I refer you to my most revered teachers, Mr. Charles Darwin and Mr. Ernst Haeckel.' If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past, the dance of eternity, and has been and will always be the same... The movement of waves, of winds, of the earth is ever in the same lasting harmony. We do not stand on the beach and inquire of the ocean what was its movement in the past and what will be its movement in the future. We realize that the movement peculiar to its nature is eternal to its nature. The movement of the free animals and birds remain always in correspondence to their nature, the necessities and wants of that nature, and its correspondence to the earth nature. It is only when you put free animals under false restrictions that they lose the power of moving in harmony with nature, and adopt a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them. So it has been with civilized man. The movements of the savage, who lived in freedom in constant touch with Nature, were unrestricted, natural and beautiful. Only the movements of the naked body can be perfectly natural. Man, arrived at the end of civilization, will have to return to nakedness, not the unconscious nakedness of the savage, but to the conscious and acknowledged nakedness of the mature Man, whose body will be the harmonious expression of his spiritual being." Fokine, in his letter, did not make pretentious allusions to Darwin and Haeckel, perhaps he knew little of their work, or was against it, as many artists of the times; and yet he understood some of its deeper implications, and above all, that the natural possibilities of the language of the human body themselves consist of evolved conventional forms. From here, it is only a short leap to realizing that the evolution of man, in all its forms, is but a part of the evolution of nature --- and that human creative freedom is itself but a form through which evolution

between the Jews and Germans, --- yet we might wonder if there has ever been true dialogue anywhere for as long as human have tread upon the earth. For this may itself be only a messianic expectation, a dream, as long as the world remains *alze sêre gescheiden*; since even the intimacy of flesh, love or friendship offers no surety for understanding. But there was at least a dance; of words, of ideas, of sounds, of visions, and, at last, of bodies and of ash --- and if, in the end, it was only a *Todesfuge* and *danse macabre*, still, extraordinary and wonderful ideas were born into the world, as sparks fly off a flint. And perhaps now, when finally rustling leaves of springtime growth have settled to the ground; --- now, when the noisy clang of words has perished in the winter air, it is our task to lovingly recollect these and bring about their converse.

This dance began with Spinoza --- the first Jew to burst into central Europe at the beginnings of the modern age --- and ended with Freud. And what a strange beginning and end; between blessedness and gaiety blossomed a tradition guided above all by messianic impulses, if only from beneath, as by Benjamin's hunchbacked theologian. Yet with Spinoza and Freud, these messianic impulses seem at their minimum; not only is human history subsumed within nature, and without any God-given meaning or justification, but there is little expectation of or hope for any sort of progress. In Spinoza, this cynicism follows from the belief that true knowledge can never be the possession of more than a blessed few. For Freud, on the other hand, it is sad experience that he must

becomes possible; thus, that nature itself, as a whole, is always on the make, and that it is meaningless to speak of the essence of things.

make towards the end of his life, as he sees barbarism erupt throughout Europe, either mated to progressive ideas, or, as in Germany, completely unalloyed.⁸⁵

Thus educated by the times in the precariousness of progress, Freud explains his decision to send out the third part of *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*. As he states in prefatory notes written before the *Anschluss*, he has the boldness (*Verwegenheit*) of one who has nothing to lose. And if he was without hope before the thirteenth of March, afterwards, no longer under the protection of the Catholic Church, he also has nothing to fear. And so, feeling neither hope nor fear, an absolute *desperado* --- he gives to the world his most ambitious, and strange, assault on the problem of history and religion. And yet it would be wrong to think that this work stands in no positive relation to the explicitly Messianic tradition of Geiger, Cohen, Rosenzweig and Benjamin. For perhaps such writings, always prophetic in intention, take shape in accordance with the measure of hope and fear that the times present to their author; perhaps even the term “God” is a variable that conforms or diverges with nature according to a hidden calculus. If so, we might understand Freud’s *Moses* as itself but another attempt, made in the most desperate, and thus most needful hour, to impress upon the human race a promise, or at least a possibility, given it by history.

⁸⁵ “Wie leben in einer besonders merkwürdigen Zeit. Wir finden mit Erstaunen, daß der Fortschritt ein Bündnis mit der Barberei geschlossen hat. In Sowjetrußland hat man es unternommen, etwa 100 Millionen in der Unterdrückung festgehaltener Menschen zu bessern Lebensformen zu erheben. Man war verwegen genug, ihnen das ‘Rauschgift’ der Religion zu entziehen, und so weise, ihnen ein verständiges Maß von sexueller Freiheit zu geben, aber dabei unterwarf man sie dem grausamsten Zwang und raubte ihnen jede Möglichkeit der Denkfreiheit. Mit ähnlicher Gewalttätigkeit wird das italienische Volk zu Ordnung und Pflichtgefühl erzogen. Man empfindet es als Erleichterung von einer bedrückenden Sorge, wenn man vorgeschichtliche Barberei auch ohne eine Anlehnung an irgendeine fortschrittliche Idee vor sich gehen kann.”

That Freud saw no hope of progress in the history of religion is clear from the following, almost ironic remark, which concludes a discussion of the “cultural regression” of Christianity; “Und doch war das Christentum religionsgeschichtlich, d.h. in bezug auf die Wiederkehr des Verdrängten, ein Fortschritt, die jüdische Religion von da ab gewissermaßen ein Fossil.”⁸⁶ The progress of religion is always a progress backwards, towards the ever more explicit revelation of the original trauma. To the extent that this revelation is not mediated through science and consciousness, but occurs unconsciously through individual and collective neurosis, one could only expect every more dangerous outbreaks of the original brutality. While this does allow for a cultural progress independent of religion, religion remains the far stronger force, and thus cultural progress always exceedingly precarious, and ever at risk of falling into an alliance with its opposite. Nothing concerns Freud so much in *Moses* than this alliance, already spoken of in the preface to the third part. His confrontation with the history of Judaism is nothing less than an attempt to free the sparks of progress embedded in the very husks of barbarism that have granted them passage into our own age.

Two-fold are the sparks embedded in the Jewish religion. On the one hand, the *Sun-religion* of Ikhnaton; not so much on account of its spiritualism its universalism and its anticipation of scientific enlightenment --- recognizing in the sun the source of all life on this planet, and thus first turning attention towards what, once the principles of Darwin have been accepted, must be regarded as the alpha and omega of earthly life. On the other hand, the free union of the *Brüderbund*. In his recapitulation of the theory of human prehistory from *Totem and Taboo*, Freud describes how the sons, banding

⁸⁶ Freud, *Moses*, p. 95.

together in order to kill their father, first hit upon the principle of political equality, the origin of all “morality and law,” all the institutions upon which civilization and civility depend. As Freud explains;

Es entstand die erste Form einer sozialen Organisation mit *Triebverzicht*, Anerkennung von gegenseitigen *Verpflichtungen*, Einsetzung bestimmter, für unverbrüderlich (heilig) erklärter *Institutionen*, die *Anfänge* also von Moral und Recht. Jeder einzelne verzichtete auf das Ideal, die Vaterstellung für sich zu erwerben, auf den Besitz von Mutter und Schwestern. Damit war das *Inzesttabu* und das Gebot der *Exogamie* gegeben.

According to Freud’s account of the origin of monotheistic religion, Moses, --- an Egyptian priest who attached himself to Semitic tribes enslaved in Israel in order to lead them and indoctrinate them in the religion of Ikhnaton --- is murdered by his minions, who thus realize a measure of equality among themselves. At the origin of Judaism, in other words, is a repetition of the original moment of all human civilization

The two sparks of progress in Judaism are the religion and politics of the *Sonne*, and of the *Söhne* --- a sun and son religion. But each is, from the very beginning, interwoven with repression, compulsion, and barbarism; the sun-religion, because it is at once a means of Enlightenment and of political repression, serving to consolidate the imperial might of the Ikhnaton and humiliate and weaken the temple priests. And the son-religion, because it is tainted, from its very inception, with the stain of murder as well as the guilt that is thereby incurred, and that will be passed down from generation to generation through neurotic patterns of behavior. The murder of Moses, however, plies these two separate complications together to create the constellation that will rule over human history in the ages to come. For as a result, the very hope of scientific enlightenment and universalism, --- an understanding of man as an outgrowth of nature,

rather than a participant in God's creation, --- will be wedded to a guilt for the father's murder. After Moses's murder, the Enlightenment idea could only be restored through the resurrection of guilt; and thus it must assume the form given it by the prophets, with their untiring focus on a life in truth, peace and justice, though based on the belief in a monotheistic God, unique and separate from his creation, as the father was distinct from his sons, and Moses from his minions.⁸⁷ And at the same time, the equality of the brothers came to be entangled not only with the guilt at the father's murder, but with the absolutist ambitions of *Akhenaton* and the regal ambitions of *Moses* --- and ultimately with the absolute lordship of God. Regarded in terms of its origin, and as a concrete historical phenomenon, the Monotheistic religion of Moses involves a fateful paradox; it presents the seeds of a world-view that grasps humanity as a part of nature and of an ethics based on the universal equality among all men, --- and ultimately, perhaps, all humans --- and yet these seeds of progress could only plant themselves among men through a trauma whose origin is in the absolute might, and right, of the father. The equality of the son-, and sun-religion and politics was only able to replicate itself through the father's absolute lopsidedness. The very insight that no force rules monarchically in heaven or on earth was thus woven into the fabric of history through the coarsest, thickest of regal thread.

In this way, we now begin to see how Freud's *Moses* presents the last voice in the already-fading tradition of German-Jewish Messianism. For Herman Cohen, the strength of the Jewish messianic tradition lay in the idea of a God that, through a unity that excluded all that was not of his Being, provided the anchor of human ethical life and the

⁸⁷ Freud, *Moses*, p. 74.

socialist ideal. God's absolute monarchic privilege, his unrivaled lordship over all things, was itself the guarantor of the equality of all human beings; humans could only be equal before God. The idea of Monotheism, he believed, was the *evolved* idea of a creator *God*; a precarious configuration that could only be made coherent through Kant's sundering of ethical and natural law. Freud, in contrast, could only regard the sundering of God from nature, and nature from ethics, not only as the greatest weakness of the Prophetic tradition, but also as a distortion wrought against an originally egalitarian potential. Yet, at the same time, it follows from this that his relation to the tradition of Judaism is no different, and no less Jewish than that of the prophets, as well as all those, who, in later times, have tried to awaken and strengthen the Messianic tradition. For like them he returns to a secret tradition in order to awaken Judaism's purist tendencies, just as, indeed, and as he admits, his scientific attitude is itself a Jewish, which is to say Egyptian heritage. And in certain sense, he could not but regard himself as possessed of a "gift for religion," no less than Paul; "Er war ein im eigentlichsten Sinn religiös veranlagter Mensch; die dunkeln Spuren der Vergangenheit lauerten in seiner Seele, bereit zum Durchbruch in bewußtere Regionen." Without these dark traces of the past in his soul, Freud could not possibly account for the insights which guided his empirical method. Yet whereas Paul, and all the other founders of religions, allowed themselves to be controlled by these forces without understanding them, Freud will try to bring them to the surface with the sobriety and awareness of the scientist --- yet even this sobriety remains in part an inheritance from the past.

Freud sought nothing less than to cleanse the theologo-politics of the sun and son of every trace of the father's inequality; a final and lasting catharsis from both the "tragic

guilt” and authoritarianism that has blighted humanity. A religion of the son, like Christianity --- but no longer haunted by the father’s ghosts. The dead have buried the dead.

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χαριτος στυγει δυστλητον Αναγκην

Empedocles

The ballet we speak of is not something over and done with, a particular idiom and system of steps; an art form that, however your opinion may sway, reached its pinnacle with Taglioni and Essler, Cecchetti, Bournonville, Petipa, Diaghelev, or Balanchine. Rather, it is a possibility, a spark of progress and hope --- just as was the sun- and son- religion, the *Freier Bund*, for Freud. Progress, for him, is not a question of specific beliefs about the nature of reality, but of a functional interaction towards the world. In a similar manner, ballet is the discipline of movement, cultivating the body towards the proper relationship towards itself, other bodies, and nature as a whole. And just as Freud’s theories work towards the embodiment of reason --- showing, above all, that the language of words and symbolic reason, though possessing its own, irreducible form of ideality, develops out of the original drives, whose energy, through cathexis, comes to inhabit linguistic signifiers --- the discipline of ballet strives after the reasonableness of the body. Rather than serving towards immediate gratification, or expressing the immediate impulses of feeling, the body’s movements are brought towards an autonomous, and open language, capable of expressing the political interaction of different bodies.

Thus, both Freud's naturalized, Darwinian messianism and the evolving art of ballet return to a goal set by Spinoza --- the first and purest modern exponent of a truly naturalized, scientific ethics; namely, the realization of the correlative power of the mind and the body, and of a community of all minds and bodies, through the overcoming of titillation, the concentration of pleasure in one part of the body. Pleasure, for Spinoza, is an expression of the power of the body, and this bodily power, rather than its renunciation, must be the basis of ethical life; and yet, when this pleasure is concentrated in specific parts of the body, its strength comes into contradiction with itself --- the pleasure of one part may bring about the ruin of the whole. Yet through the shared, and unfinished labor of Freud and the ballet --- the convergence of the embodiment of reason and the enreasoning of the body --- a communion between the two emerges that defies the dichotomization of Spinoza's attributes; each loses its privilege --- expressing the universe, in their stead, are countless languages, real and ideal, concrete and abstract. None of these could encompass the whole, yet, nevertheless, some are more expressive than others, and the most expressive are those whose possibilities can combine free from the sway of dominating forces either within or without; released, in other words, from titillation, now understood in the most general sense as every form of submission to the necessity of the parts.

Just as the ideals of equality and scientific reason first appeared in an ambiguous, even self-contradictory form, so too the ballet; for at its grand debut into European culture, it was escorted by no one else than the father incarnate --- Louis XIV, *le grande monarque, le roy-soleil*. And no other form of art stood in so near a relation to his imperial ambitions, or so perfectly displayed both the promise and the failure of the

baroque. If as a youth, still under the Tutelage of Cardinal Mazarin, he was content to play the role of Apollo at the court balls, in his later years, after he had claimed the exclusive right to rule and reduced the French Aristocracy to sycophantic courtiers, the ballet itself became the expression of a political life that revolved entirely around the person of the king, and was orchestrated through the etiquettes of courtly life; a politics that at once had become a body-politics, while at the same time, was held under the absolute sway of one single, and ever heftier body. Thus, if it was with the failed absolutism and sun-religion of Amanhotep IV, in the fourteenth century of B.C., that the ideas of *égalité*, *liberté*, *fraternité* first entered the minds of men, it is in the successful absolutism of the sun-king that these entered, and became a possibility of, the body; and it was left as the task of ballet to realize the potential contained within its paradoxical origin. The spiritual history of Judeo-Christian civilization, for Freud, began with the trauma of Moses's law, and his murder; spiritual history, was from the start, neurotically guided by the retained memories of the body. With the *danse d'ecole* (?), in contrast, both the barbaric brutality and the monarchic lopsidedness were always a function of the *institutions* through which they, of necessity, perpetuated themselves; for while the underlying language of ballet, from the beginning, contained the seeds of a freely interactive body politic, it has only been allowed to uphold itself through institutions that, beyond the unequal distribution of nature's blessings, replicated and accentuated the groundless inequalities determining social relations as a whole.

The history of ballet must be understood in terms of the real institutions that have allowed the cultivation of the *balletic* body, and give a home to its spectacle --- institutions that, in general, will reflect the relations of productive forces in a given

society. We do not wish to suggest that all human phenomena could be thus understood, or that any develop in a perfect correlation with politico-economic organization; to do so would contradict our insistence on the irreducible ideality of different languages. All languages, including the language of dance, enjoy a great deal of autonomy in their development towards ideal possibilities, --- or indeed, are capable of developing towards an autonomy, even if, at their origins, they are deeply embedded in shared forms of life. Yet for the most part, the body can only be cultivate through establishments that subject the individual body to some kind of wider scrutiny, and it is best cultivated beginning at a young age, before the individual possesses either enough maturity or self-reflection to understand what is being done to him. And likewise, the cultivated body can only display itself, and make its virtues known, in public spaces and through spectacles whose prohibitive cost make them directly dependent on the existing centers of power and wealth. Thus, the history of dance, and ballet, indeed, of all the forms of cultivation of the body in general --- sports, gymnastic exercises, military training, and religious rituals --- provides a unique insight into the changing ways in which political life, without necessarily resorting to direct physical coercion, nevertheless creates the conditions under which the human body is able, as it were, to exercise itself. Yet at the same time the history of ballet, in particular, gives insight into how --- even in the wake of ever greater degrees of institutionalization --- truly free and expressive possibilities are able to emerge, the seeds of a truly free politics.⁸⁸

There have been untimely and solitary poets, philosophers, artists, and even, though to a lesser degree, musicians; wandering upon untroden paths, they were able to

⁸⁸ Explain relation to Foucault.

see a world different than that which struck the eyes of other mortals, and their works at time even enjoyed the luxury of slumbering through years of latency and obscurity before they found an age that would understand them.⁸⁹ The art of dance, however, is almost wholly given over to its age; for it has only the present to realize itself, and if it fails at this, it has failed completely. Thus the dancer either expresses his age, or is sacrificed to it.

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Nun, mein vortrefflicher Freund, sagte Herr C, so sind Sie im Besitz von allem, was nötig ist, um mich zu begreifen. Wir sehen, daß in dem Maße, als, in der organischen Welt, die Reflexion dunkler und schwächer wird, die Grazie darin immer strahlender und herrschender hervortritt. --- Doch so, wie sich der Durchschnitt zweier Linien, auf der einen Seite eines Punkts, nach dem Durchgang durch das Unendliche, plötzlich wieder auf der andern Seite einfindet, oder das Bild des Hohlspiegels, nachdem es sich in das Unendliche entfernt hat, plötzlich wieder dicht vor uns tritt: so findet auch, wenn die Erkenntnis gleichsam durch ein Unendliches gegangen ist, die Grazie wieder ein; so, daß sie, zu gleicher Zeit, in demjenigen menschlichen Körperbau am reinsten erscheint, der entweder gar keins, oder ein unendliches Bewußtsein hat, d.h. in dem Gliedermann, oder in dem Gott.

Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater"

We could trace the history of the ballet through the court of Louis XIV, where it still served as the pastime of Aristocrats, to its development as a theatrical artform in its

⁸⁹ We should not think of the "lonely poet" as a specifically modern creation, rooted in the isolation and alienation of the individual. For as we have shown, meter and rhyme, like the artist's canvas and paint, or the composer's notation, allow for a private stage of creativity. The poet-philosopher Empedocles had lived an active life among humans, yet even so, a tremendous, almost incomprehensible loneliness speaks through the few fragments of his that remain. He understands himself to be a δαίμων, who, because he trusted himself to mad strife, has been banished from God and forced to "assume all the possible forms of mortal beings that wander life's tedious paths." Alone among mortals, he greets the earth with tears and distaste. Consider Fragment 118 (Diels) "κλαυσα τε και κωκυσα ιδων ασυνοθεα χωρον." Or 121: "ατερπεα χωρον , ενθα φονος τε Κοτος τε και αλλων ενθεα Κηρων αυχηραι τε Νοσοι και Ζησιες εργα τε 'ρευσα Ατης αν λειμωνα κατα ηλασκουσιν" It is also not surprising that as the entire

own right. This was a long process, that even now is far from finished, and within this history there is little that is without significance. The employment of commoners as professional dancers, Noverro's (?) attempt through the *Ballet d'action* to place theatrical dance on a solid footing, the systematic codifications of Blasis and Cecchetti, the development of point technique, the feminization of the ballet in post-revolutionary France and the revigoration of male dancing in Denmark and Russia, the subsidy of dancers through prostitution --- all of these stand in a vital relation to the liberation of an art form that, despite its vast expressive potential, can never bear fruit without an alliance with the real forces and conditions, and even the barbarism, of the present day. But we will skip forward to that moment when the possibilities of the ballet, long in the working, suddenly sparkled before the world; the *Ballet Russe* of Diaghilev.

Capturing the imagination of the spectators as never before, and gathering around itself the creative work of artists from every field --- Stravinsky, Debussy, Satie, Cocteau, Bakst (?), Boisson (?), Picasso --- as well as the most marvelous dancers and choreographers of the time --- Pavlova, Fokine, Massine, and even Balanchine --- the *Ballet Russe* not only exhibited as never before the possibilities of dance, but, indeed, of all the word-less art forms. Each of these artistic languages become a prism through which the others were reflected and enhanced, and like the facets of a diamond, the whole appeared in its glory only through the division into parts. Sound and spectacle coursed with life and energy, and became meaningful in a world so overfull of idle words. And at the same time as the outward spectacle of the ballet blossomed, its inner core --- the discipline of dancing itself --- acquired a new systematic unity and rigor. Enrico

political character of philosophy changed, and as it became so firmly rooted in Athenian political life, the

Cecchetti, who instructed Nijinsky at the Imperial Russian Ballet, and later taught with Diaghilev, brought a hitherto unknown unity to the movements of the ballet, and developed the systematic interrelation of the different parts of the instructional regime. Whereas Diaghilev and Fokine were concerned above all with creating a new kind of art form, Cecchetti discovered in the art of ballet an antique, classical beauty. Yet while he identifies this beauty, above all, with Ancient Greece, it is not rooted to a specific culture, body-type, language or climate, but is, simply, *la beauté merveilleuse du corps humain*. Ballet is not only neither vain nor decadent, but stands outside of movement of history, the rise and decay of civilization, and offers the constant hope of the rejuvenation of its ideals. Thus, at a time when the much of Western Europe cowers in fear before the barbarian Asiatic hordes, the aged Italian, a star at La Scalla, would write;

Encore moins est-elle décadente. Terpsichore, exilée des temples de l'antique Hellade et plus tard passagère dans les salons de la France et sur les theaters de d'Italie, elle a trouvé de nos jours en Russie des Templiers, ses Vestales, ses défenseurs les plus dévoués. Ranimée d'un nouveau soufflé de vie, elle réjouit encore par sa beauté l'esprit las des humains.
Nulle autre joie ne me touché dans mon automne de vieil artiste que de voir sur de jeunes tiges reflourir éternelle la fleur de cet art.⁹⁰

The Muse of Dance, Terpsichore, a god in exile and *Heimatloser Sänger*, travels, like the wind that breathes new life into her, from one land into another, and, giving new blossom to the marvelous beauty of the human body, rejuvenates the human spirit. The grave illusion of decay is suspended by rediscovering a beauty that is, at every moment, ready to reawaken. And in this way, moreover, we see that Cecchetti's extreme classicism --- of vast influence for modern methods of instruction --- and Diaghilev's revolutionary modernism do not contradict, but complement each other; it is only through the one that

dialogue, and later lectures and esoteric prose, replaced meter as the philosopher's medium.

⁹⁰ "A Manual of The Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Méthode Cecchetti).

the other is able to blossom. Theatrical dance is, indeed, capable of extraordinary heights of exstasis, yet this remains where, by name and nature, it should remain; at the periphery. The roots and trunk remain sober, and it is only through this steadfast core that the highest degrees of expression, and enthusiasm, are possible.⁹¹

⁹¹ Here, as everywhere, this might be explained at a much more technical, physical level; the most exstatic elements of classical dance, those which seem most to defy gravity --- with woman, work on pointe, and with men, the grand leaps of virtuoso technique, --- depend on maintaining the most contact of the feet with the floor; without a well-articulated foot that properly feels the floor during the plies which initiate even simple jumps, it is impossible to effectively communicate the energy of the body into a verticle movement. But this, in a more general sense, it was is so remarkable --- and fascinating --- about dance, and what makes it appear frivolous to the initiated and uncomprehending. Because all his work is in, with and against the graveness and gravity that is natural to the body in its relation to the world, the dancer could have no more difficult, serious or lofty goal than levity, joyousness, even frivolity. The spectacle of frivolity --- of peripheral movements that are so light and airy that they seem to evaporate into the air at the moment of their birth --- is perhaps its most difficult accomplishment. And indeed, because the purely frivolous itself appears as the receptacle of such an extraordinary quantity of labor, even as it graciously sacrifices itself to the moment --- it allows for the simultaneous experience of intense joy and intense mourning. --- This gay mourning, I believe, is the mode of the tragic proper to our age. Hölderlin and Kleist pointed us towards this, but perhaps it is even suggested in the Gnostic and Kabbalistic idea that the earth consists but of shells in which divine sparks have been imprisoned --- making the destruction of the flesh necessary for the liberation of the divine, and leading, as Buber suggests, ultimately to the religious nihilism of the Frankish sect. Yet, in ballet, the dissolution of the body does not stand in conflict with its possibilities, but is its very highest degree of activity, self-possession, and constancy. The body is disembodied, freed from the dominion of gravity, only by most being itself. And thus, whereas past, mystical incarnations of this joyous mourning conceived of God as a transcendent cause of the world, and in their purest, oldest forms --- Zoroasterism (?) and Manicheanism --- began with the presupposition of an absolute dualism between the light and darkness, the spirit and the flesh --- in its new manifestations, and above all, in balletic spectacle, this opposition dissolves; the world itself, in its totality, appears as the interwoven labor of man and nature, and in the moment of joyous mourning we at once comprehend the absolute unity of their work, and its beauty, but also its precariousness --- and, above all, its neediness --- that it would not exist without us, without our observation, our enjoyment, our pleasure, our sadness --- that it is, in every sense, our spectacle. This joyous mournfulness and mourning joy is also what we might call *true sentimentality*. True sentimentality has little to do with a cloying attachment for family, children, and fatherland; in fact, it is most purely felt towards those things that are least like oneself and furthest from one's everyday concerns --- and above all, towards inanimate, and even disposable objects. Perhaps its simplest expression is the immense responsibility that children feel towards the objects that they possess; they feel guilty if they neglect their stuffed animals and dolls --- even after they have fallen out of their favor. Such children, I think, are not merely projecting their own fears of abandonment; rather, they realize, if only, of coarse, in a very instinctive way, that the things of the world exist and have life through their grace alone. No one better understood this emotion, its power, and its significance, better than the Danish poet Hans Christian Andersen; and it is for this reason that while his stories speak so directly and immediately to children, they also contain depths that our own age can no longer afford to ignore and trivialize. Sentimentality, with him, --- as we will see --- becomes a way of comprehending the world as a totality, and is as far as can be from all mere nostalgia. And in the story "The Tin Soldier," he combines the purest and most mysterious expression of true sentimentality with an understanding of the strange unity that binds the constancy and frivolity of ballet.

All of these various tendencies converged and found themselves anew in the brief career of Vaslav Nijinsky. Not only was he an unparalleled master of the somewhat dowdy classical technique taught at the Imperial Ballet School in Petersburg, but he seemed to become at once both the music and his characters, expressing their qualities not through the artifice of mime or some kind of stereotyped “national character,” but purely in the medium of dance; the language of the body became expressive in its own right, and he commanded all its registers --- from spasms and contortions to the most extraordinary grace. And in his famous leaps, it is said, he seemed to pause as if suspended in mid-air; as if the laws of gravity were themselves, if only momentarily, put on hold. And through all of this, off-stage he remained a blank; laconic, expressionless, without outward charm. While he, like Fokine, was deeply influenced by Isadora Duncan’s revolutions, he was, in many ways, the very opposite of her; for as, as Lincoln Kirstein notes, whereas Isadora could only dance herself, and her entire life was one single act of self-presentation, Nijinsky had no life outside his dancing, and knew none of the artifices of personality beyond the roles that he became, absolutely. He seemed to exist on a different plane.

The dancer lives and works in a medium that cannot stand the test of time; or only through the betrayal of this medium, which is to say, of time itself. Even if we had films of him dancing, or if more of his choreography had been preserved, this would not change anything; the dance can only be experienced through the common space of theater, the dancer must appear in the flesh --- for above all, we must experience the suspense of every moment, the possibility of catastrophe, and the tension of one body touching up against another. Dance is incomprehensible outside of the shared moment

and shared space; every recording is only a shadow, and abstraction of movements. Thus, what remains of Nijinsky's dance are only the sparks that it threw off from itself --- the testimonies of enraptured spectators, colleagues, and even, perhaps, the words of his own diaries, written as he passed over into madness. And what we wish to do by speaking of Nijinsky, is only to point towards the immense hope that appeared through his dance and that sparkled over into these testimonies --- a hope that, like every true hope, points far beyond the narrow confines from which it emerged.

One of these testimonies is especially revealing. Cyril Beaumont writes, "I have seen no one approach Nijinsky's rendering of Petrouchka, for ... he suggested a puppet that sometimes aped a human being, whereas all the other interpreters conveyed a dancer imitating a puppet." If other dancers had presented the world and its gradations of being -- from the mechanical doll and puppet to divinely graceful sylphs --- as extreme modes of being human, Nijinsky presents humanity itself as an act of becoming; as the precarious project of the human race. And in just this same way, he was able to present the divine not after the model of the *merely, and all-too* human, but as an unheard-of possibility, --- and something that can be striven for. Born into the rigid hierarchies of the Russian Empire, and raised in both the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faith, he became at once the first dancing pantheist --- the other side of Spinoza --- and realized pantheism, as had Nietzsche --- as a process of evolution rather than emanation.

The names of Darwin and Nietzsche, and the thought of evolution haunt Nijinsky's diaries. While he opposes the idea that man is descended from an ape, he does not oppose evolution *per se*, --- only the reduction of the essence of man, and his spiritual nature, to the essence of an ape. And indeed his diary --- written on the verge of a tragic

decline into mental illness that we do not wish to romanticize --- suggests the hope of a higher conception of evolution --- one that does not limit man to the bestial, reducing all his actions to some kind of principle of survival, as many evolutionary biologists are still wont to do, but that opens mankind up towards a more all-encompassing way of being. Consider, for example, this passage, with which the first part of his diary, titled “On Life,” ends;

My soul is sick. I am suffering. I am suffering. I know that Kostrovsky will feel me, but I know that everyone will feel me. I am a man and not a beast. I love everyone. I also have faults. I am a man and not God. I want to be God, and therefore I try to improve myself. I want to dance. I want to draw. I want to play the piano. I want to write poetry. I want to compose ballets. I want to love everyone. This is my aim in life. I know socialists will find it easier to understand me, but I am not a socialist. I am God. My party is God's. I love everyone. I do not want war. I do not want state frontiers. I want Wilsonism, which will improve the whole terrestrial globe. I am the whole terrestrial globe. I am the earth. I have a home everywhere. I live everywhere. I do not want to have property. I do not want to be rich. I want to love, love. I am love, and not brutality. I am not a bloodthirsty animal. I am a man. I am a man.

God is within me, and I am within Him. I want Him. I seek Him. I want my manuscript to be published, because I know that everyone can read, but I hope for improvement. I do not know that is needed for that, but I feel that God will help all who seek. I am a seeker, for I feel God. God is seeking me, and therefore we are finding each other.

Beast, man, and God are not isolated and separate essences, but are connected through striving, and each, in a way, represents something that is striving for, an act rather than a being. Throughout his diary, Nijinsky cycles through these separate possibilities, and describes, in a dazzling and complicated fashion, their interwovenness. It is in this way, above all, that his pantheistic tendencies seem to touch upon his dance, suggesting, if only in a tortured and painful way, what was so gracefully, even joyously expressed on the stage. At the same time, though, becoming God is identified with mastering all of the different arts, all the different languages of art. Elsewhere in the diaries, Nijinsky will

claim mastery through feeling of every form of communication; he can understand what people are saying without speaking their tongue, or teach the violin without knowing how, and understands everything about the earth without the concepts of science. The unity of all languages is an ongoing obsession. Yet unlike with Wagner, this unity of languages is not rooted in the single feeling of the human body, but rather in a unity of feeling that encompasses all of the world, the entire terrestrial earth, and expresses itself through peace rather than the hostilities of one body-politic towards another. Thus, the striving to become God is nothing else than the struggle to feel and be felt throughout all of nature, and it is motivated, above all, by a premonitory feeling of God as the unity of all things.

While these notions only come to word as Nijinsky's schizophrenia became manifest, they should not be treated merely a symptoms of mental illness, or as residua of his earlier conversion to Tolystoian religious philosophy. Rather, they express a humane and revolutionary tendency that followed him throughout his life, and that inhabited his creative work; even as a student he insisted, against standard practice, in addressing the younger grades as equals. And after Diaghilev broke off relations with him, and he took his own touring company abroad, he tried, unsuccessfully, to institute democratic reforms and further undermine the star system of which he was himself, in a superficial sense, the beneficiary. Yet these tendencies could not bear fruit; the ballet could not be liberated in his time, and Nijinsky remained unfelt, and thus misunderstood. And perhaps the reason is this; even after the Russian ballet, and with it Nijinsky, had liberated itself from the decaying Imperial bureaucracy with its prudish conservatism, it remained an institution Capitalist, indeed, rather than imperial, and open to amazing creative possibilities; yet

even the collaboration of artists and their languages nevertheless depended on an organizing moment, pure vision and administration, without any real creativity of its own. A Diaghilev, in other words. Even before he went insane, Nijinsky was unable to survive as an artist without the Diaghilev whom, for many reasons, he despised, and whom he remains obsessed with throughout his diary. The unity of artistic languages was itself only possible within the empty organizational space opened up by the visionary. We may now recognize the need for this visionary moment, and the impossibility of the artist, or, indeed, any kind of creative labor, to exist without it, as the real condition of age in which Nijinsky danced, the age to which he was sacrificed --- and which would, soon after, give birth to the Soviet Union as well as Hitler.

*

Du maa vide, at ligesaa snart Kongen og alle
Haffolkene flytte herind til Byen, saa lobe
Bolmsterne strax fra Haven op paa Slottet og ere
lystige. Der skulde Du see! De to allersmukkeste
Roser sætte sig paa Thronen, og saa ere de Konge og
Dronning. Alle de rode Hanekamme stille sig op
ved Siden, og staae og bukke, de ere Kammerjunkere.
--- Saa komme alle de nydeligste Blomster, og saa er
der stort Bal, de blaa Violer forestille maa Søcadetter,
de dandse med Hyazinter og Crocus, som de gamle
Fruer, de passe pass, at der bliver dandset net, og at
det gaaer pænt til.⁹²

The king has vacated his castle, and, beyond the sight of human eyes, the flowers gather themselves from out of the garden, where they existed only to serve the pleasure of others, and begin a dance of their own. Arranging themselves only after their *Smuk*, their

⁹² Anderson, p. 27. "As soon as the king and his courtiers move into town, then the flowers move up to the castle. There they live a merry life; I wish you could see it. The two most beautiful roses sit on the throne; they are the king and the queen. The big red tiger lilies are lords in waiting; they stand behind the throne and bow. Then in come all the most beautiful flowers and the great ball begins. The blue violets and midshipmen. They dance with the hyacinths and the crocuses, and call them Miss. The tulips and the big yellow lilies are the old ladies, they see to it that everyone behaves and dances in time to the music."

beauty and decoration, their colors, once dedicated to the symbolisms of courtly life, now join into a free converse; they even spring away from their petals and begin to fly. “for naar de ville, saa kunne de flyve. Har Du ikke nok seet de smukke Sommerfugle, de røde, gule og hvite, de see næste ud som Blomster, det have de ogsaa været, de ere sprungne af Stilken høit op in Luften, of har da slaet med Bladene, ligesom de vare smaa Vinger, og saa fløi de.”⁹³

The charm of this image, it might seem, rests simply in the privilege of fantasy over the understanding. Yet while this Romantic opposition survives into Anderson’s poetry, it is not as decisive as it may at first seem; the fantasy remains only a means of access and openness to processes that lie outside the poet. Rather, it has a deeper, and stranger significance; the dance of the flowers, their blossoming, is the moment where the vertical becomes horizontal --- or indeed, where the two axes of movement are joined together in their original, organic unity. The vertical growth of the stalk unfolds into a loving embrace of the outward-flowing rays of the sun.

This moment is captured perfectly in an image from the *Den lille Havfrue* (The Little Mermaid). Here, the sun is described as a flower; “I Blikstille kunde man øine Solen, den syntes en Purpur-Blomst, fra hvis Bæger det hele Lys udstrømmede.”⁹⁴ And, at the same time, the little mermaid builds a garden that itself looks like the sun; “men den yngste gjorde sin ganske rund ligesom Solen, og havde kun Blomster, der skinnede rode som den.” This mutual embrace of the blooming sun and blooming flowers, this

⁹³ Anderson, p. 26; “When flowers want to, they can fly. You have seen butterflies. Don’t they look like yellow, red, and white flowers? That is exactly what they were once. They are flowers who have jumped off their stems and have learned to fly with their petals; and when they first get a taste for it, they never return to their stems, and their little petals become real wings.”

⁹⁴ P. 53. “When the sea was calm, the sun appeared like a crimson flower, from which all light flowed.”

confluence of vertical and the horizontal, heaven and earth, and even labor and growth, itself only points towards the original unity of paradise itself. For even here, in the mermaid's garden, the furthest rounding of opposites is experienced through sadness --- as a weeping willow; "Hun plantede ved Støtten en rosenrød Grædepiil, den voxte herligt, og hang med sine friske Grene udover den, ned mod den blaa Sandbund, hvor Skyggen viste sig violet of var I Bevægelse, ligesom Grenene; det saae ud, som om Top og Rødder legede at kysse hinander."

And verily, in paradise itself, this same sadness intrudes and causes its fall. In a story called "The Garden of Eden," Anderson tells of a learned prince who laments the disobedience of the first man, and is sure that, were he in paradise in Adam's stead, he would not have committed original sin. Carried to paradise by one of the four winds, he is given a chance to prove himself --- and fails, of course. While inside the palace in the Garden of Eden, itself formed of a giant flower, he disobeys the orders that had been given to him; leaning over the princess of the garden, and seeing her tears, he pities her own pity for him and touches his mouth to hers. This moment is described in a passage reminiscent at once of Goethe's *Faust* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (check the dates);

'Are you crying because of me? Do not cry, fairest, most beautiful woman! Now I understand the happiness of paradise. It flows with my blood through my veins into my brain, my thoughts. I feel the strength of the angels' eternal life within my mortal body. Let everlasting night come, the riches of one moment like this are enough for me.' He kissed away her tear, he kissed her eyes, and his mouth touched hers.

A fearful clap of thunder was heard, deeper, more frightening than any ever heard before. The fairy vanished and the garden of Eden sank into the earth; deep, deep down. The prince saw it disappear into the dark night like a far distant star. He felt a deathly coldness touch his limbs; his eyes closed, and he fell down as though he were dead.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ English, p. 143.

Eternity, as it were, blossoms between, and unfolds out of the furthest extremes, and yet it cannot allow these extremes to touch. For if earlier *Trauer* was experienced as the fall away from eternity, the dismemberment and shattering of an original well-roundedness, now mourning itself belongs to the eternal --- for it exists only as a circulation, and can only be felt as such, --- flowing with the blood, --- as a movement and communication that takes place throughout the whole, and yet could never realized in a single instant. And thus even paradise is not without tears, since its dance --- '*Now begins our dance,*' *whispered the fairy* --- implies the very impossibility of realizing a moment of absolute unity.

Even within paradise, the horizontal and vertical movements do not know of any higher, logical reconciliation --- there could be no such thing as an "intellectual intuition" --- and yet they join together in a moment of transition, a curving from one movement to another. After the fall, however, they are sundered completely, and each, as it were, sets out on its separate way. On the one hand, an errant path across the face of the world; man becomes a wanderer --- the fate that Death pronounces to the fallen Prince; "In a coffin I shall put him, but not now. Let him first wander about the earth atoning for his sins, becoming good if he can." On the other hand, though, nature itself comes to exist only in the vertical plain, only as a ceaseless striving towards the sun. In the words of the pine tree; "To grow, to grow, to become tall and old; there's nothing in the world so marvelous." And it is at the moment where these two movements, trying to twist back together into one, clash the most, that Anderson's own *historier* take place.

The way in which these two moments contrast and conflict appears most clearly in "Skuggen," (The Shadow). While traveling in the Mediterranean, where "the sun really

know how to shine” (*der kan rigtignok Solen brænde!*), a young scholar catches a glimpse of *Poetry* as she stepped on to her balcony to water her well-tended flowers and then hurried back indoors. In the evening of the next day, the scholar, still captivated by the sight of *Poesy*, notices that his shadow, shy of the light, has stretched all the way into the her apartment, and so he encourages his shadow to investigate, on the condition that it return to him. This, however, was not to be. The shadow sneaks across into the apartment; “but then there happened something that no one say. The shadow went through the half-open door of the other balcony, while the scholar went into his own room and closed the drapes behind him.”⁹⁶ It is only many years later that the shadow will return to the scholar and tell him what it learned amidst *Poetry*.

The scholar, having grown a new shadow, has now returned home and become a philosopher; “Saa kom den lærde Mand hjem og han skrev Bøger om hvad der var Sandt I Verden, og om hvad der var Godt og hvad der var Smukt...” Writing about what is true, good, and beautiful, he stands directly under the Platonic forms; or in the famous image in the *Republic*, directly beneath the light of the sun, --- his thought, as it were, is purely vertical and without shadows, a simple ascent on Jacob’s ladder. And so, also, he is unable to communicate to others, or make himself understood, and as his life progresses, and as he ascends ever higher towards the pure forms, his material condition becomes ever worse; “Sorg og Plage fulgte ham, og hvad han talte om det Sande og det Gode og det Skjønne, der var for de Fleste ligesom Roser for en Ko!”⁹⁷ And in the end, wasting away of sickness, his friends describe him as “a mere shadow of himself.” The shadow,

⁹⁶ English, p. 336.

⁹⁷ P. 190, “Sorrow and misery followed him, and what he told about the true and the good and the beautiful was for most people like a rose before a cow!”

on the other hand, moves purely on the horizontal plain --- as indeed, such purely horizontal movement belongs of essence to a shadow; he is a wanderer, a traveler, wealthy and famous. But above all, the master of words; for this is what he learned in the anterooms of poetry, who herself also dwells in the dimension of the horizontal, though surrounded by so much lamp-light that the shadow could not approach her directly, but had to remain in the entrance room of her court. Afterwards, having become like a human through his proximity to poetry, the shadow gains his substance and fame by wandering through the earth, and bribing people by reporting to them their evil deeds -- in the trade of words, in other words, --- gossip. "If I had written a newspaper, everyone would have read it." And indeed, the gossiped, common, *uegenlig* (check) word is itself a shadow;

'Vær ganske rolig!' sagde den lærde Mand, 'jeg skal ikke sige Nogen hwem Du egenlig er! Her er min Haand! Jeg lover det og en Mand et Ord!'

'Et Ord en Skygge!; sagde Skyggen, og saaledes maatte jen tale.'⁹⁸

In the end, the philosopher becomes the shadows shadow, and together they travel to a health resort, where the shadow meets, and wins the love, of a princess who suffers from too much discernment; she is able to see through everyone, just not the shadow. Finally threatening to reveal the shadow for a shadow and the marriage for a fraud, the philosopher --- now, officially, as it were, a shadow --- is murdered under the cloak of secrecy;

'Stakkels Skygge' sagde Prindsessen, 'han er meget ulykkelig; det er en sand Velgkerning at frie ham fra den Smule Liv han har, og naar jeg rigtig tænker over det, saa troer jeg det liver nødvendig at det bliver gjort af med ham in al Stilhed!'

⁹⁸ p. 186.

‘Det er rigtignok haardt!’ sagde Skyggen, ‘for det var en tro Tjener!’ og saa gav han ligesom et Suk.

‘De er an ædel Character!’ sagte Kongendatteren.

Om Aftenen var hele Byen illumineret, og Kanonerne gik af: bum! Og Soldaterne præsenterede Gavær. Det var et Bryllup! Kongedatteren og *Skyggen* gik ud paa Altanen for at lage sig see og faae nok en Gang Hurra!

Den lærde Mand hørte ikke noget til Alt det, for ham havde de taget Liven af. ---

While not all of Andersen’s writings possess such crisp brutality, the despair of this ending repeats itself throughout his work. Indeed, many of his stories might be thought of as prisms that separate out these two movements --- the horizontal and vertical --- from the white light of ordinary life, and allow them to appear distinctly and in their contradiction. Yet this negative task is also complemented by a positive; the remembrance of the “small piece of life” {check the Danish} that is lived only vertically, only towards the sun. Because the narrow, small, and simple life points upwards with such stubborn resolve, it is unaware of its fellows, incapable of communicating; dumb. And thus, to be remembered, it must be forcibly occupied by the horizontal life of words, and in this way brought into a communication with its surroundings, with itself, and with the reader. In order to remember the idiotic simplicity of its life, its own ceaseless striving must be overshadowed with the melancholic recollection of that which, in its striving, it has forgotten, or indeed never knew. The language through which things speak and think --- and through which they become accessible to us --- is, as it were, the mirror image of its own small life.

Nowhere is this technique applied with such force as in “The Fir Tree.” What is most remarkable about stories such as “The Fir Tree,” the “Snow Man,” or the “Tin Soldier” is that while Andersen endows inhuman things with a human language, they are

not granted even the slightest degree of human agency; they do not act against the world and towards themselves as humans do, but remain, in their actions, the things that they are, subject always to the conditions that are imposed by their nature and their material. And accordingly, their striving must not be confused with the striving of humans; they do not wish for things that they could gain through purposeful actions, but rather, --- and this is what is so peculiar --- only for what they become. Their striving, as it were, is a simple expression of their essence. And yet this essence is not itself either simple, or actively self-determining, but is subject to transformation from the outside. Thus the fir tree begins as a merely natural being, growing upwards towards the sun, and is transformed, through human labor, into an artifact, --- a Christmas tree. Surrounded by presents, decorated with gold and silver tinsel, hung with sweets and golden apples, illuminated by hundreds of candles, and crowned by a golden star, the pine tree becomes a symbol of the Garden of Paradise, and itself points towards eternal life. Its striving remains purely vertical, towards growth, but now it has itself become the human striving for eternity and God's light. The existence of the fir tree, as it were, exhausts the entire range of vertical movement; from natural growth towards the sun, to human growth towards eternity. Yet this pure verticality, is, as we suggested, wordless; it is only able to speak of itself through its opposite, the melancholy recollection of what was forgotten before it was ever known. For even the very fact that the tree's transformed nature communicates itself as striving already implies the language of melancholy; or, indeed, all language is merely horizontal, merely recollective and rememorative, --- filling in the void of what has already happened with mournfulness.

It this story, we see, the negative and positive gestures are closely intertwined; the mourning of a fallen world, where the vertical and horizontal movements have hopelessly diverged, and the melancholic recollection of a life that could never have been lived. Perhaps it is owing to the conflict in mood between these two moments, and the very different demands that they make on the reader, that Andersen has often been accused an over-indulgent sentimentality. Indeed, if we are to properly understand his work, and defend their spirit against vulgarization and misunderstanding, we must realize the very necessity of what might, at first, appear sentimental.

her court;

I was in the entrance hall. That's what you sat looking at all the time, the vestibule. There was no lamp in there, and that's why from the outside the apartment appeared dark. But there was a door. It opened into another room, which opened onto another, which opened onto another. There was a long row of rooms and anterooms before one reaches the innermost where Poetry lived. And there were ablaze with more than enough light to kill a shadow, so I never saw the maiden up close. I was cautious and patient, and that is the same as being virtuous...Everything was there! Of course, I never went all the way in. The twilight of the vestibule suited me better, and from there I had an excellent view. I saw everything and I know all. I was at the court of Poetry, in the entrance hall... You could not have stayed there and remained a human being, but it made a human being of me! I quickly came to understand my innermost nature, that part of me which from birth can claim kinship to Poetry. When I lived with you, I didn't even think about such things. You'll remember that I was always larger at sunrise and at sunset, and that I was more noticeable in the moonlight than you were. Still, I had no understanding of my nature; that did not come until I was in the vestibule, and then I became a human being.⁹⁹

in the light-giving energy of the sun and the death-absorbing, yet ever rejuvenating earth, and thus is submitted absolutely to the law and cycles of nature. And if the flowers are able to dance, it is not through a fanciful flight from their mortal condition, but only through its complete acceptance. As they explain, not to *Ida*, but rather to her doll ---; “Du skal have saa mange Tak, men vi kan ikke leve saa længe! Imorgen ere vi ganske døde; men siig til den lille *Ida*, at hun skal begrave os ude in Haven, hvor Kanarifuglen ligger, saa voxe vi op igjen til Sommer og blive meget smukere!”¹⁰⁰ The dance of the

⁹⁹ English, p. 339.

¹⁰⁰ P. 30; “It is most kind of you, but our life is short. Tomorrow we shall be dead. Tell little *Ida* to bury us out in the garden where the canary is buried; and next year we shall come to life again and be even more beautiful than we are now.”

flowers, their free union, is the sideways turn of a life lived wholly on the vertical axis, as a filament stretched between the earth and the sun, darkness and light; the inorganic and the absolute.

This utopian moment, described with such childlike ease and simplicity, is at the heart of Andersen's poetic work; it repeats itself, for example, in the violent ending to "the Tinderbox" --- where the king, queen, and royal council are, literally, overthrown at a public execution --- as well as in the more despairingly images of the "The Garden of Eden," and also, in "The Little Mermaid," through the strange correlation between two kingdoms --- one under and the other above the sea. Yet we should not think that Andersen simple repeats the typically Romantic idealization of "fantasy" over "understanding" and "cleverness."

Art does not develop through the linear advance of history. Rather, it blossoms. We have already discovered this thought in both Hölderlin and Cecchetti, and turning to the works of Hans Christian Andersen, we shall find it anew --- only now with illuminating rays cast on the relation between the language of nature, the language of dance, and the language of words.

This spiritual nature is descended from God, and God; or, perhaps one could say, man's spiritual privilege consists in being identical with --- grasping and comprehending, or rather, feeling --- God as the whole of nature.¹⁰¹ But such attempts to weave a halfways coherent doctrine out of Nijinsky's diary would be futile; what is important, above all, is that the pantheistic and panentheistic tendencies are so strongly pronounced, and that they appear in a form that has peculiar resonance with his dancing career; in his continual cycling between three possibilities, beast, man, and God.

In Dorethea Schlegel, Heine, Lasalle, Marx, Hess, Geiger, Zunz, Cohen, Rosenzweig, Benjamin we discover a politics defined, above all, by hope and by the openness of history. Just not in Spinoza and Freud --- for them, indeed, history ; in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the history of revelation becomes merely an indication of moral righteousness, but expresses nothing about nature's essence. And in Freud's *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* --- historical time is revealed as the time of trauma and neurosis. To live without neurosis would be to live outside of history --- in a relation to one's natural surroundings free of all the maladapted notions rooted in the development of the individual and of mankind. Yet if Freud and Spinoza

{Freud and Moses Mendelssohn (and Spinoza) as the beginning and end of the messianic tradition in Jewish-German literature... And yet in a certain sense, they are its deepest exponents...What Freud sought was to realize free the religion of the sun, and the son from the top-heaviness of the father ---

From the sun-king to Nijinski --- Ballet describes a similar trajectory.

Nijinski --- compared with Hölderlin's Empedokles.}

¹⁰¹ P. 18.

For the circle to be complete, the procreative semen (zeugende Samen) of the poetic word, the poets intentions,

p. 272

These enclosed and clothed vowels become the *Sprachwurzeln*; the roots of Wagner's theory of musical poetry.

124

219 –Entstehung der Sprache.

Allowing for this unification is, at once, the genius of the artist as a creative personality, and the genius of his people and their mother tongue.

p. 97

{The genius as the one who thinks he knows how these different world relate to each other.

Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* as the danger of Genius, nationalistic poetry.

Adalbert Stifter in contrast: }

The *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Diaghilev, in contrast. Different creative artists brought together... }

{Judaism: the world as God's creation.}

ii) The needs for politics --- poetry as political; as creating the possibility of beings a poet.

iii) The need to build a bridge between mythology and science; that this suggests the nature of the *Trennung*. --- Writing.

iv) That this brings us back to the question: how do the work and performance separate.

Elsewhere, indeed, he contrasts the *schnelle Verstand* with an understanding that is *einseitig schließ*--- that, as it were, slopes only in one direction, and is not yet well-rounded.

i. Schneller Begriff not simply ...

ii. Comp. with Plato's Eros.

iii. The danger of its Schnellness; the need for sober enthusiasm. For keeping
once balance.

iv. Poetry as a dance.

v. Thus: poetry moves up and down, and is endless, cannot grasp the whole.

vi. Poet as a dancing Handworker.

vii. Solution to the problem of Rhyme/Meter.

i. The poet is open towards all of nature --- not just towards the beautiful.

ii. How is the poet able to do this:

the poetic spirit must be schnell.

that it cannot encompass all at once.

that it must be infinite.

iii. *Begeisterung und Nuechternheit*.

In short: the poet must dance.

Beginning from

obvious beauties he must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever

climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and

from two to all beautiful bodies; from personal beauty he proceeds to

beautiful observances, from observance to beautiful learning, and

from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know [211d] the very essence of beauty. In that state of life above all others, my dear Socrates,' said the Mantinean woman, 'a man finds it truly worth while to live, as he contemplates essential beauty. This, when once beheld, will outshine your gold and your vesture, your

Poetry becomes writing: the murmuring, flowing, of nature, becomes a rune.

, and with And on the other hand, Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, where a monotonously repeated takes over. The former, taking shape from the heroes' senseless march towards the heathen east, and ending in chaotic bloodshed and

A philosophy, it follows, might first be understood as a set of words that find their niche by expressing the interaction of things and words among themselves and with each other. Words like οὐσία or ἰδέα or *Subjekt* and *Objekt* survive as specialized philosophical vocabulary through the very ability to express at a high level of generality actions that take place throughout the perspective on nature expressed through human language. And it would be absolutely senseless to criticize these as abstract or metaphysical, and limit the proper use of language to words that obey certain narrow conditions of empirical reference. Empirical reference is either the condition of all words (its otherly, *allegorical*, interaction, as we might say), or it is a technique that involves certain procedures (pointing at a thing, using a bubble chamber), which, to the extent usage becomes rigorously dependent on them, belong to a institutional language, and no longer to the everyday.

We are concerned here not with evolution of species, but just with the emergence of ever more patterned relations of sounds. There may be a fairly good correspondence

between sonorous complexity and the complexity of organisms, but this is not relevant in any way to our purpose.

Information about this topic in other articles

{Painting as simultaneously an act of nature and a human activity.

The development of paintings may be understood in an evolutionary way;
Moving away from purposes that rule painting as an activity, and above all the
purpose of creating either formal beauty or imitating objects.

As the assembly of an every more fluid interrelation of curves and colors ---

Thus as the coming to expression of nature itself.

This also applies to music and dance and also, as we will see, poetry; yet

In each case in different ways.

In painting, the opposition between work and play is most extreme; in dance, they

Are most close to interwovent. }

{The extraction of colors from the natural surroundings; and through chemical
processes. The material of painting thus involves a real relation to nature; the ability to
reproduce the colors of nature can in no way be taken for granted. }

{Colors and curves as prefiguring the circulation of the whole of nature }

{Goethe's Farbenlehre --- Impressionistic painting }

But don't we experience time as linear? Even if we were to understand historical time as cyclical, isn't there an ineradicable linearity to our everyday life? Don't

It cost scientists great labors to gain even the first insight into these processes, let alone develop mathematical models that could explain even the simplest cases of these operations, and this work, indeed, has only just begun.

We, of course, are not scientists, and do not pretend to say anything scientific. We wish only to lay the first root of the tree that will join our language and theirs.

translates the physical event into a limited number of possible symbolic representations—computers, we will see, are real institutions, which translate an analog event into a digital event --, and then processes these according to fixed rule,

{ There are two limit cases in the definition of an artifact; on the one hand, that which involves a tremendous investment of labor in relation to its use. --- This is the aesthetic object; just as in the case of dramatics, we had to undo the prejudice that placed spectacle in the position of least rank, and ultimately tried to assign a purpose to drama, now we must undo the prejudice in aesthetics that treats obscures the significance of decoration. Decoration is the investment of last value into an artifact through labor that serves no end; decoration is not merely a bound, unfree version of an aesthetic pleasure that involves, as it were, a kind of pure aesthetic pleasure, the experience of abstract freedom as such. Rather, decoration is the act of endowing objects as the centers of political life, by working in labor. So-called pure art is merely the extreme case of artisanry, and it differs only by the degree of details --- and if the uniqueness of the “creative personality” of the artist is an issue, it is only because it makes this expended labor even more precious. Genius is a wholly derivative category, and only serves the

erroneous idea that the art-work allow for the experience of freedom, even if it also stands at the limit of this.

Aesthetics, in other words, creates a world of extraordinary detail; dramatics is the experience of the world as a world of details.

One of the marks of the real contradiction of freedom is that the world becomes ever more flat and bland --- the complexities of this process will become apparent when we discuss the role that institutions play in this {there are institutions which create a certain kind of refinement --- namely computers}. The world, simply put, becomes ugly and disposable. What replaces decoration is design, form follows functions --- expresses the function in its purity, and thus attains a kind of limited beauty.

The genre of the sentimental as a resistance against the disposability of things. }

*

A community *involves* the activities of man with the activities of nature, and is cultivated not only through the creation of people of character, but also the manufacture things of substance. Non-human nature must itself be transformed so that it will communicate its potential for activity to man; and is substantial according to the degree of its stability and potential. Such transformations are brought about using different *techniques*, which, as stated, extend human language by bringing about a real communication with the action of nature.

It its original and pristine state, nature tends towards one of two extremes. It is either too *volatile* --- rich in potential but unstable. Examples are foodstuffs and fuels; in short, everything that contains some form of bonded energy. Or it is too *inert* --- extremely stable but without active potential. This term applies to metal ore, rocks, water,

and the like. Techniques, likewise, are of one of two sorts. Either they make what is too *volatile* more stable, or they make what is too *inert* richer in possibilities. With this in mind, we now turn to the four techniques --- shelters, tools, agriculture, and technologies, consider which category each falls under.

{This also characterizes the difference between aesthetics and dramatics --- the one begins with a material that is too inert, the other with a material that is too volatile.}

{Free political action is action within a community that maintains or expands the possibilities of the community)

- i. The codification of steps.
- ii. The principle of fluidity.
- iii. The syntactic arrangement of steps.
 - a) linear connections nevertheless limited in time and space.
 - b) the progression up and down ladder of being.
- iv. The scenario.

(vista opens upon “aesthetics” --- poetry vs. ballet as expressions of political action.

Poetry makes language rhythmic. Ballet makes movement verbal. Ballet expresses the essence of movement; the constraint of movement to space, exemplifies fluidity, and develops the system of steps into something with a complexity and expressive potential approaching verbal language. Ballet also allows for a syntactic ordering of steps, without the violation of fluidity, through the “scenario.” Ballet is the movement from fluency to freedom. The syntactic order of steps expresses the movement up and down a series of gradations of freedom. Poetry, in contrast, approaches the mechanical from freedom.)

Nor can the involuntary use of an expressive physical language be said to play less of a role in free political discourse. Quite to the contrary, what makes somatic expressiveness so essential to free political discourse

{Tools as extensions of bodily motions; the relations of tools to politeness ... weapons, the only tools that act against people as people, rather than as slaves... that weapons, traditionally are implicated in a system of politeness}

(agriculture ---)

(technology)

While tools distinguish between a mere tool, and technology. A tool serves only as an extension of human powers, and works by directly translating a mechanical movement produced by the muscle action of human beings into different kind of mechanical movement. A stone, for example, becomes a tool when it thrown; when the movement of the hand and arms and body translated into a projectile motion. A knife allows the thrusting motion of the arm to cut through flesh. Some tools can be quite complex. Because of this human, freely creative input --- because the individuals involved work through human language and in ways that depend on the full range of their capacities --- creative real

The model for an institution, its perfected form, is a computer; in a computer, physical events (a finger striking a keyboard, a signal sent over a key board, a light reflected off of a mirror from a laser beam, a electromagnetic pattern created by a magnet moving across of rotating metal drum) are translated into digit signals that are then manipulated through the circuitry, in an entirely discreet process, yielding output signals that are then

translated back into physical events. As in a perfect institution, a computer's interface with the outside world merely serves to create a content that then takes on a life of its own. This interface may, to various degree, involve the use of the forms of human language; yet these are only appropriated in order to serve the translation from one event into another, and to this extent, they are essentially derivative. They do not involve the infinite potential and creativity of natural language, but only a specific set of combinations used to describe a range of possible states-of-affairs outside of the institution and then translate these into terms used within the institution. Computers and companies speak to us in remarkably similar ways; just as a computer can only, as yet, present us with a finite set of operations, --- an input that is processed through its own internal routine, --- the tendency of companies is likewise only to communicate through choices; be this in the multiple choice surveys that they use for "market research," or the selection of wares and options that they offer to the market place, or in automated phone services. Advertising and sales may seem to proceed through a still-human language; and while indeed salesmen evince the subtlety and creativity of language in their words than any one else, and while it would be impossible, as yet, to replace them with computers; and while, likewise, advertising is often extraordinarily creative in its conception, in the end, all these forms of speech boil down to an act of communication that can no longer be counted as freely political. They all assume this form; "buy X / because of Y." I have used the "/" in order to indicate that a caesura to divide the two halves of the expression. Through the caesura, what would otherwise be one of the paradigmatic forms of political language --- giving reasons for human actions --- is sundered into two forms of agency belonging the separate realms and unable to completely unable communicate with each

other. “Buying X”, on the one hand, is an action that only has meaning for the corporation that sells it, and only because, as a result of it, and through some chain of causally linked events, it will gain income in exchange for products or services. The terms of this exchange are merely operational variable, inputs and output, that are then manipulated within the system in order to come to new choices about how to use their capital. That through “buying a product,” a consumer actually gains possession of an object in exchange for their money, or that it is their money that they exchange; or that this product will serve some purpose in their lives, or that the money they had handed over could have been used to satisfy other needs --- all of this plays absolute no role from this side of things; at best these are merely accidental facts about the way the external world operates which a corporation must take into account in order to successfully guide its actions. “Because of Y,” on the other hand, is only relevant to the consumer, and not as a free political agent, possessing moral agency. It is not really a “because” at all; it does not provide causes and reasons for the action that it wishes performed, but only tries to provoke a certain action on the part of the consumer by activating some facet of his receptive nature.

What the caesura expresses, simply put, is that the “ideal speech act” of advertising --- of language which serves, above all, to constitute a certain kind of interaction between the buyer and seller --- involves neither actions or reasons valid to both sides. This is so because neither addresser nor addressee are agents in the same way, but rather belong, as it were, to entirely different strata of being; a circulation of capital, on the one side, and on the other, a bundle of needs and desires. Any speech act that does not constitute both addresser and addressee as agents of the same kind, able touch each

other through the same kinds of action, cannot be freely political; it undermines the very possibility of reciprocal interaction.

In terms for different chemicals don't refer to anything accessible directly through our senses, not solely to abstract entities; but rather as abstract entities, they gain reference through experimental procedures that isolate and purify substances and combine them together and measure the heat produced, or capture the products of the reaction. No chemical can be known except in its reactions with other chemicals (as is even evident in the case of taste).

Or consider a business. A potential or actual customer is not a person, as it is ordinarily understood and used as a political term among people to speak of themselves in relation to other forms of agency in the world. Rather, the meaning of "customer," in this institutional context, can only be established through the procedures of marketing and sales. A customer is not a person, but an agent capable of performing a certain kind of action in relation to the corporation. The potential to perform this action among any set of entities (individual peoples, other businesses, governments, institutions) is not ascertained primarily through some insight of common senses, --- even if this may work in some cases ---, but through procedures of market research, advertising, and sales. The term "buyer" or "customer," that has meaning within the system as

If the linguistic turn in philosophy is to be more than a mere desiderata, if it is to fundamentally change the way we approach the problems of thinking, philology must replace philosophy as the unifying theoretical discourse.

it is perhaps only a consequence of the fact that they are unable to agree on a common approach to the phenomenon of human language. Because the pragmatic use of language

A purely scientific approach to language The totality of human languages, as an ideal, concrete system

The theory of physics or chemistry are ideal, abstract system that ultimately describe, and thus refer to, aspects of the concrete, real system of nature