The Powers of Philology

Dynamics of Textual Scholarship

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Contents

Acknowledgments

What Are the Powers of Philology?

For reasons I will probably never quite understand, my mother, who studied medicine, has always, consistently and even more stubbornly, used the German word *Philologe* to refer to elementary-school teachers. But my mother's eccentric semantic creation was no more off the mark than is the use that some of my most competent American colleagues still make of the word *philologist* when they apply it to some of their great predecessors from the German tradition, such as Ernst Robert Curtius, Leo Spitzer, and Erich Auerbach. For none of these eminent scholars ever particularly excelled in the practices that the Word *philology* is supposed to subsume. Ernst Robert Curtius laid the foundations of his academic reputation in the 1920s, when he was known as an eminent specialist in contemporary French and Spanish literature; he then, from the early 1930s on began to concentrate on the history of poetological ideas and literary forms in the Middle Ages. Leo Spitzer had been trained, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, as a historical linguist, but he soon turned toward a highly subjective style of immanent-text interpretation (for which the concept of "lived experience" was key). Erich Auerbach, finally, who single-handedly created a new discourse within literary history, was notoriously weak when it came to the basic philological skills.1 Neither Cur-

1.See my book *Vom Leben und Sterben der großen Romanisten: Carl Vossler, Ernst Robert Curhus, Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, Werner Krauss* (Munich: Hanser, 2002). The original English version of the Auerbach essay appeared in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach,* ed. Seth Lerer (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996), 13-35. I have dealt with the subjective and institutional motivations of the same generation of literary scholars in "Historians of Literature-Where Do They Take Their Motivations From?" in *Poetologische Umbrüche:* Romanistische *Studien zu Ehren von Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus,* ed. Werner Helmich, Helmut Meter, and Astrid Poier-Bernhard (Munich: Fink, 2002), 399-404.

tius, Spitzer, nor Auerbach ever achieved anything major as text editors or as authors of a historical commentary. It is therefore not quite clear *why my* colleagues, with a stubbornness equal to my mother's, stick to the tradition of calling them "philologists." I guess that a more or less preconscious reaction to the difference between a certain German (or Continental) style of dealing with the literary past and the interpretive tradition of Anglo-American New Criticism comes into play here. Curtius's, Spitzer's, and Auerbach's works are indeed significantly different from the writings of Arnold, Richards, or Singleton-although this difference should not be enough to call the former scholars philologists.

Above all, however, my two examples for the uses of the word *philology* were meant to make the astonishing yet undeniable point that this concept, which seems predetermined to

function in a simple and unspectacular way, has developed a sometimes confusingly broad range of meanings and uses. It doesn't get much better if you start consulting very general or very specialized encyclopedias and reference books. On the one side, you will find definitions of the word *philology* that, bringing it back to its etymological meaning of "interest in or fascination with words," make the notion synonymous with any study of language or, even more generally, with almost any study of any product of the human spirit.2 On the other, more specific and more familiar side, however, philology is narrowly circumscribed to mean a historical text curatorship that refers exclusively to written texts.

In the title of my book and throughout its chapters, the word *philology* will always be used according to its second meaning, that is, as referring to a configuration of scholarly skills that are geared toward historical text curatorship. There are four implications of this concept that I think deserve to be briefly unfolded. First, philological practice has an affinity with those historical periods that see themselves as following a greater cultural moment, a moment whose culture they deem to be more important than the cultural present. Not by coincidence, Hellenistic culture of the third and the second centuries B.C. appears

2. See the *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. *philologist:* "One devoted to learning or literature; a lover of letters or scholarship; a learned or literary man."

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quite regularly as the historical origin of philology as a scholarly practice (Plato, in contrast, used the same word in the sense of "loquaciousness"). Other important moments in the history of philology were, by the same logic, the age of the church fathers; the European Renaissance, when the humanists desired to return to the learning and texts of classical antiquity; and nineteenth-century romanticism, with its nostalgia for the Middle Ages. Second, because of its emergence from a desire for the textual past, philology's two-part core task is the identification and restoration of texts from each cultural past in quest ion.3 Based on conjecture, this includes the identification of those texts that have come down to us as fragments; the full documentation of texts for which we have several not completely identical versions, to be presented in their plurality or condensed into the proposal of one original or most valuable version; and commentary providing information to help bridge the gap between the knowledge a text presupposes among its historical readers and the knowledge typical for readers of a later age. Identifying fragments, editing texts, and writing historical commentary are the three basic practices of philology. For these practices and their underlying scholarly competence to be used, however, we have to presuppose, beyond the three basic philological skills, an awareness of the differences between different historical

periods and cultures, that is, the capacity of historicizing. And finally, the activation of these skills also (and quite inevitably) presupposes the intention to make use of the texts and cultures of the past within the institutional contexts of teaching. In other words, it is difficult to imagine that philology should come into play without pedagogical goals and ,m at least rudimentary historical consciousness.

Third, the identification and restoration of texts from the past - that is, philology as understood in this book - establishes a distance vis-á-vis the intellectual space of hermeneutics and of interpretation as the textual practice that hermeneutics informs.4 Rather than rely on

3. See the initial definition in *Crran Enciclopedia RIALP* (Madrid: Ediciones RIALP, 1972), s.v. *filología*

4. *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico* (Turin: UTET, 1987), s.v. *filologia:* "The border that separates interpretation from philology is subtle but clear."

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the inspiration and momentary intuitions of great interpreters, as, for example, New Criticism did, philology has cultivated its self-image as a patient craft whose key values are sobriety, objectivity, and rationality.5 Fourth and finally, it follows from everything that I have said so far about philology that such craft and competence play a particularly important and often predominant role within those academic disciplines that deal with the most chronologically and culturally remote segments of the past (provided that we have at our disposal at least some traces of a written tradition that lead us back to those segments of the past). Philology is thus extremely important for Assyriology and Egyptology, and most classicists still regard it to be their core competence. Ever since the era of romanticism, moreover, philology has been used to reconstruct texts from the Middle Ages as the supposed context of origin for the different national-cultural traditions.

Although I started my own scholarly life as a medievalist, that is, in relative proximity to the philological tradition, it is safe to say that I would never have thought to write a book about the "powers of philology" without an intellectual provocation and, later, the encouragement that came from five colloquia, held at the University of Heidelberg between 1995 and 1999, to which my much-admired friend, the classicist Glenn Most, had been kind enough to invite me. It was Most's project to revisit the history of classics, his own academic discipline, by following the histories of the five basic philological practices: identifying fragments, editing texts, writing commentaries, historicizing, and teaching. Of course, this multiple return to the traditions of a venerable academic past was meant to yield inspirations and orientations for the future of classics as a discipline.

As a nonclassicist I was assigned to provide contrastive materials from the history of my own academic fields and their disciplines, that is, from the histories of Romance and German literatures and from comparative literature. Despite my best intentions, however, I soon got derailed. What increasingly fascinated me in the analysis of the philo-

5. See Karl Uitti, "Philology," in *The* johns *Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism,* ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 567-73.

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logical core practices for the Heidelberg colloquia was a layer of investment among the scholars involved, a perhaps preconscious layer of investment that seemed to contradict the self-image of philology as a laborious (not to say sweaty) intellectual craftsmanship. Certainly I was not the first observer to become aware of this layer. Since late antiquity, for example, discussions about text editing had included a liberal strain that acknowledged the importance of the editor's imagination for the task of philological reconstruction. What I felt might be new and provocative about the focus of my own discovery, however, was the impression that, as a layer in the philological core practices, this was *not* just complementary to the interpretation of the texts in question.6 Therefore, I at first wanted to emphasize the otherness of the attitudes and phenomena in question by subsuming them under the concept of "poetics of philology."

I soon realized, however, that to refer to observations of this kind with the formula "the poetics of" had become so conventional over the last decade that it was, frankly, boring.7 On rethinking my choice, I also began to understand that the notion of poetics implies the connotation of a regularity - perhaps even a predictability - that would not fit the character of my discovery. But what exactly did I see, and why did I end up calling what I saw "the powers of philology"?

Let me start the overdue answer to this double question by confessing that the notion of power I am using here is far from that used by Michel Foucault, which is now enjoying endless popularity among humanists. Unlike Foucault, I think that we miss what is distinctive about power as long as we use this notion within the Cartesian limits of the structures, production, and uses of knowledge. My counterproposal is to define power as the potential of occupying or blocking spaces with bodies. By presenting it as a potential, I imply that power - even the active political use of power - does not always have to produce violence (violence would of course be the transformation of power as a

6. See, for the opposite opinion, *Enciclopedia Hispánica* (Barcelona: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994-95), s.v. *Filología:* "The philologist tries to analyze the meaning of a text and, at the same time, to interpret it."
7. It is thanks to Willis Regier's resistance that I avoided getting stuck with this phrase.

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potential into performance). I insist only that power, however multiply mediated it may be, must always be based on physical superiority-and that it is therefore inevitably heteronomous in relation to whatever can be regarded to be a structural feature or a content of the human mind.

This, however, does not take care yet of the other, decisive question, which asks how the practices of philology can be related nonmetaphorically to the concept of power (and to the concept of violence). What I see at work in the philological practices-as their hidden, lively, truly fascinating side-is a type of desire that, however it may manifest itself, will always exceed the explicit goals of the philological practices. In each specific case, moreover, this desire conjures up the philologist's body along with a dimension of space that at first glance seems to be alien to any kind of scholarly practice within the humanities. What I want to discuss under the title of "the powers of philology" certainly counts as disruptive within the official academic image and self-image of philological practice. At the same time, I think that it is fully adequate to speak of these desires as being "conjured up" by philological work, for these desires will surface inevitably and independently of the individual philologist's intentions. And what exactly do these desires refer to and long for? It is my impression that, in different ways, all philological practices generate desires for presence,8 desires for a physical and space-mediated relationship to the things of the world (including texts), and that such desire for presence is indeed the ground on which philology can produce effects of tangibility (and sometimes even the reality thereof).

It was in discussions with the British art historian Stephen Bann that I first understood how material fragments of cultural artifacts from the past can trigger a real desire for possession and for real presence, a desire close to the level of physical appetite.9 Text editing, in contrast,

8. This is the perspective from which my essays on the "powers of philology" are complementary to the forthcoming book, *The Production of Presence: On the Silent Side of Meaning* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).
9. This very aspect suggested the title for the earliest version of what has now become the chapter "Identifying Fragments": "Eat Your Fragment," in *Collecting Fragments/Fragmente sammeln,* ed. Glenn Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1997), 315-27. The titles

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conjures up the desire of embodying the text in question, which can transform itself into the desire of also embodying the author of the text embodied. The writing of historical commentaries is driven by a desire for opulence and by its corresponding geometrical dimension, that is, the empty margins around the text on which to comment. Historicizing means to transform objects from the past into sacred objects, that is, into objects that establish

sirnultaneously a distance and ,a desire to touch. Well-understood and successful academic teaching, finally, demands from the instructor that he or she refrain from transforming every content and every phenomenon taught into a preanalyzed and preinterpreted object, which means that these contents and these phenomena, as challenges in untamed complexity, can never completely lose their status as physical objects. Most of these different types of a desire for presence, as they are conjured up by the philological practices, also bring into play the energy of the philologist's imagination. This coemergence of imagination with the desire for presence is by no means random, for imagination is a comparatively archaic faculty of mind, which implies that it has a specific closeness to multiple functions of the human body.

Surprisingly, not to say strangely, we could also claim that these ambiguities - the tension, the interference, and the oscillation that the philological practices are capable of setting free between mind effects and presence effects - come close, in both their structure and their impact, to contemporary definitions of aesthetic experience.10 Never-

of my following four contributions to the proceedings of the Heidelberg colloquia followed the same syntactical pattern: "P1ayYour Roles Tactfully! About the Pragmatics of Text-Editing, the Desire for Identification and the Resistance to Theory," in *Editing TextslTexte edieren,* ed. Glenn Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998), 237-50; "Fill Up Your Margins! About Commentary and *Copia,"* in *Commentaries/Kommentare,* ed. Glenn Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), *443-53;* "Take a Step Back-and Turn away from Death! On the Moves of Historicization," in *Historicization/Historisierung* ed. Glenn Most (Göttinngen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2001), *365-75;* "Live Your Experience-and Be Untimely! What `Classical Philology as a Profession' Could (Have) Become," in *Disciplining Classics/Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf,* ed. Glenn Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprciltt, 2002), 253-69.
10. See, for this aspect, chapter 3 of *The Powers of Presence.*

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theless, although the association between philology and aesthetic experience will add to the estrangement from the traditional concept and image of philology, it is certainly not the aspect within my reflection on the powers of philology that most fascinates me. What especially interest me in this book (but every reader should of course feel free to find his or her own reading trajectory) are new and alternative ways, above all non-interpretive ways, of dealing with cultural objects; I am hoping for non-interpretive ways of dealing with cultural objects that would escape the long shadow of the humanities as *Geisteswissenschaften,* that is, as "sciences of the spirit," which dematerialize the objects to which they refer and make it impossible to thematize the different investments of the human body within different types of cultural experience. What the philological practices conjure up as the philologist's multiple desires for presence, are, after all, reactions that hardly fit into any official self-reference of the academic humanities. In this sense, being as far away as possible from the disciplinary self-image of philology, even programmatically so, could become the beginning of the emergence (perhaps even of the creation) of a new intellectual style. This style would be

capable of challenging the very limits of the humanities, which come from their inscription into the paradigm of hermeneutics (which also means into the metaphysical legacy of Western philosophy) during the decades around 1900.[11] Acknowledging the powers of philology within - and in spite of - the context of this academic tradition is like enjoying something disruptive and fascinating, a beautiful and intellectually challenging fireworks display of *special effects.*

11. See ibid., chapter 2.

CHAPTER 1

Identifying Fragments

One of the shorter entries in Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street (Einbahnstraße)* refers to a visual memory of the castle of Heidelberg: "HEILDELBERG CASTLE: Ruins whose debris point into the sky tend to look twice as beautiful on those clear days when the eye, through their windows or simply above them, meets the passing clouds. Through the mobile spectacle that it stages in the sky, their destruction confirms the eternity of these debris."[1]

What provokes Benjamin's reflection is the perception of a contrast between two temporalities. On the one hand, there is the swift change and the continuous emergence of forms in the clouds that are passing by above the castle. On the other hand, there is, as an attribute given to the castle's debris, eternity, that *degré zéro* of temporality which, strictly speaking, excludes any change in time. As often as I read Benjarnin's short text (and with all due reverence), I cannot quite follow the association that he suggests between ruins and eternity. More precisely, I do not understand why an awareness of the ongoing effects of destruction *(Zerstörung)* should ultimately lead to an impression of eternity *(Ewigkeit)* - even if this process of destruction is "doubled and emphasized by the transitory spectacle" ("bekräftigt durch das vergängliche Schauspiel") of the clouds in the sky.

I recently had an opportunity to watch the clouds passing above the ruins of the Heidelberg Castle, but instead of reminding me of eternity, this spectacle made me feel the tension between a particularly fast rhythm of change (that of the passing clouds) and another rhythm of change (that of the ruins) so slow that I can evoke it only by imagin-

1. Walter Renjamin, *Einbahnstraße,* in *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 4, pt. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 83-148 (quotation on 123). All translations from languages other than English are my own.

ing the castle both in its undestroyed former splendor and in that possible future when the debris will no longer be recognizable as objects that once belonged to a building. What the

ongoing transformation of the forms of the clouds and the slow transformation of the castle's material substance share-and what may perhaps have attracted Benjamin's attention, although he falls short of really pointing to this experience-is the connotation or rather the almost visceral feeling of a lack. Quite irresistibly, the ruins of a building make us think of the building in the state of its no longer existing wholeness. And what kind of a lack does the spectacle of the passing clouds evoke? It is the frustration coming from a process that is nothing but a continuous emerging and a continuous vanishing of forms, an ongoing transition in which these forms never gain any stability.2 This play of emerging and vanishing does not include moments that mark an event because the perception of an event would require a contrast between the event and something that is not movement and transformation. Never reaching a state that we would associate with concepts such as "completion" or "rest," the play of emerging and vanishing. in the sky also refuses us the corresponding sense of relief.

Benjamin does not seem to see any historical specificity in the experience inspired by the clouds high above the Heidelberg Castle. And can we not indeed imagine, say, Empedocles watching clouds that pass over the ruins of a temple and thinking about time? Or for that matter, Abelard following the same type of spectacle over the debris of an abandoned monastery? True as this all may be, I will try to argue that a specific affinity exists between the object of Benjamin's reflection (independent of the conclusion he draws from it) and a key motif in the philosophical repertoire of the twentieth-century Western intellectual.3 To make

2. I am not implying that "temporal phenomena in the sense proper" ("Zeitobjekte im reinen Sinn," as Husserl calls them) are incapable of having a form. Their modality of achieving a form is whatever we perceive as a "rhythm" (see my essay "Rhythm and Meaning," in *Materialities of Communication,* ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer [Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1994], 170-82).
3. In general Benjamin was eager to make the phenomena and problems dealt with in *Einbahnstraße* look contemporaneous. See the entry "Engineers" in my book *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 93-l01.

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this point, I will have to formulate a very broad thesis regarding the culture of the Middle Ages.

Medieval Christian culture was centered on the collective belief in the possibility of God's real presence among humans and in several rituals, most prominently the Mass, that were meant to constantly produce and renew such real presence.4 Presence, in this context, does not exclusively or perhaps even primarily pertain to the dimension of time but contains a claim of spatial proximity. We call "present" whatever at a given moment appears close enough to be in reach of our body and its touch. The Christian God's real presence, therefore,

makes it possible to eat his body and to drink his blood. In modern culture, in contrast, beginning with the Renaissance, representation prevails over the desire for real presence on multiple phenomenal levels. Modern representation is thus not an act that makes "present again" what, after having been present, is now absent. Rather, the word subsumes all those cultural practices and techniques that replace through an often complex signifier (and make thus available) as "reference" what is not present in space or time. If, for all the problematic totalizations that they may imply, these characterizations of the Middle Ages and modernity can appear conventional, my innovative thesis lies in the claim that, ever since the historical moment we call the "crisis of representation,"5 around 1800, our culture has developed a renewed longing for real presence, a longing to which multiple devices dedicated to the production of presence respond without ever fully satisfying it.6

The always passionate and sometimes desperate effort of the Conservative Revolution, during the early twentieth century, to recuper-

4. For the following theses, see my essays "Form without Matter vs. Form as Event," *Modern Language Notes 111* (1996): 578-92; and "Einführung: Inszenierung von Gesellschaft-Ritual-'l'heatralisierung," in *"Aufführung" und "Schrift" in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit,* ed. Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996), 331-37.

5. See Kerstin Behnke, "Krise der Repräsentation," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, vol. 8 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992) cols. 846-53.

6. The perhaps most obvious social phenomenon today responding to this longing for presence is the popularity of sports (both as active practice and as a spectacle to be watched), whereas the multiple technical media of communication are, at best, ambiguous in this respect. For they promise (think, for example, of TV) real presence without ever making tangible the things they present.

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ate a "stable ground" for human existence; more specifically, Heidegger's insistence on the question of Being as an ontological question, together with the aspect of *aletheia,* that self-unconcealment of Being which cannot be attributed, as an effect, to any human subject's action7 - all these interventions and positions attest to a renewed philosophical concern for presence within a culture that relied (and continues to rely) mainly on institutions of representation. But is there anything that makes our contemporary longing for presence different from that of medieval culture? While medieval culture believed in the possibility of satisfying the desire for real presence by providing, over and over again, the certainty of God's real presence, our contemporary relationship to presence is an asymptotic one. We seem to feel that we constantly are in situations of either increasing or decreasing presence of the world without ever fully having that world present. Jean-Luc Nancy describes this double-directional relationship to the world as "birth to presence,"8 a relationship of immediacy to a world that appears to be always emerging and receding. Seen from this angle, finally, the double-leveled spectacle of the clouds above Heidelberg Castle turns into a likeness of the birth to presence. While the debris of the castle are part of an ever-receding

wholeness that may yet never reach the point of its final self-effacement, the clouds are a potentially unending emergence of forms that will never produce a final effect of completeness.9

Being part of an extremely slow process of receding presence, the Heidelberg Castle, as Benjamin saw it and as we see it, a short step further advanced in its "destruction," has the status of a fragment. If we remember that the Western fascination with ruins and fragments underwent a moment of intensification during the decades following the culmination of Enlightenment, that is, during the decades around

7. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* 15th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984), 44.
8. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford, Cali£: Stanford University Press, 1993).
9. The relationship between wholeness/completeness and presence requires some further systematic thought. For the time being, I associate full presence with completeness/wholeness, whereas I suppose that temporal objects properly speaking (clouds, for example; see note z), despite their presence, will always leave the feeling of a lack. What needs to be elaborated is a distinction between different types of presence.

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1800, and if we take further into account that these decades have also been characterized as the historical moment marked by the crisis of representation, then we discover an epistemological ground - or at least an epistemological resonance - for the fascination that accompanies the archaeological and philological work with ruins and fragments. For we can speculate that it was the crisis of representation, the collapse of the distance between representation and world, that brought back the desire for presence. From this perspective, the fragment itself appears as a metonymy of receding presence. The work of restitution, in contrast, whether dedicated to a torso or a textual fragment, would belong to that continuous emerging and vanishing of presence-in-forms through which the clouds above Heidelberg Castle fascinated Walter Benjamin.

How do we know that something is a fragment? The term applies to any object that we identify as part of a larger whole without implying, however, that this part of a larger whole was meant to be a metonymy, representing the whole. And how do we become aware of that whole to which the fragment belongs? We certainly cannot perceive it because, by definition, it cannot be present together with the fragment. At the beginning there must be the intuition of a lack coming from the contemplation of a present object. Somebody must have been the first to feel that the mountains surrounding the central valley of Yosemite Park are but the fragments of a landscape that existed earlier in the same location. In the case of a landscape, imagining the wholeness of what is present merely as a fragment must rely on geological and physical probability, supported perhaps by a certain kind of aesthetic judgment that may come from remembering other mountains and other valleys. For the case

of any artifact that we consider to be a fragment, in contrast imagining its state of wholeness will come from imagining the intention of a producer. Once we have imagined, on the basis of a fragment, a gestalt that we think corresponds (however roughly) to the primary intention of a producer, we can begin to establish a typology of different kinds of fragments by distinguishing different principles that may have interfered with the product of the producer's original intention.

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We all know, especially from the cultural history of romanticism, that there are texts that we first identify as fragments only to find out that their authors meant them to feign fragmentedness. In these cases we draw the mostly frustrating conclusion that the text originally identified as a fragment corresponds exactly to the author's intention. To imagine, as a working hypothesis, the state of "virtual" completeness that an author himself must have imagined in order to develop a textual form capable of producing an effect of fragmentedness can help us understand, among other things, why the author formed the goal of producing this effect. Nevertheless, we would not think of "restituting" that virtual completeness (which was never meant to manifest itself) as a worthwhile philological task. On the contrary, such an effort would appear naive, for after all, a fragment destined by its author to look like a fragment is not a fragment. This first reflection in the context of our elementary typology makes it clear that we presuppose, for any fragment deserving this name, a violent intervention that has caused the difference between the text (or more generally, the form) intended by the author and the text that has come down to us. Such violence may come from an intention that conflicts with the author's intention and has at its disposal, in addition, superior power to impose itself. It is obvious that this second case of fragmentation includes and illustrates what we call "censorship." We take fragmentation through censorship to imply, first, that the censor is clearly aware of what he wants to eliminate and, second, that he usually wants the censored text not to appear fragmented. This means that it may turn out to be particularly difficult to identify such a text as a fragment but also that, once the censor and his intentions are identified, we have a particularly rich orientation for our task of imagining the complete text. Finally, what we seem most naturally to expect as causes for fragmentation are violent physical events or slow processes of destruction, independent of any intentionality The reasons for this third type of fragmentation are potentially infinite: fire und humidity; the fading of the ink that was used to produce a text and the deterioration of papyrus, parchment, or paper; the destruction of buildings on whose walls texts were written; and (especially

frequent during the Middle Ages) the recycling of already used writing materials for the production of new codices.

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But let me bracket the question whether this third type should be canonized as fragments in the proper sense, because this is not where my argument goes. What all the fragments resulting from physical causes share is a margin - we may call it, with a more dramatic formulation, a "scar" - where the flow of a text randomly stops and where we can normally discover traces of the physical cause of its fragmentation. Such scars are unavoidable for fragments of the third type, and I will argue that their existence makes an important difference regarding how, on the basis of a fragment, we imagine the wholeness of a text. For the perception of such scars changes our attitude vis-á-vis the text: they draw our attention to its exteriority or, to put it differently, its materiality.10 In this sense, the diacritical conventions with which we represent the nontextual elements of an original source in an edition (for example, the brackets indicating where the text ends in the original) cannot be equivalent to what we see when we visualize the original. To perceive the exteriority of a text, we must suspend our automatic habit of deciphering it. Instead of constituting the meaning that an absent author wanted to convey, we then concentrate on the sensual qualities of the text as a materially present object. We can touch, caress, and perhaps even eat the fragment in its material presence; we can even try to further destroy it. As I already announced, I am emphasizing this aspect so strongly because I want to show that such an awareness of the fragment in its material presence has important consequences for the functioning of our imagination. For material presence both stimulates our imagination in the practice of text restitution und is an object of the desire that Jean-Luc Nancy calls the "birth to presence." Yet another, more metaphorical way to describe the same relationship would be to invoke the magic spell or conjuring. The text as a material object enhances our capacity to imagine a world of the past, although there is of course no mimetic relationship between that world and the form of the text as a material object. But instead of trying out even more metaphors, let us attempt to conceptualize the interplay between the exteriority of

10. David Wellbery, "The Exteriority of Writing," *Stanford Literature Review 9* (1992): 11-22.

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cultural objects (especially that of texts) and the functioning of our imagination.

Within a strictly phenomenological view, that is, in the context of an analysis that restrains itself to the self-referential capacities of the human mind, it is next to impossible to beat Jean-Paul Sartre's classic essay *L'Imaginaire*. Both the quality of Sartre's analysis and

the limits of this approach may explain why, more than half a century after its first publication, this treatise is still the most important reference for any philosophical discussion about imagination as a human facult.11 One of the first descriptive motifs that Sartre develops in some detail is the experience that images produced by the imagination always present themselves, from the first moment of their appearance on as complete: "In our perception, a form of knowledge is shaping up slowly; in an image, however, the knowledge is immediate. We see, then, that the image . . . offers itself in its entirety from the very first moment of its appearance."12 We can use this observation to determine what specific structural place our imagination must occupy in the restitution of texts or other artifacts. From the very beginning, imagination provides the idea of a wholeness, of a telos toward which the philological or the archaeological work can be oriented. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the imagination is not capable of intrinsically producing any further concretization, differentiation, or even correction of the first image that it projects: "If you play along and turn, in your thought, an image of something that has a cubic form, as if it successively showed to you its different sides, you wouldn't have made any progress at the end of this exercise; you wouldn't have learned a thing."13 This seems to suggest that to go beyond the first image that imagination presents to us so as to restitute an original wholeness, we need to constantly stimulate our imagination with elements of contextual knowledge and with

11. See the "Namensregister" in Wolfgang Iser, *Das Fiktive* und *das Imaginüre: Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 521. The complete title of Sartre's essay is *L'Imaginaire: psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940).
12. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire,* 19.
13. Ibid.

p. 17.

detailed observations referring to the fragment from which the restitution departs. But while it is thus possible to ignite and to feed our imagination, we can never determine what the imagination will end up presenting to our consciousness. It constantly runs away from conscious control. Sartre explains this impossibility of guiding our imagination (which he calls its *"spontanéité")* as being related to the fact that the intrinsic structure and identity of imagination are not available to our introspection. We know of imagination only through its output: "The perceptive consciousness appears to itself as passive. In contrast, an imagining consciousness appears to itself as spontaneity, that is, as a spontaneity that produces and preserves the image of the object in question."14 Finally, our imagination characteristically leaves largely unspecified the ontological status (we might also say "the reality degree") of the images produced:

Every state of consciousness posits its object, but they all do this in their own way. Perception, for example, posits its object as existent. The image, too, includes an act of believing and an act of positing. This act can adopt four and only four forms: it can posit the object as inexistent, or as absent, or as existent somewhere else; it can also "neutralize" itself, that is, not posit its object as existent. Two of these forms are compromises; the fourth is a suspension or a neutralization of what is posited. The third includes an implicit negation of the actual and present existence of the object. Such acts of positing - and this is a crucial observation - will never add anything to the image (once it is constituted): what constitutes the consciousness of a picture is the act of positing it.15

If the images produceri by the imagination thus imply a double lack, not only the just-mentioned lack of specification regarding their ontological status, but also the lack of descriptive differentiation and development ("you wouldn't have learned a thing"), it is plausible to assume that tying our imagination to the perception of a fragment in its material givenness will provide some compensation for such lack. Let me emphasize, once again, that in the case of text restitution, the concreteness of the fragment from which we start offers the possibility of

14. Ibid. 26.
15. Ibid. 24.

p. 18.

feeding our imagination with ever more detailed observations that may end up yielding ever more detailed images of the text in its original wholeness. The ontological status of a thus restituted text is quite complex but unambiguously clear. Although we posit the fragment's existence both for our present and for the past (from the moment of its origin), we do not analogously posit the existence of the text's conjectural part, the part we have restituted with the help of our imagination. For the conjectural part we posit an existence in the past, but we of course do not posit its existence in our present.

It has to be clear that these two aspects of complementarity between fragments as objects of reference and our imagination as the faculty of restituting the wholeness of mutilated objects are not identical with the intensification of our imaginative capacities through the material presence of objects, an intensification I have metaphorically characterized as "conjuring up." In the world of theatrical performance, for example, one standard technique to enhance the imaginations of the actors involves assigning them bodily exercise and, above all, giving them objects to play with.16 In *The Philosophy of the Present* George Herbert Mead invents an impressive, quasi-mythological narrative in which he makes plausible that enhancing impact of the presence of material objects on our imagination. Mead associates

"imagery" (this is his word for both "imagination" and "imagined images") with an early stage in the evolution of the human. "Distance-stimuli" (perceptions of objects that are spatially close but not in physical contact with whoever perceives them), according to Mead, will trigger images of the either dangerous or desirable situation of immediate bodily contact ("contact-experience"), and these images are supposed to be-immediately-connected to efferent motor nerve activity and muscular movement (of either flight or aggression):

perceptual objects, with their sensuous qualities, belong to the realm of consciousness; for distance-experience exists as the promise or threat of contact-experience, and the way in which this future gets into the object

16. See Andreas Bahr, *Imagination und Körper: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie der Imagination mit Beispielen* aus *der zeitgenössischev Schauspielinszenierung* (Bochum, Germany: Brockmeyer, 1990), especially 63, 81.

p. 19.

is through the response of the organism to its own responses . . . . The distant object thus comes to be what we can do to it or with it or by way of it or what it can do to us. To say that it exists instantaneously as we perceive it is but to demand confirmation of what is given in the perception. These purposive responses are there in the organism both as tendencies and as the results of past responses, and the organism responds to them in its perception. We frequently call this latter response imagery.17

Mead's idea of the "distant object" that "comes to be what we can do m it or with it or byway of it or what it can do to us" has an interesting similarity to Heidegger's concept of the "ready-to-hand,"18 that is, the idea that in our everyday practice we experience the world and its objects as always already interpreted. They are always already interpreted from the angle of our possible needs and of the possible functions these objects can fulfill. We hardly ever see a bicycle just as a remarkably geometrical construction made of metal and rubber. The perception of such an object seems to come with the imagination of riding a bicycle. In addition, most if not all of these imaginations through which the world is primarily interpreted imply, as in the example of the *bicycle,* a participation of our bodies. Here, then, seems to lie the knot that ties the tangible presence of objects to an inspiration of the mind and an activation of the body. It is the sensual perception of such material objects that triggers our imagination, and it is our imagination that triggers movements either toward a total union with those objects (aggression: eat your fragment!) or toward a separation (flight: escape your fragment!).

According to Mead, however, these reactions belong to an early stage in the development of humankind, a stage that comes to the fore only on specific occasions in the existence of

Homo sapiens. Normally the products of our imagination are transformed into concepts, and these concepts suspend the relation of immediacy between imagery and mus-

17 George Herbert Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1959 [1932]), 74. It goes without saying that the value of Mead's narrative for my own argumentation has little if anything to do with its value from an empirical perspective. I am referring to Mead because (a) he brings together and into coherence a number of observations about imagination that have been crucial for my own discussion of this topic, and (2) in doing so, he develops the most plausible explanation I know for the experience that the closeness and the perception of material objects can enhance our imagination.
18. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* 15, 16.

p. 20.

cular movement. Perhaps those rare occasions in which we feel our imagination and our body with particular liveliness have a specific affinity to the dimension of aesthetic experience. Could it not be that much of what we call "the sublime" has to do with certain objects of perception that cause terror - not primarily because they are "objectively dangerous" but rather because (according to Jean-Francois Lyotard's reading of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft)19* our imagination is not capable of rendering them in a stable, "synthetic" picture? For the other side, the side of aggression, desire, and hunger, Jacques Lacan's famous remarks on the "voracity of the human eye" ("l'oeil plein de voracité")20 provide us with a repertoire of concepts that have the additional virtue of bringing us back from more general considerations to the dimension of the fragment. For Lacan's thesis according to which the ultimate object of human desire is always the Other's desire, with the Other's desire manifesting itself by gestures of self-unconcealment ("une sorte de désir á l'Autre, au bout duquel est le *donner-á-voir"),* has the important implication that the Other is never completely present or completely visible. What we actually see and what motivates our desire is always only a fragment, *"un objet petit a"* in Lacan's language, yet a fragment that is appealing because we take it as being the part of a completeness and because we fear that somebody else might possess this completeness: "Such is true envy. It makes the subject turn pale-in front of what? In front of an entirety that appears to be closed, and this explains why the small `a' becomes separated from what it attaches itself to and can become, for somebody else, a possession and an object of satisfaction."

I agree that the juiciness of similar speculations might appear quite farfetched-especially in relation to what is supposed to be the field of their application, namely, the laborious and highly technical business of text restitution. Perhaps I should go even further with this self-relativization - if it were not for Stephen Bann's richly documented observation about "the existence of oral appetite as a model for the appropriation of ob-

19. See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Leçons sur 1'analytique du sublime* (Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger,* 23-29) (Paris: Galilée, 1991), 271.

20. See, for the following, "Qu'est-ce qu'un tableau?" (leçon IX), in Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre XI.: les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse (1964)* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 120-32, esp. 130-31.

p. 21.

jects and fragments," especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.21 Bann encourages us to think that there must be something real (perhaps even real in the Lacanian sense) to the relationship among fragment, body, imagination, and historical experience, something more valid than the merely ornamental appeal of a complex play with philosophical concepts. This is why Bann can use the results of his own archival investigation for a description of "the exercise of the historical imagination" in the following terms: it "begins with what can be touched, and proceeds by way of the talismanic power of the name to the experience of history as a mediated otherness."22

For all the theoretical and empirical evidence attesting to its existence and importance, the relationship between imagination and historical reconstruction has always caused feelings of unease. These feelings are probably based on the impression that the high degree of reflexivity and self-control characteristic of any scholarly method should not be tainted by imagination, that is, a subject-based faculty that has a strong tendency to escape the subject's control. Even Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode,* with its by now proverbial generosity toward all kinds of analytical operations and intellectual styles that lack the classical rigor of academic work,23 does not use the word *imagination* (or any of its German equivalents) a single time over the more than five hundred pages of its argument. This is all the more intriguing since Gadamer's descriptions of the "art of interpretation" often seem to almost require this concept. See, for example, his commentary regarding the historian's interpretive freedom:

For on the other side, on the side of the "object," this implies the participation and the exploitation of the content of a tradition - in all of its

21. See Stephen Bann, "Clio in Part: On Antiquarianism and the Historical Fragment," in *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1990), 100-21 (quotation on 114).

22 Ibid., 119.

23 After all, Gadamer's book is explicitly directed against the opinion that the *Geisteswissenschaften*/humanities are capable of having a method of their own. See his *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik,* 2d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 5: "There is no `method' proper to the humanities."

p. 22.

new possibilities of meaning and resonance, and enriched by each recipient. Whenever the tradition is made to speak to us, *something comes forth that was not there before.* This can be exemplified by any historical content. Whether it is a work of poetry or the knowledge of an important event, what gives itself in the tradition *will come into existence as something new each time.* When Homer's *Iliad* or Alexander the Great's Indian campaign speak to us in a

new appropriation of the tradition, they will always be more than something in und by itself. Rather, it is as in a true conversation, *where there is always something new, something which none of those who participate in a dialogue could have understood individually.24*

I am claiming neither that Gadamer deliberately avoids the concept of imagination here nor that he makes a mistake in omitting it. I want simply to emphasize that this quotation lacks the word *imagination,* although it is otherwise likely to surface wherever we speak about innovative contents that are not owed to some kind of world reference, und although Hans-Georg Gadamer has much less reason to skip the topic of imagination than do many other philosophers.

Gadamer's cautiousness may have to do with the property of imagination that Sartre calls its "spontaneity." Wolfgang Iser has dedicated a more detailed philosophical analysis to this specific aspect.25 Iser begins his discussion by underlining that, not being an "activating potential" ("aktivierendes Potential") in and by itself, imagination always needs an extrinsic stimulus to be set into motion. Conversely, this means that, as far as its activation goes, imagination follows a subject's intentionality. But the same subject cannot control-at least not completely-the direction imagination takes und the results it produces as, once set in motion, it unfolds itself:

Precisely because the imaginary has no intentionality, it seems to be open for any kind of intentions. This is how the intentions bind themselves to what they have activated, and this is why there is always something happening to the activating impulses. Therefore the imaginary is never identical with its own intentional activations but unfolds itself in a play with

24. Ibid., 437-38 (my emphasis).
25. See, in particular, "Das Zusammenspiel des Fiktiven und des Imaginären," in Iser, Das *Fiktive und das Imagindre,* 377-411.

p. 23.
its, impulses - in a play, however, that is always more than the intentions behind the activation or more than the content of the imaginary as it develops a form. Wherever this play emerges from an intentional activation of the imaginary, it turns into a zone where the different interactions of the imaginary with its activating impulses will occur.26

These "interactions between the imaginary und the instances of its mobilization" (one of those instances of course being individual intentionality) imply the risk of spilling beyond the limits of the subject's control - not only, as Iser seems to assume,27 in contexts as remote from our everyday activities as "dreams or hallucinations but also within highly rationalized forms of practice, such as economic speculation or text editing. I certainly do not want to deny a basic heterogeneity between the necessary gesture of rationality und the "spontaneity"

of our imagination. Nevertheless, the active use of the imagination and the self-control that standards of academic rationality require of philological work appear to be equally necessary for the restitution of texts from fragments. At least in the case of fragments that are constituted by what I have called a scar, there is no perfectly inductive und therefore perfectly rational way of getting from the fragmented text to a hypothetically complete text. On the other hand, we can never be sure whether we have managed to eliminate all the heterogeneous traces that the use of our imagination may have left in the restituted text. Do we ever know, for example, whether a rhythm that we reconstructed is not just the rhythm we most wanted? "Eating one's fragment!" thus ends up having a double meaning. It is, on the one hand**,** an encouragement not only to use one's imagination but to enjoy its not perfectly controllable side effects. If, on the other hand, we want to resist a sometimes naively antiacademic auratization of the imaginary, then this imperative tan also (at least obliquely) refer to the philologist's duty und potentially cathartic experience of cleaning up all too subjective und therefore anachronistic leftovers from his play with the imagination. With or without imagination, the worst possible self-deception would be a belief in clean scholarly solutions.

26 . Ibid., 377-78.
27. Ibid., 381.

p. 24.
CHAPTER 2

Editing Texts

Few scholars have dominated an academic discipline during their lifetimes as thoroughly as Ramón Menéndez Pidal dominated Hispanic philology for more than seventy years. With his rnonumental three-volume edition of the Spanish national epic *El Cantar de mío Cid,* published during the 1890s, he was widely acknowledged as the founder of Spain's national philological tradition, of which he remained one of the most productive representatives until his death in 1968. Although he has more recently been criticized (not without reason) for identifying Spanish with his own Castilian culture, and although his views may therefore sometimes appear too monolithic to us, Ramón Menéndez Pidal nevertheless made seminal contributions to the historiography of the nation's languages, literatures, and cultures of Spain. In addition, his contributions to the histories of medieval French literature and medieval Latin language made him one of the great humanists of the past century.'

1. For Menéndez Pidal's biography, see Kurt Schnelle, "Nachwort," in Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Dichiung und Geschichte in Spanien* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), 258-82. Menéndez Pidal's *Cid* edition is most easily available (with an important introduction from 1908) in *Obras completas de Ramón Menéndez Pidal,* 4th ed., vols. 3-5

(Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1964-69). Regarding Menéndez Pidal's philological work in its cultural context, see my essays "Lebende Vergangenheit: Zur Typologie der `Arbeit am Text' in der spanischen Kultur," in *Das fremde Wort: Studien zur Interdependenz von Texten: Festschrift für Karl Maurer zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Ilse Nolting-Hauff and Joachim Schulze (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1988), 81-110; "`Las versiones que agradan mi imaginación' oder: von Menéndez Pidal zur postmodernen Editionspraxis?" in *Textüberlieferung-Textedition-Textkommentar: Kolloquium zur Vorbereitung einer kritischen Ausgabe des "Sueno de la muerte" von Quevedo* (Bochum, I990), ed. Ilse Nolting-Hauff (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), 57-72; "A Philological Invention of Modernism: Menéndez Pidal, García Lorca, and the Harlem Renaissance," in *The Future of the Middle* Ages: *Medieval French Literature in the 1990s,* ed. William D. Paden (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994), 32-49.

p. 25.

Given his stature in the academic world, one cannot help being astonished at Menéndez Pidal's peculiar attitude vis-á-vis the texts that he edited and analyzed, for he mostly spoke about them with the words of an enthusiast, perhaps even a poet: "Thus, I become aware that I am the one Spaniard of all times who has read more *romances* than any of his countrymen. The versions that please my imagination so full with historical memories, the versions that I like to recite, the versions that I give to the readers, I think they are a particle of the national tradition."2 Menéndez Pidal was convinced that by publishing *romances* (short narratives in verse form) and texts belonging to other genres in the great Spanish tradition of oral poetry, he could, with the help of philology, return to literary productivity a poetic practice that he had found almost extinct in his contemporary world: "Today, the tradition is in decadence because it has stayed alive only among peasants. But why should it not resurge in a more cultural environment? At least, it was easy to revive this tradition in my own mind; and this mind has produced many variants which I think are no different in nature from the variants produced by authors in the remote past."3 We can see that Menéndez Pidal assigns himself a role within this process of cultural resurgence that comes close to the classic role of the folklore singer: he would memorize many texts, recite (republish) them, enrich them with his own variants, and finally turn them back to the nation that, according to Menéndez Pidal's "neotraditional" understanding, had produced those texts. Seen from this angle, it may be of more than purely anecdotal interest that the culminating moment in Menéndez Pidal's activity as a text collector seems to have been the mid-1920s, when he was temporarily stricken by blindness, embodying thus a condition that has always been associated with the power of poetic imagination.

But is it really possible to play, at the same time, the roles of philologist and singer-or poet-and further, can one simultaneously be a philologist and a singer in reference to the same body of texts? Is a phi-

2. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, foreword to *Flor nueva de Romances viejos,* ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, 6th ed. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1984 [1926]), 41.
3. Menéndez Pidal, "El romancero: Su transmisión a la época moderna" (1910), in *Estudios sobre el romancero,* vol. 11 of *Obras completas* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1973), 41.

lologist not obligated to keep himself at a distance from the production of new variants? Should his activity not be restrained to registering rather than inventing them? However legitimate such critical questions may be, I think they will ultimately make us understand that the case of Menéndez Pidal was much less eccentric than one tends to assume at first glance. It is indeed my thesis that every editor adopts roles that are close to those of singers, poets, or authors (although typically doing so with less awareness than Menéndez Pidal) and that, without taking this step, the role of the editor does not even begin to exist. Each of the roles that editors may adopt (on two different level: author roles and editor roles) can be subsumed under different types of subjectivity constructions, and such affinities of different editor roles with different subjectivity constructions will help us understand the different philological styles that we find in our professional environment. For example, because Menéndez Pidal identified himself with medieval and folklore singers, his editing style could not help emphasizing the multiplicity of manuscripts and variants, for such is typical for the oral tradition of the Middle Ages. This is precisely how Menéndez Pidal contributed so much to what he called "the life of the tradition." In this essay, then, I will discuss such relationships between different more or less imaginary subject roles open for identification, different editor roles, and different styles of philological practice, and I will do so under the heading of a "pragmatics of text editing." If there is anything truly eccentric about Menéndez Pidal in this context, it cannot be his playing an author role, for this is inevitable. Rather, his eccentricity must lie in the fact that Menéndez Pidal was apparently quite aware of this role playing and obviously happy with it.

Nonetheless, some philological schools more rigorous than Menéndez Pidal's have always postulated that editing should be independent of the editors' roles or intentions (some philologists have even wanted to exclude the author's intention as a point of reference, although, on the other hand, the role of subjective decisions and even of subjective taste has been a topic in philological discussions since the age of classical antiquity). By trying to prove that philological decisions tan be made within the parameters of a strictly textual logic, they have come close to a practice that Paul de Man has described and canonized as

"theoretical reading"[4]-even though knowing about this proximity would have shocked some philologists more than it might have shocked de Man.[5] At any rate, it is possible to distinguish within the philological tradition two different conceptions of text editing that show interesting affinities with the positions of "textual pragmatics" and "theoretical reading"

in contemporary literary theory. If I start my argument by opting for textual pragmatics and trying to show that an editor is forced to choose among and play with certain roles, this may look like what de Man has described as "resistance to theory." Nevertheless, the opposite option-attempting to restrict the problems and the practice of editing exclusively to the textual domain-looks equally naive from the perspective of textual pragmatics. As no easy solution seems to be in sight, I will return to this question later on asking whether it is worthwhile or even possible to overcome this antagonism between more pragmatic and more immanentist forms of editing.

Everybody knows that text editing is a multilayered process of choosing. Editors choose among variants from what *they* decide to see as equivalent passages in what they identify as texts belonging to one and the same tradition. At other occasions they choose between leaving textual gaps untouched or filling them with conjectures. Once they embrace the second possibility, they have to choose from an infinity of potentially acceptable wordings suggested by the system of the language in question. Even correcting certain "mistakes" in a text that has come down to us without any variants entails choosing one among many possible forms that could fit in as grammatically correct. In making these choices most editors are guided, quite normally and appropriately, by what they think the intention of the text's author might have been. I will return later to the problems related to editors' hypotheses about authors' intentions. That I want to emphasize here, however, is that the editor-subject also constitutes itself in these multiple acts of choosing, for choosing among a variety of elements is ex-

4. See, above all, "The Resistance to Theory," in Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3-20.
5. De Man indeed had a habit of presenting himself as a philologist. See "The Return to Philology," in *Resistance,* 21-26. See also de Man's interview with Stefano Rosso, ibid., 118.

p. 28.
actly what can be called the "production of meaning"-under the one condition that the passed-over elements remain present as possibilities instead of getting lost, repressed, or even destroyed.6 Seen from this angle, text editing not only produces meaning as a side effect but indeed *is* meaning production par excellence, because the preservation and documentation of what remains unchosen constitute key functions of philological practice. Once meaning production has happened, however, it is impossible for us to resist the temptation of looking for an agent that could have been its source. So we simply cannot hold an edited text against its apparatus of variants without beginning to wonder who the editor might have been and which principles he or she might have followed in establishing the text. It is here, in the

philologically competent reader's imagination, that the editor's role first becomes a social reality, that is, a mutually accepted reality.

But would one not have to concede to a nonpragmatic critic that choice, meaning production, and the emergence of subject roles are not needed wherever "evidence" exists, that is, wherever an irrefutable solution to a philological problem is available? The answer to this question depends on the way one understands evidence-and absent a more or less "ontological" option, I cannot define evidence other than as a situation in which all specialists easily agree on specific arguments and on the conclusions to which these arguments lead. This implies that proposing or accepting a solution based on evidence does not greatly contribute to the profile of whoever does so, because there seems to be no alternative, but it by no means eliminates the pragmatic dimensions of editing. In other words, the emergence of an editor role with a low profile is not synonymous with the absence of such a role. It is of course equally true that the role of the editor becomes much more visible and, so to speak, much more "heroic" whenever no obvious or easily consensual solutions are in sight. Within the philological practice, these are the situations in which, as Sally Humphreys so appropriately phrased it, "taste and tact" are required.7 Taste plays a role because certain phil-

6. I am following Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995) 59-102.
7. At a colloquium about text editing organized at the University of Heidelberg in 1996.

p. 29.

ological decisions have the structure of aesthetic judgment, the structure of decisions that need to be made in situations without evidence, that is, where judgment cannot be based on shared concepts and criteria. In evoking tact, I think, Humphreys meant to refer to the legitimate expectation that an editor, even and especially in situations without available evidence, will refrain from producing texts that simply become unilateral and consistent manifestations of his or her own aesthetic preferences. Editors should never cross the threshold between philology and *Nachdichtung* (poetic imitation)-but this cannot imply that they are ever fully dispensed from making aesthetic judgments, let alone that they can avoid producing subject effects.

It should have become clear by now why the coherence of the long series of philological choices that each text edition presupposes and contains should not emanate from the editor's private taste. But what other guidelines or orientations can be followed? I think that one should first of all avoid speaking, in this context, of "the intentionality of the text" as a potential orientation-as it used to be an almost popular convention within literary scholarship about ten or even twenty years ago. From a semantic point of view, the nouns *text*

and *intentionality* are incompatible unless one admits that the "text's intentionality" refers only to the hypotheses about author intentions that can be extrapolated from any text.

Given the potential infinity of hypothetical intentions to be derived from or attributed to any text, I propose to focus on the most historically specific conjectures, and I do so for purely pragmatic reasons.8 First, in most cases it is comparatively easy to use historical knowledge to complexify the image of an author so that this image can help to produce more accurate readings and editions. Second, there exist, at least

8. For a more detailed version of the same argument, see my essay "Konsequenzen der Rezeptionsästhetik oder Literaturwissenschaft als Kommunikationssoziologie," *Poetica 7* (1975): 388-413; an English-language version appears in my book *Making Sense in Life and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 14-29. The most sophisticated discussion regarding the heuristic status of the author in literary scholarship, at least to my knowledge, is Miguel Tamen's chapter "The Appeal to the Author" in his *Manners of Interpretation: The Ends of Argument in Literary Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). 69-108.

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for most of the texts within the canon, certain author images that, on the one hand, have emerged from the need to give coherence to the readings of those texts and that, on the other hand, have often affected how they are normally read. Homer, the blind singer and Aesop, the hunchbacked slave, are probably just the most famous in an endless number of such author projections. Although texts of anonymous origin leave more space for these projections, what we have in our minds while using names such as "Shakespeare," "Goethe," or "García Márquez" is not something principally different from what we imply in saying "Homer" or "Aesop." All these names refer to images of authors that have much more to do with the readers' projections than with any documented historical reality-although the images are often supplemented by some information about the authors' lives if such information is available. In this sense, it is anything but uncommon (and certainly not wrong) for readers of Goethe's love poems to imagine, for example, the author imagining Frau von Stein, Christiane Vulpius, or other potential addressees. In general, the existence of author-guided reading traditions is another good reason for editors to work with author images, for it means that new editions that use author images can be certain to relate to and resonate with already established habits of reading.

But is the historicization of the (literary) author's role, as it was inaugurated and powerfully exemplified by Michel Foucault,9 not a strong reason against making author-oriented reading and authororiented editing a general rule? Does such a practice not presuppose a problematic generalization of the author concept? The answer is no, for the author concept that Foucault wanted to historicize was a much more specific one than the author concept to which I have been referring so far. The author concept that I have been discussing is indeed close to

universal inasmuch as it seems difficult if not impossible for us *not* to think of an agent, a producer, or an author whenever we see any kind of human artifact-including, for example, texts. Foucault's historicization of the author concept, in contrast, emphasizes the historicity of much more specific features pertaining to the modern au-

9. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism,* ed. Josué Harari (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141-60.

p. 31.

thor concept, such as inventiveness and originality, intellectual ownership, or personal liability.

The argument that I want to sustain and emphasize, then, is that philological work unavoidably produces an editor role and that this editor role presupposes and partly shapes the production of a hypothetical author role; in other words, the editor role always encapsulates an author role. At the same time, it goes without saying that the editor role also contains multiple reader roles. These can be reader roles in the more historically and individually specific sense, that is, in the sense that imagining Goethe, the author of love poems, cannot be separated from imagining Frau von Stein or Christiane Vulpius as the poet's addressees. But reader roles also exist in a more general sense, which often seems to convince interpreters and editors that, through their mediation, certain texts are capable of "speaking to humankind in general."10 I am referring here to those situations in which inter- preters ask what Jacques Derrida, Karl Marx, or Jesus Christ wanted to say to "us"-as if, while writing and speaking, they had kept "us" in mind. To assume such a universal readership is a problematic move because, besides generating many other not so welcome implications, it ends up attributing a feature of divinity to the authors in question, for it used to be a discursive privilege of God's (or of the gods') word to include all humans as potential addressees. Despite this particular reservation, it should have become plausible by now that each editor role implies, as a necessary orientation for the philological work, a hypothetical author role and at least one reader role-in many cases several reader roles. Within this general proliferation of editor, author, and reader roles, I now turn back to a line of argumentation that may lead us to the opposite position, that is, to the question of whether editing can be imagined as an exclusively text-based practice.

After all, there is nothing particularly surprising about the observation that text editing cannot help producing author-subjects

10. Regarding this and other universal claims made on behalf of "classic" texts, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik,* 2d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 269-75.

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and reader-subjects. On a very general level this can be said for all kinds of reading. Every reading constitutes a trace between its double by-product: ever more complex author roles and ever more complex reader roles. The type of reader role to which I am referring here comes close to (and may in some aspects be identical with) what Wolfgang Iser has described as the "implicit reader."11 But while I agree with Iser's tendency to set the implicit reader apart from the empirical reader, the reader I am discussing does not fit Iser's description of the implicit reader as a "reader role inscribed into the text." On the contrary, I am interested to see how a reader role gets activated and constituted through each reading of a text, with the text's form and content both igniting and guiding this process-but without the text's "containing" its results.

Therefore, if the production of author roles and reader roles is indeed an unavoidable outcome of any kind of reading, is there anything specific to the reading of a philologist? One of Paul de Man's descriptions of literary discourse may lead us in an interesting direction here:

What is meant when we assert that the study of literary texts is necessarily dependent on an act of reading, or when we claim that this act is being systematically avoided? Certainly more than the tautology that one has to have read at least some parts, however small, of a text (or read some part, however small, of a text about this text) in order to be able to make a statement about it. . . . To stress the by no means self-evident necessity of reading implies at least two things. First of a11, it implies that literature is not a transparent message in which it can be taken for granted that the distinction between the message and the means of communication is clearly established. Second, and more problematically, it implies that the grammatical decoding of a text leaves a residue of indetermination that has to be, but cannot be, resolved by grammatical means, however extensively conceived.'

What exactly does de Man mean by "grammatical reading"? He refers to a reading that is ultimately content oriented, a reading capable of "extralinguistic generalization" (i.e., a reading believing in reference)

11. Wolfgang Iser, *Der implizite Leser: Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett* (Munich: Fink, 1972).

12. De Man, *Resistance,* 15.

p. 33.

and opposite to the form- and language-oriented type of reading that de Man labels "rhetorical." According to de Man, then, since a grammatical (i.e., a content-oriented) reading is not capable of completely redeeming what literary texts have to offer, since "a residue of indetermination" remains beyond or below meaning and reference, incapable of being fully

integrated into a certain reading, this residue is supposed to draw the readers' attention toward the formal character of the text. De Man, it becomes finally clear, belongs to those theorists of literature who define literature through its self-reflexive potential.

In the sense of unredeemed-and semantically unredeemable-textual material launching a reflection on the text's formal properties, literary reading and philological reading have something more specific in common than the automatic production of author and reader roles. Nothing goes smoothly in either literary or philological reading, but the reasons differ in the two cases, and the two sorts of reading deal with what resists smoothness in very different ways. The philological reader and the literary reader both constantly confront voids and variants; they struggle with converging but not complementary perspectives or with seemingly tautological passages. As they work on such difficulties, philological and literary reading seem to develop an affinity with de Man's concept of theory: "Literary theory can be said to come into being when the approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations or, to put it somewhat less crudely, when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning or the value but the modalities of production and of reception of meaning."13 This definition captures a dramatic shift in the focus of literary scholarship, a shift away from investigating how language refers to the world and toward asking how language produces *the impression of referring to the world.* Not surprisingly, then, de Man describes "resistance to theory" as "a resistance to language itself or to the possibility that language contains factors that cannot be reduced to intuition" and, in another passage, as "a resistance to the rhetorical or tropological dimension of language, a dimension which is perhaps more explicitly in the foreground in literature (broadly conceived) than

13. Ibid., 7.

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in any other verbal manifestations."14 Going just one step further - and still relying on de Man - one might add that what resistance to theory ends up producing is "phenomenalization,"15 that is, a habit of confusing effects of language with a closeness to, if not with a possession of, what are taken to be real-world phenomena.

All this suggests the following question: must not the insistence on accepting and even playing certain roles be labeled and criticized as "resistance to theory"?16 Once again, the answer depends entirely on the premises under which such role playing is performed and understood. The one danger looming in the business of text editing is an identification with author roles and reader roles that takes these text-extrapolated constructs as shapes,

characters, or "voices" of real persons. Menéndez Pidal's editing practice, for example, is evidence for the (I believe widespread) existence of such a desire for identification among editors. Menéndez Pidal, however, would not have been the great philologist he was without an awareness of this desire and without a distance from it that helped him transform his identification with medieval and folklore singers into a playful and thus ultimately productive side of his research. Had he been naive about this desire for identification, he might have derived certain authority claims from it (in the naive sense of "whoever identifies with the author is fully aware of the meaning he or she intended"). Subsequently, such belief in his own authority might have seduced Menéndez Pidal to take his own taste as a criterion for philological decisions and thus to break the limits of tactfulness as an editor. Giving in to one's own desire for identification as a reader and as an editor implies a danger of self-deception. It is the danger of forgetting that the "real" author role and the authority inherent to that role may not be easily available and are most certainly not available at all in the cases of dead authors.

14. Ibid., 12, 17. I will not deal here with a further (and widely discussed) aspect of de Man's argument, namely, the paradox claiming that "theory" inevitably implies a "resistance to theory."
15. Ibid., 19.
16. It would be criticized, of course, only under the assumption that one wants to support the shift in literary studies from world reference to an interest in the production of effects of world reference.

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Given his distance vis-á-vis pragmatics and speech-act theory, on which basis would de Man have resolved philological problems? Would he have excluded the possibilities of using author roles and reader roles in this context? All we really know is that, as I have already mentioned, de Man liked to associate himself with the general role of the philologist, although probably not without a grain of self-irony. Other adjectives that he used for the description of his reading technique, beside *philological,* were *rhetorical* and *technical.* Clearly de Man was relying on the manifold and admirable examples of such philological, rhetorical, technical reading that he had given in his own essays and on occasional clarifications such as the following passage: "Such a reading would indeed appear as the methodological undoing of the grammatical construct and . . . will be theoretically sound as well as effective. Technically correct rhetorical readings may be boring, monotonous, predictable, and unpleasant, but they are irrefutable."17 Do we have to understand the concept of an "irrefutable reading" as converging with the ideal of exclusively text-based evidence? I do not completely rule out the possibility that de Man is pushing for a degree of rationality and conclusiveness in textual analysis that would verge on something like a "textual logic," with its own rules and techniques. Nevertheless, I think it is more likely that

de Man used the phrase to mean a reading maximally aware of its own conditions and limitations, a reading, therefore, that would be irrefutable because it would make claims only in relation to specific parameters. Such a reading would not exclude-and perhaps would even invite-the possibility of working with conjectural author roles and reader roles. It would have to insist, however, that such roles cannot be the object of identification because they are constructs created only to make readings and the results of philological work more transparent, more capable, that is, of being accepted or refuted. Individual readings and individual editions could become irrefutable-and could be refuted-only in relation to and on the basis of specific (but always heuristic) author and reader roles. Philological resistance to theory, in contrast, would be the name for a desire to identify with what does not lend itself to identification and, as

I7. De Man, *Resistance,* 19.

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a consequence, a name for a lack of tact that threatens to transform the texts to be edited into the editor's own texts.18

Let us look back for an instant. My discussion of the philological practice from a pragmatic angle *(pragmatic* understood in the sense of "linguistic pragmatics") has emphasized how unavoidable it is for text editors to adopt a variety of roles in the process of their work. The confrontation of this pragmatic view with Paul de Man's concept of reading has yielded the specification that these roles need to be interpreted as heuristic constructs that reject any desire for identification - at least if we want to maintain a clear distinction between text editing and *Nachdichten.* Altogether, my discussion sustains a critique of the traditional philological principle of text-based evidence, a principle whose impact on philology has been similar to that of strong truth concepts on philosophy. As long as we work under the shelter - or rather, the epistemological limitations - of evidence and truth, we cannot help expecting that our work will produce "right" answers and "correct" solutions to our questions and problems. A linguistico-pragmatic approach to text editing, in contrast, suggests consequences that are similar to those produced by the critique of monolithic truth concepts through philosophical pragmatism. There, the expectation of reaching truth (or evidence) is transformed into the expectation of producing a plurality of different positions.19 Likewise, one might argue, philological practice could abandon the idea of the one "correct" edition as its ultimate telos and begin to conquer an intellectual space of plurality, argument, and contention.

This philological conception of plurality, however, is different from the liberal (or "neoliberal"?) ideal of an open infinity of individual opinions. I am definitely not advocating a situation in which each editor will strive to elaborate his or her "personal" version of the text to be edited. Rather, I imagine that different author roles, used as heuris-

18. My discussion of de Man, especially my tentative suggestion as to the way de Man might have resolved philological problems, owes its central insights to conversations with Miguel Tamen.

19. See, among the many essays by Richard Rorty that problematize the philosophical concept of truth, "Does Academic Freedom Have Philosophical Presuppositions?" in *The Future of Academic Freedom,* ed. Louis Menand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21-42.

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tic devices, produce different types of reading and different communities of readers. Within such communities of readers and in reference to identical author roles, it should be possible to distinguish between more or less adequate editions and interpretations. One could then claim, for example, that a romantic and an idealistic approach to reading Goethe's *Faust* I are largely incommensurable, whereas different editions and interpretations within each of these two "schools" could be compared and evaluated by rational criteria. Alasdair MacIntyre's reflections on the structure of the academic space, from which I am taking this idea of a plurality of intellectual communities produced by relations of incommensurability,[20] are also helpful in discovering yet another important difference between a situation of plurality in the philological practice and a type of intellectual pluralism that is open for infinity While it does not cost or presuppose anything to join somebody's political, social, or aesthetic opinion, belonging to a school - in our case, a school of editing - requires the mastery of a set of general techniques and a set of school-specific techniques and obliges those who participate to be tactful. Being tactful, in this context, means keeping in mind that styles of editing should be typical of philological schools rather than of individual editors. From a sociological point of view, philology in general and philological schools share certain features with crafts and their guilds, and it might be a good idea, even for the practice of interpretation, to work toward a return to this status of a craft instead of indulging in boundless individual plurality.

The "neophilological" movement, which generated such lively debates during the 1990s, above all in medieval studies, is an almost ideal case to illustrate my proposal.[21] New Philology focuses on the different versions pertaining to individual texts[22] and on the proliferation of these texts' intrinsic variants. Such emphasis on variations and vari-

20. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), esp. 216-36.

21. The 1990 issue of the journal *Speculum* is generally regarded to be the "foundational document" of New Philology. For an interesting recent discussion of this movement, see *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 116 (1997), special issue entitled "Philologie als Textwissenschaft: Alte und Neue Horizonte."

22. If it is still possible to claim the self-identity of certain "individual texts" in an intellectual situation that emphasizes textual variations and variants.

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ants has quite naturally produced a renewed interest, among the practitioners of New Philology, in manuscripts and their material status. Altogether, New Philology corresponds to the heuristic presupposition of a weak editor-subject and a weak author-subject. Of course the word *weak* does not imply any value judgment here. It simply refers, first, to a philological practice where, on the author-role level the process of transmission receives more attention than individual authors and where, on the editor level the accurate rendering of the texts constitutes a more important task than their manipulation and modification. Second, the concept of a weak subject also tries to suggest that an affinity (however minimal) might exist between certain present day philosophies (philosophies that, intrinsically, could not be less interested in editing problems)23 and the neophilological editing style. In addition, a scholar must learn specific skills to belong to the neophilological community within the craft of text editing. He or she must be at least minimally versed in paleography, capable of reconstructing situations of usage from an evaluation of the material status of manuscripts, and competent in the analysis of the relations between the manuscripts' textual passages and their illuminations. In this sense New Philology within text editing is like a guild within a craft. This example helps us understand that the relationship between a neophilological and a Lachmann-style critical edition should be taken as one of incommensurability. They cannot compete with-and they should not be compared to-each other because they depend on incompatible heuristic premises, on the weak subject of New Philology and on the particularly strong author- and editor-subject implied by the tradition of critical editing.

Such different philological styles can become part of different national and sometimes of different disciplinary cultures. Menéndez Pidal's influence on Hispanic studies, for example, established a national

23. The concept of the "weak subject" is derived from Gianni Vattimo's concept of "weak thinking" ("pensiero debole"). One of Vattimo's more recent books clearly demonstrates how the presupposition of "weak subjectivity" would affect the practice of interpretation: *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997). For my own experimentation with the concept of "weak subjectivity," see *V Colóquio UERJ: Erich Auerbach* (Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1994), 117-25.

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concentration on the edition of text variants whose flipside was, until very recently, the quasi absence of critical editions dedicated to the canonical texts of Spanish literature. One might argue that in this specific case, Menéndez Pidal's example converged with the liveliness of an oral tradition that continued much further into the centuries of modernity than did its counterparts in most other European countries. If there are such affinities between national

cultures and styles of editing, something similar is obviously true for the rapport between editing styles and certain historical periods. A neophilological approach seems to be particularly appropriate for texts coming from medieval vernacular culture, whereas critical editions fit historical contexts and literary genres that focus on the author as a genius. Gender could become yet another dimension of philological plurality. There is nothing wrong with letting the author's gender affect philological decisions of certain types-although such a presupposition is not easily reconciled with the traditional philological criterion of evidence. Thus, in the case of the modern Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, the relatively recent discovery of his identity as a gay man has indeed changed not only the reading but also the editing of some of his texts.24 This innovation, however, does not imply that a Lorca edition that does not take into account the gender component of the author's identity is wrong. It would simply be a different edition, incompatible with editions that are sensitive to gender differences.

But are there - and should there be - gender-specific editor roles? I think that the explicit will to give the results of concrete philological work a gender-specific (or nation-specific or, for that matter, age-specific) flavor, independent of the author's identity, would create a problematic situation, at least from a philological point of view. An edition of Lorca's poems whose editor tried to adapt the texts to the specific taste of a gay readership (if such a specific taste exists) would be rather on the side of *Nachdichtung* than on that of philology as a craft. Nevertheless, it may well be that gender-specific styles of editing and gender-specific editor roles are now beginning to emerge. If this

24. Perhaps I should say, the only recently won disciplinary license to speak and write about García Lorca's homosexuality.

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is so, it will probably take them another decade to get established as new philological styles and schools. Their specific techniques of text editing could one day be identified and transmitted as gendered author roles and as gendered editor roles, and for these roles to achieve the specific status of heuristic constructs that I have been discussing, it would be crucial that the "real" editor could be gender independent of the author role and of the editor role. For text editing is about roles and not authentic identities, and this could almost be a definition of philological tact.

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CHAPTER 3

Writing Commentaries

Of course it is plausible to subordinate the task of the commentator to that of the interpreter. In an infinity of practical variations and functional permutations, interpretation always and inevitably is the identification of a given artifact's meaning. Although interpretation often looks like the projection of a meaning that the interpreter has invented (and although it may ultimately be difficult to distinguish clearly between meaning identification and meaning projection), we associate the concept and the practice of interpretation not with the liberty of projecting meaning but with the task of identifying a meaning that is given "in" a text (or any other object of reference), independently of the interpreter and prior to interpretation. As long as the interpreter thus understands the task at hand as the identification of a given rneaning, the main problem he or she faces lies in an asymmetry between the range of general and specialized knowledge that the text presupposes-as a condition for the identification of its ("intended," "original," "historical," "adequate," or "authentic") meaning-and the knowledge that the interpreter has at his or her disposal. It has always been the task of the commentator and the function of the commentary to overcome such asymmetry and to thus mediate between different cultural contexts (between that which the text's author shared with a primary readership and that of readers who belong to later historical times or to different cultures). Seen from this angle, a commentary always provides supplementary knowledge; in doing so, it fulfills an ancillary function in relation to interpretation.

Nothing I have said so far exceeds the canonized conceptions of two of the most central and most venerable philological practices, and the perspective on commentary for which I will now try to argue will only point to certain discursive dynamics that I suppose have always been

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inherent to commentary. But my perspective departs from the classical picture of commentary as being completely subordinated to interpretation inasmuch as it thematizes a potential tension between the two projects, a tension stemming from two movements inherent to commentary and interpretation, respectively, that seem to go in opposite directions. For all that has been said since the I96os - with special and especially democratic dedication to the reader's freedom - about multiple meanings as a potential of any individual text and about interpretation as a never-ending task, for all those very sophisticated and sometimes overly complicated pictures of the act of interpretation, I think that in our everyday practice we take interpretation as a task that can and normally will be brought to a conclusion. We expect that, in the average case of an interpretation, there will be a moment when we know that we have

understood the text or other artifact, and we normally associate understanding with the impression that we now know what the author wanted this text to mean or be. This assumption about the normally finite character of interpretation, I believe, explains its triumphant career as a core exercise for homework assignments and written tests in secondary education. Commentary, in contrast, appears to be a discourse that, almost by definition, never reaches its end. Whereas an interpreter cannot help extrapolating an author-subject as a point of reference of his or her interpretation (and cannot help giving shape to this reference as the interpretation progresses), a commentator is never sure of the needs (i.e., the lacunae in the knowledge) of those who will use the commentary. However carefully you cater to the needs of your contemporaries among the potential readers of a text fin question, you can never anticipate exactly what will have to be explained for readers of the next generation, and it is mainly this condition that makes commentary a constitutively unfinished exercise and discourse. Not surprisingly, then, the history of the word *commentary* yields too many different meanings-and therefore too vague a meaning-to suggest a more precise definition.1 And does this general flavor of vagueness not go together with an impression

1. See Manfred Fuhrmann, "Kommentierte Klassiker? Über die Erklärungsbedürftigkeit der klassischen deutschen Literatur," in *Warum Klassiker? Ein Almanach zur Eröffnungsedition der Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker,* ed. Gottfried Honnefelder (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher

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that users of commentaries almost always have, namely (and to exaggerate only slightly), that any given commentary offers all kinds of interesting bits and pieces of knowledge but hardly ever that one piece of information that you needed and whose need made you consult the commentary in the first place?

This contrast between the finite task of each interpretation and the never-ending task of commentary, a contrast perhaps due more to the predominant ways in which our culture has been coping with both tasks than to a "logical" difference between them, is mainly responsible for the very different topologies that have emerged around interpretation and commentary. The topology of interpretation stages meaning identification mostly as a vertical movement. The interpreter penetrates a "surface," a material surface of signifiers, in order to reach the text's meaning on a level that presents itself as that of spiritual "depth."2 An alternative topology for interpretation is that of finding a meaning or an author's intention "behind" a textual surface or behind a "face" that may well try to mislead the beholder. What these hermeneutic topologies of the below and the behind share is a categorical-not to say dramatic-distinction between a level of primary perception and an always "hidden" level of meaning and intentionality, which is the levei that is supposed to matter to the interpreter.

In contrast, commentaries do not aim at a level "below," "behind," or even "beyond" the textual surface, but commentators nevertheless do not see texts "from above" or from that famous "distance" that we so readily associate with objectivity. We expect commentaries not to reach below, behind, or beyond but rather to be "lateral" in relation to their texts of reference, and we want commentators to position themselves in "contiguity" not so much with an author but with the text in question. It is this contiguity between the commentator's text and the

Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 37-57: "The word is not of much help here because it had an almost infinity of meanings in classical antiquity" (49).

2. See my essay "Das Nicht-Hermeneutische: Skizze einer Genealogie," in *Die Wiederkehr des Anderen: Interventionen 5,* ed. Jörg Huber and Alois Martin Müller (Basel: Stroemfeld/ Roter Stern,1996), 17-36.

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text on which to comment that explains why the material form of the commentary depends on and has to adapt to the material form of the commented-on text. Interlinear glosses can therefore be considered a form of commentary par excellence, and for the same reason, no dictionary definition of the word *commentary* ever fails to mention that "running" commentaries constitute the norm.3 Raising the level of abstraction in this discussion one notch, we can then say that the place of the commentary - on the pages of a manuscript or of a printed book - is on the margin of the text on which it comments. This implies, I insist, that the form and discursive order of the commented-on text shape the material form and the discursive order of the commentary. Personally, I cannot help associating the concept of commentary with a strong visual memory of the sixteenth-century printed edition of *Las Siete Partidas,* which is the earliest extant version of an important body of laws established for the king of Castile during the later thirteenth century. The text of the laws occupies less than half the surface of each page, and it is surrounded by a commentary presented in smaller print and structured by a quite complex system of internal cross-references. The pages of the *Siete Partidas* thus convey a strong impression of fullness, and one could ask whether they do not bring to its materialization a structural principle (or perhaps a structural paradox) that may be constitutive for the genre of commentary. On the one hand, there is no "necessary" end to any commentary; on the other hand, the space reserved for (and the readers' time dedicated to) commentaries is always limited-because it is, by definition, space (and time) "on the margins."

This structural principle will normally either produce an impression of fullness (in the case of a well-balanced distribution between text and commentary, such as the *Siete*

Partidas, one might say an impression of plenitude) or, if the margins are not filled up, an impres-

3. See, as a random example, Claus Träger, ed., *Wörterbuch der Literaturwissenschaft* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1986), 270: *"Kommentar* [lat. commentarius: Notiz, Tagebuch, Denkschrift]: fortlaufende sprachl. (grammat., stilist., auch metr.) sachl. ästhet., histor. Erläuterung eines Literaturwerks unter dem Text oder auch separat; als Scholion (Pl. -ien) zu HOMER usw. bereits in der Antike - auch als Interlinear-K. - existent."

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sion of want, of absence, of a space that demands to be filled and a commentary that needs to be expanded. Can one then say that a good commentary is always a rich commentary, that there is an aesthetics of opulence and even of exuberance inherent to the genre? *Copia definitely* matters for commentary. Of course, a rich commentary can still be a bad commentary-for example, if the information it provides does not interest any reader (but does this already make a really bad commentary?) or, worse, turns out to be unreliable. Then again, the quantity of a commentary may end up being such that it makes its practical use next to impossible. Nonetheless, one can still claim that in general we expect a great commentary to be rich and opulent (at the semantic intersection of this richness and the always limited space on the margin of the page, the German word *prall* [bursting] comes to mind). Between the seemingly unavoidable and somehow joyful drive of commentary toward *copia* and commentators' obligations to show that -their work is task oriented (i.e., that they are eager to resolve philological problems and provide historical context-in short, to keep the reader's reading afloat without distracting it from the commented-on text), between an aesthetics of exuberance and an aesthetics of streamlined reader functionality, commentators tend to develop a specific rhythm that one could perhaps characterize as "go-and-stop." On the one hand, they certainly want the user to appreciate the *copia* of the knowledge offered, but on the other hand, *they* hardly ever forget to insist on the rigorous functionality of their commentary, as if they anticipated the protests of readers who would get lost in the meandering cross-references of the text on the margin. Here is an example for this go-and-stop rhythm, taken from the commentary on the principles of commentary guiding the *Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker:*

I. Survey Commentaries

Survey commentaries provide commentaries for *larger* contexts ["suprastructures"] . The survey commentary *does not limit itself* to the presentation of a necessarily transitory state of the research, nor is it equivalent to the interpretive genre of an "introduction" or an "epilogue." As *succinctly as possible,* the survey commentary presents the main aspects that open up the understanding of a given text. In this sense, "supra-

structures" have to refer *to all the textual details that are important from a certain point of view*.4

To present *all* available textual references but to restrain such potential completeness through certain *selected* points of view: this seems to be the typical go-and-stop rhythm (or the mildly paradoxical discursive principle) of the commentary. The great freedom-and the great problem-of the commentary is that, given the impossibility of anticipating exactly what present and future readers of a text may need to know, it may connect with any level and with any detail of the text of reference. Here lies the threat (and potential beauty?) of a commentary turning into an "atomization" of the text on which it comments, into a loss of cohesion and comprehensive grasp. The sixteenth-century commentaries on the *Siete Partidas,* for example, might have provided (but did not provide) information about what, seen from the early modern angle, must have appeared to be awfully archaic thirteenthcentury language. They could have presented the biography of King Alfonso X, who initiated the *Partidas'* compilation. They could also have commented (and did comment) on the "dogmatic content" of individual laws. And so forth. The structural principle at work is atomization as a semantically unlimited accumulation under the constraints of limited space.

Since it is always possible to add new levels of reference to a commentary, and since more information can always be added on each of these levels, commentaries have become, at least in some eminent historical cases, treasure houses of knowledge. There is a movement of sedimentation at work here that can perhaps compensate for the atomization caused by the multiple connections open to the discourse of commentary. I am referring to cases where commentaries became places, *topoi* indeed-and the spatial dimension of the metaphor does matter here-to visít or consult when seeking knowledge beyond the confines of that which is necessary for the understanding of a specific text. Think of the layers of texts surrounding the scriptures of the great religions, of Dante's *Commedia* and its *volgarizzamenti,* or of the commentaries growing around some of the most widely read scientific texts

4. Honnefelder, ed., *Warum Klassiker?* 315 (my emphasis).

of Greco-Roman antiquity Throughout the centuries a certain tradition of the *lectura Dantis* has always functioned as an introduction into subsequent conceptions of cosmology rather than as an interpretation of Dante's poem. Whatever more specific tasks such texts and their commentaries may have originally fulfilled, at a certain point in time they became *topoi* where new and old knowledge could be accumulated, absorbed, and sometimes even stowed

away. This last function is not to be underestimated. It is certainly comforting to know that a certain stock of knowledge, a stock that one wants to preserve without having an immediate use for it, can be found at a certain place. Commentaries on Dante are a good place to go for a historian of science - and he or she is under no obligation to pretend that such a reference is motivated by the expectation of a specifically aesthetic experience.

There is certainly reason to believe that the quantity of commentary surrounding a text becomes an indicator of the text's importance. But the opposite question also arises: is this importance exclusively a function of values intrinsic to the commented-on text, and do the material auras of the commentaries and their intellectual importance make any substantial (and, so to speak, independent) contribution to the text's reputation? Certainly even Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Goethe would not be among the most highly canonized authors of Western culture if *they* were not among the most broadly commented authors. Canonization through commentary also means that "schools"-in both the most rigorous and the most informal senses of this word-emerge from institutions of text commenting. Here the canonizing selection of primary texts, the specific discourse of commentary, and the lives of intellectual schools enter into a relation of mutual implication, mutual support, and mutual transformation. Knowing how to write an *explication de texte* makes you a French major, and the *explication de texte* is different from the *geistesgeschichtliche Einordnung* in which we expect a German major to be well versed. The fact that different styles of commentaries have much to do with different intellectual or even academic schools explains, at least in part, why the discourse of commentary tends toward anonymity. In commenting on a text, one can (at least partly) overcome

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the key difficulty of not knowing what needs future users of the commentary will have by choosing what to include based on a general idea of what a good reading should be like. In other words, the commentator inscribes him- or herself into a preexisting tradition rather than invent new or specific criteria of relevance for commenting.

Another reason for commentary's tendency of remaining anonymous comes from the already mentioned condition that a commentary is always open for added-on items, layers, and other additions that may be assembled around the text of reference. Therefore, commentaries are always potentially multiauthored, for their intrinsic complexity and open-endedness do not require the structuring power of a single strong (author- or editor-) subject. We know that, at any given moment, it would be easy to find out the names of the scholars who wrote the Goethe commentaries for the *Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker,* but we associate the

different features of this commentary (above all, the principles through which it structures the information provided on a text) with this specific publication venture rather than with any individual commentator. Commentaries would not have the relative flexibility and openness that they need to become foundational for schools if a strong author reference made them unequivocal. What should the members of a school discuss among themselves if it were absolutely clear how they should use their canonized texts? On the other hand, the members of a school rally around commented-on texts and rules of commenting only as long as these traditions exclude more than they allow.

How a commentary will function and how visible its author(s) may become depend largely on the status of the text on which they comment. Commentaries in different traditions of legislation offer particularly clear examples for this point.5 Where the relevant texts constitute a clearly circumscribed, intrinsically structured, and homogeneous body of laws, commentaries come close to interpretations, because all that remains for them to add is an explication of the "meaning" of these laws (and there is much to be learned from the highly reflected

5. I thank Gerhard Casper for his advice in this context of my argument.

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use that such texts make of the "legislator" as a methodologically necessary-and therefore "fictional"-point of reference whose function it is to give coherence to the interpretation in question). Not by coincidence, the latest edition of the *Brockhaus* defines legal commentary as a specific *type* of *interpretation* ("Tatbestandmerkmale und Rechtsfolgen zergliedernd behandelnde *Interpretation").* Legal commentaries of this type appear under their authors' names because, as attempts at the identification of text-implicit meanings, they operate under an expectation of being definitive, however empirically unrealistic this expectation may be. In any event, regardless of whether any particular commentary in this tradition will ever be definitive, there is reason to believe that the extremely high prestige (and the even higher royalties) that accompanies being the author of a *Kommentar* results from the necessity of producing the fiction that closure in the interpretation of the law is possible.

Instead of drawing a similarly clear line of division between the body of the laws and its interpretation, the common-law tradition is an ongoing process of interpretations (and interpretations of interpretations, etc.) of certain legal principles. The equivalent of the German *Kommentar* in this context-if there can be any equivalent-is the effort to collett, structure, and systematize the multiplicity of legally relevant documents. In the United States this task has been executed for threequarters of a century by the American Law Institute.

Significantly, it cannot be individual scholars who occupy the role of agency in the fulfillment of this never-ending task: rather, an institution has been created to play this role.6

Commentaries should be every deconstructor's dream-and in praise of both the deconstructive tradition and the discourse of commentary (with its image of being the poor relative among the philological core exercises), we ~an say that deconstruction has pushed certain principles of the discourse of commentary to its possible limits. Jacques Derrida bases his critique of what he calls Western "logocen-

6. The *Remarks and Addresses at the 75th Annual Meeting of the American Law lnstitnte, May* 11-14, *1998* (Washington, D.C.,1998) offer an interesting overview regarding the projects pursued by this institution.

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trism" on demonstrating the impossibility, at every individual moment, of having a complete text present in one's mind.7 Instead of making any "totalizing" statements about a text in question, deconstruction therefore obliges itself, knowingly or not, to a renewal of the tradition of the running commentary. A deconstructive reading will always be a reading "along" a primary text, a reading whose textual manifestation will necessarily be shaped by this relationship to the primary text in question. It is a reading that takes place in constant awareness of its own "supplementarity" and that of the primary text-that is, of the ever-present possibility of adding more words to the primary text or to the deconstructive reading. Deconstruction has made a reading habit (and an existential[ist] attitude) out of the insight that no text is ever definitively finished, that its ending has to be endlessly "deferred." The concepts of supplementarity and *différance,* a word invented by Derrida that puns on the distinction between the linguistic insistence on the reiteration of difference and this principle of deferral, have been present on the humanities scene only since the advent of the deconstructive movement. Although this distinction would already be far too clear for an orthodox deconstructor, it must have been the closeness between primary texts and the discourse of deconstruction as their commentary that produced two favorite metaphors of de-constructive self-description: the metaphors of deconstruction "inhabiting" the primary text and of deconstruction being a "parasite" in relation to the primary text as its "host." The closeness between the host text and the parasitical deconstructive practice reaches its un-beatable fulfillment in the deconstructive claim of their inseparability. In other words, the self-unfolding deconstructive discourse will always claim to be both the primary text and its deconstruction. This principle of simultaneity must have been one important reason the deconstructive discourse, when it first hit the humanities, was perceived to be truly unreadable: the deconstructive discourse is, so to speak, primary text and its deconstruction at

the same time; it doesn't allow for any broad, totalizing (easy-to-remember) statements to be made, and

7. This is the key point of the critique of Husserl in Derrida's first book, La *Voix et le phénoméne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).

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it can take off (not to say "explode") at any point along the primary text into multiple, atomizing commentaries or digressions. Ultimately, I think, the practice of deconstruction implies, to say the least, a potential movement toward that textual opulence and proliferation and toward that affinity with the values of *copia* that I have identified as inherent to the practice of commentary. Deconstruction's somehow "normative idea" to stage such *copia* as simultaneously present in its own discourse (despite the unavoidable and unavoidably decomplexifying sequentiality of every text) may account for some of the difficulties that early readers of deconstruction encountered in making it through Derrida's text and through the texts of those who followed him. Perhaps it would have been helpful to read the discourse of deconstruction and its (always existing) texts of reference in juxtaposition-such as it is typical for the reading of any other commentary.

From a historical point of view, it seems plausible that a long-standing tradition of uncontested importance for the discourse of commentary came to an end-a first end, I must specify-when, with the institutionalization of the printed book, the *copia* of available knowledge ceased to be a desire and an ideal of learning, transforming itself into a natural (and sometimes perhaps threatening) reality. In a not unfamiliar tone of cultural critique, one may then add that, with the soft collapse of humanistic *Bildung* as a homogenizing condition of the traditional bourgeoisie, the necessity for a reemergence of the commentary tradition arose, at least for those who continued to be interested in visiting the sites of the canonized cultural tradition of the West. This need may well have been one of the moving forces behind the (re)shaping of the philological disciplines in the European universities of the early nineteenth century.8

But do we not have to admit that the affinity between the discourse of commentary and our own time is more intense than this functional relationship, based on a demand for supplementary *Bildung,* which has existed now for almost two hundred years? Is deconstruction as a

8. Here I begin to depart from the historical theses proposed by Fuhrmann in "Kommentierte Klassiker?" 49-54.

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philosophical embodiment of the textual principle of commentary not a symptom for a specific closeness between the tradition of commentary and our own cultural moment?9

Could we not associate commentary with a weak author position and a weak author position with the description as "weak thinking" that Gianni Vattimo has proposed as an emblem of our own intellectual situation? Would one not have to admit that, for once, electronic media have played an important role in bringing about this situation? Is it not tempting and probably adequate to say that all those new instruments and formats - hypo-, hyper-, and megatext or mega-, hyper-, and hypocards - are both the symptoms and the agents of a historically accelerated "return to commentary" or even of a "return to philology" in transition toward hightech philology? Could one not finally say-without pushing the metaphor too far-that the Internet, with its ever-emerging Web sites and home pages, has become an electronically produced running commentary to the world? And all those conversations and exchanges by electronic mail that absorb so much time without ever saving time - do they not end up being a running commentary to our professional lives? For both the Internet and electronic mail, a material juxtaposition of different discourses does indeed exist, materialized in the co-habitation of such discourses on the hard drives of our computers. In both cases the structures (above all, the sequential structures) of the worlds on which to comment affect the structures of the Internet and e-mail as discourses of commentary.

But there is one technological condition through which the commentary tradition has already changed profoundly and will change even more dramatically in the future. We know that, although no single chip, disk, or hard drive will ever offer infinite storage capacity, they will soon be able to offer so much "space" that our accumulated knowledge will not fill it up. This will be the end of the situation-and perhaps we have already reached this limit-in which the discourse of commentary comes with an implicit aesthetic of exuberance, that is, the end of the situation where there is never enough space on the mar-

9. The departure in this descriptive formula from what deconstruction would accept as a possible self-description (concentrated, above all, in the word *embodiment)* is fully intended.

gins of the primary texts for all the commentary available. The vision of the empty chip constitutes a threat, a veritable *horror vacui* not only for the electronic media industry but also, I suppose, for our intellectual and cultural self-appreciation. It might promote, once again, a reappreciation of the principle and substance of *copia.* And it might bring about a situation in which we will no longer be embarrassed to admit that filling up margins is what commentaries mostly do-and what they do best.

CHAPTER 4

Historicizing Things

Imagine the politico-intellectual world in the early-nineteenth-century societies of postbourgeois revolutions and reforms as the theater for the emergence of the *Neuphilologien,* as they are still alive at universities such as Heidelberg or Tübingen, Munich, Cologne, Liège, or Kiel.1 This nineteenth-century environment was the first cultural setting - at least the first since antiquity - in which a normative image of society (whose production was enhanced and largely financed by the state) entered in conflict with the citizens' everyday experience. The newly wrought concept of the citizen included as a core component the citizen's right to expect the realization of whatever situations or privileges were promised by the normative image of society, and this was all the more important where such official promises seemed to diverge from the everyday experience in society. At the same time, the sphere of leisure und pastime emerged for the first time (as a general right m leisure, that is, not just as a privilege reserved for specific social groups), *Leisure* (or *pastime)* corresponded to a bundle of institutions that helped to ease the rising tensions between everyday experience und the normative image of society. In leisurely activities (und literary reading was just one of them) citizens played und enjoyed those very roles, sit-

1. I am mentioning Liége here, among a number of German universities, because one specific institutional form of the *Neuphilologien,* "Romance philology," has survived broadly enough to be mentioned only in Belgium und the German-speaking countries. For a more detailed version of the history of the *Nationalphilologien,* see my article "`Un souffle d'Allemagne ayant passé': Friedrich Diez, Gaston Paris, und the Genesis of National Philologies," *Romance Philology 40* (1986): 1-37. The historical conception of this essay became the basis for a colloquium whose proceedings were published in Bemard Cerquiglini und Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, eds., *Der Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie: Wissenschaftsgeschichte als Innovationsvorgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983).

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uations, and rights that the normative image of society had promised to them, without everyday life ever living up to these ideals.

Typically the states for whose stability the sphere and the function of leisure soon became crucial contributed to the existence of this institution of mediation with the foundation of certain academic disciplines. (No doubt the *Neuphilologien* belonged to these disciplines, but the question is whether my hypothesis would not also work for some other fields, at least within the humanities.) These new academic disciplines operated on a double level. First, they developed strategies that we would today identify as belonging to a "pedagogy of reading." Such new Instructions and orientations helped to ensure certain compensatory or reconciliatory effects of literary reading intervening in the tension between the normative image of society and everyday social experience. Reading in the compensatory mode would provide citizens with the illusion of playing all those roles that had been promised to them by

the normative image of society and that had been withheld in the everyday world. Reconciliatory reading, in contrast, would try to persuade the consumers of literature that the gap and the tension between the social reality and the social reality was not quite as dramatic as they had originally assumed. From the beginning, however, the new philological disciplines also fulfilled the second function of contributing to the development of the normative image of society. They "extracted" certain images, themes, und values from "literary" texts und "transferred" them into the normative image of society as it was present, on manifold levels and in multiple forms, throughout the public sphere, and they readily accepted as literary any texts that they could use in this context..

Wherever the bourgeois reforms were reactions to situations und feelings of national defeat, as in Prussia, the normative image of society was staged as an image of the nation's glorious past, one that would set standards for a desired national future. As a consequence, each of the national philologies existing in this particular environment conceived of itself as a "historical discipline," meaning a field of intellectual practice with a high degree of specific skills that had to be acquired (e.g., reading competence in early stages of a national language, paleography, und text editing) und that would in turn produce certain criteria of aca-

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demic professionalization. In other cases, however, where the bourgeois reforms had been propelled by successful revolutions lying in the immediate national past (e.g., in France, England, and the United States), literary criticism did not emerge as a historical discipline. In these victorious new states the normative image of society was constituted not by supposed remembrances from a glorious national past but by general "human" values Without any specific index of historicization. The still-existing French tendency of confusing *la grande Nation* with humankind and, on a less pretentious level, Matthew Arnold's congenial insistence that English students ought to read all the great texts of all national literatures are just two illustrations for the immanent - non-national - logic of the nonhistorical model. On the other, "romantic" side of this distinction, it is interesting to see that, throughout the nineteenth century, feelings and situations of national defeat continued to generate, quite regularly, movements of philological historicization and nationalization. This is true for the Italian risorgimento and Francesco de Sanctis, for France after the Franco-Prussian War of 187o-71 (Gaston Paris only then turned to the national historiography of literature as his main working field), or for Spain after the loss of its-last remaining transatlantic colonies in 1898 (Ramón Menéndez Pidal is generally counted among the authors of the "1898 Generation" of national resurrection in the cultural history of his country, and his critical edition of *El Cantar*

de mío Cid has the reputation of being one of the great cultural achievements of this movement).2

At least from my alien perspective of being a Romanist and not a classicist, this outline of a disciplinary history suggests a number of interesting questions regarding the history of historicization within the discipline of classics. Above all, should one consider the early nineteenth century as a moment of productive discontinuity (in

2. Regarding Menéndez Pida1, see chapter 2 in this book and my essays "Lebende Vergangenheit: Zur Typologie der `Arbeit am Text' in der spanischen Kultur," in *Das fremde Wort: Studien zur Interdependenz von Texten: Festschrift für Karl Maurer zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Ilse Nolting-Hauff and Joachim Schulze (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1988), 81-110; "A Philological Invention of Modernism: Menéndez Pidal, García Lorca and the Harlem Renaissance," in *The Future of the Middle* Ages: *Medieval French Literature in the 1990s,* ed. William D. Paden (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 32-49.

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the sense of a "historical takeoff") within the history of classics? Such a view has become truly consensual for the history of the *Neuphilologien,* to the point that hardly anybody today would claim the existence of a disciplinary prehistory before 1800 - although different stories can be told to explain why the *Neuphilologien* came into being only after 1800.3 Another specific question regarding classics is where and with what intensity the culture of antiquity was "co-opted" - paradoxically so, one may emphasize - as a part of certain nation-specific images of society (this was definitely the case in Germany/Prussia,4 but the case of France's First Empire is perhaps equally interesting and much less investigated).5 Furthermore; if it is true that the cultural presence of antiquity underwent a wave of historicization at the turn of the eighteenth century (this is at least how the historians of French literature propose to understand the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes),* can one then say that the historical culture of the nineteenth century generated a second historicization wave of similar impact? And if this is correct, did the two waves of historicization produce any effects of interference? Finally, what influence did each nation-specific disciplinary environment - for example, the philologies conceived as historical disciplines in Germany versus Matthew Arnold's ideal of literary criticism - have on the development of classics in different countries?

Turning back to the *Neuphilologien,* I will now briefly discuss two extreme (and similar) cases in the academic history of historicization, those of Britain and the United States. With respect to the two types of disciplinary forms that I have distinguished, both these cases belong to the nonromantic (non-Prussian) model, and both constitute extreme cases because, at least on a broader institutional level, historicization did not really become part of their professional philo-

3. Such an alternative story - that still begins around 1800 - is Bill Readings's deservedly famous book *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

4. See chapter 5 of this book.

5. See "'Ce divan étoilé d'or' - Empire als Stilepoche/Epochenstil/Stil/Epoche, in *Zum Problem der Geschichtlichkeit üsthetischer Normen: Die Antike im Wandel des Urteils des 19. Jahrhunderts: Vortrüge des 111. Werner Krauss-Kolloquiums,* Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR/Gesellschaftswissenschaften, no. 1/G (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1986), *269-94.*

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logical practices before the 1960s. Whereas the Continental national philologies and their practice of historicization underwent a deep crisis beginning with the final decade of the nineteenth century, a crisis that ended up provoking the emergence of subdisciplines such as "literary theory" and "comparative literature,"6 the alternative mode of literary criticism in England and the United States was much less affected by changes in its cultural environment. New Criticism and the debates about different canons of literary reading for college students that began during the second and the third decades of the twentieth century did not entail profound changes in the disciplinary practice. At most they were symptoms of a heightened level of self-reflexivity - the first step, perhaps, in the transformation of a cultural style into an academic method. However knowledgeable some of the great New Critics were about the history of culture and literature, the historicization of the great literary texts did simply not belong to their intellectual or cultural concerns.

One of the earliest signs for a change in this situation, at least in the U.S. context, was the foundation in the late 1960s of an academic journal bearing the programmatic name *New Literary History* and seeking an international range through the choice of the scholars that it published. The journal was rewarded with an almost immediate national and international success. This was also the moment when "French theory" began to conquer literature departments in the United States, bringing together under its deceptively unifying name two truly divergent intellectual styles and academic practices. One of these practices was deconstruction, which, being among so many other things a reinvention of philosophy as a technique of close reading, offered a smooth transition from the sophisticated reading culture of New Criticism. Different from other styles of close reading, however, deconstruction has always been proud and eager to undermine the semantic stability and sometimes the institutional authority of the texts with which it deals.7

6. See my article "The Future of Literary Studies," *New Literary History 26* (Summer 1995): 499-519

7. Regarding the adaptation of deconstructive philosophy in the United States, see my review article "Déconstruction deconstructed: Transformationen französischer Logozentrismuskritik in der amerikanischen Literaturwissenschaft," *Philosophische Rundschau* 33 (1986): *1-35.*

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The other half of "French theory" was Michel Foucault's revamped version of cultural and intellectual history. Now, except for their French origin, deconstructive philosophy and

Foucauldian historiography shared precious little - they were certainly relying on very divergent epistemological bases - but they had a similar impact on the pragmatics of the literary disciplines in the United States. Both Derrida's and Foucault's works were used to argue for a programmatic change in the function of the literary disciplines. From the traditional tasks that the teaching of literature had fulfilled in England and the United States - that is, from contributing to the continuity of well-established social situations (and probably well-established class privileges) - they now turned to "problematization" and "destabilization" as their new "political" values - and missions. This explains why the New Historicists who cultivated an Americanized version of Foucault's historiographical style rallied around two new feelings. The first was the feeling that the emplotment of history and the rendition of "facts" in the historiographical text were largely arbitrary (the challenge was no longer to identify the true story but to invent a good story). It was supplemented by the complementary feeling of a quasi-literary freedom that the historian should enjoy and actively use.

The new goal of being "critical" also explains why, more or less simultaneously with French theory and above all in the United Kingdom, the tradition of the Frankfurt school, the soft-spoken version of Marxist theory, began to find enthusiastic readers, giving rise during the 1980s to the research paradigm of cultural studies. Of the three paradigms in question here, only deconstruction did *not* trigger movements of historicization in England and the United States. Nevertheless, it is telling that these three critical and potentially "subversive" (a pet concept of those years) paradigms were simultaneously adopted within the Anglo-American academic tradition and that they were typically adopted and propagated by that generation of academicians who had witnessed and even actively participated in the European students' revolution or the anti-Vietnam War protest in the United States. As had happened in the European universities of the early nineteenth century, therefore, a reshaping of academic disciplines and an interest in historicization arose among a generation that was committed to the

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critique of a political present. It remains to be seen, especially in the U.S. case, whether the wave of historicization can survive this generation and its desire of political protest.

If, at least in the early nineteenth century, the capacity or necessity of historicizing had become an agent of professionalization, what exactly was the competence that defined this skill? What determined its inherent degrees of sophistication? First of all, I would like to emphasize that, from a strictly phenomenological perspective, historicization has nothing to

do with identifying time structures inherent to certain objects. "Time objects in the proper sense" ("Zeitobjekte im eigentlichen Sinn"), according to Husserl, are objects that cannot exist outside the dimension of temporality. While this is true for music and for most if not all forms of verbal communication, it is also clear that being a time object in this sense is not what makes a Mozart opera or a Platonic dialogue "historical." What makes an object historical—and I do not see any other move of historicization—is the beholder's readiness to overcome a primary inertia of assuming that he or she knows enough to make good or at least adequate use of an encountered object. As an object attribution, this seems to be synonymous with suspending the "naive" presupposition that any object we encounter will be somehow pertinent for us. Of course, the potential of triggering this reaction is not exclusive to objects that belong to the past. Nevertheless, we have to keep it in mind as an intermediary level so to speak, toward the identification of what is unique about the attitude and practice of historicization.

The precondition of historicization is thus a willingness to take a step back from the pragmatic orientation that permeates our everyday life, and such a step back transforms the object in question—to use a Heideggerian distinction—from an object "ready-to-hand" into an object "present-to-hand."[8] Having historical consciousness is thus similar to being cosmopolitan, for cosmopolitans are those who do *not* feel completely at home anywhere. Of course, the reasons for sus-

8. Developed in paragraph 15 of Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* 15th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984).

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pending the perspective of the ready-to-hand are different in the two cases—it is temporal remoteness in the case of historical consciousness and spatial (or cultural) remoteness in the case of being cosmopolitan. But this difference can become blurred or even disappear completely in certain cultural contexts (medieval "historiography" seems to have regularly included phenomena of spatial otherness).[9] For the main move of historicization following the suspension of the ready-to-hand is not—at least not yet—a distinction between temporal and spatial otherness but rather the reaction ("decision" would probably be too strong a concept here) of *not* dropping, neglecting, or eliminating objects for which we have no immediate use. Because the suspension of the ready-to-hand *cannot* be regarded as exclusive to historicization, we still have to search for what is unique and specific about historicization.

I would like to add here that identifying something as *klassisch* in the strictly Gadamerian sense of belonging to objects "mit überzeitlicher Sagkraft" implies a double suspension.[10] On the basis of the first suspension, that is, the suspension of the presupposition that I am

competent to handle any object that I encounter, identifying something as *klassisch* implies the secondary suspension of this very reservation or, in other words, an undoing of that step back that we take whenever we historicize. Identifying something as *klassisch* means recognizing that a primarily "strange" object will turn out to be important or pertinent to me, although I do not make the otherwise necessary effort to identify its historically specific conditions of becoming pertinent. Therefore, we cannot really appreciate as *klassisch* what we have not first identified as historically remote. Harold Bloom's way of reading Shakespeare, for example, his obsession with finding himself in the character of Falstaff, is immune to the criticism of being a historically naive reading because it draws its specific provocation (and perhaps its specific sophistication) from the decision not to historicize

9. See "Vorwort der Bandherausgeber," in *La Littérature historiographique des origines* á 1500, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Ursula Link-Heer, and Peter-Michael Spangenberg, Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters, vol. 11, pt. 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986), 17-25.
10. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Das Beispiel des Klassischen," *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosaphischen Hermeneutik,* 2d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 269-75.

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Shakespeare and his characters.11 But must we not admit that what encourages us - professional readers - to bracket our historicization capacities is often the observation that a certain text or a certain artwork from the past is capable of fascinating even those readers and beholders who would be unable to reintegrate them into their original historical contexts? Which reflection could lead us to ask how *klassisch* are the images of ancient texts and culture that the discipline of classics used to and continues to produce?

Not surprisingly, I have once again arrived at the conclusion that the humanists' skills are not so much attitudes and procedures imposed on us by certain objects but a will to complexification, a will to make things joyfully and painfully complicated located in the humanist's mind.12 As I tried to argue before, the decisive move is to *not* immediately bracket, drop, and eliminate objects for which we have neither immediate nor obvious use. From a Bourdieu-inspired angle, we could suggest the following rule: the less obvious the need for historicization is from our relation to an object in question, the more we tend to appreciate and even to admire the will to historicize as a proof of intellectual sophistication. For most of us it is not terribly meritorious to realize that we are unable to decipher a text written in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs yet still find these signs fascinating. But I felt immediately embarrassed by my own lack of sophistication/*historisches Bewußtsein* when a renowned cultural journalist recently mentioned in passing that he no longer liked the texts of a certain scholar because *they* had not overcome "the stylistic flavor of the late 9os." My ten-year-old son provoked an analogous impression by qualifying his Christmas wish for a skateboard

with the commentary that skateboarding is an early-I990s fashion "now strongly back" (whereas I had naively assumed that skateboarding was hip anyway).

But let us return to the phenomenological take on historicization, to

11. See, above all, Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (NewYork: Riverhead Books, 1998).

12. For a description of reading as an oscillation between joyful and painful exposure to complexity, see chapter 5 of this book.

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the observation that historicity is something produced in our minds against considerable inertia and not something inherent to certain objects of reference. By suspending, at least in some cases, the primary presupposition that we know how to handle the objects that we encounter, we single out the objects in question and surround them with an aura, and by emphasizing their remoteness, we transform them into objects of desire.'3 Once we have qualified them as "objects surrounded by an aura" and as "objects of desire," we are not far from the original meaning of the Latin word *sacer* and from saying that such objects are "sacred objects." This is indeed the argumentative direction in which I am heading. I want to say that through our skills of historicization we produce sacred objects, and I want to avoid any metaphorical undertones in this proposition (as much as I want to avoid any other effects of being witty or academically imaginative here). Rather, I want to claim that the sacred objects produced by cultural historians are as legitimately sacred as those produced by any other religion. For there are no sacred objects without specific frames of staging and scaffolding (such as our *historisches Bewußtsein,* for example), without priests, theologians, historians, and specialists in any other field capable of exempting such objects from the everyday sphere and explaining why they require (or, to say it in a more sophisticated way, why they deserve) special treatment. This is as true for a certain railway car that you can visit at Compiégne, north of Paris (the surrender of the German military in i9I8 and the surrender of the French military in I94o were both signed in this car), as for the particles of the Holy Cross that my mother keeps in her drawer; it is true for those pieces of bread that practicing Catholics believe to be the body of Christ and for the bottles of *cachaça* that you find offered to the gods of Afro-Christian cults at the street corners of Brazilian cines on any given Friday night. I understand that the reasons these objects are sacred differ from case to case, but the point of convergence that I want to emphasize is that they all are produced as

13. I think it has finally become legitimate to use the concept of "aura" without referring to the ongoing production of the Benjamin philologists. For an excellent "archaeology" of this notion, however, see Ursula Link-Heer's essay in *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age,* ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Marrinan (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

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sacred objects by specialists. In other words, there are no "primarily" or "naturally" sacred objects.

I will resist the obligation, coming from our dutifully cherished Enlightenment legacy (loving it is more an obligation than a temptation!), of saying either that the sacred objects that we produce are not really sacred objects or that we should beware of creating sacred objects because doing so is not very rational. On the contrary, I would like to claim (as well as express my regrets) that one of our most time-honored and religious social functions as historians, one of our former titles to legitimacy-namely, the expectation that we may be able to produce some kind of valuable prognoses-has become obsolete, at the latest since the demise of Marxism (outside Marxism, the same claim had been benignly historicized and relativized long before; think, for example, of Reinhart Koselleck's work). Confronted with the void that the now abandoned practice of prognostication leaves, we could do much worse, to say the least, than to rediscover the truth that by merely historicizing things we already produce sacred objects and to reclaim the status of being the specialists of this practice. I will only mention here the frequently proposed identification of our contemporary museums as "(post)modern temples" because I agree too much but also because I disagree with the metaphorical status that normally goes with this observation. The real question that I want to tackle is this: what *specific* religious functions can our sacred historical objects fulfill?

The answer is that historical/historicized objects can help us overcome the threshold of death, and this seems so obvious to me that I will not even qualify my answer as tentative. Now, by saying - as we so often do in other contexts - that a religion and its sacred objects help us overcome the threshold of death, we normally or at least primarily refer to the future threshold constituted by the end of our own lives. Both Martin Heidegger and, more surprisingly, Niklas Luhmann have explained why imagining the "afterlife" of one's own consciousness is both impossible and fascinating.14 But it was only Heidegger who

14. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* paragraphs 46-53; Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 262-67.

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showed, with breathtaking sobriety, how futile it is to indulge in the illusion that there could be anything but nothingness after one's own death. Seen from this angle, the ideological promise of "living on" in the future of one's nation or of one's class and Hegelian-style prognostications based on the observation of history appear to us today as not very convincing religious ideas that survived Heidegger's merciless diagnosis by barely half a century. It has been said that the obsession with historically based prognostication, as it arose during the eighteenth century and became popular during the nineteenth, may indeed have been a result

of secularization, of the abandonment, at least among intellectuals, of an originally religious hope for an afterlife.15 In other words, "our" historical culture and historical consciousness may have developed since the time when intellectuals first began to lose their belief in the traditionally religious horizon of transcendence; historical consciousness may have filled in for a vanishing belief in God and in the afterlife that he had seemed to promise.

In the present of the early twenty-first century, however, "we scholars" (as Nietzsche would have said) have almost completely given up the effort of trying to overcome the threshold of death by anticipating the future.16 Our fascination instead lies, to quote Stephen Greenblatt, the head New Historicist, in "speaking to the dead."17 There is today a style of writing and of staging history whose main if not only ambition lies in making us forget that the past is no longer present.18 Making material objects from the past present and tangible-or at least pointing to them-often seems to produce the truly magic effect of eliminating the temporal distance that separates us from the desired

15. Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte als Heilsgeschehen,* 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953). See also my article "Die kaum artikulierte Prämise: volkssprachliche Universalgeschichte unter heilsgeschichtlicher Perspektive," in *La Littérature historiographique,* ed. Gumbrecht, Link-Heer, and Spangenberg, 799-817.
16. This is indeed not true exclusively for scholars. See Niklas Luhmann, "Die Beschreibung der Zukunft," *Beobachtungen Moderne* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 129-48.
17. Stephen Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," in *The New Historicism,* ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 1-14.
18. My book *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) is meant to provide this feeling to the reader. See above all the chapter "After Learning from History."

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past; to be more precise, it helps us produce the illusion of this effect. Indulging, then, in the illusion that we can make the dead speak to us-and, if one may say so, that we can make them speak to us just for our pleasure-is a way of overcoming the threshold of death by persuading us that the deaths of those who lived before us do not separate us from them, which finally also means that we ignore the temporal limitations set by our own birth. Both gestures - that is, both directions of overcoming the threshold of death, prognostication and speaking to the head - are transcendental in a strictly phenomenological but also a conventionally theological sense. That everybody's possibilities of perception, lived experience, and experience are limited by the two temporal borders of his or her life is a structure of the human life-world.19 To transcend the borders of the life-world - by trying to anticipate the future or by trying to speak to the dead - means to move imaginatively into a zone that lies beyond the limits of the life-world. This is a zone that we normally either describe as the "humanly impossible" or associate with what we imagine to be "divine qualities." To anticipate the future and to speak to the dead could be, in this sense, the beginning of the illusion of becoming eternal.

If this is a fair description of one of those specific fascinations that, in our present, drive the engagement with the past, then we can be sure that Heidegger would have interpreted such enthusiasm for speaking to the dead as a symptom of our "fallenness to the world." For turning to the past, making the dead speak to overcome the threshold of death, unavoidably implies a turning away from that future in which our own deaths will lie. Turning to the worlds of the past, "falling for them" ("ihnen verfallen sein"), may help us forget about the unbearable nothingness that will come with each of our individual deaths and that Heidegger wants us to confront so very bravely. Sure enough, there have been ways of practicing history in the not so remote past that

19. Regarding the use of Husserl's concept *Lebenswelt* for an analysis of historiography as a genre, see my essay "`Das in vergangenen Zeiten Gewesene so erzählen, als ob es in der eigenen Welt wäre': Versuch zur Anthropologie der Geschichtsschreibung," in *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung,* ed. R. Koselleck, H. Lutz, and J. Ruesen, Theorie der Geschichte, vol. 4 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 480-513 (English translation in my *Making* Sense *in Life and Literature* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992]).

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would have lived up to Heidegger's existentialist challenge-one of them perhaps being Kojéve's attempt at thinking the end of history in a Hegelian way. So there is no *necessary* relationship between historicizing the world and turning away from the confrontation with nothingness. To produce the illusion of speaking to the dead as a specific use of historicization, however, must be qualified in a Heideggerean world as existentially cowardly. But who obliges us to opt for Heidegger's world? Do we not have a right to turn away from the painful impossibility of imagining our own deaths and from the painful certainty that they will occur nevertheless?

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CHAPTER 5

Teaching

When we talk about teaching at the university these days, it is certainly clear what we must try to avoid. Nobody has any use for more of that Sunday-morning rhetoric about how wonderful and indispensable yet underestimated and ultimately forward looking the humanities are. We should stop speaking of our profession using those big words to which everybody inside the humanities returns from time to time (if not constantly) and that everybody outside the humanities accepts and even supports easily-for the simple reason that nobody, either inside the humanities or outside, believes in them anyway. Nobody needs more debates concerning whether the task of our disciplines should be "compensation" (i.e., "compensation" for the horrors of technology) or "orientation" (without knowing who will profit from the blessings of such guidance). Nobody needs more of such empty claims that,

somehow inevitably, seem to lead to the even emptier claims that the true nature of our disciplines is to be "cross-disciplinary," "integrative," and "dialogic." I want never again to be exposed to self-identifications such as the one that the humanities are "enlightening" because it is supposedly their business to resist and, if necessary, undo the "remythologizing effects" of contemporary society; nor do I want to be confronted any further with the distinction between "culture" (= good) and "civilization" (= bad).' Sometimes, as we all know (because the empirical evidence pursues us by mail and e-mail without mercy), the quality of the humanities' own reflections about their status and their future meets the level of those disgustingly well-intentioned prefaces to documents of

1. I found this remarkable collection of commonplaces on the first seven and a half pages of Wolfgang Frühwald, Hans Robert Jauss, Reinhart Koselleck, Jürgen Mittelstrass, and Burkhart Steinwachs, *Geisteswissenschaften heute: Eine Denkschrift* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 7-14.

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otherwise purely administrative relevance. It is more preoccupying, however, to see that even those contributions to the ongoing debate about the humanities that are characterized by an undeniably higher degree of complexity and, if one may say so, true intellectual dignity cannot completely escape certain effects of the trivial. Do we really need to be told that extra-academic "fascination with history, aesthetic experience, and linguistic sensibility" are desirable frame conditions for our work?2 Is it necessary to remind us of the values of *Bildung,* that is, of the expectation that the years spent at the university should lead young people to intellectual and personal "independence"?3

Unfortunately, the problem is not specific to the German or any other national academic context. We certainly hit the same wall of helplessness in the American academic debates, and I have yet to make up my mind whether I find their higher degree of naïveté more charming or more devastating than the serially produced and well-packaged standard arguments of the German discussion. But what is the international academic problem? Why do we so profusely produce a discourse that clearly gets worse the more its volume increases? The problem may be, at least in part, that there is no *real* problem. We constantly defend ourselves against state administrations and a public sphere that are not *really* our enemies, because they have no intention to seriously scale down either our size or our importance. Rather, they are grotesquely eager to agree with whatever arguments we may present in our favor. Is it our paranoia that we defend the existence of a *Romanisches Seminar* at every single *Gesamthochschule-or* is shutting down one out of twenty-five *Romanische Seminare* evidence of "their" hidden but wicked intentions? In other words, the problem seems to be that, despite our own flourishing hysteria, we do not have really threatening enemies. Rather, I think, our expectations are too high (does every newly found fragment need a critical edition?). Why, for example, do German humanists so often play along with the "petit bourgeois trend" and desire of certain

2. Rüdiger Bubner, "Die humane Bedeutung der Geisteswissenschaften," *Zwischenrufe: Aus den bewegten Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 121-38 (quotation on 138).

3. Dieter Henrich, "Die Krise der Universität im vereinigten Deutschland," *Nach dem Ende der Teilung: Über Identitdten und Intellektualitüt in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 125-56 (quotation on 141).

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social sectors to invent streamlined functions for each and every humanistic discipline (culminating in the invention of the *Kulturwirt)* instead of connecting with those foundations and politicians who are willing to support the humanities for the humanities' sake anyway?4 Why are we turning our social-democratic instincts against ourselves? My quite confident answer is that we humanists suffer from a much more profound pessimism, perhaps even a much more flagrant lack of enthusiasm, about our own work than do those groups with whom we interact in practicing our profession (I call this answer "confident" in the sense that I find it convincing, but I realize that there might be some collegial pressure to qualify it as "tentative"). Instead of trying to prove my point with lengthy quotations or cumbersome statistics,5 let us see how we might react to this condition of chronic collective depression.

If we want to return to an attitude of confidence, if we want-so to speak-to *reenergize our self-image,* then it will be important not to exclude the worst-case scenario from our reflections and debates. In other words, we should not exclude the possibility that the humanities might indeed have reached their historical ending.6 After all, they had their clearly marked beginning as institutions in the early nineteenth century and their beginning as an explicit program (formulated, among others, by Wilhelm Dilthey) around 1900. Moreover, numerous societies and cultures exist quite happily without academic disciplines such as ours. Therefore, once again and most probably, we will look more convincing if we admit that the humanities are a special institution that some cultures have come to afford, one that may produce special benefits (which we would have to name), rather than pretend, quite unconvincingly, that the end of the humanities would be the end of humankind. More important, however, the ways in which

4. I am following Manfred Fuhrmann, "Klassische Philologie seit 1945: Erstarrung, Geltungsverlust, neue Perspektiven," in *Die sog. Geisteswissenschaften: Innenansichten,* ed. Wolfgang Prinz and Peter Weingart (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 3I3-28 (quotation on 327).

5. See "Dysphoria," introduction to Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Walter Moser, eds., *Canadian Journal of Comparative Literature 9* (2001), special issue, "The Future of Literary Studies/L'avenir des études littéraires," where we present some thirty views of fellow scholars about the future of literary criticism.

6. See my essay "The Origins of Literary Studies - and Their End?" *Stanford Humanities Review* 6, no. 1 (1998): 1-10.

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we reflect about our professional situations should be as specific as possible. In this essay, therefore, I will try to think about the situation of classics rather than the humanities at large; I will deal with classics as a profession, not as a field of knowledge; and I will do so by estab-

lishing a relation between the present situation of this profession and its situation in Europe during the second and the third decades of the twentieth century. Given my initial diagnosis according to which what we need most is a self-reenergizing (at least, we need this more than a public defense against accusations that don't exist), there is a specific danger inherent to the specificity of the historical approach that I have chosen. How can I avoid having the past, which I try to evoke, turn into "an invisible and dark burden," as Nietzsche put it,7 instead of becoming a "blazing lightning from within a cloud"?8 How can I manage not to get stuck in that "ironic self-reference"9 that he describes as an attitude of his own time and that has remained (or become) so much ours? The answer, of course, should be as Nietzschean as the question: I will try to keep a deliberately narrow historical focus on one text from the past (Max Weber's "Wissenschaft als Beruf") and on a specific contemporary configuration of positions, marked by the names of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, Stefan George, and Werner Jaeger. This means that bracketing (in Nietzsche's words, "forgetting") some historical conditions of classical philology10 as a profession in the early 1920s will be

7. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben,* in *Sümtliche Werke,* Kritische Studienausgabe, vol. 1. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 198o), 249: "die große und immer größere Last des Vergangenen: diese drückt [den Menschen] nieder oder beugt ihn seitwärts, diese beschwert seinen Gang als eine unsichtbare und dunkle Bürde."
8. Ibid., 253: "daß innerhalb jener umschließenden Dunstwollke ein heller, blitzender Lichtschein entsteht."
9. Ibid., 302: "Es darf zwar befremdend, aber nicht widerspruchsvoll erscheinen, wenn ich dem Zeitalter, da so hörbar und aufdringlich in das unbekümmertste Frohlocken über seine historische Bildung auszubrechen pflegt, trotzdem eine Art von *ironischern Selbstbewußtsein* zuschreibe, ein darüberschwebendes Ahnen, daß hier nicht zu frohlocken sei, eine Furcht, daß es vielleicht bald mit aller Lustbarkeit der historischen Erkenntnis vorüber sein werde."
10. I will not distinguish between the historically and nationally different shapes and interpretations that this discipline has adopted over the decades. Whichever of its different names I use *(Klassische Philologie, Altertumswissenschaft,* classics, etc.), a philological component in the strict sense of the term is always implied.

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at least as much on my mind as invoking others.11 This, I hope will help us to position ourselves - for a moment at least -" on the threshold of the present moment."12 Within the present moment, however, I will try to find a new, contemporary way of conceiving of what Nietzsche proposed for the profession of classical philology in his own time: the program of being untimely within its own present.13

Max Weber's famous essay "Wissenschaft als Beruf," original publication goes back to the spring of 1919, was first delivered as a lecture, organized by the Freistudentische Bund, at Munich on November 7, 1917, a good year before the end of World War I.14 Weber's systematic reflection on the academic profession took place at a moment in his life when, after years of disease, months of volunteer service in the military administration (which he quit in September 1915), and several unsuccessful attempts to gain a position of influence in

national politics, he was about to return to the university: first through a visiting professorship in Vienna and then, definitively, by accepting a position at the University of Munich in March 1919. The Freistudentische Bund was a national association of university students that, founded in the late nineteenth century as a minority alternative to the sword-fighting student corporations and their nationalistic pathos,15

11. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen,* 330: "Mit dem Worte 'das Unhistorische' bezeichne ich die Kunst und Kraft *vergessen* zu können und sich in einen begrenzten *Horizont* einzuschließen."

12. Ibid., 250: "Wer sich nicht auf der Schwelle des Augenblicks, alle Vergangenheiten vergessend, niederlassen kann, wer nicht auf einem Punkte wie eine Siegesgöttin ohne Schwindel und Furcht zu stehen vermag, der wird nie wissen, was Glück ist und noch schlimmer: er wird nie etwas thun, was Andere glücklich macht."

13. Ibid., 247: "so viel muß ich mir aber selbst von Berufs wegen als classischer Philologe zugestehen dürfen: denn ich wüßte nicht, was die classische Philologie in unserer Zeit für reinen Sinn hätte, wenn nicht den, in ihr unzeitgemäß - das heißt gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit - zu wirken.

14. All the following biographical (and more generally historical) information concerning Max Weber's text is taken from the outstanding "Einleitung" and "Editorischer Bericht" in vol. 1, pt. 17, of Max Weber, Gesamtausgabe, ed. Horst Baier, M. Rainer Lepsius, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Johannes Winckelmann (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 1-46, 49-69. Weber's text is presented on 71-111; further citations are given parenthetically in the text.

15. Weber himself quit the corporation of his student years (*Allemania Heidelberg)* in November 1918.

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found fast-growing acceptance during the war years. One of its programmatic concerns was to criticize the contemporary German universities as exclusively focusing on professional education (to the apparent detriment of a humanistic-and more holistic-conception of *Bildung).* It may have been the very controversial reactions to an essay written by Alexander Schwab, a leading associate of the Freistudentische Bund, professing exactly this critique that suggested the idea of a lecture series entitled "Intellectual Work as Profession" ("Geistige Arbeit als Beruf"). Max Weber became its first speaker.16

What strikes the reader in the opening passages of Weber's text "Wissenschaft als Beruf" is an almost obsessive insistence on the randomness - perhaps one should say on the "objective improbability" – of success in the academic profession (in this context Weber himself reiterates and italicizes the seldom-used word *Hazard).* The interactions between the state administration and the academic institution, he argues, make successful recruitment of professors unlikely *(77); he* sees no connection between the talents of the charismatic teacher and those of the productive scholar (79); and finally, presupposing that sustained hard work is a necessary condition for any important scholarly intuitions or discoveries, Weber claims that the difference between having such success and lifelong failure is a random phenomenon. After this

provocative opening, however, which was obviously meant to problematize the aura with which traditionally romantic and preromantic ideologies had adorned the role of the German

professor, it becomes quite difficult to identify the positions in whose favor Weber wanted to argue, while those against which he was arguing continue to be evident. With strong doses of irony, for example, he criticizes all the different versions of the Enlightenment expectation that research and learning will yield immediate orientations for everyday life. According to Weber, it cannot be the task of the academic institution to "give meaning to the world," to lay the foundations for "collective happiness" (92), or to provide any "immediately practical answers" (93) or a better understanding and "knowledge of the human life conditions" (87). But in the

16.On January 28, 1919, Weber gave a second lecture in the same series under the title "Politik als Beruf" *(Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 1, pt. *17, 157-252).*

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absence of such clearly circumscribed tasks, what would give the academic practice *as a profession* (105) its identity? For an answer Weber seems to refer, above all, to the specificity of an intellectual style. This style shall rely on highly abstract concepts and on experimentation (90), as well as on logical thought, method-guided procedure, and a preference for results that make a difference, although not necessarily a practical difference (93).17 In the second part of his speech, Weber is most concerned with an aggressive critique of all those neoromantic values whose propagation had been at the origin of the Freistudentische Bund's lecture series. He holds political goals to be incompatible with academic teaching (95-96, 100), and he seems to find truly obscene any type of emotional relationship between the academic teacher and his or her students, as it was then described and canonized by such concepts as the "teacher as leader" ("Führer," 101), the "shaping and impregnating of the student's mind" (97), or the "faith" in academic roles and academic contents (108). Again, Weber's own counterconcepts remain much more vague than his violent attacks. He sees the academic institution as part of the "disenchantment [*Entzauberung*] of the world" (87, 93) and hence identifies it as genuinely nonreligious. To those disciplines that deal with cultural manifestations *(historische Kulturwissenschaften),* he assigns the task of "understanding the conditions of the emergence and production" of such objects (95).18

None of the motifs that I have mentioned so far exceeds the standard interpretations of Max Weber's lecture. Most of them converge in the normative concept of "wertfreie Wissenschaft," with which we used to disagree heartily until the mid-1980s and which we tend to support very strongly today. It is my impression, however, that Weber's text contains a number of passages that - perhaps against the author's own intentions - cannot be so easily subsumed under the merely negative condition of being "value-free" and that might therefore be closer to certain pedagogical ideas and ideals than Weber might have wanted

17. "daß das, was bei wissenschaftlicher Arbeit herauskommt, *wichtig* im Sinn von 'wissenswert' sei."
18. "Oder nehmen Sie die historischen Kulturwissenschaften. Sie lehren politische, künstlerische, literarische und soziale Kulturerscheinungen in den Bedingungen ihres Entstehens verstehen."

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to admit. Consider, in this context, the metaphor that presents analytic concepts as "ploughshares that break up the earth of contemplative thinking" and its contrast with what Weber condemns as using words as "swords against one's enemies" (96).19 The same tendency becomes even clearer in Weber's evocation of what he claims to be the university's commitment to "intellectual aristocracy": to lure "untrained but receptive" minds into the adventure of "independent thinking" (79).20 Such independent thinking, says Weber, privileges the acceptance of "unpleasant facts" *(unbequeme Tatsachen* [98]), that is, the acceptance of observations and results that complexity - endlessly, we may add - certain preconceived opinions and positions. But does it not seem odd to associate endless intellectual complexification with the professionalism of academic research and teaching?

Likewise, such emphasis on personal independence, intellectual flexibility, and their complexifying effects does not completely coincide, I think, with what we normally understand by "wertfreie Wissenschaft." This programmatic concept, which may well be less Weber's own point in "Wissenschaft als Beruf" than that of his master interpreters, emphasizes the independence of the results of academic research from their possible value and from their practical effects outside the academic system. For example, art historians, according to Weber, should strive to explain the historical conditions for the emergence of abstract art in the early twentieth century independently from the impact that their results may have on the art market. In contrast to this focus on the results of research (in the prevailing interpretations of the concept of "Wertfreiheit"), what interests me here is Max Weber's emphasis on those effects that the ongoing process of research may have on the

19. "Die Worte, die man braucht, sind dann nicht Mittel wissenschaftlicher Analyse, sondern politischen Werbens um die Stellungnahme des anderen. Sie sind nicht Pflugscharen zur Lockerung des Erdreiches des kontemplativen Denkens, sondern Schwerter gegen die Gegner: Kampfmittel."
20. "Wissenschaftliche Schulung aber, wie wir sie nach der Tradition der deutschen Universitäten an diesen betreiben sollen, ist eine geistesaristokratische Angelegenheit, das sollten wir uns nicht verhehlen. Nun ist es freilich andererseits wahr: die Darlegung wissenschaftlicher Probleme so, daß ein ungeschulter, aber aufnahmefähiger Kopf sie versteht, und daß er - was für uns das allein Entscheidende ist - zum selbstständigen Denken darüber gelangt, ist vielleicht die pädagogisch schwierigste Aufgabe von allen."

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minds of the researchers and their students. Coming back to the just mentioned example, this would mean that trying to understand the emergence of abstract art will make you more sensitive and more intellectually versatile, even if you never come to terms with this task. But how does this happen, if it happens at all? How can Weber's ideal of a *Geistesaristokratie* become real? How and why does participation in ongoing research complexity and strengthen the minds of the participants? As far as I can see, "Wissenschaft als Beruf" does not offer any answers to this question. But it is my bet that possible answers lie exactly in the horizon of the neoromantic motifs and arguments that Weber's essay tries to reject.

What was the academic situation to which Max Weber's lecture referred? What were the problems, debates, and changes within the humanistic disciplines in Germany and within *Klassische Philologie* in particular? For the context of my discussion, it is important to realize that Weber gave his lecture only a few years after that historical threshold in which Wilhelm Dilthey's programmatic writings had confirmed and consolidated the separation of the *Geisteswissenschaften* from the rest of the academic disciplines. Not until 1910 did his book *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* definitely enthrone interpretation (as Dilthey put it, the movement from the material - and we may add, the philological - surface of the phenomena to the spiritual depth) as the core exercise of the humanities: "There lies a specific, increasingly strong tendency in the cluster of disciplines with which we are dealing, and this tendency reduces the physical aspects of the procedures to the status of pure conditions, to pure instruments of understanding. This is the emphasis on self-reflection, the directedness of our understanding from the outside to the inside. This tendency uses any objectivations of life as possible starting points for the understanding of the interiority from which it emerges."21 Dilthey mentions two slightly different although seemingly inseparable goals for the "pro-

21. "Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften" (1910), in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Texte zur Kritik der historischen Vernunft,* ed. Hans-Ulrich Lessing (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1983), 248-256 (quotation on 251): "Aber in der Natur der Wissenschaftsgruppe, über die wir handeln, liegt eine Tendenz, und sie entwickelt sich in deren Fortgang immer stärker, durch welche die physische Seite der Vorgänge in die blosse Rolle

cedure" of interpretation. First, one should seek those intellectual (or "spiritual") structures and forms that become accessible to the human senses only through their objectivations.22 Second, with respect to a much more difficult (or should one say "problematic"?) point of reference, Dilthey points to the concept of *Erlebnis* (lived experience), that is, to the human mind's encounters with the surrounding world that are at the origin of all "spiritual" contents and forms.23

Dilthey's program of bridging the distance between the material surfaces of cultural objects and a sphere of original *Erleben* holds a promise of immediacy, of a closeness to life-a promise, it appears, that he always implied to be reachable but that, at the same time, he seemed to be reluctant to describe explicitly. At this point it is important to emphasize that "lived experience," the conventional English translation of *Erlebnis,* is an inadequate expression, inasmuch as it suggests that what is being "lived" (here lies the aspect of immediacy) has already become an "experience," something interpreted and cast into concepts. The lexicon of the German language, in contrast (and the philosophical terminology

seems to follow it here), places *Erlebnis* between the level of merely physical perception, on the one side, and experience as the result of an interpretation, on the other side. An *Erlebnis,* one could then say, is an object of perception on which a consciousness focuses without having made sense of it. I think that Wilhelm Dilthey must have sensed a fascinating potential of untamedness in this notion of *Erlebnis* (the same potential that inspired other varieties of contemporary *Lebensphilosophie)* but that, instead of playing out this potential, he preferred to keep *Erlebnis* under conceptual and methodological control. The original *Erlebnis* of an author or of a poet was the point of departure to which interpretation was

von Bedingungen, von Verständnismitteln herabgedrückt wird. Es ist die Richtung auf die Selbstbesinnung, es ist der Gang des Verstehens von außen nach innen. Diese Tendenz verwertet jede Lebens Äußerung für die Erfassung des Innern, aus der sie hervorgeht."
22. Ibid., 254: "der Rückgang auf ein geistiges Gebilde," und "ein geistiger Zusammenhang . . . , der in die Sinnenwelt tritt und den wir durch den Rückgang aus dieser verstehen."
23. Ibid., 249: "Das Nächstgegebene sind die Erlebnisse. Diese stehen nun aber . . . in einem Zusammenhang, der im ganzen Lebensverlauf inmitten aller Veränderungen permanent beharrt; auf seiner Grundklage entsteht das, was ich als den erworbenen Zusammenhang des Seelenlebens früher beschrieben habe; er umfaßt unsere Vorstellungen, Wertbestimmungen und Zwecke, und er besteht als eine Verbindung dieser Glieder."
p. 78.
supposed to (be able to) return, and it is thus no wonder that autobiographical writing became the favorite genre of reference for Dilthey and his school, whereas the biographical form was their preferred way of presenting the results of their own research. Dilthey's most famous book, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung,* published in 1906, was a collection of biographical essays on Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, and Hölderlin.

It is common knowledge that another important wave of influence on the barely institutionalized *Geisteswissenschaften* came from the poet Stefan George and the sternly organized circle of his disciples.24 Because of their dramatically different styles of public self-presentation, however, which ended up attracting very different types of intellectuals, the proximity of Dilthey's hermeneutics to the positions of the Georgekreis is often overlooked. Personally, I would go so far as to claim that the rituals around poetry and culture at large that George and his *Kreis* invented are a more radical (or perhaps only more consequent) version of Dilthey's *Erlebnis* cult. George cared about the integral "wholeness" of lived experience und experience, including the human body.25 He wanted "to bodify God" and "to deify the body." Strictly hierarchical relationships and a quasi-religious commitment to "service" under the guidance of the charismatic leader characterized the internal structures of his circle.26 Friedrich Gundolf, probably the most admired Germanist of the 1920s, was a disciple of George, and to his (and George's!) dismay, he had noticed, during his early years as a professor at the University of Heidelberg, that he was less talented as a poet, less talented "in shaping life into artistic form," than as a critic. As Gundolf himself confessed, he realized

that his true und sole strength, about which he cared little, was the "vivification of what already had a shape."27 This insight, which he gradually learned to accept and which would

24. Among the abundant literature on the Georgekreis, see the excellent essay by Ernst Osterkamp, "Friedrich Gundolf zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft: Zur Problematik eines Germanisten aus dem George-Kreis," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 1910 bis 1925, ed. Christoph König und Eberhard Lämmert (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 177-98. See also Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George und His Circle* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2002).
25. See ibid., 178.
26. Ibid.,184.
27. Ibid., 181: "[Gundolfs] Briefe an Curtius bezeugen einen schweren Rollenkonflikt in den

p. 79.

gradually separate him from George himself, was the basis of his famous formula "Erlebnis als Methode,"28 which spread quickly among the literary critics of his time.29 Now, "lived experience as method" does not exactly correspond to Wilhelm Dilthey's canonization of *Er-lebnis* as the ultimate point of arrival for any interpretation. Rather, it seems to suggest that cultural objects should be brought back to life during the process of their reappropriation. This normative idea, however, is not far from the insistence on the thought-provoking proce-dures of scholarly analysis (rather than on the results that they yield) that appear in Max Weber's "Wissenschaft als Beru£"

And where did *Klassische Philologie* stand while these debates were going on at the German universities? As did most of its neighboring disciplines, it proceeded with two fundamentally different conceptions of the academic profession that, beginning with the last decades of the nineteenth century, at first coexisted and then increasingly competed. While new ways of thinking-such as those represented by Wilhelm Dilthey, Stefan George, or Friedrich Gundolf - had begun to emerge long before 1900, they were actively embraced and turned against more traditional positions only under the pressure of self - doubts and a gen-eral institutional insecurity caused by the experience of the world war.30 In this sense, Max Weber's "Wissenschaft als Beruf" - written in 1919 -

Heidelberger Anfangsjahren 1912 und 1913, der auf der im wissenschaftlichen Alltag sich mehr und mehr bestätigenden Einsicht gründete, nicht die künstlerische Gestaltung des Lebendigen, sondern die wissenschaftliche Verlebendigung des schon Gestalteten bilde sein eigentliches Talent: `Haβ gegen Bücher (die doch nun einmal mein Medium sein müssen und deren Vivifizierung mein bedeutendstes, mir nicht mehr wertvolles Talent ist) und Sehnsucht nach Lebendigen Anschauungen bei angewachsener Denkbrille quält mich."'

28. Ibid., 184.
29. One of Gundolf's admirers und colleagues for whose intellectual development this phrase became indeed decisive was the Romanist Leo Spitzer. See my biographical essay *Leo Spitzers Stil,* Veröffentlichungen des Petrarca-Instituts Köln (Tübingen: Narr, 2001).
30. See Manfred Landfester, "Die Naumburger Tagung `Das Problem des Klassischen und die Antike' (193o). Der Klassikbegriff Werner Jaegers: seine Voraussetzung und seine Wirkung," in *Altertumswissenschaft in den 2oer Jahren: Neue Fragen und Impulse,* ed. Hellmut Flashar und Sabine Vogt (Stuttgart: A Steiner, 1995), 11-40 (quotation on 11): "Dieser Bruch war zwar geistig vorbereitet seit der Jahrhundertwende, er wurde jedoch erst unter dem Eindruck der militärischen Niederlage Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg und ihrer politischen und gesellschaftlichen Folgen in der `Weimarer Republik' wirksam."

was a truly emblematic document of its time. For the public perception of classics, however, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff continued to be the most visible protagonist, even after his retirement from the University of Berlin und durrog the decade preceding his death in 1931. The preface to the fourth edition of his *Reden und Vorträge,* written in 1925, on the day of the Battle of Sedan (the decisive victory of the Prussian army in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71), proves that Wilamowitz saw decadence only in the political und cultural world that surrounded him, not in his discipline. Stubbornly, he reiterated the original dedication of this book, made in 189o, to his teachers at the *Gymnasium* of Schulpforta (whose other nationally famous student was Friedrich Nietzsche). He confirmed the oath of faith that he had sworn to Wilhelm I, the first German emperor, und above all, he saw no need - either in this preface or in the scholarly publications that he wrote during the 1920s - to react to any of the innovative conceptions that had meanwhile emerged within his discipline und of which Nietzsche's philosophy of culture was but one.31 But it was not so much Wilamowitz's hope for a revival of the German youth through the reception of ancient Greek literature that set him apart from his younger colleagues; this hope was certainly alive in the new generations of classical philologists. What made Wilamowitz look like a monument from a remote intellectual past was the absence of any doubts or questions regarding the feasibility und reliability of this educational function. From the essay he wrote about Greek tragedies *(Trauerspiele)* for his *Gymnasium* graduation from Schulpforta in 1867,32 through the nationally famous speeches that he delivered, regularly, on New Year's Eve und the emperor's birthday around the turn of the century,33 to his continued scholarly production during the 1920s, one elementary

31. Regarding Wilamowitz's reaction to Nietzsche, see Ulrich K. Goldsmith, "Wilamowitz and the *Georgekreis,"* in *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren,* ed. William M. Calder, Hellmut Flashar, und Theodor Linken (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 583-612, esp. 595-99.
32. See, for example, Joachim Wohlleben, "Der Abiturient als Kritiker," in *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren,* 3-30.
33. See, for example, *Reden und Vorträge,* repr. of 4th ed., vol. 2 (Dublin und Zurich: Weidmann, 1967 [1926]), 1-55.

set of beliefs about the usefulness of his profession never changed: Wilamowitz was convinced that aesthetic experience was necessarily subordinated to ethical learning; that the insight into one's moral obligation *(Pflicht)* was the most important ethical orientation to acquire; that the insight into moral obligation would ultimately lead to self-governance *(Selbstverwaltung)*34 and a life of contentment; and that there was no better way to learn these lessons than through the study of ancient Greek culture and literature.

In contrast to these principles, which inspired and structured Wilamowitz's professional life (it is difficult not to associate them with one of those metals-iron and steel-that were much foregrounded in the self-representation of the Prussian state), and quite astonishingly, the way he understood and imagined ancient Greek culture changed considerably over the decades. From espousing a view that was shaped by the august values and sober forms of German classicism, Wilamowitz-under the growing influence of Herder's writings-came to unfold a more colorful und less homogeneous picture of Greek culture.35 It was this "romantic" image of Greece that, in the academic generation of Wilamowitz's students during the I920s (and above all in the work of his successor, Werner Jaeger), would turn more classicist again, that is, less diverse, more normative, and more application oriented. Symbolically enough, Jaeger was not only the immediate academic successor of Wilamowitz at Berlin. In his younger years he had occupied Friedrich Nietzsche's former chair at the University

of Basel. Although he tried hard (and, to my knowledge, quite successfully) to avoid all public tensions and confrontations with his predecessor at Berlin, Werner Jaeger saw a decisive potential for the disciplinary renovation of *Klassische Philologie* in the writings of Nietzsche, the philosophy of Dilthey, und the cultural style of the George circle.36

34. Ibid., viii.
35, Ernst Vogt, "Wilamowitz und die Auseinandersetzung seiner Schiller mit ihm," in *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren,* 613-31 (quotation on 627).
36. On Jaeger und the new intellectual movement that he inaugurated in Klassische Philologie, see above all the already-mentioned essay by Landfester, "Die Naumburger Tagung," but also Uvo Hölscher, "Strömungen der deutschen Gräzistik in den Zwanziger Jahren," both in *Altertumswissenschaft,* ed. Flashar und Vogt, 11-40, 65-86; und Ernst Vogt, "Wilamowitz."

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He connected this potential, which he described as a compact and unified series of quasi-existential "tensions lived by Greek culture,"37 with the situation of crisis and misery *(Not)* of German culture after 1918, which he and his colleagues never ceased to invoke. This allowed Jaeger to unfold, around the programmatic notion of *paideia,* an impressive new conceptual edifice of classics as national pedagogy. Explicitly referring to the most canonized authors of German national literature, Jaeger reemphasized the belief in a specific affinity between German and ancient Greek culture; he identified the essence of ancient Greek (and German) culture with a metahistorically normative conception of human life; and he explained that the propagation and expansion of such humanism *(paideia)* was the ultimate and glorious destiny of humankind.

Although Werner Jaeger left Germany in 1936 to become a professor at the University of Chicago (and in 1939 at Harvard), his conception of classics-turned into a soft academic ideology-fared astonishingly well in post-1933 Germany.38 This eventuality was certainly

due to the almost explicit-and for us quite unbearable-claim of transforming part of *Klassische Philologie* into *a National-Pädagogik*. In any event, Jaeger's initiative had launched an intense new interest in questions regarding the function of classics, questions whose answers Wilamowitz's generation had still taken for granted. *Paideia* had indeed reemphasized precisely those values of *Bildung* that we could not find along the main lines of Max Weber's reflection about modern "Wissenschaft als Beruf". But it is only in the work of some of Jaeger's students that we can trace an acceptable and perhaps even pleasant convergence between a belief in the pedagogical potential of ancient Greek culture and a more sober view of the public sphere. In this sense, I find potentially interesting a self-descriptive metaphor that I discovered in a quotation from Karl Reinhardt, who saw classics as guiding its students and readers "to doors through which they will never walk."39

37. See Landfester, "Die Naumburger Tagung," 17.
38. Ibid., 29-40, esp. 38.
39. Karl Reinhardt, *Von Werken und Formen,* 1948, quoted in Uvo Hölscher, "Strömungen," 82: "Wer nur begeistert sein, wer aus den Quellen trinken will, der greife nicht zu diesem Buch, in dem um alles immer nur herumgeredet, alles Unmittelbare umgebrochen, immer

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Having made it (too speedily, I am willing to admit) through some of the programmatic writings of Max Weber, Stefan George and Friedrich Gundolf, Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, and Werner Jaeger, we are now again confronted with Friedrich Nietzsche's challenge for all historical work. In other words, we are back to the prescription that whoever wants to energize his or her present through excursions into the past must not only be able to remember but also be willing to forget. But what should we "better forget" when it comes to the history of classical philology and its self-definitions as a profession? The texts that I found useless and often embarrassing were those programs eager to "educate" entire generations, societies, and nations. Wilamowitz's speeches on the emperor's birthday, George's religious protocols and rituals around the culture of the Occident, Jaeger's pedagogy for nation and humankind, or the more recent *Denkschriften* recommending that the humanities become "integrative" and "dialogic"-they all certainly failed to energize me. The same is true, I have to admit, for Max Weber's invitation to reconstruct the historical circumstances that, from case to case, made possible the great cultural achievements. Perhaps it is simply a confusion to assume that we can sell, justify, or glorify our work by identifying its social functions, that is, certain functions on which the happiness or even the survival of societies is supposed to depend. One cannot say it often or provocatively enough: contemporary societies would easily survive without our work and the financial sacrifices that make this work possible. All the more striking is the impression that in many of those texts whose

programmatic declarations we should better forget, there is a spark and sometimes even a fire of enthusiasm, even though the enthusiasm is hardly connected to those big programmatic statements.

I don't quite know how to say it without feeling ridiculous, but after half a century of denying any academic dignity to the concept of *Erlebnis* (the half-century that covers more than my entire professional socialization), it may be time for the humanities to come back to this

vor Türen geführt wird, in die man nicht eintritt. Mit dem Unterschied von anderen Büchern höchstens, dass darum gewußt wird."

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very concept. One of the reasons such a return seems plausible to me is the impossibility of making this notion compatible with the sphere of the collective or the social. We can communicate and "share experience" as that which is interpreted and cast into concepts, but lived experience, as that which precedes such interpretation, must remain individual. For whoever agrees with the general direction of my proposal, would it then follow that we should go back and reactivate the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, who was the one philosopher of renown to give the phenomenon and the notion of "lived experience" some intellectual appeal?40

My point of distinction and departure is that, for Dilthey, *Erlebnis* was always the telos of a process of "retranslation," that is, of a "retranslation of objectivations of life into that spiritual liveliness from which they emerged."41 We have also seen that Dilthey wanted the starting point and the endpoint of this "retranslation" to be overdetermined by the dichotomy "material versus spiritual." Unfortunately, I find neither of these premises pertinent to a description of our work: we certainly do not privilege the original *Erlebnis* of the great artists, authors, or philosophers (at least not anymore), and over the years we have become quite interested in and more perceptive of the material aspects of culture and communication. Instead of placing the concept of lived experience on the object side of our work, we should relate it to ourselves ("the professionals") and to our students (I will neglect for the moment the difference between students who seek a profession in the humanities and those who don't). Again, *lived* experience in my conception would be what teaching in the humanities should trigger, not what interpretation in the humanities should reconstruct and secure.

To unfold the concept of lived experience in this position would mean that we can begin to understand why, in the best cases, our teaching and research are capable of producing effects of individual *Bildung*. How can this happen? It can happen by confronting ourselves and our

40. The following (and concluding) discussion of the concept *Erlebnis* is based on Hans-Georg Gadamer's impressive subchapter "Der Begriff des Erlebnisses," in *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik,* 2d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 60-66.
41. Ibid., 62.

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students with any object of a complexity that defies easy structuring, conceptualization, and interpretation-especially if such a confrontation happens *under conditions of low time pressure.* This formula, exposing oneself to high intellectual complexity without having an immediate need to reduce this complexity, is probably close to a new and highly auratic concept of "reading" that humanists today increasingly use as a positive self-reference.42 *Reading* here is clearly not synonymous with *deciphering* (as was the case in the heyday of semiotics). Rather, the word seems to refer to a both joyful and painful oscillation between losing and regaining intellectual control or orientation. Our pedagogical task, I guess, is not so much to live such oscillations "together with" our students (this would be too close to the psycho-emancipatory ideals of the late 1960s; to echo Reinhardt's less polemic words, we don't walk through these doors with our students). Rather, we should identify and prepare study objects of complexity and then, at least partly, stage our students' encounters with them. Preparing too much of such interactions or sharing too much of the experience with our students risks undermining professionalism, because it tempts our students to follow their teachers instead of living this challenge individually. Philology in the most traditional sense of the word, by the way, could be a very efficient device within the complexity production that is required here. For the higher the philological quality of an edition, we can say, the more disorienting, challenging, and complex the reading (and the Reading) that it informs will turn out to be.

   Although it may reflect bad taste to say so in our times, it is my impression that the non-Diltheyan conception of *Erlebnis* for which I am arguing here, the conception of *Erlebnis* as hard-to-tame and sometimes even artificially maintained complexity, dovetails with Georg Simmel's association between lived experience and "adventure."43 In addition, I agree with Gadamer's highlighting of yet another affinity, that

42. This was the central point of convergence of the twenty Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts, which between March 1998 and April 200 featured world-renowned artists and scholars developing their individual views on the future of the humanities and arts in higher education.
43. Simmel quoted in Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode,* 65.

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between lived experience in general and the dimension of the aesthetic.44 This would mean that any academic work that fits the formula of being a confrontation with complexity in a situation of low time pressure; academic work in all its different dimensions, whether learning, teaching, or doing research; even academic work other than that which refers to or

is geared toward aesthetic experience, that is, research in theoretical physics as much as thinking ("philologically," for example) about a Presocratic fragment-all this would be close to aesthetic experience. But once again it is necessary to insist on two differences. First, I dare to disagree somewhat with the reasons Gadamer gives for the general affinity between lived experience and aesthetic experience. On the one hand, the observation that both lived experience and aesthetic experience separate *(herausreißen)* us from the "continuity of life" is obvious and obviously important. On the other hand, Gadamer's second reason for the postulated closeness between lived experience and aesthetic experience relies on the impression that they both relate to the totality of life rather than to specific objects of reference.45 I would prefer to assume that both with the concept of lived experience and with that of aesthetic experience we refer to situations that tease out or at least make visible an excess of "unfunctionalized" desire.46

A second potential objection could come from Karl Heinz Bohrer, who has recently and convincingly argued that a fundamental incommensurability exists between what he calls the "negativity" of aesthetic experience and the university, or at least the state university as an institution-which, after all, is expected to produce and to profess truth.47 Regarding Bohrer's own more specific question, the question about aesthetic experience and the university, I agree that the university cannot "profess" aesthetic experience (what would this mean anyway?) or make it an obligatory item on its curriculum. All that the university or any

44. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode, 66:* "Am Ende unserer begrifflichen Analyse von `Erlebnis' wird damit deutlich, welche Affinität zwischen der Struktur von Erlebnis überhaupt und der Seinsart des Ästhetischen besteht. Das ästhetische Erlebnis ist nicht nur eine Art von Erlebnis neben anderen, sondern repräsentiert die Wesensart von Erlebnis überhaupt."

45.Ibid., 66.

46. This would be the "power" implicit in all the philological core practices.

47. Bohrer said this in his Stanford Presidential Lecture of November 1998.

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other institution can do is to provide frame conditions that make it *possible* for aesthetic experience to happen.

The same applies for lived experience and for *Bildung* as its possible effect. There is no guarantee for students that any poem, philosophical treatise, or equation will get them to that challenging situation (to that "door of reading," as Karl Reinhardt put it). Tuition must be paid for the *possibility of Bildung,* but it cannot buy or ensure lived experience or *Bildung* itself. The condition of the possibility for lived experience and for *Bildung* to happen is time - more precisely, the academic and ivory tower - like privilege of being allowed to expose one-self to an intellectual challenge without the obligation to come up with a quick reaction or even with a quick "solution." Naturally, without specific institutions and without specific individual efforts, such excess time will never be available. We need institutions of higher education to produce and to protect excess time against the mostly pressing temporalities of the everyday. In this new sense, it is not only plausible that "classical philology as a profession is untimely," as Nietzsche once said. Giving a slightly different meaning to the

same words, one might want to argue that the academic institution is all about such untimeliness. I observe that the idea does frighten us, but I do not think that it is or should be perceived as all that frightening.

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