

“The effort the linguistic sensorium has to make to achieve precision is far greater than the mechanical effort to capture ordained definitions: he who makes himself the slave of his own words makes things easier for himself by shoving the words in front of the thing itself, however much he flatters himself that he is making it harder.”

“By means of this poetic interpretation of his own words, the poet lets us know this: the poetic is the finite, which submits itself to the limits of its destiny. The poetic is what is peaceful in thoughtful rest which bans all strife. The poetic is the bond which binds together all that is unbound. The poetic is what is retained in the bond and the measure, that which is full of measure. In whatever direction it goes, the poetic does not want to surpass the limits, the rest, the bond, the measure. Poesis thinks of something which abides and endures. Poetic conversation exercises the language in the presentation of what is abiding, and thus bestows on the poet the free use of his capacity, so as to remain in what is proper to him. Such conversation is good. In it, one kind of remembrance encounters another. In their encounter, the harmony of the same thoughts, and thus their belonging together, is experienced as an enduring friendship.”

“To wish to gain an understanding of *Elective Affinities* from the author’s own words on the subject is wasted effort. For it is precisely their aim to forbid access to critique. The ultimate reason for this is not the inclination to ward off foolishness but the effort to keep unperceived everything that denies the motifs, on the other, their secret was to be kept. The domain of poetic technique forms the boundary between an exposed upper layer and a deeper, hidden layer of the works. What the author was conscious of as his technique, what contemporary criticism had also already recognized in principle, certainly touches on the concrete realities in the material content; yet it forms the boundary opposite its truth content, of which neither the author nor the critics of his time could be entirely conscious.”

Whether it be to name things or to entitle oneself to a proper name, to construct the right words is to deconstruct one's ownership over them. It is an exposure to the unnameable, to the unentitled, to the thing itself in a sensorium in which the sense of one's words is divested of both oneself and the common.

We know the poet by the fact that he makes us poets. In poetic conversation we find ourselves speaking and enacting the poet's words as if they were our own. Such words have no origin but language itself. That is what must be remembered. To encounter words without origin is not the appearing of language until then forgotten, covered over or suppressed, or that was never recognised in the first place, it is the discovery of what these words might mean or do. In this is the poetic full of measure. Poesis is the production of a space in which our remembrance can be sustained. The poet is he who through his words and his acts shows us how to abide in this space. His words are a friendship born as much of disharmony as harmony, the recognition of an originary polemos with what is unbound. Wrested from him in confrontation with a terrible freedom, such are the words the poet offers and which we must become.

Never ask the author. The author is no privileged arbiter of the truth of his fictions. The truth of poetic writing rests not on something hidden beneath it, but on its offer of a way across its words. To step there is to become the question the author's words pose, to be answered in how we repeat that step. But in so doing we come face to face with a secret, one which we share with everyone else and encounter on meeting them, namely that the singular is singular. To dwell on the surface of a fiction is to see it as an ethos in which is shared this unshareable secret. As little unconscious as it is conscious, to walk such a surface is to write the difficult text of the exchange of this secret without rest.

“From the perspective of “we” or “I” there is no philosophy; there is one only beyond the I. Therefore, the question about the possibility of philosophy depends on whether the I can perish and reason can come purely to manifestation. This author could demonstrate that this must indeed be possible from his own words. Because when he says: we can only reconstruct, he achieves ipso facto in that very moment something more than re-construction, and has at least drawn himself happily out of the “We” of which we have spoken.”

“To write is to have such pointy pricked-up ears that we hear what language says (to us) inside our own words at the very moment of enunciation.”

“everything that the theatre pronounces is official in an obscure sense. It is something for which we can hold the authorities accountable. Cinema is capitalist and private. Nobody is responsible for it, other than a producer and his employees. Whatever is said in theatre, even in a school-yard illuminated by two small lamps, is said *with majesty*. If it is scandalous, it is because the State does not keep watch over itself enough: it does not keep watch over its own words.”

Happy are they who philosophise without we. He whose thetic life resists the telos of a we, he who theticises his life to lead to a place shaped by its resistance to a community, no matter how hypothetical might be its communism, only he will know the joy of a return to words refound, reconstructed. This place of nameless language and useless gesture is shown us by art. The reconstruction of reason begins with art as a space between acting and making, between means and end, between I and we.

To be inside one's own words is to be displaced from any position we might own. Language speaks us, if only we had the ears to hear.

The kingdom of an act staged for no reason at all, of an act making visible that which has no use nor warrant or entitlement for being seen, is one in which the state must bow. No presentation of a desired political outcome will match the force of the useless. The proliferation of useless words with no reason to be uttered, no cause to serve, such is the beautiful and irresponsible scandal reducing the political to speechlessness and politics to no end.

“In a fragment of a book he intended to devote to *The Origin of Truth*, Merleau-Ponty wrote: ‘Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of an a priori of the mind; rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer’s thought does not control his language from without; the writer is himself a kind of new idiom, constructing itself.’ ‘My own words take me by surprise and teach me what I think,’ he said elsewhere. It is because writing is *inaugural*, in the fresh sense of the word, that it is dangerous and anguishing. It does not know where it is going, no knowledge can keep it from the essential precipitation toward the meaning that it constitutes and that is, primarily, its future.”

“I say of someone else „He seems to believe“ and other people say it of me. Now, why do I never say it of myself, not even when others *rightly* say it of me?—Do I myself not see and hear myself, then?—That can be said. „One feels conviction within oneself, one doesn’t infer it from one’s own words or their tone.“—What is true here is: one does not infer one’s own conviction from one’s own words; nor yet the actions which arise from that conviction. [...] This is how I think of it: Believing is a state of mind. It has duration; and that independently of the duration of its expression in a sentence, for example. So it is a kind of disposition of the believing person. This is shewn me in the case of someone else by his behaviour; and by his words. And under this head, by the expression ‘I believe . . .’ as well as by the simple assertion.—What about my own case: how do I myself recognize my own disposition?—Here it will have been necessary for me to take notice of myself as others do, to listen to myself talking, to be able to draw conclusions from what I say. My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people’s. If I listened to the words of my mouth, I might say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth.”

“The space cleared in the decline of heroism, a space whose nature was suspected by the sixteenth century, and one that our present culture cheerfully investigates in keeping with its basic forgetfulness, is ultimately occupied by the „madness“ of the artist; it is a madness that identifies the artist with his work in rendering him alien to others from all those who remain silent - and it also situates the artist outside his work when it blinds him to the things he sees and makes him deaf to even his own words. This state can no longer be understood as a Platonic ecstasy that protects him from illusion and exposes him to the radiant light of the gods, but as a subterranean relationship in which the work and what it is not construct their exteriority within the language of dark interiority.”

We are owned by words which speak us and to which we must listen and re-write if we are to learn what we think and to say anything of our own. If my words take me by surprise it is because stupefaction in the face of language is the condition of my studying my self. I listen to what I speak, but in writing it down I do not simply repeat what I hear. Repetition is never pure. To repeat is to risk contamination, what I write may contaminate what I say. But this impurity is not lack, it is what enables inauguration. The possibility of contamination must be grasped and made own. To speak at all is to affirm. The risk of corruption is at once the chance of one's own words. To live the life of one's own words one must risk death.

We are owned by words which speak us and to which we must listen or learn to read on the face of others if we are to say anything of our own. If I cannot see myself it is because I have a face. If I cannot say of myself that I believe me it is because the face I have is not mine to believe. My face is my ownmost property yet that which is most external to me. It exposes me to a space in which to construct an appearing of myself in language. I cannot know my disposition but through the exposition of my face. If I do not infer my convictions from my words it is because I must listen to myself repeated by others, and learn my own words through others' repetition of them. My response is inaugurated and made possible by the light of the other's face. I attain to my own face with words I learn on the face of another. To listen to oneself speaking is to hear through one's throat. I see reflected in the other's face what they hear of me with their ears. If someone else speaks out of my mouth it is because my face is exposed before I speak, expositing my words before me. Words are not owned until retrieved by one's mouth, an act of repetition which is at once a construction. They become part of one's appearance. The two are one's truth.

In their own acts of madness the gods throw at the artist more than he can take. The artist constructs a hole in his head out of which he can tip the waste. Toss out of the hole in the head just enough to keep this side of insanity. The hole in the head is the dark interiority of the border between his night and our day, between his being outside his work and his joining us inside it. Confronted by the mystery of artistic creativity all the artist can do is parody it. To glorify it would be bad taste. *Don Quixote* is the act of laughter which founds the novel. The laugh consists in a doubling in which the hero becomes himself by being another. His laugh is at once a warning not to listen to his own words.

“Not *their* voice, meaning by that the voice that would come from their mouths and would express, with their own words, their wish for art. There are no ‘own words’ that could express the authenticity of being. Every voice is subject to playback, and the problem is to choose the right one, to make the soundtrack, the music of words that makes the voice resound beyond itself, in its own present *and* outside of time. That is the operation of a poetic justice suitable to the aesthetic age.”

A museum of speech would be one that makes light of the 'problem' of choosing which words to repeat as authentic, and hence most untimely. But build it next door to the ministry of poetic justice and you will need to connect the two with a Bruce Nauman corridor. If the visitor did manage to squeeze through he would succeed only in being confronted with an image of himself miming words he sees and hears as none but his own but uttered in a forced act of confession.

Philosophers enowning that there be no own words

10 citations by 10 different philosophers to be read in 10 separated minutes. Each citation a question to or proposition about or provocation on the idea of there being such a thing as, own words'. Each citation to take up the same amount of space on the page. This in homage to Michael Snow's *So is This*, a projection of a text word-by-word, each word taking up the same amount of space on the screen. Each citation to be read over the course of one minute. This in homage to John Cage's *Indeterminacy*, a series of stories each read, whether short or long, to fit one minute.

Each citation to be read out loud. This in homage to John Baldessari's *Sings Sol Lewitt*, Theodor W Adorno, 'Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel' (1963), Hegel: *Three Studies*, tr S Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983), 107. — Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (1942), tr K Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 148–9. — Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', tr S Corngold, *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913–1926*, eds M Bullock and M W Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 313. — J G Fichte, *The Science of Knowing* (1804), tr W E Wright (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 139. — Hélène Cixous & Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Hélène Cixous Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, tr E Prenowitz (London: Routledge, 1997), 85. — Alain Badiou, 'Rhapsody for the theatre: a short philosophical treatise', tr B Bosteels, *Theatre Survey* 49 (2), November 2008, 203. — Jacques Derrida, 'Force and signification' (1963), *Writing and Difference*, tr A Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 11. Maurice

Merleau-Ponty, 'An Unpublished Text', tr A Ballery, *The Primacy of Perception*, ed J M Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 8-9. Merleau-Ponty, 'Problèmes actuels de la phénoménologie', *Actes du colloque internationale de phénoménologie* (Paris, 1957), 97. — Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations, Part 2* (1949), tr G E M Anscombe, rev edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 163. — Michel Foucault, 'The father's "No"', tr D F Bouchard and S Simon, *Essential Works of Foucault Vol 2, Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed J D Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 10. — Jacques Rancière, 'From the poetics of the image to the tragedy of justice', tr C Mandel, James Coleman (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 17. question to or proposition about or provocation on the idea of there being such a thing as, own words'. Each citation to take up the same amount of space on the page. This in homage to Michael Snow's *So is This*, a projection of a text word-by-word, each word taking up the same amount of space on the screen. Each citation to be read over the course of one minute. This in homage to John Cage's *Indeterminacy*, a series of stories each read, whether short or long, to fit one minute. Each citation to be read out loud. This in homage to John Baldessari's *Sings Sol Lewitt*, the first performance of theory.

Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield,

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