8-1-2022

Intentional entanglement: Walter Benjamin, transcendental yet speculative, Darstellung

Andrew Brooks
University at Albany, State University of New York, aabrooks85@gmail.com

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Intentional Entanglement: Walter Benjamin, Transcendental yet Speculative, Darstellung

by

Andrew Brooks

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts and Sciences
English
Summer 2022
Abstract

This dissertation consists of retranslations of three essays by Walter Benjamin: “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” “The Task of the Translator” and “La traduction—le pour et le contre.” Each section and interlinear retranslation-commentary builds on the previous, moving from 1) Benjamin’s “transcendental yet speculative” philosophical foundation for experience, to 2) the importance of a performative Darstellung [performative presentation] which places criticism/philosophy/translation between science and poetry, 3) the conception of translation for Benjamin in 1923 within the frame of said philosophy and Darstellung, juxtaposed with his conception of translation in 1936, after his materialist aesthetic turn.

The necessity of new translations is relative. The performativity of Walter Benjamin essays is often lost in the Selected Works English translations, which lack the benefit of decades worth of relevant research. This has led to reductive understandings of Benjamin in English studies and surrounding fields. For a theorist like Benjamin the essay’s performativity has a rhetorical function affecting meaning. Thus, this dissertation foregrounds the performativity through a methodology of retranslation—a heteroglossic process of translating the original texts in dialogue with previous translations to produce anew translation. In doing so, this dissertation attempts to intervene in two fields:

1. This dissertation, in tracing Benjamin’s earlier romantic theories through his materialist aesthetic, brings forward the continual importance of rhetorical performativity in Benjamin, thus, intervening across departments concerned with Benjamin and, more generally, performativity in texts.

2. Retranslation, influenced by arguably mis-readings of Benjamin’s early essay on translation (1923), is plagued by notions that each translation is progressively better. This
dissertation reconceptualizes retranslation theory through Benjamin’s materialist and technological concerns, thus intervening in Translation Studies.

Lastly, I have approached the retranslation-commentary form as a poetic-critical montage of fragments, which strive to be viewed in an inverted manner. Usually, one sees first the overall image and then the details; I argue this is problematic. For (as I touch on in the Althusser section) a canonical ”swerve” takes place in academia around critical theory translations. That is to say, the “image” that should be, in Benjamin, an insufficient mosaic where unstable details and cracks are seen becomes, in academia, an Image that smooths over the fissures and creates an opaqueness that covers the details, while claiming mythic transparency. This arguably compels a kind of anti-reading, of seeing the canonized image instead of details and fissures of the text itself, and thus simultaneously creates uncritical distraction, mindless consumption. Thus, I have attempted to invert such a manner of reading, hoping to see the details before the image, by making the fragment and difference omnipresent, while marking the potentiality for other possible affinities, and striving (hopefully) less far away from a community of strange friendships. In enacting this process in this form, I have attempted stand in affinity with Walter Benjamin’s “Darstellung” and “glückliche Form der Übersetzung” [happy form of translation].
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has taught me to read. I have “practis’d so long to learn to read” and done so with the guidance and patience of teachers, parents, sisters, and friends.

Specifically, I would like to thank the following people who have helped me undertake this project: my supervisor Professor Helen Elam, for her enthusiasm for the project, as well as her intellectual support, encouragement, and patience over the last five years. I cannot imagine a better reader and mentor. Professor Ilka Kressner for her continual patience and guidance with my German and insights into Walter Benjamin. Professor Paul Stasi for his support and guidance.

In addition, I thank Professor Kir Kuiken and Professor James Lilley for their engagement with me on all things Benjamin. Professor Erica Fretwell for her guidance over my time at UAlbany. I would like to thank the English Department at the State University of New York, University at Albany, for consistent support and encouragement through challenging times.

Also, I would like to thank Professors Wai-Leung Kwok and James Martell (SFSU) for their early influence on my interest in Benjamin. I am also indebted to and thankful for Professor Loretta Stec (SFSU) for her continued emotional and intellectual support, and guidance throughout my college career.

And lastly, I thank my partner, Sarah, for always striving to see “each other as a whole and before an immense sky.”
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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for citations in the texts and the notes. Details are in the bibliography.

Walter Benjamin:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>The Arcades Project</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>Correspondence</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>Gesammelte Schriften</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGT</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>The Origin of German Tragic Drama</em>. Translation by John Osbourn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTS</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>Origin of the German Trauerspiel</em>. Translation by Howard Eiland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Benjamin, <em>Selected Writings</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When referring to the “The Task of the Translator,” I have cited the paragraph and sentence number, as reflected in the retranslation contained in this dissertation. Thus, (2.12) indicates paragraph 2 sentence 12.
Diese glückliche Form der Übersetzung, die im Kommentar Rechenschaft von sich ablegt und das Faktum der verschiedenen Sprachsituation mit zum Thema macht . . . (Benjamin “Traduction” Line 26)

Presentation is the crux of their method. Method is indirection. Presentation as indirection, as the roundabout way—this, then, is the methodological character of the tractatus . . . Renunciation of the unbroken course of intention is its immediately distinguishing feature. In its persevering, thinking constantly begins anew; with its sense of the circumstantial, it goes back to the thing itself. This continual breathing in and out is the form of existence most proper to contemplation. For inasmuch as the latter pursues various levels of meaning in observing one and the same object, it receives the impetus of its constantly renewed beginning as well as the justification of its intermittent rhythm. Just as the majesty of mosaics remains intact when they are disassembled into capricious bits, so philosophical observation fears no dissipation of momentum . . . The value of thought-fragments is all the more decisive the less they are immediately capable of measuring themselves by an underlying conception, and the brilliance of the presentation depends on this value to the same extent that the brilliance of the mosaic depends on the quality of the poured glass. (OTS 2-3, Trans. Howard Eiland)
Prologue—Introducing Plagiarism:

THIS STORY IS NOT MINE. Whether the painter Eduard Scherlinger (whom I saw for the first and last time the evening he told it) was a great storyteller or not is not a matter I wish to enter into, since in this age of plagiarism there are always listeners prepared to ascribe a story to you when you have insisted that you are only reporting it faithfully.

(Benjamin, “On Hashish” 105)

To get to my reading of Benjamin involves a lot of preliminary lifting and unfolding. And of course, so much heavy lifting has been previously completed by so many other writers, including most directly Benjamin himself. A sort of plagiarism is continually encountered when reading other people writing about Benjamin, or in attempting to write about Benjamin oneself. As Carol Jacobs points out in the opening pages of In the Language of Walter Benjamin: “that is to say I have plagiarized shamelessly, often citing Benjamin without, by appropriate punctuation, marking the border between his text and mine” (3). [And even more absurdly, as any graduate student knows, every reader of Benjamin has thoughts on whose plagiarism one should read to understand Benjamin.] In the following sections, I need to plagiarize, i.e., “unpack,” Benjamin’s recasting of Kant, constellation of truth/phenomenon/ideas, conception, and practice of Darstellung, and conceptions of allegory and encounter. I have to explain what Werner Hamacher unpacks as Benjamin’s “demand that ‘the linguistic essence’ of pure transcendental consciousness be reclaimed as the foundation for a new concept of experience” (505). I do so by favoring Howard Caygill’s framing and Samuel Weber’s readings. And then, I must “report . . . faithfully” how this shift in foundation alters Benjamin’s every concept, image, style, and etc., that follows. (Though, instead of “follows” this should be understood as a “zugleich” event.) In so doing, this section largely plagiarizes Benjamin’s “On the Program of the Coming
Philosophy” and “Epistemo-Critical Prologue.” My attempt at a contribution will arrive in the form of the retranslation-commentary, which arguably is a more intensive and immediate form of plagiarizing Walter Benjamin. As Clive Scott explains in Translating Baudelaire:

Even if we overlook the fact that translation has explicit acknowledgement of a source built into it, we must understand that plagiarism, to a greater or lesser extent, is an inherent resource of translation, most importantly because a sine qua non of a translator’s effective operation is a belief in the right to appropriate language, a belief that language, and all its possible collocations, is a universal possession. (76)

Who or what is plagiarized? If both the original and the translation touch on a quasi-transcendental substratum (even if just as one deformed version of the absolute), could one assume, as Scott indicates, that the translator plagiarizes in a manner consistent with Benjamin’s quote of Mallarmé: “tacite encore l’immortelle parole” (9.11). When I retranslate Benjamin, I am involved in a sequence of plagiarisms—attempting to plagiarize the “immortal word” in a manner that makes it “tacit again.” What follows is an attempt to make something beyond tacit again.
**Introduction to Dissertation Overall:**

This dissertation consists of retranslations of three essays by Walter Benjamin, moving from source-text into English, with extensive commentary, footnotes, and multiple essays, culminating as interlinear texts. The translated essays include “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” “The Task of the Translator,” and “La traduction—le pour et le contre.” In addition, sections include extensive close readings of “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” and the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue.” Each section and retranslation-commentary builds on the previous, moving from 1) Benjamin’s “transcendental yet speculative” philosophical foundation for experience, to 2) the necessity of a performative Darstellung, which places criticism/philosophy/translation between science and poetry, 3) Benjamin’s conception and presentation of translation in the 1923 essay and the 1936 dialogue.

Each essay’s performativity has a rhetorical function, effecting the meaning of the essay; Benjamin places an immense worth on the form of each text, be it “esoteric essay,” “Lehre,” “Traktat,” or fragmentary dialogue. However, the performativity of his essays is largely lost in the current canonized English translations, which being completed between the 1960s and 1990s, lack the benefit of years of relevant research. Building on aid research, this dissertation foregrounds performativity through a methodology of retranslation—a process of translating original texts in dialogue with previous translations to produce a new translation. In enacting such, this dissertations intervenes in two fields: 1) by tracing Benjamin’s early Romantic theories through his materialist turn, I will foreground the continual importance of rhetorical performativity, intervening across fields concerned with Benjamin and rhetoric; and 2) retranslation as a methodology developed by Antoine Berman, influenced by readings of Benjamin’s early essay on translation, is plagued by teleological progressive notions that each
translation is better, culminating in retranslation. This project reconceptualizes retranslation through Benjamin’s 1936 essay on translation and its materialist and technological concerns, thus intervening in Translation Studies.

*Benjamin Studies:*

The canonized *Selected Works* with translations by Howard Zohn, Edmund Jephcott and Mark Ritter, were translated between the mid-to-late-20th century in an Anglo-American context, which arguably valued definitive and systematic qualities. In contrast, Benjamin’s performative philosophy purposefully disrupts definitive and systematic ways of thinking, which is often lost in the current English translations.

Since the initial translations, new research has emphasized Benjamin’s early works on philosophy, language, and presentation (cf. Caygill, Fenes, Homburg, Tagliacozzo, Hamacher, Weber); thus, developing an understanding of the foundational importance of rhetoric in Benjamin. Building on said work, my retranslations trace Benjamin’s earlier theories, of translation, language, experience, Darstellung, through his materialist turn of the 1930s, to bring forward shifts and continuities in his works, such as Benjamin’s valuing of rhetorical performance and self-conscious form. The included retranslations develop the theory of rhetorical performativity in Benjamin’s work and present selected essays with such foregrounded. In addition, through the overall retranslation-commentary process, a plethora of readings of Benjamin’s text and secondary work on Benjamin occur that allow for a fragmentary yet encyclopedic method of literary study, which traces out specific motifs, concepts, and themes
in Benjamin’s essays, such as the fragment, Zusammenhangen, Darstellung, use of a-topos/a-temporal images/concepts, Sehnsucht, transcendental yet speculative, etc.¹

Translation a Methodology of Reading and Writing:

By retranslation, I mean an enactment of heteroglossic relations between the source text, previous translations, and the translation I am producing. I consider this an active form of what Gaddis Rose’s calls stereoscopic reading, which is “using both the original language text and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching . . . [to] make [] it possible to intuit and reason out the interliminal” (90). I propose that a retranslation-commentary form of Benjamin’s essays will encourage “stereoscopic reading” as a form of literary study.

Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” (1923) was foundational for Antoine Berman’s development of the methodology of retranslation (Cf. Berman 1985, 1990, 1995), which attempts to enact a text-conscious rhetorical performativity (Age 25), in the hope of an ethical translation, i.e., a respect for the original and a questioning of one’s own positionality (Criticism 74). Retranslation as an ethical methodology and form is also relevant to translation theorists Lawrence Venuti, who argues that translation enacts an ethnocentric violence, which “foreignizing translation seeks to restrain” (20). “This translation method must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience” (Invisibility 20).

In foregrounding the previous translations alongside the original language text, retranslation tries to keep the translation visible as a translation inevitably enacting ethnocentric violence; moreover, doing so brings forward distortions, or mistranslation, in previous translations.

¹ “Et cetera” is used thematically throughout this dissertation. It is meant to mark an intricate interdependence between various items of a lists, as well as an ongoing shifting aspect to the elements, and a lack of finality.
Retranslation highlights distortions not out of a desire to correct, but to indicate symptomatic limitations and delimitations from the historical moment of translation, and our own moment.

However, Berman’s retranslation theory, influenced by his arguably misreading of Benjamin’s Romantic early works, has been plagued by progressive notions that each retranslation progresses towards better translations. This dissertation attempts to reorient Berman’s retranslation through Benjamin’s “La traduction—le pour et le contre” thus, reconceptualizing retranslation as an encounter with the moment as bounded by materialist, technological and positional concerns, aiming for relevance and political effect.

A brief note on form:

The way this dissertation unfolds has little to do with the expectations of institutions of academia and dissertational form, which might be outlined in a reductive manner as thesis, evidence, insight—usually with an application of a theory that may or may not be corresponding to the work/object under consideration. In such a methodology of application, presumptive conception overpowers any spontaneous resistance or other possible meanings from the text. Instead, I have approached this project with the intention of trying to hear the “language of things”—in this case Walter Benjamin’s essays:

For conception and spontaneity together, which are found in this unique union only in the linguistic realm, language has its own word, and this word applies also to that conception of the nameless in the name. It is the translation of the language of things into that of man. It is necessary to found the concept of translation at the deepest level of linguistic theory, for it is much too far-reaching and powerful to be treated in any way as an afterthought, as has happened occasionally. (SW 1, 69)
Accepting the text’s pronouncement, I have brought translation central to my methodology, a reading and writing as translation—where I have attempted to get out of the way of the text, and have failed to do so repeatedly, and yet still try to hear and feel the speculative potentiality of other, as silence, as overdetermination, as ambiguity, as multiplicity, as uncertainty. But I have also found in Benjamin’s source-language essays meanings that are read similarly by me and other researchers, specifically a particular and changing transcendental yet speculative form. A frame that attempts to halt the lure of universalizing frames/methods, as theorized by Howard Caygill:

Instead of redeeming spatio-temporal experience by referring it to the absolute

[Benjamin] now traces the removal of the absolute through the warps, distortions and exclusions of a bereft experience. The balance he established between these positions was extremely unstable and continually threatened by the danger of lapsing into either a redemptive idealism or the melancholic endless task of the collector of scattered fragments. (Caygill 25)

We might consider a dogmatic approach to a dissertation as one that assumes a single transcendental infinity, which suppresses the potential for other speculative transcendental infinities. If the source-text is allegorically thought of as an “absolute,” then the event of retranslation and reinterpretation marks differences in-between the various translations, source-texts, readings, etc. These differences appear to the translator as “distortions,” and mark the possibility of and existence of potential other speculative transcendental infinities, yet only in an
“extremely unstable” manner—attempting to stand suspended between resolution and an endless task of collecting fragments.  

What has occurred in the writing of this dissertation, in such a form, is something—thinking of Novalis and Schlegel—I want to call a fragmentary-encyclopedic, or encyclopedic-fragmenting. A kind of the endless collecting of fragments, and fragmenting that collection—a collecting of potential meanings, other readings, possible context, etc. Translation as methodology and form is powerfully at the fore of this; and from this experience of translating has come the theories that populate this dissertation. In the event of translation, with the source-text as allegorically the “absolute,” I sought the absolute, impossibly striving to redeem the source-text from the distortions of previous translation—but all I ever found was fragmented material things, in linguistic-historical forms: words, images, ideas, concepts. And as such linguistic-historical forms perpetually defer and differ, I moved from fragment to fragment, in a vertiginous spiraling back to, though, and away from the absolute.

The encyclopedic strive is towards a potential universality; this should not be taken as an actuality, but a rhetorical a-topos/a-temporal ideal used as a guiding principle. There is a drive towards getting less-far-away from (but never closer to) Benjamin’s “source-text,” even as this drive is experienced as negation, failure, and anew return to the source-text again and again, as fragmenting. The fragmentary is the reality of returning to the object with a transcendental yet speculative mind, turning towards one’s own current particular transcendental infinity

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2 There are vertiginous layers here. The “source-text” as allegorically standing as the “absolute,” reveals not just our relationship to the “absolute” as one haltingly recognizing the differences and distortions between the “absolute” and the particular “transcendental infinity” i.e., the translation; but in this “difference” also marks the negation of the “absolute”—just as the “source text” is only ever allegorically the “absolute,” the conception of the “absolute” is only ever allegorical of some-beyond [Absolute]. This reveals our relationship to the [Absolute] as one experienced as a negation of what is presented in linguistic-historical forms as “absolute.”
(worldview). That is if I take a universal theory and try to let text speak against it, fragmentation, transformation, translating occurs, thus revealing the possibility of other and my own unstable distorting position.

What follows borders on a dissertation—I do use a general theory, from Benjamin “On the Program for a Coming Philosophy” titled in shorthand “transcendental yet speculative.” This is developed in a book length study by Howard Caygill. I did not approach the “transcendental yet speculative” from Caygill’s text, but rather recognized it as a motif in Benjamin’s work, and then in seeking out explications of Benjamin’s relation to Kant, came across Caygill’s work. I found it to align with my own thinking, and to be a “dissertational frame” i.e., conducive as unifying theory; however, this theory is undermined, and must be kept relatively ambiguous. If “transcendental yet speculative” is taken in too much detail from one text and applied to others, something other is being suppressed. Hence, what follows has a fragmentary quality, with a general framing system of “transcendental yet speculative” used to unstably bring multiple fragments into an insufficient encyclopedic collection.

**Introduction to Intentional Entanglement and Encounters in Translation:**

In Benjamin’s work on Brecht’s epic theatre from 1936, there is an intention and a task brought together in the figure of the “epic extension”: “the teacher’s first task would be to loosen the dancer’s joints to the greatest possible extension” (SW 4, 303). Weber in reading said section argues that for Benjamin “such stretching . . . is intended to reveal the articulations that structure what is apparently a unified plot” or history or text or any seemingly unified system of thinking and experience (103). The task of Benjamin’s Darstellung, and a task of translation is to loosen one’s here-now limits of thinking and experience, and like a dancer this is done through a series of stretches of seemingly disparate tensions. To enact said extension, I put forward an entangled-
retranslation form; that is a mode of literary criticism, whose form and means is commentary and retranslation. A form that attempts the same intentions as Benjamin’s German texts. A form as presentation of digression and interruption—a form of contemplation—iteratively, with distortion, striving for other. Benjamin describes his own writing form as:

| Presentation is the crux of their method. Method is indirection. Presentation as indirection, as the roundabout way—this, then, is the methodological character of the tractatus. Renunciation of the unbroken course of intention is its immediately distinguishing feature. In its persevering, thinking constantly begins anew; with its sense of the circumstantial, it goes back to the thing itself. This continual breathing in and out is the form of existence most proper to contemplation. (Eiland 2-3) |
| Its method is essentially representation. Method is a digression. Representation as digression—such is the methodological nature of the treatise. The absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure is its primary characteristic. Tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object. This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation. (Osbourn 28) |
| Darstellung is the embodiment of their method. Darstellung as re-detour—that is the methodical character of the Traktats. Sacrificing the uninterrupted course of intention is its first hallmark. Enduring the thinking always springs anew, roundaboutly it goes back to the sake itself. This unrelenting taking-a-breath is the most proper Daseinsform of contemplation. (my translation)³ |

³ I have limited myself to leaving “Traktat” “Darstellung” and “Daseinsform” untranslated. They are echoing each other. Benjamin’s Darstellung takes the form of a Traktat which is the Daseinsform of thinking. This will be returned to persistently.
translation being produced; it moves in and out of etymological and allusive digressions, springs to other texts and commentaries, and continually returns to the source-text to offer a retranslation in-between the digressions and leaps, and in doing so encounters and reasons an interliminal space of other possibilities.

**The Shock:**

I attempted my first translation in 2013: a French to English translation of Althusser’s “Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’État.” I had read Althusser’s essay a number of times and believed I knew “what it meant.” I found the process of translation—the moving between the original, between dictionaries and grammars, between secondary studies, etc. I found this process enjoyable. In lieu of “mastery” of the language or the text, I was just trying to learn through the process. As I moved through the text, I found a few spots where I questioned the anthologized Norton version, but for the most part my retranslation did not shift much. But then I got to the section on “l’interpellation,” and I had a shocking experience. Nowhere in the original French does the term “héler” occur—“hailing” is absent. I believe it was with this absence that I first recognized the name Ben Brewster—whose 1971 translation of Althusser’s essay, anthologized in Norton, is the text that I thought I knew “what it meant.” Brewster introduces a word, a figure—“hailing”—that does not appear in the original French. The image of the officer is there, but “héler” is not. Only the word “l’interpellation” is present. Brewster translates “l’interpellation” into “interpellation or hailing” (the “or” implying adequacy) and he introduces “hailing” prior to the image of the officer, effectively making “hailing” “interpellation.”

This was shocking for me—if I had known “what is meant” by “interpellation” through “hailing” had I known “what is meant” at all? How did such a misunderstanding occur? I seemingly forgot it was a translation. Brewster’s name is marked in the Norton version; it states
it is a translation and yet in the drive to know “what is meant,” I had forgotten it was a
translation—until in retranslating myself, I remembered.

My point here is an experience: the shock I experienced in retranslating Althusser,—the
shock of remembering, of re-cognizing—the recognition of how much I misunderstand
“interpellation.” And I did not misunderstand from a complexity of the idea per se, because such
complexity is disguised in a reductive deformation due to a didactic intention; I never
encountered “interpellation” itself, but only as already translated, contextualized, and canonized.
In the case of Brewster this is the “choice” of the translator to reduce complexity through a
singular figure and a solidifying of context. “L’interpellation” instead of being questioned in a
shifting context as present in the original—where it could possibly imply different verbs like
“constitute,” “recruit,” “plead,” “interrupt,” “prevent”—becomes reductively the context of “on
the street” and the verb of “hailing.” Translations that have a didactic-intention are reductive out
a demand for clarity and distinction (i.e., the entanglement between the source-text, institutional
pressures, and readability) leading to mis-readings masquerading as understanding, mis-readings
masquerading as clear and stable meanings with clear and stable contexts.

And yet, Althusser straddles a line for me. His writing is not what I have in mind when I
think about Darstellung or entangled-retranslation. Rather, I specifically have in mind writers

like Walter Benjamin: theorists who recognize an impossible distance between the “manner of
meaning” [Art des Meinens] and “what is meant” [Gemeinte] and the impossible necessity of

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4 The doublement of “or hailing” contextually makes sense with Althusser’s striking image of the police
officer on the street and the historical context of 1968; however, the inclusion of “or hailing” with all
other occurrences of “l’interpellation” carries with it the unifying image of the police officer. Thus,
reducing the potentiality of ‘interpellation’ and arguably placing an ideological focus on RSAs, in lieu of
ISAs, which are more prevalent in regard to the institutions and systems involved in the translation,
canonization, and teaching of the specific essay.
attempting to bridge this distance for the sake of significance; authors who utilize rhetoric in an intentional manner to bring about an experience in the reader of that impossible necessity. What this experience is shifts with iterations, but for the reductionist sake of clarity, we might think of it in the manner of a semi-messianic experience: it is not an experience of an intentionless thing-in-itself or absolute as-is, but rather an experience of an as-if pre-communicative movement of language (be it visual, verbal, musical, etc.) This experience houses the potentiality for a

5 In his reading of Benjamin’s essay, Weber marks two conceptions of “intention.” The intention of the translator “stresses the discontinuous separation between movement of mind or language, between a pointing-at, and that at which one is pointing” (71). And yet also, Weber argues Benjamin uses “intention” in regard to the poet, where it implies a “fulfillment and fusion” (71). There is a tension between the Translator as enacting a fragmenting, discontinuous process, and that of the Poet bringing about a fusion through image. Possibly at odds with this understanding, in the opening paragraph, I have made the claim that retranslation “shares the same intention” as Benjamin’s source text. Both Benjamin’s source-text and retranslation attempt to bring about an encounter through paradoxical Darstellung of fulfillment and discontinuity—both potentially bring about an encounter with ‘truth’ as a presenting-itself; neither is a communicative accumulation of knowledge. Both hold the seemingly opposing intentions in tension; this is encountered in an allegorical manner through the process of retranslation. That is, the movement between the various translations and the source-text mark allegorically the immanent affinities between an absolute and the finite, manifested in rhythms of distortions of a continuity, in the attempting of a fulfillment. That is, the process of retranslation foregrounds its own finitude in discontinuous markings of other translations unfolded historically; and in foregrounding its own finitude, the continuity of the source-text is also marked in the foregrounded distortions between previous translations and source-text; thus, there occurs a marking of a continuity—even if the source text is thought of merely as graphic marks arranged in a specific form—as the distortions, both synchronically between languages and diachronically through the previous translations in target-language texts.

6 In Benjamin’s pre-1930s writings, a few images and concepts are described as “intentionless”: “Pure language” and “Truth.” “Pure-language” is a figurative conception of ‘truth’ as the bringing together of ideas: “Truth actualized in the round dance of presented ideas” (OTS 4). “Pure Language” is an as-if fully-supplemented to the point of an Allheit state; yet such is only ever present as the fragmented peculiar intentions of each language brought together. It is the task of the translator to re-present and release the possible intentions in a sehnsüchtig striving for the fully-supplemented impossible intentionlessness. Thus the “brot” and “pain” example in the Task of the Translator or the remarks on “ideas” and “truth” from the Epistemo-Critical Prologue:

The being of ideas simply cannot be conceived of as an object of vision, even intellectual vision. For even in its most paradoxical periphrasis, as intellectus archetypus, vision does not enter into the form of existence, which is peculiar to truth, which is devoid of all intention, and certainly does not itself appear as intention. Truth does not enter into relationships, particularly intentional ones. The object of knowledge, determined as it is by the intention inherent in the concept, is not the truth. Truth is an intentionless state of being, made up of ideas. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it.
transformation of consciousness/context; for when a here-now configuration is disrupted—when
the continuity interrupts and is recognized as the distortions—it allows the limits of said
configuration to alter, stretching to think and experience other. This experience is of what we
must forget, or misrecognize, for the “what is meant” to seemingly ossify. Benjamin in the “The
Task of the Translator” describes this pre-“what is meant” as being “. . . [encountered as] engaged in steady changing [Wandel], until it [what-is-meant] as the harmony of all those
manners of meanings [Art des Meinens] emerges-out as the pure-language” (7.13). The

Truth is the death of intention. This, indeed, is just what could be meant by the story of the veiled
image of Sais, the unveiling of which was fatal for whomsoever thought thereby to learn the truth.

Truth and pure-language share the same intentionlessness; and as such both only enter “intellectual
vision” in here-now (i.e., the historical privileged configurations of a time/space) distorted presentations,
delimited by here-now intentions—be them specific languages or concepts or figurations or translations.
Thus, intellectual comprehension of pure-language and truth is intentional. Such is present in Benjamin’s
work as as-if distortions—as “pure-language” and “Truth,” (thought of rhetorically and with unstable
terminological auras.) While to encounter pure-language or truth as-such requires a dangerously
immersive experience, an emptying of intentions. Translation at times toes-the-line of this immersion.
Though in a general sense each translation is ideologically-cued and bound-to its specific here-now
configuration, making individual translations historical interpretations of a source text; in the most
immersed forms of translation Benjamin argues one finds fatality and madness, i.e., intentionlessness,
unbounded from here-now: for the “unveiling of” the image of Sais is “fatal,” and Hölderlin’s late
translations, standing as examples of the “enormous and original fear of all translation” [ungeheure und
ursprüngliche Gefahr aller Übersetzung] (12.9), are “enclosed in silence” or “plunge the sense [Sinn]
from abyss to abyss, until it threatens—in bottomless languagedepth—itself to-lose” (12.7).

As such, my use of a phrase like, “pre-communicative movement of language,” is only ever an as-if, with
intention, and therefore marks an ideologically-cued moment in thinking and writing about actuality and
possibility; and as an intentional distortion is as-if a dance between “truth” and truth, between what-is-
meant and manner-of-meaning, which are also as-if, and so on ad infinitum (or until the emergence of the
inconceivable messianic) . . .

7 Referring back to “anzutreffen” earlier in the sentence.

8 To use Benjamin’s language from “The Task of the Translator.” When quoting my own translations, I
will cite paragraph followed by sentence. For example: (10.21) refers to paragraph ten sentence twenty-
one of the “The Task of the Translator” essay.
experience of this is brought about through an intensive dance in-between “what is meant” and “manner of meaning.”

For an example: Benjamin writes, “in a wonderful insistent manner it [translation] at-least points [hindeutet] toward the predetermined, failed [versagten] domain of Reconciliation-and Fulfillment of Languages” (8.3). Translation points towards the “what-is-meant” through its various already failed “manners.” “Hindeutet” as a verb implies “indicating” and “pointing”; it can be broken down into the prefix “hin-” implying movement and root “deutet” [deuten] as “to-point,” “to-interpret,” “to-beckon.” Translation as ideologically cued, as a historically marked interpretation i.e., as a product of a here-now configuration, “points” and “beckons” to that which lies beyond the limits of its own here-now finitude, beyond its own time-bound “manner.” The beyond—in this cited “manner” a “domain of Fulfillment and Reconciliation”—in retranslation allegorically refers to both the actual source-text and to other possible interpretations—other unread possible configurations contained immanently in the here-now “manner.” Moreover, “versagten” as a preterite verb form points to the what-is-meant in its performative usage. “Versagten” indicates an action at a determined moment in the past, implying “failed”; but also “failed to say” or “said wrongly” as an event in the past, or even “the past event of failing to say or saying wrongly.” Failure, necessity, and distortion are immanent to the event of translation. The experience I am striving for, the meaning I am attempting to grasp,

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9 Samul Weber in -abilities offers an in-depth distinction and discussion of these terms in Benjamin’s work: “. . . that between ‘the meant’ and ‘the way of meaning.’ Languages, he argues, are identical in what they mean: they all mean the same things, they all have the same ‘Gemeinte.’ What distinguishes them is the way they mean these things, their Art des Meinens. It is the relation of different ways of meaning, tied to the differences between and within languages that constitutes the true object of the translator. The task of the translator consists, first, in relating the distinctive ways of meaning in different languages to one another, and secondly and correlatively, in bringing out what is ultimately ‘meant’—signified—by these different but related ways of meaning: namely, ‘pure language’ itself” (71).
has always-already failed to say; and yet, the “manner’s” distorted presentation’s attempting to “at least point” is “insistent”; the absolute, the “what-is-meant,” the “pure language,” “the domain of fulfillment and reconciliation,” i.e., a continuity, is yet always presenting, disruptive to the claim-of-readability in its own “beaconing.” The experience of this rhetorical stammering, as it points beyond, is an intention of Benjamin’s text.

Certain strains of critical theory strive for this rhetorical experience to occur in the reader as the reader strives for “what is meant.” In my experience this is a pleasurable but arduous process—a digressive halting movement towards and away from the text—deep dives into etymologies, leaping to other texts, gleaning commentaries—it is an inter- and intra-textual experience—which comes, hopefully, with a few shocks, i.e., such theory, in original or translation, is experienced as a process of reading as entangled-retranslation.

This implies the experience of retranslating is the very experience of reading such critical theory—a perpetual questioning of the relationship between “manner” and “meant,” and an already failed striving for a domain of fulfillment and reconciliation, beyond the finitude of the here-now. Moreover, when the “what is meant” is an experience of the “manner” bumping-up-against the “what is meant,” the “manner” becomes paramount for said experience. Such “manner” takes on a performative Darstellung. In English, Althusser’s “interpellation” meant “hailing”; until in translation, there occurred an experience of the “manner” of the two texts. Then, simultaneously, “interpellation” was unbounded by here-now configurations, releasing a potentiality—and I had a momentary experience of language-in-flux, context and meaning shifting and yet the French text continually stayed materially the same—and I had to think, to question: “what is meant” by this “manner”? 
So, how is such an experience brought about? What Brewster’s translation of Althusser highlights is an intention corresponding to a form: what Benjamin calls a didactic intention.\textsuperscript{10} In the opening paragraph of the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue,” Benjamin argues that 19\textsuperscript{th} century philosophy, under the privileged configuration of mathematical and scientific attempts to “eliminat[e] the problem of presentation” [Elimination des Darstellungsproblems] (11), develops a conception and form of “system” that as “syncretism” [Synkretismus] claims the “didactic authority of Doctrine” [die didaktische Autorität der Lehre] (11), and in doing so attempts to repress the “Esoterik” aspect of things (all that which can’t be explained in the depth and scope of the system); which nonetheless said dogmatic doctrinal system is unable to disown, shed, or acknowledge. In lieu of said system and the conception of philosophy “as a mediating guide to knowledge” [als vermittelnde Anleitung zum Erkennen] (11), Benjamin recognizes philosophy as a “presentation of truth” [Darstellung der Wahrheit], which must foreground the “practice of this its form” [Übung dieser ihrer Form] (11). Thus, as in “all ages in which the uninscribable essentiality of the true has stood before one’s eyes” [die unumschreibliche Wesenheit des Wahren vor Augen stand], a propaedeutic form is present. One termed ‘Traktat;’ such a form contains a latent hint towards the “Esoterik,” the objects of theology—that which is beyond yet

\textsuperscript{10} Such “intention” is always ideologically cued, always within a here-now; thus, in our current age, in my current positionality, a didactic intention of translation is delineated by academia and publishing industry directly and their demands for “readability”; this stands often in disrespect with the intentions of a source text. Thus, distortions in translation are not just the product of authorial and translator intention, but also mark what must be done to gain a PhD., an instructor position, tenure, to get published, etc., and yet still said distortions also mark the source-text’s intentions as distortions. The slipperiness of such “intention’s” meaning marks the manner in which socio-economic determinations delineate unconscious intentions. Thus, one could catalogue distortion trends in translation practices for a specific age, and simultaneously mark systemic pressures for “readability,” which corresponds to the privileged here-now configuration.
immanent—which are necessary for the thinking of truth (11). The Traktat form “may be doctrinal in tone” but is denied the authoritative didactic (seeming) conclusiveness of the doctrinal form; its intention, via its usage of authoritative citations, is “almost more educative than didactic” [einer mehr fast erziehlichen als lehrenden Intention] (11). This movement from didactic to more educative is brought about by Traktat’s form disrupting the didactic intention from moving into systemization. For “sacrifice of the uninterrupted course of intention is [Traktat’s] first hallmark” [Verzicht auf den unabgesetzten Lauf der Intention ist sein erstes Kennzeichen] (11). The Traktate’ form disrupts intention from reaching systemization.

In a reductionist reading for the sake of clarity, “Lehre” as doctrine and its didactic intention seems to be set against “Traktat” and its educational intention. However, there is not a diametric opposition, but rather Traktat form is privileged by Benjamin because it foregrounds its own form. Thus, Traktat is able to allow a continual anew practice of a doctrinal didactic intention, while simultaneously its form interrupts intention’s movement into a systematic conclusiveness, holding seeming sides in tension. In doing so, the “lehrenden” intention is reconfigured into an almost more “erziehenlichen” intention—where a redrawing, a reconfiguration, a stretching is immanent.

11 “... in einer Propädeutik aufgenötigt, die man mit dem scholastischen Terminus des Traktats darum ansprechen darf, weil er jenen wenn auch latenten Hinweis auf die Gegenstände der Theologie enthält, ohne welche der Wahrheit nicht gedacht werden kann.” (11)

12 Peter Fenves offers an influential interpretation of “Lehre,” as use in an earlier essay of Benjamins: “The name of this counterpoint to the ‘fact of science’ is Lehre (doctrine, teaching, theory), which ‘teaches’ only the transient moment of its transmission” (5). Lehre “suggests a veridical transition, a transition into truth . . . which should probably be translated as ‘doctrine’ but which, like doctrine, derives from the word for ‘teaching’ or ‘learning,’ lehren . . . so ‘doctrine’ must be continually taught in order for it to be ‘doctrinal’” (42-43).
Retranslation attempts to do the same. Retranslation is similar in some respects to the Traktat; for retranslation maintains a tension between recognizing its own finitude and yet still striving for an impossible ideal translation of the source text. Both Traktat and retranslation are forms of immanent criticism; both reject “timeless” i.e., dogmatic standards of judgment and systemization, while simultaneously refusing a dissolution of any criteria all together, still allowing for the possibility of the absolute to present as distortions in the here-now forms. Both strive for and fail to grasp the immanent germ of impartibility and translatability respectfully, while still simultaneously marking said germ in the failure and striving. Of course, for Benjamin and many theorists all translation is a form of immanent criticism. As Berman states in his commentary on Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”: “What the original text calls for with all of its strength, so that the meaning immanent in its translatability can come into being, is the act of translation” (79). However, with retranslation, as Chantal Wright writes in her commentary on Berman’s commentary: “the translator does not come to the text unaffected by earlier readings . . . But acknowledge[es] the influence of previous translations” (25). Retranslation continually confronts its own finitude in a manner that marks the distortions of its own presenting, while simultaneously still striving for a reconciliation of “manner of meaning” and “what is meant.” In so doing, other possible meanings and experience present themselves, i.e., the here-now configuration stretches, shifts, reconfigures.

Such a conception of translation as retranslation is in line with the ending of Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator,” where Benjamin emphasizes translation’s fidelity to the Wörtlichkeit—the Wörtlichkeit, or word-to-word.
Vielmehr ist eben das die Bedeutung der Treue, welche durch Wörtlichkeit verbürgt wird, daß die große Sehnsucht nach Sprachergänzung aus dem Werke spreche. Die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend . . . (Benjamin)

Rather, the significance of fidelity as ensured by literalness is that the work reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation. A real translation is transparent . . . (Zohn, SW 1, 260)

On the contrary, the meaning of the fidelity ensured by literal translation is that the great longing for the completion of language is expressed by the work. True translation is transparent . . . (Rendall 161-162)

Rather it is precisely the denoting [Bedeutung] of fidelity, which shall be vouched for through Wörtlichkeit [Wörtlichkeit] that the great Sehnsucht for supplemented-language [Sprachergänzung] speaks out of the work. The real translation is translucent [durchscheinend] . . . (10.24, my translation)

“Bedeuten” implies a “denoting” towards the word as a materiality of the letter, as the continuity of graphic marks arranged. In the limits of the citation, Zohn and Rendall’s “meaning,” and “significance” seem fine, but in the context of the essay overall I believe “denoting” is hinted at.13 “Sprachergänzung” implies a messianic supplemented-language: the Gemeinte, the pure-language, the domain of reconciliation and fulfillment. In Zohn’s “linguistic complementation”

13 There appears to be three types of “meaning” in Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translation”: Sinn, Bedeuten, Gemeintes. (Remember that the text itself will disrupt the following classification if taken too far.) “Sinn” equates to that which “bad” translators emphasize with the smoothing over of syntax, hence the illusion of “conveyed” meaning. “Bedeuten” marks a marking of the word as the letter, i.e., what fidelity to the text aims for. And “Gemeintes” implies a messianic completely-supplemented-meaning. Unfortunately, Zohn and Rendall tend to translate all three with ‘meaning’ ‘significance’ etc. without a fidelity to repetition.
there seems to be a repressing of the more esoteric implication; in Rendall’s “completion of language” the esoteric seems present, but maybe a progressive notion and a conclusiveness is implied. “Supplemented-language” may be too close to a neologism, but the implication is not for a completion, but for a continual attempting via supplemental language i.e., for Fortleben.

The “Sprachergänzung” is felt as a “Sehnsucht.” Zohn and Rendall’s choice of “longing” makes sense, but the word, Sehnsucht, is untranslatable, implying a continually renewed longing/striving not just for a return but also for a departure towards something indeterminate. Sehnsucht speaks out of—“auf . . . spreche”—the work itself. Zohn’s “reflects” distorts a material affinity; Rendall’s “expresses” is closer but loses an “echoing” occurring throughout the entire essay around hearing/speaking/echoing ‘from the work.’ Lastly, the translation of “durchscheinend” as “transparent” by Zohn and Rendall is a telling distortion. Chantal Wright, in reference to Berman’s commentary, describes Benjamin’s idea of ‘translucent’ as “like washi, the paper that is used for room dividers in traditional Japanese houses” (Age 181). This is apropos, for “translucent” implies that the medium is present as medium; the “translation” denotes its form.

Thus, translation in the form of a literal-translation, which is faithful to the source-text through Wörtlichkeit (and as such is resistant to the didactic intention of readability for the target-language) denotes towards its own materiality. The absolute—distorted here as “Sprachergänzung,” “linguistic complementation,” “supplemented-languages”—is present only in distortions, in the mode of Sehnsucht, and in the form of a translation that is translucently visible. I argue that the form of retranslation itself halts the didactic intention (Complex as authorial and social) from claiming a systematic authority (a readability judged as “correct”), and yet still heeds the beacon of the text, the Sehnsucht, and strives for translation.
In summary, if the intentio of the original is intentions brought to tension causing a halted stretching, and it is the task of translation to “give voice to the intentio . . . as a supplement” (10.21), then translation’s task is to call attention to itself as translation. Not just a few footnotes, or an introduction, or an afterwards commentary—but as a form where the tensions between “manner” and “meant,” where didactic intentions, can strive for an impossible ideal, because the form itself will disrupt its arrival at a systematic conclusiveness, thus bringing about an intention to stretch, i.e., entangled-retranslation.
Section One: On “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”

Transcendental yet Speculative, Darstellung and “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”:

A lack of comprehension of Benjamin’s recasting of Kant has led to a belief that Benjamin lacked a developed theory of experience or language. For example, Antoine Berman argued that Benjamin never fully developed a metaphysics of languages—that all we are presented with is “programmatic, fragmentary or a latent form” (32). Understanding Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative philosophy of experience and its influence on his conception and use of Darstellung\(^\text{14}\) will reveal how this fragmentary form is a developed strategically insufficient theory of language and experience, an insufficient calculus.

**Insufficient Calculus:**

“Insufficient Calculus” is shorthand for a framing of Benjamin’s project that begins with A) the development of his post-Kantian and anti-Hegelian “transcendental but speculative” philosophy of experience (Caygill), B) shows how said philosophy influences one’s understanding of translation, history, politics, etc., and compels the necessity of presentation as method or Darstellung (Truskolaki and Siber), C) grasps how such manifests through/as Benjamin’s rhetorical, grammatical textual performance (Samuel Weber) and D) potentially compels a privative encounter for the reader, writer, and translator. Benjamin’s speculative experience involves a complex recasting of Kant’s tri-part faculties, to allow for the possibility of the absolute to manifest as distortions in the here-now, and to allow for the justification of

\(^{14}\) The question of Darstellung will be reapproached multiple times throughout this dissertation. For the reductionist’s sake of clarity, “Darstellung” implies a form-mode of representation that is conscious of itself; “Darstellung” is a re-presentation, a staging, and a performance all at once. As Samuel Weber states Benjamin’s Darstellung “precisely exhibits and exposes, stages and interprets the problematic dynamic of concepts such as sound, name, and symbol” (303).
multiple worldviews. Benjamin’s “calculus” is strategically unstable and fragmenting, thus strategically “insufficient.”

As a foundation to this insufficient calculus, I turn to Howard Caygill’s comprehension of Benjamin’s recasting of Kantian philosophy of experience and subsequent conception of knowledge. In general, in Kant, Benjamin found a scission between experience and the absolute, and in Hegel a teleological continuity. Questioning both, Benjamin develops a transcendental yet speculative theory of experience, where the absolute presents in distorted historical linguistic forms, and where an infinite possible number of configurations (historical linguistic forms) unfold. To unpack this requires a little summary into Kant and Hegel.

**Kant’s Tripartite System:**

Kant’s tripartite system of experience is comprised of three faculties: intuition/sensibility, understanding, and reason. First, “the faculty of intuition possess a ‘certain principle of form’ through which the mind may directly apprehend the concrete singularity” (Caygill *Kant* 265). The formal principles of intuitions—space and time—are the necessary conditions for human sensing of objects, and for sensory representations.

The faculty of understanding is separate from both intuition and reason for Kant and understanding becomes a matter of judgment. “All judgements are accordingly ‘functions of unity among our representations’, so the understanding may be further characterized as a faculty for unifying representations” (ibid. 406). Because for Kant the faculty of understanding is separate from intuition and reason, understanding must create its own concepts, which are complexly connected to the a priori, in that they are delineated by space-time forms.

Lastly, the faculty of reason also represents as concepts, but particular and inexperienceable ones: absolute, God, etc. Reason is the capacity that gives the principles of
knowledge a priori. Because the faculty of reason is driven to “absolute totality,” it is thus not necessarily confined by a priori. However, according to Charles Matthew, for Kant this is what must be kept in check to stop the “inherent tendency of idealism since Plato for metaphysical flights of speculation” (2).

Thus for Kant, the unknowable thing-in-itself is experienced in sensory representations, affected by space-time, as the “material of sensibility”; then through the categories of understanding the thing-in-itself is represented as concepts; when this unknowable thing-in-itself is understood in Ideal Speculative forms—Spirit, Absolute, Totality, God—for Kant this is a space of empty ideas devoid of any correlation to the real “thing-in-itself.” Kant’s comprehension places a scission between Experience (intuition-understanding) and the Absolute (Caygill 23); a break between experience and the thing-in-itself.

According to John E. Smith, “Kant failed to hold fast to the actuality of reason and the force of the Idea because he opted for the primacy of the understanding and its knowledge of finite reality over all speculative thought” (439). For Kant speculative thinking, due to the break, is a kind of empty flight of fancy. And yet, Kant still valued mathematics and physical science as a universal mode of communication. Reason, if it does not go beyond empirical experience, can bring about empirical knowledge (456). This marks a tension in Kant’s philosophy that generations of philosophers continue to question, including Walter Benjamin. As Philip J. Kain writes: “Theoretical reason, as understood by Kant, cannot make good on its grand claims” (3). How can there be a scission and yet a privileging of theoretical reason, mathematics, sciences? What is such a valuation based on? Moreover, it sets a strict limit on experience, and the types of experiences that are valued. In “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” Benjamin will describe Kant’s conception of empirical experience as on par with any other “epistemo-cognitive
mythology.” Such an idea not only throws into question Kant’s relation between knowledge and experience, but also opens up the possibility of knowledge from an infinite number of other experiences. As Benjamin is reported to have said to Gershom Scholem, while discussing the essay, “a philosophy that does not include the possibility of soothsaying from coffee grounds cannot be a true philosophy” (73).

**Disliking Hegel:**

If Kant is the philosopher of finite limits between understanding, intuition and reason, Hegel can be understood as valuing reason and speculation over the imposed limits of understanding. Benjamin’s relationship with Hegel is one of dislike and disregard. There are few mentions of Hegel in his early works. But, around the time when Benjamin was working on “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” he writes in his correspondences:

Hegel seems to be awful! (C 109)

The Hegel I have read, on the other hand, has so far totally repelled me. If we were to get into his work for just a short time, I think we would soon arrive at the spiritual physiognomy that peers out of it: that of an intellectual brute, a mystic of brute force, the worst sort there is. (C 113)

Hegel—from arguably Benjamin’s perspective—totalizes Idea/Reason as History/Spirit, ignoring the finite limitations of his historical here-now ideology, which included teleological notions of progress. Thus, Caygill argues that for Benjamin, Hegel’s speculative philosophy “reduced the absolute by expressing it in terms of the categories of finite experience” (Caygill 23). This will at first seem a contradiction, how can Hegel “totalize” and “reduce . . . by expressing . . . in terms of finite experience.” Arguably, Benjamin sees Hegel as taking one distorted historical configuration of an Absolute and systematizing it to be the Absolute.
Caygill argues that Benjamin’s transcendental but speculative philosophy is anti-Hegelian, due to Hegel’s reduction of the absolute, and its teleology. Benjamin’s philosophy is attempting to be both transcendental/critical in recognizing limitations and delimitations, and yet also speculative in allowing the possibility of an Absolute to present itself, in multiple and varying (de)forms. If Hegel perceived “Reason” as the lone form of accessing the absolute, Benjamin conceives of an infinite possible presentations/revelations. Hence, there are many presentations of Absolute, Hegel’s Spirit in correspondence with Reason is simply one that claims universality. So, while Kant presents a scission between experience and Absolute, and Hegel presents incessant continuity between experience and Absolute, Benjamin attempts to re-cognize scission and continuity.

**Benjamin’s recasting of Kant:**

According to Caygill, instead of pursuing the options of an absolute break or uninterrupted continuity between experience and the absolute, Benjamin “developed a concept of experience in which given spatio-temporal and linguistic universes were regarded as discrete configurations through which the absolute manifested itself in patterns and rhythms, breaks and distortions” (Caygill 23). Instead of Kant’s radical separation between experience and the Absolute, and Hegel’s attempt at absolute continuity between them, Benjamin develops a fragmented, unstable, and historical affinity between them, characterized by Caygill as “transcendental but speculative.”

To unpack this concept, I turn to Caygill reading of Benjamin’s fragment “On Perception Itself,” which uses the metaphor, and configuration of interpretation, inscription, and reading (3-4). The fragment:
It begins with a general proposition: Perception is reading. This implies not a passive receptivity, but rather a complex passive-active process of interpretation, understood as multiple possible interpretations. The “transcendental” refers to the conditions of possibility for perception as reading – the cognitive performance of reading presupposes a surface upon which something can be read, i.e., a surface that is readable and inscribable. In Benjaminian fashion one may refer to this as a “readability” or “legibility.” The “speculative” refers to the structure for the conditions of the transcendental condition of the surface—to function as readable, the surface must be appropriately configured. This implies the possible exclusion of other possible configurations of inscribable-readable. Hence the actual here-now configuration is but one possibility of an infinite number of possible configurations. The speculative is simultaneously folded into the here-now actual configuration and exceeds it in the infinite possible configurations (4). (To apply this to Kant, space and time would be but one possible configuration, and moreover would be contextualized as expressions of an imminent absolute.) Though traditionally the speculative opens up in two seeming directions 1) that of universal totalities to come and 2) as an endless dissolving—Benjamin’s “transcendental yet speculative” opts for a suspension (Caygill 6).

In “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” Benjamin writes: “in addition to the concept of synthesis, also that of a certain non-synthesis of two concepts in another is bound to

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15 This is a kind of filter theory. Thing-in-itself or Absolute presents in historical linguistic forms and presents in distorted and fragmented forms—other aspects are filtered out in the here-now molding.
gain increasing systematic importance; since outside of synthesis another relation between thesis and antithesis is possible” (my translation). This non-synthesis is arguably one of suspension and indicates an early marking of what Benjamin will in the 1930s refer to as “dialectics at a standstill” and “dialectical image.” Samuel Weber offers a reading of the “dialectical image” in relation to this early mention of “non-synthesis.”

‘Image’ for Benjamin is something very different from the familiar conception; indeed, it is something unheard-of. Image, as here used, signifies not the illustrative depiction of an external object. Rather, as something to be read rather than merely seen, the image is construed by Benjamin as both disjunctive and medial in its structure—which is to say, as both actual and virtual at the same time. (49)

Once again, this active aspect of reading what is actually readable in the here-now configuration, which in turn implies the possibility of currently non-readable other aspects, which could present in other configurations: a halted tension between actual and possible, between transcendental yet speculative.

Later in *Origin of German Trauerspiel*, Benjamin states: “the undialectical neo-Kantian mode of thought is not able to grasp the synthesis . . . a synthesis, not so much in the sense of a peace, as a treuga dei between the conflicting opinions” (OTS 177).16 The dialectic that appears through Benjamin’s work is not a synthesis of peace, but a momentary standstill in an unending battle—a truce of god. This stand-still seems to be partially a chance encounter, as it seems possible in specific configurations/conditions. Because the infinite configurations of

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16 “Treuga dei”: A Truce of God had the ideal goal of bringing about peace-on-earth, or God’s peace, but it was done through short standstills: a momentary peace for special days. The momentary peace allows for the feudal lords to still maintain their power, which is maintained through war; but God’s peace would dissolve the feudal-power system.
legibility/inscriptibility seem to become representable within specific historical configurations in a singular form; this specificity seems capricious. This itself is a dialectical standstill tension in Benjamin—the “capricious particles” of the mosaic. But notice that this dialectics at a standstill comes about through a vacillation between two contradictory tensions, in this way the dialects at a standstill, and even more so the dialectical image, and the transcendental yet speculative are nachstammelnde. This nachstammelnde has a shape: double infinity.

**Double Infinity and “German Language”**:
Caygill describes Benjamin’s recasting of Kant through the image of a “double infinity”: the transcendental infinity of possible marks on a given surface (or perceptions within a given framework of possible experience) and the speculative infinity of possible bounded but infinite surfaces or frameworks of experience. The transcendental infinity of possible legible marks on a given surface is framed and supplemented by the speculative infinity of possible surfaces for inscription and legibility. (4)

To unpack this “double infinity,” I turn to Benjamin’s discussion of the “German Language” from his earlier essay “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man.”

the German language, for example, is by no means the expression of everything that we could—theoretically—express through it but is the direct expression of that which communicates *itself* in it. This “itself” is a mental entity. It is therefore obvious at once that the mental entity that communicates itself in language is not language itself but something to be distinguished from it. (*SW* 1,63).

The “German language” represents a specific-historical configuration of language as-such. The “German language” should not be mistaken as “that which communicates *itself* in it” (i.e., language as such, i.e., the absolute), which would lead to limiting the absolute. And yet, the
“German language” in the sentence must be present in order to represent “that which communicates itself in it,” i.e., the absolute. Benjamin stages this in the source text as well through the italicization and quotation of through, itself, and “itself.” “Itself” highlights the necessary (im)possibility of knowing and of representing, and thus also highlights a double infinity: “language as an infinitely extended field of possible utterances, and language as a mode of designation and intention capable of generating an infinite number of languages” (Caygill 15).

In the relationship between a specific fragmented configuration and a conceptual representation of the absolute “as such,” the structural possibility of language as such represents itself as that which communicates itself in a specific language. Benjamin’s Darstellung loses a dimension in translation: The “German language” becomes more conspicuous in the absence of a written “deutsche Sprache.” If it were the “English language” it would be even more explicitly communicating itself, even as it was cloaked as “English.” Language as-such is a non-instrumental medium which is present in distorted form as specific historical language, a specific configuration, in this instance “the English Language.”

“On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” is but one example of Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative experience manifested in his writing. In “On the Program for a Coming Philosophy” it will be present itself as a reframing of the relationship between knowledge and experience. To paraphrase what will be expanded in the commentary of the retranslation, Benjamin negates a conception of knowledge as the organization and communication of empirical experience and a timeless validity, which privileges the science of mathematics as the methodology; and in turn Benjamin presents a concept of the relationship between experience and knowledge as: “Erfahrung ist die unheimlich und kontinuierliche Mannigfaltigkeit der Erkenntnis.” [“Experience is the unified and continuous multiplicity of
knowledge.”] That is to say, experience presents itself (in Benjamin’s anew recasting of the Kantian tradition) as a virtual system of pure knowledge, through the transcendental critical method (i.e., moving from what is presented to possibility of conditions), opening up the possibility of multiple other sciences—a science of math, of language, of color, etc. This anew conception is Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative; in which, according to Jan Sieber, there is a “pure epistemological consciousness” or “voided subject” i.e., an “effect of the experience” (Sieber 3), and in which “truth” becomes a matter of presentation, i.e., here-now configurations.

But before moving to the essay, it is necessary to unpack how Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative manifests, in distorted form, “the absolute.” For Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative simultaneously effects his notion of Darstellung.

Lehre, Ideas, Phenomenon:

Benjamin’s main text for a discussion of Darstellung is the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue;” specifically said text’s first section, what Beatrice Hanssen describes as “a cabalistic reinterpretation of Plato’s doctrine of Ideas” (38). Benjamin’s prologue calls for a return to the origin of philosophy, turning away from a focus on cognition, and turning back to a focus on the representation of Ideas. The cognitive focus of philosophy refers to Kant and the Kantian tradition, where, as detailed above, experience was associated with empirical consciousness, and Ideas were associated with the faculty of reason and cut off from any connection to the thing-in-itself and/or absolute. Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative places the absolute and Ideas in affinities as fragmented presentations. This is not in an essentialist manner, but rather it is historical and linguistic i.e., “the presentation of ideas comes about in the medium of the empirical” (OTS 10). This is the difference between a Platonism of Ideal Forms and Benjamin’s return to the Idea—Benjamin returns to before Plato, to an a-topos presentation of a mythic
garden and the act of naming: “Adam[] the father of humankind regarded as father of philosophy” (OTS 14).\footnote{Such a reading is present as early as the 1916 “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man.” In which, Benjamin references Hamann’s theory of language at the root of knowledge/experience (SW 1, 67, 70).} This is likewise present in “On the Program for the Coming

For a quick summary: In “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” Benjamin uses the biblical story of the fall from Paradise to sketch a before and after image of humankind’s relationship to truth and knowledge. The form is that of Lehre, a presentational experience form of Darstellung. Benjamin uses Eden to explain his “presupposing language as ultimate reality” (Reflections 322). According to Benjamin, in the garden, all was created by God’s creative logos; a logos which creates without mediation, thus fully signified and materially communicative with things. However, God “not wishing to subject [humankind] to language,” “breathed his breath into man: this is at once life, and mind and language” (323, 321) Benjamin is not indicating that language is simply an expression of mental being and life; but rather, mental being, life, and language are inseparable. Hence, language/mental-being is intimately linked to truth and knowledge. Human language, in contrast to the mute material language of things, is “immaterial and purely mental, and the symbol of this is sound” (321). In giving humankind language, God instilled in humankind the creative power of naming, but this power “was relieved of its divine actuality, [thus] becom[ing] knowledge” (323). The prelapsarian Paradise was a moment where the “language of man must have been of perfect knowledge” (326). This perfect knowledge was expressed through naming. God created things via logos and these things spoke in a mute language to Adam. Adam “in receiving the unspoken nameless language of things and converting it by name into sounds . . . performed” the task assigned to him by God (325-26). In Paradise, this act of naming was powerful, and the name given was a symbol of the thing, because man and the nameless thing were “related in God and released from the same creative word” (326). Hence, in this prelapsarian Paradise, humankind’s knowledge expressed in naming recognized the true material things as immediate in the symbol-name. Symbol is “the very incarnation and embodiment of the idea [or thing]” (OTS 164). In the prelapsarian world, truth is an immediate experience of the material-thing-in-itself. Knowledge is humankind’s direct experience of that truth through the symbol-name (of the thing) expressed in naming. Hence, knowledge was truth, language/mental being was symbolic, and experience was unmediated.

But Paradise did not last, the snake seduced humans by promising “knowledge of good and bad” (Reflections 327). However, God had created and beheld that everything was good. Hence, “Knowledge of evil . . . has no object” (OGT 233). Evil is an empty signifier devoid of a signified. This fall “marks the birth of the human word, in which. . . The word must communicate something (other than itself)”; through the fall the human word became a mediated communication and knowledge became fetishistic (R 327). In this postlapsarian world, knowledge is separate from truth: “all knowledge is . . . infinitely differentiated in the multiplicity of language” (R 326-327). The human word is no longer symbolic with material reality; instead, allegory became the “faculty of the spirit of language itself” and as such the mode of mental-being (R 234). Allegory implies “one and the same object can just as easily signify a virtue as a vice . . . [because] . . . all things which are used to signify derive, from the very fact of their pointing to something else” (OGT 174-175). Instead of a signifier indicating a specific, direct, singular signified, allegory empties the signifier of meaning and opens it to (possibly) endless differing and
Philosophy” where Benjamin argues that “the great reformation and correction to be undertaken on the one-sided mathematical-mechanical orientated concept-of-Erkenntnis, can only be gained through a relationship of Erkenntnis with language, as was attempted by Hamann during Kant’s lifetime” (my translation). Saving a discussion of Hamann for below, for now the point is to understand Benjamin’s “presentation of ideas” as presenting in material form as the “medium of the empirical,” the prime example being language. And yet, “it is not a matter of an intuitive making-present of images; rather, in philosophical contemplation the idea as word—as the word that claims anew its naming rights— is released from the innermost reality” (OTS 13). The presentation of the absolute in distorted form’s heftiest potential is presentation’s ability to release the possibility of anew naming.

*Knowledge and Truth:*

“The object of knowledge does not coincide with truth” (5).

Kantian Philosophy perceives itself as a “mediating guide to knowledge,” adhering to a “concept of system” and “syncretism that seeks to capture the truth” (OTS 3). This philosophy’s object of knowledge is not truth; but rather an object “determined by necessity of being held by

deferral. Hence, humankind’s postlapsarian experience is mediated, meaningless and overdetermined, separated from material things (truth), and humankind’s knowledge—in being a knowledge of non-existent evil—is a knowledge of fetish.

However, Benjamin indicates that some kind of experience of truth is possible, but not through knowledge alone. “Truth bodied forth in the dance of represented ideas, resists being projected, by whatever means, into the realm of knowledge. Knowledge is possession” (OGT 29). In Paradise, it was humankind’s task to contemplate and name the mute material things. After the fall, humankind turned away “from the contemplation of things . . . [and took part in] the enslavement of things” (Reflections 329). The essences of things still communicate in their mute material language; but the message is unheeded. Humankind’s postlapsarian knowledge enslaves things through fetishistic misnaming. Yet, the truths of things resist. This resistance is recognized in the arbitrary nature of language and naming: things refuse to adhere to humankind’s misnaming. Benjamin seems to imply that the “truth bodied in . . . represented ideas” is separate or different from knowledge, while also simultaneously being an intimate distortion of the absolute/thing-in-itself, thus a truth is presenting in the illusion.
consciousness” (i.e., Kantian a priori categories, and/or concepts) and thus “attaches a character of possession” (OTS 4). This “possession” of the object of knowledge by consciousness is a process of appropriation. Any “unity of knowledge” is the product of a mediating process, of connecting distinct pieces of knowledge (OTS 5). For philosophy as a guide to knowledge, an object and any interrelation between objects is never grasped as-is, but always mediated, appropriated, and possessed, i.e., distorted.

Benjamin proposes a return to philosophy as “a presentation of truth” (OTS 2). Such a philosophy seeks to bring “into view” “the uncircumscribable essentiality of the true” through a “practice” of philosophy as a presentational form, such as the “Traktat18,” which denies “conclusiveness” (OTS 2). “Presentation is . . . their method . . . presentation as indirection, as the roundabout way” (OTS 2). Reflecting the practice of thinking itself, it “constantly begins anew . . . it goes back to the thing itself” (OTS 3). Philosophy as presentation has “idea as its object . . . [the] presentation of ideas” (OTS 4). “Truth [is understood as] actualized in the round dance of presented ideas” (OTS 4). “Truth” is self-presenting [sich darstellen], unlike knowledge which must appropriate objects. Truth “self-presents” in a presentational form of ideas. This “form is suited . . . to being” (OTS 4). While knowledge can only “unify” through mediation and appropriation, “truth in its essence is determined as a unity in a thoroughly unmediated and direct manner” (OTS 5). Truth is “as a unity in being” (OTS 5). The “in” must be marked—it would seem that Benjamin is propagating a pretty basic Platonic argument, where being is of more importance than becoming; but this “being” is arguably always in the mode-form of “becoming,” in that “in being” is present as/in historical linguistic forms. Though the focus is seemingly

18 In “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” the Darstellung form favored is “Lehre,” though this is likewise for the same reasons as “Traktat.”
(here) on the moment of coming into being and leaving being, on encounter, it is also true that an Absolute is marked in each presentation of truth. Each presentation of truth is distorted and fragmented (in/as historical linguistic form), yet not disconnected from an absolute. Truth presents in grading levels or circles—a vertiginous spiraling. Truth as the presentation of the absolute in a specific (historic-linguistic) distorted form; Truth as the presentation/experience of human limitation of access to the absolute. Truth presents, within/as historical-linguistic (de)forms (as/in a tradition) in a manner simultaneously transcendental yet speculative.

**Immanent Criticism:**

Benjamin destabilizes the Kantian and Neo-Kantian epistemological methodology, where there is a complete ontological separation between reason’s idea, and concept and sensation. In disrupting this Benjamin allows his immanent criticism to arrive, insufficiently. As the transcendental yet speculative are folded into each other, any attempt at criticism and judgement must come from the object of criticism, never from a universal methodology. Phillip Homburg describes Benjamin’s immanent criticism, in *Walter Benjamin and the Post-Kantian Tradition*, as “method and object are, in a sense, inseparable and mutually mediating. The method emerges through the engagement with its object, an engagement that, in turn, comes to reflectively form its object of critique” (60). The shifting and uniqueness of this method—in relation with each object of criticism—means that general comments about the method become meaningless. Each essay, as an object of criticism, requires its own unsystematic and intuitive methodology of critical rigorous reading/writing. Maybe, as Homburg warns, one can state the tensions inherent in such a criticism: though the method must begin with the object of criticism; “the material and experiential particularity” “does not remain fixed within the gaze of its object” (60). If not held in tension, transcendental criticism starting from a priori arguably reads in a manner that
reproduces said a priori, mistaking a here-now configuration for timeless and universal; and a speculative criticism not held in tension runs the risk of falling into endless reflexive complexity. Moreover, a purely empirical account may focus so much on the here-now particularity that all “potentiality that inhere in its object” is lost (Homburg 60). Caygill argues that the endless reflexivity is held in check by a “desire to terminate . . . by resort to an ‘idea’ or ‘truth’” (34). Thus, Benjamin’s immanent criticism becomes a “tension between a finite but speculative concept of criticism and one which dogmatically seeks timeless truths” (34).

Ideas and Phenomenon and Concepts:

As stated above: “truth presents, within/as historical-linguistic (de)forms (as/in a tradition) in a manner simultaneously transcendental yet speculative.” Now, if for Kant the faculty of reason’s object of ideas is a flight of fancy, due to a scissioning apart from understanding and intuition, for Benjamin this object of “Idea” is the (de)form of being by which truth presents itself. But what is meant by being?

Sebastian Truskolaski and Jan Sieber summarize “it is not a unity of being, which has been forgotten in the course of history, or hidden behind false appearance of an alienated world . . . Truth as a unity as being . . . is not essential; rather it is historical” (“Philosopher” 6). Philosophy as a guide would wrongly perceives itself as “unveiling” truth or objects, but there is a passivity on the part of the human. Benjamin describes, instead, how truth-content “manifest itself in a process that can be described figuratively as the flaming up of the veil as it enters the circle of ideas” (OTS 7). It is the task of the philosopher to “practice the descriptive exposition of the world of ideas, such that the empirical world enters of itself into the world of ideas and dissolves in it” (OTS 8). In a Lehre form, Benjamin has presented mythic images and concepts for the reader: “veil . . . flaming up,” “ideas,” “world of ideas” and the “empirical world” of
phenomenon. Ideas and phenomenon are presented as from different spheres. Weber paraphrases Benjamin as:

The [idea] can only be presented or staged . . . by taking leave of the realm of pure ideas and descending to that of empirical, phenomenal experience, and this in turn can be accomplished only through a reordering or reorganization, a dismantling and dispersion effectuated by the concept on the “thing-like elements” (dinglicher Elemente) that constitute the phenomena. (7)

Ideas must descend into empirical existence, and imprisoned phenomenon must ascend to the realm of ideas to be saved from the confines of appropriation. Concepts, yielded by a philosopher “elevated [to the] midpoint between scientist and artists” (OTS 8), gather a mediating role. Concepts “enable phenomena to participate in the being of ideas” (OTS 10) by presenting as the medium of the empirical. “Concepts operating in the presentation of an idea makes that idea manifest as a configuration of concepts” (OTS 10). However, “phenomenon are not incorporated into ideas” during this process. But rather, “ideas are the objective virtual arrangement of phenomena” (OTS 10). Lastly, ideas cannot be intuited as objects of intention, for they are of a different realm. And since, truth is the “unity in being” in the “dance of presented ideas,” thus, “truth is an intentionless being formed from ideas” (OTS 12). And the “comportment appropriate to truth is therefore an entering and disappearing into it” not a stable knowing—but an encounter/experience and insufficient knowing. This is the recasting of Kant. Benjamin is presenting a speculative recasting of concept, idea, and intuition. For Kant, the ideas of reason are removed from understanding’s concepts and sensibilities’ sensory representations. For Benjamin, the absolute presented in the ideas of reason can be in both intuitions (sensory experience, encounters) and concepts (rational representations). Though one must never forget
“the absolute manifests itself in spatio-temporal experience, but indirectly in complex, tortuous and even violent forms” (Caygill 2). And the Lehre or Traktat form attempts to not allow one to forget, in this case with the simile between the ideas/phenomena and “the flaming up of the veil.”
Darstellung as Such and Darstellung as Lehre:

Lehre of “Coming Philosophy”:

In those years—between 1915 and at least 1927—the religious sphere assumed a central importance for Benjamin that was utterly removed from fundamental doubt. At its center was the concept of Lehre [teaching], which for him included the philosophical realm but definitely transcended it. In his early writings he reverted repeatedly to this concept, which he interpreted in the sense of the original meaning of the Hebrew torah as “instruction,” instruction not only about the true condition and way of man in the world but also about the transcausal connection of things and their rootedness in God. (Scholem 67)

Letters to Scholem between these years reflect Benjamin interests in “Lehre” which is, according to Bernd Witte, “to be understood [as] the representation of absolute truth in a philosophical system” (41); and as Fenves argues it is the “counterpoint to the ‘fact of science’ [and it] . . . ‘teaches’ only the transient moment of its transmission” (Fenves 5). Witte and Fenves’ interpretations correspond to the Scholem’s understanding of “the true condition and way of man in the world”; that is, the focus is on the transient, momentary, and in “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” Benjamin marks the Lehre form the where and how as the “bumping up against” an absolute. Weber disrupts Fenves’s reading a little around the nature of this “absolute”:

Lehre, religious doctrine to be sure, but also teaching, and also instruction, is thus the place where philosophy enters into contact with “an absolute”—and not, as Peter Fenves has insightfully remarked, “the” absolute. For this “absolute,” which is inaccessible to
knowledge while making it possible, requires the indefinite rather than the definite article—“an” or “one” rather than “the.” (Weber 312)

Benjamin’s critique of Hermann Cohen’s “fact of science” was Cohen’s notion that “only the mathematical sciences are so fully unified” (Fenves 43), a similar critique is present in Weber’s reading of Fenves. For Benjamin “Lehre” as a counter point to “fact of science” speaks to a relationship to the/an absolute. Both are understood as “points of departure for epistemo-critique, which then consists in the generative justification of what science has learned but cannot by itself make universally teachable” (Fenves 43). The problem with favoring mathematical sciences or any one-methodology/system of thought is an over valuing, a taking of a doctrinal position—making “a” into “the.” For Benjamin, each “the” is really only “a” presentation of absolute in historical-linguistic distorted form. Hence, the problem with post-Kantian philosophy and its dogmatic forms of representation can be addressed with the Lehre form. Lehre as form resists the shift into the dogmatic with its lack of conclusiveness.

Benjamin specifically correlates Lehre with “Talmudic witticism” in a correspondence with Scholem from September of 1917 (C 94). Unlike mathematical-sciences, which in their symbolic abstractness can slip into dogmatic methodology and object, Claude Lefort in “The Permanence of the Theological-political?” writes: “what philosophy discovers in religion is a mode of portraying or dramatizing the relations that human beings establish with something that goes beyond empirical time and space within which they establish relations with one another” (223). Lehre is a performative presenting—where interpretation is compelled by a form that resists stability and systemization. Hence, Lehre gives instructions of the transient nature of humankind in the world.
And yet, what Witte downplays, above, is the second aspect of Scholem statement on Lehre, not just the transient but also “the transcausal connection of things and their rootedness in God.” Though, one should arguably take “God” with a grain of salt when it comes to Benjamin, this other side speaks to a continuity with an absolute, in/as tradition. Lehre is connected to tradition, as Eiland writes in relation to the correspondences:

[Benjamin] conceives of tradition here, as he had conceived of language the previous year, and as he will conceive of art in the dissertation, as a dynamic medium— one in which the learner is continually transformed into a teacher (lernen and lehren both derive from a root meaning “to follow a track”). ([Critical Life] 95)

For Lehre:

is like a surging sea, but the only thing that matters to the wave (understood as an image for the human being) is to surrender itself to the sea’s motion: in this way, the wave crests and breaks into foam [zur Kamm wächst und überstürzt mit Schäumen]. This enormous freedom of the breaking wave [Freiheit des Überstürzes] is education in the authentic sense: . . . tradition emerging precipitously like a wave from living abundance. ([C], 94)

(Eiland 95)

Scholem’s God, Eiland’s tradition, and Benjamin’s sea all speak to the connection to Absolute, even as various “the” absolutes rise and fall. The Lehre strives to present this rise and fall, both as idea and phenomenon, as concept and image. This is markable in many of Benjamin’s essays though not always clearly understood. For instance, concepts like “Ursprung” can correlate both with Hermann Cohen’s conception of “origin” as well as (as Agamben mentions in passing) Goethe’s “Urphänomen” (156), while presenting in Benjamin as a simile of an eddy and stream.19

In regard to Goethe, Andy Blunden writes:

19 “The term origin . . . describe[s] that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming and in its current it swallows the material involved in the process of genesis . . . On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something unfinished. There takes place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which an idea will constantly confront

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The Urphänomen was both idea and image. . . . Goethe also rejected the conception of a complex whole by collecting things together according to some inessential attribute, as in Linnaeus’s taxonomy. . . . Goethe also rejected the instrumental/teleological explanation of Nature. The Urphänomen was Goethe’s solution to the problem of how to conceive of the whole. (Blunden)

For Goethe, the “Urphänomen” is both concept and image, understood to conceive of the absolute without claiming essential characteristics or teleological implications. And as Benjamin writes, “the category of origin is therefore not, as Cohen holds, purely logical, but rather historical” (OTS 25). The difference between Benjamin and Cohen is one of presentation and history. “Origin” is not cut off from presentation for Benjamin—not purely logic and not timeless as such—just as “Urphänomen” is not essential for Goethe; the presentations of “origin”

the historical world, until it is revealed fulfilled, in the totality of its history . . . The dialectic [that accompanies the origin] shows singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials. The category of origin is not therefore, as Hermann Cohen holds, a purely logical one, but a historical one” (OGT 45-46).

On the one hand is the idea and concept of “origin” as marked in the tradition of Cohen, and on the other a simile with the image of an eddy. Once again, an image of a suspension between transcendental yet speculative is present. The two tensions are explained as 1) the “process of restoration and reestablishment” and in the supplementary nature of this 2) “as something unfinished.” Also, represented are multiple forms of an encounter or “bumping-up against.” For instance, the image: “Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming and disappearance.” Origin in this image is the manifestations on the surface of water of an obstruction in the water’s flow—thus creating distortions and back currents i.e., fluid dynamics: while the center of an eddy is relatively stable, even possibly creating a near stagnation of water, the edges of an eddy are unstable—where the eddy encounters the downstream flow. The image is both stable and unstable. And yet an “eddy” becomes legible in the relationship between said stability and instability, which itself is the mark of underlying omnipresent elements—the river and the obstruction, i.e., materiality marked as structural possibilities, the eddy being one configuration. This image represents one “determination of the form,” that “constantly confronts” [immer wieder . . . auseinanderersetzt]—a stammering translation process. This stammering dialectical process (at a standstill) reveals “singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another” i.e., reveals structural possibilities of legibility/inscriptibility in singular representations, like the eddy. The consequence of this, in this instance, is a re-cognizing of history, philosophy, translation, etc. (This section is also present in a different context in “Performative Fragments”).
are historical and linguistic, and hence distortions and fragments. This presents in Lehre form through simile between idea/concept and truth as image.

The Lehre is thus as a form transcendental in its transient limitations yet speculative in its continuity with tradition/God. Through his writing Benjamin shifts from speaking about this presentation as Lehre, Traktate, critical-commentary, etc., but what each specific form denotes towards is a performative aspect of language, what appears in all of Benjamins works as “Darstellung.”

**Darstellung as Such:**

If as Benjamin states the task of the “philosopher [is to] attain the elevated midpoint between scientists and artists” (8), then the encounter of the absolute in the finite falls on two intensely entangled sides. On one side is the scientist and the encounter of concepts; this encounter is one of active critical reading. And on the side is the artists and truth; this encounter is via a “passive” aesthetic experience. “Passive” should not be understood as an unactive process, but rather something like a hearing instead of a speaking—no hierarchy intended—just as experience understood as “reading” (“perception as reading”) is an entanglement of subject-object.

Peter Fenves’ marks such passivity in his reading of Benjamin’s “the poetized.” In seeking a word for what “happens when the poetized finally departs from its corresponding mythos” (40), Fenves marks “passivity.”

The perfection of passivity lies in a certain action, and the consummation of motionlessness requires a certain motion. This is, as it were, the impasse of passivity: there must be a supplementary or complementary action that completes passivity. (41)
This “passive” encounter must be supplement by an action for it to be an encounter. Though an inactive passive aesthetic experience (some pure encounter) is imaginable, it is mystical and meaningless—romantic mythology.

Moreover, both concepts and truth share medium. Truskolaski and Sieber argue that the “inessential correlation between phenomenon and ideas appears in what Benjamin describes elsewhere as a ‘now.’ . . . this correlation . . . in a ‘now,’ in turn, is mediated through language. Language and history thus appear as the media of philosophical thought” (7). To bring this back to the transcendental yet speculative framework and disrupt a simplistic Platonic reading: “world of ideas” is but one presentation in being of truth—just one configuration of an infinite possible configurations. The presentational nature of Benjamin’s “Prologue” can get lost when one follows his advice and “immerse” ourselves in the “minute details.” But don’t forget that Benjamin is performing this dance of ideas as truth. Maybe this is experienced in the jarring shift that occurs halfway through paragraph six of the prologue. Benjamin has just spent five and a half paragraphs presenting “ideas” “truth” “phenomenon” “concepts” in a vertiginous dance of relations, when he turns to a presentation of “a kind of [intentionless] being [Sein]” (OTS 12).

That being—distant from all phenomenality—in which alone this power inheres is that of the name. It is this being that determines the givenness of ideas. They are given, however, not so much in a primal language as in a primal hearing, in which words possess the nobility of the naming power undiminished by the signification necessary to knowledge. (OTS 13)

This is a shift from Plato to Adam, a shift from a world of ideas, to “a struggle for the presentation of a limited number of words, which are always the same—a struggle for the presentation of ideas” (OTS 14). Benjamin seems to propose a “limited” “finite” number of ideas
and corresponding words—but in turn this speaks to one configuration of a number of possibilities. An idea of a totality—Plato’s Form here—is held in tension with “discontinuous finitude” (OTS 15)—the individual ideas intricately and complexly being in language and history. Truth dances forth in the “sonorous comportment” of each individual disparate idea/word in presentational form (OTS 14). Ideas are present insofar as they are heard, as unity in being, in configurations of phenomena. They are “discontinuously finite” configured in a multiplicity in being—i.e., language and history. Think of this as a fragmented absolute encountered in a finite here-now configuration.

A vertiginous play between truth and concept is presenting in Benjamin’s prologue—on the level of foundational shifts, as marked above, but also on the level of individual sentences, both grammatically and in play between image and concept. For one instance of many:

The general is the idea. The empirical, on the other hand, is more deeply penetrated the more distinctly it is seen as an extreme. The concept issues from the extreme. As the mother visibly begins to draw on her powers and live fully only when the circle of her children, all feeling her nearness, closes around her, so ideas come to life only where extremes gather around them. Ideas—in Goethe’s parlance, ideals—are the Faustian mothers. (OTS 11)

The conceptual is present in the subject-verb-object form sentence, even if vaguely turning—“general is the idea” “empirical . . . is” etc.,—each a “discontinuous finitude” and “name.” And then a shift to a comparative form occurs, “As X . . . so Y,” in the form of an allegorical form

presentation—“mother and children” = “idea and extremes.” And finally, the oddity of a
definitional image forms—fragmented with an allusion to another definition that this definition is
like—where concept equals truth: Idea = Faustian Mother. Where the scientist and artist entangle
via presentation, via Darstellung.

And in another level of Benjamin’s Darstellung, Benjamin writes:

for inasmuch as the latter [contemplation] pursues various levels of meaning in observing
one and the same object, it receives the impetus of its constantly renewed beginning as
well as the justification of its intermittent rhythm. (OTS 3)

On this level of Darstellung, the allegorical presentation, the image, of “mother and children” is
already a “truth” presentation. But in vertiginous fashion this would be an odd conceptual-truth
due to the nature of explanation and definition, and the comparative form. Moreover, as
Benjamin states “ideas manifest as a configuration of concepts” (OTS 10), and truth is the
presentation of ideas. So, “truth” can also be understood as the bringing together of the various
concepts—the “x is y” of “ideas” “concepts” “truth” “phenomenon” “being” etc.—which
presents as: “Idea is Faustian Mother,” a concept-truth, a Denkbild.21 Thus, a monadic moment
occurs, a “critical mimesis,” an intensive dereconstruction of presentation. Or what Benjamin
describes as the: “practice [of] the descriptive exposition of the world of ideas, such that the
empirical world enters of itself into the world of ideas and dissolves in it” (OTS 8).

And as an encounter with truth-content, where “such content does not come to light in an
unveiling so much as manifest itself in a process that can be described figuratively as the flaming
up of the veil as it enters the circle of ideas” (OTS 7).

21 As influenced by Stefan George, Benjamin’s Denkbilder are “an aphoristic prose form combining
philosophical analysis with concrete imagery to yield a signature critical mimesis” (Eiland, Critical Life
3).
And lastly, where, in relation to the transcendental yet speculative conception of experience Benjamin has compelled, via his Darstellung, a privative and fragmented encounter with the absolute through a rhythm and pattern of distortions—with levels of concept and truth, (from grammar to syntax, to images/definitions, to Zusammenhängen of sentences together) enacting a stammering slippage. This is an encounter of a transcendental yet speculative experience.

On all levels, in any form, Benjamin’s concept of transcendental yet speculative experience radically alters concepts of knowledge, truth, identity, translation, criticism, history, and etc. No concept is left unaffected. Moreover, in Benjamin’s texts (i.e., “spatio-temporal and linguistic . . . discrete configurations”), the “absolute manifested . . . in patterns and rhythms, breaks and distortions” make up his unique Darstellung, and compel a privative encounter, a critical-mimesis, a monadic moment, an allegorical contemplation.
Specific Influences—Rickert, Cohen, Nietzsche, Humboldt and Hamann:

I have already discussed Hegel and Kant as two sides of the transcendental yet speculative. But there are also more direct historical foundations to consider. The importance of a historical continuity for Benjamin is foundational. For that reason, it is important to at least touch on the arguably direct influences on Benjamin’s recasting of Kant. In the past 20 years a number of papers and a couple book length studies have been published examining these connections.

Alexei Procyshyn in the essay “The Origins of Walter Benjamin’s Concept of Philosophical Critique” unfolds how at the turn of the 20th century, during Benjamin’s formative education, the philosophical debate par-excellence was around the “possibility of objectively valid knowledge in the human science” and the possibility of “developing a distinct theory of presentation that can function as a mode of research and interpretation” (656). Two prominent influences in this debate for Benjamin were Herman Cohen and Heinrich Rickert, who Gillian Rose (as cited by Phillip Homburg) argues share an epistemological starting point. Both “turn Kant’s transcendental logic into an autonomous logic of validity . . . based on a concept of cognition and concept formation that is conceived of as fundamentally nonrepresentational. As a result, empirical reality is . . . subordinated to the logic of validity that transcends finite existence” (Homburg 52). Both presuppose a transcendental a priori, for Cohen the “logic of pure thought” that “precedes the break between subject and object” and for Rickert a “realm of values” that “precedes any form of subjective reflection” (Homburg 52).
Cohen logical idealism and experience:

According to Homburg, in Cohen, Benjamin finds a “logical idealism [that] rejects a concept of external reality prior to his conception of pure logical thought” (52). And according to Peter Fenves: Cohen’s recasting of Kant “absorb[s] space and time into the categories of pure thinking, [] restor[ing] the systematic function of continuity in the theory of knowledge, for the object generated by any ‘factual’ science is constitutively continuous” (159). And yet, “Cohen [also] introduces an equally intractable discontinuity into the theory of experience: every science methodologically generates its own object and thus lays out a field of ‘experience’ that belongs to it alone” (Fenves 159-160). Thus, the problem for Benjamin is that even as Cohen’s system addresses Kant’s scission of reason in relation to experience, the focus on the facts of science bifurcates experience—as experience and knowledge of experience, while continuing to privilege physical-mathematical science. Alexei Procyshyn, citing Jurgen Stolzenberg writes: Cohen’s “new concept of experience consists in . . . the totality of synthetic propositions, which form the content of mathematics and the pure natural sciences” (675 n15).

Next, Tamara Tagliacozzo in Experience and Infinite Task writes,

in Cohen there is a shift with regard to Kant’s concept of experience. Experience comes to be identified with a physical-mathematical science that constructs itself in its concepts in an open and potentially infinite system, and no longer depends upon the data of the senses. It is experienced itself as totality, unreachable by scientific knowledge, conceived as thing-in-itself and infinite task. (36)

Even as “experience” is identified with physical-mathematical sciences, there is still a scission between thing-in-itself and experience as endless reflexivity/task. The tension being once again,
a privileging of one methodology even while marking an unbridgeable distance. In “On the Program for the Coming Philosophy,” Benjamin would take issue with both, the bifurcation and privileging, while still maintaining certain formal features—the transcendental methodology for one. Or as Fenves argues, Benjamin maintains “Cohen’s treatise, as a ‘purification’ of the theory of knowledge, is the basis on which the concept of higher experience can be developed,” while leaving besides its necessity of a dogma (Fenves 161).

**Heinrich Rickert and transcendental empiricism:**

In Rickert, according to Homburg, Benjamin found an argument for “a historical science of reality,” implying that there is a limit to Cohen’s “pure mathematical natural science and its conception of knowledge” (Homburg 53). Moreover, Rickert “attempts to provide a position through which the infinite manifold of reality, which exists over and against pure conceptual thought, can become a valid object of knowledge for historical and natural science” (Homburg 53), thus, the possibility of a science of history. Rickert argues: “a point of unification may lie beyond nature and history, but it can never be found within one of these two mutually exclusive concepts” (53). The limits Rickert delineates stop him from pursuing any “beyond” including an immanence within nature and history, or an absolute. Ricket emphasizes a specificity in the historical science, and yet that specificity “must be subordinated conceptually to a universal in order to be conceived as a valid object of knowledge” (52). Procyshyn argues that Benjamin sees “two lacunae in Rickert’s” value-theory and attempts to fill them in “by offering an account of what value consists of, and how specific values are anchored within specific contexts” (678).

Thus, Cohen presents a marking of limitations while attempting a continuity between experience and knowledge, and yet falls into a transcendental idealism with a dogmatic belief in the fact of science; and Rickert presents a material empiricism that recognizes limits and yet still
sees his historical science as an “objective and value free science” (Homburg 52). Homburg argues that “Benjamin [found] himself within the neo-Kantian tension between material empiricism and transcendental idealism and the uniqueness of his early thought is his attempt to navigate this tension without collapsing one side into the other” (53). While Procyshyn, influenced by Caygill, argues:

For, in trying to identify and elaborate the modal relationships between transcendental framework and speculative configuration, a robust sense of transformation emerges, one sensitive to the productive, or generative, tendencies involved in configuring a framework while also registering the deep, irrecoverable losses these configurations entail. (679)

Benjamin’s Darstellung presents the virtual/rhetorical suspension of two systems of thought—each with their own scission between experience and knowledge (be it historical or logical), and yet each with a dogmatic privileging of one methodology (science or history). And in such a suspension, Benjamin essay performs the transcendental yet speculative in a manner that releases a “robust” unfolding, limitation, delimitation, confabulations, through a transcendental method while using it to open up the possibility of other sciences (of language, history, color, etc.) and other modes of thinking/experience.

*Nietzsche’s ambiguous influence:*

One can think of Nietzsche’s influence on Benjamin as omnipresent. And yet, Nietzsche is rarely touched on directly. Howard Caygill in an undeveloped statement on their connection writes:
An anticipation of Benjamin’s concept of experience may be found in a note dating from 1887 in which Nietzsche raised the possibility of an ambiguous nihilism, one which was both active and passive. Nihilism could be interpreted both as creative—a ‘sign of strength’ and a ‘Violent force of destruction’—and as a ‘decline and recession’ in which ‘the synthesis of values and goals (on which every strong culture rest) dissolves.’

Benjamin’s work may be read as an exploration of the ambiguity of nihilism, an attempt to establish a ‘method called nihilism’ which would offer both a diagnosis of the experience of a passively nihilistic culture as well as identifying the chances for an active nihilism emerging within it. His analysis of passive nihilism focused on the ‘decay of experience’—Nietzsche’s dissolution of the ‘synthesis of values and goals’—provoked by the destruction of traditional forms of community and their relations to nature by the development of capitalist social relations and technology. This analysis, however, is inseparable from an assessment of the chances for an active, even religious nihilism which nests within the decay of experience, manifesting itself above all in the experience of destitution. (xii)

The two immanent sides of this nihilism—passive/destructive and active/creative—are omnipresent in Benjamin’s works. Arguably one can mark out the active-passive nihilism being enacted as a means of holding in tension the transcendent yet speculative. In Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life, while commenting on the Trauerspiel book, Eiland describes how Benjamin “attributes to the work of art not just a revelatory but a destructive capacity, a nihilistic power” (227). Such is present in Benjamin’s earlier works as well, like in his comments on the two kinds of “irony” in “The Concept of Criticism.” “The irony of the material annihilates the material; it is negative and subjective. The irony of the form, in contrast, is positive and objective” (SW 1,
And such a concept is present in Benjamin’s later works after the so-called materialist aesthetic turn, like the double sense of thinking and form of methodology in thesis XVII in “On the Concept of History.” “Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well . . . He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history; thus, he blasts a specific life out of the era, a specific work out of the lifework” (SW 4, 396).

Within “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” a creative-destructive sensibility is present, in that Benjamin wishes to deconstruct Kant’s tripart system to recast the transcendental in a manner that will allow the possibility of speculative while holding such in check, thus both destructive and constructive. Moreover, such a movement mirrors the (in)finite task of a dialectic of non-synthesis in general, on the level of form as the Lehre, the Traktat, the Darstellung i.e., continual dereconstructive presenting.

**Humboldt and Hamann:**

On Walter Benjamin’s 1940 CV, he marks Wilhelm Humboldt as having “awakened [his] interest in the philosophy of language” (SW 4, 381). According to Mueller-Vollmer, Humboldt was tapping into a theory of language that would reappear in the 20th century with Saussure, and a theory of writing not far removed from post-structuralism (“Wilhelm von Humboldt”). In “La traduction—le pour et le contre” from 1936, Benjamin paraphrases Humboldt’s theory of language in the form of a dialogue:

> Es gibt keine Gedankenwelt, die nicht eine Sprachwelt wäre, und man sieht nur das an Welt, was durch die Sprache vorausgese(t)zt ist. Sie meinen das im Sinne Humboldt's, der
überzeugt war, daß jeder zeit seines Lebens unterm Banne seiner Muttersprache stünde.

(GS VI, 158)

There is no world-of-thought, which would not be a language-world, and one see only in
the world what through the language is preconditioned. You mean that in the sense of
Humboldt, who was convinced that every[one] during all of his life stood under the Ban
of his mother-tongue. (my translation)

This speaks to a prison house of language understanding; Humboldt’s “Banne seiner
Muttersparche” marks a transcendental limit that for Humboldt was un-transversal. In the
dialogue, Benjamin disrupts this conception with an image of the now-of recognizability. But
even ten years earlier, Benjamin had already written a critique of Humboldt.

In 1925 Benjamin wrote a fragment, unpublished in his lifetime, “Reflections on
Humboldt”:

[Humboldt’s] interest in language is confined to language as part of objective spirit (In
Hegel’s sense). One could say that insofar as the poetic side of language cannot fully be
penetrated without contact with a realm that we may, if need be, call magical . . . this side
of language is one that Humboldt fails to penetrate at all. (SW 1,424).

Though Benjamin may theorize language as structuring one's perceptions of the world, and even
a kind of “Ban” held in relation to language, Humboldt seemingly denies the possibility of a
freedom from said language. Benjamin does not close the door to a material “magical”
correspondence, to the poetic speculative side of language denoting towards potential others. The
“Objective Spirit” side of language is a singular presentation of an absolute, but one that
theorizes as universally true a scission between perception and absolute. Andre Lefevere writes
that for Humboldt “language rests on the consensus of its speakers . . . it is not an abstract set of words and rules. The word itself is not a mere sign to him, but a symbol, which expresses the close identity between sign and concept. Equivalence for symbols can be found in different language, whereas it is impossible . . . to find equivalents for signs expressing concepts” (40). Hence, Humboldt’s theory opens the monolingualism of privileging, say, just mathematics, in recognizing the centrality of language to consciousness, experience, philosophy, etc.

In relation to Kant, according to Robert Miller in The Linguistic Relativity Principle and Humboldtian Ethnolinguistics, Humboldt “accepted Kant’s theory of knowledge, but sought to add to its validity by applying the principles of Kant’s concept of objectivity to the problem of Language” (Miller 25). Ernst Cassirer writes: “What is described by Kant as a feat of judgment, is shown by Humboldt to be possible in the concrete life of the mind only through the mediacy of speech. The objectification of thought must pass through objectification of the speech sound” (in Miller 26). Humboldt accepts Kant’s theory of epistemology and the inability to know if one’s ideas are true. George Steiner offers a similar reading as Miller, writing that Humboldt believed “language is the true or the only verifiable a priori framework of cognition” (Steiner 85). While simultaneously believing language to be like Kant’s synthesis of judgment, a creative and heuristic act of the mind, which shapes in a determinate manner the constituents of thought: “language is the formative organ of thought . . . [intellectual activity] and language are therefore one, and inseparable from one another” (in Miller 26). This “language” though comes forth not from objects in the world, or things-in-themselves, but “words issue forth from the whole of speech” (Humboldt, in Miller 29). This aspect is in line with Kant: because the faculty of understanding is separate from intuition and reason, “understanding” must create its own concepts which are complexly connected to the a priori, in that they are delineated by space-time
forms. For Kant reason takes autonomy over any experience. For this, there is a disconnect between the “thing-in-itself” or “the absolute” and the representations of the mind as intuitions or concepts. And yet, Steiner argues that for Humboldt,

language is a ‘third universe’ midway between the phenomenal reality of the ‘empirical world’ and the internalized structures of consciousness. It is this median quality, this material and spiritual simultaneity, that makes of language the defining pivot of man and the determinant of his place in reality. Seen thus, language is a universal. (85)²²

Benjamin is in line with such an understanding to an extent. Arguably, Benjamin’s critique of Kant is nearly identical, except for the shift into “universal.” For Benjamin, though language’ maybe a structural medium shared by nature/humans/objects etc., Benjamin’s use of the term “language” implies a language way beyond verbal or written language. It includes a nonverbal language, language of things, language of silence, color etc. This conception is present in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”:

Every expression of human mental life can be understood as a kind of language, and this understanding, in the manner of a true method, everywhere raises new questions. It is possible to talk about a language of music and of sculpture, about a language of justice that has nothing directly to do with those in which German or English legal judgments are couched, about a language of technology that is not the specialized language of technicians. Language in such contexts means the tendency inherent in the subjects

²² Citation is reproduced accurately.
concerned—technology, art, justice, or religion—toward the communication of the
contents of the mind. (SW 1, 62)

For Benjamin there is a structural medium marked or felt as the “tendency . . . toward the
communication.” This is language as a structural medium, not as a “specialized” instrumental
technology. Thus, Benjamin is in line with Humboldt’s theory of language and its substitution of
Kant’s focus on reason, but then Benjamin opens language further. Where arguably Humboldt
(as Benjamin in 1936 summarizes) believe one is always “under the spell of the mother tongue,”
Benjamin recognizes the intimate connection between perception and languages, and yet argues
the possibility of an experience of what is beyond the “spell,” what he above calls the “magic.”

This aspect aligns with Hamann’s critique of Kant—for Hamann “the most direct and
immediate form of experience was not reason . . . but language” (Miller 16). For Hamann, as
arguably for Benjamin, “reason does not function as an independent faculty of cognition . . . but
rather is fertilized by the Logos and is solely the capacity for deriving concepts from sensory
impressions, and for forming judgments and conclusions” (Miller 17). This “logos” fertilizing
reason implies an agency and correspondence of impressions between the Absolute and/or things
to human consciousness; these sensory impressions are given to us by language. Hence, while
Humboldt recognizes the centrality and unifying properties of language to consciousness, he
maintains the barrier between the absolute/thing-in-itself and human consciousness. While
Hamann recognizes the centrality of language and sees language as beyond just human, and thus
sees a possible correspondence between consciousness and the absolute/thing-in-itself via
languages. Benjamin attempts to accept both—a critical/transcendental stance of language as a
historical “spell” on consciousness, and simultaneously opening the possibility of an encounter
with the absolute in the form of language—deformed in historical-linguistic presentation. Again
this “language” is not only verbal/graphic, human language; but rather human verbal/graphic language is but one technique of a mimetic faculty that brings humans/nature/objects/absolute into complex relations.
Next, I turn to the correlation between Darstellung as outlined in the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” in relation to the recasting of Kant, and Benjamin’s statements on allegory. Benjamin’s Darstellung compels a privative encounter, which arguably unfolds on two levels—a conceptual level manifesting as an allegorical reading, and an experiential level manifesting as a non-sensuous similarity [unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten.]

**Darstellung and Allegory:**

Weber describes Benjamin’s Darstellung: “there remains a pervasive and persistent tension between Benjamin’s theoretical utterances and their use in the course of his contemplative practice, that Darstellung that . . . precisely exhibits and exposes, stages and interprets the problematic dynamic of concepts such as sound, name, and symbol” (303). This “Darstellung” places the “utterance” and “practice” in tension. For clarity’s sake, let’s imagine a student reading Benjamin who has only ever read textbooks with bolded definitions: such a student experiences Benjamin’s “utterances,” as the concepts, from a relation of knowledge-experience, where there is a conception of a timeless validity of knowledge and a sense of empirical consciousness. In such a reading, a stability is compelled: X= “X.” While from anew experience-knowledge relationship, (where the sense of subjectivity is an effect of the here-now configuration and “truth” is presentation of here-now configuration) the “practice” of Benjamin’s work holds the “utterances” in tension. [This has to be understood as reductive though, because paradoxically there is no separation between the utterances and practices of the text except in our

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23 “Unsinnliche” implies both “non-sense” and “non-sensuous.” It marks a form of reading of what was never written; i.e., to read what is yet outside of sense and sensation, to read a potentiality of other.
conceptually framing. This is true of the literal text, and reflective of Benjamin’s statement on the nature of language itself: “jede Sprache teilt sich in sich selbst mit” “all language communicates itself in itself” (SW 1, 64].

Benjamin’s Darstellung does shift through his career; though certain basic features are present throughout, such as an interrupting and strong sense of rhythm of distortions.

Benjamin juxtaposes his Darstellung with that of a philosophy still residing in the old concept of Knowledge-experience relations, whose methodology is of “the seamless deductive connectivity of science” (OTS 8). In contrast, Benjamin proposes and enacts “Methode ist Umweg” through that of the “tractatus”: “in their tone, certainly, tractates may be doctrinal; in their inmost disposition they are denied the conclusiveness of instruction that could maintain itself” (OTS 2). This is the tension held between “utterance” and “practice,” characterized by Weber above. The utterances or “tone” carry a certainty, which is disrupted by the “practices” or “disposition” of inconclusiveness; and vice-versa the “utterance’s” vague certainty holds the inconclusively in check from unraveling into an infinite abyss.

Benjamin describes this Darstellung as tractatus in detail:

Presentation is the crux of their method. Method is indirection. Presentation as indirection, as the roundabout way—this, then, is the methodological character of the tractatus. Renunciation of the unbroken course of intention is its immediately distinguishing feature. In its persevering, thinking constantly begins anew; with its sense of the circumstantial, it goes back to the thing itself. This continual breathing in and out is the form of existence most proper to contemplation. For inasmuch as the latter pursues various levels of meaning in observing one and the same object, it receives the impetus of
its constantly renewed beginning as well as the justification of its intermittent rhythm.

\((OTS\ 2-3)\)

Benjamin’s Darstellung, here with a double negation of “renunciation” “unbroken,” enacts the indirection it describes. The Traktat is a form of interruption, i.e., fragmenting. To begin anew, to go back to, to breath in and out—each implies a fragmenting, a “intermittent rhythm” of fragmentation. This being the ideal presentation for philosophy, it compresses a Darstellung “specific to writing . . . that with every sentence it stops and starts anew” (4). This Darstellung “obliges the reader to pause at stations of reflection . . . “ (4). The Traktat, the Darstellung, the reading, and the thinking all do so due to the impetus to “pursue [] various levels of meaning in observing one and the same object.” Darstellung compels a reading towards a potentiation—in general this seems to be marked in two forms in Benjamin’s work between “On the Program for the Coming Philosophy” and “Epistemo-critical Prologue,” that of immersion and that of elevation; both imply a moving through levels striving for a “higher” or more “immersive” order. The coming philosophy is described as a “higher experience,” the Darstellung compels an immersive contemplation; translation ripens language towards a “higher development;” truth-content is grasped through “exacting immersion” into material content; in “Theory of Criticism” philosophy’s striving for a unity is an answer to a call from a “higher order;” the “task of [monadic] presentation” is “immersion” \((OTS\ 27)\)—”breathing in and out.” This stiving for a higher-order or a deeper-immersion, a movement through levels is also present in Benjamin’s conception of allegory.

Howard Caygill in an article entitled “Water Benjamin’s Concept of Allegory” offers a cohesive examination of Benjamin’s incohesive understanding of allegory throughout his career. In relation to “On the Program for the Coming Philosophy” and the above described Darstellung,
Benjamin’s use of allegory in the *Trauerspiel* book seems most apropos. Caygill describes a two-part process, first the “antinomy” aspect of allegory: “The antinomy consists in the nihilistic devaluation of the meanings of the world of things and actions . . . Meaning is first destroyed . . . The first movement of the allegorical is that of fragmentation – the destruction or ruination of contexts of meaning – with the ruin as an emblem of the destructive character of allegory” (Caygill 248).

This destructive character of allegory is omnipresent in “On the Program for the Coming Philosophy” where both through utterance and practice Benjamin’s destabilizes the old concept of knowledge-experience through negative devaluation. For example:

<table>
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<th>Die entscheidenden Irrtümer der Kantischen Erkenntnislehre sind wie nicht zu bezweifeln ist auch auf die Hohlheit der ihm gegenwärtigen Erfahrung zurückzuführen, und so wird auch die Doppellaufgabe der Schaffung eines neuen Erkenntnisbegriffes und einer neuen Vorstellung von der Welt auf dem Boden der Philosophie zu einer einzigen werden. (GS 2, 160)</th>
<th>The decisive errors of the Kantian Epistemology are, as not to be doubted, traceable to the hollowness of experience present to him, and so the double-task of creating a new concept-of-knowledge and a new representation of the world on the grounds of philosophy are the-same. (my translation)</th>
<th>The decisive mistakes of Kant’s epistemology are, without a doubt, traceable to the hollowness of the experience available to him, and thus the double task of creating both a new concept of knowledge and a new conception of the world on the basis of philosophy becomes a single one. (<em>SW</em> 1, 104; Ritter)</th>
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<td>Diese Unterschiede sind zugleich solche des Wertes dessen Kriterium jedoch nicht in der Richtigkeit von Erkenntnissen bestehen kann um die es sich in der empirischen, psychologischen Sphäre niemals handelt; das wahre Kriterium des Wertunterschiedes der Bewußtseinsarten festzustellen wird eine der These differences are, at the same time, such of worth; whose criterion, however, cannot consists/insists on the correctness of its Erkenntnissen, [and] which is itself, in the empirical, psychological sphere, never handled; fixing/finding the true criterion of the differences-in-value of the types-of-consciousness will These differences are simultaneously differences of value, but their criterion cannot be the correctness of cognitions and is never the issue in the empirical, psychological sphere; to determine the true criteria for differentiating between the values of the various types of consciousness will be one of the highest tasks of the future</td>
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höchsten Aufgaben der kommenden Philosophie sein. 
(GS 2, 162)

be one of the highest tasks of the coming philosophy. (my translation)

philosophy. (SW 1, 106; Ritter)

In both of these sentences a destabilization and devaluation of the Kantian and Neo-Kantian conception of experience and cognition is occurring, while simultaneously, in the same sentence, an allegorical restitution is enacted through the idea of restitution as the “task.”

The second part of the allegorical process is simultaneous with the “nihilistic devaluation,” with is “accompanied by their reevaluation in allegorical contexts. Meaning is first destroyed and then restored at a higher, allegorical level” (Caygill 248). Yet, this higher level is both conceptual i.e., utterance, and once again on the level of practice:

The annihilation of natural meaning by the allegorical is then succeeded by an allegorical restitution, one in which the destructive impulse of allegory is applied to itself. In this way, the allegory of meaning is itself allegorized – the state of fragmentation is itself fragmented, allowing the possibility of putting into question the destruction of meaning. 

(Caygill 249)

In the above examples, because the “task” is described through devaluation of Kantian conceptions of knowledge and experience and not defined in positive terms but left open in vague delineation, it points towards this “higher allegorical level,” which is pointed to and unfolded on the level of Darstellung.

Again, the “reevaluation” and “higher allegorical level” are found in the play of the Darstellung with the meaning, the play between the utterance and practice. If Benjamin, simply defined the “new concept of experience-knowledge” in a definitive manner all that would occur is a replacement of the old with an equally delusional new transcendental—this is arguably what Benjamin believes the neo-Kantian’s have done. However, in enacting a Darstellung of
“indirection,” a Darstellung that utilizes fragmentation and latency, Benjamin has brought into play, as the very text itself, a higher-allegorical Darstellung, where “allegory of meaning is itself allegorized.” Retranslation-commentary attempts to document this process, which is largely lost in translation to English. For one example, let us turn briefly to “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy.”

In the essay, Benjamin’s Darstellung is an insufficient representation of the process of creating a new foundation for philosophy, dismantling the “old” knowledge and experience relation while delineating through negation and yet to come tasks a “new” relation between experience and knowledge, and all the changes in meaning, thinking, representation that come with it. If “Experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of Knowledge,” then Benjamin’s Darstellung is an allegorical, and possibly analogical, experience of this new relation—first with foundations shifting, new delineations being implied, concepts being opened up to new interpretation, (as shown above) but even more so in its “programmatic” “fragmentary” and “latency” aspects, which occur on all levels of the text—from verb latency to concepts like “pure-language.” For an example from the opening sentence:

Es ist die zentrale Aufgabe der kommenden Philosophie die tiefsten Ahnungen die sie aus der Zeit und dem Vorgefühl einer großen Zukunft schöpft durch die Beziehung auf das Kantische System zu Erkenntnis werden zu lassen. (GS 2, 157)

The central verb, “zu . . . werden zu lassen,” is an extended infinitive with zu form. Though it is of course common in German to have end verbs, I would argue that Benjamin is staging the latency of the coming philosophy in the sentence and compelling a feeling and (re)reading that shares an affinity with the anew relations of experience-knowledge.
The current standard translation, by Mark Ritter, loses this experiential latency, as well as a passivity that is required of the “coming philosophy”:

The central task of the coming philosophy will be to take the deepest intimations it draws from our times and our expectation of a great future, and turn them into knowledge by relating them to the Kantian system. (SW 1, 100)

In shifting the central verb from a passive “let . . . become” to and active “take” and “turn,” and in disrupting the end position of the verb, Ritter’s translation disrupts the Darstellung, the allegorical representation of this anew philosophy. A “Wörtlichkeit,” or in modern parlance “literal,” translation would be:

It is the central Task of the coming Philosophy the deepest Intimations which it from the Time and the Presentiment a great Future draws through Relation to the Kantian System to Knowledge become to let. (Literal)

The issue with a literal translation, though syntactical positions are kept, it is too unreadable. So much of the beauty of Benjamin’s work is his ability to enact a semi-catachresis, to push grammar and meaning to the limits of its current stability in order to shift that meaning. Benjamin famously disliked neologism describing them as “an abortive naming in which intention plays a larger part than language, [and] are lacking in the objectivity with which history has endowed the major formulations of philosophical observation” (OGT, 37). [This speaks to the above importance of “tradition” and a continuity with such.] And yet, as Weber has written, “Benjamin’s discussions, and his writing practice, advocates the reinscribing of established terms so that they part company with themselves—which is to say, with their previous identities” (Weber 10). Hence, a literal-translation likewise dissolves the Darstellung and allegorical heft.
It is impossible to truly capture the Darstellung of Benjamin’s style in English. I offer the following as a failed attempting to present that allegorical heft:

It is the central task of the coming philosophy to let the deepest intimations, which it draws from the time and the presentiment of a great futurity, through the relating to the Kantian system, become knowledge. (my translation)

The English grammaticalization allows a certain readability. And though keeping the central verb at the end position is seemingly impossible (for me at the moment), by splitting it I attempt to compel a certain latency of meaning and compel the reader to re-read.

“On the Program for the Coming Philosophy” stages and performs a new relation of experience and knowledge; its Darstellung is the fully developed yet strategically insufficient philosophy; within the “new relations” to be a true philosophy is to be non-developed through non-synthesis, but always potentially developing, sans teleological implications, a novel encounter and reconstruction. This “encounter” leads us to the other side of the reductive binary, the analogical.

**Darstellung and unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten:**

Benjamin’s Darstellung offers the potential for an encounter of a “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten,” a non-sensuous similarity. Though usually associated with Benjamin’s early 1930s work on language and mimetic faculty, Howard Caygill argues that the “outline of the thought enveloped in Benjamin’s often obscured early fragments may be clarified by a brief anticipation of the later sketch” (5).

The short essay from 1933, *The Doctrine of the Similar* and the revised version from later in the same year *On the Mimetic Faculty* both develop genealogies of perception as
reading. This is expressed formulaically in the later version as: “To read what was never written.” Such a reading is the most ancient: reading before all languages, from the entrails, the stars, or dances’ (1933 b: 162). Configuration is regarded as the condition of legibility: to be legible (i.e., to conform to the conditions of a possible reading or experience) is not the consequence of an intended meaning but is rather the discovery of a ‘non sensuous similarity’ between configured patterns. As the example of the dance suggests, these patterns are not exclusively spatial—for space itself is but a particular form of ‘non sensuous similarity’ or patterning—but can also be temporal, expressed in accent, meter, and rhythm. Indeed, it is crucial for Benjamin’s argument that space, and time (Kant’s forms of intuition) be regarded as modes of configuration whose plasticity, or openness to other forms of patterning, can ‘decay’ or be otherwise ‘transformed.’ Space and time which feature as the givens of transcendental philosophy become modes of configuration which can be understood speculatively as providing the contours of but one among many possible configurations of experience. (Caygill 5)

In a transcendental or Neo-Kantian philosophy where knowledge is an organization of empirical experience communicated, and space/time are a priori, writing loves a dogmatic form, clear and distinct delineation, definition, thesis, evidence, etc. In Benjamin’s works, where a “anew” concept of experience-knowledge is foundational, a shifting reconfiguration of legibility is the Darstellung. Such a form brings about the potential encounter, for the reader/translator, as/of “non-sensuous similarity.” This encounter is, in my experience, twofold: a negation of what-seems-stable through a confrontation with a figure that disrupts—be it “pure-language” “untranslatability” etc.—followed by anew delineation of meaning.
To unpack “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” let us juxtapose “The Task of the Translator” with “Mimetic Faculty”:

Wird dort gezeigt, daß es in der Erkenntnis keine Objektivität und sogar nicht einmal den Anspruch darauf geben könnte, wenn sie in Abbildern des Wirklichen bestünde, so ist hier erweisbar, daß keine Übersetzung möglich wäre, wenn sie Ähnlichkeit mit dem Original ihrem letzten Wesen nach anstreiben würde. (GS 4, 12)

If it is shown therein that in the Cognition/Knowledge there is no objectivity and thereafter not even the right to claim such if it consists in reflections of the actual, then it could be proved here, that no translation would be possible, if it were to strive for similarity with the original in its ultimate essence. (my translation)

With Benjamin’s anew relationship between experience-knowledge, there is no epistemological basis for a non-distorted objective knowledge; there is no “true” mimetic-inscription between X = “X.” Thus, likewise there is no translation or writing that is a mimetic-inscription of the original. The affinity between original and translation is not a mimetic-inscription but rather an “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten.” The “similarity . . . in its ultimate essence” is only problematic when it is assumed that such is occurring in a knowable and indexical manner. In “On the Mimetic Faculty” (1933), translated by Edmund Jephcott, an unfolding of unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten can be found:

As is known, the sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by the law of similarity was comprehensive; it ruled both microcosm and macrocosm. But these natural correspondences are given their true importance only if we see that they, one and all, are
stimulants and awakeners of the mimetic faculty which answers them in man.” (SW 2.2, 720)

If in a prelapsarian state—the former “sphere of life”—a natural-correspondence/affinity existed (and still exists but is now only accessible through distortion and negation), the “importance” of such correspondence for humans is their ability to “awaken” a decayed or transformed faculty. For our purposes here: “Every word—and the whole of language . . . is onomatopoeic” (SW 2.2, 721); there is some natural mimetic-inscription, an onomatopoeia, but it is not as supposed by conventional translation-theory or conventional philosophy that assumes a “meaningfulness.” Rather what is “similar to the signified at [all words’] center” (721) is a “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten”: a simultaneously non-sensuous and non-sensical similarity. This “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” is the “affinity” covered over by conventional theories of translation. This could arguably be a form-mode of “mimesis,” but it is a non-sensuous/sensical mimesis. Benjamin goes on to argue that this “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” establishes the ties between all material-forms and “what-is-meant” (what-is-said, written and what is meant, and between spoken and written), i.e., between mimetic and semiotic elements of language, with the semiotic being the “bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears” (722). Moreover, Benjamin states, “language may be seen as the highest level of mimetic behavior and the most complete archive of unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” (722). In relation to the “The Task of the Translator” essay, one could argue translation is a worthy attempting “to read what was never written” i.e., the “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” (722). Benjamin argues that it is “not improbable that the rapidity of writing and reading heighten to fusion of the semiotic and the mimetic in the sphere of language” (722); and in response, the halting-unfolding of Darstellung is compelling a mode-form of reading and writing functioning to defuse the mimetic and semiotic in a manner that allows the
unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten to flash up as an analogical encounter, and read what was never or has yet to be written.

The “non-synthesis” proposed in “On the Program for a Coming Philosophy” correlates with this “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten”—both denote towards a non-instrumental medium which moves and halts as the limitation of actual knowledge/experience. And in that moving and halting, both point beyond, as a Darstellung unfolding the transcendental yet speculative, recognizing the critical potentiality of what already is actualized in tradition, and releasing the potentiality of other anew forms.

_A Warning on Methodology and Form:_

I have to note and warn here: this can only ever be a bit of a farce. In arranging this argument, this paper, I am at odds with Benjamin’s warnings and own value system: “the value of thought-fragments is all the more decisive the less they are immediately capable of measuring themselves by an underlying conception” (3). This “transcendental yet speculative” held too rigidly, used too directly for an understanding of Benjamin’s Darstellung stands in opposition to the thought-fragment, to the value of Benjamin’s work.

As for historical types in époques in particular one should never assume that ideas such as the . . . [transcendental yet speculative] are capable of mastering the material conceptuality; to believe that a modern insight into the different periods of history can validate itself in any polemical confrontation. (_OTS_ 19)

The transcendental yet speculative frame cannot possibly master the material textuality and conceptuality that is Benjamin’s text. To believe such would be to make the transcendental yet speculative frame into a purely transcendental configuration, to privilege it to the point that it
loses its very radicalness. Used too rigidly it no longer assists in encountering distortion of the absolute in the finite, but mistakes itself for the transcendental lens, the pure logic by which knowledge is imprisoned. And yet, Benjamin writes: “but what such names cannot accomplish as concepts they can achieve as ideas—in which it is not the similar that is brought into congruence but the extremes that attain to synthesis.” (OTS 19). The method of retranslation-commentary stands to place Caygill’s lens in tension. Retranslation-commentary attempts—as a truth used to bring ideas into a dance and allow self-presentation by recognizing its own historical finality—to counter-act any reading that over-privileges a configuration as the configuration.
Methodology in General:

Retranslation-commentary:

We do not see in terms of infinite-possibilities; but rather, *at worst* we mistake fragments for totalities, and from this create dogmatic and draconian ways of living; and *at best* we recognize other possibilities through an encounter with the traces of the absolute, as potentiality of other, that appear legible as distortions, and from this we resist the dogmatic/draconian and attempt to form novel communities of inclusive multiplicity. I argue: 1) that for Benjamin, this manifests and is enacted in relation to his unique Darstellung, through which the absolute is experienced as distortions/fragments; and 2) that retranslation-commentary enacts an analogous process, where the source text and previous translations are held in bounded but infinite possible relations of shifting here-now configurations. The form of retranslation-commentary, though still always necessarily enacting a kind of ethnocentric violence (Venuti), also marks the possible *others* in a manner that destabilizes a privileged configuration (accepted influential translation), as well as its own configuration (the here-now newest translation).

Retranslation and Literary Study:

As stated previously, “by retranslation, I mean an enactment of heteroglossic relations between the source texts, previous translations, and the translation I am producing. I consider this a form of Gaddis Rose’s stereoscopic reading, which is ‘using both the original language text and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching . . . [to] make [] it possible to intuit and reason out the interliminal’ (90).” According to Joshua Price, this interliminal space of understanding can be:
designated . . . a metasemantic and metapragmatic standpoint . . . Like gravity, this
metasemantic and metapragmatic standpoint is generated by the worlds it analyzes, and it
is of them – it does not exist as a standpoint without these external points of reference. At
the same time, the stereoscopic reading is a critical discourse, a meta-discourse that
comments on the texts and their interrelation. (Price 80)

This interliminal is thus understood as a space delimited between meaning and context—between
previous translations and source-text; between transcendental yet speculative. I argue that such a
space is allegorized in Benjamin’s urform translation as the “interlinear-version of the hallowed
Text” (12.17). Or marked out in Benjamin’s call to take the language that “in fremde gebannt ist”
in order to “zu erlösen” it through retranslation (11.13), i.e., the space between a word
“imprisoned” by form and meaning, and where the word is re-leased to the possibility of other
meanings. Or in the tension between the negation of the old-concept of knowledge-experience
and the proposition of the task of the new-concept of experience-knowledge, i.e., between a
transcendental yet speculative.

I propose that a retranslation-commentary form of Benjamin’s “On the Program for the
Coming Philosophy” and “The Task of the Translator” will encourage “stereoscopic reading” as
a form of “literary study.” Influenced by Fred Moten, I use “study” to mark the form of reading
that I argue occurs through retranslation-commentary: a slow immersion into language and the
possession of the reader by the language, leading to the dispossession of false expertise and an
untutoring of thinking, perception, experience. This study as a “mode of thinking with others [the
source text, and various translations] separates from the thinking that the institution requires of
you” (Moten 11) i.e., a thinking that corresponds to privileged practices of publication and
canonization, where clear and definitive concepts outweigh presentation. If our “reading”
correlates to a transcendental\textsuperscript{24} limit, a frame of current legibility, then retranslation-commentary as a form of literary study marks the interliminal by revealing the limited (historical linguistic) nature of our readings and the speculative possibility of infinite others.

**Ideology and Retranslation:**

Retranslation-commentary is in tension with institutionally privileged practices that can be characterized as domestication, ethnocentric violence, and a privileging of readability in general. These are forms of translation where the translator is “invisible” (to use Venuti’s parlance\textsuperscript{25}), or where one particular transcendental infinity suppresses other possible linguistic infinites. This raises the question: how is a translator present in a translation? According to Gaddis Rose: “A translation proclaims that this is what the work in question meant to the translator on the day he or she declared the translation finished. It marks an understanding that is time bound ideology-cued” (7). The translator’s particular privileged transcendental infinity,

\textsuperscript{24} Transcendental for Benjamin marks a historic-linguistic limit, which denotes towards the speculative possibility of other. Though the ‘linguistic’ nature of experience should not be underplayed, Benjamin’s notion of language far exceeds verbal and written communication. Language should be thought of as a technique. Jan Sieber’s article “Walter Benjamin’s Concept of Technique” offers a reading of language as a technique from Benjamin’s early works to his late. Language would be one technique of many possible techniques; literacy is the current privileged particular transcendental infinity which suppresses speculative other possible infinites.

Technique is a non-instrumental medium structured like a language. It has the potential to function as a common language for mankind and nature alike. The non-instrumental use of technique can be described as an intense communication not directed towards an end outside of the world but towards the non-all of a universal language of the world. (Sieber 19)

Language as a technique is a semi-instrumentalized version of non-instrumental technique meant to allow a striving towards other possibilities. This conception in relation to retranslation will be unfolded in the last section of this dissertation on “La traduction—pour et contre.”

\textsuperscript{25} “Under the regime of fluent translating, the translator works to make his or her work “invisible,” producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems “natural,” i.e., not translated” (Venuti 5).
which suppresses other possible infinities, presents (but covers and distorts) as-if the original. A translation is cued with the ideology of the translator, which itself is in an intimate reciprocal relation with the hegemonic order of things, power-relations, privileged grammar. The translation cued by said ideology in-turn frames the source-text with a particular transcendental infinity. Or in the language of Venuti:

> It is these social affiliations and effects—written into the materiality of the translated text, into its discursive strategy and its range of allusiveness for the target-language reader, but also into the very choice to translate it and the ways it is published, reviewed, and taught—all these conditions permit translation to be called a cultural political practice, constructing or critiquing ideology-stamped identities for foreign cultures, affirming or transgressing discursive values and institutional limits in the target-language culture.

(Venuti 19)

A translation does not necessarily need to uphold the privileged particular transcendental infinity—such a translation and commentary would be a weaponization of translation at worst. Sir Richard Francis Burton’s translation and commentary of *The Book of the Thousand Nights* comes to mind, which both Chantal Wright and Edward Said offer a readings of how said text maintains and disperses the imperialist project (even as Burton seems to “struggle between individuals and . . . national identity” (Said 195).26

However, maybe Burton’s “struggle” speaks to the inevitability of translation as ethnocentric violence, as distortion, as a suppression of speculative other transcendental infinities. Venuti writes: “the violence wreaked by translation is partly inevitable, inherent in the

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26 See Said’s *Orientalism* pages 195-197; and Wright’s *Literary Translation* pages 33-34.
translation process, partly potential, emerging at any point in the production and reception of the translated text, varying with specific cultural and social formations at different historical moments” (Venuti 19). This inevitability denotes to the nature of language, ideology, and experience in general—not specific to translation. The necessity of translation itself is a symptom of what is denoted to, as the nature of language for human beings. In the 1916 “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” Benjamin writes: “man communicates his own mental being in his language. However, the language of man speaks in words. Man therefore communicates his own mental being (insofar as it is communicable) by naming all other things” (SW 1,64). As outlined above, humankind’s postlapsarian experience is mediated, meaningless and overdetermined in being separated from material things (truth); and humankind’s knowledge—in being a knowledge of non-existent evil—is a knowledge of fetish, i.e. ideologically cued, as distorted and fragmenting language, experience, knowledge. Hence, each here-now (historical moment/position) is presented and presents itself through language and through mental being as language. When the particular privileged transcendental infinity (worldview) suppresses through claims of equivalence (be it in translation as equivalence theory, or in the realms of Epistemo-cognitive mythology), this makes the translator invisible in their enacting an ethnocentric violence. But this should not be understood as a scission between knowledge and experience, between understanding and reason—it is not a prison house of language for Benjamin:

all language communicates itself in itself; it is in the purest sense the “medium” of the communication Mediation, which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic. At the same time, the notion of
the magic of language points to something else: its infiniteness. This is conditional on its
immediacy. For precisely because nothing is communicated through language, what is
communicated in language cannot be externally limited or measured, and therefore all
language contains its own incommensurable, uniquely constituted infinity. Its linguistic
being, not its verbal contents, defines its frontier. (SW 1,64)

The very presentation of a particular language that suppresses other possible frames is both the
problem and the magic. As a problem, language as the immediate mediation disrupts the claims
of a singular transcendental infinity, a singular worldview, specifically one that claims
mythological equivalence and conveyance i.e., of language instrumentalized as mediation while
suppressing what is communicated immediately. As magic, language’s immediate mediation
resists such instrumentalization and denotes towards the speculative other possible
transcendental infinities—thus Said can read Burton against the grain. In the “The Task of the
Translator” Benjamin specifically advocates: “Die Interlinearversion des heiligen Textes ist das
Urbild oder Ideal aller Übersetzung” [“The interlinear version of the hallowed texts is the
urimage [Urbild] or ideal of all translation” (12.17)]. The “magic” of language is brought
forward in interlinear texts, and allegorically something of the intimacy of language, knowledge,
experience is marked. For the “hallowed texts” stand in a mise-en-scene as the non-
instrumentalized medium in a particular transcendental infinity presentation. The aura a here-
now endows the hallowed text with gives it a “beyond” quality, beyond our language and
comprehension, which is likewise “shared” with the non-instrumentalized other possible
infinities, or absolutes, or any other presentation. We experience/conceive the other infinite
possibilities as likewise beyond, in a kind of privative negation. More practically, in “La
traduction—le pour et le contre” Benjamin advocates for a, “glückliche Form der Übersetzung,
die im Kommentar Rechenschaft von sich ablegt und das Faktum der verschiedenen
Sprachsituation mit zum Thema macht” (GS 6, 159); [“happy/fortulate form of translation, which
in the commentary takes/gives accountability of itself and makes/performsthe fact of the
differences of language-situations a/as theme” (my translation)]. There is a form-mode of
translation for Benjamin that views the problem of language as magic and attempts to present
this magic in its very form—as a translation commentary, which foregrounds the play of
transcendental yet speculative. I argue retranslation-commentary goes one vertiginous spiral
more, in presenting the thematic of the transcendental yet speculative as it unfolds through
ideological-cued previous translations; thus, marking previous particular transcendental
infinities, along with my own particular transcendental infinity, all in relation to the source-text
which stands in magical resistance, thus denoting towards the non-instrumental medium, the
beyond.

In more practical terms, retranslation-commentary, compels a destabilization of reductive
relations with the source text, and as a mode of literary study stands in an affinity with
Benjamin’s insufficient calculus and immanent critique. Moreover, Gaddis Rose argues
“foreignization translation . . . corrects the deformations caused by unequal power relations.
Further we will not be cognizant of the inequality unless we sight gaps between boundaries of
text and translation, until we explore the interliminal” (75). I understand retranslation-
commentary to be a tapered form of foreignization, compelling literary study; and I understand
that opening the interliminal space (between translations and original) where meaning can
fluctuate becomes a preliminary step at attempting the correction of inequalities—both textual
and historical. This also speaks to the relationship between power-relations (the order of
things/grammar) and the privileged particular transcendental infinity which suppresses the
possible others. Retranslation-commentary compels study, compels Althusserian symptomatic reading, compels de Manian linguistics of literariness, or rhetorical reading—in each form of study the privileged transcendental infinity is destabilized through a focus on the multiplicity of actual and possible meanings, reading, translations.

**Documentary and (non)instrumental:**

The proposed retranslation will enact a documentary (marking the context and performance of the text in footnotes) and foreignizing (allowing the source text to transform the translating language) process of translation.

Of course, as a translator I want the freedom to read, annotate and translate intensely. Hence when Vladimir Nabokov writes about footnotes, I understand: “I want translation with copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity” (“Problems of Translation” 125).\(^{27}\) I believe this is the mode most appropriate for translating Benjamin for me here and now. I never want the reader to forget my text is a translation. The translator, as expressing a particular transcendental infinity, must be completely visible, to mark the (inter)limit and speculative others. My hope is that the translation stands in a reciprocal economy of the supplementary with the original—they stand in a reciprocal transcendental yet speculative affinity.

Previous theorists have touched on how such a process encourages active reading: Venuti argues that foreignization compels a symptomatic reading—“alter[ing] the ways that translations

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\(^{27}\) Commentary denotes towards one particular transcendental infinity, and eternity towards the speculative possible other transcendental infinities.
are read as well as produced because it assumes a concept of human subjectivity that is very different” (20). While Clive Scott argues that “the foreignizing translation provokes the reader . . . requires the reader to fill out the TT with all manner of imaginative supplements” (13). Such descriptions are aligned with Benjamin’s insufficient calculus, where the humanistic concept of a self-contained subjectivity is destabilized, and an immanent criticism is enacted. However, that being said, this “documentary” aspect will be tapered with an instrumentalist translation, which attempts to capture an equally important aspect of Benjamin’s Darstellung. As written above, the beauty of Benjamin’s work is his ability to enact a semi-catachresis, to push German grammar and meaning to the limits of its current stability in order to shift that meaning. As stated above, Benjamin famously disliked neologism and yet his “discussions, and his writing practice, advocates the reinscribing of established terms so that they part company with themselves—which is to say, with their previous identities” (Weber 10).

Thus, the necessity for a documentary and instrumental translation that attempts to preserve enact and document Benjamin’s Darstellung.

Retranslation and Immanent Criticism:

Moreover, I argue that retranslation as a method is a privileged form of Benjamin’s immanent critique, for retranslation maintains a tension between recognizing its own finitude and yet striving for an ideal significance of the source text. Benjamin’s immanent critique is vaguely transcendental in seeking a criterion for judgment or meaning but it does so, as Caygill writes, in the “traces of the absolute left in [each particular] experience or work” (34) i.e., there is no universal-timeless criterion, but particular finite criterion does exist. And the immanent critique “is speculative in acknowledging that both it and the work or object being judged are
transformed by their encounter” (35). Now, of course, for Benjamin all translation is a form of immanent criticism, as Antoine Berman writes in his commentary on Benjamin’s translation essay: “what the original text calls for with all of its strength, so that the meaning immanent in its translatability can come into being, is the act of translation” (Age 79). However, with retranslation as Chantal Wright writes, “the translator does not come to the text unaffected by earlier readings . . . But acknowledge[es] the influence of previous translations” (Age 25). This retranslation experience—carried over to the reader through the commentary—continually confronts the significance’s finitude and source-text’s two-way transforming/transformed ability.

An obvious correlation with this argument is Benjamin’s dissertation “On the Concept of Criticism.” In which, Benjamin offers a detailed exploration of the Jena Romantics and their conception of criticism. On one hand they develop a conception of endless reflexivity with various degrees of potentiation towards some higher sphere or an endless spiral; and yet on the other hand, according to Rodolphe Gasche’s reading, the Jena romantics over privilege the “thinking of thinking of thinking” as the “Ur-Form” (Sober 56). “This boundless thinking is not only the form of intuitive cognition par excellence but, in its universality, it comprises all other forms of thinking as well” (56). The issue here is the connection assumed between the ur-form and absolute; the Jena Romantics assume a continuity, Gasche reading Benjamin argues that what is marked with each reflexive turn is a greater ambiguity of the absolute, thus “the absolute loses its distinction, its univocality, in short everything that separates it from the lower orders” (Gasche 57). One may frame this as a particular transcendental infinity (romantic criticism and its assumed continuity) suppressing speculative other possible transcendental infinities (other manifestations of the absolute in equally fragmented and distorted form). In contrast, via Schlegel and Novalis, Benjamin describes, according to Gasche, the “idea of critique as
translation,” where the artwork, or text, as a “form, understood as self-limited reflection” still capable of being “unbounded through a potentiation of the reflection in the singular work” is set against the Idea of art itself (a distorted form of absolute) (60). This is accomplished through Darstellung, and conceptually is designated in the paradoxical term the “sober Absolute” implying both transcending and limitations. Such a concept is present in “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>Es ist die Aufgabe der kommenden Erkenntnistheorie für die Erkenntnis die Sphäre totaler Neutralität in Bezug auf die Begriffe Objekt und Subjekt zu finden; (Benjamin, GS 2, 163)</td>
<td>It is the task of the coming Recognition-theory to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in reference to the concept of object and subject; (my translation)</td>
<td>The task of future epistemology is to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object; (SW 1, 104)</td>
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Such a “sphere of total neutrality” would be the a-topos location of the Sober Absolute. As Fenves argues, “higher than the task of value-discrimination is the task of discovering a sober sphere that has no ‘value’ from the perspective of ‘insane’ consciousness” (164). The “insane consciousness” refer to “epistemo-cognitive mythological” forms of consciousness, which as particular transcendental infinities claim/believe to be the only correct form or to have the only

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28 This is true of Benjamin’s reading of the Romantics where “The Darstellung of the prosaic [absolute] present in every work” is reflected in the prosaic nature of the criticism. In addition, it is true of Benjamin own methodology and writing, where “his objections appear as marginal in-passing marks, as foot notes, and are never developed or even substantiated, they occur with such frequency and insistency that the task of reading The Concept of Criticism becomes the task of construing their underlying rationale” (Gasche 56).

29 By Atopos/Atemporal I am referring to Benjamin’s use of rhetorical (im)possible spaces and times. Such rhetorical virtualities fall on two sides of Lehre, rather as overtly figural such as “god’s remembrance” garden of Eden, “nowhere” “divine violence” etc., or within a philosophical conceptional near terminological form such as, “sphere of total neutrality” “pure language” “happiness,” etc. These serve a rhetorical function in his writing which allegorically marks the necessity of “ideal” images/concepts for humans to strive towards in seeking anew understanding, experience, communities, etc.
access to the absolute, and does so through the suppression of all potential other possible transcendental infinities. Retranslation-commentary is such a form of a neutral criticism, sober in its negating of any ecstatic acts/thinking; retranslation-commentary will not pretend to offer equivalence. It will not, as Benjamin writes “posit criticism as an objective court of judgment on all poetic production” (SW 1, 174). The form of retranslation-commentary is reflexive of/on a multiplicity of “values” (interpretations) and in doing so has no singular “value” notion and thus destabilizes even its own values.

In the retranslations here present, Benjamin’s source texts, as the objects of translation, will confront previous historical accounts i.e., Zohn, Ritter, Rendall, and Jephcott’s translations, and my own here-now translation. Retranslation, as an immanent criticism, implies that the source-text is self-presenting [sich darstellen], while my here-now retranslation-commentary will be attentive to the distortions that are apparent in the previous translations. And the here-now translation that is produced will become a presentation of the new conditions of legibility, which the encounter with the source-texts presents.

Retranslation-commentary understood as an immanent criticism holds in tension Benjamin’s complex paradox of thought—where endless reflexivity, reductive empiricism (and/or vulgar materialism), and transcendental universalism are held in tense suspension. I argue, and my retranslation-commentary will mark, that a translator grasping or falling into one of these three reductive and totalizing frames (that Benjamin holds in tense suspension) corresponds to Antoine Berman’s negative analytic deformations. For example, Zohn’s choice to grammaticize the Pannwitz example in “The Task of the Translator” completely misunderstands Benjamin’s use of Pannwitz as an example. The use of the Pannwitz citation is as an example of his style (the dissolving of German grammar norms) in relation to his meaning, making the
citation an example of where literal syntactical translation is the-same as a sense-for-sense translation. In this misunderstanding, Zohn’s translation of Benjamin’s use Pannwitz hits on possibly all twelve of Berman’s negative analytics—at least five—and this is due to his reading Benjamin through a reductive scientism sense of theoretical texts, i.e., focusing on conceptual definitions, the Darstellung is lost. This is likewise seen in this infamous “mode” for “Form” choice. Thus the “distortions” of negative analytic translation to a source-text, recognized through a retranslation process, also mark the manifestation of the absolute in the finite, as distortions within the here-now configurations.

Retranslation and anew Experience:

Retranslation is understood in contrast to the seeming linear teleological paradigm that Berman developed in his retranslation hypothesis. I understand retranslation as bringing about a potential privative encounter, and hopefully opening the possibility for other meaning, thinking, experience, community, etc. This privative-encounter is felt as a destabilization of the previous translations, and “what is known” about the text.

Different theorists characterize or enact a figuration of this encounter in various forms. Such as, when in describing Benjamin various supplementary process, like translation, Samuel Weber writes: “to therefore define these processes as [a] quasi-transcendental, structuring possibilities is to shift the emphasis from the ostensibly self-contained work to a relational dynamic that is precisely not self-identical but perpetually in the process of alteration, transformation, becoming-other” (59). Likewise, retranslation foregrounds said, “relational dynamic” and “perpetual process” of “becoming other”; in doing so it opens a potential privative encounter with the “quasi-transcendental, structuring possibilities.” Moreover, my relating this privative encounter to retranslation is influenced by Annie Brissette’s conception of “subjective
novelty” characterized as “strangeness” (16). This “strangeness” entangles both the retranslation and the original as/via “quasi-transcendental, structuring possibility” (as one of many descriptions of absolute).

**Retranslation a la Berman:**

To unpack this difference: As Deane-Cox argues, Berman’s retranslation hypotheses “moves from restricted access to source text potential inscribed in initial translation to augmented access achieved in later translations” (18). Berman develops such a reading from Goethe’s three types of translation, as described in an essay on translation included in *Westöstlicher Diwan*:

There are three kinds of translations. The First acquaints us, in our own mode of understanding, with a foreign country: a simple prosaic rendering is most appropriate here. . . . Next comes a second mode of translation, where you are trying to place yourself in the context of the foreign country but are able to assimilate unfamiliar material only by representing it in your own way. Such a mode I want to call the parodistic one, in the purest root meaning of that word . . . we have witnessed a third phase of translation, the last and highest, where we seek to make the translation identical to the original, not a substitute but a replacement. At the outset, this mode encountered the greatest resistance. The translator who faithfully follows the original text will have to sacrifice, to a greater or lesser degree, the distinctiveness of his own tradition. And so, a tertium quid arises—a new item of such a kind that, to develop a taste for it, most people will need to educate themselves. (*Diwan* 279-280)
Three translations moving in linear progressive fashion from prosaic, to parodistic, to “identical with the original.” It is from this ground of an evolutionarily idealized image of translation that Berman’s retranslation hypothesis develops. The most direct comments by Berman are found in the 1990 special issue of *Palimpsestes* dealing with retranslation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French text</th>
<th>English translation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Il faut tout le chemin de l’expérience pour parvenir à une traduction consciente d’elle-même. Toute première traduction est maladroite: se répète ici au niveau historique ce qui advient à tout traducteur: aucune traduction n’est jamais une « première version ». (Berman para. 22)</td>
<td>It takes the whole path of experience to achieve a self-aware translation. Any first translation is clumsy: what happens to any translator is repeated here at the historical level: no translation is ever a “first version.” (my translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mais pour que se produise cette traduction abondante, il faut autre chose, et c’est le kairos, le moment favorable. La grande retraduction ne surgit qu’« au moment favorable ». Le moment favorable est celui où se trouve brusquement et imprévisiblement (mais non sans raisons) « suspendue » la résistance qui engendre la défaillance, l’incapacité de « bien » traduire une œuvre . . . Catégorie temporelle, le kairos renvoie à l’Histoire elle-même. A un moment donné, il devient « enfin » possible de traduire une œuvre. (Berman para. 26-27)</td>
<td>But for this abundant translation to occur, something else is needed, and that is the kairos, the favorable moment. The great retranslation only arises “at the favorable moment.” The favorable moment is when the resistance suddenly and unpredictably (but not without reason) “suspends” the resistance that engenders failure, the inability to translate a work “well” . . . . A temporal category, the kairos refers to History itself. At some point, it “finally” becomes possible to translate a work. (my translation)</td>
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As noted by Deane-Cox, such a conception of retranslation entails a progressive linear teleology and presumes a “symbiotic link between successive versions and precludes the possibility of it working backwards” (5). There is a complexity here—though the teleological paradigm of Berman’s retranslation hypothesis is problematic and at odds with my reading of Benjamin; however, Benjamin is influenced by Goethe’s theory of translation (which he states is, next to Pannwitz, the best on translation in the German language (11.17)). I argue that Benjamin takes the progressive theory of translation and filters out the teleology, while keeping the desired form – the interlinear translation with commentary. What Berman above calls the “self-aware” form,
and as Goethe states: “A translation that tries to identify with the original finally approaches an interlinear version and greatly eases our understanding of the original” (Diwan 281). Yet this “last and highest” form is seemingly one of near complete foreignization, as it is encountered with “resistance” and requires a “sacrifice” of “the distinctiveness of one’s tradition” (279-280). Hence, I argue, that like with his reconceptualization of Kant, Benjamin does not wholesale reject Goethe’s thinking of translation, but reconfigures it towards the halted encounter.

In addition, Berman’s retranslation theory being problematically influenced by Goethe’s linearly progressive notion of translation (Foreign 58-61)30, influences his arguably mis-reading of Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”; where Berman develops a system of translation out of the motif of “ripening.” Berman brings a reading of “ripening” into a telos-infested constellation with the concept of “Kairos,” implying that translation is “not simply diachronic, nor a simple process of renewal: [but rather] maturation, growth” (Age 143). Thus, Berman’s “retranslation hypothesis” suggests that each subsequent translation is an improvement upon the previous, reaching a pinnacle in retranslation and commentary form (“retraduction” paragraphs 25-28) (Age 25). However as Benjamin writes, “Ja, diese Aufgabe: in der Übersetzung den Samen reiner Sprache zur Reife zu bringen, scheint niemals lösbar, in keiner Lösung bestimmbar” (10.2). [Yes, this task: through the translation to bring the seeds of pure language to ripeness, appears never solvable [lösbar], in no resolution determinable.] Though “ripening” is a major motif in Benjamin’s essay, in paragraph 10 Benjamin directly undermines the whole notion when he aligns such thinking with translations which focus on “reproduction of Sinne,”

30 There are multiple places one could cite for Berman’s interpretation of Goethe and its correlation to retranslation. The chapter “Goethe: Translation and World Literature” of The Experience of the Foreign has the most detailed reading of Goethe’s triadic scheme of translation understood in a teleological paradigm.
which, as I will argue in the retranslation of “The Task of the Translator,” “Sinn” equates to that which “bad” translators emphasize by smoothing over of syntax, hence giving the illusion of “conveyed” meaning. As such, paragraph 10 can be read as going so far as to say the negation of ripening is really the meaning of the essay. “Und nichts anderes ist ja—negativ gewendet—die Meinung alles Vorstehenden.” (10.4). [And really nothing other is–negatively turned–the meaning of all the preceding.]

**Fortleben and Ruhm:**

Thus, Berman’s reading of Benjamin’s notion of translation—reading a Goethean evolutionary view of translation into Benjamin’s work—misrecognizes a Darstellung that disrupts a teleological conception of translation. This can be marked with Berman’s understanding of “Fortleben” and “Ruhm.” Berman argues that “Fortleben” has nothing to do with the translation or translatability necessarily. Rather “Fortleben” is simply the original-texts continuing through-time, as it goes through a maturation process getting closer and closer to the kernel of the text (*Age* 94). “Ruhm” is contingent on certain text’s unforgettableness that for Berman is a unique quality of certain texts, which after the authors’ death become “glorious on [their] own terms” and thus gain autonomy from the author (*Age* 90). When certain texts mature to a Fortleben of Ruhm, and thus a coincidence of “translatability” and a Kairotic moment—a moment when a translator submits to the unforgettableness of the text—a retranslation occurs that elevates the continued-living of the text to above-and-beyond-life, a rejuvenating commemoration as a “return to the origins of the text” that occurs every age (*Age* 93-95). This likewise speaks to Berman’s notion that “great translations” are retranslations that do not age (“retraduction” 2); For Berman, according to Deanne-Cox, “the life blood of the original is its dynamism; its enduring prestige in the face of time” (6). Each retranslation for Berman is a
renewal of the original, not a recontextualization. One can see how a certain reading of Benjamin would support Berman’s view—one where some uniqueness of the original can be obtained, and where “pure-language” can be attained in actuality, not virtuality; a reading where the “kernel” is a conception of some authentic and unique quality inherent in only certain “great” texts.

In subtle difference sits Samuel Weber’s reading, who argues “Überleben” is the original surviving “in and as translation. But this survival confirms finitude rather than transcending it . . . translation transports the original into a sphere of limited reproducibility, in which it cannot live very long” (67). Weber than implies that “Fortleben” is a more precise description of this finitude, a “life already moving elsewhere;” for in translation the original is lost. And yet, translation is the means of Fortleben as the loss of the original, for “translation proceeds ‘not from the life of the original,’ . . . but from its ‘afterlife.’ At the same time, translation . . . ‘no longer signifies anything for the original itself.’ It proceeds or issues out of the original, but unlike Orpheus, it never looks back” (66). There is no transcendence; there is no obtaining something unique in the original; there is no attaining pure-language; there is no return to an origin. Though Weber doesn’t discuss “Ruhm,” one can surmise that within his reading of Benjamin, translation can be in a momentary Fame many times over—it is a matter of continual recontextualization—it is not a teleological state but an immediate finitude experienced privatively and momentarily; it is the original in Fame, where the original is not present, but through a representative ruinous analogical form something entangling both is momentarily encountered. Such a vision could understand retranslation as a continual process of recontextualizing and reconfiguring.

The reason for the difference between Berman and Weber’s interpretations can be marked in the shift between their conception of the relationship of knowledge and experience—
the same shift that makes up Benjamin’s “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” essay. Weber in his *Abilities* offers a concise description of how one can think of this shift, as quoted above: “to therefore define these processes [supplementary processes like translation] as quasi-transcendental, structuring possibilities is to shift the emphasis from the ostensibly self-contained work to a relational dynamic that is precisely not self-identical but perpetually in the process of alteration, transformation, becoming-other” (59). Berman’s seeming belief in a transcendent return of the original implies a belief in the original being “self-contained;” this is in contrast to thinking of translation as a loss of the original without the possibility of return.

The confusion in readings, I believe, often falls around what is encountered in a translation if it is not the original, or how does one understand Benjamin’s “pure-language” and “untranslatability.” Where Berman seems to align the “kernel” and “untranslatability” with an authenticity-like inherent quality towards the “great” originals which reach their culmination as self-aware retranslations; Weber sides with the more transformative possibilities inherent in the “kernel” as untranslatability, not necessarily the original text itself. Caygill in writing on Benjamin’s later works states: “Authenticity is the record of this process of preservation and transformation, but one which privileges preservation or ‘substantive duration’ over transformation. The emphasis of the process of technical reproduction is the precise opposite: transformation is preferred to preservation” (101). Such a reading seems to get at the heart of a conception of the relationship between the translation and the source-text.

I align my conception of retranslation-commentary with Weber’s reading. What is encountered in retranslation-commentary, and the source text—what both gesture towards—is an a-topos/a-temporal other, be it referred to as technique, or denoted towards as more rhetorically-concrete terms of “pure language,” “untranslatability,” “kernel.” Retranslation-commentary
attempts to compel an experience of a Kern as a strange encounter, a “butt[ing] up against [stößt gegen] an absolute, as being-there” (Weber 312). An experience that can take an infinite number of forms, with an infinite amount of configurations.

**Anew Encounter:**

In line with this thinking, Brissette offers a reconceptualization of retranslation, away from Berman’s seeming linear-teleological-return towards that of an anew experience.

La nouveauté présente alors ce caractère spécifique d’étrangeté (“strangeness,” “weirdness,” “uncanniness”): “When you read a canonical work for the first time, you encounter a stranger, an uncanny startlement rather than a fulfillment of expectations. Read freshly, all that The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Faust Part Two, Hadji Murad, Peer Gynt, Ulysses, and Canto general have in common is their uncanniness, their ability to make you feel strange at home.” (Ibid. 3). Le discours critique sur la valeur des originaux rencontre celui de la traduction sur le double terrain de la nouveauté subjective et de l’étrangeté de l’œuvre traduite à son tour promise au canon (voir l’exemple classique de Hölderlin traduisant Sophocle). (Brissette para. 16)

The novelty presents then this specific character of strangeness (“strangeness,” “weirdness,” “uncanniness”): “When you read a canonical work for the first time, you encounter a stranger, an uncanny startlement rather than a fulfillment of expectations. Read freshly, all that The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Faust Part Two, Hadji Murad, Peer Gynt, Ulysses, and Canto general have in common is their uncanniness, their ability to make you feel strange at home.” (Bloom, 3). The critical discourse on the value of originals meets that of translation on the double ground of subjective novelty and the strangeness of the translated work in turn promised to the canon (see the classic example of Hölderlin’s translation of Sophocles). (my translation)

In relation to Weber’s understanding of translation confirming finitude, I propose one can think of Brisset’s “strangeness,” experienced as a subjective-novelty in retranslation, as an “estranged-ness” from the original. A momentary “butt[ing] up against [stößt gegen] an absolute, as being-there” (Weber 312), the “Kern,” “untranslatability,” “pure-language” all being (im)possible virtual sides to an overdetermined and underrepresented coin, which can be experienced only as a privative estrangement from the original and as a strangeness. This strangeness oddly and
analogically entangles both the retranslation and the (lost) original as/via a quasi-transcendental structuring possibility.

However, I do find Brisset’s “novelty,” “nouveauté,” to be a bit at odds with my reading of Benjamin and my understanding of retranslation-commentary. “Nouveauté” feels a little too removed from the original—I prefer “anew” as it implies a-new-way, and also anti-new. Thus, by “anew” I hope to imply something still part of a material tradition, something more like bricolage. Retranslation-commentary, following Benjamin’s style and text, should not be producing new concepts or words per se, but rather letting Benjamin’s text’s configurations anew itself to other potential configurations brought forward by the recontextualization/reconfiguration of the text.

The power and potential of a retranslation is in its attempting to bring about anew experience; its attempting to bring about a butting-up against with this quasi-transcendental; an attempting that occurs while recognizing it will never succeed in transcending the limitations of its finitude. In its attempting, a retranslation is a Darstellung of this process, marking out the shifts and changing meaning of a text through historical time, while attempting to recognize its own temporal-spatial limitations. A retranslation of Benjamin’s essays adds the absurd and impossible layer of being a Darstellung of a Darstellung of this quasi-transcendental, or the transcendental but speculative unfolding.

Commentary:

By commentary, I am referring to the inclusion of comments in the translation. Walter Benjamin wrote that “commentary” and “translation” are in a conductive relationship; they both view a text but from dissimilar positions (One Way Street 15). Berman’s conception of
commentary concurs with my thoughts: “the aim of [] commentary is to offer an interpretation of the text by reflecting on its language thus simultaneously preparing the way for its retranslation” (Age 76). With this interpretative aspect in mind, commentary is, in general, hybridic, essayistic and reflective. Penelope Sewell in her 2002 book length study on commentary lists a number of possible aims. The most relevant for my retranslation are, 1) to draw attention to the relationship between the surface words and underlying meaning; 2) to focus attention on patterns of difference between German and English; 3) to promote awareness of notions of textuality and mark intertextuality; 4) to enact a reading of a theoretical nature (17-23). The choice of a retranslation-commentary is not arbitrary but specific to Benjamin’s conception of speculative experience, i.e., his transcendental yet speculative philosophy.

Benjamin goes into some detail about the connection between commentary and critique in the opening paragraphs of his long essay “Goethe’s Elective Affinities”:

Critique seeks the truth content of a work of art; commentary, its material content. The relation between the two is determined by that basic law of literature according to which the more significant the work, the more inconspicuously and intimately its truth content is bound up with its material content. If, therefore, the works that prove enduring are precisely those whose truth is most deeply sunken in their material content, then, in the course of this duration, the concrete realities rise up before the eyes of the beholder all the more distinctly the more they die out in the world. With this, however, to judge by appearances, the material content and the truth content, united at the beginning of a work’s history, set themselves apart from each other in the course of its duration, because the truth content always remains to the same extent hidden as the material content comes
to the fore. More and more, therefore, the interpretation of what is striking and curious—that is, the material content—becomes a prerequisite for any later critic. (SW 1. 297)

Though Benjamin is writing on the task of criticism, there is an immanent connection between the commentary on the material-content and the criticism that leads to an illumination of the truth-content. The truth is immanent in the material-content. And thus, commentary on said material is a prerequisite for Truth to dance forward. There are paradoxical elements to this—or it would seem that the material and truth content stand in two relations. On the one hand, it seems the material-content has a dead-weight to it, while the truth-content implies a livingness:

If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a burning funeral pyre, then the commentator stands before it like a chemist, the critic like an alchemist. Whereas, for the former, wood and ash remain the sole objects of his analysis, for the latter only the flame itself preserves an enigma: that of what is alive. Thus, the critic inquiries into the truth, whose living flame continues to burn over the heavy logs of what is past and the light ashes of what has been experienced. (SW 1, 298)

Here the material-content as the historical, carries the truth-content which presents as the living.

Thus, the material-content and by extension commentary seems subordinated to the truth-content and criticism. And yet, on the other hand, in the “sunkenness” of truth-content into the material-content the immanence is everything. They are immanently bound. As the material-content comes forward, truth recedes, and for the truth-content to present the material-content must reseed. The idea that the commentary prepares the way would imply a hierarchical relation. But I believe this should be thought of as all happening simultaneously in any given here-now moment. As Eiland writes, “the material content, the vast bulk of the text, forms over time a
shield that the critic must work through if he or she is to isolate and free the increasingly recessive truth of the work” (Eiland *Critical Life* 167). That is, a commentary on the material-content wears away the historical weight and can lead to a momentary critical illumination of the truth-content within one essay, one paragraph, one sentence, even one-word.

For instance, a commentary on a material-graphic word and its breakdown of prefix, suffix, root, etc. can lead to an illumination of the truth-content. This “illumination” is not a revelation of a hidden meaning; but possibly, a momentary illumination of the immanent connection between presentation and being. The truth-content of a material-word thus is a dancing forward of its material-history and its self-presenting. The retranslation-commentary will attempt to do both—to enact a material reckoning with the source material and through such allow for moments of the truth-content, lost in previous translations, to burn again. These presentations of truth-content moments are few, but it is through retranslation-commentary that the possibility of them presents itself.

In the mode of translation, commentary becomes immanent. The relation between commentary and translation, and knowledge-experience was marked by Benjamin:

| Kommentar und Übersetzung verhalten sich zum Text wie Stil und Mimesis zur Natur: dasselbe Phänomen unter verschiedenen Betrachtungsweisen. Am Baum des heiligen Textes sind beide nur die ewig rauschenden Blätter, am Baum des profanen die rechtzeitig fallenden Früchte. *(GS IV, 15)* | Commentary and Translation conduct-selves to-the/for-the Text like Style and Mimesis to/for Nature: the-same phenomenon under differing/dissimilar viewing/contemplating-manners/modes/points. On the tree of the hallowed Texts are both only the eternally rustling Leaves/Papers, on the | Commentary and translation stand in the same relation to the text as style in mimesis to nature: the same phenomenon considered from different aspects. On the tree of the sacred text, both are only the eternally rustling leaves; on that of the profane, the seasonally falling fruits. (Edmund Jephcott translation, *SW* 1, 449) |

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Commentary and style carry an individual and unique character, while translation and mimesis imply a direct connection to an original. Moreover, the verb form “verhalten sich” implies a relation, but one that is more active, and yet “halt” is present. Julia Ng in the glossary for her and Fenves’s translation of “Critique of Violence” translates “verhalten” as “conduct.” This is a case where I find the translation into English illuminates the relationship between “commentary” and “translation”; for, “conduct-selves” carries an implication of “relations” as “guiding” “behaving” “conveying” “showing the way,” and still a “halted” relations, etc. The “commentary” and “translation” are in a conductive relationship; they both view the text but from dissimilar positions—one from criticism, one from translation. They thus stand as two entangled perspectives, in a simultaneous relationship with the phenomenon of interests (text/nature/original). And their phenomenon is the simultaneous product of the entangled “dissimilar” contemplating modes, not necessarily free of their influence but seemingly comprehended only through there distorted Betrachtungsweisen [viewing-manners]. This is illuminated more so with the image of the tree: the “eternal rustle of the leaves” speaks to commentary, and “ripened falling fruit” to translation. This is a Denkbild form, the simultaneous forming of the idea in the “thought” “image” entanglement. “Dasselbe Phänomen” does not just refer to commentary and translation, or style and mimesis, but also to the “text” and to “nature.” There is an absolute entanglement—they are all “dasselbe.” Retranslation-commentary attempts to be both the eternally rustling leaves and the ripened falling fruit.

31 “Literal” refers to a word for word translation.
**Summing Up:**

The potential of a retranslation-commentary—in affinity with Benjamin’s philosophy and Darstellung—is its attempting to bring about an encounter, and reading; its attempting to bring about, and mark, a privative encounter with a quasi-transcendental structing possibility; an attempting that occurs while recognizing it will never succeed in transcending the limitations of its finitude; there will never be a definitive translation. Moreover, the premise is assumed that each literary translation is an event of (mis)interpretation, influenced by a historical complex of values and beliefs.
On the Program of the Coming Philosophy:

Background and Comments:

“On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” was unpublished in Walter Benjamin’s lifetime and is assumed to have been composed in 1918. Mark Ritter translated it into English in 1983-1984. If one takes the experience of the translator into account, Ritter is a fascinating lens through which Benjamin’s text is refracted. Ritter has a unique background in mathematics at Cornell before shifting to German Studies for his doctorate. Benjamin’s essay oddly carries a critical rigor that one thinks of with perhaps theoretical physics or mathematics, as Benjamin’s “Nachtrag” indicates. And yet any “equational” quality is misleading, for there is a radical disruption and reorganization of Kantian philosophy. If the old relationship between knowledge and experience had been something like: Knowledge is the organization and communication of empirical experience; Benjamin in his anew concept of the relationship between Experience and Knowledge has reversed the point of view: “Experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of Knowledge” (SW 108). Such anew labor, (anew return to the scholastics and the linguistic nature of knowledge), such an enormous undertaking could only be attempted under the constellation of the modern era, more specifically post-World War One Germany in the midst of a scientific and philosophical upheaval. As Fenves points out, when writing on a slightly earlier work of Benjamin’s from 1916: “Einstein had just formulated the differential equations

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32 Originally published in English in The Philosophical Forum 15, nos. 1-2 (1983-1984). In an email correspondence with Ritter from 10/31/2022 he writes: “I wasn’t even aware I had actually translated anything by Benjamin—I did translate a lot of similar stuff back then, however.” I do not mark this to take away from his translation. But rather to note Ritter was not a Benjamin scholar or necessarily even a student focusing on Benjamin. This might be why the Selected Works translation for “On the Program for a Coming Philosophy” largely domesticates Benjamin performative aspects and purposeful convolutedness, due to Ritter’s transcendental infinity framing at the time of translation; arguably he did not see a performative rhetoric occurring, even as it was always potentially presenting itself.
that would henceforth be known as ‘the general theory of relativity’ and thereby displaced Newton’s Principia by freeing physics from the strictures of Euclid’s Elements . . . “ (Fenves 114). This displacement made “the concept of knowledge proposed in Kant’s Prolegomena a thing of the past” (157). I do not mark Einstein’s event as a necessary moment for Benjamin’s thinking, but more a correlative moment to an era of immense changes in the understanding of the relations between experience and knowledge. Thus, Benjamin in “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” is attempting to disrupt, while maintaining, Kant’s system of thought, through a recasting of terminology and an intensive attention to paradoxical tensions in the relations between knowledge, experience, and language. In doing so, Fenves, Caygill, Eiland, and others argue Benjamin set out “the lineaments of a program for a program” to come (Fenves 157). In this moment, I want to suggest there is a little more to the essay. But this little more is beyond difficult to describe without paradox or dangerous rigor that borders on nonsense. In a nutshell, I argue that a more nuanced and detailed study of Benjamin’s rhetorical performance and presentation, Darstellung, will reveal a strategically insufficient program of philosophy already present and yet to be arrived at, as a mode of presentation holding in tension the potentiality and actuality of a metaphysics-epistemology theory of language and experience.

All this being said, Ritter’s translation is quite a feat—he makes Benjamin’s essay, with its thrillingly convoluted sentences and shifting-sand lexis, readable in English. However, in doing so much of Benjamin’s then budding Darstellung methodology and nuances of lexicon are lost. This speaks to the moment Ritter was translating. In the last three decades, thanks to translators like Ritter, the research focusing on Benjamin’s early writings, concepts, his relation to Kant and the neo-Kantians, has offered enough commentary on the essay that the conceptual aspects—working out definitions, influences, etc.—can be recognized, while also trying to
insufficiently mark the Darstellung of Benjamin’s essay; and thus gain a sense of how the Darstellung relates to the conceptual aspects. Thus, to unfold Benjamin’s coming philosophy, I am compelled to a re-translation commentary methodology. I use “retranslation” methodology and commentary form less for the production of a new standard version of Benjamin’s essay, and more for the Darstellung, the literal unfolding of the work. In so doing, the focus is on trying to bring forward the original German text’s performative aspects in general. My commentary will begin quite detailed and intensive, but by the fourth paragraph of Benjamin’s text the majority of the argument will be laid out. Hence after paragraph three the footnotes lighten and often refer back to previous footnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retranslation Commentary: “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Über das Programm der Kommenden Philosophie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es ist die zentrale Aufgabe der kommenden Philosophie die tiefsten Ahnungen die sie aus der Zeit und dem Vorgefühl einer großen Zukunft schöpft durch die Beziehung auf das Kantische</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the central task of the coming philosophy to let the deepest intimations, which it draws from the time and the presentiment of a great futurity, through relating it with the Kantian system, become knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The central task of the coming philosophy will be to take the deepest intimations it draws from our times and our expectation of a great future, and turn them into knowledge by relating them to the Kantian system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Program of the coming Philosophy (my translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the central task of the coming philosophy to let the deepest intimations, which it draws from the time and the presentiment of a great futurity, through relating it with the Kantian system, become knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Program of the Coming Philosophy (Ritter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The central task of the coming philosophy will be to take the deepest intimations it draws from our times and our expectation of a great future, and turn them into knowledge by relating them to the Kantian system.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

33 Translated from Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften Band 2, pages 157-171.

34 Ritter’s translation interpolates an active subjectivity that is at odds with Benjamin’s anew relation between experience and knowledge. In Benjamin’s conception of experience, the “mythic” Kantian distinction between Subject/Object is rejected, and the possibility of a continuity between experience and knowledge from the position of concrete empirical experience is established. Subject/object distinction is simply “one of many possible surfaces of experience” (Caygill 24). Hence, in the essay Benjamin often strategically destabilizes active subject positions, or places objects in the active position. First, with the ambiguity and mundanity of “es ist” which allows for a central verb to fall at the end of a convoluted sentence. Therefore, Ritter’s “will be to take” “and turn” verb forms, covers over the passivity of human agency implied in “zu lassen.” Second, throughout the essay Benjamin rhetorically enacts the latency he is prophesizing—the “philosophy to come.” Benjamin’s Darstellung is an insufficient attempt of such a philosophy-to-come, simultaneously with the anew-concept of experience as a continuity of knowledge, or maybe the experience of knowledge as a latency to come. This “great futurity” is felt and reasoned in
the end verbs, common in German. In Benjamin, at first a piling up of clauses occurs followed by a latency organization at the end of the sentence, compelling a rereading of the sentence—an immanent halting relationship between knowledge and experience, between clauses and organization. The reader enacts the immanent halting relationship.

The implication of the opening is that of a necessity to take any present experience, any utopian dreams of the future, any political, social, ethical movements and investigate these experiences and intimations by referring them to Kant’s system, in an immanent transformative process, a mode of critique. Investigate the experiences and intimations a priori and conditions of possibility and ideals and allow this to transform both the experiences/intimations and Kant’s system, and thus said present experiences and intimations become “knowledge” in the transformation.

35 Benjamin’s statements on neologism and philology come to mind for why a certain “historical continuity” is demanded. Benjamin is against neologism because they betray a historical actuality. For Benjamin objects and words have a history apart from our here-now conception. Peter Fenves outlines this historical continuity in the conclusion of The Messianic Reduction:

Any attempt to create new terms damages the continuity that characterizes the object of philology. For this reason, Benjamin calls the introduction of new terminologies “worrisome” (1: 217), and for related reasons he singles out Kant, whose terminology immediately acquires the kind of continuity that characterizes the object of philology (GB, 1: 389) . . . If every new terminology is a transformation of a previous one, then the original terminology could not have developed in a rectilinear fashion, as new discoveries give rise to new words; rather, the original terminology must have continually transformed itself. In this context, philology is not so much evidence of an original language of names as a guarantee that there is, after all, such a language “in” every human language. (234)

Any notion of a “new” philosophy is problematic if it attempts to radically cut off all ties with the historical continuity, i.e., a historicity as tradition. Benjamin is implying that the “coming philosophy” will have to enact a bricolage like process with the past in the here-now; a recasting of the inherited tradition through engagement with it to produce a virtual imaging of the future, and anew here-now configuration.

I argue that, while some German philosophers leaned into the production of neologisms—leading to the claims of “jargon”—in order to uncover the hidden possible meanings/events in words which have been covered over by the modern age’s continual reduction of experience—technology and globalization—Benjamin enacts this process of illumination through Darstellung. The rhetorical performance of his text—syntactical, lexical, and terminological—illuminate other potentialities. Hence, in “On the Coming
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| entscheidender systematischer Tragweite. | Denn Kant ist von denjenigen Philosophen denen es nicht unmittelbar um den Umfang und die Tiefe, sondern vor Allem, und zu aller erst, um die Rechtfertigung der Erkenntnis ging der jüngste und nächst Platon auch wohl der Einzige. | For Kant is—of those philosophers who went not immediately with the scope and depth, but above all, and first of all, with the justification of knowledge—the latest and next to Plato also probably the only.  
| Diesen beiden Philosophen ist die Zuversicht gemeinsam, | Both these philosophers are of the mutual confidence, | Both of these philosophers share a confidence that the |

| Philosophy” Benjamin’s use of Kantian terminology must be read in relation to the Darstellung, in order to illuminate the other potentialities, without the production of neologisms. |

Often throughout the essay, Ritter translates “zugleich” as also. The word “zugleich” appears eleven times. I mark the number because “zugleich” is a word with heft; the repetition imbues it with a concept like quality. It is implying a simultaneousness that recognizes the entangled relationship between experience and knowledge. That these are in an immanent relationship: engagement with Kant’s historical continuum and system simultaneously is “decisive” (destructive) and “systematic” (constructive) with a “Tragweite,” i.e., reaching/carrying-a-distance beyond the transcendental limits in a speculative mode that treats Kant’s transcendental limits with historical heft—reaching beyond the subject/object division, and beyond the isolation of the absolute, through an engagement with the historical continuum of Kant’s system.

| 36 Once again, trying to maintain syntax and central verb “ging” makes this difficult to read. I have taken a translation liberty (the dashes) to attempt to maintain the vast distance between verb “ist” and object “der jüngste und nächst Platon auch wohl der Einzige.” |

Moreover, in philosophy in general, “depth” is referring to a logical deduction of conditions of possibility, further and further “down” towards an origin point, i.e., metaphysics. “Scope,” or “breadth,” refers to what-all can be explained or subsumed by the system, how much can be explained. Benjamin is arguing that Kant and Plato had obtained depth and scope (though in Kant’s case limited) through a focus on epistemological concerns, the limits to and conditions of. This seems an ironic statement, for the real argument “against” them is a shift away from metaphysics or redefining of metaphysics as epistemology.

| 37 “Zuversicht” etymologically “Zuversicht, feminine, ‘confidence, reliance, conviction,’ from Middle High German zuoversiht (Middle German zûvorsiht), Old High German zuofirsicht, feminine, ‘foreseeing, glance into the future, expectation, hope.’” (Kluge 412). |

The implication of “confidence” is to an anticipated future understanding. There is an ambiguous meaning implied in “zuversicht”: for Kant and Plato the implication is a kind of systematic faith. The confidence Plato and Kant share is in the systems each respectively created, which had a clarity or purity in relation to a total systematization. For Plato, the “Divided Line” analogy comes to mind, where a seeming purification of “objectivity” corresponds with moving to higher-realms—from the visible material realm of particular experiences to the intelligible formal realms—the near-pinnacle being a priori knowledge as Form, which is in no way dependent on experience of particulars. Likewise, as Benjamin
will unpack throughout the essay. Kant’s “knowledge” is at its near pinnacle as synthetic a priori, irrelevant of changing historical experiences, but as limits imposed by the mind on objects of experience—the transcendental unity of apperception, i.e., that which is original and necessary for experience to occur.

The other side implied in the term “zuversicht” is that of a “foreseeing.” In an essay on the “coming” philosophy, such possible meaning becomes relevant, even if a stretch in this circumstance. Of course, Kant has his own future philosophy text: “Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that can come forward as science,” and assuming such a future philosophy where metaphysics becomes science would likewise imply experience and knowledge equal each other. Hence, Benjamin will push philosophy past science by the end of the essay to include nearly all methods of reading.

Peter Fenves in The Messianic Reduction offers the following gloss: “Kant and Plato did not intend to deepen knowledge, much less to present themselves as profound; but they did not therefore issue an edict against depth per se, for they understood—without exactly knowing—the following thesis: as knowledge becomes more fully justified, it thereby becomes deeper . . . By going to its roots, philosophy achieves a kind of depth that has nothing to do with profundity; but the imperative itself is not a matter of knowledge; rather, it is, as Benjamin emphasizes, a matter of ‘confidence.’” (162-163).

Jamie Carlin Watson argues “the idea that justification is the crucial link between true belief and knowledge seems to be implicit in epistemology since Plato” (“The Gettier Era”). For Plato that justification takes the form of an elaborate anamnesis theory and formal Idealism, a redefining of metaphysics as an epistemology. Likewise, for Kant, in placing limits on the judgments possible (the exclusion of the absolute or God or Soul or world, this identification is quite literal: “undertak[ing] a redefinition of [metaphysics] purpose and scope . . . Kant describes metaphysics as the ‘criticism of the faculty of reason in respect of all its pure apriori knowledge’ and the ‘systematic connection [of] the whole body (true as well as illusory) of philosophical knowledge arising out of pure reason’” (Caygill “Kant” 292).

Moreover, this “Forderung der Tiefe” [demanding for depth] corresponds with “tiefer muß sie nach Gewißheit ringen” [deeper must it wring for certainty]. For Benjamin, both speak to the feeling of an impossible necessity to strive for the absolute. As well as the absolute’s demand to be strived for, i.e., the demanding by the depth.
Je unabsehbarer und kühner
die Entfaltung der
kommenden Philosophie sich
ankündigt, desto tiefer muß
sie nach Gewißheit ringen
denen Kriterium die
systematische Einheit oder
die Wahrheit ist.

The more unforeseeably and
cunningly the unfolding of
the coming philosophy
announces itself, the deeper
must it ring for certainty of
whose criterion is systematic
unity or truth. 39

Paragraph 2:

Die bedeutendste Hemmung
welche dem Anschluß einer
wahrhaft zeit- und ewigkeits
bewußten Philosophie an
Kant sich bietet ist jedoch in
Folgendem zu finden:
diejenige Wirklichkeit deren

The most-meaningful
hinderance, which the
connection [of] a truly time-
and eternity-conscious
philosophy to Kant offers, is
however to be found in the
following: 40 The-one

Nevertheles, the most
important obstacle to linking
a truly time- and eternity-
conscious philosophy to Kant
is the following: The reality
with which, and with the
knowledge of which, Kant

39 The oddity and uncertainty of the subject should be noted. It is not “the coming philosophy” but rather
the “unfolding of the coming philosophy.” The concept of “announces itself” correlates to Benjamin
collection that the object presents itself. Benjamin cannot delineate or explain the coming philosophy, it
must announce the unfolding itself, assumingly through the material actual forms i.e., Benjamin’s
Darstellung, the linguistic, textual, and material dimension of the text. The “coming philosophy” is not
the Darstellung, rather it announces its own unfolding (the possible becoming) as immanent in the (actual)
Darstellung.

The adjectives—unforeseeably and cunningly—speak to a logic of extremes Benjamin is fond of: “The
idea can be described as the formation of the nexus in which the uniquely occurring extreme stands with
its like . . . The empirical, on the other hand, is more deeply penetrated the more distinctly it is seen as an
extreme. The concept issues from the extreme” (OTS 11). What is unseen is that which is outside the
here-now privileged configurations of readable/inscribable, but that which exists as immanent
possibilities.

The more extreme, the more outside the current privileged configurations, the more must any certainty
i.e., confidence in systematic unity defined as truth, be sought on the level of metaphysics—which
actualizes as a destabilization of the here-now configuration (the transcendental idealism, empiricism,
and, though not mentioned yet, materialism). What is “wringed” for, the temptation and desire for an
immanent perfection in experience—be it idealism or materialism—for Benjamin is an announcing of an
unfolding so deep it holds idealism, materialism, and empiricism in a suspended tension, extending the
scope of possible experience without a reduction to the experience of objects, without maintaining what
he will call the mythic realm of human subject-centric systems and the division between subject and
object.

40 This is an extremely convoluted sentence that is performing a destabilization of an active subject. The
verb form “sich bietet . . . an” is what seems to be a confusion for Ritter’s translation. He erases the verb
and makes the which- [welche] phrase’s subject and noun, “Anschluß,” into the verb: hence “the
connection” becomes “to linking.” This shifts the subject and object; effectively creating an unstated
active human subject—that who would “link” these two. In the German syntax and form, translated to
English, “the connection” “offers/presents” “itself” [sich bietet] in the form of a “meaningful hinderance”;

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Erkenntnis und mit der er die Erkenntnis auf Gewißheit und Wahrheit gründen wollte, ist eine Wirklichkeit niedern, vielleicht niedersten Ranges.

wanted to base knowledge on certainty and truth is a reality of a low, perhaps the lowest, order.

41 “Wirklichkeit” is a philosophical term in Kant referring to the second order modal category:

In his critical philosophy Kant distinguishes between “actuality” and “reality.” Whereas (“Wirklichkeit”) or “existence” (“Dasein”) is a modal category, “reality” (“Realität” from res ‘Sache’ or ‘Sachhaltigkeit’) is a category of quality. The category of “actuality,” Kant claims, is derived from the assertoric form of judgment and determines, as “Second Postulate,” that something exists or is there (“Dasein”). By contrast, “reality” is derived from the affirmative form of judgment in so far as something is thought to have a (sensible and/or nonsensible) quality. Thus, everything that is actual is also a reality but not everything that is thought as a reality is actual. (Heidemann, Fn. 8)

The distinction between Actuality and Reality is an important distinction; for Benjamin is striving for the possibility of a privative experience with an absolute. This “absolute” being something like the Reality that Kant argues we can only have knowledge of through and as vigorously confined limits of possible experience—i.e., we cannot know but maybe think such. Though Caygill does argue that at one single point in Critique of Pure Reason Kant implies “reality” as an extra-categorical idea, as a transcendental substratum of the reality of everything, (“Kant” 346) i.e., an absolute. However, the “Wirklichkeit” Benjamin is referring to in the sentence is nowhere near an extra-categorical conception of reality, or even the first order category of Reality, but rather the second order postulate or modal category (Actuality), which stands arguably in a seemingly circular relation with experience and knowledge, as bound up with the material conditions of experience. “Actuality” thus shares a shape with “experience.” Hannah Ginsborg in her article “Kant and the Problem of Experience” offers a succinct description of a kind of tautological moment in Kant’s terminology:

The idea that experience involves the activity of understanding raises a large problem, which can be put formulaically in terms of an apparent conflict between the “spontaneity” characteristic of understanding, and the “receptivity” characteristic of sense perception. How can experience involve the activity of thinking or judging, while still being a means through which objects can be “given” to us? (Ginsborg 60)

Hence, in a philosophy concerned with how to have knowledge free of subjective experience, there is an unassumed nature of experience “as the kind of thing for which the categories . . . serve as conditions of possibility” (Ginsborg 59), and within the Kantian system a seemingly paradoxical tension between 1) experience requiring understanding, characterized as the capacity of make judgments i.e., active (spontaneous), “taking a stand on the world’s being a certain way” (Ginsborg 61); and 2) Experience understood in a more empiricist sense as passive and receptive.

42 Again, this sentence is intensely and intentionally convoluted. Benjamin’s Darstellung is enacting the “hindrance” as an uncertainty in the meaning of the sentence brought about through a convoluted syntax.
The Kantian problem, like every great Epistemology, has two sides and on only the one side has Kant managed to give a valid explanation for.

and abundance of pronouns: “diejenige” “deren” “der.” Ritter chooses “Knowledge” as the object of the “der.” But I think this is uncertain. “Der” could be “knowledge” or “actuality.” From Ritter’s translation the “Reality” corresponds with “Knowledge”; I offer a less-readable literal-translation, where “Actuality” should be seen as terminology and the sentence strategically fails to be certain; the “hinderance” is in the specific uncertainty between Actuality, Knowledge, and Reality—or an uncertainty between experience, language, and the absolute.

For, just as Experience carries that tension between passive and active, between immanent and universal, Howard Caygill explains, actuality is “bound up with the material conditions of experience . . . with sensation,” (218). But only sensations we are conscious of i.e., perception, which in turn are governed by analogies of experience [...] so actuality involves conformity with the rules governing a possible experience . . . Actuality may actualize a possible concept, but it can also be manifest in a perception for which a concept is lacking. Thus, while Kant introduces actuality as the principle of a discrete category, it quickly becomes apparent that it also underlies all forms of categorical judgement; for such judgements actualize concepts by determining them according to the conditions of existence in time . . . . [ ] . . . actuality was marked by ‘presence’ - by the bringing to presence or being present of things. (Caygill “Kant” 52-53)

Thus, Actuality (like experience) is both an active category with its manifesting a concept in perception, and a passive category as that which brings to presence what is.

Returning to the sentence under review from one more angle: the specific convolutedness presents a paradoxical convergence and confusion between Actuality and Knowledge. “Knowledge is both objectively and subjectively sufficient and gives rise to both conviction and certainty (CPR A 822/B 850) . . . The object of knowledge ‘answers to conceptions whose objective reality can be proved’ and are ‘matters of fact’ or scibile (CJ §91). They include . . . ‘things or qualities of things which are capable of being verified by experience’ (ibid.). The modality of judgements of knowledge is apodeictic, that is ‘universally and objectively necessary (holding for all)’ (L p. 571)” (Caygill “Kant” 273-274). With the essential tension of experience being the conditions, representations, and verification, “Actuality” and “Knowledge” can be understood as terminological representations of a tautological paradox: “experience” is the means of both timeless knowledge and ephemeral experience. Kant’s paradox is arguably due to a failure to recognize the place of language in philosophy.

Such convolution is a continual trope in the essay. A few sentences below Benjamin enacts something similar with a purposeful confusion of the object of knowledge vs object of experience through specific choices in terminology. Hence, on the level of Darstellung the philosophy of pure reason is critiqued and deconstructed via the medium (Language) it attempted to elide. Benjamin is doing this with a deep respect for Kant or at least the historical continuum; Benjamin is destabilizing while simultaneously presenting and delineating the tasks for the philosophy to come through an inheritance of Kant’s system. This respect will be unfolded further in paragraph 2.
one side was he able to give a valid explanation.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Es war erstens die Frage nach der Gewißheit der Erkenntnis die bleibend ist; und es war zweitens die Frage nach der Dignität einer Erfahrung die vergänglich war.</th>
<th>It was, first, the question of the certainty of knowledge that is permanent;44 and it was, second, the question of the dignity of an experience that was fugacious.</th>
<th>First of all, there was the question of the certainty of knowledge that is lasting, and, second, there was the question of the integrity of an experience that is ephemeral.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denn das universale philosophische Interesse ist stets zugleich auf die zeitlose Gültigkeit der Erkenntnis und auf die Gewißheit einer zeitlichen Erfahrung, die als deren nächster wenn nicht</td>
<td>For the universal philosophical interest is steadily directed simultaneously on the timeless validity of knowledge and on the certainty of a temporal experience which is regarded as the immediate, if not the</td>
<td>For universal philosophical interest is continually directed toward both the timeless validity of knowledge and the certainty of a temporal experience which is regarded as the immediate, if not the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 The “side” focused on by Kant is that drawn from Newtonian mathematical physics—a mechanical idea of experience as perceived by the subject of an object, with which one can transcendentally comprehend the categories.

44 “He argues that in order to experience change or co-existence in time it is necessary to postulate a permanence underlying things in time: ‘Without the permanent, there is no time relation’ (CPR A 183/B 226). . . it suffices to point to the principle of permanence as ‘the mode in which we represent to ourselves the existence of things in [the field] of appearance’ (A 186/ B 229)” (Caygill “Kant” 64).

45 “Dignität”: Ritter translates “Dignität” as “integrity” – implying a material completeness possibly. I am compelled to push against this: On the one side we have an experience that is permanent/remaining [bleibend] i.e., Erfahrung and one that is fugacious/ephemeral [vergänglich] i.e., what is often referred to as “Erlebnis.” It should be re-marked Benjamin does not use the work “Erlebnis” even once during the essay, to not further divide “Erfahrung” and argue both as immanent in each other. As Peter Fenves explains: “For the proponents of Erlebnis, the advantage of ‘lived experience’ over scientific experience consists in its singular, momentary, and unrepeatable quality, which disappears from view whenever attention is turned only to the recording of regularities and the corresponding discovery of laws.” (Fenves 156). Benjamin is in the sentence footnoted critiquing Kant’s low ranking of a lived-fugacious-experience. And yet as will be unfolded, this critique is not an endorsement of “Erlebnis” as understood by the Neo-Kantians, and other contemporaries like Husserl, Burber and Dilthey. For whom Erlebnis is a “response to the threat of an one-sided scientific Erfahrung” (156), a response that believes it can break free of the confines of Kantian philosophy. Benjamin attempts to hold both sides in a high tension, through “[borrowing] the pathos of contemporaneous Erlebnis-discourse, which summarily repudiates the “mechanical-mathematical” experience of the physical sciences [Erfahrung]” (156). For as Fenves writes when Benjamin argues that it is “only in experience that transience acquires ‘dignity’—implicitly opposed to ‘value’ . . . “ this “unequivocally departs from [Burber and Dilthey’s] precedent . . . while simultaneously recasting the opposition between Erfahrung and Erlebnis in terms of the relation between knowledge and experience . . . “ (157). The dignity of “bleibend” is immanent in and presents as the “vergänglich.” Benjamin wants a continuity between the fugacious and the remaining—between experience and knowledge. Thus, “Dignity” implies an immanent heft of the remaining (Knowledge) within the fugacious (experience), presenting as distortions and fragments in the historical continuum (discourse/language).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>einziger Gegenstand betrachtet wird gerichtet.</td>
<td>experience, which is considered the nearest if not the only object [Gegenstände].</td>
<td>only, object of that knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur ist den Philosophen diese Erfahrung in ihrer gesamten Struktur nicht als eine singulär zeitliche bewußt gewesen und sie war es auch Kant nicht.</td>
<td>Simply, for the philosophers, this experience, its total structure as singularly temporal, was not sensible and neither was it for Kant.</td>
<td>This experience, in its total structure, had simply not been made manifest to philosophers as something singularly temporal, and that holds true for Kant as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat Kant auch, vor Allem in den Prolegomena, die Prinzipien der Erfahrung aus den Wissenschaften und besonders der mathematischen Physik abnehmen wollen, so war ihm doch zunächst und auch in Kant also had, above all in the Prolegomena, wanted to take the principles of experience from the sciences and particularly mathematical physics; yet, from the start and really in Critique of Pure Reason, experience itself and</td>
<td>Especially in the Prolegomena, Kant wanted to take the principles of experience from the sciences— in particular, mathematical physics; yet from the very beginning, and even in the Critique of Pure Reason,</td>
<td></td>
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46 Kant has terminological distinctions for types of objects: “Gegenstände,” “Objekt,” “ding.” This is a distinction that is often unmarked in translations. Referring back to the problem of experience in Kant: “the conditions for the possibility of experience in general are likewise conditions of the possibility of objects [Gegenstände] of experience’ (CPR A 158/B 197)” (Caygill “Kant” 305). This implies that “the complex relationship which this entails between concept and intuition” (305). This is the very twist in the system described above, with the focused switched to the object of experience and knowledge. Ritter’s expansive translation here to define the “Object” as an “Object of that knowledge,” though true to the implication Benjamin is making—that the object of Knowledge is the object of Experience—erases the Darstellung unfolding held in the heft of Benjamin’s terminological choice. To unpack the Kant distinction a little more:

Gegenstände are objects of experience or appearances which conform to the limits of the understanding and intuition; they may be appearances in intuition without ‘being related to the functions of the understanding’ (A 89/B 122), or ‘objects of consciousness’ which ‘are not in any way distinct from their apprehension’ (A 190/B 235). When objects [Gegenstände] of experience are made into objects for knowledge, they become Objekte. (Caygill “Kant” 305)

So, if in Benjamin’s sentence it is the “object of knowledge” the word should be “Objekte.” Moreover, the syntax does imply that it is referring to the “Object of Knowledge.” However, by using the term “Gegenstände,” Benjamin cunningly implies the object of knowledge is the object of experience—thus “simultaneously” one and the same object—there is an underlying structural equivalence that is or flirts with tautology. Raising the dignity of the fugacious experience, though as will be unfolded, it also allows an indicating towards an immanent fragment of the absolute.

47 Once again, a convoluted sentence. Ritter’s translation gives a certain action to something unnamed—“made” implies someone or thing did so. But, in the German this experience is neutrally “not sensible.” Within the lens of a “transcendental yet speculative” configuration, this would imply that “this experience” was/is available to be sensed, but that Kant’s readable/inscribable configurations did not sense said experience, due to the privileged readable/inscribable configuration of the Enlightenment.
der Kritik der reinen Vernunft
die Erfahrung selbst und
schlechthin nicht mit der
Gegenstandswelt jener
Wissenschaft identisch; und
selbst wenn sie es ihm
geworden wäre so wie sie es
den neukantischen Denkern
geworden ist, so bliebe doch
der so identifizierte und
bestimmte immer noch der alte Erfahrungs begriff, dessen
bezeichnendstes Merkmal seine Beziehung nicht nur auf das reine sondern zugleich
as-such was not identical with
the object-world\textsuperscript{48} of that
science; and even if it had
become this way, as it has
become for the Neo-Kantian
thinkers, [the concept of
experience as identical with
object-world of
mathematical-physics] so
identified and determined
would still remain the old
concept-of-experience, whose
most-distinctive marking is
its relation not only to pure
but also empirical
consciousness.\textsuperscript{49}
experience itself and unto
itself was never identical with
the object realm of that
science. Even if it had
become so for him, as it did
for the neo-Kantian thinkers,
the concept of experience
thus identified and
determined would still have
remained the old concept of
experience, which is
distinguished by its
relationship not only to pure
consciousness but to
empirical consciousness as

\textsuperscript{48} “Gegenstandswelt”: with the root of “Gegenstände” and not “Objekt,” implies an object world that is of appearances from the simultaneous relationship with systems of knowledge. Not a thing-in-itself world, rather “Gegenstandswelt” is like an early form a dream-world comprehension of knowledge and experience; the “object-world” as what the privileged readable/inscribable configuration of “that science.” Or from another perspective: “experience itself and as-such” or experience unbounded, and bounded, stands in some resistance with the “object-world” as produced by “that science.”

\textsuperscript{49} In this sentence Benjamin marks a change in Kant’s conception of the relationship between experience and objects of the sciences from the \textit{Prolgemma} to \textit{CPR}: though Kant wanted to take from the sciences, he also understood a non-identity between Experience particularly and as-such, and the objects from the world of science. Benjamin is arguing that this marks a certain non-identity between the objects, which Kant recognized more so in \textit{CPR}. Moreover, even though the Neo-Kantians have picked up this belief in an identity correspondence between fugacious experience and scientific objects of experience—i.e., Cohen’s “all those facts and methods of scientific knowledge” (Beiser 148)—this has not broken free from the old concept of experience, nor from experience-itself. For the “Erlebnis” presents within the historical continuum, is already always immanent in “Erfahrung,” and marks a distortion that hints at the absolute.

To digress with intent: in an early fragment, titled “On Perception” from 1917 translated by Rodney Livingston, Benjamin outlines different historical relationships between knowledge and experience. Benjamin outlines Kant’s opposition to metaphysics:

Kant . . . made the validity of the categories of experience of nature dependent on time and space . . . [meaning that Kant] . . . produced a metaphysics of nature and in it described that part of the natural science which is pure—that is, which proceed not from experience but simply from reason a priori . . . in this sense the \textit{metaphysic} of nature could be described as the a priori constituents of natural objects on the basis of the determinants of the knowledge of nature in general. (\textit{SW} 1,93)

Benjamin’s understanding of Kant is that of a circular event: metaphysic of nature is described via a priori of “natural objects” as long as they are through the determinants of the knowledge of nature in general i.e., a priori. In order to stop the collapse of metaphysics into experience, Kant “relates all knowledge of
auch auf das empirische Bewußtsein ist.

Um eben das aber handelt es sich: um die Vorstellung von der nackte primitiven und selbstverständlichen Erfahrung die Kant als Menschen der irgendwie den Horizont seines Zeitalters geteilt hat die einzig gegebene ja die einzig mögliche schien.

However, precisely this itself is bargained: the representation of the naked primitive and self-evident experience, which for Kant, as a person who had somehow shared/divided the horizon of his era, as the only given seemed the only possible.

But this is precisely what is at issue: the concept of the naked, primitive, self-evident experience, which, for Kant, as a man who somehow shared the horizon of his times, seemed to be the only experience given—indeed, the only experience possible.

nature, as well as the metaphysics of nature to space and time as constitutive concepts but [then also] to distinguish these concepts absolutely form the categories” (SW 1,93; emphasis added). This separation between concepts and categories is a bargaining: though this holds off a collapse of one into the other, it also causes a historical disruption, “the continuity of knowledge and experience, if not the connection between them, was disrupted” (SW 1,94). Note that “the connection between” Knowledge and Experience is not severed, just the “continuity” i.e., a disruption in historical tradition. In the fragment Benjamin goes into detail on how Kant is a product of his age, responding to a tradition, etc. Hence, there is no notion of an ahistorical disruption, but rather a historical disruption that produces an ahistorical conception of the relationship between Knowledge and Experience through the “distinguishing these concepts absolutely from the categories.” We will return to exactly how this disruption involves the implementation of language further along.

Lastly, the other question this sentence rises is what is the “old-concept of experiences” relation to pure and empirical consciousness. Here, Benjamin is stating that both Kant’s concept of experience and the Neo-Kantian concept of experience are the same “old-concept” which has distinctive markings in how it frames pure and empirical consciousness.

50 “Vorstellung”: representation or concept? Both Kant and Benjamin use Begriff for “concept.” In Kant, in Critique of Pure Reason, perception is divided into concept and intuition. Intuition being immediate, Concept being mediated. The question: is the “self-evident” experience under question referring to empirical day to day life, pure concepts of understanding?

51 “Geteilt”: past tense of teilten, implying “shared in dividing.” This speaks to the idea of disrupting the historical continuum between Knowledge and Experience. Shared should be understood as a divisive act; it correlates with the “impartation” marked further along.

52 There is a slight difference here between Ritter’s translation and mine. For Ritter it is “seemed to be the only experience given—indeed, the only experience possible” I find the “schien” to be telling. In Kant’s age the horizon of the possible had a particular configuration which allowed for a finite number of possible representations of experience. Ritter’s translation is not wrong necessarily—or only as wrong as all translations—but there is once again a kind of conflation of experience, knowledge and language occurring. Benjamin is stating that the representation of experience is the only given and seems like the only possible; whereas Ritter’s translation, first in making representation into concept and second in expanding “einzig” to imply “experience” instead of “representation of experience,” blurs a subtle distinction. The importance of this distinction will only be apparent later in the essay but, as Tamara Tagliacozzo argues about Benjamin’s “On Perception”: “Benjamin distinguished between ‘experience’
This experience however was, as already indicated, a singular one temporally restrictive, and beyond this form, which it shares in a certain way with every experience, this experience was—which could in a pregnant sense be named a worldview—that of the Enlightenment.

I cannot note this enough: Benjamin does not use “Erlebnis” even here in the “singular temporal” instance. Rhetorically he is altering the concept of Erfahrung to be immanent in the temporal experience, and vice versa. Thus, a recasting of the term within anew conception of the relationship of experience and knowledge. Fenves says it best, though I offer a slight variation:

The two strands of Benjamin’s argument—one drawn from an inquiry into the concept of knowledge, the other from an analysis of “experiences or intuitions of the world”—join at the following point: higher experience is structured in such a way that it tends toward the singularly temporal, but at the same time the concept of experience that rests on the pure concept of knowledge is altogether continuous. If there is to be a coming philosophy; if, in other words, philosophia is not always to be perennis, then the two irreducible yet seemingly irreconcilable characteristics of experience—continuity and temporal singularity—must somehow be synthesized. (Fenves 167)

The “higher experience” is an encounter in the “singularly temporal,” free of value, free of language (rhetorical); “concept of experience” and its relation to “concept of knowledge” marks the historical discussion of such as it unfolds in time, in language. However, instead of a necessary “synthesize” of the two, Benjamin’s coming philosophy is enacted on the level of Darstellung, in a continual non-synthesize—as the singularly temporal is encountered in the continuous historical in the act of reading, writing, translating.

A simultaneous sharing and parting, connecting, and dividing: an impartation. Something is brought forward, and something is lost, present as residue and distortions.

The meaning of the word vacillates between Kant’s passive institutions of the world to notions of interpretation. Heidegger in his 1927 Marburg lectures offers a historical account:

The word “Weltanschauung” is of specifically German coinage; it was in fact coined within philosophy. It first turns up in its natural meaning in Kant’s Critique of Judgment—world-
intuition in the sense of contemplation of the world given to the senses or, as Kant says, the mundus sensibilis. . . . Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt thereupon use the word this way. This usage dies out in the thirties of the last century under the influence of a new meaning given to the expression “Weltanschauung” by the Romantics and principally by Schelling. . . . Weltanschauung is directly assigned not to sense-observation but to intelligence, albeit to unconscious intelligence. Moreover, the factor of productivity, the independent formative process of intuition, is emphasized. Thus, the word approaches the meaning we are familiar with today, a self-realized, productive as well as conscious way of apprehending and interpreting the universe of beings. (“Problems of Phenomenology” 4-5)

Benjamin’s implication seems already to be hinting at the later notion of ideology. Benjamin is implying that Kant’s passive intuitions of the world are shaped by the interpretations of the age, in this case the Enlightenment understood not as a priori truth but a worldview in a mixed sense. Benjamin will make this clear in two lines when “Experience” is set in a “or” relationship with “views of the world.” The “or” implying a correlative relationship between the concept of experience, experience, and worldview. Between “concept of experience” (as within historical discourse), experience as a momentary-encounter, and a privileged ideologically cued configuration. Though such a reading must be held in tension with the “sich darstellen” form throughout the essay, the active agency of objects to allow themselves to be presenting.

56 The concept of “Erfahrung” and Erfahrung itself. This marks the “ways” it “shares/parts” from every “experience.” There is something essential about experience—the absolute—though with-in each worldview that essential is distorted. This may raise the question: what is the common means of distortion for the modern age? pushing us towards a question of technology. A connection unfolded more directly in Benjamin’s 1933 “Experience and Poverty”: “A generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body . . . With this tremendous development of technology, a completely new poverty has descended on mankind” (SW 2b, 732).

57 One should note Benjamin’s use of plural, a feature lost in the Ritter. Where for Kant and the Enlightenment there is only one experience (mechanical/mathematical), for Benjamin each historical age has experiences—the privilege configuration becoming the worldview. This opens up the possibility of multiple worldviews and experiences at any given here-now configuration. As Peter Fenves states:

In contrast to Kant, who affirms that “there is only one experience” (K, A 110), Benjamin asserts that every historical epoch consists in “an experience [einer Erfahrung],” which is, for this reason, always “transient” (2: 158). Because the concept of experience has been distinguished from that
That Kant could take action on his enormous work under the constellation of the Enlightenment implied, that this was undertaken at a, as-it-were, reduction of experience to the null-point, to the minimum of denoting.

The very fact that Kant was able to commence his immense work under the constellation of the Enlightenment indicates that he undertook his work on the basis of an experience virtually reduced to a nadir, to a minimum of significance.

Yes, one can say that just the greatness of his attempt, the radicalism peculiar to him had such an experience as the presupposed an experience of knowledge, the transient character of the former does not “relativize” the validity of the latter. (166)

I wonder about the notion of “an experience” in Fenves as well. It would seem in the sentence in question multiple experiences and world views are possible in any given era. This correlates with the reading of Benjamin, where though each era may have a privileged configuration or system, it is always but one of an infinite possible, though the infinite does not present themselves.

Moreover, Kant’s correlation between knowledge and experience as the “lowest” is because of his systems’ separation between concepts and categories. For with this separation, Kant’s experience becomes solely mechanical, correlating with objects in movement as perceived by subjects. This excludes metaphysics, God, etc. from possible knowledge—and reduces experiences to the “lowest” point.

58 I read this “gerade” as modifying the “Werk” to “workings.” Thus “work” should be understood as an on-going laboring.

59 “Ungeheures”: there is an untranslatable aspect that seems pertinent. “geheuer” though obsolete in common usage, implies “sure” or “comfortable,” “Heuer” implies “year” and “ge-” implies a collective, repetitive, or togetherness. Thus, “geheuer” has implications of comfort due to a collective-era’s experience or configuration. That is, a particular era’s “constellation.” Thus, Kant’s work described as “Ungeheures” implying a size also implies a slight tension with the collective era’s experience, even as it reduces experiences to a nadir. A word that thus implies Benjamin’s respect for and recasting of Kant. This slight tension will be more illuminated further along—but one may say, Kant’s more muddy moments of terminology or paradoxical aspects of the system, the infinite task of delineation, are distortions through which the absolute may let itself be present.

60 Ritters “virtually,” I assume, comes from “gleichsam” in the source text. Which seems present in theory but not yet within the text. My choice of “as-it-were” implies an “as-if” or “quasi-” aspect, for the “null-point” cannot be reached, expect in a quasi-sense. Bedeutung as “denotation” is to imply a pointing, interpretation, which is simultaneously lost. As experience is reduced to the null point, the potential denotation to the absolute becomes more and more singular. The syntactic structure of the sentence implies a correspondence between the null point for experience and the minimum of meaning/denoting.

61 Not “work” as Ritter has it, but an “attempting” “experiment.” A lack of totality is implied.
Voraussetzung hatte deren Eigenwert sich der Null näherte und die eine (wir dürfen sagen: traurige) Bedeutung nur durch ihre Gewißheit hätte erlangen können.

Kein vor-Kantischer Philosoph hat sich in diesem Sinne vor die erkenntnis-theoretische Aufgabe gestellt gesehen, keiner allerdings auch in dem Maße freie Hand in ihr gehabt, da eine Erfahrung deren Quintessenz deren Bestes gewisse Newton'sche Physik war derb

| presumption, whose own-value neared nil and who could have attained a (we may say: tragic) denoting only through its certainty. | No pre-Kantian philosopher had, in this sense, seen himself posed with the epistemological task; none indeed even had a free hand to the extent that, as-here, an experience, whose quintessence, whose best was the certainty of Newtonian physics, could be handled |
| which had almost no intrinsic value and which could have attained its (we may say) sad significance only through its certainty. | Of the pre-Kantian philosophers, none saw himself confronted with the task in this sense. Nor did any of them have such a freehand, since an experience whose best aspect, whose quintessence, was Newtonian physics, with all |

62 With the reference to “null-point” this could be an allusion to the mathematical concepts of “eigenvalue” or “eigenwert.” Lacking the background for such a reading, I mark this as a distortion point offering a potential reading—and I choose in translation a translation away from algebraic terminology.

63 Benjamin is stating that Kant’s concept of experience must be presupposed by an experience that the concept correlates with. Such a correlation cannot gain an individual intrinsic-dignity (of experiences, object, and even concepts) i.e., an inner-worth, but rather is valued based on its relation to “certainty,” which for Kant is a concept recast within the confines of the reductive Enlightenment experience and concept of “experience.” According to Caygill:

> in the critical philosophy, certainty is important in establishing the limits of what can be known; it consists in reason coming ‘to a decision either in regard of the objects of its enquiries or in regard to the capacity or incapacity of reason to pass any judgement upon them’ (CPR B 22). However, certainty does not serve as a criterion for truth, but only as a mark of the subjective experience of the truth of a judgement. The sources of truth themselves lie elsewhere than in subjective certainty. (“Kant” 110)

Benjamin’s critique in the sentence is once again indicating the circular tension of Kant’s system between experience, “concept of experience,” certainty, and objects. If “certainty” and the concept of “experience” are both matters of subjective limits, they gain value and meaning based on their relations with each other. Thus, Kant’s system and the enlightenment become devoid of any meaningful connection to objects, including (other possible) experiences themselves, (leading to a sad state of alienation and reification.) As Peter Fenves interprets: “the meaning of experience is reduced to a minimum, [thus] nothing hinders a metaphysical theorem of the following type: there is no object of experience, for objects mean nothing” (Fenves 166).

64 There is a confusion of pronouns and determiners here once again. The “in ihr” with the “da” imply something like “such a free hand in it to such an extent [as Kant]” or “none had their free hand to the extent [of Kant].” “Da” implying “Kant’s time” or as experience is described “there” or “here” in Benjamin’s essay. Ritter’s translation seems like a fragment due to a hiding of this.
und tyrannisch angefaßt werden dürfte ohne zu leiden.

bluntly and tyrannically without suffering.  

its certainty, could take rough and tyrannical treatment without suffering.

Autoritäten, nicht in dem Sinne daß man sich ihnen kritiklos hätte unterordnen müssen sondern als geistige Mächte die der Erfahrung einen großen Inhalt zu geben vermocht hätten, gab es für die Aufklärung nicht.

Authorities, not in the sense that one must without-criticism subordinate oneself to them, but as spiritual power that could have been able to give the experience a greater content, were not given for the Enlightenment.

For the Enlightenment there were no authorities, in the sense not only of authorities to whom one would have to submit unconditionally, but also of intellectual forces who might have managed to give a higher context to experience.

The suffering would appear to be an allusion of being heretical maybe. To remove the “absolute” to reduce experience down to the nadir or mechanical/mathematical certainty, would be to suffer greatly at the hands of institutional Authority in certain pre-Enlightenment ages. But this could also speak to the suffering of being outside the privileged readable/inscribable configuration i.e., as Benjamin writes in his 1917 fragment “On Perceptions: “madness is a form of perception alien to the community. The accusation of madness leveled at the great scientific reformers” (SW 1, 92).

66 To contextualize this passage a bit in Kantian terminology:

“For Kant, Nature’s “macht” is a lesser power than human dominion—political power falls under the category of “Gewalt,” while “Macht” is aligned with an un-legitimate, un-legislative, power, being rebelled against for dominion. Thus, Benjamin is arguing that during the Enlightenment, there was Macht in the sense of the monarch, or state: i.e., that which “one must without-criticism subordinate oneself to.” [Benjamin may even possibly be foreshadowing his later argument (Critique of Violence) that the legislative dominion is inseparable from the state’s might.] However, more-importantly for our purposes, the Enlightenment, in raising human dominion above spiritual-power (nature), reduced an authority (nature, God, an absolute; something other than, resistant too, and influential towards human “dominion”) that could offer experience greater “content.”

What is meant by “Inhalt?” Ritter chooses “context.” I opt for “content” based on historical use. Benjamin will continually come back to a question of “content,” content of art, language, history, etc. Benjamin in two earlier essays has shifted notions of content/form, to imply that the inner form is the content. If “experience” in Kant’s system is reduced to the mechanical, this also means experience itself (as interdependent with privileged systems of “knowledge”) is reduced, thus the “content” of experience would be greater with an Authority that could disrupt a simple mechanical-experience, opening up the
Was das Niedere und Tiefstehende der Erfahrung jener Zeit ausmacht, worin ihr erstaunlich geringes spezifisch metaphysisches Gewicht liegt wird sich nur andeuten lassen in der Wahrnehmung wie dieser niedere Erfahrungsbummel auch das Kantische Denken beschränkend beeinflußt hat. 

What the lower and deep-rooted experience of that time extinguishes, wherein their astonishingly low specifically metaphysical heft shall lie, only lets itself be hinted at in the Wahrnehmung, as this lower concept-of-experience also has a restrictive influence on Kantian thought.

Just what the lower and inferior nature of experience in those times amounts to, just where its astonishingly small and specifically metaphysical weight lies, can only be hinted at in the perception as to how this low-level concept of experience also had a restricting effect on Kantian thought.

Possibility of other to present itself. Maybe there is a subtly of difference involving position and action between “context” and “content.” Ritter’s “context” seems to be from the position of an active subject: i.e., humans would gain greater “context” for their experience of the world; versus the content, where experience gains “content” seemingly from the spiritual authority. This subtly comes to a head in our choices of “geistige”— “intellectual” vs. “spiritual.” Once again, historically, Benjamin’s use of the word in this time period and prior implies “spiritual,” and has been translated as such by Fenves, Caygill, Weber, etc.

However, the slipperiness of “geistige” between spiritual and intellectual is relevant. A similar structure is found in the Trauerspiel book, where the satanic realm is found between two poles: “The purely material and this absolute spiritual are the poles of the satanic realm: and consciousness is the mock synthesis with which they ape the genuine synthesis, that of life” (252). The spiritual speaks to the “fata morgana of a realm of absolute—that is . . . spirituality” (251); in the earlier “Coming Philosophy” such an Authority with Spiritual power is understood as potentially rising the content of experience. And yet, this realm of the spiritual is “bound to the material as its counterpart, such as can be concretely experienced only through evil” (251) thus Ritter’s context and intellectual seems possible, at least retroactively. However, the choice of “intellectual” and “context” in the confines of the “Coming Philosophy” seem to lean towards a translation unconsciously maintaining the mythic subject/object division.

67 “Ausmacht”: ambiguous verb. Could mean “extinguish” and also “amounts to,” or “constitutes.” Such a verb captures the simultaneous aspect between the Knowledge and Experience, every organizing involves a reduction.

68 I believe a kind of linguistic play is lost in Ritter’s syntax. The “sich nur andeuten lassen” implies a passive and indirect hinting to the “what” that was “un-made” in the Enlightenments constituting of Knowledge and experience. First, again Benjamin gives us an active object: the “what” allows itself to be “andeuten” i.e., to be “pointed” or “hinted” at in Wahrnehmung. The comma after Wahrnehmung and the “wie” as rather “as” or “how” changes the implication of the sentence completely. The “what” that is being hinted at can be illuminated with a reference to Benjamin’s earlier fragment: “Wahrnehmung ist Lesen” from 1917, which begins: “In der Wahrnehmung ist das Nützliche (Gute) wahr” (GS VI 32). „In the Perception is the Useful (good) true.” Or “In perception the useful (good) is true.” A play on words is occurring in Wahrnehmung “wahr” is hinted at. “What” is lost, “wherein” the metaphysical heft can lie, is hinted at as the “True” hidden in Perception.

For Kant perception is a mix of sensation and consciousness: “an ambiguity which assures the possibility of experience by allowing the distinction between consciousness and sensibility to be both observed and suspended” (Caygill “Kant” 315). Perception is a complex mix, able to be ordered by the categories and
Es handelt sich dabei selbstverständlich um denselben Tatbestand den man als die religiöse und historische Blindheit der Aufklärung oft hervorgehoben hat ohne zu erkennen in welchem Sinne diese Merkmale der

It is obviously the same matter-of-facts that have often been highlighted as the religious and historical blindness of the Enlightenment, with no recognition in what sense these distinctive-marks of the

It is obviously a matter of that same state of affairs that has often been mentioned as the religious and historical blindness of the Enlightenment, with no recognition of the extent to which these features of the Enlightenment pertain to the entire modern era.

have a relationship to the objects of sense: “they” stands in “a complex relation to the forms of intuition, space and time” (315). Benjamin is not denying Kant’s definition here, but rather hinting at a point to be put into tension, where a complex relation between consciousness, sensation determining consciousness, and object of sensation, opens to the possibility of an experience of the absolute—involving an infinite task of defining For Kant perception is a receptive process in relation with a synthetic activity of imagination (providing the conditions of experience), but this imagining is only knowledge when the objects conform to the basic intuitions and categories. Thus, a greater specificity of imagination becomes necessary; and still “in both CPR and CJ imagination is situated both between sensibility and the understanding and beyond both them and itself” (Caygill “Kant” 248), a paradoxical situation, which begets in turn more clarification, more conceptual definitions in distinctions of imagination—empirical and productive, etc. This shifting, deferring paradoxical muddiness hints at the “what,” the “wahr,” wherein metaphysical heft is.

Moreover, Benjamin is stating first that “perception is reading” “implying that perception is not the receptivity of impressions but the ‘reading’ of appearances that are themselves already organized” (Caygill 4). In a longer exposition of fragments by Benjamin with similar statements from 1917, Caygill argues:

The train of thought moves from the proposition that perception is reading to a transcendental definition of the conditions of the possibility of legibility (namely, of what can qualify to be read, or which appears on a surface) and then to a speculative statement of the condition for the transcendental condition of legibility itself (namely, the configured character of the surface).

(Caygill Colour of Experience 3-4).

The “what” is that which is not currently readable, under the conditions of legibility implied in Wahrnehmung—i.e., Kantian and Neo-Kantian understandings of Experience and Knowledge. These privileged configurations have a real limiting effect on our perception of the world, and yet also are part of the historical continuity. That is, Kant’s conception of Perception is a product of his moment in the world. Hence, at the risk of repeating myself from a slightly different angle, Kant under the restrictions of human rationality and Enlightenment, could at best indicate (unconsciously though through immense conscious effort) distortions in the privileged conditions of legibility. This indication takes the forms of seemingly paradoxical tensions in definitive terms and systems: thus, the muddiness of Perception within the system, the necessity of ever greater division (infinite-task) hints at the possibility of the absolute—at the “wahr” in “Wahrnehmung.” Moreover, the verbal configuration of the sentence under review “sich nur andeuten lassen” shifts the idea of “perception is reading” from not an active reader (subject of experience, Kant’ in his task, Benjamin in his attempting to illuminate, our reading of Benjamin) and passive text (object of experience/sensation), but a more reciprocal activity; the “wahr” the “what” *lets itself* be indicated.
The lack of Erkennen marks the continued historical and religious blindness. The readable/inscribable configuration of the Enlightenment and the early 20th century is one that continues to over-value empirical and transcendental frames as-if timeless, and thus “truer” than religious or historically contingent configurations. Not recognizing the mythic blindness that has carried over in the Neo-Kantian’s own theories; this is marked in Benjamin’s use of “Tatbestand.” Herman Cohen as mentioned earlier in his critique of Kant’s conception of experience focuses in on the “fact of science” [Tatbestand/Tatsache/Faktum der Wissenschaft] thus restoring the continuity Benjamin is also concerned with, or as Fenves writes: “By doing away with the Kantian “doctrine of elements” and thus absorbing space and time into the categories of pure thinking, Cohen restores the systematic function of continuity in the theory of knowledge, for the object generated by any “factual” science is constitutively continuous” (159). Yet, in the act of doing so, Benjamin argues Cohen reestablishes a discontinuity into experience through his reliance in and conception of the “fact of science”:

Because, however, this very principle—which expresses itself in the famous “fact of science” (C, 57)—requires that philosophy abstain from dictating a priori concepts to the sciences, Cohen introduces an equally intractable discontinuity into the theory of experience: every science methodologically generates its own object and thus lays out a field of “experience” that belongs to it alone. (159-160)

Thus “Tatbestand” is a word that corresponds with the mythic element in the modern philosophical school, which is created in the act of dispelling the mythic in Kant.

Benjamin will keep, for now, the tripart structure of the Kantian types, reworking them to include the possibility of the absolute. Specifically, according to Tagliacozzo, “Benjamin individuates the ‘thought’ of doctrine in Kant’s system and in Kant’s doctrine of ideas and intends to maintain the Kantian system (in its trichotomic structure and its “typics”) so as to develop it in new directions, by reworking the theory of experience and knowledge” (3-4). While, as will be unfolded by Benjamin throughout paragraph 3 specifically it is the Kantian typic—in contrast to schema—understood as the as such which mediates between idea and concept, which will be “taken-up” and “well-tended” allowing for a “re-forming” of, as Howard Caygill writes, “the Kantian topology, beginning with a reorientation of infinity and totality with respect to the forms of intuition (space and time).” (Caygill 3). Which in turn involves the “throwing-away” of the “scientific underpinning of Kant’s concept of experience, drawn from Newtonian mathematical physics” and “to reject the distinction between perceiving subject and perceived object fundamental to Kant’s concept of experience . . . “ (Caygill 23-24). Leading to the comprehension that “the Kantian tripartite architectonic of experience (reason/understanding/intuition) [i]s but one of a number of possible infinite but bounded surfaces of experience” (Caygill 3).
welche verworfen werden müssen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jede Forderung eines Anschließens an Kant beruht auf der überzeugung, daß dieses System, welches eine Erfahrung vor sich fand deren metaphysischer Seite ein Mendelssohn und Garve gerecht geworden sind, aus der bis zum Genialen gesteigerten Nachforschung nach Gewißheit und Rechtfertigung der Erkenntnis diejenige Tiefe geschöpft und entwickelt hat, die es einer noch kommenden neuen und höheren Art der Erfahrung wird adäquat erscheinen lassen.</th>
<th>Every demand for a connection to Kant rests on the conviction, that this system—which found before itself an Erfahrung whose metaphysical side Mendelssohn and Garve did justice to—has by ingenious increasing investigation of the certainty and justification of knowledge derived and developed the depth that shall let it appear to be adequate(^1) for a new and higher type of Erfahrung yet-coming.</th>
<th>Every demand for a return to Kant rests upon the conviction that this system, which encountered a notion of experience whose metaphysical aspect met with the approval of men such as Mendelssohn and Garve, has, by virtue of its brilliant exploration of the certainty and justification of knowledge, derived and developed a depth that will prove adequate for a new and higher kind of experience yet to come.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damit ist die Hauptforderung an die gegenwärtige Philosophie aufgestellt und zugleich ihre Erfüllbarkeit behauptet: unter der Typik des Kantischen Denkens die erkenntnistheoretische Fundierung eines höheren Erfahrungs begriffes vorzunehmen.</td>
<td>Thereby is the principle-call posited by contemporary philosophy and at the same time pronounces that it can be fulfilled: under the Typik(^2) of Kantian thought, the epistemological foundation of a higher concept-of-experience can be undertaken.</td>
<td>This simultaneously presents the primary challenge faced by contemporary philosophy and asserts that it can be met: it is, according to the typology of Kantian thought, to undertake the epistemological foundation of a higher concept of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Und das eben soll zum Thema der zu erwartenden Philosophie gemacht werden, daß eine gewisse Typik im Kantischen System aufzuzeigen und klar abzuzeigen ist die einer höhern Erfahrung gerecht zu werden vermag.</td>
<td>And just that should be the theme of the expectant philosophy to come—a certain typik can be shown in and raised-from the Kantian system that will impel a</td>
<td>And precisely this is to be made the theme of the expected philosophy: that a certain typology can be demonstrated and clearly drawn out from the Kantian system—a typology which can do justice to a higher experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) “Wird adäquat erscheinen lassen”: Ritter’s translation of “erscheinen” as “prove” misses the uncertainty in the sentence, further implied with the destabilization of a human agent. It is “the system” that “lets” itself “appear” “adequate” as such, due to the “depth” it has created from its “infinite task.”

\(^2\) “the ‘Kantian typic’ which provides a framework for a system that otherwise departs from the *Critiques*” (Fenves 153). Fenves argues that the typic stands in contrast to the schema in Kant.
| Die Möglichkeit der Metaphysik hat Kant nirgends bestritten, nur die Kriterien will er aufgestellt haben an denen eine solche Möglichkeit im einzelnen Fall erwiesen werden könnte. | The possibility of metaphysics, nowhere has Kant denied, he only wishes to set-up the criteria by which such a possibility, in single-cases could be proven. | Nowhere does Kant deny the possibility of a metaphysics; he merely wishes to have criteria set up against which such a possibility can be proven in the individual case. |
| Die Erfahrung des Kantischen Zeitalters bedurfte keiner Metaphysik; zu Kants Zeit war es historisch das einzige Mögliche ihre Ansprüche zu vernichten, denn der Anspruch seiner Mitgenossen auf sie war Schwäche oder Heuchelei. | The Erfahrung of the Kantian Age did not need/require metaphysics; the only possibility historically during Kant’s time was to annihilate its claims/expectations [metaphysics’], because the claims of his [fellows molded in the age] were weakness or hypocrisy. | The notion of experience held in the Kantian age did not require metaphysics; the only thing historically possible in Kant’s day was to deny its claims, because the demand of his contemporaries for metaphysics was weakness or hypocrisy. |
| Es handelt sich darum Prolegomena einer künftigen Metaphysik auf Grund der Kantischen Typik zu gewinnen und dabei diese künftige Metaphysik, diese höhere Erfahrung ins Auge zu fassen. | It is a matter, therefore, of obtaining a prolegomenon of a future-metaphysics; on the ground of the Kantian-Typik, and simultaneously while envisioning the future-metaphysics, [obtaining] this higher experience. | Thus, it is a question of finding, on the basis of Kantian typology, prolegomena to a future metaphysics and, in the process, of envisioning this future metaphysics, this higher experience. |

73 “Gerecht zu werden vermag”: as a verb phrase translated as „able to do justice to” I like “impel” as it shifts agency more to the object or viewpoint maybe—in this case the typology. To impel a justice does mean that it will do justice to it, but also that the Typology causes the justice to be done. A blurring of agency between object/subject.

74 “Ins Auge zu fassen”: envisioning. The necessity of a speculative realm as simultaneous with the transcendental.

75 Through the use of the Kantian Typic as the basis, one envisions a future philosophy which in doing so reveals a higher concept of experience. The use of imagination here is of importance. This is a kind of bricolage practice—the Kantian typik being already present—and an understanding of our consciousness as an entire-structuring (though never entire/total and always perpetually shifting) process. A foundation of A will call to the necessity of B and C—is this due to the nature of envisioning? Yes. Does this imply an eternal truth, no. It implies a process of consciousness. It cannot make claims past this; It can only annihilate claims past this. It in a sense is a recognition that through envisioning I can see the present infinity, and the possibility of other infinities, though I can never see the totality of infinities.
Paragraph 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allein nicht nur von der Seite der Erfahrung und Metaphysik muß der künftigen Philosophie die Revision Kants angelegen sein.</th>
<th>But the future philosophy, with the revision of Kant, must not be only concerned with the side of experience and metaphysics.</th>
<th>But it is not only with reference to experience and metaphysics that philosophy must be concerned with the revision of Kant.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Und methodisch, d. h. als eigentliche Philosophie überhaupt nicht von dieser Seite sondern von Seiten des Erkenntnisbegriffes her.</td>
<td>And methodically, i.e., as actual philosophy as-such, not from this side but from the side of the concept-of-knowledge.</td>
<td>And methodically considered-that is, as true philosophy should consider it-the revision should begin not with reference to experience and metaphysics but with reference to the concept of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die entscheidenden Irrtümer der Kantischen Erkenntnislehre sind wie nicht zu bezweifeln ist auch auf die Hohlheit der ihm gegenwärtigen Erfahrung zurückzuführen, und so wird auch die Doppelaufgabe der Schaffung eines neuen Erkenntnisbegriffes und einer neuen Vorstellung von der Welt auf dem Boden der Philosophie zu einer einzigen werden.</td>
<td>The decisive errors of the Kantian Epistemology\textsuperscript{76} are, as not to be doubted, traceable to the hollowness of experience present to him, and so the double-task of creating a new concept-of-knowledge and a new representation of the world on the grounds of philosophy are the-same.</td>
<td>The decisive mistakes of Kant’s epistemology are, without a doubt, traceable to the hollowness of the experience available to him, and thus the double task of creating both a new concept of knowledge and a new conception of the world on the basis of philosophy becomes a single one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Schwäche des Kantischen Erkenntnisbegriffes ist oft gefühlt worden indem der mangelnde Radikalismus und die mangelnde Konsequenz seiner Lehre gefühlt worden ist.</td>
<td>The weakness of the Kantian concept-of-knowledge has often been felt in the lacking radicalism and the lacking consequence of his Lehre.</td>
<td>The weakness of the Kantian concept of knowledge has often been felt in the lack of radicalism and the lack of consistency in his teachings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kants Erkenntnistheorie erschließt das Gebiet der Metaphysik nicht weil sie</td>
<td>Kant’s epistemology does not open up the region of metaphysics, because it</td>
<td>Kant’s epistemology does not open up the realm of metaphysics, because it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{76} “Erkenntnislehre” implies a theory of knowledge. Ferris defines the “the basic problem of Kantian epistemology: [as] the ‘thing-in-itself’ is supposed to ‘affect’ our cognitive faculties, and yet it cannot be an object of knowledge” (25). All experience is thus wrong, except for that of a logical order; thus, the hollowness of such experience causes the tension between effect on cognition and lack of ability to cognize thing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>selbstanlage primitive Elemente einer unfruchtbaren Metaphysik in sich trägt welche jede andere ausschließt.</th>
<th>[Kant’s epistemology] bears primitive elements of an unfruitful metaphysics which excludes all others.⁷⁷</th>
<th>contains within itself primitive elements of an unproductive metaphysics which excludes all others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In der Erkenntnistheorie ist jedes metaphysische Element ein Krankheitskeim der sich in der Abschließung der Erkenntnis von dem Gebiet der Erfahrung in seiner ganzen Freiheit und Tiefe äußert.</td>
<td>In the Epistemology every metaphysical element is a germinating-disease that in the containment of knowledge from the region of experience in its full freedom and depth, expresses itself.</td>
<td>In epistemology every metaphysical element is the germ of a disease that expresses itself in the separation of knowledge from the realm of experience in its full freedom and depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Entwicklung der Philosophie ist dadurch zu erwarten daß jede Annihiliation dieser metaphysischen Elemente in der Erkenntnistheorie zugleich diese auf eine tiefere metaphysisch erfüllte Erfahrung verweist.</td>
<td>The development of philosophy, in this way, is to be awaited in that every annihilation of these metaphysical elements in epistemology, at the same time, directs it to a deeper metaphysically-fulfilled experience.</td>
<td>The development of philosophy is to be expected because each annihilation of these metaphysical elements in an epistemology simultaneously refers it to a deeper, more metaphysically fulfilled experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es besteht, und hier ruht der historische Keim der kommenden Philosophie, die tiefste Beziehung zwischen jener Erfahrung deren tiefere Erforschung nie und nimmer auf die metaphysischen Wahrheiten führen konnte und jener Theorie der Erkenntnis welche den logischen Ort der</td>
<td>There insists, and here rests the historical-germ⁷⁸ of the coming philosophy, the deepest relationship between that experience, (whose deeper exploring could never lead to metaphysical truths) and that theory of knowledge, (which cannot yet sufficiently determine the logical place of metaphysical research;⁷⁹)</td>
<td>There is-and here lies the historical seed of the approaching philosophy—a most intimate connection between that experience, the deeper exploration of which could never lead to metaphysical truths, and that theory of knowledge, which was not yet able to determine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁷⁷ “Welch jede andere ausschließt” – the metaphysics excludes Others. Other modes of existence, thinking, being, etc. Other potential speculative infinities.

⁷⁸ The “historical” aspect of this, the resting squarely in the historical, correlates with the Origin as a historical category. “Origin” is not cut off from presentation for Benjamin—not purely logic and not timeless as such. The presentations of “origin” are historical and linguistic, and hence distortions and fragments. The presentation of the coming philosophy will come from the historical relationship between “experience” and “knowledge.” That is however the relationship of experience and knowledge are present historically.

⁷⁹ Forschung // verse Erforschung – used clause before. Experience = Exploration / Knowledge = Research? Knowledge excludes the “er.” Etymologically er- [ur? -] implies a “transition, beginning, attaining.” Hence, knowledge removes that -ing, claiming a completeness. In English this may be harder.
metaphysischen Forschung noch nicht ausreichend zu bestimmen vermochte; immerhin scheint der Sinn in dem Kant etwa den Terminus »Metaphysik der Natur« braucht durchaus in der Richtung der Erforschung der Erfahrung auf Grund erkenntnistheoretisch gesicherter Prinzipien zu liegen.

after all, seemingly the sense in which Kant uses, for instance, the term “Metaphysics of Nature” needs thoroughly to lie in the direction of exploring experience on the principles secured by Epistemology.\(^{80}\)

sufficiently the logical place of metaphysical research.

Nonetheless, the sense in which Kant uses, for instance, the term “metaphysics of nature” seems definitely to lie in the direction of the exploration of experience on the basis of epistemologically secured principles.

Die Unzulänglichkeiten in Hinsicht auf Erfahrung und Metaphysik äußern sich innerhalb der Erkenntnistheorie selbst als Elemente spekulativer (d. i. rudimentär gewordener) Metaphysik.

The insufficiencies in regard of experience and Metaphysics express themselves within Epistemology-itself as elements of speculative (i.e., has become rudimentary) Metaphysics.

The inadequacies with respect to experience and metaphysics manifest themselves within epistemology itself as elements of speculative metaphysics (that is, metaphysics that has become rudimentary).

Die wichtigsten dieser Elemente sind: erstens die bei Kant trotz aller Ansätze dazu nicht endgültig überwundene Auffassung der Erkenntnis als Beziehung zwischen irgendwelchen Subjekten und Objekten oder irgendwelchem Subjekt und Objekt; zweitens: die ebenfalls nur ganz ansatzweise überwundene Beziehung der Erkenntnis und der Erfahrung auf menschlich empirisches Bewußtsein.

The most important of these elements are: first, Kant’s notion of knowledge—despite all approaches to definitively overcome [subject/object]—as a relation between any subjects and objects, or subject and object; secondly: also really only to some extent overcome, the relationship knowledge and experience to human empirical consciousness.

The most important of these elements are, first, Kant’s conception of knowledge as a relation between some sort of subjects and objects or subject and object-a conception that he was unable, ultimately, to overcome, despite all his attempts to do so; and, second, the relation of knowledge and experience to human empirical consciousness, likewise only very tentatively overcome.

Die beiden Probleme hängen eng miteinander zusammen und selbst soweit

Both of these problems hang-closely-together [interconnected] and even as

These two problems are closely interconnected, and even to the extent that Kant

to capture. Searching, vs. Researching (but here we gain). Also, maybe the translation should be

metaphysical research cannot determine a theory of knowledge, or maybe both simultaneously: since the question presuppose the answer, and Re-search is to find what is already found.

\(^{80}\) Ritter eliminates “needs” and just states that it “does.”
Kant und die Neukantianer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kant and the Neo-Kantians have overcome the object-nature of the thing-in-itself as the urcause of Empfindungen [sensations], yet always the subject-nature of the cognizing-consciousness remains to be eliminated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and the neo-Kantians have overcome the object nature of the thing-in-itself as the cause of sensations, there remains the subject nature of the cognizing consciousness to be eliminated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diese Subjekt-Natur des erkennenden Bewußtseins...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This subject nature of this cognizing consciousness, however, stems from the fact that it is formed in analogy to the empirical consciousness, which of course has objects confronting it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of this is a thoroughly metaphysical rudiment of epistemology, a piece of just that shallow “experience” of these centuries which has crept into epistemology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Das Ganze ist ein durchaus metaphysisches Rudiment...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The entirety is a thoroughly metaphysical rudiment in epistemology; a piece of that flat “experience” of these centuries which have slipped into epistemology.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of this is a thoroughly metaphysical rudiment of epistemology, a piece of just that shallow “experience” of these centuries which has crept into epistemology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Es ist nämlich gar nicht zu bezweifeln...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is namely not at all to be doubted, that in the Kantian concept-of-cognition, the representation, although sublimated, of an individual-body-mind/spirit ego which receives sensations by means of its senses and forms its ideas on the basis of them plays a role of the greatest importance in the Kantian concept of knowledge.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It simply cannot be doubted that the notion, sublimated though it may be, of an individual living ego which receives sensations by means of its senses and forms its ideas on the basis of them plays a role of the greatest importance in the Kantian concept of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diese Vorstellung ist jedoch Mythologie und was ihren Wahrheitsgehalt angeht jeder...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This Vorstellung is, however, mythology and—in relation to how much its Truth—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This notion is, however, mythology, and so far as its truth content is concerned, it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

81 Ritter Translates “Vorstellung” as “notion.” This would seem to confuse “idea” and “representation.”

82 “Empfängt”: receive is likely but could have the implication of “conceive” as well. This might be a blurring of the line.

83 The Vorstellung plays the greatest role, in the Kantian conception of knowledge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erkenntnismythologie</th>
<th>Content is concerned—is equivalent to any other Epistemo-Cognitive-Mythology.</th>
<th>is the same as every other epistemological mythology.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>andern Erkenntnismythologie gleichwertig.</td>
<td>Wir wissen von Naturvölkern der sogenannten präanimistischen Stufe welche sich mit heiligen Tieren und Pflanzen identifizieren, sich wie sie benennen; wir wissen von Wahnsinnigen die ebenfalls sich zum Teil mit den Objekten ihrer Wahrnehmung identifizieren, die ihnen also nicht mehr Objecta, gegenüberstehend sind; wir wissen von Kranken die die Empfindungen ihres Leibes nicht auf sich selbst sondern auf andere Wesen beziehen und von Hellschern welche wenigstens behaupten die Wahrnehmungen anderer als ihre eigenen empfangen zu können.</td>
<td>We know of indigenous peoples of the so-called pre-animistic stage who identify themselves with sacred animals and plants, and as such name themselves after them; we know of insane people who, likewise, identify themselves in part with objects of their perception, which are therefore no longer appearing-opposite them; we know of sick people who relate the Sensations of their bodies not to themselves but to other Beings, and of clairvoyants, who at least claim to receive/conceive perceptions of others as their own.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die gemeinmenschliche Vorstellung von sinnlicher (und geistiger) Erkenntnis sowohl unserer als der Kantischen als auch der vor-Kantischen Epoche ist nun durchaus eine Mythologie wie die genannten.</td>
<td>The commonly-human Vorstellung of sensuous (and intellectual/spiritual) knowledge in our as well as the Kantian and pre-Kantian epochs is now thoroughly a mythology, just like those named.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die Kantische »Erfahrung« ist in dieser Hinsicht, was die naive Vorstellung vom Empfangen der Wahrnehmungen angeht, Metaphysik oder Mythologie.</td>
<td>The Kantian “experience” is, so far as the naive Vorstellung of the reception of perception is approached, metaphysics or mythology and only a modern and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In this respect, so far as the naive conception of the receipt of perceptions is concerned, Kantian “experience” is metaphysics or mythology, and indeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 “Wahrheitsgehalt”: truth-content. A “halt” is present.

85 The effects of this claim are multiple: the opening up of philosophy to “soothsayers” as well as the destabilization of privileged modes of experience/knowledge. “A philosophy that does not include the possibility of soothsaying from coffee grounds cannot be a true philosophy” (Scholem 73).
und zwar nur eine moderne und religiös besonders unfruchtbare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erfahrung, so wie sie mit Bezug auf den individuellen leibgeistigen Menschen und dessen Bewußtsein und nicht vielmehr als systematische Spezifikation der Erkenntnis gefaßt wird, ist wiederum in allen ihren Arten bloßer Gegenstand dieser wirklichen Erkenntnis und zwar ihres psychologischen Zweiges.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience, as in reference with the individual living-body human and its consciousness, and not rather as a systematic specification of composed(^87) knowledge, is again in all of its types the mere Gegenstand (object-standing-against(^88)) this real knowledge and its psychological branch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience, as it is conceived in reference to the individual living human and his consciousness, instead of as a systematic specification of knowledge, is again in all of its types the mere object of this real knowledge, specifically of its psychological branch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diese gliedert das empirische Bewußtsein systematisch in die Arten des Wahnsinns.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This [latter branch] divides empirical-consciousness systematically into types of insanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The latter divides empirical consciousness systematically into types of madness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Der erkennende Mensch, das erkennende empirische Bewußtsein ist eine Art des wahnsginnigen Bewußteins.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cognizing man, the cognizing empirical-consciousness, is a type of insane consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognizing man, the cognizing empirical consciousness, is a type of insane consciousness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Damit soll nichts anderes gesagt sein als daß innerhalb des empirischen Bewußteins es zwischen seinen verschiedenen Arten nur graduelle Unterschiede gibt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is to say nothing other than that within empirical consciousness, between these differing(^89) types there passes only gradual differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This means nothing more than that within the empirical consciousness there are only gradual differences among its various types.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{86}\) One experience among many possible; it is “unfruitful” in that it is reductive. Other experience might be more fruitful, more bearing.

\(^{87}\) “Gefaßt”: The implication is the constructed nature of knowledge. Not indexical transcriptions of reality but consensual agreement mistaken for such. Thus the “experience” of the “living body” is the real knowledge. Cognizing empirical consciousness is insane [wahn-sinnigen], but this has a powerful potential in that it disrupts the ‘dead’ experience mistaken as reality, opening up a critical questioning of gradation in difference and value. Destabilizing the over-valuing of one single consciousness as correct and shifting various consciousness to a question of historical worth, power, truth.

\(^{88}\) As stated in footnote above, this is not “Object” but rather the appearance as produced by the world-system. An early occurrence of the dream-world.

\(^{89}\) “Verschiedenen”: various, different, but etymologically tied to “deceasing” or “dying.” Type that arises and die in each gradation? And “Schiedn” to separate, to dissolve, to divide, etc.
Diese Unterschiede sind zugleich solche des Wertes dessen Kriterium jedoch nicht in der Richtigkeit von Erkenntnissen bestehen kann um die es sich in der empirischen, psychologischen Sphäre niemals handelt; das wahre Kriterium des Wertunterschiedes der Bewußtseinsarten festzustellen wird eine der höchsten Aufgaben der kommenden Philosophie sein.

These differences are, at the same time, such of worth; whose criterion, however, cannot consist/insists on the correctness of its Erkenntnissen [Cognitions], [and] which is itself, in the empirical, psychological sphere, never handled; fixing/finding the true criterion of the differences-in-value of the types-of-consciousness will be one of the highest tasks of the coming philosophy.

Den Arten des empirischen Bewußtseins entsprechen ebensoviele der Erfahrung, welche mit Hinsicht auf ihre Beziehung aufs empirische Bewußtsein was die Wahrheit angeht lediglich den Wert der Phantasie oder Halluzination haben.

The types of empirical-consciousness correspond to just as many [types of] experience, which—with regards to their relation with empirical-consciousness, in as much as truth is concerned—have only the value of phantasy or hallucination.

Corresponding to the types of empirical consciousness are just as many types of experiences, which in regard to their relation to the empirical consciousness, so far as truth is concerned, have the value only of fantasy or hallucination.

Denn eine objektive Beziehung zwischen dem objektiven Begriff von Erfahrung ist unmöglich.

For an objective relation between empirical-consciousness and the objective concept of experience is im-possible.

For an objective relation between the empirical consciousness and the objective concept of experience is impossible.

Alle echte Erfahrung beruht auf dem reinen erkenntnis-theoretischen Bewußtsein wenn dieser Terminus unter der Bedingung daß er alles Subjekthaften entkleidet sei noch verwendbar ist.

All genuine experience is based on the pure knowledge-Theoretical [Epistemology] (transcendental) consciousness, if this term under the condition that it is undressed of all its subjectivity is still usable.

All genuine experience rests upon the pure “epistemological (transcendental) consciousness,” if this term is still usable under the condition that it be stripped of everything subjective.

Das reine transcendentalen Bewußtsein ist artverschieden

The pure transcendental-consciousness is a different-

The pure transcendental consciousness is different in

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90 Benjamin shifts focus to worth. Instead of a false certainty of correctness. Thus, insane consciousness may have more historical worth as a means of destabilizing the false believe in scientific reason corresponding to reality. Ritter’s translation of “Wertes” to “value” misses the mark a little. “Worth” is a more inherent quality, like a heft, as legitimate experiences of reality.
von jedem empirischen Bewußtsein und es ist daher die Frage ob die Anwendung des Terminus Bewußtsein hier statthaft ist.

Wie sich der psychologische Bewußtseinsbegriff zum Begriff der Sphäre der reinen Erkenntnis verhält bleibt ein Hauptproblem der Philosophie, das vielleicht nur aus der Zeit der Scholastik her zu restitutieren ist.

Hier ist der logische Ort vieler Probleme die die Phänomenologie neuerdings wieder aufgeworfen hat.

Die Philosophie beruht darauf daß in der Struktur der Erkenntnis die der Erfahrung liegt und aus ihr zu entfalten ist.

Diese Erfahrung umfaßt denn auch die Religion, nämlich als die wahre, wobei weder Gott noch Mensch Objekt oder Subjekt der Erfahrung ist, wohl aber diese Erfahrung auf der reinen Erkenntnis beruht als deren Inbegriff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>von jedem empirischen Bewußtsein und es ist daher die Frage ob die Anwendung des Terminus Bewußtsein hier statthaft ist.</th>
<th>type from any empirical-consciousness and hence the question—is the application of the term Bewußtsein permitted here.</th>
<th>kind from any empirical consciousness, and the question therefore arises of whether the application of the term “consciousness” is allowable here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wie sich der psychologische Bewußtseinsbegriff zum Begriff der Sphäre der reinen Erkenntnis verhält bleibt ein Hauptproblem der Philosophie, das vielleicht nur aus der Zeit der Scholastik her zu restitutieren ist.</td>
<td>How the psychological-concept-of-consciousness relates to the concept of the sphere-of-the-pure knowledge remains a high-problem of philosophy, and perhaps only can be restituted [as a recognizable problem] from the time of the Scholastics.</td>
<td>How the psychological concept of consciousness is related to the concept of the sphere of pure knowledge remains a major problem of philosophy, one which perhaps can be set aside only through recourse to the age of Scholasticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hier ist der logische Ort vieler Probleme die die Phänomenologie neuerdings wieder aufgeworfen hat.</td>
<td>Here is the logical position of many problems that phenomenology recently has raised anew.</td>
<td>Here is the logical place for many problems that phenomenology has recently raised anew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Philosophie beruht darauf daß in der Struktur der Erkenntnis die der Erfahrung liegt und aus ihr zu entfalten ist.</td>
<td>Philosophy rests upon [the notion] that the structure of knowledge lies in experience and can unfold from it.</td>
<td>Philosophy is based upon the fact that the structure of experience lies within the structure of knowledge and is to be developed from it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diese Erfahrung umfaßt denn auch die Religion, nämlich als die wahre, wobei weder Gott noch Mensch Objekt oder Subjekt der Erfahrung ist, wohl aber diese Erfahrung auf der reinen Erkenntnis beruht als deren Inbegriff</td>
<td>This experience also includes religion, namely as the true [one], whereby neither God nor Human is the object or subject of experience; well but, this experience rests on pure knowledge as the sole</td>
<td>This experience, then, also includes religion, as the true experience, in which neither god nor man is object or subject of experience but in which this experience depends on pure knowledge as the quintessence of which</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91 “Verhält”: translated by Ritter as relates. But the word could be more indicative of a controlling.

92 Like the “sphere of total neutrality” this is an a-topos, an impossible ideal that serves a regulative function, something to strive for. But are there better striving for. The issue with the “pure” is the terminological quality—and in doing so is terminally emaciated if take too seriously. The push towards Lehre and a presentational form is to contrast terms with images, offering an instability of meaning and compelling interpretation, and thus compelling a confrontation between one transcendental infinity with speculative other transcendental infinities.

93 This is a confusing sentence I believe due to the concept of “restituieren.” The Problem will only be restituted—become a focus—by returning to the Scholastics? Because the question is no longer asked in Kantian and Neo-Kantian philosophy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allein die Philosophie Gott denken kann und muß.</th>
<th>Epitome on which philosophy can and must think of God.</th>
<th>Philosophy alone can and must think of God.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Es ist die Aufgabe der kommenden Erkenntnistheorie für die Erkenntnis die Sphäre totaler Neutralität in Bezug auf die Begriffe Objekt und Subjekt zu finden; mit andern Worten die autonome ureigne Sphäre der Erkenntnis auszumitteln in der dieser Begriff auf keine Weise mehr die Beziehung zwischen zwei metaphysischen Entitäten bezeichnet.</td>
<td>It is the task of the coming Epistemology to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in reference to the concept of object and subject; in other words, meditating the autonomous, ur-one/inate sphere of knowledge in which this concept in no-manner denotes the relationship between two metaphysical entities.</td>
<td>The task of future epistemology is to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object; in other words, it is to discover the autonomous, innate sphere of knowledge in which this concept in no way continues to designate the relation between two metaphysical entities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Paragraph 5:**

| Es ist als Programmsatz der künftigen Philosophie aufzustellen daß mit dieser Reinigung der Erkenntnistheorie die als radikales Problem Kant zu stellen ermöglicht und notwendig gemacht hat nicht mir ein neuer Begriff der Erkenntnis sondern zugleich auch der Erfahrung aufgestellt wäre, gemäß der Beziehung die Kant zwischen beiden gefunden hat. | It should be set up as a program of the future philosophy that with this purification of Epistemology, which as a radical problem Kant positioned as possible and necessary, not merely a new Concept of Erkenntnis but at the same time also the Erfahrung should be positioned, according to the Relationship that Kant founded between both. | It should be made a tenet of the program of future philosophy that in the course of the purification of epistemology which Kant ensured could be posed as a radical problem--while also making its posing necessary--not only a new concept of knowledge but also a new concept of experience should be established, in accordance with the relationship Kant found between the two. |
| Freilich dürfte dabei wie gesagt die Erfahrung ebensowenig wie die Erkenntnis auf das empirische Bewußtsein bezogen werden; aber auch hier würde es dabei bleiben, ja erst hier seinen eigentlichen Sinn gewinnen daß die Bedingungen der Erkenntnis die der Erfahrung sind. | Of course, as was said, Erfahrung should be just-as-little secured as Erkenntnis to the empirical consciousness; but here, too, it would remain, and only here would it really gain its meaning, that the conditions of Erkenntnis are those of Erfahrung. | Of course, as was said, neither experience nor knowledge may be bound to the empirical consciousness in this process; but here, too, it would continue to be the case, indeed it would first derive its proper significance to say that the conditions of knowledge are those of experience. |
| Dieser neue Begriff der Erfahrung welcher gegründet | This new concept of Erfahrung, which will-be- | This new concept of experience, which would be |

94 „Reinigung“: the infinite task – Just as “always-again to make metaphysics a problem” a few sentences down. The implication here is the infinite task. Benjamin is grounding the infinite task.
wäre auf neue Bedingungen der Erkenntnis würde selbst der logische Ort und die logische Möglichkeit der Metaphysik sein.

grounded on new conditions of Erkenntnis, would itself be the logical place and the logical possibility of metaphysics.

established on the basis of the new conditions of knowledge, would itself be the logical place and the logical possibility of metaphysics.

Denn aus welchem andern Grunde hatte Kant immer wieder die Metaphysik zum Problem und die Erfahrung zur einzigen Grundlage der Erkenntnis gemacht als weil von seinem Erfahrungs begriff aus die Möglichkeit einer Metaphysik die von der Bedeutung der früheren gewesen wäre (wohlverstanden nicht einer Metaphysik überhaupt) ausgeschlossen erscheinen müßte.

For what other ground would cause Kant always again to make metaphysics a problem and Erfahrung the only ground of Erkenntnis, [other] than because his Concept-of-Erfahrung must make the possibility of a Metaphysics that would have the importance of former [metaphysics] (well-understood as not a metaphysics as-such but a metaphysics of man?) appear impossible.

For when he made metaphysics a problem and experience the only basis of knowledge, Kant had no other reason than the fact that, as he proceeded from his concept of experience, the possibility of a metaphysics that would have the importance of previous metaphysics (properly understood; not the possibility of having a metaphysics at all) would have had to seem excluded.

Es liegt aber offenbar das Auszeichnende im Begriff der Metaphysik nicht, und jedenfalls nicht für Kant der sonst keine Prolegomena zu ihr geschrieben hätte, in der Illegitimität ihrer Erkenntnisse, sondern in ihrer universalen, die gesamte Erfahrung mit dem Gottesbegriff durch Ideen unmittelbar verknüpfenden Macht.

But apparently the distinguishing-markings of the Concept of Metaphysics—and anyway not for Kant, who would otherwise not have written his Prolegomena to it—lies not with the illegitimacy of its Erkenntnissen, but in their universal (which unmediatedly knots the entire Erfahrung with the Concept-of-God, through Ideen) power.

Apparently, however, metaphysics is not distinguished solely by the illegitimacy of its insights, at least not for Kant, who would otherwise hardly have written prolegomena to it. Its distinctiveness lies, rather, in its universal power to tie all of experience immediately to the concept of God, through ideas.

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95 Not a metaphysics-as-such, but a metaphysics of humans.

96 The power of Metaphysics is in its claim, not in what it actual can do. The claim of Universal power to connect in an unmediated manner. Ideas become the manner through which this occurs. Yet the failure for this to be True is due to the historical material nature of ideas. The historical and material form Ideas take are language/text/images/etc.

97 The syntax of the sentence purposefully places a clause between universal and power. Could this be read as a qualifying of “Universal” and thus disconnecting it from “power.” The claim of universal allow this knotting of God/Experience through idea, but the power is questionable being separated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Text</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So läßt sich also die Aufgabe der kommenden Philosophie fassen als die Auffindung oder Schaffung desjenigen Erkenntnisbegriffes der, indem er zugleich auch den Erfahrungs begriff ausschließlich auf das transzendentielle Bewußtsein bezieht, nicht allein mechanische sondern auch religiöse Erfahrung logisch ermöglicht.</td>
<td>Thus the task of the coming philosophy can be taken as the finding or creation of that concept-of-knowledge which, by relating simultaneously the concept-of-Erfahrung exclusively to transcendental consciousness, makes not only mechanical but also religious Erfahrung logically possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damit soll durchaus nicht gesagt sein daß die Erkenntnis Gott, wohl aber durchaus daß sie die Erfahrung und Lehre von ihm allererst ermöglicht.</td>
<td>This is definitely not meant to say that Erkenntnis is God, but perhaps that it [Erkenntnis] makes possible the Erfahrung and Lehre of God in the first place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von der hier geforderten und als sachgemäß betrachteten Entwicklung der Philosophie läßt sich als Neukantianismus ein.</td>
<td>From the here called for and regraded as proper developing of philosophy lets itself be [seen] as a Neo-Kantianism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anzeichen bereits betrachten. Ein Hauptproblem des Neukantianismus ist gewesen den Unterschied von Anschauung und Verstand, ein metaphysisches Rudiment wie die ganze Lehre von den Vermögen an der Stelle die sie bei Kant einnimmt, zu beseitigen.</td>
<td>One of the highest-problems of Neo-Kantianism was to eliminate the difference/division between Anschauung [Intuition] and Verstand [Understanding], a metaphysical rudiment that occupies a position like that of the theory of the faculties in Kant’s work.</td>
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<td>Damit—also mit der Umbildung des Erkenntnisbegriffes hat sich denn sogleich eine des</td>
<td>With this—that is with the reformation of the concept of Erkenntnis—one of the</td>
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</table>

**Paragraph 6:**

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<td>Damit—also mit der Umbildung des Erkenntnisbegriffes hat sich denn sogleich eine des</td>
<td>With this—that is with the transformation of the concept of knowledge—there also</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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98 “So läßt sich also”: “So leaves itself so.”

99 Cognition/Knowledge makes such possible the representation/conception of God.

100 “Umbildung”: reorganization. From top to ground re-forming.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erfahrungsbegriffes eingestellt.</th>
<th>concepts-of-Erfahrung readily adjusts.(^{101})</th>
<th>began a transformation of the concept of experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Es ist nämlich nicht zu bezweifeln daß die Reduktion aller Erfahrung auf die wissenschaftliche, wie sehr sie in mancher Hinsicht die Ausbildung des historischen Kant ist, in dieser Ausschließlichkeit bei Kant nicht gemeint ist.</td>
<td>It is namely not in doubt that the reduction of all Erfahrung to the exclusively scientific, [despite] how much in some respects it is in the education of the historical Kant, is not intended by Kant.</td>
<td>For there is no doubt that Kant does not intend to reduce all experience so exclusively to scientific experience, no matter how much it may belong, in some respects, to the training of the historical Kant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es bestand sicherlich bei Kant eine Tendenz gegen die Zerfällung und Auf teilung der Erfahrung in die einzelnen Wissenschaftsgebiete und wenn ihr auch die spätere Erkenntnistheorie den Rekurs auf die Erfahrung im gewöhnlichen Sinne, wie er bei Kant vorliegt, wird abschneiden müssen, so ist doch anderseits im Interesse der Kontinuität der Erfahrung ihre Darstellung als das System der Wissenschaften</td>
<td>Certainly there is, in Kant, a tendency against the disintegration and division of Erfahrung into the separate scientific-fields, and even if the later Epistemology must cut-off the recourse to Erfahrung in the usual sense—such as exists in Kant—yet on the other-hand, in the interest of the continuity-of-Erfahrung, its Darstellung(^ {102}) as the system of the sciences, as the Neo-Kantians have it, is yet lacking, and there must be</td>
<td>Certainly, Kant tended to avoid dividing and fragmenting experience into the realms of the individual sciences. Even if later epistemology has to deny recourse to commonly understood experience (such as occurs in Kant), on the other hand, in the interest of the continuity of experience, representation of experience as the system of the sciences as the neo-Kantians have it is still lacking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{101}\) “Eingestellt”: sets in; but also adjusting; the notion of the simultaneous shifting together. “sogleich” as a straight away.

\(^{102}\) Representation of Erfahrung:

The continuity he seeks is also between knowledge and experience. Once having overcome the distinction between forms of sensibility and categories, Benjamin seeks a continuity that does not reduce everything to logical forms, but takes account of the dignity of an experience, which in Kant was—in the context of the Enlightenment’s vision of the world—transitory and ‘low,’ devoid of meaning, and which Benjamin wishes to fill with metaphysical and religious meaning., seeking, as early German romanticism had done, to found a higher sphere in which history and religion must coincide. (Tagliacozzo 23)

In the 1917 fragment “On Perception,” he distinguishes between “experience” and “knowledge of experience,” between a concept of experiences as a system of pure knowledge, and the perceptual symbol of this system. This symbolic and linguistic perception . . . . has its own temporality, which we will discover to be that of the Jetztzeit, now-time, the temporality of knowledge that will present itself in the symbolic exhibition (Darstellung) of ideas in concepts of origin and dialectical images. (Tagliacozzo 23)
wie sie der Neukantianismus gibt noch mangelhaft und es muß in der Metaphysik die Möglichkeit gefunden werden ein reines systematisches Erfahrungskontinuum zu bilden; ja ihre eigentliche Bedeutung scheint hierin zu suchen zu sein.

found in metaphysics the possibility¹⁰³ to form a pure systematic Continuum-of-Erfahrung; yes, the actual significance [of Erfahrung] seems to be searched-for herein.

A way must be found in metaphysics to form a pure and systematic continuum of experience; indeed, it seems that the true meaning of experience is to be sought in this area.

Es hat sich aber bei der neukantischen Rektifikation eines und zwar nicht des grundlegenden metaphysizierenden Gedankens bei Kant sogleich eine Änderung des Erfahrungsbegriffes ergeben und zwar bezeichnenderweise zunächst in der extremen Ausbildung der mechanischen Seite des relativ leeren aufklärerischen Erfahrungsbegriffes.

However, the neo-Kantian rectification of one of Kant’s, not the fundamental one, metaphysicizing thought, readily reveals a change to the concept-of-Erfahrung, and indeed significantly and first of all in the extreme formation of the mechanical side of the relatively empty enlightenment concept-of-Erfahrung.

But in the neo-Kantian rectification of one of Kant’s metaphysicizing thoughts (not the fundamental one), a modification of the concept of experience occurred—significantly enough, first of all in the extreme extension of the mechanical aspect of the relatively empty Enlightenment concept of experience.

Allerdings ist nicht zu übersehen daß in einer eigentümlichen Korrelation zum mechanischen Erfahrungsbegriff der Freiheitsbegriff steht und demgemäß im Neukantianismus fortentwickelt worden ist.

Certainly, it must not be overlooked, that in a strange correlation stands the mechanical concept-of-Erfahrung and the concept-of-Freedom, and accordingly in Neo-Kantianism has been further developed.

It should by no means be overlooked that the concept of freedom stands in a peculiar correlation to the mechanical concept of experience and was accordingly further developed in neo-Kantianism.

Aber auch hier ist zu betonen daß der gesamte Zusammenhang der Ethik in dem Begriff den die Aufklärung Kant und die Kantianer von Sittlichkeit haben ebensowenig aufgeht wie der Zusammenhang der Metaphysik in dem was jene Erfahrung nennen.

But here too it must be stressed that the total interrelating¹⁰⁴ of ethics can just-as-littlely be merged with the concept (which the Enlightenment, Kant, and the Kantians held) of morality, as the interrelating of metaphysics can into that

But here, too, it must be emphasized that the entire context of ethics can no more be absorbed into the concept of morality held by Kant, the Enlightenment, and the Kantians than the context of metaphysics fits into that which they call experience.

¹⁰³ “Möglichkeit”: what is being sought is the speculative possibility of a totality of infinities.

¹⁰⁴ “Zusammenhang”: intimate inter-relations and context.
which they name Erfahrung.\textsuperscript{105}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mit einem neuen Erkenntnisbegriff wird daher nicht nur der der Erfahrung sondern auch der der Freiheit eine entscheidende Umbildung erfahren.</th>
<th>With a new concept of Erkenntnis, hence, not only Erfahrung but also Freedom shall experience\textsuperscript{106} a decisive reformation\textsuperscript{107}.</th>
<th>With a new concept of knowledge, therefore, not only the concept of experience but also that of freedom will undergo a decisive transformation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man könnte nun hier überhaupt die Meinung vertreten, daß mit der Auffindung eines Erfahrungs begriffes der einen logischen Ort der Metaphysik abgeben würde überhaupt der Unterschied zwischen den Gebieten der Natur und der Freiheit aufgehoben wäre.</td>
<td>One could, now-here as-such, advocate the opinion that with the finding of a concept of-Erfahrung, which would give a logical spot\textsuperscript{108} for metaphysics as-such, the distinction between the region of nature and freedom would be abolished.\textsuperscript{109}</td>
<td>One could actually argue here that, with the discovery of a concept of experience which would provide a logical place for metaphysics, the distinction between the realms of nature and freedom would be abolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indessen ist hier wo es sich nicht um Erweisen sondern nur um ein Programm der Forschung handelt soviel zu sagen’: so notwendig und unvermeidlich auf dem Grunde einer neuen transzendentalen Logik die Umbildung des Gebietes der Dialektik, des Überganges zwischen Erfahrungs- und Freiheitslehre ist, so wenig</td>
<td>Nevertheless here, where it is not by proof, but only by a program of research, only so much can be said: just as necessary and inevitable that the ground of anew transcendental logic includes the reformation of the region of dialectics, the transition between Erfahrung-(Lehre) und Freedom-Lehre, so also this reformation must not be</td>
<td>Yet here, where we are concerned solely with a program of research and not with proof, only this much need be said: no matter how necessary and inevitable it may be to reconstruct, on the basis of a new transcendental logic, the realm of dialectics, the realm of the crossover between the theory of experience and the theory of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{106} “Erfahren”: experience, learn, find-out, under-go.

\textsuperscript{107} “entscheidende Umbildung erfahren”: decisive reformation experience. This could relate to Nietzsche concept-quakes. Or also the “shock” experience of Benjamin’s encounters.

\textsuperscript{108} “Ort”: “place, spot, region, from Middle High German ort, neuter, and masculine, sharp point end, beginning, corner, angle, border, place” (Kluge 258).

\textsuperscript{109} The new conception of experience (transcendental yet speculative) requires a new conception of the relationship between freedom and nature, for any separation between them is abolished. The following sentence adds the representational layer to this: “Erfahrung- under Freiheitslehre.” This destabilizes notions of freedom and nature as the transcendental infinity, and instead brings them into view as a transcendental infinity, which in it is the state suppresses other possible speculative infinites.
permitted to end up, even a little, in a mixing of Freedom and Erfahrung; even [though] the concept-of-Erfahrung in the metaphysical may be altered by that of Freedom, perhaps, in a yet unknown sense.

freedom, it is just as imperative that this transformation not end up in a confounding of freedom and experience, even though the concept of experience may be changed in the metaphysical realm by the concept of freedom in a sense that is perhaps as yet unknown.

Denn so unabsehbar auch die Veränderungen sein mögen die sich der Forschung hier erschließen werden: die Trichotomie des Kantischen Systems gehört zu den großen Hauptstücken jener Typik die zu erhalten ist und sie vor allem muß erhalten werden.

For as unforeseeable\(^{110}\) as the changes may be that researching here will open-up: the trichotomy belonging to the Kantian system is the greatest principle-part of that typic, which is to be sustained\(^{111}\) and, before all, must be sustained.

For no matter how incalculable the changes may be that will reveal themselves to research here, the trichotomy of the Kantian system is one of the great features of that typology, which is to be preserved, and it, more than any other, must be preserved.

Es mag in Frage gestellt werden dürfen, ob der zweite Teil des Systems (von der Schwierigkeit des dritten zu schweigen) sich noch auf die Ethik beziehen muß oder ob die Kategorie der Kausalität durch Freiheit etwa eine andere Bedeutung habe; die Trichotomie deren metaphysisch tiefste Beziehungen noch unentdeckt sind hat im Kantischen System schon an der Dreheit der Relationskategorien ihre entscheidende Begründung.

The question may be posed, weather the second part of the system (to remain silent about the difficulty of the third) still must cover Ethics or [if] the category of casualty through Freedom perhaps has a different significance; the trichotomy, whose deepest metaphysical relations are yet undetected, in the Kantian system has already in the trinity of relational-categories, its decisive grounding.

One may well ask whether the second part of the system (quite apart from the difficulty of the third) must still be related to ethics or whether the category of causality through freedom might have a different meaning. The trichotomy, whose metaphysically deepest aspects are still undiscovered, has its decisive foundation within the Kantian system in the trinity of the relational categories.

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\(^{110}\) “Unabsehbar:” due to connection to perception and consciousness. The current frame and its sphere of interrelation. This reminds me of Gaddis Rose’s description of translation sphere of meaning: “The work is a resilient axis in a circle or a globe with a circumference that wavers and shifts—both horizontally and vertically. But what the infinitely expanding and contracting circumference contains belongs to the axis and is part of the work’s potential, both with its actual contemporaries and those of its future” (7). The “researching” will open up the circumference or configuration of the seeable.

\(^{111}\) “Erhalten”: sustained and halted. Must be preserved or must be halted?
In der absoluten Trichotomie des Systems das sich eben in dieser Dreiteilung auf das ganze Gebiet der Kultur bezieht liegt eine der weltgeschichtlichen überlegenheiten des Kantischen Systems über das seiner Vorgänger.


Jedoch wird außer dem Begriff der Synthesis auch der einer gewissen Nicht-Synthesis zweier Begriffe in einem andern systematisch höchst wichtig werden, da außer der Synthesis noch eine

In the absolute trichotomy of the system, which in this tripartition is related to the entire region of culture, lies one of the world-historical superiors of the Kantian system over that of its predecessors.

The formalist dialectic of the post-Kantian systems, however, is not grounded on the designation of the thesis as categorical, antithesis as hypothetical and synthesis as disjunctive relation.

But besides the concept of synthesis, another concept, that of a certain nonsynthesis of two concepts in another, will become very important systematically, since another relation between thesis and

| 112 As Hamacher argues, “Benjamin did not subject Kantian transcendentalism to critique because it was insufficiently empirical, much less materialist, but because it was not transcendental enough” (520). Benjamin is not discarding Kant but recasting the transcendental to allow the possibility of speculative as a transcendental critique of the transcendental, while holding the speculative in-check: an infinite task of non-synthesis, a halting movement of distinctive singularities being juxtaposed. In the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” the discussion of “nonsynthetic” leads more directly to the question of philosophical presentation, which in “Program for a Coming Philosophy” is present but less direct. Weber offers a succinct reading:

By replacing the consecrated philosophical and Kantian term epistemological with “epistemo-critical” in the title of that preface, Benjamin indicates that his task is not simply to reflect on the conditions under which cognition is produced, but to explore the way his writing questions critically the notion of knowledge itself. His (Nietzschean) determination of all knowledge as a “having,” and his effort to develop the mourning play not as a concept in which phenomena are subsumed under universals, but as an “idea” in which their distinctive singularity is saved through a “configuration” of “extremes,” constitutes a practical effort to develop a “nonsynthetic,” nonsubsumptive form of knowledge. It is significant that this effort culminates in a discussion of “philosophical style,” a form of “presentation” characterized by discontinuity, interruption, and renewed effort. (120)

113 Assuming this is parallelism with relation. Hence: categorical-relation, hypothetical-relation, disjunctive-relation. |
andere Relation zwischen Thesis und Antithesis möglich ist. | relation between thesis and antithesis is possible.\textsuperscript{114} | antithesis is possible besides synthesis.  

Dies wird jedoch kaum zu einer Vierheit der Relationskategorien führen können. | This shall, however, hardly lead to a quaternity of relational-categories. | This can hardly lead to a fourfold structure of relational categories, however.  

Paragraph 8:  

Aber wenn die große Trichotomie für die Gliederung der Philosophie erhalten bleiben muß auch solange diese Glieder selbst noch fehlsbestimmt sind, so gilt dies nicht ohne weiteres von allen einzelnen Schematen des Systems. | But, if the great trichotomy, for the structuring of philosophy, must remain maintained, even as these components-[of-the-structure]\textsuperscript{115} themselves are still lacking-definitely, so this does not without further-ado apply to all the individual schemata of the system. | But if the great trichotomy must be preserved for the structuring of philosophy, even while the components themselves are still misdefined, the same does not hold true for all the individual schemata of the system.  

Wie etwa die Marburger Schule bereits mit der Aufhebung\textsuperscript{116} des Unterschiedes zwischen transzendentaler Logik und Ästhetik begonnen hat (wenn es auch fraglich ist ob ein Analogon dieser Scheidung nicht auf höherer Stufe wiederkehren muß), so ist die Tafel der Kategorien wie es jetzt allgemein gefordert wird völlig zu revidieren. | Just as at the Marburg school has already begun the sublimation of the distinctions between transcendental logic and aesthetics (even if it is questionable if an analogue of this distinction must return on a higher level) so the table of categories, as is now generally demanded, is to be completely revised. | Just as the Marburg school has already begun with the sublation of the distinction between transcendental logic and aesthetics (even though it is possible that an analogue of this distinction might return on a higher level), so must the table of categories be completely revised, as is now generally demanded.  

\textsuperscript{114} Decidedly anti-Hegelian: Benjamin’s “non-synthesis of two concepts” stands in opposition to the dialectic understood as a synthesis between thesis and antithesis. This conception already eliminates the conception of a progressive telos-driven dialectic. This marks an early seed of dialectics at a standstill.  

\textsuperscript{115} “Gliederung” as “structuring” // “Glieder” as “components,” “articulations,” “limbs.”  

\textsuperscript{116} “Sublimate:” abolish/preserve. “The ‘double meaning’ (to adopt Hegel’s term) of a verb, aufheben, that means both “maintain, preserve” and “halt, end,” has not only been recognized by Hegel’s interpreters and specialists in German philosophy but has simply become part of today’s philosophical culture” (\textit{Untranslatables} 71).  

“In Kant, “subsuming” is defined as the action of “distinguishing whether something does or does not stand under a given rule (casus datae legis)” (\textit{Critique of Pure Reason, “Analytic of Principles,” Introduction, B 171}), whereas Hegelian subsumption would designate, inversely, “the process of totalizing the part” (73-74).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gerade hierbei wird sich dann die Umformung des Erkenntnisbegriffes in der Gewinnung eines neuen Begriffs von Erfahrung ankündigen, da die aristotelischen Kategorien einerseits willkürlich aufgestellt, andererseits aber durch Kant ganz einseitig im Hinblick auf eine mechanische Erfahrung ausgebuöt worden sind.</td>
<td>Precisely here, in this occasion, the re-forming of the concept-of-Erkenntnis will be announced in the winning of a new concept-of-Erfahrung; since the Aristotelian categories, on the one hand have been arbitrarily established, and on the other have been quite one-sidedly exploited through Kant in regard to a mechanical-Erfahrung.</td>
<td>In this very process, then, the transformation of the concept of knowledge will begin to manifest itself in the acquisition of a new concept of experience, since the Aristotelian categories are both arbitrarily posed and have been exploited in a very one-sided way by Kant in the light of mechanical experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es wird vor allem zu erwägen sein ob die Kategorientafel in der Vereinzelung und Unvermitteltheit in der sie dasteht bleiben muß und ob sie nicht überhaupt in einer Lehre von den Ordnungen sei es eine Stelle unter andern Gliedern einnehmen, sei es selbst zu einer solchen ausgebaut, auf logisch frühere Urbegriffe gegründet oder mit ihnen verbunden werden könne.</td>
<td>Before all-else, it will have to be considered, whether the categorical-table must remain standing in isolation and immediacy, or whether or not it could, in-general, take a spot among other components in a Lehre of Ordering, or be developed into one itself, founded upon or could be connected to logically earlier Urbegriffe.</td>
<td>First and foremost, one must consider whether the table of categories must remain in its present isolation and lack of mediation, or whether it could not take a place among other members in a theory of orders or itself be built up to such a theory, founded upon or connected to primal concepts [Urbegriffe].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In eine solche allgemeine Lehre von den Ordnungen würde dann auch dasjenige gehören was Kant in der transzendentalen Asthetik erörtert, ferner die sämtlichen Grundbegriffe nicht nur der Mechanik sondern auch die der Geometrie, Sprachwissenschaft,</td>
<td>Such a general Lehre-of-Orderings would then be a part of that which Kant discusses in the transcendental aesthetic, furthermore, all the foundational-concepts not just the mechanics but also the geometry, linguistics, psychology, descriptive</td>
<td>Such a theory of orders would also comprise that which Kant discusses in the transcendental aesthetic, and, furthermore, all the basic concepts not only of mechanics but also of geometry, linguistics, psychology, the descriptive natural sciences, and many</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117 “Umformung”: “um-” implying repeatedly, ground, down, over.

118 “Ankündigen”: “kündigen” has implications of cancel, halt, stop. Announce does something similar. “A-” as a kind of cancellation of “-nounce” (to say).


120 “Ur-Concept”: Confusing sentence syntactically. The subjects become blurred.
| Psychologie, beschreibender Naturwissenschaft und vieler anderer, sofern sie unmittelbare Beziehung auf die Kategorien oder sonstigen höchsten philosophischen Ordnungsbegriffe hätten. | natural-science, and many others, provided these have an immediate relation to the categories or other highest ordering-concepts of philosophy. | others, to the extent that these concepts had a direct relation to the categories or the other highest ordering concepts of philosophy. |
| Hervorragende Beispiele sind hier die Grundbegriffe der Grammatik. | Outstanding examples, here, are the foundational-concepts of grammar. | Outstanding examples here are the principles of grammar. |
| Ferner hat man sich zu vergegenwärtigen, daß mit der radikalen Ausschaltung aller derjenigen Bestandteile, welche in der Erkenntnistheorie die versteckte Antwort -auf die versteckte Frage nach dem Werden der Erkenntnis geben das große Problem des Falschen bzw. des Irrtums frei wird dessen logische Struktur und Ordnung nun gen au so wie die des Wahren ermittelt werden muß. | Furthermore, one must envision that with the radical elimination of all the components which in Epistemology give the concealed answer to the concealed question toward the becoming of Erkenntnis, the great problem of false or the error becomes free, whose logical structure and ordering must now be meditated exactly like the Trueing. | Furthermore, one must recall that, with the radical elimination of all those elements in epistemology that provide the concealed answer to the concealed question about the origins of knowledge, the great problem of the false or of error is opened up, whose logical structure and order must be ascertained just like those of the true. |
| Der Irrtum darf nicht länger aus dem Irren erklärt werden, wie die Wahrheit nicht länger aus dem rechten Verstand. | Error can no longer be declared by the erring, as the truth can no longer from right understanding. \(^\text{121}\) | Error can no longer be explained in terms of erring, any more than the true can be explained in terms of correct understanding. |
| Auch für diese Erforschung der logischen Natur des Falschen und des Irrtums sind voraussichtlich in der Lehre von den Ordnungen die Kategorien aufzusuchen: überall in der modernen Philosophie regt sich die Erkenntnis, daß die kategoriale und verwandte Ordnung von zentraler Wichtigkeit für die Erkenntnis manngfach. | Also, for this exploration into the logical nature of the falsehood and the Error, the categories are anticipated to be sought-out in the Lehre of the Ordering: everywhere in modern philosophy stirs the Erkenntnis/Recognition, that the categorical and related ordering are of central importance for the Erkenntnis of multifariously graded and non-mechanical Erfahrung. | For this investigation of the logical nature of the false and the mistaken, the categories are likewise presumably to be found in the theory of the orders; everywhere in modern philosophy the recognition crops up that categorical and related orders are of central importance for the knowledge of an experience which is multiply graded and nonmechanical. |

\(^\text{121}\) Truth must no longer correspond with limited delusions of correctness of understanding, which has been restrictively defined as mathematical/mechanical.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abgestufter und auch nicht mechanischer Erfahrung sei.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kunst, Rechtslehre und Geschichte, alle diese und andere Gebiete haben sich mit ganz anderer Intensität als Kant es getan hilt an der Kategorienlehre zu orientieren.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, jurisprudence, and history, all of these and other regions have to orient themselves, with quite a different intensity than Kant did, to the categories-lehre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, jurisprudence, and history: these and other areas must orient themselves according to the theory of categories with much more intensity than Kant oriented them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doch erhebt sich zugleich mit Beziehung auf die transzendentale Logik eines der größten Probleme des Systems überhaupt, nämlich die Frage nach seinem dritten Teil, mit anden Worten nach denjenigen wissenschaftlichen Erfahrungsarten (den biologischen), die Kant auf dem Boden der transzendentalen Logik nicht behandelt hat und warum er es nicht tat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Though, at the same time, rises, with the relation to the transcendental logic, a great problem of the system as such, namely the question of its third part; in other words, [the problem] according to those scientific types-of-Erfahrung (the biological), that Kant on the ground of the transcendental logic did not handle and why he did not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But at the same time, one of the greatest problems of the system occurs in regard to the transcendental logic, specifically the question of its third part-in other words, the question of those scientific types of experience (the biological ones) which Kant did not treat on the ground of the transcendental logic; one must also inquire why he did not do so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further, the question of the interrelating between art with the third, [and] ethics with the second part of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore, the question of the relationship of art to this third part of the system and of ethics to the second part:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>- Die Fixierung des bei Kant unbekannten Begriffes der Identität hat voraussichtlich in der transzendentalen Logik eine große Rolle zu spielen, in sofern er in der Kategorientafel nicht steht, dennoch vermutlich den obersten Begriff der transzendentalogischen ausmacht und vielleicht wahrhaft geeignet ist die</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– The fixation, unknown in Kant, of the concept of identity will prospectively play a great role in the transcendental logic, in-so-far as it does not stand in the table-of-categories, yet presumably makes-out the uppermost concept of the transcendental-logic and is perhaps truly suitable to founding the sphere-of-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fixing of the concept of identity, unknown to Kant, will likely play a great role in the transcendental logic, inasmuch as it does not occur in the table of categories yet presumably constitutes the highest of transcendental logical concepts and is perhaps truly suited to founding the sphere of knowledge autonomously</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

122 “voraussichtlich” Ritter translates as “likely,” within the implications “probably” “presumably.” However, such a choice looses the “anticapatory” and “seeing” aspect—which as a motif of the essay should be preserved if possible. “Prospectively” connotes the idea of “forward-looking” as well as the possibility of what might come to be. Both aspects are present in the original.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sphäre der Erkenntnis jenseits der Subjekt-Objekt-Terminologie autonom zu begründen.</strong></td>
<td>Erkenntnis autonomously beyond the Subject-Object-Terminology. (^{123})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Die transzendentale Dialektik weist schon in der Kantischen Fassung die Ideen auf auf denen die Einheit der Erfahrung beruht.</strong></td>
<td>The transcendental dialectic already indicates, in the Kantian version, the ideas on which the Unity-of-Erfahrung is based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Für den vertieften Begriff der Erfahrung ist aber, wie schon gesagt, Kontinuität nächst der Einheit unerläßlich und in den Ideen muß der Grund der Einheit und der Kontinuität jener nicht vulgären und nicht nur wissenschaftlichen sondern metaphysischen Erfahrung aufgewiesen werden.</strong></td>
<td>As already mentioned, however, for the deepened concept of experience continuity is almost as indispensable as unity, and the basis of the unity and continuity of that experience, which is not vulgar or only scientific, but metaphysical, must be demonstrated in the ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Die Konvergenz der Ideen auf den obersten Begriff der Erkenntnis ist nachzuweisen.</strong></td>
<td>The convergence of ideas toward the highest concept of knowledge must be shown.(^{125})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Paragraph 9:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wie die Kantische Lehre selbst um ihre Prinzipien zu finden sich einer Wissenschaft mit Beziehung auf die sie sie definieren konnte gegenüber sehen mußte, ähnlich wird es auch der modernen Philosophie ergehen.</strong></td>
<td>Just as Kantian Lehre itself, to find its principles, had to contrast/contradict a science with relations to that which it could define them, analogically modern philosophy will also go-forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Die große Umbildung und Korrektur die an dem</strong></td>
<td>The great reformation and correction to be undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The great transformation and correction which must be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
einseitig mathematisch-mechanisch orientierten Erkenntnisbegriff vorzunehmen ist, kann nur durch eine Beziehung der Erkenntnis auf die Sprache wie sie schon zu Kants Lebzeiten Hamann versucht hat gewonnen werden.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Über dem Bewußtsein daß die philosophische Erkenntnis eine absolut gewisse und apriorische sei, über dem Bewußtsein dieser der Mathematik ebenbürtigen Seiten der Philosophie ist für Kant die Tatsache daß alle philosophische Erkenntnis ihren einzigen Ausdruck in der Sprache und nicht in Formeln und Zahlen habe völlig zurückgetreten.</td>
<td>Beyond the awareness that philosophical-Erkenntnis is absolutely certain and a priori, beyond the awareness that these mathematic equivalently matched sides of philosophy, for Kant, the fact that all philosophical-Erkenntnis had its only expression in Language and not in formulas and numbers had fully stepped-back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diese Tatsache aber dürfte sich letzten Endes als die entscheidende behaupten und um ihretwillen ist die systematische Suprematie der Philosophie wie über alle Wissenschaft so auch über die Mathematik letzten Endes zu behaupten.</td>
<td>This fact, however, might itself ultimately assert-itself as the decisive-one, and because-of-it the systematic supremacy of philosophy over all science as well as over mathematics should ultimately assert-itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ein in der Reflexion auf das sprachliche Wesen der Erkenntnis gewonnener Begriff von ihr wird einen korrespondierenden</td>
<td>In reflection on the linguistic essence of Erkenntnis a concept of itself [Erkenntnis] shall-be-gained, which will create a corresponding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performed upon the concept of knowledge, oriented so one-sidedly along mathematical-mechanical lines, can be attained only by relating knowledge to language, as was attempted by Hamann during Kant’s lifetime.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

126 For Hamann, as arguably for Benjamin, “reason does not function as an independent faculty of cognition . . . but rather is fertilized by the Logos and is solely the capacity for deriving concepts from sensory impressions, and for forming judgments and conclusions” (Miller 17). This “logos” fertilizing reason implies an agency and correspondence of impressions between the Absolute and/or things to human consciousness; these sensory impressions are given to us by language. Hence, while Humboldt recognizes the centrality and unifying properties of language to consciousness, he maintains the barrier between the absolute/thing-in-itself and human consciousness. While Hamann recognizes the centrality of language and sees language as beyond just human, sees a possible correspondence between consciousness and the absolute/thing-in-itself via languages.
Erfahrungsbegriff schaffen der auch Gebiete deren wahrhafte systematische Einordnung Kant nicht gelungen ist umfassen wird.  

| Erfahrungsbegriff schaffen | concept-of-Erfahrung, which will also comprise the regions whose truly systematic classification Kant was not successful with. | experience which will also encompass realms that Kant failed to truly systematize. |

Als deren Oberstes ist das Gebiet der Religion zu nennen.  

| Als deren Oberstes ist das Gebiet der Religion zu nennen. | As the uppermost, the region of religion is to be named. | The realm of religion should be mentioned as the foremost of these. |

127 Benjamin is arguing that due to the centrality of language to cognition/knowledge and experience a reflection on the linguistic essence of cognition/knowledge understood as essentially linguistic will open up the (post)Kantian limitations and privileging of the mathematical. Such an occurrence will unfold via the elective correspondence between a “concept of cognition/knowledge” and the “concept of experience” expressed as intimately interrelated, which opens up “regions” current outside of Kantian thought. Religion has a special place in this—both as a realm to be opened up but also due to its relationship with language and concepts. Religion speaks in allegory.

Claude Lefort in the essay “The Permanence of the Theological-political?” writes:

> What philosophy discovers in religion is a mode of portraying or dramatizing the relations that human beings establish with something that goes beyond empirical time and space within which they establish relations with one another. This work of the imagination stages [met en scene] a different time, a different space. Any attempt to reduce it to being simply a product of human activity is doomed. Of course, it bears the mark of human operations and that the script for the performance bears witness to a human presence and borrows from human sense experience. Human beings populate the invisible with things they see, naively invent a time that exists before time, organize a space that exists behind their space. (223)

To compel a “reflect[ing] on linguistic essence” Benjamin utilizes rhetorical figures and concepts marking a-temporal and a-topos (place/motif) “regions.” The coming philosophy’s aim of a “sphere of total neutrality,” or the use of prelapsarian scenes in “On Language as Such and the Language of Man,” or the use of “pure-language” or “now-time” etc. Religion has a different relationship with knowledge and theorizes the possibility of a correspondence between experience and knowledge, a correspondence that Benjamin is arguing has been cut off in the Kantian system, due to a prioritizing of mathematical cognition. Such conceptions allow for a virtual unity between the absolute (religious sphere) and the topos-temporal (sphere of history).

Likewise, as Werner Hamacher argues in “Intensive Languages,” Benjamin’s critique of Kant is that he is not transcendental enough, leading to a call for “pure transcendental consciousness” (520). “All genuine experience is based on the pure knowledge-Theoretical [Epistemology] (transcendental) consciousness, if this term under the condition that it is undressed of all its subjectivity is still usable.” (Benjamin, paragraph 4 above). “This consciousness must itself immanently step out beyond its own experience” (Hamacher 520). To strip the concept of “pure transcendental consciousness” of all subjectivity Benjamin advocates not a mathematical knowledge but a linguistic experience—an experience of language. The shift here is subtle and monumental. Within a mathematical conception of the cognition “pure transcendental consciousness” has a terminological character, within the realm of language a rhetorical character. One claims an “is” and one claims a “performing.” Even as Benjamin enacts a substantial transformation of Kant’s concept of transcendental—recasting it out of a sole sphere of mathematics—he
Und damit läßt sich die Forderung an die kommende Philosophie endlich in die Worte fassen: Auf Grund des Kantischen Systems einen Erkenntnisbegriff zu schaffen dem der Begriff einer Erfahrung korrespondiert von der die Erkenntnis Lehre ist.

And thus, the calling on the coming philosophy can be grasped in these words: on the grounds of the Kantian system to create a concept-of-Erkenntnis that corresponds with a concept-of-Erfahrung, of which Erkenntnis is the Lehre.

Thus, the demand upon the philosophy of the future can ultimately be put in these words: to create on the basis of the Kantian system a concept of knowledge to which a concept of experience corresponds, of which the knowledge is the teachings [Lehre].

Eine solche Philosophie wäre entweder in ihrem allgemeinen Teile selbst als Theologie zu bezeichnen oder wäre dieser sofern sie etwa historisch philosophische Elemente einschließt übergeordnet.

Such a philosophy would either, in its general/universal parts be denoted as Theology or would be superordinated insofar-to-the-extent that historical-philosophical elements are included.

Such a philosophy in its universal element would either itself be designated as theology or would be superordinated to theology to the extent that it contains historically philosophical elements.

**Paragraph 10:**

| Erfahrung ist die einheitliche und kontinuierliche Mannigfaltigkeit der Erkenntnis. | Erfahrung is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge. | Experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Nachtrag:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Addendum/Supplement</strong></th>
<th><strong>Addendum</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Im Interesse der Klärung der Beziehung der Philosophie zur Religion ist der Gehalt des vorigen sofern es das systematische Schema der Philosophie angeht zu wiederholen.</td>
<td>In the interest of clarifying the relationship of philosophy to religion, the contents of the preceding should be reiterated provided the systematic Schema of philosophy is concerned.</td>
<td>In the interest of clarifying the relation of philosophy to religion, the contents of the preceding essay should be repeated to the extent that it concerns the systematic schema of philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es handelt sich zunächst um das Verhältnis der drei Begriffe Erkenntnistheorie, Metaphysik, Religion,</td>
<td>First is the relation between three Begriffe: Epistemology, metaphysics, religion.</td>
<td>It is concerned first of all with the relationship among the three concepts, epistemology, metaphysics, and religion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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does so via a rhetorical use of the terms: thus “pure transcendental consciousness” corresponds with “sphere of total neutrality,” atemporal and aspatial, rhetorically without subjectivity.

Moreover, “pure transcendental consciousness” without subjectivity and a “sphere of total neutrality” are denoting towards a non-instrumental structural medium.

128 “Angeht zu wiederholen”: to tackle repeatedly. To keep re-iterating.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Die ganze Philosophie zerfällt in Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik, oder mit Kant zu reden in einen kritischen und einen dogmatischen Teil, diese Einteilung ist jedoch, nicht als Angabe des Gehalts, aber als Einteilungsprinzip nicht von prinzipieller Wichtigkeit.</td>
<td>The whole philosophy decays into epistemology and metaphysics or, as Kant would say, into a critical and a dogmatic part; this division is, however, not as indicative of the content but as a principle-of-division/classification, not of principle significance.</td>
<td>All of philosophy breaks down into epistemology and metaphysics, or, as Kant would say, into a critical and a dogmatic part. This division, however, is not as an indication of content but as a principle of classification—not of principal importance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mit ihr soll nur gesagt werden daß auf aller kritischen Sicherung der Erkenntnisbegriffe und des Erkenntnisbegriffs nun eine Lehre von dem aufgebaut werden kann wovon zunächst allererst erkenntnis-kritisch der Begriff einer Erkenntnis festgesetzt ist.</td>
<td>With it, should only be said, that on all critical securing of the Concepts-of-Erkenntnis [cognitive-concepts] and the Concept-of-Erkenntnis, now a Lehre can be built from which, first of all, be critical-erkenntnis of concepts-of-Erkenntnis can be fixed.</td>
<td>With it, one is trying to say only that upon the basis of all the critical ensuring of cognitive concepts and the concept of knowledge, a theory can now be built up of that on which in the very first place the concept of knowledge is epistemologically fixed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo das Kritische aufhört und das Dogmatische anfängt ist vielleicht nicht genau aufzuzeigen weil der Begriff des Dogmatischen lediglich den übergang von Kritik zu Lehre von allgemeinern zu besonderem Grundbegriffen kennzeichnen soll.</td>
<td>Where the critical stops and the dogmatic starts is, perhaps, not exactly indicatable, because the Begriff of dogmatic shall only mark the through-passing of the Kritik to Lehre—from general to particular grounding-begriffen.</td>
<td>Where the critical ends and the dogmatic begins is perhaps not clearly demonstrable, because the concept of the dogmatic is supposed to designate only the transition from critique to teachings, from the more general to particular fundamental concepts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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129 Only change is in ending. -s versus -e. Ritter translates as “cognitive-concepts” and “concepts of knowledge.”

130 “Übergang”: over-going/gait/passage

131 Samuel Weber’s reading at the end of Benjamin’s –Abilities. The concept of “dogma” is marked in the transition between of the critical to the teaching/doctrinal (Lehre).

Lehre, religious doctrine to be sure, but also teaching, and also instruction, is thus the place where philosophy enters into contact with “an absolute”—and not, as Peter Fenves has insightfully remarked, “the” absolute. For this “absolute,” which is inaccessible to knowledge while making it possible, requires the indefinite rather than the definite article—“an” or “one” rather than “the.” In its indefiniteness, it is inseparable from the “immediacy” of a “Dasein,” a “being-there” that in its singularity serves as the “integral” of the many different laws (Gesetzmässigkeiten) produced by a philosophical cognition that is always on the side of the general or the universal. (312)
Die ganze Philosophie ist also Erkenntnistheorie, nur eben Theorie, kritische und dogmatische aller Erkenntnis.

So, the whole of philosophy is a theory-of-Erkenntnis [Epistemology]; just a theory, critical and dogmatic, of all Erkenntnis.

All philosophy is thus theory of knowledge, but just that-a theory, critical and dogmatic, of all knowledge.

Beide Teile, der kritische wie der dogmatische fallen ganz ins Gebiet des Philosophischen.

Both parts, the critical as well as the dogmatic, fall entirely within the domain of philosophy.

Both parts, the critical and the dogmatic, fall completely within the realm of the philosophical.

Und da das der Fall ist, da nicht etwa der dogmatische Teil mit dem einzelwissenschaftlichen zusammenfällt, so erhebt sich naturgemäß die Frage nach der Grenze zwischen Philosophie und Einzelwissenschaft.

And since this is the Fall, since the dogmatic part does not fall-together with the individual-sciences, the question naturally arises towards the boundary/limit between philosophy and individual-sciences.

Since this is the case, since it is not true that, for instance, the dogmatic part coincides with that of individual sciences, the question naturally arises as to the borderline between philosophy and individual sciences.

Die Bedeutung des terminus des Metaphysischen wie er im vorigen eingeführt ist besteht nun eben darin diese Grenze als nicht vorhanden zu erklären und die Umprägung der »Erfahrung« zu »Metaphysik« bedeutet daß im metaphysischen oder dogmatischen Teil der Philosophie, in den der oberste erkenntnistheoretische, d. i. der kritische Teil übergeht, virtuell die

The significance of the term metaphysical, as introduced previously, is to insist on explaining just that this boundary/limit as nonexistent, and the Re-shaping of “Erfahrung” as “Metaphysics” means that in the metaphysical or dogmatic part of philosophy, in which the highest epistemological, i.e., the critical part, through-passes, so-called Erfahrung is

The meaning of the term “metaphysical, “ as introduced in the foregoing, consists precisely in declaring this border nonexistent, and the reformulation of “ experience “ as “metaphysics “ means that so-called experience is virtually included in the metaphysical or dogmatic part of philosophy, into which the highest epistemological—that is, the critical—is transformed.

The referred to Fenves: “The name of this counterpoint to the ‘fact of science’ is Lehre (doctrine, teaching, theory), which ‘teaches’ only the transient moment of its transmission. Lehre ‘suggests a veridical transition, a transition into truth . . . which should probably be translated as ‘doctrine’ but which, like doctrine, derives from the word for ‘teaching’ or ‘learning,’ lehren . . . so ‘doctrine’ must be continually taught in order for it to be ‘doctrinal’” (42-43).

132 “wie” not “und” hence the critical as dogmatic, not the critical and dogmatic.

133 “Der Fall”: the actual event/case; and the fall/drop/decline. As in the biblical fall. Referring back to the previous “fall” in prior sentence.

134 “Zusammenfällt”: coincide, but also to fall as the same. The alliteration of “fall” could imply the biblical, referring back to “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sogenannte Erfahrung eingeschlossen ist.</td>
<td>virtually entrapped/comprised.(^{135})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Die Exemplifikation dieses Verhältnisses für das Gebiet der Physik ~ meinen Aufsatz über Erklärung und Beschreibung.)</td>
<td>(For the Exemplification of this relationship in the area of physics ~ my gloss on explanation and description.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn damit ganz allgemein das Verhältnis zwischen Erkenntnistheorie, Metaphysik und Einzelwissenschaft umrissen ist so bleiben noch zwei Fragen übrig.</td>
<td>If, in general, the relations between Epistemology, Metaphysics, and individual-sciences are so outlined, two questions yet remain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erstens diejenige nach der Beziehung des kritischen zum dogmatischen Moment in Ethik und Ästhetik, die wir hier auf sich beruhen lassen indem wir doch eine Lösung im systematisch analogen Sinne wie etwa im Bezirk der Naturlehre postulieren müssen, zweitens diejenige nach dem Verhältnis von Philosophie und Religion.</td>
<td>Firstly, that of the (moving)-relation between the critical and dogmatic moment/um in ethics and aesthetics, which here we will let rest,(^{136}) as we nevertheless must postulate a loosening/solution(^{137}) in a perhaps systematically analogous sense, such as in the circuit of the nature-Lehre,(^{138}) secondly, that the of halting/hailing-relation between(^{139}) Philosophy and Religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zunächst ist es nun klar daß es sich im Grunde nicht um die Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen Philosophie und Religion, sondern nach dem zwischen Philosophie und Lehre von</td>
<td>Initially, it is now clear that what must be handled here is not grounded by the question about the (halting)-relation between philosophy and religion, but by that between philosophy and the Lehre-of-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To begin with, it is now clear that what is at stake is not the issue of the relationship between philosophy and religion but that between philosophy and the teachings of religion-in other words, the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{135}\) “Erfahrung” is “virtually” enclosed in the Lehre, as Darstellungen, or images.

\(^{136}\) “Sich beruhen lassen”: -ruhe- rest but also stall or suspends.

\(^{137}\) “Lösung”: solution in the more literal sense, of dissolving, breaking-away

\(^{138}\) Ritter translates as “physics.” But the implication is closer to Nature-Doctrine/Proverb.

\(^{139}\) Two words for “relation” with different root attributes. Beziehung—root of Ziehen, implying movement, and Verhältnis which the root “halten” could imply to halt, or could be a low-German root of halen—to fetch. Why this distinction? I think the difference is that of movement and halting.
| der Religion handeln muß; mit andren Worten um die Frage nach dem Verhältnis der Erkenntnis überhaupt zur Erkenntnis von der Religion. | Religion; in other words, the question of the (halting)-relation between Erkenntnis-as-such to Erkenntnis-of-religion. | question of the relation between knowledge in general and knowledge of religion. |
| Auch die Frage nach dem Dasein der Religion Kunst u.s.w. kann philosophisch eine Rolle spielen aber nur im Wege der Fage nach der philosophischen Erkenntnis von solchem Dasein. | As well, the question of the Dasein of Religion, Art, etc. can philosophically play a role, but only in the way of the question over the philosophical Erkenntnis of such Dasein. | The question of existence raised by religion, art, and so on can also play a role philosophically, but only on the path of inquiry into the philosophical knowledge of such existence. |
| Die Philosophie fragt durchaus immer nach der Erkenntnis wobei die Frage nach der Erkenntnis von ihrem Dasein nur eine wenn auch unvergleichlich hervorragende Modifikation der Frage nach der Erkenntnis überhaupt ist. | Philosophy questions absolutely-always about the Erkenntnis, in which the question about the Erkenntnis of its Dasein is only, an incomparable out-towering modification of the question of Erkenntnis-as-such. | Philosophy always inquiries about knowledge, in relation to which the question of the knowledge of its existence is only a modification, albeit an incomparably marvelous modification, of the question of knowledge in general. |
| Ja, es muß gesagt werden: daß die Philosophie überhaupt in ihren Fragestellungen niemals auf die Daseinseinheit sondern immer nur auf neue Einheiten von Gesetzlichkeiten stoßen kann deren Integral »Dasein« ist. | Yes, it must be said: that philosophy-as-such in its questioning can never bump-up-against the Daseinseinheit but only always [bump-up-against] new unities of legality of whose integral is “Dasein.” | Indeed, it must be said that philosophy in its questionings can never hit upon the unity of existence, but only upon new unities of various conformities to laws, whose integral is “existence.” |
| —Der erkenntnistheoretische Stamm- oder Urbegriff hat eine doppelte Funktion. | —The epistemological stem- or Urbegriff has a double function. | —The original or primal concept of epistemology has a double function. |

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140 Between “as-such” and “specific.” Just as Kant’s system is both one transcendent infinity, religion is an other transcendental infinity, there are potentially infinite more.

141 Ritter’s failure to mark the “überhaupt” etc. At this point in the essay the “as such” marks the potentially of infinite others, versus Kantian philosophy as one transcendental infinity.

142 “Stoßen”: the critical encounter of the decisive-Umforming-forming-experience.

143 “Gesetzlichkeiten”: Also, rhetorically: “Daseinseinheit” is the impossible unity but in one compounded word; while “neue Einheiten von Gesetzlichkeiten” is the actual encounter in questioning and is written as separate words.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>English (Detailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Einmal ist er es der durch seine Spezifikation, nach der allgemein logischen Begründung von Erkenntnis überhaupt zu den Begriffen von gesonderten Erkenntnisarten und damit zu besonderen Erfahrungsarten durchdringt...</td>
<td>First, through its specifications, after the general logical grounding of Erkenntnis-as such, penetrates/permeates(^{144}) to/as [zu] the Begriffen of separate Erkenntnisarten (types-of-Erkenntnis) and thus to particular Erkenntnisarten.</td>
<td>On the one hand, this concept is the one which by its specification, after the general logical foundation of knowledge, penetrates to the concepts of specific types of cognition and thus to specific types of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dies ist seine eigentlich erkenntnistheoretische Bedeutung und zugleich die eine, schwächere Seite seiner metaphysischen Bedeutung</td>
<td>This is its actual epistemological significance and simultaneously the one weaker side of its metaphysical significance.</td>
<td>This is its real epistemological significance and simultaneously the one weaker side of its metaphysical significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jedoch kommt der Stamm- und Urbegriff der Erkenntnis in diesem Zusammenhang nicht zu einer konkreten Totalität der Erfahrung, ebensowenig zu irgend einem Begriff von Dasein.</td>
<td>However, the stem- and Urbegriff of Erkenntnis, in this inter-context, does not come to a concrete totality of Erfahrung, any-more-than it does a Begriff of Dasein.</td>
<td>However, the original and primal concept of knowledge does not reach a concrete totality of experience in this context, any more than it reaches a concept of existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es gibt aber eine Einheit der Erfahrung die keineswegs als Summe von Erfahrungen verstanden werden kann, auf die sich der Erkenntnisbegriff als Lehre in seiner kontinuierlichen Entfaltung unmittelbar bezieht.</td>
<td>But there is a unity of Erfahrung that can, by no means, be understood as a sum-of-Erfahrungen, to which the Concept-of-Erkenntnis as a teaching relates immediately in its continuous unfolding.(^{145})</td>
<td>But there is a unity of experience that can by no means be understood as a sum of experiences, to which the concept of knowledge as teaching is immediately related in its continuous development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Der Gegenstand und Inhalt dieser Lehre, diese konkrete Totalität der Erfahrung ist die Religion, die aber der Philosophie zunächst nur als Lehre gegeben ist.</td>
<td>The Gegenstand and Inhalt of this Lehre, this concrete totality of Erfahrung is Religion, which, however, philosophy first-and-only as Lehre is presented.</td>
<td>The object and the content of this teaching, this concrete totality of experience, is religion, which, however, is presented to philosophy in the first instance only as teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Quelle des Daseins liegt nun aber in der Totalität der Erfahrung und erst in der Lehre stößt die Philosophie auf ein Absolutes, als Dasein.</td>
<td>The well-spring of Dasein lies only, however, in the totality of Erfahrung and only in the Lehre does philosophy encounter something...</td>
<td>Yet the source of existence lies in the totality of experience, and only in teaching does philosophy encounter something...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{144}\) “durchdringt”: implies both deepness and spreading.

\(^{145}\) “als Lehre in seiner kontinuierlichen Entfaltung unmittelbar bezieht”: as a Lehre – as a presentation/teaching. A material-linguistic experience as interpretation unfolding.
und damit auf jene Kontinuität im Wesen der Erfahrung in deren Vernachlässigung der Mangel des Neukantianismus zu vermuten ist.

butt-up-against an absolute, as Dasein, and thereby [also encounters] that continuity in Wesen of Erfahrung, the neglect of which is the assumed lack of the Neo-Kantians.

absolute, as existence, and in so doing encounter that continuity in the nature of experience. The failing of neo-Kantianism can be suspected in its neglect of this continuity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In rein metaphysischer Hinsicht geht der Stammbegriff der Erfahrung in deren Totalität in einem ganz anderen Sinne über als in seine einzelnen Spezifikationen, die Wissenschaften: nämlich unmittelbar, wobei der Sinn dieser Unmittelbarkeit gegenüber jener Mittelbarkeit noch zu bestimmen bleibt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>butt-up-against an absolute, as Dasein, and thereby [also encounters] that continuity in Wesen of Erfahrung, the neglect of which is the assumed lack of the Neo-Kantians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>absolute, as existence, and in so doing encounter that continuity in the nature of experience. The failing of neo-Kantianism can be suspected in its neglect of this continuity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eine Erkenntnis ist metaphysisch heißt im strengen Sinne: sie bezieht sich durch den Stammbegriff der Erkenntnis auf die konkrete Totalität der Erfahrung, d. h. aber auf Dasein.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Erkenntnis is metaphysical means in a strict sense: it relates itself through the Stemm-Concept of Erkenntnis to the concrete totality of Erfahrung, i.e., Dasein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To say that knowledge is metaphysical means in the strict sense: it is related via the original concept of knowledge to the concrete totality of experience—that is, existence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Der philosophische Daseinsbegriff muß sich dem religiösen Lehrbegriff, dieser aber dem erkenntnistheoretischen Stammbegriff ausweisen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The philosophical Daseinsbegriff must display/answer to the religious Lehrebegriff, this, however, [answers/displays] to the Epistemological-ur-stam-concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The philosophical concept of existence must answer to the religious concept of teachings, but the latter must answer to the epistemological original concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dies alles ist nur skizzenhafte Andeutung~</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of this is only sketchy-adumbration~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of this is only a sketchy indication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

146 “Stößt”: the moment of encounter. Touch. A privative encounter. In the form of Lehre philosophy butts-up-against an absolute.

147 He states this is all just a faint sketch, a rough symbolic representation., a display—just a transcendental infinity of the potential for other speculative transcendental infinities.
Die Grundtendenz dieser Bestimmung vom Verhältnis zwischen Religion und Philosophie ist aber: gleichmäßig zu erfüllen die Forderungen erstens der virtuellen Einheit von Religion und Philosophie, zweitens der Einordnung der Erkenntnis von der Religion in die Philosophie, drittens der Integrität der Dreiteilung des Systems. The grounding-tendency of this determination-ing of (halting)-relationship between religion and philosophy is, however: consistently to fulfill the call first for virtual-unity of religion and philosophy; second the ordering-of-Erkenntnis from religion into philosophy; third, the integrity of the threefold-divided system. The basic tendency of this definition of the relationship between religion and philosophy, however, is to meet the demands for, first, the virtual unity of religion and philosophy; second, the incorporation of the knowledge of religion into philosophy; third, the integrity of the tripartite division of the system.

Hopefully, the preceding retranslation-commentary has unfolded Benjamin’s re-cognition of the centrality of “language” to human experience and knowledge and the simultaneous emerging of the transcendental yet speculative and stipulation of a performative Darstellung. For reinforcement of concept please return to section one and repeat reading as needed.
Section Two: On “The Task of the Translator”:

Re-introduction:

I began preparing to translate Walter Benjamin’s “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” in fall of 2020. The process was slow and arduous. I set all previous translations aside and took Benjamin’s words as a guide: “Die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend” (10.24) [The real translation is translucent]. The word “durchscheinend” has been translated by Howard Zohn and Steven Rendall as “transparent,” implying a clarity and lack of obstruction. Antoine Berman in critiquing Gandillac’s French translation marks a similar issue, for “durchscheinend” implies something like “through-shining” but not transparent—something closer to “translucent” (Age 181). I viewed my translation of Benjamin as attempting to be translucent, attempting to allow the original to be experienced in the form of a diffusing of its light as a recognizably distorting medium.

In practice, this involved following Benjamin’s other prescription in the essay: “Das vermag vor allem Wörtlichkeit in der Übertragung der Syntax und gerade sie erweist das Wort, nicht den Satz als das Urelement des Übersetzers.” (10.25) [Above all, this requires Wörtlichkeit in the transposition of the syntax and this precisely proves the word, not the sentence as the Ur-element of the translator. (my translation)] Such a conception of translation corresponds in a reductive manner to the conception of “foreignization” put forth by Friedrich Schleiermacher in a 1813 lecture, known to Benjamin, titled “On the Different Methods of Translating.”

Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him. (49)
Fidelity to rhythm and melody caught in irreconcilable conflict with dialectical and grammatical fidelity! (52)

To move Benjamin’s performative essay towards the reader is to be faithful to grammar, to move the reader towards Benjamin’s Traktat is to be faithful to syntax and rhetoric. Carried forward from Schleiermacher to the modern parlance of Lawrence Venuti (and others), this binary survives in terms of domestication and foreignization. To choose “Wörtlichkeit” (word-for-word) and a transposing of syntax is to side with foreignization, and thus is to see the ur-element as the word and not the sentence: “Denn der Satz ist die Mauer vor der Sprache des Originals, Wörtlichkeit die Arkade” (10.26).

In practice, I began by completing a detailed word for word translation of the German, as published in Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften IV. During this literal translation, I marked out as many possible word choices as I could conceive at that moment, attempting to make no judgements on diction choices, attempting to be open to all possible meanings. The product of such a preliminary step, as Benjamin states, “wirft jede Sinneswiedergabe vollends über den Haufen und droht geradenwegs ins Unverständliche zu führen” (10.12) [“... throws any rendering-of-meaning fully over the heap and threatens to lead-straight in to the un-understandable” (my translation).] For some brief “monströse Beispiele solcher Wörtlichkeit” (10.13) [monstous examples of such Wörtlichkeit]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes,</th>
<th>How namely Shards/Fragments/Sherd of-a Vessel/Jar/Container to-around together-put allow/lets, in the smallest/tiniest/insignificant Particulars/Details one-another to follow/succeed/obey/understand/attend, but not so to equal/resemble have-to-be, so must, instead-of the Senses/Meaning/Point/Feeling of the Original itself alike/similar to make, the Translation loving rather and down to-the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
such a preliminary step allows for a marking of possible meanings, as well as lays the groundwork for marking performative aspects of the essay being enacted on the level of semantics, syntax, and rhetoric.

as I was translating in mornings, I spent afternoons and evenings reading other people’s readings of Benjamin theory of translation. I began to footnote sections and concepts in the original where divergent and/or compelling readings occurred by authors like Antoine Berman, Samuel Weber, Peter Fenves, Beatrice Hanssen, Werner Hamacher, Carol Jacobs, etc. After the initial Wörtlichkeit translation, I began to retranslate focusing on syntax in the original, trying my best to maintain Benjamin’s syntax and create some readability, which is synonymous with domestication. For example:

wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen. (10.18)
Namely [that demand for literality], as shards of a vase, to let itself be-fit-together, to follow one-another in the tiniest details, but not so to have be alike, so must, instead of rendering similar the sense of the original itself, the translation lovingly rather and to the last detail acquire-forms, its manner-of-meaning into its own language, so-as both like shards as fragments of a vase, are made recognizable as fragments of a greater language. (10.18; my translation)

To me this is a compromise. The syntax attempts to maintain the fragmented presenting of the original—it is performing the shards fitting together. While simultaneously I have made certain choices to at least touch readability.

Next, I began the retranslation process. Specifically I focused on Harry Zohn’s translation as published in *Walter Benjamin Selected Works* vol. 1, and Steven Rendall’s 1997 notes and retranslation of the essay. My commentary focused on spots where there were significant differences between the translations of Zohn, Rendall, and myself.

Fragments of a vessel that are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s way of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel. (*SW*1, 260; Zohn)

One can note Zohn’s domestication in the form of splitting the original into two separate sentences, the elimination of the ambiguity of pronouns (its), the lack of action on the part of the object (i.e., the movement to “to be glued together” where the original implies a passive
allowing), etc. The most significant difference between my retranslation-commentary and Zohn and Rendall’s translation is a focus on the performative rhetorical aspects of Benjamin’s essay. This focus on the performative develops from Benjamin’s own writings on presentation; specifically, from “The Task of the Translator” essay, where his notion of presentation and form is marked indirectly in multiple places, such as the often-quoted privileging of “interlinear” forms of translation, or his reading of Mallarmé:

Wenn, was in diesen Worten Mallarmé gedenkt, dem Philosophen streng ermeßbar ist, so steht mit ihren Keimen solcher Sprache die Übersetzung mitten zwischen Dichtung und der Lehre. (9.12)

If, what in these words Mallarmé commemorates [gedenkt], is strictly (fully)measurable to the philosopher, so stands translation, with its sproutings of such-language, midway between literary and theory. (my translation)

My overall process is compelled by such an understanding of retranslation-commentary as midway between literary and theory—an attempting to mark the performative and the terminological—which thus makes it appropriate for performative critical theory like Walter Benjamin’s Darstellung. Forms like the Traktat and retranslation-commentary treat the materiality of language as it unfolds with dignity. That is, such forms thematize the ineptness of human attempts to control language as a technology, even while calling attention to language as a non-instrumental technology.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ I now add the caveat that this “non-instrumental technology” is materiality, though not necessarily matter. To be unfolded below.
The foregrounding of the performative of the original and the translation can be placed in opposition to what Benjamin refers to as the bad translation:

Daher rührt in der Tat ein zweites Merkmal der schlechten Übersetzung, welche man demnach als eine ungenaue Übermittlung eines unwesentlichen Inhalts definieren darf. Dabei bleibt es, solange die Übersetzung sich anheischig macht, dem Leser zu dienen. (Benjamin 2.9-2.10)

Such, actually, is the cause of another characteristic of inferior translation, which consequently we may define as the inaccurate transmission of an inessential content. Whenever a translation undertakes to serve the reader, it demonstrates this. (Zohn, SW 1, 233)

From there, in the act, stirs a second distinctive-mark of bad translation, which one is therefore permitted to define as an inexact over-mediating [Übermittlung] of inessential content. There-by it remains, as long as the translation itself-undertakes to serve the reader. (my translation)

Benjamin uses a varied form of “Mittlung,” “Übermittlung.” Thus, emphasizing the “over.” “Übermittlung” marking the “inexact transmission of an inessential content” to “transmit” implies an indexical type of rendering; the “inexact” marks a sense-based translation; that is, an Übermittlung is a translation that brings the text closer to the reader, through a smoothing over of fractures and tensions between the original language and translated-into-language. Best exemplified in Zohn’s multiple translation choices to remove dashes [“—”] throughout the essay, as well as his grammatization of Benjamin’s Pannwitz example (both to be explored below.)
In contrast, the Benjaminian translator, or the “wahren Übersetzers,” attempts an impossible labor to move less far away from and present “so bleibt dennoch dasjenige unberührbar zurück” [that which remains behind the untouchable] (8.8):

Mag man nämlich an Mitteilung aus ihr entnehmen, soviel man kann und dies übersetzen, so bleibt dennoch dasjenige unberührbar zurück, worauf die Arbeit des wahren Übersetzers sich richtete. (8.8)

One namely from Mitteilung it to-take, so-much one can and this translate, so remains/stays still the-one untouchable backwards, whereupon the Work of the real/true Translator itself righted/aimed/judged. (Literal)

One may namely extract as much Impartion [Mitteilung] as one can and translate that, so yet remains behind that-one untouchable, whereupon the labor of the true translator itself is righted. (my translation)

“Wahren” as “true” would seem to imply a metaphysical category; however, it should be taken in with the context of “Arbeit”: The German “Arbeit points toward an entirely different area of meaning, related to the Greek orphanos [ὁρφανός], the Latin orbus (deprived of), the German Erbe (inheritance), as well as Armut (poverty). To be an orphan is to be a child subject to harsh physical activity in order to provide for one’s own needs” (Untranslatable 1264). Thus the “wahren” as “true” is closer to an impossible and historical “truing” labor, which is a painful,

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149 “Though one may glean as much of that subject matter as one can from a translation, and translate that, the element with which the efforts of the real translation were concerned remains at a quite inaccessible remove . . . “ (Zohn SW 1, 258)

“One can extract from a translation as much communicable content as one wishes, and this much can be translated; but the element toward which the genuine translator’s efforts are directed remains out of reach.” (Rendall, 158)
difficult labor; one that is always-already tinged as a lack, orphaned. Such is the labor of the translator painfully attempting to present the (im)possible of what “remains behind that-one untouchable.” Such “remains behind” marks the instrumentally used materiality of language, as graphic marks, syntax, etc., while the “untouchable” marks what the materiality of language denotes towards, a non-instrumental materiality, what Benjamin will refer to (below) as technique [Technik]. The “wahren” translator, in attempting the painful orphaned labor, does present something towards/as the “untouchable.” In actualized texts, the wahren translator presents a kind of density as a syntactically-faithful translation. This is described, in reference to Hölderlin’s Sophocles word-for-word translations, as “Übertragungen”— which might be thought of as an insufficiently exact transmission of inessential content. Such would be “exact” in its fidelity to syntax of the “inessential” (the linguistic, the graphic), but “insufficient” in not being an equivalent of “what-is-meant.” Or the “wahren” translator in presenting translation in an omni-visible form, i.e., interlinear with commentary that is foreignizing in its fidelity to syntax, such a translator enacts a “Übertragungen.” What the wahren translator “transfers” is not instrumentally meaningful, but rather the impoverished and orphaned relationship of humanity, text, thing, absolute, etc. As such, the wahren translator presenting in an “Übertragungen” manner denotes towards the non-instrumental.

All translations—bad included—are “wahre” due to the nature of language, however “bad” translators presume a relative instrumental mastery; Benjaminian or “wahre” translators in presenting the differences of language in the form (interlinear) denote towards an (im)possible non-instrumental medium, language as technique.
Language as such—Technique:

The mastery of nature (so the imperialists teach) is the purpose of all technology. But who would trust a cane wielder who proclaimed the mastery of children by adults to be the purpose of education? Is not education, above all, the indispensable ordering of the relationship between generations and therefore mastery (if we are to use this term) of that relationship and not of children? And likewise, technology is the mastery of not nature but of the relation between nature and man. Men as a species completed their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology, a physis is being organized through which mankind’s contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families. (SW 1, 487; emphasis added)

For Benjamin, technology is a medium of human and nature, a non-instrumental medium which humans can attempt (and fail) at instrumentalizing for the point of striving towards anew organization—be that organization anew translation, anew manner of thinking, anew community. This “technique” takes many forms, like language:

it is possible to talk about a language of music and of sculpture, about a language of justice that has nothing directly to do with those in which German or English legal judgments are couched, about a language of technology that is not the specialized language of technicians. Language in such contexts means the tendency inherent in the subjects concerned—technology, art, justice, or religion—toward the communication of the contents of the mind. (SW 1, 62)
For Benjamin there is a language of things, of color, of technology, of humans and each ‘language’ denotes towards language as such—this “language as such” denotes a non-instrumental medium. Antoine Berman in *The Experience of the Foreign* in the chapter on Schleiermacher and W. von Humboldt writes: “Language as *environment*, and no longer as *instrument* . . . for any environment is by nature, as Lacan says, ‘something that infinitely surpasses any intention we may put in it’” (143). Immanent to each language as a transcendental infinity (as one momentary legibility/inscribability) is a medium—which in turn the presentation of said medium is immanent as/in a transcendental infinity. To say that “language as such” is the same as “technique” is to state a presentational and conceptual equivalence, that I believe clarifies certain aspects. To say, as Jan Sieber writes,

> Technique is a non-instrumental medium structured like a language. It has the potential to function as a common language for mankind and nature alike. The non-instrumental use of technique can be described as an intense communication not directed towards an end outside of the world but towards the non-all of a universal language of the world. Making a non-instrumental use of technique means to freely use it in order to playfully and constructively give shape to world oriented towards the idea of happiness. Such happiness, again, is not a state, not an end, but that non-place *in* the world where what is in the world is not yet. Happiness as the *a-topos* of the world is at the same time the *a-telos* of technique. It constitutes humanity’s infinite task to which technique is the medium. Technique serves the intensive and fragmentary realization of happiness as the bodily intermingling of nature and man. (Sieber “Technique”)

Such a statement serves to destabilize any transcendental infinity (worldview) that perceives a lack of materiality in Benjamin’s argument. That statement “Technique is a non-instrumental
medium structured like a language,” instead of “language as such” contains a disruptive seed. Jan Sieber’s explanation of “technique” in Benjamin correlates with my own reading. As stated in the previous section, “language” in Benjamin marks a medium. “Language as such” exceeds any singular mode of experience for Benjamin; hence there is a “language of things,” language of color, language of x, y, z—each language is but one infinite transcendental with distorted access to surfaces of legibility/inscribability. Each human language is an instrumentalization of language as such. Language as such can thus be thought of as “non-instrumental medium.” The “structured as a language” speaks to the necessity of keeping the translation visible to an extent.

“Technique is structured like a language” because it is another speculative transcendental infinity—it itself can only ever denote towards the negative “as such,” the “non-instrumental.” To say “structured like a language” points to the instrumentalization of the very idea of non-instrumental. The impossible position. In translation, the imperialistic translator under the mythology of instrumental mastery of language, as Clive Scott states, “pursue[s], through interpretation, the chimaera first of authorial intention and then of linguistic equivalence” (78). Such a translator claims a mythic invisibility, a mythic transparency. In contrast, the Benjaminian translator recognizes the significance of the translator, the lack of mastery of the non-instrumental, and the necessity of instrumentalization despite of. And thus such a translator is compelled towards an interlinear translation as the “the archetype [Urbild] or Ideal of all translation” (12.17); or as Benjamin writes in 1936: “this happy form of translation, which in the commentary takes/gives accountability of itself and makes/performs the fact of the differences of language-situations a/as theme . . . “ (“Traduction” line 26). A textual form which continually presents a multiplicity of language (to “give accountability” and to thematize the “difference of language-situation”) is a form that continually presents/denotes towards the medimic,
technology as medium; such a form does so to make the translation visible as translation. As Clive Scott writes: “the multiplicity of translations then becomes evidence . . . of the rich multiformity of the shared medium itself” (78); the shared medium of the various languages, then denoting towards the shared medium of things, humans, words, nature, etc.

Within Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator,” this non-instrumental medium is present as “untranslatability,” which itself is present in multiple forms throughout. I would like to note such a denoting towards non-instrumental medium in two manners: 1) terminologically as a-topos/a-temporal ideals, like “nowhere, “god’s commemoration” and “sphere of pure language”; 2) motifs of materiality in the form of density/emaciation, and standing. In addition, this non-instrumental medium is present in retranslation-commentary as a methodology and form itself: 1) as an interlinear form including the original, the previous translations, and anew translation; 2) the subjective-presenting commentary which gives account of itself and discusses the differences and similarities.

**Non-instrumental Medium—Terminological, A-topos/A-temporal:**

As quoted above, Sieber states,

Happiness as the *a-topos* of the world is at the same time the *a-telos* of technique. It constitutes humanity’s infinite task to which technique is the medium. Technique serves the intensive and fragmentary realization of happiness as the bodily intermingling of nature and man.” (Sieber “Technique”)

Such a-topos can be thought of as speculative ideals—be it in the form of a “coming” philosophy/community/politics or in the form of ideal spheres of language, like “pure language.”

I argue there are multiple examples of such in Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator.”
Nirgends:

Starting with the first word of the entire essay: “nirgends.”

Nirgends erweist sich einem Kunstwerk oder einer Kunstform gegenüber die Rücksicht auf den Aufnehmenden für deren Erkenntnis fruchtbar.

In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. (Zohn)

When seeking knowledge of a work of art or an art form, it never proves useful to take the receiver into account. (Rendall)

Nowhere does the Regard of the Absorber towards an Artwork or an Artform prove fruitful to Knowledge. (my translation)

Benjamin’s first word—“Nirgends”—is etymologically distinct in its simple consistency. Emerging in the Middle High German period, 1050-1350, “nirgend” has since signified “nowhere” (Kluge 253). Zohn and Rendall’s choice to translate this sentence into temporal negation [“never”] possibly misses the trope of an impossible space that plays throughout the essay. Far from being a negative sentence, this is an affirmative statement: “Nowhere is a time/place where regarding the Absorber/Recipient of a work of art would be fruitful to knowledge.” Could this be a lapsarian space? In the Garden, before the fall, would regarding Adam have given us information about the object?

Yes. For in the garden, before the fall, Adam shares a true affinity with materiality, in the form of a material language and not subjected to it—“He did not wish to subject him to language, but in man God set language . . . God rested when he had left his creative power to
itself in man. This creativity, relieved of its divine actuality, became knowledge” (*SW* 1,68).

Man’s relationship to things is different than Gods’ but not fallen, yet. In paradise, Adam named through a prelapsarian “translation” of “the language of things into that of man” (*SW* 1,70). This translation is one of pure cognition: “It is therefore the translation of an imperfect language into a more perfect one, and cannot but add something to it, namely, knowledge” (70). Human naming stood in a supplementary relationship to God’s actualization, but fulfilled itself in the translation with a total thing-name. In the prelapsarian garden, Adam’s naming was an act of pure-translation, “the creative word in them is the germ of the cognizing name” (70). The things communicated their name *materially* as an act of “cognizing.” God does not give the Name. Adam names through communing with Nature. This is a material singular naming, as the material things are offering the names which are uniquely specific, i.e. not ubiquitous forms. In such an a-topos/a-temporal Nirgends, there is a direct correspondence between thing-name-knowledge—a prelapsarian-human Messianic power of legibility and inscriptibility. The things commune with Adam in a material manner (i.e., pure-legibility) and Adam names in a paradoxical act of mimetic-translation (i.e., pure-inscriptibility).

But the fruit was eaten, and the fall(s) occurred. Translation was still the means by which human’s named; but postlapsarian, “the language of things can pass into the language of knowledge and name only through . . . so many translations, so many languages . . . all knowledge is again infinitely differentiated in the multiplicity of language” (71). And moreover since God made all “good” in the garden, any knowledge of good and evil (judgment), obtained within the Garden, is fetishtic knowledge.

Even the existence of the Tree of Knowledge cannot conceal the fact that the language of Paradise was fully cognizant. Its apples were supposed to impart knowledge of good and
evil. But on the seventh day, God had already cognized with the words of creation. And God saw that it was good. The knowledge to which the snake seduces, that of good and evil, is nameless. It is vain in the deepest sense, and this very knowledge is itself the only evil known to the paradisiacal state. Knowledge of good and evil abandons name; it is a knowledge from outside, the uncreated imitation of the creative word. (SW 1, 71)

In this postlapsarian state human naming becomes both nameless babel and also marks (in)communicability as language. Simultaneously,

In the language of men, however, [things] are over-named. There is, in the relation of human languages to that of things, something that can be approximately described as ‘over-naming’—the deepest linguistic reason for all melancholy and (from the point of view of the thing) for all deliberate muteness. Over-naming as the linguistic being of melancholy points to another curious relation of language: the over-precision that obtains in the tragic relationship between the languages of human speakers. (SW 1, 75)

This passage gestures to the insatiable need to name, which leads to over-naming and over-precision. This need comes from the “melancholy” of nature after the fall in being over-

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150 This highlights the supplementary nature of all language—the need of name to supplement name leading to over determination. But, keep in mind that all these tropes are a mythic narrative meant to maybe disrupt the claims of mono-narratives/methodologies, and itself. The “melancholy” gestures to Agamben’s conception of “the fetish, [which] confronts us with the paradox of an unattainable object that satisfies a human need precisely through being unattainable” (Stanzas 33). The human insatiatable need to over-name, speaks to a fetishistic relationship caused by the unbridgeable abyss, which in turn demands continual supplement for human survival. Melancholia marks our fallen state, where naming (once a simultaneous and certain power of legible-inscription) has become a weak-naming (the infinite possibilities of legibility/inscriptibility): “in melancholia the object is neither appropriated nor lost, but both possessed and lost at the same time. And as the fetish is at once the sign of something and its absence, and owes to this contradiction its own phantomatic status, so the object of the melancholic project is at once real and unreal, incorporated and lost, affirmed and denied” (Stanzas 21). This is being performed in this essay that you are reading in the continual attempting to mark what Benjamin is doing and why, and the need I have to do so.
named; but the over-naming comes from the desire to alleviate the melancholy—the fall from pure-translation, and the subsequent infinite task of redemption. However, “for the sake of [nature’s] redemption the life and language of man . . . are in nature” (SW 1, 72). This possibility of “redemption” for nature is offered through the “language of man.”

Though Benjamin is personifying nature, humankind is also part of nature—thus both are in a postlapsarian melancholic state allegorically denoting towards the non-instrumental medium, deformed rhetorically by Benjamin as Nirgends; both legibility and inscriptibility become infinitely fragmenting, yet each specific reading/writing opens the possibility of redemption towards the non-instrumental medium, the medium free of fetishtic knowledge, rhetorically presenting here as Nirgends. This redemption would be to transfer true indexical semantic and syntactic perfectly, an (im)possible task; and yet, each act of naming through fragmenting translation is a possible act of redemption, in representing inscriptibility/legibility—in offering the possibility of a reading of traces. As stated above,

A textual form which continually presents a multiplicity of language (to “give accountability” and to thematize the “difference of language-situation”) is a form that continually presents/denotes towards the mediumic, the technology as medium; such a form does so to make the translation visible as translation.

And hence, such a-topos, as Nirgends, is both strategic and seemingly foundational (at least currently) to human language/thinking. Such a-topos/a-temporal rhetorical forms are an example

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151 Benjamin’s use of “redemption” and “theology” here and in the later text is not defined in a precise manner to something outside his work: “like all of Benjamin’s writing that makes explicit use of theological motifs, it is drawn freely from Jewish and Christian sources” (Eiland Life 659). This “drawn freely” leads to the use of words and images being over-generalized, in contrast with over-precision; “Theology,” “mystical,” etc. become a kind of short hand for being seduced by the apple, thinking that the abyss has been overcome.
of what Fenves calls the “paradoxical primacy of fantasy for securing the content for philosophical knowledge” (Arresting 203), or Benjamin’s “the virtual possibility of formulating the work’s truth content” (SW 1, 334), or Weber’s “certain virtualizations” (39). These virtualizations “define their own virtuality in terms of the absence of what they name, [as well as] in terms of its radical alteration” (Weber 40). Thus, Benjamin is not implying that such a-topos existed or could exist in Actuality, but such a narrative has a rhetorical function in his texts; the Garden is a “Nirgends,” an a-topos that marks a rhetorical idea, and thus allows for the 1) comprehension of the “fallen” state of language which is often suppressed in the forms of mythic knowledge that claim technological mastery—be the technology “name” or “translation”; and 2) an ideal aim by which to play out the infinite task towards. In “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” and “The Task of the Translator” the a-topos denotes towards a realm of corresponding name-thing.

**God’s Remembrance:**

Another such a-topos in “The Task of the Translator” is “God’s remembrance.”

Wenn nämlich deren Wesen es forderte, nicht vergessen zu werden, so würde jenes Prädikat nichts Falsches, sondern nur eine Forderung, der Menschen nicht entsprechen, und zugleich auch wohl den Verweis auf einen Bereich enthalten, in dem ihr entsprochen wäre: auf ein Gedenken Gottes. (3.10)

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152 In “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” the prelapsarian mythic stands in tension with a modern mythic science of equivalence.

153 “If the nature of such a life or moment required that it be unforgotten, that predicate would imply not a falsehood but merely a claim unfulfilled by men, and probably also a reference to a realm in which it is fulfilled: God’s remembrance.” (Zohn, SW 1, 234)
If namely their Essence it asked/claimed/required, not forgotten to be, so would that
Predicate not False, but Humans not correspond, and concurrently also probably the
Reference to/on/at a Region contains/to-halt, in which it corresponded be: on/to/in/at a
commemoration God. (Literal)

If namely their Essence demanded it, not to be forgotten, so that predicate would not be
false, but only a demand [that] humans do not correspond with, and simultaneously also probably contain the reference to a region, in which it would have corresponded: a commemoration of God. (my translation)

To break down a few aspects: the literal syntactic of the German is performative. With an appositive construction, “it” is defined as “not to be forgotten”—a playful ambiguity. It raises the question: Why the necessity of the “it” between the defining: that is, “Essence”—“it”—“forgotten.” Instead of “Essence”—“forgotten.” A rhetorical performance in underway: The “demand to not be forgotten” is attached to the “it” and not the “essence.” Thus presenting the necessity of mediation through the distorting, ambiguity of language. The performance is towards more-forgetting: “unforgettable” to “Essence” to “it.” If the “Essence” carries a demand to not be forgotten, then the “Essence” is translatability; the “Essence” is the structural possibility of translation, which in meditation “it” is quasi-forgotten.

“If the essence of such lives or moments required that they not be forgotten, this predicate would not be false, it would merely be a demand to which human beings had failed to respond, and at the same time, no doubt, a reference to a place where this demand would find a response, that is, a reference to a thought in the mind of God. “(Rendall, 152)

154 “Zugleich” is here implying “at the same time” and in the same “flesh”—as in “Leiche.” The same moment and substance.
Next, “Entsprochen” as “correspondence” makes literal sense but is awkward here. The verb is used twice: 1) what humans cannot do i.e., not-forget the essence, and 2) as what the area of the commemoration of God can do. Zohn’s “unfulfilled” and “fulfilled” makes sense; but it loses the indications of an “intercourse” or “communing.” To be human is to forget the “Essence” via the Mitteilung of language, which is the state of postlapsarian humanity; to be human is to be unable to correspond-fully with the demand to not-forget; to be human is to leave the demand unanswered, unfulfilled, not out of anything like agency, but rather as a passive correspondence, a structural necessity of being human.

Zohn translates “in dem ihr entsprochen wäre” as “in which it is fulfilled.” The italicization of “is” is not in the original German. The verb sequence “entsprochen wäre” seems to be past subjunctive. So why is Zohn shifting the tense and emphasizing his shift? Possibly because of a tension held with a previous sentence: “unvergeßlichen Leben oder Augenblick gesprochen werden” [may be spoken of an unforgettable [unvergeßlichen] life or blink-of-an-eye-instant [Augenblick] (3.9). There is a tension between an impossible space-time when the unforgettable-life is/was experienced, and simultaneously-and-in-the-same-flesh [zugleich] with the impossible time-space of “God’s commemoration.” Both of these imply a nonplace/nontime where/when a possible thick-Messianic-writing (will have) occurred. Both mark allegorically the quasi-transcendental structure of possibility for experience/thinking, and mark in a manner that attempts to elide the human-necessity of forgetting. For to be human is to exists in a language/experience/thinking that requires to forget pre/non-linguistic-a-topos; thus, such seemingly impossible space-times (Nowhere, God’s Commemoration, Unforgettable) mark distortions of this requirement and offer an allegorical experience of such. This brings us back to the first sentence: “Nowhere does the regard of the absorber towards an artwork or an artform
prove fruitful to their knowledge.” The location of “God’s commemoration” would be such a “nowhere.” A prelapsarian space-time where an idiosyncratic and material language of true-naming (always-already) occurs. This “space” is re-presented in various manners throughout the essay. For a non-imagistic example, such is implied in Benjamin’s citations of Mallarmé and Pannwitz, which stand as examples where “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense” become the-same, and thus denote to this (im)possible “nowhere.”

**Non-instrumental Medium—Motifs of Materiality:**

Besides the terminological and conceptual side, the other side of the presentation of non-instrumental mediums is in the form of motifs of materiality and untranslatability, specifically in motifs of *standing*, density and emaciation.

**Materiality and Lacan:**

A note on what is meant by “materiality,” as it presents in “The Task of the Translator”: Benjamin’s rhetorical motifs denote towards the materiality of language, towards the materiality of *the letter*. I hesitate to bring Lacan into this dissertation, but a loose use of *the letter* correlates seemingly well with Benjamin’s implications of materiality, material content, and denoting towards an untranslatable/absolute. First, as touched on in section one of this dissertation: “critique seeks the truth content of a work of art; commentary its material content” (*SW* 1, 297). Critique’s focus is on the Sinne/significance of the work, while commentary is focused on the letter. This parallel to Lacan is marked by Antoine Berman: “commentary is not the same thing as a critical analysis. The latter focuses above all on ideas. Commentary, by contrast, focuses on the language—the letter—of the text” (*Age* 76). By “letter” I mean the text in its unique order—syntax, diction, style, language. The act of translation is the distortion of such into other. In our
current era where invisible translation is still highly valued, published translations lean toward covering over the letter in order to produce Sinn/significance.

According to Dylan Evans, Lacan conceives of the letter, not as a mere graphic representation of a sound, but as the material basis of language itself; ‘By letter I designate that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language’ (E, 147). The letter is thus connected with the real, a material substrate that underpins the symbolic order. The concept of materiality implies, for Lacan, both the idea of indivisibility and the idea of locality; the letter is therefore ‘the essentially localized structure of the signifier.’ (102)

In Benjamin, this correlates with his conception of language as non-instrumental technique. Mark that for Lacan, and I argue Benjamin, that paradoxically this “materiality implies . . . both the idea of indivisibility”—i.e., a speculative a-topos substrata that is undivided—and “idea of locality”—i.e., the here-now particular transcendental infinity.155

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155 The experience of the materiality of the letter or materiality of language unfolds in stations of contemplation. After much reading, thinking, writing, there is sometimes an unfolding: first, a recognition of the text itself as a materiality: graphic marks on the page. This station involves a momentary revelation when the text that has been thought of as meaning X denotes its allegoricalness and presents itself as material marks on a surface. Second, this in a vertiginous turn, denotes to the possibility of a substrata perceived often, in my experience, as undivided—this is the technique, or pure-language. The vertiginous aspect of this, is in the thought that the “second station” is really a slipping back into a mode of thought that is before the first station. In my experience, when the letter shifts from presenting itself to denoting towards speculative possible other, this is a shift back into a particular transcendental infinity, anew reconfiguration of the same. And yet, remembering Benjamin’s statement: “In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows” [N1,1]. The first revelation station is the lightning, the Now-of-Recognizability, while the second “denoting” towards atemporal/atopos is the shift to the thunder. Thunder is where the possible is distorted into actual, a strategic necessity for any anew community, thinking, forms, etc.
The material content of a text for Benjamin—be it the letters of the text as such, the individual word, the material content of an artwork—all contain an immanent trace of the absolute, or what is beyond/before/coming, the a-topos/a-temporal other. What occurs in the act of retranslation is the recognition of the letter, of the text as a here-now distortion. This recognition points to the letter in particular and materiality as such. Materiality and the ideal a-temporal images (God’s remembrance / sphere of pure language) are the same coin. Both are presenting to the reader as graphic letters, thus particular transcendental material presentation; and yet both denote towards the speculative possibility of other particular transcendental potentialities, as well as denote to the possibility of a purely material (or purely ideal) realm—in such an a-temporal/a-topos realm materialism and idealism would be meaningless.

Hence, when one argues that Benjamin’s Darstellung denotes towards the materiality of language, this is twofold at least: denoting towards its letter (transcendental) and yet also the letter (speculative); however, the Darstellung and retranslation-commentary attempt to disrupt the all so human elements of necessity and teleology, through suspending materiality and ideality, transcendental yet speculative (or vice versa) “precisely over this abyss”—the “great abyss” of human’s infusion of teleology and necessity in language and subsequently conflation with things.

**Materiality and de Man’s “Task”:**

More directly to the essay, such a conception of materiality of the “letter” in Benjamin is present in Paul de Man’s lecture on “The Task of the Translator,” specifically in his reading of the space between word and sentence, and the letter and the word:
it is a-sēmos, it is without meaning. When you spell a word you say a certain number of meaningless letters, which then come together in the word, but in each of the letters the word is not present. The two are absolutely independent of each other. What is being named here as the disjunction between grammar and meaning, Wort and Satz, is the materiality of the letter, the independence, or the way in which the letter can disrupt the ostensibly stable meaning of a sentence and introduce in it a slippage by means of which that meaning disappears, evanesces, and by means of which all control over that meaning is lost. (RT 89)

There is always-already a disjunction between the signifier and the signified—or here the letter and the word, or rhetoric and grammar. Any meaning is relative, or rather bounded to a here-now, a particular transcendental infinity frame of inscribable/readable. However, the “materiality of the letter” marks the “absolute independence” for de Man; this would possibly be too much for Benjamin, who I argue, leaves open the door for the potential non-elective affinity—though such an occurrence would at best be a chance happening and would most likely be meaningless within the frame of our current transcendental infinity. And yet, besides this “absolute” de Man’s “materiality of the letter” offers a useful comprehension of Benjamin’s motifs of materiality. For Benjamin, the motifs of materiality do mark an independence; they are “absolutely” separated, but the potential for correspondence is omnipresent. For to state they are “absolutely separated” would be to fall into a transcendental infinity tinged with teleology and necessity. And yet, rhetorically the “materiality of the letter” and various motifs of materiality present as “absolutely independent,” thus serving a function of an infinite tasking—compelling the “slippage” that frees meaning from “all control.” The performativity of the form once again becomes the active destabilizing attribute, halting any “absolute” readings, including its own.
The following motifs of materiality in Benjamin mark historically particular transcendental yet speculative frames. In Benjamin, such differing motifs function to hold in tension the seemingly opposite sides of a here-now.

To unpack *standing* and “density,” I turn to paragraph two of “The Task of the Translator.”

*Dichtung:*

Was ›sagt‹ denn eine Dichtung? Was teilt sie mit? Sehr wenig dem, der sie versteht. (2.3)

For what does a literary work “say”? What does it communicate? It “tells” very little to those who understand it. (Zohn)

What does a poem “say,” then? What does it communicate? Very little, to a person who understands it. (Rendall)

What “says” a ThickLiterary? What does it im-part with? Very little to those who understand it.156 (my translation)

“Dichtung” is translated by Zohn as “literary work,” but the meaning surpasses “literature” “fiction” even “poetry”; for “dichten” connotes “invention” and “confabulation”; while “dicht” carries a material sense of “density,” “thickness.” “Dichtung” thus implies a “complex relationship between fiction and reality” (*Untranslatables* 216). The density implied is lost in the translation to English; but is of particular importance for Benjamin’s trope of a prelapsarian material-language. Something like “thick-literary” might be useful. This quality of “thick” denotes towards the material-substrata, while the “literary” is the grammar, together they refuse

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156 Zohn includes a “tells” that is not in the German. “Tells” has an implication of purposeful communication, as in trying to tell, but “say” does not necessary imply an interlocutor.
and demand meaning. Certain modes-forms of language—thick-literary, essayistic—both
demand and refuse translation and criticism. For Benjamin, these texts have a heft, a thickness—
i.e., Dichtung. In “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” “density” as a
characteristic of different “media” of language is mentioned directly:

| Einen Inhalt der Sprache gibt es nicht; als Mitteilung teilt die Sprache ein geistiges Wesen, d. i. eine Mitteilbarkeit schlechthin mit. Die Unterschiede der Sprachen sind solche von Medien, die sich gleichsam nach ihrer Dichte, also graduell, unterscheiden; und das in der zweisehaf ten Hinsicht nach der Dichte des Mitteilenden (Benennenden) und des Mitteilbaren (Namen) in der Mitteilung. Diese beiden Sphären, die rein geschieden und doch vereinigt nur in der Namensprache des Menschen, entsprechen sich natürlich ständig. | A content of Language there is not; as im-partation im-parts the language a spiritual Being, i.e., an impartibility as such with. The under-differencing of languages are such of Mediums, which itself quasi so-to-speak their Density, so gradually, under-differencing; and that in the twofold regard according to the Density of the Imparting (naming) and the Impartable (names) in the Impartion. These two spheres, which purely divided and yet united only in the Name-Language of man, correspond themselves naturally continuously. (Literal) | There is not a content of language; as Impartation, language im-parts a spiritual Being, i.e., an impartibility as such. The differences of languages are such of Medium, which differs itself so-to-speak by their Density, so gradually; and in that twofold regard according to the Density of the Imparting (naming) and the Impartable (name) in the Impartation. These two spheres, which purely divided and yet united only in the Name-Language of Man, naturally continuously corresponding. (my translation) | There is no such thing as a content of language; as communication, language communicates a mental entity—something communicable per se. The differences between languages are those of media that are distinguished as it were by their density—that is, gradually; and this with regard to the density both of the communicating (naming) and of the communicable (name) aspects of communication. These two spheres, which are clearly distinguished yet united only in the name—language of man, are naturally constantly interrelated. (SW 1,66) |

157 “Unterschiede”: echoes the im-partation, in the form of a division; here an under-division, a sub-division.
“Density” is here a varying quality of different kinds of mediation/mediums and refers to two aspects of said quality: the density of the imparting (the act/event of naming) and the density of the impartable (name). [Or, as Peter Fenves writes—utilizing the language in the start the above quote—“Benjamin employs the word, ‘density,’ Dichte . . . because each language is the expression of, ‘as it were,’ a spatial-material proportionality” (“Genesis” 85).] Some mediums of impartation are denser in the act, and some in the product. By “density of impartable” I image a form of writing: for instance, a textbook with bolded definitions would be an emaciated form (where name seems to be equivalent with thing); while a retranslation-commentary would be a dense impartable form (where the impartation between name and thing is continually marked). Likewise, the translation where the translator is made invisible would be an emaciated form of Imparting (where the act of naming, of translating, is rendered invisible, upholding a myth of equivalent communication of content); while the retranslation-commentary where the translator and act of translation are thematized and made omnipresenting would be a Dense form of Imparting. In the retranslation-commentary, the “divided and yet united” “continuously corresponding” are present in the form.

Returning to the question asked above: “Was teilt sie mit?” Weber writes on the notion of “im-parting” that is implied in the dual sense of “teilt” (41-42) What is shared and what is parted? In the act of translation, “Dichtung” losses some thickness in its im-parting.

Mitteilung:

Ihr Wesentliches ist nicht Mitteilung, nicht Aussage. (2.4)

Its essential quality is not communication or the imparting of information. (Zohn)

Neither message nor statement is essential to it. (Rendall)
Its essential is not Impartation, not statement. (my translation)

“Mitteilung” is this modality of im-parting and shar-ing. Yet, the forms of it appear to be largely negative. Naomi Cohen and Vivian Liska indicates a connection to Benjamin’s reading of the character “Mittler” in his essay “Goethe’s Elective Affinities:” “Benjamin’s work, as does his important article on Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*, where a character in the novel, a go-between called ‘Mittler,’ forces compromise and eliminates the singularity of opposite viewpoints” (235).

The “Mittler” im-parts, shearing away a singularity, here and now alluding to the thickness of the name in the garden: the “essential” is im-parted through Mitteilung, as the Mittler brings the thickness into “Aussage,” i.e., into the actual. The essential (i.e., thickest Dichtung) in the act of im-parting into actuality is made less thick. With another vertiginous turn, the “Essential” can be thought of as a speculative formation, a virtuality; as such, what is performed in such a deceptively simple sentence\(^{158}\) is an allegory of the possible moving into the actual, and the emaciation that occurs through such.

Moreover, Weber in *Benjamin’s -abilities* and Hamacher in “Intensive Languages,” both maintain that instead of “communication,” “Mitteilung” should be thought of as “impartible” and communicability as “impartibility.”

The word Mitteilung is composed of two parts: the root, formed from the verb teilen (to separate or partition), and the adverbial prefix mit- (‘with’). Literally, then, the word suggests ‘partitioning with,’ or also, ‘sharing.’ But to share, I must first divide, and it is

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\(^{158}\) “Ihr Wesentliches ist nicht Mitteilung, nicht Aussage.” (2.4)
precisely this double movement that is reflected in the English word, to impart. (Weber 40-41)

So, when Benjamin asks the question what does language impart, the answer is itself:

What does language ‘communicate’ or impart? It imparts the spiritual being that speaks to it . . . Spiritual being is identical with linguistic being, only insofar as it is impartable. Whatever of a spiritual being is impartable, is its linguistic being . . . That which is impartable about a spiritual being, is its language. On this ‘is’ (equivalent to ‘is immediately’) everything depends . . . This impartible [Mitteilbare] is immediately [unmittelbar] language itself . . . This means: each language imparts itself [teilt sich mit].

(SW 1, 63) (Weber 41)

Language imparts simultaneously the means and what is meant. But the aspect of the “spiritual” is the aspect that can be imparted as language—its linguistic being; while also carrying with it traces, distortions, of the parts of the spiritual being that were parted with, i.e., the thickness. And just as “translatability” also marks the “untranslatability,” the possible mental/spiritual being that is imparted in the linguistic being (as traces of an absence, as distortions) mark the in-communicability (un-impartibility).

Dennoch könnte diejenige Übersetzung, welche vermitteln will, nichts vermitteln als die Mitteilung—also Unwesentliches. (2.5)

Yet any translation that intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but communication—hence, something inessential. (Zohn)

However, a translation that seeks to transmit something can transmit nothing other than a message—that is, something inessential. (Rendall)
Nevertheless, the translation, which wills to transmit, could transmit nothing but the impartation—thus the Unessential. (my translation)

The use of “vermitteln” implying conveying or transmitting should be understood as a delusional conception of translation being an adequate version of the original. Translation cannot transmit the essential (singular, thick, impossible) but only “transmit” the im-parting which is un-essential. It is “unessential” in its emaciation, its im-parting of thickness; and yet, as Benjamin wrote in the 1916 essay, “For language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, the same time, a symbol of the noncommunicable” (SW 1, 74). This “symbol” of the un-impartible hints at the traces of what was discarded in the imparting; and hence, marks the thickness, the paradox of virtual materiality. In the context of sentence 2.5, “unessential” marks the “im-partation,” and yet this “unessential” is the allegorical character for the “essential” (i.e., the materiality, the thick-literary). One may read this “unessential” as that which has already been im-parted, emaciated of thickness, and yet it also alludes to thickness. Unessential could be thought of as actualized from a certain angle. In other contexts, from other positions, “essential” and “unessential” could be switched. “Essential” and “unessential” like “pure-language” or “nirgends” mark particular speculative transcendental frames. Hence, “density” as a motif of materiality is present as that which is im-parted, and that which is experienced, in a vertiginous reflective moment “Dichtung” implies both the speculative materiality that has been im-parted, and the actual, transcendental material mark, both the graphic presentation and denotes towards impartibility as such.159

159 To push this further, seeing as spiritual or mental being is imparted in impartibility it is not a far leap to connect consciousness and language as Benjamin does in mythogeme of Genesis, where language, consciousness, and knowledge are all entangled: implying the state of humanity post-lapsarian.
This head spinning vertiginous movement, which warrants a short digression, is the Benjamian motif of contemplation; itself an im-partation process.

Relative levels of Dichtung, or “stations of contemplation”:

In the Epistemo-Critical Prologue:

John Osborne translation:

“... the contemplative mode of representation.” “This form can be counted successful only when it forces the reader to pause and reflect” (29).

My translation:

“... contemplative representation” [no mention of mode in original here.] “Only where it coerces the reader to hold/observe/discontinue [einzufahren] in stations of contemplation, is it secure.”

The notion of “stations of contemplation” is important and lacking in the Osbourn translation. “Stations” implies a stop, a pause, but also stages. As one twirls in a halting fashion around each sentence, each word, each mark, one moves through stations of contemplation. These stations are present in my experience as a translator of Benjamin, in his use of—and “—” [the dash]:

1. — experienced in reading/translating; is an encounter moment. [Dash not in quotes here to signify lack of referential level yet.]
2. ‘—’ as poetic-terminological mark of a speculative thick-literary, or pre-linguistic-materiality. This station gains vague referential meaning: becoming what Agamben, “Cognizability is impartibility: the medium common to cognition and the cognized” (Hamacher 485). The medium being the impartibility.
reading Derrida, describes as a “trace of the trace” (Potentialities 211). This station is the first erasure of an experience of an encounter.

3. “—” begins to (in a more seemingly geometrico manner) signify “Mitteilung” and the prelinguistic-materiality. In doing so, Sign-signifies-Sign, thus exposing themselves as signs. i.e., “—” becomes self-referential exposing itself as a graphic, determined sign, which erases the marking of the pre-linguistic-materiality. Thus, “—” is a “trace of the erasure of the trace” (Agamben Potentialities, 211)

4. “—” “Mitteilung” and “prelinguistic-materiality” “Thick-literary”: All (graphic-traces-and-concepts) fall into (signifying in the fall) a constellation, of the problem/question of language, logic, and event. My own explanatory terminology becomes referential of “—” and “Mitteilung.” Traces of erasure of Traces of erasures of the trace.

Hence with each attempting to explain one moves farther away from the indescribable encounter with a prelinguistic-materiality, the thick-literary. While simultaneously, each possible over-Mitteilung (impossible rendering of a particular in general, i.e., a delusional notion of indexical signification) is disrupted by such vertiginous critical essayings of translation and reading through the stations of contemplation.

_Dichterisches Heim:

| Das ist denn auch ein Erkennungszeichen der schlechten Übersetzungen. (2.6) | That is also a sign-of-recognition of bad translations. (my translation) | And this is also the hallmark of bad translations. (Rendall) | This is the hallmark of bad translations. (Zohn) |

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160 “schlechten” – bad or evil.
I have already started to trace the “thick” “material” connections to “Dichtung” which is likewise implied in “dichterische.” To continue this line of thought: that which is “parted” in Mitteilung is the essential; the language in Benjamin’s original reflects this play of parting with Mitteilung. Moreover, there is a materiality implied here. The “Dichtung” loses the “dichterische” in the parting of Mitteilung, i.e., loses the poetic-density, poetic-material-thickness. This essential is tied to “das Unfaßbare, Geheimnisvolle, ‘Dichterische’.” Geheimnisvolle has the root of “Heim” i.e., home. “Geheim” according to Fluge’s Etymological Dictionary has a meaning of “belonging to the house.” Thus “secretive” or “private” [Geheim] have a lost material implication of home. Though “Unfaßbare” would seem to imply the opposite of a thick-materiality, i.e., the intangible or that which cannot be mediated linguistically, but this is exactly the materiality being discussed. The “thickness” that is decimated as a [impossible to describe experience of “bumping-up-against”] becomes a—becomes a “—” becomes a “Mitteilung” etc. that which is

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161 To create a hierarchy of denseness based on parts of speech in Benjamin is interesting but would be a move towards methodologization. Rather if a noun, verb, or adjective is denser would have to be based on context, its locality. They all potentially reveal the particular transcendental infinity and denote towards the speculative possibility of other transcendental infinities depending on context.
parted with is one part of a materiality experienced as and erased by a shared-and-parted materiality.

Das der Übersetzer nur wiedergeben kann, indem er—auch dichtet? (2.8)

And is this not something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also-a poet? (Zohn)

That which the translator can render only insofar as he—also writes poetry? (Rendall)

That the Translator only again-give can, while he—also thickening/composing? (Literal)

That the translator can only give-again whilst—also composing [dichtet]? (my translation)

The structure here is true to the German. For clarity’s sake, there are two “that” phrases responding to a question of “is it not generally held” in the previous sentence: 1) that the essential is lost in Mitteilung and it is the part called the unfathomable, and 2) translators can only give-this-back through the act of translating/composing. The verb form of “dichtet,” “dichten,” implies a form of “thick” “writing” with a material component. Zohn changes this “dichtet” from a verb to that of a noun— “Poet.” A choice that parts-with the oddly thick-material-modal-quality of “dichten,” as well as involving a reification via prosopopoeia. In Sum: the translator can only attempt to “give-back” what is lost in the act of re-trying, i.e., in the (im)possible act of dichten. The “—” marks the différance between Zohn’s “poet,” the literal thickening/composing and Benjamin’s “dichten.”

Benjamin draws the weight of “dichten” from Hölderlin who states: “doch dichterisch, wohnet der Mensch auf dieser Erde,” underscored subsequently by Heidegger’s “Poetically Man Dwells.” However, though Benjamin’s and Heidegger both read and write on Hölderlin, dichterisch, Heim—the difference between the two according to Antonia Egel is one of
aesthetics versus metaphysics: “Whereas Heidegger thinks of this origin literally and even historically, Benjamin does so aesthetically” (184). This specific citation is in reference to “Heim,” and gets to the heart of the distinction, as I understand it currently: for Benjamin “Heim” is a rhetorical trope. It functions in the text to denote towards the possibility of something other and reveal its own unstable frameworks. Any pointing towards an “origin” thought of as necessarily real, and not halted from slipping into dogma, would be to forget its (de)form as a dense trope.

Standing:

By stand [steht] I am referring to a motif of materiality in Benjamin’s essay that correlates with Lacan’s notion of the letter: “By letter I designate that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language” (147). When I say a text stands it marks an untranslatable aspect of the text in a material fashion; to stand is to resist translation, i.e., resists an instrumental use of language. Such standing is surfacy in presenting as the letter—this is most present in the above dense material encounters, but it also functions as a motif in Benjamin’s essay in other manners.

Dash:

To note: the “—” (dashes), (throughout the paragraph and essay) stand as another marking of a resistant materiality that is lost in the translators’ Mitteilung. The dashes throughout paragraph two mark the im/possible dichten, Mitteilung, and translator’s “wiedergeben,” re-rendering: a futile attempt to compensate the requisite, the parted thickness of an “Essential” and “original” only implied in the graphic-mark of the in/essential. But this “essential” or “original” is diluted at the site of dichten, simultaneously and just as “Mitteilung” and “—” are beginning
to emaciate any dense relation to a modality of possible/actual. And thus, denote to the
untranslatable as that which *stands* in defiance to emaciation.

“Steht” as *standing*:

Den erreicht es nicht mit Stumpf und Stiel, aber in ihm steht dasjenige, was an einer
Übersetzung mehr ist als Mitteilung. (8.6)

The original cannot enter there in its entirety, but what does appear in this region is that
element in a translation which goes beyond transmittal of subject matter. (Zohn)

The original does not attain this domain in every respect, but in it lies that which, in a
translation, is more than a message. (Rendall)

The reached it not with Stump and Stem, but in it stands the one, which to/by a
Translation more is as a Mitteilung. (Literal)

It is not reached with stump and stem, but in that which stands the-one, what in a
translation is more than Impartion. (my translation)

“Es” refers back to the “original” in the sentences above 8.6; and hence Zohn and Rendall’s
translations *make* sense. But as a single sentence performing, “es” carries an ambiguous heft,
marking the indefinability of that “the-one” [dasjenige] that is “more than im-partation” [mehr . . .
als Mitteilung]. Such a “more than” denotes to the untranslatable, which “steht” in defiance of
impartation and thus is a residue of what is “more than.” From another angle, The sentence form
here implies that *that* which “steht” is more than “Mitteilung.” This “more than” that *stands*
denotes towards a-topos-materiality, those impossible speculative virtualites. “That which
Stands” = “the elemental kernel” = “untranslatability” = the negative potentiality of what refuses
and demands translation. And once again, this “more” is not named in the sentence except in a
relational way to what it is more than, to what it exceeds—that which exceeds impartation.

What stands in a “root and branch” translation? What exceeds the impartation of a
change? What stands in the midst of Benjamin’s sentence? What is at a stand-still in the
unfolding flux of each individual translation is the “Stumpf und Stiel” i.e., the literary element
that is not, and cannot, enter a higher-realm of coincidence, and yet is exceeding any simple
impartation of meaning. Benjamin’s ambiguity in this sentence coinciding with the literary-
cliché nature of “Stumpf und Stiel” stages a vertiginous suspension. It is (at least seemingly) the
only-means available to the translator to reach what is in the essay called the “domain of
Reconciliation- and Fulfillment of Languages” (8.5) and yet it is that which refuses to be
imparted through “stump and stem” which alludes to said domain. Such a phrase seems to stand
and point as a Kernel of something essential that cannot be translated, be it a motif of materiality
or ideality.

Examples standing:

In the 1936 dialogue on translation Benjamin writes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grenze der Übersetzung in der Prosa – Beispiele (Benjamin)</th>
<th>Limit of translation in prose—examples (my translation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The question on why an example might be untranslatable, the limit of what translation is capable
of is due to an example’s position as standing in the text. Sigrid Weigel in discussing examples
and pure-language states:

In this form of thought the quotation attains a linguistic materiality and independence
which make it readable in a variety of ways, but also resistant to the purpose of
constructing history. The quotation embodies as it were language as literature, broken out

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of one discourse in order, as a fragment, to become part of another, different form of writing. (Weigel 36)

The “linguistic materiality” of the example is resistant to translation, to impartation, and denotes allegorically back to its own original context, and thus a higher and lower allegorical context as well. There are two such citations as examples in the “The Task of the Translator” essay. Both of them stand as performative examples, implying meaning both in what and how they present. The rhetorical performance of the citations stand as untranslatable examples. As Antoine Berman writes, “Benjamin’s citations – such as they are – gesture towards the enigma of translation, not only in their content, but in their form – their letter” (Age 184).

Mallarmé:

»Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême: penser étant écrire sans accessoires, ni chuchotement mais tacite encore l’immortelle parole, la diversité, sur terre, des idiomes empêche personne de proférer les mots qui, sinon se trouveraient, par une frappe unique, elle-même matériellement la vérité.« (Benjamin quoting Mallarmé)

The imperfection of languages consists in their plurality; the supreme language is lacking: thinking is writing without accessories or even whispering, the immortal word still remains silent; the diversity of idioms on earth prevents anyone from uttering the words which otherwise, at a single stroke, would materialize as truth. (Zohn, 263n1)

Language imperfect in plurality: missing the supreme: think being write without accessories, no whispering but tacit encore the immortal parole, the diversity, on earth, from idioms hinder person/nobody to utter the words which, if-not would-find, by a strike unique, itself materially the verity. (Literal)
Benjamin leaves the example in French, untranslated into German. The reason for such comes in the subsequent sentence:

Wenn, was in diesen Worten Mallarmé gedenkt, dem Philosophen streng ermeßbar ist, so steht mit ihren Keimen solcher Sprache die Übersetzung mitten zwischen Dichtung und der Lehre. (9.12)

If what Mallarmé evokes here is fully fathomable to a philosopher, translation, with its rudiments of such a language, is midway between poetry and theory. (Zohn)

If, what in these words Mallarmé commemorates, is strictly (fully)measurable to the philosopher, so stands translation, with its sproutings of such-language, midway between Dichtung and Lehre. (my translation)

The French *stands* like a rock in a stream in the midst of the essay—it stands midway between Dichtung and Lehre. What Mallarmé “commemorates” is a mid-way space: to translate into English (or German) is to lose the poetic presentation of the French—the rhythm, the rhyme, the syntax, to lose the “tacite encore l’immortelle parole.” Translation stands forth as marking such. Moreover, the emphasis on the root— “Keim”—being the action/perception of budding, an in-motion seeding; this disrupts a “Seed” in any sense as a stable “Origin.” Interestingly, tracing the “Keim” the emphasis is always after-the-event, not a stable “seed” but rather the offspring:

“Keim, masculine, ‘germ, bud, shoot,’ from the equivalent Middle High German kîm, kîme, masculine, Old High German chîm, chîmo, masculine (Gothic *keima, masculine). The Teutonic root is kî, which is widely diffused in the Teutonic group. Gothic has only the participle of a verb derived from this root, us-kijans, ‘sprouted,’ for which, however, an earlier variant, keins, ‘germinated,’ is assumed by the verb us-keinan (-nôda). With the
same root $kî$ are connected the dental derives. Anglo-Saxon $cîp$, Old Saxon $kið$, Old High German chîdi (ikidi), Middle High German $kîde$, Modern High German dialectic Keide, ‘shoot.’ Old Saxon and Old High German $kînan$, ‘to germinate,’ has a present affix $n$ of the root $kî$; the identical Anglo-Saxon $cînan$, ‘to spring up, burst, burst to pieces, germinate,’ and the corresponding Anglo-Saxon substantive $čînu$, Middle English $chine$, ‘rift, crack,’ prove that the meaning ‘to germinate’ originated in the actual perception of budding.” (Kluge).

This correlates with Benjamin’s Greek quotation of Genesis: “en archê en ho logos, im Anfang war das Wort” (10.20). The past-tense “war” implies at the Anfang das Wort already-was. In addition, Keimen in its already-was movement, and affinities with “$cînan$” implies a “spring up” and a fragmenting, “burst to pieces” “rift” “crack.” Hence, this is an already-was sprouting, which fragments as it springs-forth in the unfolding. However, the tension is in “Keimen” standing forth—just as the “Kernel” stands in the movements of translation, just as Mallarme’s citation stands untranslatable in its function as an example.

**Pannwitz:**

The second example that stands is the Pannwitz citation:

»unsere Übertragungen auch die besten gehn von einem falschen grundsatz aus sie wollen das indische griechische englische verdeutschen anstatt das deutsche zu verindischen vergriechischen verenglischen, sie haben eine viel bedeutendere ehrfurcht vor den eigenen sprachgebrauchen als vor dem geiste des fremden werks . . . der grundsätzliche irrtum des übertragenden ist dass er den zufälligen stand der eignen spräche festhält anstatt sie durch die fremde sprache gewaltig bewegen zu lassen, er muss
zumal wenn er aus einer sehr fernen sprache überträgt auf die letzten demente der sprache selbst wo wort bild ton in eines geht zurück dringen er muss seine sprache durch die fremde erweitern und vertiefen man hat keinen begriff in welchem masze das möglich ist bis zu welchem grade jede sprache sich verwandeln kann sprache von sprache fast nur wie mundart von mundart sich unterscheidet dieses aber nicht wenn man sie allzu leicht sondern gerade wenn man sie schwer genug nimmt.«

“Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a mistaken premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . . The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own, he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language. It is not generally realized to what extent this is possible, to what extent any language can be transformed, how language differs from language almost the way dialect differs from dialect. However, this last is true only if one takes language seriously enough, not if one takes it lightly.” (Zohn)

“our Transmissions even the best go out from a false principle they want the indian greek english germanized instead the german indianized greekized englishized, they have a much importanter reverence of their-own language-usage than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . the fundamental error of the transferor is that he chancily stands with the own
language held-fast instead of through the foreign language violently letting-move, he
must especially when from a very foreign language transfer to the last demontia of
language itself where word image tone into one regressively-penetrating he must his
language through the foreign expand and deepening one has no concept in which masses
the possible is to what grade each language itself transforms can language from language
almost only as dialect from dialect itself differentiated these but not when one they alltoo
lightly however exactly when one they difficult enough take.” (my translation)\textsuperscript{162}

In the context of the essay, the Pannwitz citation is an example of standing—of a presentation of
language as materiality, which is both stating and performing its meaning. In the original
German, Pannwitz is purposefully abusing grammar for the point of presenting a distortion, and
denoting towards the materiality of the text, to what is untranslatable. Pannwitz performs such in
a sentence that is denouncing the act of domesticating translation (“verdeutschen” [germanize]).
Thus the original sentence itself is performing a critique. The citation critiques domesticating
translation, with a rhetoric that resists grammar entirely, and thus becomes untranslatable. Such
standing as untranslatable could even be though of as a representation of pure-language, as
Samuel Weber describes it:

language that is pure of everything that is outside it is a language that would consists of
pure signifying, something that is aporetical, to be sure, since signifying always entails a
signified and hence cannot be entirely pure. But a relation to language in which syntax . .
. takes precedence over the time-and-space transcending rules of grammar and semantics

\textsuperscript{162} As the original Pannwitz citation violates German grammar norms, lots of violations of English
grammar norms are occurring here, such as not capitalizing the languages, or capitalizing one word, and
the merging of words.
... this would be a language that seems to approach what Benjamin ‘means’ by ‘pure-language’... that performs by signifying without being absorbed or determined by entities that appear to exist independently of all signifying. (Weber 75)

The Pannwitz citation is an insufficient representation of pure-language, understood as “a relation” where syntax makes translation impossible. It is untranslatable in that its performance is an abuse of grammar and semantics, in that it signifies the materiality of the language itself.

Moreover, Marcel Blanchot’s essay “Translating” offers a revealing reading of Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” essay and the Pannwitz quote in particular. Blanchot read the French translation by Maurice de Gandillac, who, similar to Zohn, grammatizes the citation. Leading to Blanchot’s interpretation:

the statement or claim is dangerously seductive. It implies that each language could become all other languages, or at least move without harm in all sorts of new directions; it assumes that the translator will find enough resources in the work to be translated and enough authority in himself to provoke this sudden mutation; finally, it assumes a translation free and innovative to such an extent that it will be capable of a greater verbal and syntactic literality, which would, in the end, make translation useless. (60) (Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg)

In the sans grammar German, Benjamin’s Pannwitz reveals materiality, the letter, the standing, as a privatively encountered substrata materiality and/or process of all language, a privatively experienced ‘Zusammenhang’ represented in near nonsensical ruin. The grammatization through a domesticating translation shifted the letter standing from being a representational example, to being a conceptual argument about each language’s capability of becoming each other language,
a claim of equivalence. In a translation that grammatizes the Pannwitz an interpretation of a
teleological notion of translation is brought forward. This is the opposite of Benjamin is
implying. Pannwitz’s example is purposefully abusing German grammar in such a way that
makes any clear translation a violation of the rhetorical function. So even if one could
grammatizes Pannwitz’s words to bring forward the idea of a mythically capable translator and
mythical realm where “all language become all other languages,” such a mythical conception is
actively deconstructed by the very untranslatability of the passage. The grammar of the citation
caused a privative encounter with materiality, and ruinous Zusammenhang representatively, to
become a utopian claim conceptually.

There are also ways that untranslatability stands in seemingly clear translatability.

*Form and Mode: Kant/Goethe:*

One of the often marked, but not fully understood, moments in the translation history of
“The Task of the Translator” revolves around a deceivingly simple sentence:

> “Übersetzung ist eine Form.” (3.1)

An intriguingly simple sentence, which contains almost no resistance to being translated. In
many ways it is already translated at least into English. And yet, as many critics—Samuel
Weber, Paul de Man, Carol Jacobs, etc.—have noted Zohn in his initial translation changes
“form” to “mode.” This is corrected in Zohn’s 1996 translation, in this one sentence. However,
even after seeing this mistranslation in one sentence, both Zohn and Steven Rendall continue to
shift “Form” to “Mode” in multiple later sentences in Benjamin’s essay. Thus, marking the
excessive irony of the seemingly resistance free translatability of the sentence. Weber describes
why in a sentence of seemingly no-resistance to translation such an event of mistranslation occurs:

The reason why “mode” is substituted for “form” is because the translator senses a tension between the autonomy and integrity associated with form, on the one hand—remember Kant’s definition of it as “the agreement of a manifold with a unity”—and the subordination or dependence generally associated with translation and endorsed here by Benjamin: a translation is precisely not autonomous, self-contained, integral—it consists in a relationship to something outside of it, to something it is not and yet to which it owes its existence, the “original” work. “Mode” suggests a way of being, a modification, rather than any sort of independent structure. And yet it is just such independence that Benjamin endorses, provocatively, in extending the term “form” to cover not only the original work but that of “translation” as well. It is this extension that is unusual, that shocks, and this is reflected in the initial translation of “form” as “mode.” What disappears in this translation, however, is precisely the provocative tension between the relative independence of translation and its dependency on something other than itself—an “original,” a work—that is, the tension that informs Benjamin’s effort to articulate “The Task of the Translator.” That task is an ambiguous one, traversed by tensions and conflicts, and as such is remote from the notions of harmony and wholeness traditionally dominant in the realm of aesthetic theory. The translation of “form” as “mode” tends to efface or at least reduce that tension and to reinstate the very ideal of harmony that Benjamin’s thought and writing are constantly calling into question. (Weber 57-58)

Translation as “form” would imply self-contained, non-dependent, i.e., some thing like Kant’s a priori; while translation as “mode” implies a change occurring in the relationship with the
original. This alone already reflects the transcendental but speculative structure of Benjamin’s thinking. Moreover, Weber marks Benjamin’s (loose) definition for “Form” as harkening back to Kant in the third critique—the object of the aesthetic judgment being “beautiful form” (58).

While Antoine Berman in his commentary writes: “to grasp the meaning of the term, we have to look to Goethe, for whom ‘form’ leads to ‘organization,’ ‘organism,’ ‘ensemble’—both in the artistic sphere and, above all, in the sphere of living manner” (Age 62), thus Berman aligns “Form” closer to ‘mode.’ Both readings open compelling interpretations and mark differing tropes.

A question might be raised as to how Goethe’s form and Kant’s form relate. On a simplistic level, Kant’s faith in “form” as an a priori feature of experience is set in tension with Goethe’s faith in direct experience of natural objects. As David E. Wellbery, translating Goethe writes in his commentary,

Deswegen gibts doch eine Form, die sich von jener unterscheidet, wie der innere Sinn vom äußern, die nicht mit Händen gegriffen, die gefühlt sein will” (FA 1.18:174; Therefore there is a form that distinguishes itself from that one, as the inner sense from the outer, one that cannot be grasped with hands, but must be felt) . . . “[die] inner[e] Form, die alle Formen in sich begreift, [. . .]” (FA 1.18:174; the inner form, which comprehends all forms in itself).

So here we have a notion of form that (a) provides genuine unity, (b) is internal to the object (dramatic work) evincing the form, and (C) is apprehended not by an abstractive operation of the understanding, but rather by what Goethe designates as “feeling.” Elevated to a definition: form is the inner principle of unity of an object, and that principle can be apprehended through the capacity of Gefühl. (Wellbery 2021).
It would seem apropos to argue that Benjamin is more in-line with Goethe than Kant in his use of “Form,” and this is understandable in that the implied interpenetration and inter-play is modal in nature. But, where Goethe arguably found, according to K. Jenson, “Kant’s foray into the transcendental conditions of possibility . . . an unnecessary circumvention of precisely that which we are by nature equipped to undertake” (IEP); Benjamin understands Kant’s transcendentalism as a regulative counter-point to over-mediating belief in “natural” abilities, in Goethe’s case the faith in a total Form felt by natural human ability. Benjamin in his “Goethe’s Elective Affinities” writes, “only an incorruptible rationality, under whose protection the heart might abandon itself to the prodigious, magical beauty of this work, is able to cope with it [providing a unity, a total form]” (SW 1, 339). This “incorruptible rationality” speaks to the necessity of sober-critical reason, to mark the limits—i.e., Kant and immanent criticism in general. Moreover, in said essay, Benjamin places the expressionless (das Ausdruckslose)—like untranslatability, and unforgettability in the “The Task of the Translator” essay—as an eruptive “critical violence which, while unable to separate appearance from essence in art, prevents them from combining . . . for it shatters whatever still survives as the legacy of chaos in all beautiful appearance: the false, errant totality—absolute totality” (SW 1, 340). Thus, Benjamin’s non-resistant to translation sentence—“Übersetzung ist eine Form”—under the immense weight of disparate implications, which are “prevented from combining” in their differing philosophical significance and systems, (i.e., a sober-reason and an encounter with the absolute through intuition-understanding), stands in an ironic tension that makes its non-resistance untranslatable for Zohn and Rendall: thus enlivening “Form” with critical-limitation and the feeling of continuing-living.

This ironic tension shares a stylistic similarity with what Beatrice Hanssen’s essay “‘Dichtermut’ and ‘Blodigkeit’: Two Poems by Hölderlin Interpreted by Walter Benjamin”
describes as Benjamin’s “new conception of irony” as found in a caesuraian image (reading Hölderlin against Goethe) (812). I believe the “negative potentiality of reflective irony” that Hanssen reads in Benjamin’s Hölderlin/Goethe, which “plays its diabolic game in the double meaning” (History 162), is the same rhetorical move as the word “Form” in Benjamin’s essay. That is, Benjamin’s ironic “form” is a caesura where Kant/Goethe are held in tension, marking the “expressionless” in a manner that simultaneously marks limits and fissures totality, while offering through translation a privative encounter of the absolute, as the (un)translatable.

It would seem that the non-resistant to translation “Form” stands in a pan-language resistant tension, in original and translation; an example again of what Howard Caygill titles Benjamin’s “transcendental but speculative” philosophy. Kant’s transcendental notion of form is kept in-tact on a graphic-level marking out the conditions of possibility for translation to occur, i.e., translation as in Weber’s reading, is marking (permitting/demanding) a structural-potentiality, i.e., translatability. And yet, where Kant’s transcendental makes access to not mediated experience seemingly impossible—thus forms of time-space become universal instead of historical—Goethe’s conception of form offers a speculative possibility, though one that seems to not give enough dignity to Kant’s task, in that it offers too much dignity to the historical-cultural “feeling” of the absolute. Thus, Benjamin’s use of “Form” and the non-resistant-yet-resistant translation unfolds the transcendental but speculative.

“The Task of the Translator” in Context:

On March 26th, 1921, Walter Benjamin wrote a letter to Gerhard Scholem announcing a lack of knowledge of the philosophical tradition on the subject of translation:
As far as my treatment of the subject is concerned, I am lacking a very basic aid: preliminary philosophical studies by authors who wrote on the topic before me. After all, in a critical analysis (of unfamiliar viewpoints) it is often possible to say things you would not yet know how to present synthetically... Could you possibly come up with some references for me? (C 177).

On November 27th, 1921, writing again to Scholem, Benjamin writes that he found “the slight allusion to my “The Task of the Translator,”... in the original version of your “Lyric der Kabbala” (C 195). Speculatively, I imagine Benjamin gave Scholem a copy of the essay sometime in August or September, during meetings and correspondences about the journal, *Angelus Novus*, in which Benjamin proposed to publish the “The Task of the Translator” essay. During the spring and summer, Benjamin was researching and writing the essay. Looking at Benjamin’s essays from the 1910s, the notion that he lacked the preliminary studies seems laughable—he had taken classes on and studied the German tradition with emphasis on language centric theory, as visible from his Hölderlin essays, through his critic of criticism, etc.

Of the various possible traditions present in the essay, I would like to mark one: the German romantic tradition. I set the Jewish mysticism aside, as it is touched on in the sections on “name” and reading of biblical imagery.

**German translation tradition:**

In “The Task of the Translator,” Benjamin directly mentions Luther, Voss, Schlegel, Hölderlin, and Goethe with possible allusions to Herder, Hamann and Humboldt—whom he had likewise written on previously. In the previous sections, I have discussed Hamann and Humboldt and will likewise come back to them in the afterward; hence, the following will offer brief
markings of resonations. In general, I will trace the binaries of domestication/foreignization and invisibility/visibility.

Translation and Language in the making:

Andre Lefever quoting Senger cites: “one could give foreign shape to German raw linguistic material” (7). For Luther, and a line of succession moving forward to Benjamin, translation into German was a process of improving the German language.

Once again, German writing in its current state stands in need of a genre that has always had a beneficial effect on it in its periods of great crisis: translation. In the present instance, however, the translations of the journal wish to be understood not just as providing models to be emulated, as was the case in earlier times, but also as the strict and irreplaceable school of language-in-the-making. (SW 1, 294).

Benjamin likewise saw translation as a means to shifting not just language but the German nation. And yet, their thoughts on fidelity to syntax and Wörtlichkeit were a world apart. According to Berman “Luther, for his part, aims at the Germanization, Verduetschung, of the sacred text” (Experience 24). Or as Luther writes, “when we were translating the bible, I laid down the following rules for those who helped: First: the holy scripture speaks of divine words . . . Second: if a proverb or an expression fits in with the New Testament, use it. Third: pay attention to grammar.” (Lefevere 9). For Luther there is an undeniable divine original (word of God sans rhetoric); it is the translator’s job to make this accessible to those who cannot read the

163 “Von neuem ruft die Lage des deutschen Schrifttums eine Form hervor, welche seit jeher heilsam seine großen Krisen begleitete: die Übersetzung. Freilich wollen die Übersetzungen der Zeitschrift nicht sowohl als Vermittlung von Vorbildern verstanden werden, wie dies früher Brauch war, denn als unersetzlicher und strenger Schulgang werdender Sprache selbst” (GS 2, 243).
original. And to do so is to fully Germanize the text, to move the text to the reader. There is a vague tension between conceiving of translation as allowing for an expansion of the language and also believing that that language should fully grammaticize, a tension between a reforming and a conserving. Luther’s argument understood as a root of domestication is carried forward through various translators of the German tradition.

For example, Justus Georg Schottel writes, “to stammer German and German words after a foreign fashion is not German and will not become German, and the German language is badly served by such Germanesque” (Lefevere 12). Benjamin Wörtlichkeit, and Darstellung as a theatrical stammering (halting and restating), is at direct odds with such views.

Form over Sense:

In contrast, such translators like Johann Jakob Boder (1698-1783) and Johann Jacoss Breitinger (1701-1776), give greater emphasis to form over sense. As Breitinger writes:

Translating is like painting a portrait: the more it looks like the original, the more praise it deserves. Therefore, the translator must impose the following harsh law upon to himself: that he will never take the liberty to deviate from the original, whether with respect to the thoughts expressed in it, or to their nature and shape. (TL 24)

Form is understood as being as important as content—in this case Breitinger is referring to poets like Milton and other structured verse. And yet, due to—as Lefevere puts it—Bodmer and Breitinger’s “subscrip[tion] to a theory of language based on a rather naïve concept of universality” (TL 23), their conception of “form” is founded on unique and true equivalence: “there is not a variety of expressions which corresponds to a certain and fully defined thought,
but just one” (TL 25). One may hear echoes of Benjamin’s lapsarian language-thing-name-Adam community; yet it must be noted for Benjamin such is a rhetorical presenting.

*Herder and a bit of Goethe:*

With Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) a significant shift in the German translation tradition occurs: first, he utilizes “translation” as a metaphor for thinking in general—in which all reading is a translation and potential shift in tradition; second, he argues that “every living language is . . . unique and there for not inferior to any other” (TL 30); third, Herder focused on “the linguistic material being cast in a foreign mold” (TL 30), i.e., foreignization. He even went so far as to imply that languages which are distant in “kinship” offer more “to learn” “or else the differences between the two will at least provide philosophers of language with a wealth of material for further observation” (TL 31); And lastly, according to Lefevere, for Herder “the divine is translated into the human in language” (TL 30), a motif familiar in Benjamin.

With Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) a teleological notion of translation and retranslation was written down. I have already discussed such in section one of the dissertation, as well as above with Kant/Goethe and form. I will limit myself to noting just two reverberations. The translation form that comes at the end of Goethe’s cycle is similar to Benjamin’s Urform of translation mentioned in the “The Task of the Translator”:

A translation which attempts to identify itself with the original in the end comes close to an interlinear version and greatly enhances our understanding of the original; this in turn leads us, compels us as it were, towards the source text, and so the circle is closed at last. Inside it the coming together of the foreign and the native, the unknown approximation and the known, keep moving towards each other. (Goethe 37)
Once again, the difference between the two is one of teleology and necessity; for Benjamin it would seem to be a relatively chance occurrence sans progressive movement, while for Goethe there is a sense of progression through kinds of translation (prosaic, parasodic) to arrive at the interlinear.

**Hölderlin:**

Lastly, much should be said on Hölderlin’s influence on Benjamin’s conception of translation. Hölderlin is likely the most influential on a formal level. And yet, any pinpointing of similarities and differences rely solely on interpretation; when it comes to the “differences” between them on a level of philosophical relationship between language, thing, event, text, etc. it is hard to say anything definitive. But the following is an attempting to mark a few striking resonances between them.

**Translation as Trial—Strangeness:**


Translation is the ‘trial of the foreign.’ But in a double sense. In the first place, it establishes a relationship between the Self-Same (Propre) and the Foreign by aiming to open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness. Hölderlin reveals the strangeness of the Greek tragic Word, whereas most “classical” translations tend to attenuate or cancel it. (“Trials” 284)

In the parlance of Caygill, the “Self-Same” marks the particular transcendental infinity, what Hölderlin refers to as “home-land, the native, the national” (“Experience” 162). In contrast, the
“Foreign” marks the speculative transcendental possibility of other transcendental infinities—what Hölderlin refers to as “the fire from heaven, the sacred pathos, the aorgic, etc.” (162). This “Foreign” is not simply the other language, but points towards an “original” “home.” [Though, as will be unpacked below, both Benjamin and Hölderlin seem to understand that this is a rhetorical/poetic figuring. What each conceives the figuring denoting towards marks a significant difference between them.]

Hence for Hölderlin, according to Berman, “translating first and foremost means liberating the violence repressed in the work through a series of *intensifications* in the translating language—in other words accentuating its strangeness” (“Trails” 284-285). A full echo of which is heard in Benjamin’s essay:

> Jene reine Sprache, die in fremde gebannt ist, in der eigenen zu erlösen, die im Werk gefangene in der Umdichtung zu befreien, ist die Aufgabe des Übersetzers. (11.13)

> It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language, which is exiled among alien tongues, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. (Zohn)

> That pure language, which is banished/captivated in strange, to-loose in one’s own, that which in the work is imprisoned in the re-composing is set-free, is the task of the translator. (my translation)
The imagery of “releasing” what is “captive” is overtly present in Benjamin, but so is the implications of “violence”—in that, pure language “extinguishes” “all sense and all intention” (11.9).164

The Foreign is experienced as the “strangeness” of the Greek Tragic Word in Hölderlin’s translations. Benjamin marks Hölderlin’s late translations as examples of fidelity to syntax, at the expense of readability. The “strangeness” of Hölderlin’s late translations, late style, was considered the “work of a madman” (Experience 157), as Benjamin likewise implies with the image of Hölderlin’s translations falling from “abyss to abyss” and being enclosed in “silence” (12.9). More concretely, Berman offers a few statements on this “strangeness” in practice:165 first, Hölderlin utilizes an etymological approach, where he “draw[s] on the linguistic base of the German language, using words while giving them back their, if not originary, at least their ancient meaning” (Experience 158). Secondly, Hölderlin utilizes “neologisms” with the hopes of “constituting a double movement of a return to the meanings of the natural and native language, and an appropriation of the Sprachlichkeit of the foreign” (160). Though, I argue the etymological approach is present in Benjamin’s own works (though not necessarily his translations), Benjamin famously disliked neologism for their non-historicalness. Benjamin does not want to fall from abyss to abyss or open on to ideal flights of fancy—such would be to fall into the infinite regressive task or fall for the speculative ideal. Hence, Benjamin’s conception of translation is tempered in relation with Hölderlin; this is most prominent in Benjamin’s advocation for dual-language commentaries. In such, even if the translation may potentially fall

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164 This reference to the violence of “pure language” is even more direct in the concept of “pure means” and “divine violence” in “Critique of Violence” written the same year as “The Task of the Translator” in 1921.

165 Besides the late-style fidelity to syntax, which arguably Benjamin is emulating from Hölderlin.
into abyss, the form—in its continual affinity to a historical manifestation, to a tradition, to the
“original”—is kept from doing so; just as the fidelity to syntax keeps one from falling for the
myth that the translation is an equivalent transportation of content. The dual-language syntactical
Wörtlichkeit form of translation keeps one suspended between abyss and paradise.

Translation as Trial—Darstellung of Kernel:

Returning to Berman’s Hölderlin’s translation as a trial:

In the second place, translation is a trial for the foreign as well, since the foreign work is
uprooted from its own language-ground (sol-de-langue). And this trial, often an exile, can
also exhibit the most singular power of the translating act: to reveal the foreign work’s
most original kernel, its most deeply buried, most selfsame, but equally the most
“distant” from itself. (“Trials” 284)

Such a conception is also present in Benjamin, in the concept and image of “pure-language.”

Von diesem sie zu entbinden, das Symbolisierende zum Symbolisierten selbst zu machen,
die reine Sprache gestaltet der Sprachbewegung zurückzugewinnen, ist das gewaltige
und einzige Vermögen der Übersetzung. (11.8)

To relieve it of this, to turn the symbolizing into the symbolized itself, to regain pure
language fully formed from the linguistic flux, is the tremendous and only capacity of
translation. (Zohn)

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166 There is a hint of the violence implied here.
To unbind it [Wesenheit] from this [Sinn], to make the Symbolizing into the Symbolized itself, to gain-back the pure-language shaped by the language-in-motion, is the vehement and single potentiality of Translation. (my translation)

The Wesenheit refers to the essential *Kernel*, which is the “violence” or “potentiality” or “untranslatability” manifesting from the linguistic flux in the more overtly figurative form of “pure language” or “fire from heaven.” As Weber writes, “the ‘nucleus’ of the translation is its untranslatability. And yet this ‘nucleus’ (Kern) toward which it gestures, but can never contain or attain, is what Benjamin calls ‘pure language’” (70). Both “Kernel” and “Pure Language” are figures/concepts from a particular transcendental infinity, denoting towards the speculative potentiality of other particular transcendental infinities. Translation is the process of striving towards translatability and

as soon as the translation reaches the end of one layer of untranslatability, transforming it, or rather revealing its translatability, it finds, behind it or below it, a further layer of untranslatability, and so on. It goes without saying that at the end of all this there is a final kernel of untranslatability, and that this kernel is concealed under impenetrable layers. (*Age 80*)

The *Kernel* is never reached, despite Berman’s teleological language of “end”—which is likewise tempered with “impenetrable layers.” The *Kernel* is likewise present in the original, what we might call uninterpretability. Benjamin writes in “On the Concept of Criticism”:

Criticism is the preparation of the prosaic *kernel* in every work. In this, the concept ‘preparation’ [Darstellung] is understood in the chemical sense, as the generation of a
substance through a determinate process to which other substances are submitted. \(SW\) 1, 178)

Eiland’s choice of “preparation,” I argue should be presentation, though this is also a preparation of sorts. It falls to Darstellung to “uproot” the “foreign work . . . from its own language-ground” and perform, “a balance of two excesses . . . of aorgic disproportion and the excessive respect of forms” (Beaufret, in Berman \textit{Experience} 169). Both, Hölderlin and Benjamin conceive of a Darstellung of literal translation as a means by which to allow for an experience of the strangeness of the foreign (aorgic) and try out the foreign as the Self-Same (respect of form). For as Berman writes on Hölderlin:

\begin{quote}
Literal translation goes toward this literalness and even, in a sort of hyperbolical movement, restores it where the original text tends to veil it or to “deny” it. In fact, the original is not an inert given, but the site of a struggle, at all of its levels. Hölderlin describes the struggle as that of “pathos” and “sobriety” . . . Translation reproduces this struggle even reactivates it. \(Experience\) 169
\end{quote}

For both Hölderlin and Benjamin, I would argue, that literal translation is a reenactment and presentation (the act and the product) of a possible relationship between potentiality and actuality, of the speculative and the transcendental, of Foreign and the Self-Same, and a potential privative experience with a non-instrumental technology. This implies that maybe the closest affinity between Hölderlin and Benjamin is in their notion of Darstellung and translation, influenced by a centrality of language and a nihilistic distance between the foreign and the self-same.
In support of this reading but from a slightly different angle, Rainer Nägele’s text *Echoes of Translation* offers a compelling reading of Benjamin and Hölderlin’s use and conception of Darstellung. Between Self-Same and Foreign, or imagined speculative and the bounding transcendental in Caygill’s parlance, or in Nägele’s parlance between “theory of translation” and “praxis,” there is “a gap, a space of presentation, of Darstellung: a theater rather than a theory” (12). Both Benjamin and Hölderlin’s form of translation—late Hölderlin’s literality into abyss, and Benjamin’s literality with the dual-language and commentary—is Darstellung. And yet, as indicated above there is a difference between Benjamin and Hölderlin in regard to translation. Hölderlin’s affinity with the transcendental or speculative as presented in my reading of Benjamin seemingly shifts as he slips into madness and literal translation. Nägele in discussing Hölderlin’s earlier poetry (not late style) and Nietzsche states: “both Hölderlin and Nietzsche see tragedy as the presentation of an original fissure. But whereas Hölderlin emphasizes the presentation of division and struggle in tragedy as a representation of an original unity, Nietzsche projects the division into the unity itself” (82). If Hölderlin views the “original unity” as represented in the struggle of Self-Same and Foreign (or maybe Apollonian and Dionysian here), and Nietzsche fractures the possibility of an original unity all together; Benjamin’s attempts to suspend both. Benjamin’s literality of syntax and Wörtlichkeit fragments [a particular transcendental infinities’ conception of] “unity itself”*¹⁶⁸a* [Kernel], while his

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¹⁶⁷ Hölderlin’s late style translation would seem to align closer to Nietzsche’s “division into the unity itself.” But this earlier style here is placing Hölderlin on the side of a speculative idealist a bit in Nägele’s argument that Hölderlin seems to use an image of “original unity.” It is up for debate if such an image is a rhetorical a-topos for the point of a compelling, or a real nostalgic faith in a returned state.

¹⁶⁸ The strangeness is in the fact that to translate Wörtlichkeit and Zusammenhangen is to present a less far away unity between original and translation; yet in doing so it destroys the illusion of mythic equivalence, and as such also fragments the notion of a unity.
inclusion of the original via interlineal and commentary marks the speculative possibility of a return to the original unity, in the form of “pure language” (the original and translated languages standing next to each other, compelling a striving towards meaning.) To state again, “Wörtlichkeit” and fidelity of syntax denotes towards the Kernel, while the dual-language and commentary denote towards the possibility of “pure-language.”
Supplement(ing/-able) Essays:

Keeping the above motifs in mind, I now turn to a series of essays developing out of my retranslation of Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator.” Each of these essays will touch on the transcendental yet speculative, the motifs of a-topos and materiality, and in so doing offer contextual close-reading examples of the preceding. In addition, each essay will explore aspects of these motifs from other angles—such as, the notion of potentiation, the rhythm of fragmented-totalities, and the implications for critical theory in general.

Saying “the same” repeatedly, i.e., translation, i.e., an intensive-ambiguous hanging-together of words, i.e.,

So, Derrida was basing some part of his reading on the “intraduisible,” on the untranslatability, until somebody in his seminar (so I’m told) pointed out to him that the correct word was “translatable.” I’m sure Derrida could explain that it was the same . . . And I mean that in a positive sense, it is the same, but still, it is not the same without some additional explanation. (de Man 80)

In the second paragraph of “The Task of The Translator” essay, in discussing if a translation is meant for the reader who doesn’t understand the original, Benjamin states: “. . . it seems the only possible ground to say ‘the-same’ repeatedly” (2.3). This is usually read as

169 “That awkward heavy-handedness, which has been attributed to either a lack of talent on the part of the artists or lack of insight on the part of the patron, is essential to allegory” (Benjamin, OGT 187).

170 “Überdies scheint es der einzig mögliche Grund, ›Dasselbe‹ wiederholt zu sagen.”—I will cite Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” essay with Paragraph, Sentence form. Hence (2.3) implies paragraph 2 sentence 3.

There is an irony implied in the quotation marks around “the-same.” “The-same” as a concept of conveyance undoes itself in being ironically the same as language, Mitteilung.
undermining the idea of translation as an equivalent-conveyance, i.e., Benjamin argues translation does not convey the original meaning as another language, and thus this is not the grounds for translation; but, the statement also marks the question: what are the other “possible grounds” for “saying” “the same” “repeatedly?”

What follows is my attempt to mark a paradoxical intimate-distance between Benjamin’s “transcendental yet speculative” philosophy, theory of translation, and rhetorical-style—to mark the ways ‘the-same’ is said “repeatedly” and the “possible grounds” for doing such.

This intimate-distance is partially marked as a “Zusammenhang/en”\(^{171}\) [i.e., a hanging-together], a word that echoes throughout the essay. For one instance, Benjamin has a series of sentences structured as similes, which hinge on the word “Zusammenhängen”:

> Just as the utterances (Äußerungen) of Life intimately nexuses [zusammenhängen] with the Living, without denoting some for it, so the translation goes forth from the original.

(4.5)

\(^{171}\) For Benjamin the term is meant to complicate any linear and progressive theory of knowledge held by early German Romantics. In \textit{The Concept of Criticism}, Benjamin references Hölderlin’s “Das Unendliche”: “they hang together infinitely (exactly)” [Unendlich (genau) zusammenhängen], thus implying an infinity of connections as a context. (SW 1, 126). From Hölderlin’s “Das Unendlich”: “Ambiguously I have a mind to say it exactly . . . I discover a connection [Zusammenhang] between . . . a connection not ascribed to either of them, but to a third factor by which they are connected infinitely (exactly), for that I have an ambiguous mind” (“Pindar” 717). Anthony Phelan offers a compelling reading of Fortgang—as continuous advance, progress—versus Zusammenhang—as the alternative to such—in Benjamin (72-73). Though I do not believe that the “Zusammenhang” of Benjamin’s earlier work is “the same” as that delineated in the “The Task of the Translation” essay. As Phelan and others argue, in his earlier work there seems to be a belief in a systematic coherence, infinitely complex, specifically in such concepts as Zusammenhang. However, I believe that by the early-20s, Benjamin had moved fully away from a coherence, and undermines the will-towards-total-thinking via specific rhetorical-techniques. Hence, the “Zusammenhang” of the “The Task of the Translator” essay becomes over-determined and under-represented, i.e., ambiguous.
The Zusammenhang that is as/between the “expressions of life” and “that-which-is-living” which is like as/between “the original” and “the translation,”\textsuperscript{172} [further in the essay] these are like as/between the “Wörtlichkeit” “syntactical fidelity” and “meaning.” This list could be continued, the recursive structure/methodology of Benjamin’s essay—like translation itself—causes an iterative (re)presenting [Darstellung] of similar-but-different intimate-distant Zusammenhange throughout the text, thus enacting and marking the “transcendental but speculative” as experience, as translation, and as rhetoric.

\textit{I: The General Shape Of “i.e.”}

Howard Caygill’s 1998 reading of Benjamin 1917 fragment “On Perception Itself” has become a privileged text for explicating this “transcendental but speculative” in Benjamin. The fragment is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walter Benjamin</th>
<th>Howard Caygill</th>
<th>Andrew Brooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Über die Wahrnehmung in sich</td>
<td>\textit{On perception in itself}</td>
<td>\textit{On Perception in itself}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahrnehmung ist Lesen</td>
<td>Perception is reading</td>
<td>Perception is Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbar ist nur in der Fläche (E)scheinendes. ( . . . )</td>
<td>Only that appearing in the surface is readable . . .</td>
<td>Readable is only in the surface appearing . . . ( . . . )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fläche die Configuration ist - absoluter Zusammenhang (GS VI, 32)</td>
<td>Surface that is configuration—absolute continuity (3)</td>
<td>Surface the Configuration is – absolute inter-relation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{172} “So wie die Äußerungen des Lebens innigst mit dem Lebendigen zusammenhängen, ohne ihm etwas zu bedeuten, geht die Übersetzung aus dem Original hervor” (4.5). My choice of “nexuses” is a verbalization of the noun “nexus,” which I use for “Zusammenhang.”

This is a simile structure. “As the Äußerungen is Inter-suspended with Living, The Translation goes forth from the original.” “a connection/context of living” - Zusammenhang des Lebens. Utterances as individual Life mark the living that can only be traced retroactively, never arriving at Living but touching living, manifesting living as an aspect marked in Life. This ties to the same movement in Bedeuten, and Weber’s description of “after-life” in \textit{Benjamin’s - Abilities}, page 66-67.
Without diving into a close reading, what is being set up has a shape: an intensive-recursive double infinity, a shape when encountered via translation appears/feels as if an (im)possible privative-potentiation that strives for an unabating “relevance to the present” (SW 1,239). The transcendental-infinity is denoted as infinite possible interpretations within a here-now configuration of a surface (i.e., a privileged readable-inscribable frame); the speculative-infinity is the bounded but infinite possible other surfaces, experienced as paradoxes, fragments/fissures and ambiguity in a privileged here-now configuration. Together these are folded into and exceed each-other, and rhetorically manifest in a recursive style that denotes spatiality, often as if “saying ‘the-same’ repeatedly”—i.e., words are denied meaning gained from a temporal unfolding along grammatical lines, instead in Benjamin, words hang-suspended-together in

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173 Proposition: Perception is reading. This implies not a passive receptivity, but rather a complex passive-active process of interpretation, understood as multiple possible interpretations. Transcendental: the conditions of possibility for perception as reading — the cognitive performance of reading presupposes a surface upon which something can be read, i.e., a surface that is readable and inscribable. Speculative: the structure for the conditions of the transcendental condition of the surface—to function as readable, the surface must be appropriately configured. This implies the possible exclusion of other possible configurations of inscribable-readable. This implies that the actual here-now configuration is but one possibility of an infinite number of possible configurations. The speculative is simultaneously folded into the here-now actual configuration and exceeds it in the infinite possible configurations. Though the speculative opens up in two seeming directions 1) that of universal totalities to come (Hegel) and 2) as an endless dissolving—Benjamin’s “transcendental but speculative” opts for an intensive suspension (i.e., an intimate-distance) enacted via rhetorical staging.

174 This is a shape of potentiation that is not a heightening, not consciousness rising, not moving towards an absolute, not a potentiation that can be fulfilled. In “The Task of the Translator,” there seems to be a shift away from the criticism of reflective potentiation found in the earlier dissertation on German Romanticism. I want to call this a privative-potentiation; a potentiation marked by the lack of a totality and self-reflective-I, and instead a privative potentiation of language-in-flux. Maybe, as Beatrice Hanssen reads the form of “poetic self-reflection” that Adorno, influenced by Benjamin, argues for in his 1964 work on Hölderlin: at best we can think of this privative potentiation as “an anamnesis” of its “own negativity and finitude” (142).
infinite intensive spatial relations, as “Sinn” [meaning] and the *Impartation* [Mitteilung]\(^{175}\) dance\(^{176}\) in the readers/translator’s interpretation and/or perception.

I offer two examples of this shape, this intensive-recursive double infinite “hanging together.” I offer them in the form of a re-translation commentary focused on paragraph eleven of “The Task of the Translator.”

**II: Benjamin’s exact ambiguity of “it”**

Starting with a sentence from Paragraph 11:

Allein wenn der *Sinn* eines Sprachgebildes identisch gesetzt werden darf mit dem seiner *Mitteilung*, so bleibt ihm ganz nah und doch unendlich fern, unter ihm verborgen oder deutlicher, durch ihn gebrochen oder machtvoller über alle *Mitteilung* hinaus ein Letztes, Entscheidendes. (11.03; emphasis added)

\(^{175}\) “Sinn” and “Mitteilung” are terms used by Benjamin in the “The Task of the Translator” essay. “Sinn” for reductive purposes implies “sense” in an as-if stable “conveyance” of meaning. “Mitteilung” as Samuel Weber explains, “suggests ‘partitioning with,’ or also, ‘sharing.’ But to share, I must first divide, and it is precisely this double movement that is reflected in the English word, to *impart.*” (Weber 40–41). Benjamin often enacts a rhetorical style where an everyday word is used in an odd manner causing a tension in meaning/letter. Hence, Weber’s “impart” and Zohn’ and Rendall’s “communicate” marks this to an extent, but strategically I opted for “*impartation*” as I think it denotes to the word-itself, in its strangeness, and signifies the meaning.

*Impartation* is denoting similar to the *letter*, as materiality emptied of meaning, a substrate, itself (re)presenting as/of language. Depending on context, this can appear/feel different—symbolized in lacunary presentations, symbolizing as the shifting graphic-mnemonic-inscriptions, such as “(non)-Mitteilung” or “(un)translatability,” etc. which unfold in translation/reading in/as privative encounters, where Mitteilung and Sinn are set in intensive-ambiguity, in intimate-distances. *The letter* marks as the readable-inscribable configuration and in that marking denotes beyond, exceeds itself, to the possibility of other.

\(^{176}\) Marking an instability that does not resolve. Like but not the same as Derrida’s “play” or Lacan’s “slippage.”
Only if the sense of a linguistic creation may be equated with that of the information it conveys, does some ultimate, decisive element remain beyond all communication—quite close and yet infinitely remote, concealed or distinguishable, fragmented or powerful.

(Zohn, SW 1, 260-261; emphasis added).

Zohn’s translation of the first clause would have Benjamin stating an equivalence notion of translation; the “sense” and the “information” are identical, and a meaningful “conveyance” is occurring through the sense, i.e., (Original = Translation). Arguably, this makes the remaining of the sentence nonsensical. Why would a relationship of equivalent-conveyance between “sense” and “information” indicate “some . . . element . . . beyond”? More-importantly, Zohn translates “seiner Mitteilung” to “information it conveys,” which effectively verbalizes a noun, dissolves the implication of “its” [seiner] and in doing so disrupts a rhetorical performance.

I offer a rough translation:

Only if the Sinn of a language-structure were allowed to-set identical with its Impartation, so remains it entirely-close and yet infinitely-far, under it hidden or even-clearer, by it more-broken or more-powerful beyond all impartations latest, decisive.

(11.03)

Here, “Sinn of a language-structure” is set identical with “its Impartation,” but this “set identical” is not one that “conveys” “information,” such conventionality remains absent. Here, the “its” sets both “Sinn of . . . “ and “Impartation” ambiguously as one. Here, the clause

177 Unless the information conveyed is that of a graphic-iterative form, but in relation to other aspects of Zohn’s translation that is not his reading.
performs an intensive-ambiguous hanging-together, of Sinn and/as Impartation. An intensive ambiguity of “its” that is both over-determining and under-representing.

Zohn over-represents this rhetorical under-representing with the words “some . . . element,” which are not present in the original. He does this to give linguistic flesh to what is “beyond.” The “beyond” refers to what Benjamin will-mark and remark in the subsequent sentences as “non-impartation” [Nicht-Mitteilbares], “pure-language” “untranslatability” [unübersetzbar]; however, Zohn choice to give this yet-unnamed “beyond” a material-presence as “some . . . element,” reduces the ambiguity of the three repetitions of “it” [ihm/ihn] throughout the sentence. This reductive-additive interpolation denies the rhetorical performance of the sentence, which hinges on the recursion of the three ambiguous “it.” Is “it” the “non-impartation” (i.e., that which is not-yet-marked but denoted to as “beyond” and experienced privatively) or the “Sinn-Impartation” (i.e., that which is (mis)named, marked, and experienced as the intensive-ambiguity as/between Sinn and Impartation held in “its”)? Similar to the way the first “seiner” denotes “Sinn” and “Impartation”; the three uses of the word “it” in the second half of the sentence are setting [the not-yet-named] “Non-Impartation” and “Sinn-Impartation” in an intensive-ambiguity. For one can glean both in the recursive “it,” as they set in the intimate-distance—i.e., close/remote, hidden/clear, broken/powerful, latest, decisive.178 This ambiguity of “it” is a rhetorical tactic that is present throughout Benjamin’s essay—and arguably is what he earlier calls in the essay a “Darstellung seiner Bedeutung” [Re-presentation of its Denoting]; where “Darstellung” is understood to be a staging/(re)presentation, “Bedeutung” is a form of

178 One more distinction is the shift between the direct object “ihm” and indirect object “ihn.” Far from being a clarifying reference, the ambiguity of both, in a shifting direct to indirect object position, further implies this ironic “the-same”—the beyond and “the beyond.”
“meaning” that points to (non)impartment, and “seiner” marks the Zusammenhang between/as and beyond.¹⁷⁹

As mentioned above, the next sentence, in paragraph 11, (re)names an Impartation form of the “what-is-beyond” as “Non-Impartation” and “Pure Language,” which are represented in at least two forms: “Symbolizing only, in the finite shapings of Language; but Symbolized in the Becoming of Languages themselves [Werden der Sprachen selbst]” (11.6). That is to say, non-impartation is symbolized as a fragmented presentation in the unfolding of language; but in here/now shapings “it” [pure-language] symbolizes, i.e., it performs its impartation, folding-into-and-exceeding each possible meaning that lays “heavy and alien” (11.9). Thus, the intensive-ambiguity of “it” is symbolizing in recursive re-markings such as “Impartation,” “Sinn,” “Non-Impartation,” “pure-language,” etc., and “symbolized” as a “yet near privative Knowledge of the nexus” (5.2) [och fast der Erkenntnis sich entziehender Zusammenhang], an encounter of the lacuna, the experience of the fragment, the hanging-together suspended as/between and beyond the Sinn-Impartation.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ There appears, in a reductionist but helpful manner, to be three types of “meaning” in Benjamin “Task” essay; “Sinn,” “Bedeuten,” “Gemeinten.” “Sinn” equates to that which bad-translators emphasis with the smoothing over of syntax; hence the illusion of “conveyed” meaning. “Bedeuten” marks a denoting of the word as the letter, i.e., what fidelity to the word and syntax aims for. And “Gemeinten” implies a messianic completely-supplemented-meaning. The “Gemeinten” is felt as a “Sehnsucht,” a longing not for a return, but for a departure towards something indeterminate; as well as a longing that is constantly renewing itself. Unfortunately, Zohn and others translate these rather as “meaning” or without fidelity to the context, sometimes “meaning” sometimes “significance” sometimes “sense.” I believe these distinctions hold up to a point—though there are a few places where Benjamin purposefully mixes meanings/words.

¹⁸⁰ “entziehender” implies something like “withdrawing.” Zohn translates as “almost beyond”; I read this as privative to mark the lacunary presentation.
This movement from symbolizing to symbolized and back and again, this process of releasing and re-encumbering the impartation from the meaning and thus encountering the “non-impartation,” “the untranslatability,” privatively, this is the potentiality of translation:

To unbind [entbinden] it [pure-language] from this [Sinn], to make the Symbolizing into the Symbolized itself, gain-back [zurückzugewinnen] the pure-language shaped by the language-in-motion, is the vehement [gewaltige] and single faculty/ability/potentiality [Vermögen] of Translation. (11.9)

To enact this potentiality Benjamin advocates for what I will call a Wörtlichkeit-Zusammenhangen translation, i.e., a translation that is word-for-word and syntactically faithful.  

III: Benjamin’s citation, where Impartation and Sinn are “the same”

In the closing paragraphs, Benjamin discusses the Wörtlichkeit and fidelity to syntax:

Die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend . . . Das vermag vor allem Wörtlichkeit in der Übertragung der Syntax und gerade sie erweist das Wort, nicht den Satz als das Urelement des Übersetzers. (10.23)

The real translation is translucent . . . above all, this requires Wörtlichkeit [Wörtlichkeit] in the transposition [Übertragung] of the syntax and this precisely proves [erweist] the

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181 “Vermögen”: Weber makes an argument for “potentiality” (43). Fenves as “capacity” or “faculty” (207). I believe it oscillates between both.

182 This is not a simple subordinating sense for the letter, but rather a strategic-privileging, contingent on the here-now configuration of readable-inscribable. A strategy of disruption by highlighting the warps and fissures in the institutionally privileged configuration. Hence, the question is how to enact the privative-potentiation to bump-up-against the possible-other configurations.
“Word-for-word in the Transposition of the Syntax” achieves a “translucent” “real translation”; this is a relatively affirmative statement for a methodology of translation. But, oddly, this “syntax” is not that of “the Satz” i.e., a grammatical logic, but rather a syntax involving the word’s spatial relations. As the next sentence indicates: “For the sentence [Satz] is the wall before the language of the original, Wörtlichkeit is the arcade [Wörtlichkeit die Arkade].” The “syntax” is framed as an intensive-ambiguous hanging-together; one where lacunary is encountered as/between and beyond the word-for-word Darstellung of the translations; just like the window/spaces in the arcades are translucent—without being transparent—framing and separating, while denoting its own framing and separating, thus denoting the possibility of what is excluded in the framing.

Benjamin ends the paragraph with a Darstellung example of such an “arcade” in the form of an excessively ungrammatical citation from Rudolph Pannwitz. This quote is worth looking at, specifically in how it is translated by Zohn, included in Harvard’s Selected Writings from 1996.¹⁸³ The citation is chosen by Benjamin because it is oddly where the Sinn and Impartation

¹⁸³ This opens up onto a discussion of institutional forms of what Benjamin calls in the “Critique of Violence” essay “law-preserving violence.” As Caygill argues, “any transcendental establishment of conditions for the experience/exercise of freedom is inevitable partial and unable, unaided to sustain itself. A system of categories or laws cannot legitimate itself, but must gain legitimation from without, even while claiming to be autonomous. This is . . . the speculative condition of autonomy itself” (28). I will make a tiger-leap through the needed reading to connect this . . . for Zohn’s translation’s inclusion in the Selected Writings, and in many translation anthologies, preserves his translation as the text students encounter. I do not mean to denounce any great translator, like Zohn, though the values and choices of the translator are omnipresent. The issue is, also, on the level of the institutions—publishing and academia—and a valuing of “readability” over concerns of translation. That which is easily “readable” is that which has been institutionalized and taught, and at least treated as-if it is “the” frame, “the” reading, “the” text. I believe valuing the concerns of translation over that of current readability will produce a text that compels
are “the same,” i.e., where the word-for-word and sense-for-sense are “the-same” in the passages
lack of grammar. As such, the translation requires a rhetorical syntax. However, Zohn neither
translates word-for-word nor sense-for-sense, enacting instead a full grammaticalization —
Englishizing—of the text, which assumingly he thought was sensical.184

»unsere Übertragungen auch die besten gehn von einem falschen grundsatz aus sie
wollen das indische griechische englische verdeutschen anstatt das deutsche zu
verindischen vergriechischen verenglischen, sie haben eine viel bedeutendere ehrfurcht
vor den eigenen sprachgebrauchen als vor dem geiste des fremden werks . . . der
grundsätzliche irrtum des übertragenden ist dass er den zufälligen stand der eignen
spräche festhält anstatt sie durch die fremde sprache gewaltig bewegen zu lassen, er muss
zumal wenn er aus einer sehr fernen spräche überträgt auf die letzten demente der sprache
selbst wo wort bild ton in eines geht zurück dringen er muss seine sprache durch die
fremde erweitern und vertiefen man hat keinen begriff in welchem masse das möglich ist
bis zu welchem grade jede sprache sich verwandeln kann sprache von sprache fast nur
wie mundart von mundart sich unterscheidet dieses aber nicht wenn man sie allzu leicht
sondern gerade wenn man sie schwer genug nimmt.« (Benjamin)

“Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a mistaken premise. They want to
turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek,
English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language
than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . The basic error of the translator is that he
preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his
language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating
from a language very remote from his own, he must go back to the primal elements of
language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must
expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language. It is not generally
realized to what extent this is possible, to what extent any language can be transformed,
how language differs from language almost the way dialect differs from dialect.
However, this last is true only if one takes language seriously enough, not if one takes it
lightly.” (Zohn, SW 1, 262)

the reader to interpret more actively, while gaining experience of the symbolizing/symbolized nature of
language and meaning.

184 An obvious correlation here is Paul de Man’s texts on the notion of “logic and grammar[‘s]
seem[ingly] . . . natural enough affinity,” which relates to what “Cartesian linguistics [and] the
grammarians . . . maintain [is] the same orientation [as] the universality that logic shares with science”
(RT 14). de Man contrasts this with the “uncertain relationship between grammar and rhetoric” (14). I
believe this can be read in relation to Benjamin’s “reading as perception.” For de Man a faith in an
affinity between logic and grammar is recognized as “faith” not a capital T “Truth” via the “latent tension
between rhetoric and grammar [which] precipitates out in the problem of reading” (15) i.e., the problem
of perception/presentation for Benjamin.
“our Transmissions even the best go out from a false principle they want the indian greek english germanized instead the german indianized greeked englishized, they have a much importanter reverence of their-own language-usage than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . the fundamental error of the transferor is that he chancily stands with the own language held-fast instead of through the foreign language violently letting-move, he must especially when from a very foreign language transfer to the last demontia of language itself where word image tone into one regressively-penetrating he must his language through the foreign expand and deepening one has no concept in which masses the possible is to what grade each language itself transforms can language from language almost only as dialect from dialect itself differentiated these but not when one they alltoo lightly however exactly when one they difficult enough take.” (my translation)

To note the oddities, Pannwitz German is without noun-capitalization, without punctuation, and on reading involves a syntax that exceeds grammatical delineations and logical meaning. As Benjamin’s example of “word-for word” syntaxial fidelity, the “meaning” comes through in the word-for-word syntactical arrangement,\(^{185}\) as an encounter of an intensely suspended “the-same.” The citation becomes a symbolizing and symbolized, intensive-ambiguous-hanging-together, of (un)translatability||non-impartation—the reading of the citation becomes the unfolding of Sinn-\textit{Impartation} vehemently dancing; the words, the images, the phrases, suspended in tense syntactical interrelations, a perpetual-re-significance unfolds, with “what is meant” seemingly about to arrive yet only ever as the excessively ambiguous possibility of other possible meanings, experienced less-than-momentarily with uncanny heft vertiginously. This is transcendental but speculative—each momentary meaning a here-now configuration of readability-inscriptibility, suspended, and disrupted by the possible other meanings also immanent in each possible word-for-word-syntactical-relation.

This is oddly also an allegorical experience of reading/translation Benjamin, or literary texts in general: words upon words, clauses upon clauses run into and exceed each other,

\(^{185}\) This syntactical pressure on the level of the word-for-word, which dissolves the logical syntax, i.e., grammar, disassembles Idealistic notions of a self-reflective subject, and the mode of producing knowledge marked as ‘genius.’ There is no “I” in a word-for-word syntactical hanging-together.
seemingly less-than-momentarily meaning one thing and then [. . . ], possibly symboliz(ed)ing in the citation, via an arranged fragment:

—wo wort bild ton in eines geht zurück dringen—

—where word image tone in one go back piercing—

“Where” each word-image-tone is set in tense relation with others, a general recursive shape is denoted exceeding and collapsing (regressively-penetrating) as-if “one.”

Thus, translation is a Darstellung of the transcendental but speculative; a privative-potentiation that collapses any concept of a stable self-reflective-I able to know totally or even stably; translation “says ‘the same’ repeatedly” but “the same” is always-already ambiguously fragmenting; translation is simultaneously a Bedeutung-(non)Mitteilung regressively-penetrating into “the-same” less than momentarily suspended in a dance of collapsing and exceeding intensive-ambiguity between/as and beyond . . . 186

186 The question or problem that now comes forward is the “why?” I hold that for Benjamin this always has an affirmative political application, which I have yet to mark. What Benjamin marks, performs, presents, in his theory of translation and in the transcendental but speculative is a process of potentiation as translation, as reading. A potentiation that gains its (ironically) “highest” potential in opening up to the possibility of an other that has a relentless “relevance to the present” (SW 1.292). To comprehend this relevance less-indirectly requires a shift to understanding said worlikeith-zusammenhangen’s relevance to Benjamin’s shape of history and criticism.
Encounters with Performative & Conceptual Fragments, & Compulsion Towards Totality:

Continually the experience and concept of an encounter comes forward. One can think of the transcendental yet speculative as a philosophical frame attempting to bring about a continual encounter with shifting configurations; one can think of the retranslation commentary form as likewise attempting to mark out anewed encounters with Benjamin’s work. Thus, it is worthwhile to work out what is meant by this encounter. A question to start with is, what is it that is encountered? I argue, it is what has been described by Weber as “quasi-transcendental, structural possibility” (Weber 59); and what Caygill in relation to Benjamin describes as “the transformation of the limits of identity through the encounter with alterity” or “encounter with other infinities” (20, 22); what Benjamin in different essays frames (from strategically binary perspectives) as “pure,” “abyss,” “-ability,” and various a-topos. What these all share, in my configuration, is a fragmentariness, in the experience, the concept, and as the Darstellung. The fragment is a pervasive and foundational presence encountered throughout Benjamin’s writing, and arguably throughout retranslation form. For the purposes here, I will explore the fragment in relation to Nietzsche and Benjamin, leaving aside the question of retranslation and fragment until the last section.

The fragment is a pervasive foundational presence encountered throughout all of Walter Benjamin’s writings, and subsequent translations, criticism, and theorist influenced by him. A presence found on all levels of Benjamin’s text,—grammar, rhetoric, concepts, form—as well as a mode of thinking, and as compelling a mode of encounter of said texts/levels. This is evident in many of Benjamin’s texts, but in the opening pages of the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” the fragment’s invasive, omnipresence, is condensed.
The form-mode Benjamin offers as the most appropriate for philosophical investigations is the Traktat, which has the “absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure” (OGT 28). Benjamin’s choice of a double negation—“absence” “uninterrupted”—enacts this interruption. The Traktat is a form of interruption, i.e., fragmenting; it is a representation of Benjamin’s ideal mode of philosophical contemplation: “tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object. This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation” (OGT 28). To return, to start again, to pause—all of these verb-forms imply a fragmenting process. The rhetorical figure that stands in the midst of the opening section of Benjamin’s “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” is likewise one of fragmentation: “Just as mosaics preserved their Majesty despite their fragmentation to capricious particles, so philosophical contemplation is not lacking in momentum. Both are made up of the distinct and the desperate” (OGT 28). Through the figure of the mosaic, Benjamin represents the fragment; moreover, the analytic form of the sentence calls on something other to express itself, thus implying a fragmentary nature—this analogy begins to push at the deeper foundation of the fragment, as supplementary. Moreover, for Benjamin it is in the fragment that the “truth-content” becomes experienceable: “The relationship between the minute precision of the work and the proportions of the sculptural or intellectual whole demonstrates that truth content is only to be grasped through immersion in the most minute details of subject matter” (OGT 29). To immerse oneself into the “minutes details” is an immersion into or reading of fragments, which then differs/defers to other fragments, and an impossible totality (relations between minute and whole). Furthermore, such form, tropes, thinking requires a fragmented form of writing and reading: “the writer must stop and restart with every new sentence . . . the form can be counted successful only when it forces the reader to pause and reflect” (OGT 29). The omnipresence of
the fragment in Benjamin—the form, thinking, rhetoric, grammar, writing, reading—begins with a philosophical foundation of humans as linguistic animals, and the reverberations of such through human-experience, language, consciousness, knowledge, understanding, history, etc. Benjamin’s philosophical foundations begin with a nihilistic refusal of all attempts to grasp the absolute through finite categories, leading to a conception of experience that is both transcendental yet speculative in a supplemental manner.

**Attempt One: The Impact of Conceptual-Upheaval**

I will begin with Friedrich Nietzsche’s and Walter Benjamin’s theory of language, experience, and truth—they coalesce in a general notion of the unbridgeable gap between the world or thing-in-itself and human-experience. To explore this theory, I turn to Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense.”

For a quick summary, for Nietzsche language is an expression of and producer of socially established arbitrary conventions out of the necessity for social interaction. All language, and human-experience, is a dissimulation: the word “tree” is not a symbol for the-tree-in-itself but rather an arbitrary name always-already agreed on by social convention. Moreover, “every word becomes a concept . . . [when it has to] serve not merely as a reminder of the . . . [specific] individual original experience . . . but at the same time to fit countless . . . [general experiences] which, strictly speaking, are never identical and hence absolutely dissimilar” (“On Truth” 249, trans by Gilman). That all words are concepts, in not being singular, points to the systematic nature and interdependence of human-experience and hegemonic-systems. Human is thrown-into
an always-already grammatical system, which produces and reinforces consciousness and power-relations.\textsuperscript{187}

The question this raises is: do humans have any agency, or are we under the spell of the grammars of the world, the pressures of the hegemonic-concept-structures? I am thinking of these grammars as sums of human relation, but of course certain “grammars” seem universal, for instance: the constructs of time/space—are these built in and unalterable or are they the manifestation of a malleable grammar? For Benjamin, according to Caygill’s reading, each grammar is a currently privileged configuration of an infinite possible number of configurations. Moreover, this connection is also indicated in a figure by Benjamin in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” where a hegemonic “grammar” becomes “Law.”

The tree of knowledge stood in the garden of God in order to dispense information on good and evil, but as an emblem of judgement over the questioner. This immense irony marks the mythical origin of law. (\textit{SW} 1, 72)

Any specific historical law is but one (among infinite) configuration, or what Nietzsche will call “concept-structures,” or what we might translate to one hegemonic-order-of-things. But “Law” claims to be the only configuration and its origin to be the only source of said configuration—i.e., source of “information on good and evil.” While in reality the tree—the mythic origin and the claim of singular Truth and Right—is a mythic emblem standing in “judgment.” Thus, “knowledge of good and evil” itself is indicated to be fetishtic knowledge brought about through the admitting of fetishtic language—for there is no evil in a prelapsarian world; hence,

\textsuperscript{187} The connection from word-concepts-systems and power is highlighted in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} section 20, where the innate connection between power and grammar is more overtly stated.
knowledge/language of evil and value-judgment is fetishtic knowledge and involved in a series of translational steps and falls—exiled from the Garden and then the confusion of languages as Babel. This marks a nihilistic border for Benjamin that Weber designates, in summary of the *Trauerspiel* book, as “matter and spirit, expression and meaning are linked only by an unbridgeable chasm: the chasm of ‘signification.’” (*OGT* 217).

For Nietzsche, there exists a similar abyss between the objective world and the subjective consciousness, which is unbridgeable except through an “aesthetic relation” i.e., a series of translations that distort (“On Truth” 252). The process of artistic metaphor formation (translation) is the mediating ground between experiential spheres: 1) nerve stimulus translated metaphorically into an image; 2) image reshaped metaphorically into a sound/signifier (248); 3) sounds/signifiers synthesized metaphorically into concepts (254). This gap, according to Maurice Blanchot, is nihilistic; “it stands like an extreme that cannot be gotten beyond, and it is yet the only true path of going beyond” (“Nihilism” 121). This foundational nihilism is what it is to be human—an experience “that ultimately has ignorance as its foundation” (123). This unbridgeable abyss is what causes fragmentation, i.e., what causes the human-experience to be that of fragments. The “aesthetic relation” that “translates” this abyss is a linguistic process, the link of “signification.”

In general, however, it seems to me that “the right perception”—meaning: the adequate expression of an object in the subject—is contradictory nonsense:\footnote{“Richtigen Perzeption” is “ein widerspruchvolles Unding.”} because between two absolute distinct spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no
correctness, no expression, but no more than an *aesthetic* conduct\(^{189}\)—I mean a suggestive transferring\(^{190}\), a continual-stammering\(^{191}\) translating into an entirely strange language\(^{192}\): for this, however, in any case, a free-versifying and free-inventing Mittel-sphere and mittel-force is needed. (Nietzsche “On Truth,” my translation).

The fragmentation is represented in the process of a “stammering translation.” Above, Nietzsche described the metaphoric process between object and subject—from sensation to concept—as a series of translations. But far from a singular indexical translation, it is stammering in process. Carol Jacobs describes this stammering as “a fragmentary repetition,” “a defective one” (“Dissimulation” 20). For Nietzsche, as for Benjamin, there is no getting beyond this stammering or fragmenting—expect in rhetorical figures, which may only re-present a beyond in a privative mode—due to the necessity of metaphoric translation for human-experience. Hence, the fragment is not part of a whole; it is not a stammer that leads to a definitive expression; the fragment gestures as a trace of the abyss—it marks the unmarkable. This is performed by Nietzsche in the word stammer itself: “nachstammelnde,” which appears to be a neologism. “Nach-” as a prefix implies “after, behind, in accordance with” while “stammelnde” already signifies a repetitive, successive, action or utterance. The “nach-” implies a stammering that is behind, ahead, and right now, something omnipresent. It is fragmented in parts by the “nach-”

\(^{189}\) “Verhalten”: something like behavior but also a sense bearing/conduct/manner. “Halten” etymologically traces back to “to hold/to support/to detain/to perform/to contain.” There is a sense of “conduct” in that it is behavior, a conveyance and a guiding aspect—and yet it is a halting conduct.

\(^{190}\) This “suggesting” could be implying a “will/drive.”

\(^{191}\) “nachstammelnde”: as stammering, the “nach-” implies a “Follow after” or “to follow.” So, a stammer-to-come? Or a stammer-after-the-fact? A purposeful repetition a perpetual stammer.

\(^{192}\) The continual babbling of attempting to convey X.
being in multiple space/times simultaneously. The adjective “nachstammelnd” is an act of stammering in itself, that marks the process of “translation.” Jacobs also indicates that one of the etymological connotations is “to knock against, to be obstructed” (20). For me, this gestures to what Walter Benjamin calls “stößt gegen” in “On the Program for the Coming Philosophy” or a “bumping-up-against” an absolute\(^{193}\) \((SW\ 109)\). The adjective “nachstammelnde,” as a catachresis, marks the abyss as a mode of potentiality.

\(^{193}\) “Absolute” (whatever that might be, materiality, thing-in-itself, X) cannot be grasped through finite categories for Benjamin, due to the necessity of translation, but maybe it can be experienced in the form of representation causing a knocking or bumping-up-against, as a pre-stable-meaning-mode of potentiality.

I would like to introduce a term here that might help categorize this certain use of language—catachresis. Defined by Thomas Sloane as, “a rhetorical effect can be achieved by redirecting the addressee’s attention to the substitutive character of a catachresis thus creating an awareness that it is a metaphor after all” \((\text{Sloane}\ 88-89)\). Catachresis is a misuse of language that calls attention to itself as a misuse of language. But, more than a conscious gesture with language, catachresis also gestures to the structural possibility or potentiality. Language is mis-used in a sense by its very nature. Derrida defines catachresis as the “first the violent and forced abusive inscription of a sign, the imposition of a sign upon a meaning which did not yet have its own proper sign in language. So much so that there is no substitution here, no transport of proper signs, but rather the irruptive extension of a sign proper to an idea, a meaning, deprived of their signifier” \((\text{Margins}\ 255)\). This is a unifying trope, in the same way the fragment is, due to the same expressionless abyss. As Sian Hawthorn writes, “catachresis, as the ‘middle’, is here also a ‘between’, an interval that is neither purely semantic nor purely syntactical; it is simultaneously a spacing and a displacement of the sense proper to a term. In Derrida’s formulation catachresis is both a kind of impropriety and an opportunity, inasmuch as in losing the sense proper to a sign exposes a reconfigured relation to that sign” \((\text{160})\). Moreover, the notion of a “dead metaphor”—an anthropomorphism itself—stands in opposition to catachresis. In “On Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense,” Nietzsche’s “dead-metaphors” is implied in his image of “fleeing like Lessing’s son” and the columbarium. However, neither of these for Nietzsche nor Benjamin have access to the thing-it-itself. Most language/concepts are dead-metaphors—catachresis could be purposeful though, weaponized metaphors in a sense: the purposeful mixing/destruction/confusion of metaphors, to destabilize allowing for something other to occur.

In many ways Jacques Derrida is the master of catachresis. Like Nietzsche’s aesthetic stance—translation/transference through/as metaphors—Derrida argues the problem of translation is “the very passage to philosophy” \((\text{Dissemination}\ 72)\). In Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy,” he explores how the word “pharmakon” has contradictory meanings: it means “drug” yet can be used to imply “remedy” and/or “poison” \((70)\). Despite this inherent ambiguity, all translations of Phaedrus into other Western languages “produce on the pharmakon an effect of analysis that” destroys or reduces the ambiguity by choosing a word that corresponds to the Western metaphysical value system \((101)\). But far from being only a problem of translation Derrida shows how, according to the translator’s introduction to Dissemination,
“Plato’s ‘original’ text is thus itself already the battlefield of an impossible process of translation” (XXV). This speaks to the supplementary-nature, the necessary-impossibility of translation/interpretation even in one’s primary language and time—i.e., the fragmentariness. This choice of translation speaks to the building of conceptual-structures; the choice of how to translate “pharmakon” is the choice of a hegemonic-system. Moreover, “If the pharmakon is ‘ambivalent,’ it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them / or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/ outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The pharmakon is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the différance of difference” (Dissemination 127). The ambiguity is the experience of the structural possibility that is potentially at play—any singularity if it is to survive must become multiple through translation. And yet the rhetorical aspects of Derrida’s text compel a reader into an experience of this tension between the structural ambiguity and the conceptual structures that support hegemonic values. For example, within the opening pages of “Des Tours de Babel,” there are multiple examples of a catachresis that causes an encounter in the reader. The text begins with a singular word “Babel” defined first as a proper name, and then immediately fragmented:

Considérons la survie d’un texte légué, le récit ou le mythe de la tour de Babel: il ne forme pas une figure parmi d’autres: Disant au moins l’inadéquation d’une langue à l’autre, d’un lieu de l’encyclopédie à l’autre, du langage à lui-même et au sens, il dit aussi la nécessité de la figuration, du mythe, des tropes, des tours, de la traduction inadéquate pour suppléer à ce que la multiplicité nous interdit. (“Babel” 209)

“Disant . . . il dit aussi . . . nous interdit” translates to “telling . . . it also tells . . . denies us.” “Interdit” has a figural element that is lost in translation, a punning quality, implying both speaking-between and forbidden. For any proper name to survive it must lose its proper name status. Survival is contingent on being translatable, otherwise the X is unknowable—but in being translated the “Il dit ” becomes “nous interdit.” “The original ‘undergoes a change’ because it belongs to a medium that itself is always in the process of changing: the medium of language. Because it is linguistic, the original work is historical.” (Weber 66). Derrida enacts this (un)survivability in translation through use of pronouns and verbs in his sentence. “Inter-dit” implying both between us and an impossible injunction.

Second example: This time in the English as the parentheses are in both original and translation. “There is then (let us translate) something like an internal limit to formalization” (“Babel” 191). The use of parentheses here fragments the sentence through a gesturing to a figure before, in this case the “tower of Babel.” Besides just compelling a supplementary reading process in the reader—the need to return to the previous sentences to understand what “(let us translate)” is referring to—in that it is the “tower of Babel” which is referred to, the fragmented sentence literally refers back to the image of the mythic origin of fragmentation of language—i.e., the mythic origin of the interdit (impossible-necessity) to translate. But the impact of the image of the “tower of Babel” and its seeming meaning, in that it can be compelled through the purposeful catachresis of rhetoric/grammar, has an immense potentiality, the potentiality of a conceptual-upheaval. In this particular case, hopefully, that consequence might be the disrupting of hegemonic reading practices—skimming for definitive meanings. And then hopefully after the upheaval encouraging through the interdit a slow digressive reading.
Another, maybe obvious, example in Nietzsche of catachresis bringing about a bumping-up-against revealing fragments as traces of underlying structural possibilities—i.e., the abyss as a mode of potentiality—is in the often-quoted definition of truth:

What, then, is truth? A morphing army\(^\text{194}\) of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism, in short, a sum of human relations, which have been poetically and rhetorically enhanced, translated, decorated, and through long use appear fixed, canonical, and binding to a people:\(^\text{195}\) truths are illusions of which one has forgotten they are (illusions); metaphors that have become worn and sensually feeble; coins that have lost their image and now, as (mere) metal, are no longer considered coins. (Nietzsche “On Truth,” my translation)

The tension here is between the form and the meaning. A question is asked and answered with a definitive statement: What is truth? Truth is nothing but tropological or linguistic displacements. In a nihilistic sense this denies certainty to truth, which is quite something in itself; and yet, according to Gasché, “while denying certainty to truth, [it] establishes this in truth, and thus reasserts certainty” (189). To state again, through a halting contradiction between rhetoric and

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\(^{194}\) This imagery refers back to the Hobbesian state of nature as “war against all,” which is present earlier in Nietzsche’s essay. The quote I am referring back in his essay goes: because humans are social “they need and strive for a peace-agreement, [so] that at least the greatest bellum omnium contra omnes disappear from their world” (“On Truth” own translation). This refers back to the above cited “mythic origin of law” in Benjamin. The “bellum omnium contra omnes” comes from Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, chapter 18. But in-line with my current reading is Agamben’s reading in *Homo Sacre* (106). For Agamben’s Hobbes’s myth functions as an origin point and justification for the political authority that develops. It is an ur-mythical image meant to justify and bring the sovereign into existence—while simultaneously producing a world at war with itself. Hence, the dissimulation is occurring on multiple levels here. The dissimulation is both the rhetorical myth Nietzsche is referencing and implying the start of dissimulation is the founding of power. Power claims to know Truth in order to justify (and re-establish) its own existence and right—hence the “will to truth” develops as a need to establish power. Hopefully, this gives some more weight to the power and potentiality of the catachresis encounter.

\(^{195}\) This lays out the interdependent connections between origin-myths (history), consciousness, language, hegemonic systems-truth/lies, and values/morals. What we might call the “hegemonic-order-of-things.”
grammar this sentence is enacting catachresis—‘truth is an army’ for one example. On a grammatical level it states: “Truth” equates to “An Army.” But on a semantical level it indicates that all of human-experience is a stammering-translation process, and hence any capital Truth-in-itself is Unknowable. And yet, this simultaneously reveals the supplementary nature of “Truth” and in doing so fragments the various continuities and totalities of a hegemonic-order-of-things. This irruptive catachresis-encounter once again marks a mode of structural potentiality.

In “History in the Service and Disservice of Life” Nietzsche utilizes a term—Begriffsbeben—translated variously as “earthquake of ideas,” “conceptual upheaval” and “concept-quake,” which designates the arrival of a mad science that disrupts faith, health, and security. This science is motivated by dangerous wanderings and potentialities of other futures. Moreover, I am relating this conceptual upheaval to the encounter that disrupts

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196 **As the cities collapse in an earthquake and become desolate and the human being, trembling and in haste, erects his house on volcanic ground, so life breaks apart and becomes weak and dispirited when the earthquake of ideas which science arouses takes from a person the basis of all his certainty and rest, his faith in the eternally permanent” (“History” 143).

197 In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Book 4, section 15 titled “Science” Nietzsche offers two contrasting forms of science:

– today, when everything is wobbling, when the whole earth is quaking.

But you, when I look at the eyes that you make, it almost seems to me you are seeking more insecurity, – more thrills, more danger, more earthquakes.

What you are fond of, I almost suppose, but forgive my posing, you higher men –

– what you are fond of is the worst, most dangerous life, the one that frightens me the most; the life of wild animals, woods, caves, steep mountains and labyrinthine gorges. (245-246)

The science being referred to is that which seeks earthquakes, i.e., concept-quakes that shake the hegemonic-order-of-things down and opens the potentiality for other. That wanders away from security towards uncertainty.
seemingly stable concept-structures\textsuperscript{198}. The “concept-structure” is a figural representation of the hegemonic-order-of-things, and the forgetting they entail by postulating a “before” i.e., a mythical origin point that justifies authority. This forgetting is done through the production of said “origin,” i.e., a before—what Nietzsche alludes to in the “peace-agreement” and “war-of all against all” (“On Truth”). In response to this situation, Nietzsche tells the youth:

Their mission is to upset modern concept of “health” and “culture” . . . and the monstrous conceptual hybrids . . . the health and vigor of these young people are guaranteed precisely by their inability to use a single concept . . . to designate their own nature. Rather, their conviction comes solely from their faith in a power which I active in them, a power which struggles, divides, analyzes, and in their best moments, in their own increasingly heightened sense of life. (“History” 143)

The youth is given the task to create “conceptual-upheaval.” The ability to complete this task must be first activated in them through the catachresis-bumping-up-against. This encounter has the consequence of activating a creative-critical-ability to “struggle, divide, analyze”—i.e., to read and write in a manner that releases the potentiality of other.

\textsuperscript{198} Nietzsche uses the image of “concept-structures”—Begriffsdomes—to represent a hegemonic stability brought about through the forgetting of metaphoric translation: “Whereas any intuition-metaphor is individual and unique and therefore knows how to eternally escape from all classification; the great Structure-of-Concepts points to the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium and respires, in logic, that cool austerity inherent in mathematics” (“On Truth” my translation). The imagery of the “columbarium” functions as an allegorical image and disrupts the continuum in a manner similar to the catachresis. The columbarium first was constructed as pigeon housing (which could be used for communication), then to house the dead. The image is of a public compartmentalized storage/housing for first doves and then later holding of urns. From a means of communication process to the holding of cinerary urns, for respect and tradition. From communication to tradition. No one mistook the pigeon for the message it carried, but the Urn comes to represent the dead—from vitality to memorialization.
A similar task, which is the product of the consequence of fragmentation, is given by Walter Benjamin in “The Task of the Translator.”

Whereas in the various tongues that ultimate essence, the pure language, is tied only to linguistic elements and their changes, in linguistic creations it is weighted with a heavy, alien meaning. To relieve it of this, to turn the symbolizing into the symbolized itself, to regain pure language fully formed from the linguistic flux, is the tremendous and only capacity of translation. (SW 1, 162)

“Pure language,” which can seem like a symbol of totality, has different legibilities associated with different mediums—“whereas in the various tongues . . . pure language is tied only to linguistic elements and their changes, in linguistic creations [i.e., textual form] it is weighted with a heavy alien meaning.” Pure language is fragmented in our experience and use of language. The simple reading would be to think of the “linguistic creations” seemingly confine “pure language.” This makes the text “heavy with alien meaning.” The more singular a textual configuration the heavier the potentiality for otherness will be. This is further emphasized with the task of the translator, which is to “release in his own language that pure language, which is exiled among alien tongues, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work” (162). Pure language marks the potentiality for other meaning, which is an infinite legibility/inscriptibility. The task of the translator is to release potentiality through a creative-critical-ability i.e., translation, which occurs through the encounter with pure-language’s confinement.

199 This release and task gestures back to Nietzsche conceptual-upheavals and mission.
This encounter with what Rainer Nägele calls the trace is felt. It is not an encounter that brings about an experience of the event “in their abstract infinity” but rather “the traces of an impact” are “felt as in impact” (Nägele 4). This leads to the possibility of the writing and reading of the traces, for Nägele—and for Benjamin—this is the impact which can bring about the critical-ability of reading/writing to begin again. “This beginning comes at the end of a long process; the process has to be completed again and again in order for the beginning to begin ever anew” (5). But this returning to the beginning through an impact of the trace has a relation to the political and revolutionary acts: “Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train-namely, the human race—to activate the emergency brake” (SW 4, 402). Each revolution, each re-reading has the potential to interrupt and bring to a stand-still the hegemonic-order-of-things, and in doing so the releasing of the potentiality for other.

Hence, as I turn more fully to Benjamin there is a necessity to start over with a philosophical foundation:

Attempt Two: Total-Fragments

Benjamin’s recasting of Kant’s conception of experience leads to the fragment being favored in his use of tropes. Howard Caygill argues that Benjamin recasts Kant’s concept of experience in a manner that undermines any distinction between subject and object—i.e., that nihilistic abyss—and undermines the tenant that there can-not be an experience of the

\[200\] A reading of the “Critique of Violence” that highlights the circular relation between means-ends, and the impotent necessity of attempting for pure-means, would make it clear that such an idea is present in the early 1920s, when the text I am discussing here come from. But this later image is more succinct.

\[201\] I could also say, Benjamin’s fragmented experience led to his recasting of Kant's conception of experience.
absolute.\textsuperscript{202} Hence, Benjamin develops a concept of experience that is both transcendental yet speculative: 1) “the transcendental is made up of the conditions of legibility afforded by a particular surface” while 2) “the speculative comprises the set of such possible surfaces of legibility” (Caygill 4). The transcendental becomes one of infinite legibilities. There are infinite readings possible on any given surface of legibility (i.e., “set of conditions of possible experience”) yet any reading and any set of conditions is but “one of an infinite set of (the) possible” (Caygill 5). Hence, fragmentating and the fragment become a structural necessity of all experience, knowledge, consciousness—as translatability, communicability, reproducibility of surfaces/texts becomes a “necessary structural possibility” (Weber 58). And the hegemonic-order-of-things simply becomes one privileged reading, (a particular transcendental infinity) that is blind to the traces of fragmentation and hence claims a mythic origin of totality/continuity.

This conception of experience shines on Benjamin’s theory of translation.\textsuperscript{203} For Benjamin translation imparts translatability through the presentation of human languages in their interlinguistic play between each other. Really, all human language imparts its structural possibilities—most apparently for me in its supplementary and fragmentary aspects—but some

\textsuperscript{202} Language, mathematics, ideas, concepts—nothing can bridge the abyss in an indexical manner that would allow for certain a-priori. But maybe, and only maybe, an experience of the absolute can occur. This involves a rethinking of the absolute for Benjamin as well. The experience of the absolute is the “bumping-up-against,” the catachresis moment. An experience of that impossible necessity of the unbridgeable abyss. An experience brought about through the fragment as a trace of structural possibility. What this experience is shifts, but for the reductionist’s sake of clarity, we might think of it in the manner of a semi-unmediated distorted experience (a weak-messianic): it is not an experience of an intentionlessness-thing-in-itself, but rather a singular and fragmented encounter of a pre-communicative movement of language/meaning (be it visual, verbal, musical, etc.) An experience of what we must forget for the “what-is-meant” to seemingly ossify. Nietzsche describes this “what-we-must-forget” as: “the primitive-metaphor-world . . . an originally hot fluid mixture of images . . . “ (“On Truth”). While Benjamin describes this pre- “what is meant” as “in a constant state of flux—until it is able to emerge as the pure-language” (\textit{SW} 1, 257).

\textsuperscript{203} But shines in a manner that also veils other aspects in shadows.
forms of linguistic creations (similar to catachresis as weaponized metaphors) gesture to the structural possibilities, or the forms own fragmenting/supplementing aspects: such as the Traktat and interlinear translation. This gesturing is done through various stylistic techniques by Benjamin, but also in his choice of subjects, which is consistently supplementary in a manner that gives the original an afterlife—poetry as supplementary to experience, history as supplementary to the event, criticism as supplementary to the art-work, translation as supplementary to the “original,” etc. To look at just one subject, language and translation:

All suprahistorical kinship between languages consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet, this one thing is achievable not by any

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204 The similarities between the forms—at this earlier stage of Benjamin writing career—would seem to be a kind of digressive, interruptive, and iterative-representation form that consistently calls attention to its own fragmented, supplementary nature. The interlinear gestures through the literal movement back and forth between two or more languages, often on the level of individual words. And the Traktat form gestures through its iterative interruptive digressive method of re-presentation—see first paragraph on the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue.”

205 Afterlife offers an example of the stammering translation process. “Just as the utterances of life are most intimately tied to the living, without signifying anything from it, so translation issues from the original. Not so much from its life as from its ‘after-life’” (SW 1, 254). Samuel Weber argues that “for the living” marks “a movement in which life . . . is only rendered ‘present’ by expending itself . . . by opening itself to a movement of iteration in which it is constantly being altered” (Weber 66). Life is not displayed—but is given an afterlife through utterances, the plural indicating the fragmenting of the stammer.

206 Paul de Man states “all these activities—critical philosophy, literary theory, history—resemble each other in the fact that they do not resemble that from which they derive. But they are all intralinguistic: they relate to what in the original belongs to language, and not to meaning as an extralinguistic correlate susceptible of paraphrase and imitation” (RT 84). The relating to “what . . . belongs to language” is the structural possibility.

In addition—at the risk of being redundant—the pages just before de Man’s quote go through and adjust our understanding of each of the activities away from anything analogous with nature or truth, towards a historical perspectivism—“we are to understand natural changes from the perspective of history” for example (83). Benjamin’s re-casting of experience does something similar. In re-cognizing that the reading/perspective currently allowed by the set of conditions of legibility/readability is but one of an infinite, and infinitely shifting, possibilities, we are asked to rethink the impossibility of any singular claim to truth/history/meaning.
single language but only by the totality of their intentions supplementing one another: the
pure language. (SW 1, 257)

The supplementary texts—translations—are only possible due to the current various (out of an
infinite) structural possibilities of the original. And yet, the structural possibility in the original
for translatability calls forward for a translation to supplement it. Hence, both supplement each
other due to the structural possibility and both impart—through presentation—(un)translatability.
And yet, each individual language, at any given time-space, would present translatability
differently, due to the infinite legibilities that present an infinitely shifting possibility of readings.
Lastly, in this quote each language is supplemental of a greater (but never total) “pure language.”

“Pure language” raises the question of figures of totality. These figures seem to imply
that a “totality of supplementing” could in fact occur. Caygill argues that Benjamin’s recasting of
Kant’s experience leads to certain tropes in Benjamin’s writing in which “the immanent totality
in spatio-temporal experience” manifest in two “inconsistent and even contradictory ways”
(6). The first way “stresses complexity” and focuses on the ways in which an immanent totality
appears in “complex patterns and distortions of spatio-temporal experience”; while the second
way, “dissolves space and time into a totality . . . that threatens to collapse (said) complexity into
a closed redemptive” totality (6). The first manner can be thought of as a deconstructive reading-
writing process. If things have an infinite legibility/inscriptibility, but only manifest in a
particular transcendentald infinity here-now form, then that particular manifestation will have
traces, distortions, of its greater infinity; these traces will, maybe, present in the form of
contradictions, or fragments, or catachresis, etc. The second manner is the promise of a

207 The “spatio-temporal” is understood as one possibility, not as a universal. But it is the current
historical privileged notion of experience.
messianic future to come or the mythic origin of a prelapsarian past, both in the form of a figural totality (a before and after of the fragment). However, Benjamin is not advocating that a prelapsarian garden existed or the Messiah will return—in which the transcendental yet speculative would no longer supplement each other and where infinite possibility becomes the totality of the Absolute.²⁰⁸ Rather the two contradictory ways are placed into an indissoluble and yet supplementary tension with each other: i.e., dialectics at a standstill.²⁰⁹ One example of this is in Benjamin’s “origin”:

The term origin . . . describe[s] that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming and in its current it swallows the material involved in the process of genesis . . . On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something unfinished. There takes place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which an idea will constantly confront the historical world, until it is revealed fulfilled, in the totality of its history . . . The dialectic

²⁰⁸ Whatever that might be—it is a fiction, or at least unknowable in human-experience. This form as a redemptive totality at least in Benjamin is a rhetorical fiction, a confabulation. Though due to human foundational agnosticism/ignorance the possibility exists, maybe. Maybe, it can be experienced as a pre-stable-meaning-mode of potentiality.

²⁰⁹ In Origin of German Trauerspiel, Benjamin states: “the undialectical neo-Kantian mode of thought is not able to grasp the synthesis . . . a synthesis, not so much in the sense of a peace, as a treuga dei between the conflicting opinions” (OGT 177). The dialectic that rages through Benjamin’s work is not a synthesis of peace, but a momentary standstill in an unending battle—a truce of God. This stand-still seems to be partially a chance encounter, as it seems only possible in specific configurations/conditions. Because the infinite configurations of legibility/inscriptibility seem to become representable within specific historical configurations in a singular form; this specificity seems oddly capricious. This itself is a dialectical standstill tension in Benjamin—the “capricious particles” of the mosaic. But notice that this dialectics at a standstill comes about through a vacillation between two contradictory tensions, in this way the dialects at a standstill, and even more so the dialectical image, are nachstammelnde.
The two contradictory tensions are explained as 1) the “process of restoration and reestablishment” and in the supplementary nature of this 2) “as something unfinished.” Also, represented are multiple forms of an encounter or “bumping-up against.” For instants, the image: “Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming and disappearance.” Origin in this image is the manifestation, on the surface of water, of an obstruction (often below the surface) in the water’s flow—thus creating distortions and back currents, i.e., fluid dynamics; while the center of an eddy is relatively stable, even possibly creating a near stagnation of water, the edges of an eddy are unstable—where the eddy encounters the downstream flow. The image is both stable and unstable. And yet an “eddy” becomes legible in the relationship between said stability and instability, which itself is the mark of underlying omnipresent elements—the river and the obstruction, i.e., materiality marked as structural possibilities, the eddy being one configuration.

This image represents one “determination of the form,” that “constantly confronts” [immer wieder . . . auseinandersetzt]—i.e., a stammering translation process. This stammering dialectical process (at a standstill) reveals “singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another” i.e., reveal structural possibilities of legibility/inscriptibility in singular representations, like the eddy.

But to push this one step further in Benjamin’s work: figures of totality, like “pure language,” “pure means” are themselves fragments of a greater vessel; each figure of totality, which has its own mythic origin is but another eddy gesturing. When these various figures of totality are placed in relation with each other as fragments they gesture-beyond to a greater (but
never complete) totality, or/and they come to a momentary standstill. To bring these figures of totality together, at least in Benjamin’s early work, there is a figure/term that stands in relation with each: the “expressionless,” meaning, which is a kind of “pure expression.” Where, according to Weber, “pure” is “a negative notion: ‘pure’ means purged of elements that are external” (70); hence, to be “expressionless” is to be emptied of all meaning, i.e., to be not translated, and thus presenting the untranslatable. Moreover, this use of “expressionless” places “pure language” as a shard of a larger (but never total) vessel.

In Benjamin’s “Elective Affinities,” the expressionless re-appears in another fragment: Just as interruption by the commanding word is able to bring out the truth from the evas[ive] . . . precisely at the point where it interrupts, the expressionless compels the trembling harmony to stop and through its irruptive immortalizes its quivering . . . The expressionless is the critical violence which, while unable to separate semblance from essence in art, prevents them from mingling . . . For it shatters whatever still . . . the false, errant totality——the absolute totality. Only the expressionless completes the work, by

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210 Beatrice Hanssen in a reading of origin, marks where Benjamin “invokes a legend recounted by Salomon Maimon” (821)—indicating the stammering perpetual gesturing to a previous origin. Origin is similar to “the mode in which Ideas both constitute the sphere of truth and participate in it . . . [as a] mise en abyme” (821).

211 “Pure language” in “The Task of the Translator,” “pure means” in “Critique of Violence,” “inexpressive” or “caesura” in “Elective Affinities.”

212 “Just as fragments of a vessel, in order to be articulated together, must follow one another in the smallest detail but need not resemble one another, so, instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the origin, the translation must rather, lovingly and in detail, in its own language, form itself according to the manner of meaning of the original, to make both recognizable as the broken part of a greater language, just as fragments are the broken part of a vessel” (Jacob 84). This is Carol Jacob’s translation found in both her text “The Monstrosity of Translation” and Paul de Man’s “Conclusions: Task of the Translator.” Both discuss the importance of maintaining the continual, inescapable, fragmented nature of the translation and the original—and their continued fragmentariness even when combined. There is no before the fragment, expect in rhetorical figures, and mythic thinking.
shattering it into a thing of shards, into a fragment of the true world, into the torso of a symbol.  

“The expressionless” is what brings the dialectic to a standstill through an “irruptive” moment/event; it prevents “the mingling” i.e., Hegelian synthesis, and in doing so houses a “critical violence” that fragments, and in fragmenting “completes the work.” The expressionless in the forms of “pure-” is omnipresent, as it is the supplement to the fragment, and the fragment to it—not in a manner that allows mingling, but in an irruptive, simultaneously shattering and stabilizing movement. Weber argues that the “pure language” and the “expressionless” stand in the opposite relation with translatability, as “untranslatable” (Weber 70). They are the negative form of an infinity of legibility/inscriptibility. Yet, as rhetorical figures such dialectical tensions between fragment/totality re-present this—marking the unmarkable. And in this representation harness the power of the conceptual-upheaval:

For the tragic transport is actually empty . . . Thereby, in the rhythmic sequence of the representations wherein the transport presents itself, there becomes necessary what in poetic meter is called caesura, the pure word, the counter rhythmic rupture——namely, in order to meet the onrushing change of representations at its highest point, in such a manner that not the change of representation but the representation itself very soon appears. (SW’ 1, 340-341)

The tragic signifier “expressionless” or “pure language” is empty. Yet, in “one determinate form,” i.e., as presentation, these specific negative-figures have an irruptive potentiality. This

\[213 \text{ The form of this last sentence gestures to the fragmenting supplementing stammer: into, into, into . . . Each of these iterations—unique and repeated—stylistically gesture to the double infinity of legibility/readability, or to the expressionless figure of pure-language.} \]
potentiality though would not occur from a single total appearance, but rather requires a fragmented supplementary stammering re-presentation to be enacted as an upheaval—the “counter rhythmic rupture” (the counter-flow of the eddy) brought about through the shifting representations, which gestures to the presentation as presentation. This rhythm of irruptive presentation as a style can potentially bring about conceptual-upheaval, i.e., disrupt various hegemonic claims or systems.

*Epilogue: the appearance of madness—a cautionary “failure”*

As I mentioned before, there is an impossibility of Benjamin’s transcendental yet speculative recasting of experience.²¹⁴ It seems it can only be actualized as presentation that fails in a counter-rhythmic repetition of dialectics at a standstill—with only a possibility of releasing confined potentiality—with only the possibility of activating a critical-creative-ability. Or perhaps such a form of potentiality is at best an impotent mad appearance:

Indeed, one could not characterize this rhythm any more aptly than by asserting that something beyond . . . interrupts the language . . . What stirs beyond this limit is, in one direction, the offspring of madness, and, in the other, the conjured appearance. (*SW* 1, 341)

The “beyond this limit” rhetorically . . . and mythically . . . marks the expressionless and . . . thus gesturing . . . towards— —but—why? For a “perhaps?” [Alas], which is madness, and which as

²¹⁴ “Benjamin’s elaboration of a non-Hegelian speculative experience provoked many false starts and unhelpful digressions and may even in the end be judged as a cautionary failure. It left in its wake the ruins of a number of uncompleted/incompletable projects, of which the *Arcades Project* is but the most striking instance. Even at the outset of his authorship, Benjamin’s texts are often fragments of uncompleted projects, while his correspondence is littered with the remains and traces of abandoned works.” (Caygill 3).
“conjured appearance” becomes inseparable—and then just as my explanation begins to seem like “conjured appearance” and hence “madness,” a word presents itself in my mind: “feute.”

There is a crushing amount of comments on the failures of Walter Benjamin—I won’t bother naming them, in a sense it becomes a cliché of Benjamin scholarship to mention them—from unfinished projects to a seemingly unnecessary suicide. But this compulsion of documenting his failure is at odds with Benjamin’s striking love of language and reading, which is marked in his living: in the bulk of his writings, in the photos of him always seemingly in a library or with a book, in the magical-esq descriptions of language, and in one more utopian-esq figure: childhood reading.

For a week you were wholly given up to the soft drift of the text, which surrounded you as secretly, densely, and unceasingly as snow. You entered it with limitless trust. The peacefulness of the book that enticed you further and further! Its contents did not much matter. For you were reading at the time when you still made-up stories in bed. The child seeks his way along the half—hidden paths. Reading, he covers his ears; the book is on a

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215 It means the tracks and traces of an animal. I grew up in Michigan and was taught to recognize feutes. But the thing about it is though some feutes are obvious, some are a coin flip. Is that a trail or did the wind just blow the grass in such a manner? But really it did not matter either way. For my dad, grandfather, etc. existing in northern Michigan as (insufficient) sustenance farmers, the reading of feutes was for survival. For me, reading of feutes was a game, translating as a seeking of in-bound feutes in-between. What though is the relationship between necessity and reading? — “No society can exist without reading” (Manguel 7).

216 “Benjamin’s suicide, Nietzsche’s madness project this meaninglessness back through their writing, which remains ‘essentially’ incomplete: call, request, rebuttal, challenge. These philosophies produce meaning not through significant closure but by outrunning nonsense with perpetual explosive inventiveness.” (MacFarland 260).

217 “The child functions for Benjamin as a Utopian figure. This is, however, not in the sense inherited from Romanticism, of an embodiment of plenitude in harmony with nature, but rather in view of both the ‘barbaric’ and ‘primitive’ tendencies” (Gess 683).
table that is far too high, and one hand is always on the page. To him, the hero’s adventures can still be read in the swirling letters like figures and messages in drifting snowflakes. His breath is part of the air of the events narrated, and all the participants breathe it. He mingle with the characters far more closely than grown-ups do. He is unspeakably touched by the deeds, the words that are exchanged; and, when he gets up, he is covered over and over by the snow of his reading. (SW 1, 435)

Yes, a critical-creative-ability is one potentiality, but said potentiality needs an upheaval. David Ferris points out that in a similar image of children’s play—where Benjamin was rolling and unrolling his pocket/purse/sock—the experience brought about an epiphany: “it taught me that form and content, veil and what is veiled, are the same” (SW 3, 374) (Ferris 82). And Nicola Gess argues that the children’s “destructive and mimetic potential come together in the games children play, leading dialectically to a gain of sovereignty in which intimacy with history or the strange, analytical destruction and steady new creation mutually specify each other” (683). Children’s play brings about understanding through experience. These childhood readings strike me as a kind of pure-reading—not a reading for the end purpose of releasing potential for a critical-creative-ability, but rather for some-other.
Supplement to an Intentional Entanglement: Re-translation and Interpellation:

In summary, while presenting at a symposium on translation, I offered a re-reading of a sentence from Walter Benjamin in the mode/form of re-translation commentary. That is, through a critical-creative process of interpreting Benjamin’s German sentence in relation to previous German-to-English translations by multiple authors, I attempted to demonstrate, to allow an observation of, the impossibility of finding an appropriate equivalence and hence the impossibility of knowing the meaning in a definitive manner; and in-doing so I hopelessly attempted to call attention to the original German, and the way Benjamin’s rhetoric performs his meaning. In the texts that I am most engaged with—performative critical theory—this impossibility is emphasized even in the original, where an excessive tension is placed between meaning and language—i.e., such texts carry a literary thickness that in exceeding clear-and-distinct meaning compel a privative encounter as uncertain interpretation, which may have a politically affirmative potentiality. Now, I want to reemphasize re-translation; a mode-form that stands in a correspondence with, is maybe even at least for Benjamin, iconic of, performative-critical-theory and the literary-as-such. Playing off Chantal Wrights’ work, I mean iconic in that the mode/form foregrounds textual possibility and capability, “refracted” through the translator (Literary 62). Re-translation highlights the continuous reengagement of a literary text with its possibilities across time and space. As Antoine Berman argues, the point of the re-translation is not to criticize a translator or to even mark errors in a manner that implies a solution (Age 20). There is no solution. But rather, re-translation reveals the lack of correspondence between the source and the translation, in hopeless attempts to illuminate the source text, to call attention to what Clive Scott describes as “the ways in which it makes its meaning” (247), or what Benjamin emphasizes as an impenetrable-distance between the “manner of meaning” [Art des Meinens]
and “what is meant” [Gemeinten] (SW 1, 257), the impossible-necessity of attempting to bridge this distance for the sake of significance, and the “bumping-up-against” encounter [stößt gegen] (SW 1, 109) that possibly occurs in such attempting.

Now, during a 2020 conference where a version of “Intentional Entanglement” was originally presented, a professor brought Warren Montag’s 2017 essay,—“Althusser’s Empty Signifier: What is the Meaning of the Word ‘Interpellation’?”—on the Brewster’s translation of “interpellation” as “or hailing,” to my attention.

In the essay, Montag asks what I hope is an ironic question, in the form of a necessity statement: “We must therefore ask the simple question of whether ‘hail’ adequately translates ‘interpeller’ in general, and in the ISA essay in particular” (Montag).

What. A. Question! Though nothing is simple about it; this is the question of translation practically and theoretically. This is a question of translation that reaches back to Jerome’s very accusations/crimes . . . sense-for-sense or word-for-word, and the complex entanglement, the mystification, which occurs when “adequacy” is demanded by an institutional validity that supports only that which reproduces its-own grammars and apparatuses. Does “hail”

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218 “Intentional Entanglement” can be found in the introduction to this dissertation under the heading “My Subjective Encounters.”

219 Quick detour to stand as an example of the complexity and possible historical root of the relationship between ISA/RSAs and interpellation in translation: According to Venuti, Paraphrastic translation i.e., translation as cultural adaptation, which was typical of the Romans, was taken up by the Christians (Reader 15)—this involved a standard of accuracy for a translation, not based on the relation to source text, but on institutional judgment validity. The complexity of this is felt when the text is the holy bible in the beginnings of the Holy Roman Empire. The bible translated paraphrastically must correspond with the in-particular Authoritative-governance’s grammars or apparatuses, (with the threat of heresy towards the translator). And yet the translation must still be perceived of as transparent, i.e., adequate. But “transparent” is defined by the Authoritative-governance’s grammars and apparatuses, not the source text. Hence, the mystification between “transparency” (clear and distinct) i.e., some authentic-correspondence,
adequately translate “interpeller” generally and in-particularly, and who decides? And yet, the heft of Althusser’s “interpellation,” as concept and word, adds a dimension to the translator’s choice that reveals mystification as such and in-particular. In his hopefully ironic use of “simple” Montag is possibly implying a weightier question, more in-line with Althusser’s project.

To re-paraphrase Montag’s almost question into my own grammar and concerns:

What are the implications and results of “hail” being the English translation for “interpeller” in general, and for ISAs in-particular? What is disrupted and what is maintained? And how does this reproduce or disrupt my own positionality?

That being said, I agree with the majority of Montag’s essay—his reading of Althusser, the empty-signifier nature of “l’interpellation,” the reading of the allegory, its relation to violence against people of color in America etc.,—and at the core I am working through Althusser’s belief and Montag’s words that: “At stake in this struggle between words, between translations of untranslatable terms is the very concept of ideology” (Montag). Where we seem to be in a tension is on the question of what to do about this struggle. Specifically, I question his view of the benefit of “or hailing” and his call at the end of the essay to “substitute one image [of interpellation] for another,” (Montag) unless that substituting process can become perpetual, a “and yet also . . . “ rhetorical form, instead of Brewster’s doublement. For, though I agree that “interpellation” absolutely signifies police brutality against people of color—I believe that if the image of Eric Garner becomes the new “allegorical expression” of “interpellation,” which is

and what is actually a paraphrastic-adaptation, maintains power-relations through grammars or apparatuses that define and internalize “transparent” to uphold institutionally valid.

Montag’s use of a privileged “allegorical expression” seems nearly not allegorical, but rather closer to a concept of symbol. As I hope will be apparent, I am not arguing that police brutality against the Black
what Montag states, this is still a problematic reduction that maintains specific privileges—while simultaneously being a contemporary and politically relevant rendering of Althusser, with potentially real political affect against policing.²²¹

For, “interpellation” must also signify acts of translating, reading, and critiquing and the developing of new “allegorical expressions” itself—with violently rippling effects. The question for me turns to academia and the substitutions that privilege one image for another and thus what is veiled. Hence, the image should be Eric Garner . . . and yet also . . . professors teaching about Althusser . . . and yet also . . . graduate students presenting at colloquiums . . . and yet also . . . red-lining . . . and yet also . . . Instagram . . . and yet also . . . etc. This “and yet also” is not signifying a focus on one over the other, but an attempting to think the complexity of ISA/RSA and interpellation more fully and thus read symptomatically with the hopes of questioning one’s own complicity and resistance.

Community is not a form of interpellation or is unimportant. This concern of the use of Eric Garner’s murder comes from thinking about the use of “black bodies” by academics and general theory. As Frank Wilderson writes in Afropessimism: “Blacks are not Human subjects, but are instead structurally inert props, implements for the execution of White and non-Black fantasies and sadomasochistic pleasures . . . Blacks do not function as political subjects; instead, our flesh and energies are instrumentalized for postcolonial, immigrant, feminist, LGBTQ, transgender, and workers’ agendas. These so-called allies are never authorized by Black agendas predicated on Black ethical dilemmas” (14). Within the lens of afropessimism raises a questioning of the use of Eric Garner as the new “allegorical expression:” who does such a use benefit, and how? I argue that, once again, the thinking about police brutality towards Black bodies in America through the lens of interpellation is beneficial, in that as a lens it seeks out metaphors in its transcendent-yet-speculative movement; which can, when left out of a mystifying (under the guise of clarity) analogy, i.e., “or hailing,” lead to a questioning of one’s own positionality and complicity therein. Hopefully leading to conversations about how police violence is a form of interpellation, and yet also asking of oneself and ones’ context: how am I complicit in or resistant to anti-Blackness?

²²¹ The goal of retranslation is a critical encounter between an original, previous historical translation, and anew translation; the goal of commentary is to demarcate one’s own positionality and ideological distortions; in a manner that hopes to compel the reader to likewise take on the role of critically reading not just the “anew translations” for its own ideological distortions, but likewise a critical reading of the reader’s own ideological distortions.
For translation, critique, teaching, etc., all of these are also forms of interpellation.\textsuperscript{222}

As Venuti argues:

Translation also enlists the foreign text in the maintenance or revision of dominate conceptual paradigms, research methodologies and cultural practices that inform disciplines and professions in the receiving culture . . . It is these social affiliations and effects—written into the materiality of the translated text, into its discursive strategy and its range of allusiveness for the translating-language reader, but also into the very choice to translate it and the ways it is published, reviewed, and taught—all these conditions permit translation to be called a cultural political practice, constructing or critiquing ideology-stamped identities for foreign cultures, affirming or transgressing discursive values and institutional limits in the receiving culture. (15)

I should note, the form/mode of re-translation is also interpellation, but one that in highlighting the continuous reengagement of a text, through the translator [with their own complex positionality], with its possibilities across time and space, attempts to illuminate the complex ways meaning is made and preserved, while revealing (and disrupting) its own complex position in power-relations.

Montag uses a word that seems to indicate the very process Venuti is describing:

Althusser will substitute for interpeller other verbs which have English cognates, such as ‘constitute’ and ‘recruit’ (neither of which, however, are exactly synonyms of

\textsuperscript{222} Re-translation attempts to reveal this process while also undermining its own interpelleting process.
interpellation), it is ‘hail’ that emerges as the definition of interpellation in the English version . . . up to the present serves [as the] allegorical expression. (Montag)

This “emerges” alludes to the greater text On Ideology and, I am making it allude to Venuti’s description of translation’s relationship to the processes of interpellation and ideology. i.e., “emerges” marks the canonization that has occurred, and the translation/reading/teaching practices that have enforced and disseminated “or hailing” not just as a single “doublement” but as a near-definitive meaning of “interpellation”; this near definitiveness, I argue, possibly maintains the neo-liberal university and ISAs/RSAs in general, in not-compelling a questioning of “interpellation” as say ‘critiquing’ ‘reading’ ‘translating,’ within the neo-liberal institutions.223

I imagine this will be too much . . . too much is contained in “emerges,” I have over-determined it—compelling it to imply—just under its “surface”—all the events that have occurred from 1971 to today those that disrupted and maintained: translation, publication, citations, excerptions, canonizations—and I have under-represented any event in-particular. But in doing so does this too much permit a certain alluding to—“what art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of ‘seeing,’ ‘perceiving’ and ‘feeling’, (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes” (Althusser 1480). I imagine I am being too much in implying that a purposeful, excessive, over-determining and under-representing in language, not just poetic, but in a performative aspect of critical theory may also be indicated in Althusser’s reply to André

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223 Scholars like Sara Ahmed come to mind, or even Walter Benjamin, though he tried. Or as George Steiner wrote: “tenure in the academy today, the approval of one’s professional peers, the assistance and laurels in their giving, and not infrequent symptoms of opportunism and mediocre conventionality” (Steiner ix). All of this is to state, maybe critical work that will disrupt its own privilege and hence the ISA/RSAs more directly, cannot be done within the walls or with the support of said ISAs apparatuses, i.e., universities today.
Daspre. This seeing/feeling/perceiving is marking Althusser’s later work on the material encounter, which I have also marked in Benjamin’s “bumping-up-against.” But I am compelled to too much once again, in wondering how to translate “interpelle” if not as “or hailing.”

With this question in mind, and alluding to Althusser’s later work, if one must translate “interpellation” with a doublement—which one need, dare I necessitate, must not—then maybe it should be “interpellation or the event of the swerve [. . . and yet also . . .].”

In the ‘nothing’ of the swerve, there occurs an encounter between one atom and another, and this event [événement] becomes advent [avènement] on condition of the parallelism of the atoms, for it is this parallelism which, violated on just one occasion, induces the gigantic pile-up and collision-interlocking [accrochage] of an infinite number of atoms, from which a world is born (one world or another: hence the plurality of possible worlds, and the fact that the concept of possibility can be rooted in the concept of original disorder). (Philosophy of the Encounter 191)

The interpolation of “or hailing” was a swerve of canonical proportions. Colliding and building until it emerged out as “the allegorical expression” of interpellation—224 which is all the more striking when one remembers that Althusser ended the section on ideology with his own allegory of ideology and interpellation! I highlight this passage as well for its imagistic quality, alluding to ideology and interpellation, maybe offering an uncertainty breaming with potentiality to re-recognize Althusser and his work.

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224 “For Althusser ideology works through our tactic recognition of being hailed, as when we turn around to answer the call, “Hey, you there!” (Norton Anthology, 2001, p. 1478).
Now, of course, it is inevitable that Brewster’s “or hailing” while critiquing any ideological processes (policing) is also maintaining specific ideological privileges. For to quote Venuti:

the translator’s consultation of these materials inevitably reduces and supplements it, even when source-language cultural materials are also consulted. Their sheer heterogeneity leads to discontinuities—between the source-language text and the translation and within the translation itself—that are symptomatic of its ethnocentric violence. (Venuti 24)

We are always-already born into and work from an ideology. The question turns, not to a reified notion of pure-indexical-translation, but to: how does one, or is it even possible to read and translate in a manner that critiques one’s own ideological position, of one’s own interpellative acts, of translation? And ideally are there inappropriable forms/modes of translation?

I argue for the form and mode of re-translation, as potentially opening onto a material encounter for the reader and translator: one form (of shifting historic multiplicities) of which is includes a respecting of the use of empty-signifiers, near-neologisms, words that attempt to bring to a tension a monadic density that the reader encounters in a manner that compels a symptomatic reading. Brewster’s “or hailing” covers over a possible encounter of the aleatory materialism entailed in interpellation as a process and “interpellation” as an “empty-signifier.” As Althusser writes:

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225 The empty signifiers allude in a manner that relates to Althusser’s notion of art.

226 It covers-over not in its individual use, but in the interpolation of “or hailing” within every occurrence of “interpellation” in the text—even those possibly signifying other verbs and contexts. Thus, arguably, negating a necessity of contextual reading.
finally, we shall say that the materialism of the encounter is the materialism, not of a subject (be it God or the proletariat), but of a process, a process that has no subject, yet imposes on the Subjects (individuals or others) which it dominates the order of its development, with no assignable end. (190)

The translator should attempt to mark this process in a manner that does not conceal interpellation as one, or two, but opens to multiplicity, or at least attempts to not conceal the potentiality of an empty signifier. Hence, Montag’s argument that “or hailing” “move[s] beyond the emptiness of tautological definition by inserting a second term” (Montag) misses the radical potentiality of “interpellation” as an empty-signifier and/or in its near-neologism status in English, marking a materialism of the encounter—”a process that has no subject yet imposes on the subjects” (Althusser 190) . . . i.e., an encounter of interpellation. In not doubling “interpellation,” potentially one encounters the perpetually relative determination of context and

227 The power of an empty signifier, which hinges on a near tautological definition, is likewise emphasized in a letter from Benjamin to Scholem from 23/12/1917. In which, Benjamin postulates one’s ability to determine the identity-relation that transcends the identity of the thought, i.e., representing the truth of thinking-thinking or thinking un-thinking. He decides this would have to be an absolute tautology, and states: “Die Wahrheit ist „denkicht“ (ich muB mir dies Wort bilden weil mir keines zur Verfä- gung steht).” In a moment of trying to mark a correspondence between thinking and truth in language—Benjamin is compelled to create a neologism, for there is no available language to state such a truth. Jacobson translates the word as “thinkish” and Fenves as “thi(n)ck.” A Dichtung thinking. Yet, as mentioned multiple times, Benjamin is seemingly against neologism. But, something is marked and compelled when a word is unknown immediately. When the reader is brought to a halt and compelled to ask, “what does that mean?” A momentary destabilization of assuming one knows what something means—interpellation should compel us to question in what ways are we interpellated and in the context of academics, in what ways am I interpellating? To fight against police brutality, white-supremacy and anti-blackness is a must; but to do so should not take the form of a monolithic approach where all contexts are generalized. Rather, academics, and white American academics especially should ask in what ways am I complicit in the death and terrorization of black bodies, of black peoples, of Eric Garner? What can I do today in my position to resist and dismantle white-supremacy in academia and in the street, in myself and in this world?
thus the possible necessity of reading symptomatically . . . and yet also, in not doubling, one potentially covers over a strategic radical relevance to contemporary events and real violence.

And so, ideally both could occur simultaneously [zugleich]. This would be an experimental interlinear re-translation form, which includes Althusser’s original, past and contemporary translations, translator’s notes, and critical commentaries, etc., in a form that is visibly translation, and uncertain of meaning. Re-translation in this form would possibly compel an allusive encounter with ideology, as textual possibility represented unfolding in historic forms, and with strategically real heft and affirmative political potentiality and thus compel one to read symptomatically, the text, one’s own positionality, and the specific here-now applicability.
Benjamin’s Heim and “The Task of Translator”:

1921 was bookended by two compositions by Walter Benjamin: “The Critique of Violence” (January 1921) and “The Task of the Translator” (fall of 1921); and thus, according to Michael Jennings, the year was spent with attempts at “integrating the idea of pure language into politics” (SW 1, 503). During the months in between, Benjamin’s time is consumed by various projects, including the never actualized journal *Angelus Novus*[^228], which gave (in theory) a central role to translation.

*Angelus Novus:*

In the official announcement of the journal Benjamin writes:

> Once again, German writing in its current state stands in need of a genre that has always had a beneficial effect on it in its periods of great crisis: translation. In the present instance, however, the translations of the journal wish to be understood not just as providing models to be emulated, as was the case in earlier times, but also as the strict and irreplaceable school of language-in-the-making. (SW 1, 294).

[^229]: Translation became a central motif during such periods of “great crises.” What translation offers in such moments is an understanding of the integration between word and politics, and a possibility of a remaking of language and politics.

[^228]: The first edition was to consist of excerpts from Fritz Heinle’s papers, poems by Wolf Heinle, a critical essay by Rang, a short story by Agnon, a translation of the mystical Judaic text ‘Bahir’ by Scholem, and Benjamin’s own “The Task of the Translator” (C 186-200).

It can only be coincidental that one hundred years ago—on August 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1921—Walter Benjamin wrote to Gershom Scholem: “[Angelus Novus] will be structured entirely and unconditionally keeping with my conception of the journal when I first thought of it many years ago (to be exact, in July 1914 when Fritz Heinle and I first seriously considered starting a journal)” (C 186). This seemingly quotidian parenthetical aside carries an odd allegorical weight.

\textit{Strange-Friendships:}

The intensely intimate intellectual relationship between C.W. Heinle and Benjamin lasted only around one year, (1913-1914) during which time they would develop (alongside others) a meeting-home in Berlin for intellectual symposium: consisting of literary, political, and philosophical/critical discussion, surrounding the youth movement. Arguably, “das »Heim«“ [“the Home”] (GS vi 476)—as it is called by Benjamin nearly two decades later—and Heinle encapsulates a prelapsarian-like space and time of youth, hope, commune: an impossible ideal between poetry/politics/criticism. In a letter from Benjamin to Carla Seligman from November 17, 1913, the depth of Benjamin and Heinle’s friendship is felt:

. . . it has become very difficult for both of us to be apart . . . He confronted me in the name of love, and I countered with the symbol . . . it is inevitable that each must remain true to his own spirit . . . I want the fulfillment that one can only anticipate but that he can satisfy. But fulfillment is something too serene and divine for it to issue from anything other than a burning wind . . . ’No friendship between brothers and comrades, but rather a friendship among friends who are strangers’ (C 56-57)\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{230} “ . . . es uns beiden sehr schwer wurde, uns zu trennen” . . . “er stellte sich mir gegenüber im Namen der Liebe und ich setzte ihm das Symbol entgegen” . . . “trotzdem jeder der andere ist, muß er aus
Benjamin’s words speak of a strange unity between poetics and criticism, being manifested as a strange friendship. Bernd Witte writes, “there is much evidence that Benjamin saw in the interaction between the two of them the desired archetypal realization of a pure spiritual community” (31).

Benjamin reflecting back on this time two decades later in “Berlin Chronicle,” describes Heinle and “Heim” as entangled in his memory—”die Gestalt meines Freundes Fritz Heinle, um die all jene Geschehnisse im Heim sich ordnen und mit dem sie verschwinden” [“the figure of my friend Fritz Heinle, around whom all the happenings in the ‘Heim’ order themselves and with whom they vanish” (GS vi 477).] Within the constellation of Home-Heinle is where Benjamin first considered starting a journal—where and with whom, he thought of creating a journal; where and with whom, poetics and criticism and politics could stand together as strange-friends.

_Humanity and catastrophic self-destruction:_

And then:

August 1, 1914: Germany declared war on Russia. August 3, 1914: Germany declared war on France. Between August 4th and 7th: Benjamin and friends attempt to enlist in the German Notwendigkeit bei seinem eignen Geist bleibe” . . . “Ich will die Erfüllung, die man nur erwarten kann und er erfüllen. Aber die Erfüllung ist etwas Ruhiges und Göttliches, als dass sie anders, als aus brennendem Winde folgen könnte” . . . “keine Freundschaft der Bruder und Genosse, sondern eine Freundschaft der Fremden Freunde” (Briefe 95-95).

231 Tensions in the “Home” were always present. Through the early months of 1914 a serious dispute between two conflicting groups involved in the journal _Anfang_ occurred: two sides disagreeing about the direction of the journal—politics or poetry. Heinle fell on the poetic side and a group led by George Barbizon on the political. Benjamin, having been elected president of the “Freien Studentenscahft” played the part of the mediator between the two sides, though it is written that he was covertly on the side of the poetic (Witte 33).
Military – “not out of enthusiasm for the war but to anticipate the ineluctable conscription” (Scholem 17).

And yet, on August 8th, 1914, in the Heim, Fritz Heinle, with Rika Seligson, committed suicide. Benjamin awoke to a letter:

Sie werden uns im Heim liegen finden. (GS vi 478)

[How do you translate a suicide note?

1. Domestication into English Syntax: “You will find us lying in the home”
2. Foreignizing with German Syntax: “You will us in the Heim lying find”

What, as the translator, is one attempting to capture here: the information or the experience? What to make of a poet’s suicide note? Which indicates the question, what is the experience? What is Benjamin’s experience?

How did Benjamin read the words: awake or still half-asleep? How was “Heim” comprehended? Was it read word by word, with a pause, or received in its entirety? Did the desired, the possibility of, “Sie werden uns im Heim . . . “ [you will-be us in the home] momentarily seem fulfilled? The ideal symposium of “We” and “home” fulfilled?

Did “. . . liegen finden” retroactively altering “werden” fragment the half-asleep symbolic unity? Did ‘Heim’ fall to ruin, leaving “lying” there to “find” real-bodies, uncommunicable-death, and allegory?

The local Vossische Zeitung translated the act as “Liebesgram,” [love-grief]; the friends translated it as a protest of the war. Benjamin seemingly overcome with a lamenting muteness writes nothing explicit about the act at the time. A home of attempted pure spiritual and
intellectual communing—in an impenetrable significant act/event towards a world burning—turned mute.

[“And the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth and they left off building the city.”

(Gen. 11:9, Trans. Robert Alter)]

And yet, days before Heinle’s suicide, Benjamin and friends had attempted to enlist in military service—“the double suicide put a stop to any desire to fight” (*SW* I, 498). Benjamin would actively attempt to fail military physical examinations (faking palsy with mass consumption of caffeine, using hypnosis to fake symptoms of sciatica, and eventually leaving for Bern to study and wait out the war.) This moment marks a significant shift in thinking for Benjamin.

*From Real-Ideal to Rhetorical-Ideal:*

Heinle and Heim never leave him entirely: Benjamin took over the literary works of Heinle, attempting to publish them for many years; until in 1933 the papers were lost when, while fleeing the Nazis, Benjamin went into exile (Scholem 17). References and allusions to Heinle are found throughout Benjamin’s works. Eiland and Jennings write: “. . . one of the most enigmatic episodes in Benjamin’s enigmatic life. At once epochal and impenetrable, the

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References to the “Heinle Papers” occur frequently throughout his correspondences. Benjamin was compiling, reading, and writing an introduction to Heinle’s work until 1923 actively; Benjamin continues to try to access the papers left in Berlin from Paris for well into the 1930s—in a letter from November 1*st* 1938 he writes to Gretel Adorno that “As of now, the only thing yielded by my persistent efforts to get some more of my books, but above all my papers, out of Berlin is the virtual certainty that the following things have been destroyed: the complete papers of the two Heinle’s . . . “ (*C* 578).
encounter with Heinle would leave a deep mark on Benjamin’s intellectual emotional physiognomy for years to come” (53).

It is shortly after the suicide in the winter of 1914-1915, Benjamin dedicated his “Essay on Two Poems by Hölderlin” to Heine. Two years later, in his essay on Dostoevsky’s *Idiot*, from the summer of 1917, he writes: “in the absence of both nature and childhood, humanity becomes conceivable only through a catastrophic self-destruction” (*SW* 1, 81). Bernd Witte argues that “Benjamin’s friends read these sentences correctly ‘as an esoteric comment about Fritz Heinle’” (Witte 32). Moreover, it can only be coincidental that, though falling into a deep depression, shortly after the suicide, in winter 1914-1915, Benjamin under the tutelage of philologist Ernst Lewy, studied the language theories of Humboldt (and I would imagine also Hamann, and Herder), which would become prevalent to his theory of translation.

The ruthless reality of Heinle’s suicide, the years of world war, the events of Benjamin’s exile and own suicide speak to the impossibility, the impassable, and utter failing—while the sheer volume of Benjamin’s writings, planning, correspondences, friendships, and attempting despite, speak to what Eiland and Jennings describe as Benjamin’s “impulse to symposium—the gathering of like-minded thinkers and writers—[] an inextinguishable propensity of his philosophic sensibility,” (5). Such a propensity seemed to reach back to idyllic ‘home,’ even while knowing from experience the fractured and allegorical, the necessity of the language.

This constellation of impossible ideal symposium, death, and language would rise to the surface again in September of 1921, when Benjamin and Scholem met with Lewy to discuss the plans for *Angelus Novus*, while simultaneously Benjamin is amid working on his “The Task of the Translator” (Eiland 154). Though “The Task of the Translator” would end up published as an introduction to the Benjamin’s translation of Baudelaire’s “Tableaux parisiens” (1923); it is also
listed in a letter to Gerhard Scholem from November 8, 1921, as one of the items for the first edition of *Angelus Novus*.

*Hidden Home:*

“The Task of the Translator” has a hidden “Heim”—though it is a Heim that no longer believes in the possibility of an actualized “realization of a pure spiritual community.” Such conceptions have become solely rhetorical, though marking the Sehnsucht towards such. For example, Heim as an actual pure community has fallen to a rhetorical “pure language,” a speculative transcendental ideal, which none-the-less strives for the possibility of a “pure community,” thus potentiality, and chancily, allowing for the possibility of anew community. “Heim” is present in “The Task of the Translator” exactly, insufficiently, twice. In paragraph two:

> Was aber außer der Mitteilung in einer Dichtung steht—und auch der schlechte Übersetzer gibt zu, daß es das Wesentliche ist—gilt es nicht allgemein als das Unfaßbare, Geheimnisvolle, ‘Dichterische?’ (2.7)

But is it not generally held that what stands apart from the Impartation in the Dichtung—and even a bad translator will admit that it is the essential—is the unfathomable, enigmatic, “Dichterische?” (my translation)

The “Dichtung” loses the “dichterische” in the parting of Mitteilung, i.e., loses the poetic-density, poetic-material-thickness. The “Essential” is corresponding via the “—” to “das Unfaßbare, Geheimnisvolle, ‘Dichterische’. And here one finds the rhetorically hidden “Heim”: “Ge-heim-nis-volle.” The “Ge-” could imply a collective aspect or a repetitive aspect. “Geheim” according to Fluge’s Etymological Dictionary, besides the ‘private,’ ‘secret,’ and ‘hidden’ carries
a meaning of “belonging to the house” (110). This could be transmitted as something repeating-
mysterious-yet-home-full; it carries an enigmatic character in its paradox: to be home and yet
hidden. In the original, “Heim” has parted with its dichterische, and thus become
Geheimnisvolle, and which none-the-less is “-volle” and as such denotes towards what might
inessentially and romantically be figured as “Heim.”

Likewise, in paragraph nine sentence six Benjamin writes:

Wenn anders es aber eine Sprache der Wahrheit gibt, in welcher die letzten Geheimnisse,
um die alles Denken sich müht, spannungslos und selbst schweigend aufbewahrt sind, so
ist diese Sprache der Wahrheit—die wahre Sprache. (9.6)

If, in-another-way, however a language of truth exists, in which the latest Geheimnisse,
which all thinking strive for, are kept tensionless and even in-silence, so is this language
of the truth – the true language. (my translation)

“Heim” cloaked again in its strange “Geheimnisse,” is the a-topos/a-temporal which “all thinking
strives for”; The “letzten” could imply “ultimate” in a teleological coloring233; but could also
here imply “latest” in a historical sense, not an end but a halting along. In which case “Heim”
maybe understood in the form of “Geheimnisse” as one particular transcendental infinity,
functioning as an a-topos/a-temporal ideal towards which one’s thinking strives, which in turn
marks the hidden “Heim” speculative and immanently present(ed).

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233 Both Zohn and Rendall choose “ultimate.”
What follows is my retranslation-commentary of Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator.” I have already discussed my process above in the introduction to this section. However, I will repeat myself in order to renote why this form. My form is guided by Benjamin’s various descriptions of “happy” forms—such as interlinear translation described as the “the archetype [Urbild] or Ideal of all translation” (12.17); or in 1936, “this happy form of translation, which in the commentary takes/gives accountability of itself and performs the fact of the differences of language-situations a/as theme” (“Traduction” line 26). As well as Benjamin’s own Darstellung—

Darstellung is the embodiment of their method. Darstellung as re-detour—that is the methodical character of the Traktats. Sacrificing the uninterrupted course of intention is its first hallmark. Enduring the thinking always springs anew, roundaboutly it goes back to the sake itself. This unrelenting taking-a-breath is the most proper Daseinsform. (OTS 11).

My retranslation commentary attempts to thematize and perform the nature of post-lapsarian translation, in the hopes of potentially creating an “bumping-up-against” encounter for the reader, in the hopes of potentially compelling anew interpretation. To do this means to choose a form that disrupts teleological and necessity driven conceptions of translation—i.e., disrupting invisible translators producing mythical equivalence between the original and the translation. Retranslation-commentary, in my “The Task of the Translator” translation, does this by interlinear form—Benjamin’s original, followed by Howard Zohn’s translation, followed by Steven Rendall’s translation, followed by a “literal” word for word translation, and finally my
translation. Such a form disrupts teleological and necessity driven concepts of translations through making translation and interpretation itself omni-visible.

My commentary marks differences of interpretation and translation choices, along with secondary readings. Retranslation-commentary is not trying to “correct” earlier versions, such would be a reinstatement of teleology and necessity driven conceptions of translation. Instead, retranslation is about marking the nature of post-lapsarian language and human relations with text as they unfold through history. Retranslation-commentary thus brings multiple particular transcendental infinities together in a juxtaposition, denoting towards the speculative other possible transcendental infinities. Such a form attempts to halt any particular transcendental infinity from sliding into teleological and necessity tones of “the one and only” transcendental infinity.

Note:

The retranslation of “The Task of the Translator” that follows contains footnotes that overlap with the preceding sections. I have left them in the retranslation for that is their ‘original’ context; some of such have been edited for the preceding, but left in an earlier form in the translation, a difference likewise thematizing the “different language situations” of a “happy translation.” Moreover, I have color coded the translation to clearly indicate which translation is by Howard Zohn, Steven Rendall, Literal, and Andrew Brooks. The choice of interlinear commentary is in following Benjamin’s descriptions and examples of favored translation form.

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234 The “literal” or Wörtlichkeit or word-for-word translation will be odd. The literal translation maintains syntax and marks multiple potential meanings. As such literal translation does not seek clarity but foregrounds difference, and foreignization.

235 If the color is not maintained, the translations runs from top to bottom Zohn, Rendall, Literal, Brooks.
In doing so, a different experience occurs for the reader of this retranslation, than for the reader of the original German, or previously published translations. As the reader of the retranslation, one is immersed in the details of each sentence, and one immerses further in many instances in the commentary, individual words, and fragments. The commentary also attempts to place the fragments into a collective conversing, through the marking of tropes, explication, cross-referencing, etc. In such a form, I do not imagine one would “read” this document, but rather that this document might be illuminating to one reading Benjamin’s essay. Such an illumination is not a clarity of meaning, or even an agreeing with my comments or interpretations; but rather such an illumination of the text I hope would take the form of a questioning, and in such thus potentially compel the reader into the task of the translator.
Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers

The Task of the Translator (Zohn)
The Translator’s Task (Rendall)
The Task of the Translator (Literal)

Translated from Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften Band 4, pages 9-21
The Task of the Translator (my translation)


The title is seemingly straightforward. There is a translator and a task. The essay unfolds this task. Many commenters on Benjamin’s essay have discussed the meaning of “Aufgabe.”

If the text is called “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” we have to read this title more or less as a tautology: Aufgabe, task, can also mean the one who has to give up. If you enter the Tour de France and you give up, that is the Aufgabe—’er hat aufgegeben,’ he doesn’t continue in the race anymore. It is in that sense also the defeat, the giving up, of the translator. The translator has to give up in relation to the task of refinding what was there in the original. (de Man, RT, 80)

The title also says, from its first word, the task (Aufgabe), the mission to which one is destined (always by the other): commitment, duty, debt, responsibility. Already at stake is a law, an injunction for which the translator is answerable. He must also acquit himself, and of something that implies perhaps a fault, a fall, an error, or even a crime. The essay has as horizon, as we will see, a “reconciliation.” And all of this in a discourse multiplying genealogical motifs and allusions—more or less than metaphorical—to the transmission of a family seed. The translator is indebted, he appears to himself as translator in a situation of debt; and his task is to render, to render that which must have been given. Among the words that correspond to Benjamin’s title (Aufgabe, duty, mission, task, problem, that which is assigned, given to be done, given to be rendered), there are, from the beginning, Wiedergabe, Sinnwiedergabe, restitution, restitution of meaning. How is such a restitution, or even such an acquitting, to be understood? And what about meaning? As for aufgeben, it is to give to dispatch (emission, mission) and to abandon. (Derrida Psyche 200)

The “Aufgabe” of the translator is less his task than his surrender: he is “aufgegeben,” given up, abandoned. This is its initial irony. (Carol “Monstrosity” 765)

Berman, in his commentary, offers insight into the romantic notion of “Aufgabe”:

In the romantic terminological cosmos, the task, the Aufgabe, is connected to another term, Auflösung, which translates as both resolution and dissolution. The ‘task’ is always confronted with a state of affairs that needs ‘resolving’ . . . the ‘task’ is therefore confronted with a problem (to solve), with hostile materiality (to dissolve), or with dissonance (to resolve musically). (Age 43)

Benjamin uses a series of words to imply translation, but with varying auras. Übertragbar and übersetzers being the two major ones. For Benjamin, “übersetzers” seems to imply the translation that is always insufficient, a transposition through a foreign language that transforms. While “übertragbar” seems to rather imply a delusional equivalence ideology of translation, or/and contrastingly the idea of a Wörtlichkeit translation, a syntactical-fidelity translation, in which the untranslatability is encountered privatively as the strangeness of foreignization. In a moment when “translation” is popularly preferred to be invisible, “übertragbar” is the myth of transparency; but Treue übertragbar of syntax presents übersetzers as insufficient. In a sense, the retranslation I am attempting is a übersetzers and übertragbar simultaneously.
Paragraph 1:

1.1: Nirgends erweist sich einem Kunstwerk oder einer Kunstform gegenüber die Rücksicht auf den Aufnehmenden für deren Erkenntnis fruchtbar.

In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful.

When seeking knowledge of a work of art or an art form, it never proves useful to take the receiver into account.

Nowhere proves itself an Artwork or an Artform overagainst the Regard towards the Absorbinger for their Knowledge fruitful.

Nowhere does the regard of the absorber towards an artwork or an artform prove fruitful to knowledge.\(^{239}\)

1.2: Nicht genug, daß jede Beziehung auf ein bestimmtes Publikum oder dessen Repräsentanten vom Wege abführt, ist sogar der Begriff eines ›idealen‹ Aufnehmenden in allen kunsttheoretischen Erörterungen vom Übel, weil diese lediglich gehalten sind, Dasein und Wesen des Menschen überhaupt vorauszusetzen.

\(^{239}\) Benjamin’s first word— “Nirgends”—is etymologically distinct in its consistency. Emerging in the Middle High German period, 1050-1350, it has since signified “nowhere” (Kluge 252). Zohn and Rendall’s choice to translate this sentence into temporal negation misses the trope of an impossible space/time that plays throughout the essay overall. Far from being a negative sentence, this is an affirmative statement: “Nowhere” is a time/place where regarding the Absorber/Recipient of a work of art would be fruitful to knowledge. This “space” is restated in the essay in various ways, such as “a reference to an area” of mere correspondence, i.e., “a commemoration of God,” or “Sprachfügung”; as well as in Benjamin’s citations of Mallarmé and Pannwitz—citations that mark where “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense” become “the-same,” and thus allude to this (im)possible “nowhere.” As in Pannwitz quote: “where word image tone into one regressively-penetrating.” This is a motif of “a-topos,” a rhetorical presentation, marking/causing a striving of an infinite task of translation.

In addition, “Rücksicht” is translated as “consideration” by Zohn. This loses a major impetus in the essay as well, that of a backwards looking, “Rück-“ as a prefix implying “back,” while “sicht” implies view or sight. Moreover, “Aufnehmenden” is translated by Zohn as “receiver” though the term is odder: “Aufnehmen/d-en”. This is a near-neologism, which is hinting at a tradition of phenomenology and epistemology—“vernehmen” or “wahrnehmen”— and in Benjamin’s deverbal form here indicates “Aufnahmen” as well: i.e., “reception” “photo” “recording,” all of which carry a questioning of mimesis. In its root verb form “nehmen” could be ditransitive; this would further indicate an (im)possible space and an über-receiver able to read both the “meaning” and “the letter” simultaneously. In lieu of “receiver,” I aim to highlight this relation to the “nowhere.” A similar concern is present in the contemporaneous “Critique of Violence,” in which Benjamin in concerned with the possibility of a position from which violence/force [Gewalt] could be the subject of criticism.
Not only is any reference to a particular public or its representatives misleading, but even the concept of an “ideal” receiver is detrimental in the theoretical consideration of art, since all it posits is the existence and nature of man as such.

Not only is every effort to relate art to a specific public or its representatives misleading, but the very concept of an “ideal” receiver is spurious in any discussion concerning the theory of art, since such discussions are required to presuppose only the existence and essence of human beings.

Not enough, that every Relation to a determined Public or its Representatives from the ways departs, is even the Concept an “ideal” Absorbinger in all art-theoretical Discussions of the Evil, because these merely are held, Being and Essence of Man in general presuppose.

Not enough, that every relation to a definite public or its representatives leads astray, even the concept of an “ideal” absorber is an evil in all art-theoretical discussions, because these are only held to presuppose the being and essence of humans as-such. 240

The genre of the human is hinted at in Benjamin’s words and critique of a theory of “ideal” being. Concepts of “ideal” posit what it is to be “human.” Hence, the ideal “receiver” of an artwork becomes the model that humans as-such should be. Cicero’s ideal orator, and its Quintilian’s variation of “a good man speaking well” come to mind. Thus, the “ideal” receiver implies an ideologically privileged “superiority.”

But Benjamin’s statement is about the notion of an ideal interpreter, or reader, i.e., reception (though not necessarily “reception theory” as understood in American context). Paul de Man marks how these categorical statements against idealizing the reader were confronted by Jauss and his disciples (RT 77-78). “This passage has provoked the ire of the defenders of Rezeptionsästhetik, who analyze the problem of poetic interpretation from the perspective of the reader . . . For them, a sentence like the one which begins this essay is absolutely scandalous” (77). This “thr[ew] them into a slight panic in Konstanz, a panic with which they deal by saying that this is an essentialist theory of art, that this stress on the author at the expense of the reader is pre-Kantian, since already Kant had given the reader (the receptor, the beholder) an important role, more important than the authors. This is then held up as an example of the regression to a messianic conception of poetry which would be religious in the wrong sense, and it is very much attacked for that reason” (77-78). But, as de Man indicates through his then turn to Gadamer and Habermas, it is not the “author” Benjamin is privileged but the text itself.

Antoine Berman discusses Benjamin’s complete disavowal of conventional reception-tinged translation theory. Berman discusses the detrimental history of reception theory to translation: “Ethnocentric translation and hypertextual translation are in fact rooted in the ideology of reception” (Age 57). The “ideal” reader likewise implies an ideal text and meaning. In a footnote Berman cites Nida and Taber, “this theory leads to a form of adaptation which, in turn, is a form of manipulation guided but the infamous ‘receiver’” (Age 71n7). Hence, though Benjamin’s use of “Übel” may seem odd—Zohn and Rendall shift it to less stressed adjectives—it is marking an “evil” conception of adaptation-translation. Benjamin in the Trauerspielbuch traces ‘evil’ as originating with fetishtic knowledge: “But it is said of God after the creation: ‘And God saw everything he had made and behold, it was very good.’ Knowledge of evil therefore has no object. There is no such object in the world” (trans. Eiland 255). The concept of an “ideal” reader, text, etc. is empty of objectivity. Thinking of translation (poetry, art, music, etc.) as a
1.3: So setzt auch die Kunst selbst dessen leibliches und geistiges Wesen voraus—seine Aufmerksamkeit aber in keinem ihrer Werke.

Art, in the same way, posits man’s physical and spiritual existence, but in none of its works is it concerned with his attentiveness.

Art itself also presupposes man’s corporal and spiritual essence—but no work of art presupposes his attention.

So, sets also the Art itself his physical and spiritual/mental Essence ahead—his Markitiveness but in none of their works

domesticating practice to bring the text to the reader is thus a subjective evil that fetistically values an “ideal” being and content over the original text itself, under the guise of knowledge.

Remembering that Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” is a prologue for his translation of Baudelaire’s “Tableaux parisiens,” Baudelaire’s envisioned “lecteur” in Les Fleurs du Mal should be marked. But rather than the envisioned reader implying a mythic ideal reader and understanding of the meaning; instead, as Benjamin describes in his late 1930s work, Baudelaire “envisaged readers to whom the reading of lyric poetry would present difficulties” (SW 4, 313). Hence, in-lieu of a reception-focused translation (domestication) and ideal, Benjamin’s reader is to experience difficulty due to the emphasis being on the text-itself (foreignization).
So, sets also, art itself presupposes human’s bodily and spiritual\textsuperscript{241} essence—but their attentiveness in none of its works.\textsuperscript{242}

1.4: Denn kein Gedicht gilt dem Leser, kein Bild dem Beschauer, keine Symphonie der Hörerschaft.

No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience.

\textsuperscript{241} “Geistiges” for Benjamin could imply spiritual or mental. Such distinctions go back to “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” essay. Art—aesthetic forms/works—positing both “body” and “mind/spirit.” Aesthetic forms/works that we are born-into, that cause a passive inheritance of perceptions, thinking, experience, are highlighted by Nietzsche in his “On Truth and Lies in the Extra Moral Sense” as well as vignette 44 of The Antichrist:

Even the relationship of a nerve-stimuli to the produced image is in-itself not essential: but when the same image is (re)produced millions of times, and passed-down through many human-generations, indeed finally, appearing to the totality of humankind as a result of the same cause; thus, finally it receives the same signification, as if it was the only essential image, and as if the relationship [between] the original nerve-stimuli and the inherited image was that of a strict causality—as a dream, perpetually repeating, would be continually perceived of and evaluated as absolute Reality. But the hardening-and-rigidifying-becoming of a metaphor does not absolutely guarantee the essentiality and sole entitlement of this metaphor. (“Truth,” my translation)

The fundamental will to employ only the concepts, symbols, and attitudes which have been proved by the practice of priests, the instinctive rejection of every other practice, every other value- and usefulness-perspective — this is not only tradition, but also inheritance: only as inheritance does it function like nature. (“Anti” 145-146, trans. Thomas Wayne).

The “passed-down through many human-generations” is not biological (though “like nature”), but rather non-biological inheritance, historical genealogical, passed down through concepts, artforms and works. Hence, art presupposes human as-such mind/spirit and body in an always already cultural inheritance.

\textsuperscript{242} “Aufmerksamkeit”: “auf – merk – sam – keit”: -Auf: prefix, “up” / “open” / “stop” / “do smt to smt”; “-Merk”: from verb “merken”: To mark, note, observe, remember; “-sam”: shift verb to adjective; “-keit”: shift adjective into a noun.

Zohn’s “Attentiveness” seems to elide the root of “mark.” The statement that this art “in none of its works” [sets’ ahead] Human “Aufmerksamkeit” – attentiveness, or ability-to-mark-ness—possibly indicates that this is not something posited in cultural-inheritance, but rather, what Samuel Weber marks in Benjamin’s use of the suffix -barkeit, as a “structural possibility.” “-samkeit” is not the same as “-barkeit” but the prefix of “auf-” with the root verb of “merkmal” gives this transformed noun an indication of “doing something,” in particular “marking.” As marking the structural possibility of marking, this implies something that is “potentially at work even where it seems factually not to have occurred” (Weber 6). Thus, artworks do not per se posit this ability, though the artwork marks the structural possibility in its form.
No poem is meant for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience.

For no Poem pertains for the Reader, no Image for the Viewer, no Symphony for the Listener.

For no poem pertains\textsuperscript{243} for the reader, no image for the viewer, no symphony for the listener.

**Paragraph 2:**

2.1: Gilt eine Übersetzung den Lesern, die das Original nicht verstehen? Das scheint hinreichend den Rangunterschied im Bereiche der Kunst zwischen beiden zu erklären.

Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original? That would seem sufficient to explain the differing status of original and translation in the domain of art.

Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original? This would seem to explain adequately the fact that the translation and the original have very different standing in the realm of art.

Pertains a Translation for the Readers, who the Original not understand? This appears sufficient the Rankdifference in the Area of Art between both to explain/declare.

Is a translation requite for the readers, who doesn’t understand the original? That seems- sufficient to clarify the different-rankings between both in the sphere of art.

2.2: Überdies scheint es der einzig mögliche Grund, ›Dasselbe‹ wiederholt zu sagen.

Moreover, it seems to be the only conceivable reason for saying “the same thing” over again.

In any event, it appears to be the only possible reason for saying “the same thing” over again.

Moreover, seems it the only possible Ground, “the-same” repeatedly to say.

\textsuperscript{243} “Gilt” [“gelten”] is the German verb. It appears seven times in said form in the essay. Zohn translates it simply as “meant.” But its possible meanings surpass “meant,” implying “to be worthy” “prove effectual,” “pass,” as well as indications of “requite” “compensate” “re-pay” “make good on something,” all the way back to “sacrifice,” “barren” “castrate.” As a word it implies a fixing in place, fixing of debt/payment, fixing through sacrifice (to and for), fixing as gelding. I am torn between the verbs “fix” and “requite” for translation. I like “requite” as it also implies an impossible redemption/release. As well as gestures to the Derridean reading of unpayable debt. “Gelten” is marked by Berman as pertaining to the “lexical fabric of the text beneath its conceptual fragment” (Age 59). Chantal Wright makes an argument for “pertains” in that its “sense of agency is vague” (Age 54). I also need to note “gilt” as implying “be in place” in certain contexts, as in “nowhere.”
Moreover, it seems the only possible ground, to say “the-same” repeatedly.

2.3: Was „sagt“ denn eine Dichtung? Was teilt sie mit? Sehr wenig dem, der sie versteht.

For what does a literary work “say”? What does it communicate? It “tells” very little to those who understand it.

What does a poem “say,” then? What does it communicate? Very little, to a person who understands it.

What “says” then a Dichtung? What divide/share it with? Very little to one, who it understands.
“Dichtung” is translated by Zohn as “literary work,” but the meaning surpasses “literature” “fiction” “poetry,” to larger meanings of “invention” “confabulation,” as well as a more material sense of “density,” “thick” and a closure – “caulk,” “gasket,” “seal.” According Élisabeth Décultot, “Dichtung” implies a “complex relationship between fiction and reality” (Untranslatables 216). The density implied is lost in the Zohn translation; but is of particular importance for Benjamin, with his trope of a prelapsarian material-language. Possibly similar to Herder, in “Origins of Language” essay, where he uses it to refer to a first language of humanity, a poetic inventive first human language, connoting original naivety, and unmediated relations with nature. Moreover, Goethe’s autobiography “Dichtung und Wahrheit” places it in a complementary couplet with truth. Decultot traces its romantic and nationalist connotations (German Literature) of the 19th century, and its decline in the 20th, specifically following WW2 (216-218). According to Pascal David, for Heidegger it appears to imply both one particular “mode among others of the project of clarifying the truth” and in a wider sense “the very project of clarifying the truth” (Untranslatables 219).

In a descriptive sense one might translate “Dichtung” as “thick-literary.” The quality of thickness is also what Benjamin describes in his notions of religiosity of language, and prosaicness of poetry or poetics of prose; it could relate to certain mystical conceptions of orality, and essayistic/Traktat as well. The “thickness” is the material-substrata, the “literary” is the grammar, together they refuse and demand interpretation. Certain modes-forms of language—thick-literary, religious, essayistic—both demand and refuse translation and criticism. For Benjamin, these texts have a heft, a thickness—i.e., Dichtung. Hence, “poetry” “fiction” “literature” are each too narrow for “Dichtung.” Yet, some neologistic variation of the antiquated English word “dight” might be more fitting, knowing Benjamin’s dislike of neologism. “Dight” traces back to the Latin “dictāre”; the Latin root can be traced forward into nearly all Germanic languages, whence “dight” cognates with a plethora of relevant implication; besides German “Dichtung,” “dight” cognates with such meanings as to invent, to contrive, to write, to think out, to versify, to romance, to lie, to feign, to fable, to make poems, to mold, to manage, to govern, to abuse, to kill, to arrange, to put in order, to cloth, to adorn, to direct oneself, to dictate, to direct, to proffer, to repair, to polish, to winnow, to cultivate, etc. (OED). “Dighting” is the noun form. However, I think in the spirit of “foreignization” maintaining the german “Dicht” is the best approach to Wörtlichkeit.

“Was teilt sie mit.” Weber writes on the notion of “im-parting” that is implied in the dual sense of “teilt,” though with a focus on the parting (45-47). I want to trace out what is shared in addition to what is parted. Mitteilung implies a sharing and an imparting; a giving that must include a division, a loss. It marks a modality between possible/actual. Weber in Benjamin’s -abilities and Julia Ng in her translation of Hamacher in “Intensive Languages” (485) maintain that instead of “communication,” Mitteilung should be thought of as “impartible” and “communicability” as “impartibility.” “The word Mitteilung is composed of two parts: the root, formed from the verb teilen (to separate or partition), and the adverbial prefix mit- (‘with’). Literally, then, the word suggests ‘partitioning with,’ or also, ‘sharing.’ But to share, I must first divide, and it is precisely this double movement that is reflected in the English word, to impart” (Weber 40-41).

So, when Benjamin asks the question what does language impart, the answer is itself:

What does language ‘communicate’ or impart? It imparts the spiritual being that speaks to it . . . Spiritual being is identical with linguistic being, only insofar as it is impartable. Whatever of a spiritual being is impartable, is its linguistic being . . . That which is impartable about a spiritual
2.4: Ihr Wesentliches ist nicht Mitteilung, nicht Aussage.

Its essential quality is not communication or the imparting of information.

Neither message nor statement is essential to it.

Its Essential is not Mitteilung, not statement.

Its essential is not impartation, not statement.\(^{247}\)

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being, is its language. On this ‘is’ (equivalent to ‘is immediately’) everything depends . . . This impartable [Mitteilbare] is immediately [unmittelbar] language itself . . . This means: each language imparts itself [teilt sich mit]. \(SW\ 1, 63\)

Language imparts simultaneously the means and a distorted what-is-meant. But the aspect of the “spiritual” is the aspect that can be imparted in language—its linguistic being; while also carrying with it traces, distortions, of the parts of the spiritual being that were parted with. (The confusion of parts, linguistic, spiritual, impartible, immediately, etc. though important also harken to the “over-naming” and “over-precision” fallen humans find themselves in.) And just as “translatability” also marks the “untranslatability” in “The Task of the Translator,” the possible mental/spiritual being that is imparted in the linguistic being (as traces of an absence, or as distortions) mark the in-communicability (un-impartibility). “For language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, the same time, a symbol of the noncommunicable” \(SW\ 1, 74\). This “symbol” of the un-impartible hints at the traces of what was discarded in the imparting; and hence, in Weber’s view marks the structural possibility.

Seeing that spiritual or mental being is imparted in impartibility, it is not a far leap to connect consciousness and language as Benjamin does his reading of the myth of Genesis, where language, consciousness, and knowledge are all entangled—and hence so is history, thus the mythological narrative form. As Hamacher writes, “Cognizability is impartibility: the medium common to cognition and the cognized” \(485\). The medium being the impartibility. A speculative non-instrumental medium, which in any given historical context presents as a particular transcendental infinity, an instrumentalization of the medium. What Hamacher, reading Benjamin, adds here is the connection between language and consciousness; but this “language” is only one possible conceptualization of non-instrumental Language; Benjamin also discusses languages of things, color, touch, technology, cognition, etc., which may all share a non-instrumental medium. But said medium is instrumentalized in the conceptualization of it as “non-instrumental.”

\(^{246}\) Zohn includes a “tells” and emphasizes it. This is not in the German. In doing so, Zohn alters the implication. “Says” doesn’t necessary imply an interlocuter; but “tells” implies such. Hence, Zohn has effectively introduced the idea that the text is “telling” ‘humans’ (the “person” Rendall introduces). Though in the context, this makes-sense; I argue the inclusion of such takes away from Benjamin’s limiting of active human subjects, and destabilization of human centric thinking.

\(^{247}\) “Mitteilung” as the modality of im-parting and shar-ing. Yet, the forms of it appear to be largely negative. Naomi Cohen and Vivian Liska indicate a connection to Benjamin’s reading of the character “Mittler” in “Goethe’s Elective Affinities.” “Benjamin’s work, as does his important article on Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften, where a character in the novel, a go-between called ‘Mittler,’ forces compromises and eliminates the singularity of opposite viewpoints. Benjamin, pointing to the ‘Pferdefuß des
2.5: Dennoch könnte diejenige Übersetzung, welche vermitteln will, nichts vermitteln als die Mitteilung—also Unwesentliches.

Yet any translation that intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but communication—hence, something inessential.

However, a translation that seeks to transmit something can transmit nothing other than a message — that is, something inessential.

Nevertheless, could the one Translation, which coveys will, not convey as the Mitteilung—thus Unessential.

Nevertheless, the translation, which wills to transmit,\(^{248}\) could transmit nothing but the impartation—thus the unessential.\(^{249}\)

2.6: Das ist denn auch ein Erkennungszeichen der schlechten Übersetzungen.

This is the hallmark of bad translations.

And this is also the hallmark of bad translations.

This is then also a Recognition-sign of bad Translations.

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Sittenstrengen’ (1.1: 130), describes him as the devil incarnate” (235). “Aussage” as the actual utterance. The sentence construction is not implying equivalence. Maybe implying order. Hence, the essential is prior to translation and actuality.

\(^{248}\) “Vermitteln”: convey or transmit should be understood as a delusional conception of translation being an adequate version of the original. i.e., the delusion that a translation is the-same as the original in a mimetic meaningful manner.

\(^{249}\) At this point in the essay, “the Essential” is neither actual statements, nor Mitteilung. The “original” currently stands as an allegorical form of the Essential. The original standing as some Dichtung material-linguistic form. Translation “wills to mediate” in a compensational mode, but can only operate in the modality of mitteilung, in the modality of sharing-&-parting. What is mediated is the modality of mitteilung, which is inessential in relation to the “Essential-Original,” but also oddly represented as an inessential-essential. That is Mitteilung, as a modality of un-essentializing, (and in an inessential form in the word “Mitteilung”) is substantiated in a Dichtung-esque form as Benjamin’s dash “—,” which marks the absence of what is parted (the Gist that is lost in translation) \textit{and} the modality of sharing-&-parting i.e., translation as a stammering mitteilung. [These distinctions of course fall apart if taken to definitively. Ultimately, the “intellectual” “essential” “linguistics” “inessential” are different speculative-definitions marking an unmarkable that is always-already under-represented and over-determined, i.e., the qualifiers and what they fail to mark adhere to the logic of the supplement; the necessity of others to mark the proper, and in doing so the lack implied in the proper; translation is supplementary in a Derridean sense, as Benjamin states as well: the original relies on the translation for its continued-living, and status as original.]
That is also a sign-of-recognition of bad\textsuperscript{250} translations.

2.7: Was aber außer der Mitteilung in einer Dichtung steht—und auch der schlechte Übersetzer gibt zu, daß es das Wesentliche ist—gilt es nicht allgemein als das Unfaßbare, Geheimnisvolle, ›Dichterische‹?

But do we not generally regard that which lies beyond communication in a literary work—and even a poor translator will admit that this is its essential substance—as the unfathomable, the mysterious, the “poetic”?

But what then is there in a poem—and even bad translators concede this to be essential—besides a message? Isn’t it generally acknowledged to be the incomprehensible, the secret, the “poetic”?

What but except the Mitteilung in one Dichtung stands—and even the bad Translator give to, that it the Essential is—pertains [gilt] it not generally as the incomprehensible, secretiveful, “Dichterische”?

But, is it not generally held that what stands apart from the impartation in the Dichtung—and even a bad translator will admit that it is the essential—is the unfathomable, enigmatic, “dichterische”?\textsuperscript{251}

2.8: Das der Übersetzer nur wiedergeben kann, indem er—auch dichtet?

And is this not something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also-a poet?

That which the translator can render only insofar as he—also writes poetry?

That the Translator only again-give can, while he—also thickening/composing?

\textsuperscript{250} “schlechten”: bad or evil.

\textsuperscript{251} I have already started to trace the “thick”—“material” connections to “Dichtung” implied in “dichterische” in a footnote above. To continue this line of thought: that which is “parted” in mitteilung is the ‘essential;’ the language in Benjamin’s original reflects this play of parting with Mitteilung. Moreover, there is a materiality implied here. The “Dichtung” loses the “dichterische” in the parting of mitteilung, i.e., loses the poetic-density, poetic-material-thickness. This “Essential” is tied to “das Unfaßbare, Geheimnisvolle, ›Dichterische.\textsuperscript{251}” Geheimnisvolle has the root of “heim” i.e., home, asylum. “Geheim” according to Fluge’s Etymological Dictionary (1891) has a meaning of “belonging to the house.” So secretive or “private” have a lost ‘material’ implication. Though “Unfaßbare” would seem to imply the opposite of a thick materiality, i.e., the intangible or that which cannot be mediated linguistically, but this is exactly the materiality being discussed. The “thickness” that is decimated as a [impossible to describe experience of “bumping-up-against”] becomes a — becomes a “—” becomes a “Mitteilung” etc. that which is parted with is one part of a materiality experienced as and erased by a shared-and-parted materiality.
That the translator can only give-again whilst—also composing [dichtet]?²⁵²

2.9: Daher rührt in der Tat ein zweites Merkmal der schlechten Übersetzung, welche man
demnach als eine ungenaue Übermittlung eines unwesentlichen Inhalts definieren darf.

Such, actually, is the cause of another characteristic of inferior translation, which
consequently we may define as the inaccurate transmission of an inessential content.

This in fact leads to another distinguishing mark of bad translation, which can be defined
as inexact transmission of an inessential content.

Thus, stirs in the act a second Distinctive-Mark the bad Translation, which one therefore
as an imprecise over-Mittlung one insignificant Content to-define allowed.

From there, in the act, stirs a second distinctive-mark of bad translation, which one is
therefore permitted to define as an inexact over-mediating²⁵³ of inessential content.²⁵⁴

²⁵² The structure here is true to the German. For clarity’s sake, there are two “that” phrases responding to
a question of “is it not generally held” from the previous sentence: 1) that the essential is lost in
mitteilung and it is the part called the unfathomable, and 2) translators can only give-this-back through
the act of translating/composing. The verb form of “dichtet,” “dichten,” implies a form of “thick”
“writing” with a material component. Zohn changes this “dichtet” from a verb to that of a noun— “Poet.”
A choice that parts-with the oddly thick-material-modal-quality of “dichten,” as well as involving a
reification via prosopopoeia— “Poet.” In Sum: the translator can only attempt to “give-back” what is lost
in the act of re-trying, i.e., in the (im)possible act of dichten. The “—” marks the différance between
Zohn’s ‘poet,’ my ‘thickening/composing’ and Benjamin’s ‘dichten.’

²⁵³ Benjamin specifically uses a varied form of “Mittlung” here,” Übermittlung.” Thus, emphasizing the
“over.” Zohn and Rendall’s choice of “transmission” is apropos, in relation to later in the Task
essay when Benjamin describes a syntactical-fidelity in translation as “Übertragungen,” in paragraph 12.
“Übermittlung” as marking “inexact transmission of an inessential content” – to “transmit” implies an
indexical type of rendering, the “inexact” marks a sense-based translation; that is, an Übermittlung is a
translation that brings the text closer to the reader, through a smoothing over of fractures and tensions
between the Original Language and Translated-into-Language. Best exemplified in Zohn’s multiple
translation choices to remove dashes [“—”] throughout the essay, as well as his grammatization of
Benjamin’s Pannwitz example (to be explored below.) In contrast, a syntactically-faithful translation is
described, in reference to Hölderlin’s Sophocles word-for-word translations, as “Übertragungen”—which
might be thought of as an insufficiently exact transmission of inessential content. Such would be “exact”
in its fidelity to syntax of the “inessential” (the linguistic, the graphic), but “insufficient” in not being an
equivalent of ‘what-is-meant.’

²⁵⁴ Bad-Translation as an “Over-Mittlung” of Inessential Content. Is the “dash” an example of such over-
mediation/transmission/communication? Or is Zohn’s ‘poet’ [noun] from “dichten” [verb] an example of
over-Mittlung? To over-Mittlung is to “clarify” for reader, at the expense of the ‘essential’ (pre-linguistic-
materiality/X) and the essential-inessential (graphic-iterations); thus, a concrete noun, “poet,” is clear but
is inessential to the modality of the essential verb ‘dichten.’ Maybe, all translation is the diluting of
Dichtung—the impartation of thickness towards an emaciation of a materiality implied in mitteilung.
2.10: Dabei bleibt es, solange die Übersetzung sich anheischig macht, dem Leser zu dienen.

Whenever a translation undertakes to serve the reader, it demonstrates this.

And we never get beyond this, so long as translation claims to serve the reader.

There-by remains it, while the Translation itself-undertakes-to-produce, to-the Reader to-
serve.

There-by it remains, as long as the translation itself-undertakes to serve the reader.²⁵⁵

2.11: Wäre sie aber für den Leser bestimmt, so müßte es auch das Original sein.

However, if it were intended for the reader, the same would have to apply to the original.

If it were intended for the reader, then the original would also have to be intended for the reader.

Were it however for the Reader destined/intended, so must it also the Original be.

But were it intended for the reader, so it must also be [for] the original.²⁵⁶

2.12: Besteht das Original nicht um dessentwillen, wie ließe sich dann die Übersetzung aus dieser Beziehung verstehen?

If the original does not exist for the reader’s sake, how could the translation be understood on the basis of this premise?

If the original is not created for the reader’s sake, then how can this relationship allow us to understand translation?

Hence, “poet” is an emaciated form from “dichten,” even though it would seem more material and concrete, because the “original” seems to be an act of thickening not being a poet per se.

²⁵⁵ Is to “serve the reader” to “over-mediate” inexact? This idea—brining the text to the reader or the reader to the text—has a long history, one point being Schleiermacher and his notion of (what is popularized by Venuti) as domestication vs. foreignization in translation.

²⁵⁶ There is a tension here with a far-fetched but possible translation: “but were it certain for the reader, so it must also be [for] the original.” This is a telling tension. Would this imply an impossible? Could a text ‘destined’ for the reader be ‘certain’ in both original and translation. An impossible indexicality in form-and-content, in essential and inessential, in translation and original would be certain in meaning and destined for the reader; this is the logic of certain sacred texts within religious institutions. Jerome’s situation and letter comes to mind. It is impossible and yet institutions of power demand the illusion of it. The tension here in the text opens onto a history of how such an idea of translation carries on. Marking it as “Übermittlung” is both indicating the tradition and the impossibility of such a translation—free of Messianic intervention. Benjamin’s use of “inexact” emphasizes this.
Exists the Original not for-its-sake, how let itself then the Translation from this Relation understand?

The original does not exist for that sake, how then permit understanding the translation from this relation?  

Zohn translates “Beziehung” as “premise.” Such a translation shifts away from an inessential modal “relationship,” to an actual utterance, i.e., premise as statement, in addition to basic assumption. Zohn’s choice reflects translating for the reader, in that he shifts the insubstantial modal quality of “relations” towards an actualized mode seemingly substantiated in the relative objectivity of ‘premise’ as statement.

To note: the “—” (dashes), throughout the paragraph and essay, stand as another marking of the materiality that is lost in the translators’ mitteilung. The dashes throughout paragraph two mark the im/possible dichten, mitteilung, and translator’s “wiedergeben,” re-rendering: a futile attempt to compensate the requisite, the parted thickness of an “Essential” and “original” only implied in the graphic-mark of the in/essential. But this “essential” or “original” is diluted at the site of dichten, simultaneously and just as “mitteilung” and “—” are beginning to emaciate any dense relation to a modality of possible/actual.

In a sense, this reflects-again the problem of the mode of language/existence. “Mitteilung” and “—” both mark said modality and pre-linguistic materiality as inessential language, i.e., graphic/acoustically determined form: “mitteilung” as a concept, and “—” as an event. In re-translating Benjamin, along with reference to Zohn’s translation, a density is re-released, but simultaneously also emaciates. In giving-again, in the deed of dichten, each “marking” (“—,” “Mitteilung”) begin to reference each-other and thus themselves, as the attempt at reading and translation falls into a paradox. What Agamben calls the “White Knight Theorem,” quoting Lewis Carol: “the name of the name is not the name” (Potentialities 213). In the essay Agamben unravels the medieval notions of “intentio prima” and “intentio secunda” (211-214).

For example, in my reading, the “—” marks the imparted-with “Essential” as an event and/or a materiality; it begins as an “intentio prima” referring to “an object,” that of a pre/non-linguistic-materiality/X. And likewise, “mitteilung” begins as an “intentio prima” referring-to/describing “an object,” in this case the modality of language, and its parting with the “Essential” (of said X) and sharing the “Inessential.” Yet, as they are over-mediated by me (as I attempt to exact their relations), “—” and “Mitteilung” begin to reference each other and themselves as intentio-secunda: “a sign that signifies an intentio prima” i.e., a sign that references a sign (211). Thus “—” wills to refer to “mitteilung” as a “prima intentio” referring to their the-sameness i.e., pre/non-linguistic-materiality/X; but, “—” ends-up referring to “mitteilung” as a sign, as a graphically/acoustically determined entity; in doing so, the ‘prima’ modality (less far away from the possible) of both “mitteilung” and “—” is placed into question, as they become remarkably actualized in inessential forms.

In relation to the “Essential/Inessential” and modality of dichten, the two refer as “prima” but in relation to each other they function as “secunda”; in doing so, they expose themselves as mixed modes, throwing into question their prima modality. The two modes—prima and secunda—begin to exceed and anticipate each-other and each’s-self; their referential and self-referential functions expose their own dual modalities. For instance, if the “—” marks the pre-linguistic-materiality/X, i.e., the Essential, it does so in an Inessential form. Thus, really as marking and a mark of the Essential, “—” still only shares the Inessential of the Essential. As Agamben states in his “White Knight Theorem”: “In each case . . . if I
3.1: Übersetzung ist eine Form.

Translation is a form.
Translation is a mode.
Translation is a Form.
Translation is a form.²⁵⁸

want to say an intentio, to name the name, I will no longer be able to distinguish between word and thing, concept and object, the term, and its reference” (213).

This is wiedergeben, dichten, mitteilung performed. The im/possible modality where pre/non-linguistic-materiality/X acquires a terminological quality—and in doing so is terminally emaciated, while simultaneously marking the dichten-terminological event/modality. There is not a term, not a name for what is marked. No “pure nominal unity” . . . just a “unceasing” X “dislocating itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions” (Derrida Margins 28; Agamben 210). Hence, even the term that seems to be arising the most in various forms— “modality”—is not quite right. As Benjamin states in the next paragraph: “Übersetzung ist eine Form.”

²⁵⁸ An intriguingly simple sentence. It contains almost no resistance to being translated. In many ways it is already translated. And yet, as many critics—Samuel Weber, Paul de Man, Carol Jacobs, etc.—have noted Zohn in his initial translation changes “form” to “mode.” (This is corrected in Zohn’s 1996 translation. But also, is a choice carried over by Rendall in his first translation. Moreover, even after correcting paragraph three “Form” “Mode” translation, both continue to shift “Form” to “Mode” later in Benjamin’s essay.) Thus, marking the excessive irony of the seemingly free translatability of the sentence. Weber describes why in a sentence of seemingly no-resistance to translation such an event of mistranslation occurs:

The reason why “mode” is substituted for “form” is because the translator senses a tension between the autonomy and integrity associated with form, on the one hand—remember Kant’s definition of it as “the agreement of a manifold with a unity”—and the subordination or dependence generally associated with translation and endorsed here by Benjamin: a translation is precisely not autonomous, self-contained, integral—it consists in a relationship to something outside of it, to something it is not and yet to which it owes its existence, the “original” work. “Mode” suggests a way of being, a modification, rather than any sort of independent structure. And yet it is just such independence that Benjamin endorses, provocatively, in extending the term “form” to cover not only the original work but that of “translation” as well. It is this extension that is unusual, that shocks, and this is reflected in the initial translation of “form” as “mode.” What disappears in this translation, however, is precisely the provocative tension between the relative independence of translation and its dependency on something other than itself—an “original,” a work—that is, the tension that informs Benjamin’s effort to articulate “The Task of the Translator.” That task is an ambiguous one, traversed by tensions and conflicts, and as such is remote from the notions of harmony and wholeness traditionally dominant in the realm of aesthetic theory. The translation of “form” as “mode” tends to efface or at least reduce that
tension and to reinstate the very ideal of harmony that Benjamin’s thought and writing are constantly calling into question. (Weber 57-58).

Translation as “form” would imply self-contained, non-dependent, i.e., something like Kant’s a priori; while translation as “mode” implies a changing occurring in a relationship with the original. This alone already reflects the transcendental but speculative structure of Benjamin’s thinking.

Moreover, Weber marks Benjamin’s (loose) definition for “Form” as harkening back to Kant in the third critique—the object of the aesthetic judgment being “beautiful form.” While Antoine Berman in his commentary writes: “to grasp the meaning of the term, we have to look to Goethe, for whom ‘form’ leads to ‘organization,’ ‘organism,’ ‘ensemble’—both in the artistic sphere and, above all, in the sphere of living manner” (“Age of Translation” 62), thus closer to ‘mode.’ Both readings open compelling interpretations and mark differing tropes. A question might be raised as to how Goethe’s form and Kant’s form relate. On a simplistic level, Kant’s faith in ‘form’ as a pure a priori feature of experience is set in tension with Goethe’s faith in direct experience of natural objects:

Deswegen gibts doch eine Form, die sich von jener unterscheidet, wie der innere Sinn vom äußern, die nicht mit Händen gegriffen, die gefühlt sein will” (FA 1.18:174; Therefore there is a form that distinguishes itself from that one, as the inner sense from the outer, one that cannot be grasped with hands, but must be felt) . . . “[die] inner[e] Form, die alle Formen in sich begreift, [. . . ]” (FA 1.18:174; the inner form, which comprehends all forms in itself). So here we have a notion of form that (a) provides genuine unity, (b) is internal to the object (dramatic work) evincing the form, and (c) is apprehended not by an abstractive operation of the understanding, but rather by what Goethe designates as “feeling.” Elevated to a definition: form is the inner principle of unity of an object, and that principle can be apprehended through the capacity of Gefühl. (Wellbery 2021).

It would seem apropos to argue that Benjamin is more in-line with Goethe than Kant in his use of “Form,” and understandable how such an interpenetration and inter-play is modal in nature. But, where Goethe arguably found “Kant’s foray into the transcendental conditions of possibility . . . an unnecessary circumvention of precisely that which we are by nature equipped to undertake” (Jenson IEP), Benjamin understands Kant’s transcendentalism as a regulative counterpoint to over-mediating belief in “natural” abilities, in Goethe’s case. the faith in a total Form felt by natural human ability. Benjamin in his “Goethe’s Elective Affinities” writes, “only an incorruptible rationality, under whose protection the heart might abandon itself to the prodigious, magical beauty of this work, is able to cope with it [providing a unity, a total form]” (SW 1, 339). This “incorruptible rationality” speaks to the necessity of sober-critical reason, to mark the limits—i.e., Kant and immanent criticism in general. Moreover, in said essay, Benjamin places the expressionless (das Ausdruckslose)—like untranslatability, and unforgettability in the Task essay—as an eruptive “critical violence which, while unable to separate appearance from essence in art, prevents them from combining . . . for it shatters whatever still survives as the legacy of chaos in all beautiful appearance: the false, errant totality — absolute totality” (SW 1, 340). Thus, Benjamin’s non-resistant to translation sentence—“Translation is Form”—under the immense weight of disparate implications, which are “prevented from combining” in their differing philosophical significance and systems, (i.e., a sober-reason and an encounter with the absolute through intuition-understanding)—said sentence stands as in an ironic tension that makes its non-resistance untranslatable: thus enlivening “Form” with critical-limitation and the feeling of continuing-living. [This ironic tension shares a stylistic similarity with what Beatrice Hanssen’s “Dichtermut und Blodigkeit” describes as reading of the Hölderlin and Goethe essay (sans Kant) in which she ends with Benjamin’s “new conception of irony” in a caesuraian image (161). I believe the “negative potentiality of reflective irony”
3.2: Sie als solche zu erfassen, gilt es zurückzugehen auf das Original. Denn in ihm liegt deren Gesetz als in dessen Übersetzbarkeit beschlossen.

To comprehend it as a form, one must go back to the original, for the laws governing the translation lie within the original, contained in the issue of its translatability.

In order to grasp it as such, we have to go back to the original. For in it lies translation’s law, decreed as the original’s translatability.

It as such to gird/comprehend/grasp, pertains it to-back-approach to the Original. For in it lies their Law as in its Translatability determined/concluded/decided.

that Hassen reads in the image, which “plays its diabolic game in the double meaning” (162), is the same rhetorical move in an image as the word “Form” in Benjamin’s “Task” essay. That is, Benjamin’s ironic “form” is a caesura where Kant/Goethe are held in tension, marking the “expressionless” in a manner that simultaneously marks limits and fissures totality, while offering through translation a negative encounter of the absolute, the un-translatable.

The non-resistant to translation “Form” stands in a pan-language resistant tension, in original and translation; an example of what Howard Caygill titles Benjamin’s “transcendental but speculative” philosophy. Kant’s transcendental notion of form is kept in-tact on a graphic-level marking out the conditions of possibility for—in the case of the “Task” essay—translation to occur, i.e., translation as in Weber’s reading, is marking (permitting/demanding) a structural-potentiality, i.e., translatability. And yet also, where Kant’s transcendental makes access to not mediated experience seemingly impossible—thus forms of time-space become universal instead of historical-cultural—Goethe’s conception of form offers a speculative level, though one that seems to not give enough dignity to Kant’s task or is largely (transcendental) in its own right, in that it offers too much dignity to the historical-cultural “feeling” of the absolute. Thus, Benjamin’s use of “Form” and the non-resistant-yet-resistant translation unfolds the transcendental but speculative.
To apprehend\textsuperscript{259} it as such, pertains\textsuperscript{260} it regressing\textsuperscript{261} towards the original. For in it [original] lies it is [translation’s] statute as decreed in its [original’s] Translatability.\textsuperscript{262}

3.4: Die Frage nach der Übersetzbarkeit eines Werkes ist doppelsinnig.

\textsuperscript{259} “Erfassen”: implies “grasp,” “conceive,” “measure,” etc. The etymology and connotations implying a “confining into a form,” be it conceptual or material.

\textsuperscript{260} “gilt”: For consistency I am compelled to translate “gilt” as “pertains.” For clarity-sake this would require a shift in verb form: “it is pertinent to go-back-to.”

\textsuperscript{261} “Zurückzugehen”: “Zurück” - back, backwards; “zugehen” – approach, close, shut. “regress” The implication is a contrary direction; this is less a going-back-to, than a backwards-approach: an against the grain. To regress from translation to original, from secondary to ur-origin, is a motif throughout Benjamin’s work. “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” is formally the regression from modern linguistics and the question of a ground/being for knowledge, to biblical logos, emphasizing the abyss all attempts hover over: fallen naming and translation as being human-as-such. A “regression” that marks the before in the now, the “biblical” in the “modern linguistics.” The “translation” is always-already in the “original.”

\textsuperscript{262} “beschlossen”: as “decreed.” Zohn opts for “enclosed.” “Decree” gestures to ‘judgment’ and ‘act.’ In a conventional conception of “form” self-contained would make sense, but the tension here is as Weber states “between the relative independence of translation and its dependency on something other than itself—an ‘original,’ a work . . . “ (Weber “-abilities” 57) and the original’s translatability being dependent on the translation to ‘continue living-on.’ Thus, “enclosed” seems too shut-off, while “decreed” plays on the “statute” motif, while being performative and thus less contained.

Zohn translates sentence 2 and 3 of this paragraph into one longer sentence. Knowing that Benjamin’s essay calls for a translation that aims for a Wörtlichkeit of word and syntax, for monstrous translation, most of Zohn’s choices stand as example of what Benjamin is not calling for. Zohn’s translation Anglaises the German; it places meaning above manner. Carol Jacobs explores one instance of this in \textit{In the Language of Walter Benjamin}:

In the long passage that speaks of this sameness, Harry Zohn remains far less “true” to the original, far less “literal” than the text demands. This is because he maintains a significant respect for his own linguistic usage, and traditionally, that is to his credit. Understandably then, his translation results in phrases such as “the same thing,” “the same object,” where the German speaks neither of objects not things. (81)

I see such occurrences throughout Zohn’s translation, including his updated translation from 1996—the version included in \textit{SW Vol.} 1. It may seem slight and inevitable in translation, but for a writer like Benjamin—who was well versed in phenomenology—“objects” and “things” carry immense significance. For a write like Benjamin—who was well versed in Kantian philosophy—the difference between Essence and Nature, or Understanding and Knowledge is paramount. For a writer like Benjamin—who took courses with Friedrich Frege—the difference between Sinn, and Bedeutung is significant. For a writer like Benjamin—whose understanding of the fragment was foundational for his work—the combining of his sentences undermines the rhetorical performance of the essay itself; Zohn emaciates the density of Benjamin’s Dichtung in such moments.
The question of whether a work is translatable has a dual meaning.

The question of a work’s translatability has two senses.

The question to the Translatability of a Work is Doubly-sensible.

The question for the translatability of a work is doubly meaningful.\textsuperscript{263}


Will an adequate translator ever be found among the totality of its readers? Or, more pertinently: Does its nature lend itself to translation and, therefore, in view of the significance of this form call for it?

It can mean: will it ever find, among the totality of its readers, an adequate translator? Or, more pertinently, whether by its very essence it allows itself to be translated, and hence—in accord with the meaning of this mode—also calls for translation.

It can denote: whether it under the entirety its Reader ever its adequate/sufficient Translator find will? or, and really: whether it its Essence by Translation permit and therefore—the Denoting of this Form corresponding—also demand.

\textsuperscript{263} “Doppelsinnig”: implying ambiguous and specifically opening up two questions for Benjamin.
It can denote: if, under the totality of its readers, ever a sufficient translator will be found? or, and actually: if its essence permits translation and therefore – corresponding to the denotation of this form – even demands.

264 “Bedeutung”: I am opting for “denotation.” A representational aspect must be implied, as well as a touch. “Bedeutung” is a problem in translation. Harry Zohn later in the essay translates “Bedeutung” as “significance,” “importance” or erases of the word altogether. A contemporary break occurred in Frege’s 1892 essay Uber Sinn und Bedeutung, unpacked in the Untranslatables dictionary. “The Sinn of a sentence or word is a distinct public entity belonging to or associated with a statement, whereas the Bedeutung is the reality designated by the sentence or word” (Untranslatables 960). One can think of Bedeutung as representational of a thing (even if just as-if).

Be- +deuten

Be-: verbal prefix signifying (all or one): change of state, discussing/mentioning an object, and touching the object.

+deuten: verb to ‘point,’ ‘beckon,’ ‘interpret.’ Derives from old High German “diuten” meaning to ‘show,’ ‘point’ ‘notify’ and ‘translate.’ (Kluge, 54)

Hence, the word implies something like a “pointing that touches.” A representation that (attempts to) touch the original, maybe as representation. Zohn’s translation of “Bedeuten” as “significance” misses the mark, except in ‘importance’ though due to contemporary overuse the ‘import’ of the word is not recognized.

Bedeuten/den connection to Importance loses some of the implications of meaning. “importance” colloquial defined implies “of great value.” But the implications of “importing” i.e., an introduction or adoption from one place, culture, or context into another (OED), is really the act of translation. Within the economic perspective, “import” involves an entry into a context as well as the shift that occurs after—the effect of the import. Jean-Pierre Cléro unpacking Jeremy Bentham’s Essay on Language discusses “import” in terms of a diachronic dimension of etymology (Untranslatables 961-962). The “import” moment is the etymological origin, mythic or other, and the translator traces the drift that occurs after the introduction of the word.

There appears, in a reductionist but helpful manner, to be three types of “meaning” in Benjamin “Task” essay: “Sinn,” “Bedeuten,” “Gemeinten.” “Sinn” equates to that which bad-translators emphasis with the smoothing over of syntax; hence the illusion of “conveyed” meaning. “Bedeuten” marks a denoting of the word as the letter, i.e., what fidelity to the word and syntax aims for. And “Gemeinten” implies a messianic completely-supplemented-meaning. The “Gemeinten” is felt as a “Sehnsucht,” a longing not for a return, but for a departure towards something indeterminate; as well as a longing that is constantly renewing itself. Unfortunately, Zohn and others translate these rather as “meaning” or without fidelity to the context, sometimes “meaning” sometimes “significance” sometimes “sense.” These distinctions hold up to a point—though there are a few places where Benjamin purposefully mixes meanings/words. For example, his use of “Form” and “Mode”; where such a reconceptualization is in process that they become ambiguous, or in any number of ambiguous pronouns—these mark the untranslatability in a rhetorical performance.

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3.6: Grundsätzlich ist die erste Frage nur problematisch, die zweite apodiktisch zu entscheiden.

In principle, the first question can be decided only contingently: the second, however, apodictically.

In principle, the first question can be answered only in a problematic manner, the second apodictically.

Basically, is the first Question only problematic, the second apodictic to decide.

Fundamentally\textsuperscript{267}, the first question is decided-on\textsuperscript{268} only problematically, the second apodictically.\textsuperscript{269}

3.7: Nur das oberflächliche Denken wird, indem es den selbständigen Sinn der letzten leugnet, beide für gleichbedeutend erklären.

Only superficial thinking will deny the independent meaning of the latter question and declare both to be of equal significance.

Only superficial thinking will, by denying the independent sense of the second question, declare them to have the same meaning.

Only the superficial Thinking will, by it the self-reliant Sense of the latest denies, both for equal-denotation declare.

\textsuperscript{265} “Zulänglichen”: the implication is something like ‘stretching to fit’ or ‘to-elongate’

\textsuperscript{266} The tension between “permits” and “demands.” The essence permits and form demands. Is translatability form or essence here? Or both? The limit/border marked as the form and indicated to in the essence. Moreover, the first question is one of “potentiality” i.e., does/will such exist; while the second is one of actuality, or logical certainty, i.e., the essence permits thus the form demands. Translatability as ‘law’ permits and demands translation.

\textsuperscript{267} “Grundsätzlich”: “Grundsatz . . . used in the sense of the initial laws of a formal system on the basis of which a certain number of theorems, propositions, Sätze, can be derived” (\textit{Untranslatables} 851). The term means something like “ground proposition” “Ground sentence” as the most basic presupposition of language, truth, judgement.

\textsuperscript{268} “Entscheiden”: decided, but carries a legal weight as well, like “adjudicated.”

\textsuperscript{269} Zohn translates “problematically” as “contingently.” This misses the literal meaning of both in Kantian philosophy. Problematic: A statement of the possibility of something being true. Apodictic: A statement that is \textit{actually} provable or logically certain.
Only superficial thinking will, by denying the independent sense of the last, explain both to be coterminous.  

3.8: Ihm gegenüber ist darauf hinzuweisen, daß gewisse Relationsbegriffe ihren guten, ja vielleicht besten Sinn behalten, wenn sie nicht von vorne herein ausschließlich auf den Menschen bezogen werden.

It should be pointed out in refutation of such thinking that certain correlative concepts retain their meaning, and possibly their foremost significance, if they are not from the outset used exclusively with reference to man.

In opposition to this it must be pointed out that certain relational concepts gain their proper, indeed their best sense, when they are not from the outset connected exclusively with human beings.

It opposite is thereon to portend, that certain Relational-Concepts their good, yes perhaps best Sense keep/remember, when/if it not from fore herein exclusively on the People obtain/cover/corral become.

In opposition to such it should be pointed-out, that certain Relational-Concepts retain their good, really perhaps best sense [Sinn], when they are not from the outset tied-up exclusively to humans.

3.9: So dürfte von einem unvergeßlichen Leben oder Augenblick gesprochen werden, auch wenn alle Menschen sie vergessen hätten.

One might, for example, speak of an unforgettable life or moment even if all men had forgotten it.

Thus, we could still speak of an unforgettable life or moment, even if all human beings had forgotten it.

270 Samuel Weber describes this “superficial thinking,” as “humanistic,” as the tendency “to reduce or interpret all relations to human relations” (59). Question one places the original/translation as a question of the right Reader, i.e., human. While Question two’s focus is on the relationship between the translation/original with or without the reader, in their essence and form. Hence, the last question is “independent” of human relations. The following sentence raises the question of “best sense” as free from human-exclusivity. Returning to the first paragraph, it possible to speak of the human-relation as a cultural inheritance, as an inherited grammar.

271 “bezogen/beziehen”: The implication is to “set in relation with”; however, “bezogen” correlates past relate/refer, implying a ‘covering,’ and in the sense of the sentence a ‘confinement.’ Thus, something like “tie-up” in English carries similar connotations, formally and contextually.

272 The correlative meanings of “behalten” and “bezogen” echo with the play on memory and remembrance that is coming. “Relational-Concepts remember their . . . perhaps best Sense, when from the onset they are not covered exclusively [by] the Human.”
So, might of an unforgettable life or moment/blink-of-an-eye spoken become, even if/when all Humans it forgotten have.

So\textsuperscript{273} may be spoken of an unforgettable life or blink-of-an-eye-instant, even if all humans had forgotten it\textsuperscript{274}.

\textsuperscript{273} What a dense “So!” A “so” signifying a state where relational-concepts are untied-up of human relations. A “so” signifying relational concepts being allowed to speak for themselves. A “so” signifying the “prelapsarian” state in “On Language as Such,” or what in the next sentence will be described as “commemoration of God” or the “nowhere” where considerations of the receiver are beneficial. Zohn’s translation is so telling: “One might, for example, speak of . . . “ Zohn translates the immensely dense “so” into a human speaking, right after Benjamin marked the importance of “Relational-concepts” not tied to the Human.

\textsuperscript{274} What speaks about the unforgettable Moment/Life? There are no humans here. Zohn’s translates as “one might speak,” but “one” is absent in the German. It is not humans that may speak here, it is the relation-concept allowed to have spoken through being untied from Humans.

Moreover, what is an unvergeßlichen Life? Unvergeßlichen Augenblick? Augenblick as literally “eye-blinking.” The word implies both “look” and a “closing of the eyes”; it is the blinking of an eye staring at its object, then by extension the short duration of this closing, which is, according to Balibar in \textit{Untranslatables}, is to be “indivisible.” A lapse of time so brief it eludes measurement i.e., a blink. Lessing explains the Augenblick as that which “crystallizes a temporal sequence, including the future, instead of disrupting it”: (\textit{Untranslatables}, 689); this is reminiscent of Benjamin’s monadic crystallization, and now-time—the dialectical-image suspended above the abyss with tensions. The choice of “instant” for me is related: an “instant, by the sheer weight of its etymology, thus appears as an uneasy translation for Augenblick, which indicates a present that is not itself within time, and a present in which nothing happens, since it alone is what can enable Dasein to open itself to a being “in a time.” (689) “Blink-of-an-eye-instant” maintains the metaphor and expresses time; though it is clunky and loses the experience of Augenblick as a single-word so substantially tense. The experience described is that of the “bumping-up-against.”

This “unforgettable” instead of being related to ‘human’ memory/experience might correlate the Law of Translatability. If it is ‘unforgettable’ even if forgotten by humans, then it is a structural materiality. “For in it [original] lies their [translation’s] statute as decreed in its [original’s] Translatability.” Unforgettability is to permit/demand remembering. Derrida refers to Benjamin’s translatability as a quasi-transcendental structure (“Des Tours de Babel” 212, 220); assumingly ‘unforgettability’ and as Weber argues all of Benjamin’s ‘-abilities’ mark a similar quasi-transcendental (Weber 6). Derrida also describes said quasi-transcendental concepts/process as enacting a kind of “identity ‘and’ difference, iteration-alteration, repetition ‘as’ \textit{différance}, etc.” (‘inc.’ 54)—as a kind of ‘blinking,’ i.e., that iteration-alteration, repetition, process, or Nietzsche’s nachstammelnde. This “unforgettable . . . even if all humans had forgotten it” implies a logic of the supplement, and a perpetual always-already simultaneous forgetting-remembering, and the experience of such in the instance(s).

Antoine Berman in his commentary focuses on the “moment” aspect (\textit{Age} 64-65), relating it to Kairos. In his reading the first translation is always “premature,” but in its failures makes re-translation possible, which may occur at a Kairotic moment—when a desire to translate and to be translated corresponds with a historical moment when a great translation is possible. Just as translatability and unforgettability mark
3.10: Wenn nämlich deren Wesen es forderte, nicht vergessen zu werden, so würde jenes Prädikat nichts Falsches, sondern nur eine Forderung, der Menschen nicht entsprechen, und zugleich auch wohl den Verweis auf einen Bereich enthalten, in dem ihr entsprochen wäre: auf ein Gedenken Gottes.

If the nature of such a life or moment required that it be unforgotten, that predicate would imply not a falsehood but merely a claim unfulfilled by men, and probably also a reference to a realm in which it is fulfilled: God’s remembrance.

If the essence of such lives or moments required that they not be forgotten, this predicate would not be false, it would merely be a demand to which human beings had failed to respond, and at the same time, no doubt, a reference to a place where this demand would find a response, that is, a reference to a thought in the mind of God.

If namely their Essence it asked/claimed/required, not forgotten to be, so would that predicate not be false, but only a demand [that] humans do not correspond with, and simultaneously

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permit/demands translation, re-translation is a “law” for any “great translation” spoken in the Kairotic moment (65).

275 Literal syntactically: With an appositive construction: “it” is defined as “not to be forgotten.” Why? Is Benjamin playing on predicate nominative and appositives? Why the necessity of the “it” as between the defining. Essence—“it”—“forgotten.” Instead of Essence—“forgotten.” A performance: The “demand to not be forgotten” as attached to the “it” and not the “essence.” Maybe marking the impossible and necessary mediation of language and the distortion there of. The performance is towards more forgetting: “unforgettable” to “Essence” to “it.” If the “Essence” carries a demand to not be forgotten, then the “Essence” is translatability, is the structural possibility.

276 “Zugleich” is here implying “at the same time” and in the same “flesh”—as in “Leiche.”
also probably contain the reference to a region, in which it would have corresponded\textsuperscript{277}: a commemoration of God.\textsuperscript{278}

\textsuperscript{277} “Entsprochen”: as “correspondence” makes sense but is awkward here. The verb is used twice: 1) what humans cannot do i.e., not-forget the essence, and 2) as what the area of the commemoration of God can do. Zohn’s “unfulfilled” and “fulfilled” makes sense. But it loses the indications of a “intercourse” or “communing.” To be human is to forget the essence via the translation or mitteilung of language; to be human is to be unable to correspond-fully with the demand to not-forget; it is to leave the demand unanswered, unfulfilled, but not out of anything like agency, but rather here a passive correspondence.

Zohn translates as: “in which it \textit{is} fulfilled.” The italicization of “is” is not in the original German. The verb sequence “entsprochen \textit{ware}” seems to be past subjunctive. Why is Zohn shifting the tense and emphasizing his shift? Possibly because of a tension held with the “unvergeßlichen Leben oder Augenblick gesprochen werden” as well. There is a tension between an impossible space-time [Nowhere] when the unforgettable-life is/was experienced, and simultaneously-and-in-the-same-flesh with the impossible time-space of “God’s commemoration.” Both of these imply a nonplace/nontime [where/when] a thick-Messianic-writing (will have) occurred. Both mark allegorically the quasi-transcendental 'structure of possibility for experience/thinking, and mark in a manner that attempts to elide the human-necessity of forgetting. For to be human is to exists in a language/experience/thinking that requires to forget pre/non-linguistic-Materiality/X; thus, such seemingly impossible space-times (Nowhere, God’s Commemoration, Unforgettable, Augenblick) mark distortions of this requirement and offer an allegorical experience of such. This brings us back to the first sentence: “Nowhere does the Regard of the Absorber towards an Artwork or an Artform prove fruitful to their Knowledge.” Maybe the location of “God’s commemoration” would be such a ‘nowhere.’ A prelapsarian space-time where an idiosyncratic and material language of true-naming (always-already) occurs.

\textsuperscript{278} Weber translates as “commemoration.”

“A commemoration of God” is, first and foremost, a reminder of the limits of the human. It is therefore almost a contradiction in terms to translate “ein Gedenken Gottes” as “God’s remembrance.” God does not remember, for He does not forget. Man does not “remember” God either, at least not so long as remembering implies forgetting, since man cannot forget what he could never have known. Rather than a “remembrance,” the “thought of God” is a reminder and challenge to commemorate the enabling limitations of the human. And these limitations include that which the human produces itself, its works” (60).

More than human “thought” God’s thinking does not forget/remember but preserves the event/thing in the call, in the performance/presence. An echo of the echo, trace-of-a-trace, of said commemoration is marked in the materiality of the letter; simultaneously each commemoration as translation re-marks, re-commemorates the remainder.

Peter Fenves in discussing Benjamin’s use of remembrance in the chapter “On the Beauty of Colorful Pictures,” contrasts it with Plato’s anamnensis: “Remembrance of this kind [Benjamin’s], which is unlike any other kind of memory, takes place in the absence of longing precisely because there is nothing to long for. By contrast, anamnensis in the proper sense of term incites both regret and longing” (\textit{Messianic Reduction} 76-77). In the way that the translatability and unforgettability are irrelevant of human desire, in my reading, I would similarly place “God’s commemoration” as largely not Platonic, but rather an absence of Human’ remembering and desire [Sehnsucht]. However, Fenves points out that in marking this distinction—specifically against children ‘remembering’ as paradisal and adult anamnesis in relation to an
3.11: Entsprechend bleibe die Übersetzbarkeit sprachlicher Gebilde auch dann zu erwägen, wenn diese für die Menschen unübersetzbar wären.

Analogously, the translatability of linguistic creations ought to be considered even if men should prove unable to translate them.

The translatability of linguistic constructions would accordingly have to be taken into consideration even if they were untranslatable by human beings.

Correspondingly to-remain/continue the Translatability linguistic Formation/Structure even/also then to-consider/contemplate, if/when these for the People untranslatable be.

Correspondingly the translatability of linguistic formations remains\textsuperscript{279} also\textsuperscript{280} to-be considered, if/when these are untranslatable for humans.

3.12: Und sollten sie das bei einem strengen Begriff von Übersetzung nicht wirklich bis zu einem gewissen Grade sein?—In solcher Loslösung ist die Frage zu stellen, ob Übersetzung bestimmter Sprachgebilde zu fordern sei.

Given a strict concept of translation, would they not really be translatable to some degree? The question as to whether the translation of certain linguistic creations is called for ought to be posed in this sense.

art-work—Benjamin marks a “tension toward the messianic” (77). In the impasse between the children and adult world/perspective/relations-to-things the ‘messianic’ springs forth. This sudden emergence of “messianic” in the midst of an impasse, reveals something about “god’s remembrance” and the tension in the sentence between ‘human’ sehnsucht, memory, translating, etc. The translator and the experience-of-art share-(and-part) an analogous tension: “Works of arts produce a paradoxical effect upon their viewers: their authenticity lies in “satisfying” the longing for the paradisal condition, which is constitutively without tension; and in doing so, a supplementary tension— “toward the messianic”—is either created or disclosed” (78). The translator longs to translate the original into a paradisal-meaning; (even while knowing the impossibility of such, we weight each word, punctuation, letter, in devotional acts of re-translation as reading.) Such a paradisal-translation (God’s commemoration) would be without tension between meaning and the-letter. In human attempts at Messianic translation—impossible attempts to enact ‘god’s commemoration,’ which is not a translation at all but a creation (a True-and-Perfect Iteration-without-variation or with all-variations-simultaneously)—in such human attempts only insufficient revealing and covering, an insufficient forgetting and remembering occurs.

\textsuperscript{279} “bleibe”: indicates a corresponding remainder of the commemoration of God in linguistic formations, i.e., the materiality of the letter as a correspondence to the realm and event. Zohn removes the remainder.

\textsuperscript{280} Does anything hinge on if “auch” is “also” or “even” and its placement in the ‘if’/‘when’ clause? I feel the “even if” formation places too much on the human still. Just as the “unforgettable life” and “Augenblincken” are concepts now free from ‘human’ correspondence and hinting towards a Messianic-X, but also “linguistic formations” should “also” now be considered from the position of non-human correspondence. Another way of asking: is a translation of the untranslatable possible in the impossible position of non-human-translation?
And mustn’t they actually be untranslatable to a certain degree, if a rigorous concept of translation is applied? In that case we must ask whether the translation of certain linguistic constructions is required.

And should they/it be a sever/tight Concept of Translation not really/actually up-until/up-to a certain Degree be?—in such Detaching/loose-loosing/loose-solution is the Question to set/place, weather Translation certain/determined Linguistic-Formation to demand/require be.

And should they with a strict\textsuperscript{281} concept of translation not really be up-to a certain degree? – in such loose-detachment the question is set, whether translation of certain linguisticformations\textsuperscript{282} is called for.\textsuperscript{283}

3.13: Denn es gilt der Satz: Wenn Übersetzung eine Form ist, so muß Übersetzbarkeit gewissen Werken wesentlich sein.

For this thought is valid here: If translation is a form, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works.

\textsuperscript{281} This possibly stands in relation to the “Loslösung” in the sentence. A play between tight and loose. In which case it maybe a “loosing” of the concept of translation to push out past the human.

\textsuperscript{282} In the previous sentence Benjamin referred to “sprachlicher Gebilde,” here it becomes one word “Sprachgebilde.” A motif carried on throughout the essay, two words become compounded into one and vice-versa.

\textsuperscript{283} This sentence stands in tension with the question of “even” and “also” of the previous sentence and what the “sie” and “sein” refers to. This uncertainty of “sein” is overtly obvious in the difference between Rendall and Zohn’s translation, where they differ on if it is “translatable” or “untranslatable.” I am uncertain, and I imagine that is the point: does “they” refer to “Linguistic Formations” or the humans? Does the ‘sein’ refer to what is untranslatable by humans, or that which is translatable by linguistic formation? It would seem linguistic formation would be human-translatability; is there a non-human linguistic-formation? Such ambiguity of pronouns/verbs—lacking clear reference, and marking two disparate, and here purposefully opposed, implications—mark as a rhetorical performance untranslatability. Moreover, rhetorically this marks the untranslatability as experienced in the tension between Human and (free-of-human) Language-Forms. A literal enacting of untranslatability.

The “Loslösung” is telling in its stammering ambivalence. Is the root “lösen” (loosen) or “Lösung” (Solution) or maybe “los lösen” (loose-loosing.) This ambivalence is a possible stammering marking one more moment of necessary and impossible translation: translatability/untranslatability. Does this looseness refer to the inability of truly removing the “human” from the equation? Said loose-detachment can only occur in a stammering manner—translation, by humans, would be an insufficient loose-detachment from the human in releasing even momentarily (Augenblicken) the death grasp of human-meaning on a substrata-materiality (be it language and things). What will be referred to as the “continuing-living” (afterlife) of the work brought about through translation, can be thought of here as a thing-positive dehumanization process brought about by a loose-detaching—the release of X from the superficial human-bindings of sense.
For this proposition is relevant here: if translation is a mode, then translatability must be essential to certain works.

Because/for/than it pertains/pertains the Sentence/Proposition: if Translation a Form is, so much Translatability to-certain Works essential be.

For it pertains the sentence: if translation is a form, so must translatability be essential to certain works.284

Paragraph 4:

4.1: Übersetzbarkeit eignet gewissen Werken wesentlich—das heißt nicht, ihre Übersetzung ist wesentlich für sie selbst, sondern will besagen, daß eine bestimmte Bedeutung, die den Originalen innewohnt, sich in ihrer Übersetzbarkeit äußere.

Translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential for the works themselves that they be translated; it means, rather, that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability.

Translation is properly essential to certain works: this does not mean that their translation is essential for themselves, but rather that a specific significance inherent in the original texts expresses itself in their translatability.

Translatability to-be-characteristic certain Works essential—that names/means not, their translation is essential for themselves, but wants/intends to-say/to-mean/to-signify, that a set/certain denoting [Bedeutung], which the Original inherent [innewohnt], itself in their/its Translatability utters/expresses [äußere].

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284 The “gewissen” works that carry translatability—though relevant to all works—are magnified in Dichtung works.
Translatability is essential to certain works — that names not, their translation is essential for themselves; it only says, that a certain denotation, inherent in the original, utters their translatability.

4.2: Daß eine Übersetzung niemals, so gut sie auch sei, etwas für das Original zu bedeuten vermag, leuchtet ein.

It is evident that no translation, however good it may be, can have any significance as regards the original.

It is clear that a translation, no matter how good, cannot have any significance for the original.

That a Translation never, as good it even be, some for the Original for/to denoting [bedeuten] able/impel, shines on/one/a.

That a translation never, as good as it may be, is able to denote some for the original, shines-clear.

4.3: Dennoch steht sie mit diesem kraft seiner Übersetzarkeit im nächsten Zusammenhang.

285 These works being Dichtung, Literary-Works that are purposefully dense with other possible meanings and hold clarity-and-definition at bay.

286 i.e., Though “translatability” is an essential condition of possibility for the original, this does not mean that the “translation” (both as process and product) means [heißt] anything for/of the original. However, a “denotation” of translatability (inherent in the original) is uttered, as utterance, in the process and product of the translation. The play between “heißt” and “Bedeutung” is worth marking here; Benjamin’s use of “meaning” in varying forms is indicative of a rhetorical performance throughout his text. Forms of “Deuten” carrying a graphic weight of “Wörtlichkeit,” which Benjamin will describe in the concluding paragraphs of the essay. “Heißt” be the impossible act of a true name.

Berman in his commentary argues that it is the “act of translation” that “the original text calls for” and “the product . . . is regarded with ironic indifference” (Age 79). From the position of the original text this would seem true-enough. But I hopelessly-hope that a re-translation commentary form of translation (i.e., this very text you are currently reading) can foreground the act of translation as a product, and thus be what the original calls for as well, though always insufficiently so.

287 A possible play between “innewohnt” and “äußere.” An aspect of (not-total) inner becomes outer. Äußere: express, voice, utter. As an “out—here” type expression. Utter strikes me as a similar trope as stutter. But unlike stutter, utter does not stammer. The translatability is voiced.

288 Note “translation” is marked with the singular “it” while “Originals” is marked by a plural “them/their.”

289 “Leuchtet ein”: “einleuchten” implies “make sense” “be manifest” – the motif of shining is absent largely. Instead, the “Task” essay offers a praise of covering and hiding, which ironically unveils.
Nonetheless, it does stand in the closest relationship to the original by virtue of the original’s translatability; . . .

Nevertheless, it stands in the closest connection with the original by virtue of the latter’s translatability.

Still stands it with this by-means-of [kraft] its translatability in-the nearest Zusammenhang.

Even still, it stands with them, by means of its translatability, in the nearest nexus.

4.4: Ja, dieser Zusammenhang ist um so inniger, als er für das Original selbst nichts mehr bedeutet.

. . . in fact, this connection is all the closer since it is no longer of importance to the original.

Indeed, this connection is all the more intimate because it no longer has any significance for the original itself.

Yes, this Zusammenhang is all-the intimater, as it for the Original itself not more denotes.

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290 “Zusammenhang”: Literally “Hanging together.” Implying “connection,” “context” and “complex.” Weber translates ‘Zusammenhang’ with variation, “nexus” being one choice; this strikes me as apropos, in being applicable across grammar, biology, philosophy, etc., connection, junction, area of close contact, network, meeting-place (OED).

This “nexus” between original and translation marks an intimate-distance. For Benjamin “Zusammenhang” is meant to complicate any linear and progressive theory of knowledge held by early German Romantics. In The Concept of Criticism, Benjamin references Hölderlin’s “Das Unendliche”: “they hang together infinitely (exactly)” [Unendlich (genau) zusammenhangen], thus implying an infinity of connections as a context. (SW 1, 126). From Hölderlin’s “Das Unendlich”: “Ambiguously I have a mind to say it exactly . . . I discover a connection [Zusammenhang] between . . . a connection not ascribed to either of them, but to a third factor by which they are connected infinitely (exactly), for that I have an ambiguous mind” (“Pindar” 717). Anthony Phelan offers a compelling reading of Fortgang—as continuous advance, progress— versus Zusammenhang—as the alternative to such—in Benjamin (72-73). Phelan argues in Benjamin’s earlier work there seems to be a belief in a systematic coherence, infinitely complex, specifically in such concepts as Zusammenhang. However, I believe that by the “Task” and the early 1920s, Benjamin has moved fully away from a coherence, and undermines the will-towards-total-thinking via specific rhetorical-techniques. Hence, the “Zusammenhang” of the “Task” essay becomes over-determined and under-represented, i.e., ambiguous.
Yes, this nexus is all-the intimater\textsuperscript{291}, as\textsuperscript{292} it [translation] denotes no more for the original itself.\textsuperscript{293}

4.5: Er darf ein natürlicher genannt werden und zwar genauer ein Zusammenhang des Lebens.

We may call this connection a natural one, or more specifically, a vital one.

\textsuperscript{291} “‘inniger’”: Berman marks the “innig” as related to Hölderlin and Zusammenhange implying “inter-belonging of beings” (83). This is a non-subjective intimacy.

\textsuperscript{292} Choice of “as” for “als” is to maintain comma as in the German. Also, there is a comparison of degrees occurring here that ‘as’ captures. “it” assumingly refers to ‘translation.’ The “intimacy of the connection” stands in inversely proportional relations with the Original revolving around denoting for the Original. How could a translation ever denote for an original? As the translation no longer denotes for it gains greatest “intimacy of connection.”

\textsuperscript{293} This “bedeutet” may be a spot where my categorization of verbs implying forms of “meaning” falls flat. “Mean” (Sinn) might be closer to what Benjamin is implying. But it could also imply “denoting” as marking degrees of untranslatability. There is a wonderful paradox of intimate-distance occurring across at least three (and assuming ad infinitum) possible implication.

1. If “bedeutet” is closer to “Sinn,” the sentence is implying: ‘as translation stops meaning for the original, the original and translation are set in an intimate-Zusammenhang.’ Not “meaning” would imply a distance (not confining the original) but also an intimate release of the original to mean other.

2. But if “bedeutet” is “denoting” implying a marking of (un)translatability, then the sentence is implying: ‘as the translation stops marking untranslatability, the original and translation are set in an intimate-Zusammenhang.’ Not “denoting” untranslatability would mean the translation is marking the translatable, which is quite intimate while not translating the most-intimate-Kernel of the original i.e., untranslatability. This could also imply simply no longer translating. Maybe this is the case of texts where all that exists are later translations, i.e., lost originals that only exists in translation.

3. Or maybe to “denote nothing more” is to denote untranslatability, which is the aspect of the original that is untranslatable. Thus, “denoting nothing more” implies “denoting untranslatability”—a paradoxical impossibility—the most intimate of all but also absolute distance. This would be possible in such impossible spaces as “God’s commemoration” (also implying death), and the “Nowhere,” where consideration of the absorber is fruitful for knowledge i.e., a prelapsarian type state.

Whichever, the implication is an intensely paradoxical Zusammenhang—hanging together/nexus.

Lastly, I should mark that both Zohn and Rendall translate “nicht mehr” in temporal terms “no longer.” “No more” also implies this temporal aspect. But following a similar logical as the “denoting nothing more” #3, temporally this would imply rather a time when the Translation did mean something for the Original—which would assumingly still be an impossible time/space, a prelapsarian. And/or “no longer” implies some time like a ‘God’s commemoration’ in regard to death, but what has died?
It can be called a natural connection, and more precisely a vital connection.

It permitted/must a more-natural naming/calling/mentioning will and indeed exactly a Zusammenhang of Life.

It may be named natural and indeed more precisely a nexus of life.\(^{294}\)

4.6: So wie die Äußerungen des Lebens innigst mit dem Lebendigen zusammenhängen, ohne ihm etwas zu bedeuten, geht die Übersetzung aus dem Original hervor.

\[
\text{Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original— . . .} \\
\text{Just as expressions of life are connected in the most intimate manner with the living being without having any significance for the latter, a translation proceeds from the original.} \\
\text{So as the Utterance of Life intimately with the Living zusammenhängen, without it some to denoting, goes the Translation from the Original forth/out.} \\
\text{Just as the utterances of life intimately nexused\(^{295}\) with the Living, without denoting some for it, so the translation goes forth from the original.}\(^{296}\)
\]

\(^{294}\) Note the move towards precision. Not “natural” but more precisely “Zusammenhang des Lebens.” The question that is raised: what is “life” and “living?” This paradoxical intimate-distance is Life. Life is not biological here: “the term “life” could not be restricted to the life of the living organism, to organic corporeality, or to animalism. Instead, Benjamin grounded the natural and natural life in the historical finally to identify life itself as history” (Hanssen 33). And though Benjamin will utilize a temporal structure—after-life, continued-living, ripening—this should not be read as predetermined. Paul de Man marks a few places where Zohn’s translation falls into a kind of biological-historicism, assuming a kind of determined life cycle: “Nachreife is of the same order, or has to do with the same; it is by no means a maturing process, it is a looking back on a process of maturity that is finished, and that is no longer taking place” (85). Derrida, likewise, and more extensively, warns against such readings: “The allusion to the maturation of a seed might resemble a vitalist or geneticist metaphor; it would come, then, in support of the genealogical and parental code that seems to dominate this text. In fact, one has, it seems, to invert this order here and recognize what I have elsewhere proposed calling the ‘metaphoric catastrophe’” (“Des Tours” 202).

\(^{295}\) “zusammenhängen”: the problem with nexus is in trying to maintain a uniformity; nexus does not have a verb form in English. Hence, “nexused” being a denominalization of “nexus.” Weber opts for “tied,” which is clean and true, but fails to “hang-together” in translation Benjamin’s use of “Zusammenhang.” “nexused” implying a connecting together into a complex or network.

\(^{296}\) This is a simile structure. “As the Äußerungen is Inter-suspended with Living, The Translation goes forth from the original.” “a connection/context of living” - Zusammenhang des Lebens. Utterances as individual Life mark the living that can only be traced retroactively, never arriving at Living but touching living, manifesting living as an aspect marked in Life.
4.7: Zwar nicht aus seinem Leben so sehr denn aus seinem ›Überleben‹.

. . . not so much from its life as from its afterlife.

Paragraph four requires unfolding. So much is occurring between living, life, history, Überleben, Fortleben, and Fame.

To start, I will mark contrasting readings:

A) Berman argues that “Fortleben” has nothing to do with the translation or translatability necessarily. Rather “Fortleben” is simply the original-texts continuing through-time, as it goes through a maturation process culminating in Fame (Age 94). Fame is contingent on certain text’s unforgettableness, which would not be a quasi-transcendental for Berman, but rather a quality of certain texts, which after the authors’ death become “glorious on its own terms” and thus gain autonomy from the author (90). “Überleben,” for Berman, sets in intimate Zusammenhangen with Übersetzung. When certain texts mature to fame and thus translatability and the Kairotic moment coincide with a translator who submits to the text, a form of translation occurs that elevates the continued-living of the text to above-and-beyond-life, a rejuvenating commemoration (93-95). Berman admits in a footnote that “we are twisting Benjamin somewhat with this formation” (97, n26).

B) In subtle difference sits Weber’s reading, who argues “Überleben” is the original surviving “in and as translation. But this survival confirms finitude rather than transcending it . . . translation transports the original into a sphere of limited reproducibility, in which it cannot live very long” (67). Weber than implies that “Fortleben” is a more precise description of the finitude; hence, for Weber Überleben and Fortleben both describe the translation and sur-vival (67-68).

C) Beatrice Hanssen writes “translatability in reality was to be thought of as a temporal kernel located in the original . . . that ensured the original’s endurance or survival (Überleben)” (32). Thus, Überleben in intimate-Zusammenhang with translatability marks the conditions of possibility of certain texts. “While the translation unfolded, unfurled, perpetually renewed, and transformed the original, it at once sprang forth from it, finding its condition of possibility in the original’s afterlife” (Fortleben) (32). Fortleben would seem to mark the original’s life in intimate-Zusammenhang with the translation.

D) Paul de Man writes “First of all Benjamin says: take the notion of Fortleben, of survival, in the most literal sense possible . . . it is the survival of the text, the text kept in circulation, by the translation, circulation is augmented as such in the process” (97). Fortleben is for de Man the continuation of the original as translation, in a distorted, augmented manner. This “Fortleben” occurs with “decanonization” through the translation— “you are made aware of certain disjunctions, certain disruptions . . . certain characteristics which do not correspond to the original” causing the loss of the original’s sacredness (97). While “the word Überleben, to live beyond your own death in a sense. The translation belongs not to the life of the original, the original is already dead, but the translation belongs to the afterlife of the original, thus assuming and confirming the death of the original” (85). In de Man it seems “Überleben” also marks the translatability.

5. Derrida does not mark a distinction between uber and fort, possible due to Gandillac’s French translation. “Überleben has here an essential relation with Übersetzung” (202). “sur-vival gives a surplus of life, more than a surviving. The work does not simply live linger, it lives more and better, beyond the author’s means” (203). For Benjamin both are tied to translation and involved in a “perpetual reviviscence” that is “an annunciation, an alliance and a promise” (223).
Not indeed so much from its life as from its “afterlife” or “survival” [Überleben].

Indeed, not from its Life as very than/for from its “Überleben.”

Indeed, not from its life, so much as from its “Überleben.” 297

4.8: Ist doch die Übersetzung später als das Original und bezeichnet sich doch bei den bedeutenden Werken, die da ihre erwählten Übersetzer niemals im Zeitalter ihrer Entstehung finden, das Stadium ihres Fortlebens.

For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.

Nonetheless the translation is later than the original, and in the case of the most significant works, which never find their chosen translators in the era in which they are produced, indicates that they have reached the stage of their continuing life [Fortleben].

Be but/though the Translation later than the Original and describes [bezeichnet] itself but by the notable [bedeutenden] Works, which as/there their chosen/selected Translator never in the Time-Age of-their Start-Standing/Creation/Emergence find, the Stage of their Fortlebens.

For, the translation comes later than the original, and yet designates, in the noteworthy works which never find their chosen translator in the age of their origin, the stage of its living-on.

4.9: In völlig unmetaphorischer Sachlichkeit ist der Gedanke vom Leben und Fortleben der Kunstwerke zu erfassen.

The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity.

The notion of the life and continuing life of works of art should be considered with completely unmetaphorical objectivity.

In fully/totally unmetaphoric Objectivity/Factuality is the Idea/Thought of the Life and Fortleben of the Art-Work to grasp/capture.

297 Berman argues that the inverted commas are calling attention to Überleben’s relation with Übersetzung (Age 87). While Caroline Disler argues that the parentheses mark the “tentative” nature, where Überleben is soon—in her reading—to be made more precise with “Fortleben” (185).
In full unmetaphoric matter-of-factness\textsuperscript{298} is the thought of life and living-on of the artwork to be comprehended.

4.10: Daß man nicht der organischen Leiblichkeit allein Leben zusprechen dürfe, ist selbst in Zeiten des befangensten Denkens vermutet worden.

Even in times of narrowly prejudiced thought, there was an inkling that life was not limited to organic corporeality.

Even in ages of the most prejudiced thinking it has been suspected that life must not be attributed to organic corporeality alone.

That one not the organic Leiblichkeit alone Life to-speak/to-grant/to-comfort allowed/must, is itself in Time the most-biased/prejudiced/self-conscious Thinking inferred/suspected/imagined was.

That one not attribute living to organic livingality\textsuperscript{299} solely, has been supposed even in the times of the most biased thinking.


But it cannot be a matter of extending its dominion under the feeble scepter of the soul, as Fechner tried to do, or, conversely, of basing its definition on the even less conclusive factors of animality, such as sensation, which characterizes life only occasionally.

But there can be no question of extending its dominion under the feeble aegis of the soul, as Fechner attempted to do; not to mention defining life on the basis of still less decisive aspects of animal life such as sensitivity, which betokens life only occasionally.

But not therefore can it itself-act/deal, under the weakened Scepter of the Soul whose Lordship\textsuperscript{300} extended, as it Fechner attempted; let-alone that Life from the yet/still fewer/lesser relevant/authoritative/essential/prevailing Moments of the Animalistic

\textsuperscript{298} “Sachlichkeit”: I do not want to use “Objectivity,” as Benjamin uses “Objectif” at points. Sache root implying matter, and fact, I though this phrase touches the idea and tense.

\textsuperscript{299} “Leiblichkeit” is the German. I wonder about the “Leib” of the word. Corporeality would be Körperlichkeit. What would be the distinction? The difference appears to be in fields of use. “Leib” aligns with a literary and religious tradition, while Körper is found in the hard sciences. “Leib” has a ‘creaturely’ quality. The impetus of the sentence then is the idea of living objects, creatures, matter, that are inorganic living. This inorganic-living is being aligned with History in this paragraph, the living of objects.

\textsuperscript{300} “Herrschaft”: Sir-ship. I find Lord-Ship maintains a personification in the term that performs such an extension of dominion.
define-will-could, such-as from Sensation/Feeling, which it only occasionally signalize/know-sign [kennzeichnen] can.

But therefore, it cannot be a case of extending its dominion under the weakened scepter of the soul, as Fechner tried; let alone that life could be defined from the even less decisive momentum\textsuperscript{301} of animality, such as from feeling, which can only occasionally mark life.

4.12: Vielmehr nur wenn allem demjenigen, wovon es Geschichte gibt und was nicht allein ihr Schauplatz ist, Leben zuerkannt wird, kommt dessen Begriff zu seinem Recht.

The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life.

Rather, it is only when life is attributed to everything that has a history, and not to that which is only a stage setting for history, that this concept comes into its own.

Rather only when/if all those, from-which it History/Story [Geschichte] gives and which not alone it Scene is, Life conferred/to-it-knows [zuerkannt] shall, comes this Concept [Begriff] to its Right/Law.

\textsuperscript{301} "Momentum": momentum and moment.
Rather only when all that, which has a history and is not alone its showplace, shall be granted life, does its concept come to its right.


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302 Different conceptions:

1. This form of History as a “living history” – Althusser. “Their [Marxism] objects belong not to accomplished history but to Geschichte, to living history, which is made of, and wells up out of, aleatory tendencies and the unconscious. This is a history whose forms have nothing to do with the determinism of physical laws” (Althusser *Encounter* 264).

2. “Geschichte, feminine, ‘occurrence, narration, tale, history,’ from Middle High German geschiht, Old High German gesicht, feminine, ‘event, occurrence, cause of an event, dispensation’ (Middle High German also ‘affair, manner, stratum’; abstract of geschehen. Similarly Modern High German Geschick, ‘fate, destiny, dexterity,’ is based upon Middle High German geschicke, neuter, ‘event, order, formation, figure’ (Kluge, 115).

3. “When the Grimms define Geschichte as ‘der zusammenhängende bericht über diese begebenheiten, das geschichtswerk,’ we might translate it as “the narrative cohesion of events, the story as a work.” (Untranslatables, 289). History as a Zusammenhange.

4. “representation of the unfolding of true or imagined events” Maybe something like “plot” (Untranslatables, 290).

5. “Die Geschichte wandert in den Schauplatz hinein.” [The History wanders into the showplace.] (Benjamin, GS1, 271; OTS 92). This marks the Darstellung form such Geschichte occurs-as/disrupts/recreates.

Geschichte can be thought of as the Mitteilung by which the “work” is recognized—a Zusammenhange of the origin, continued-living, and living-on of the work. The “work” or “natural life” is never experienced as such but only in re-cognized Mitteilung. “Fame” is the current-latest Zusammenhange of a text, the Geschichte surrounding the text.

“Natural-History” comes to mind: “Welding together nature and history, ‘natural history’ obviated the traditional aporias between both, pointing instead to their originary dialectical interplay” (Hanssen 810). “Natural history” is opposed to “ur-history” in Benjamin. Ur-history is mythic; it implies an originary-immediacy between nature-history; Benjamin will use it as a rhetorical figure; an elusive seductive figure that re-establishes a human power over language and nature. While “natural history” places both, like the title, in an entangled relationship—there is no time/place, that humans can know of (only speculatively), where nature and history were separated. If ur-history, or ur-future (figures of redemption of utopia) are mistaken as Real seduction has occurred.

303 “Schauplatz”; “Calvary” in religious text. Implying the earthly site where the end of the world will be revealed. “The Schauplatz of the baroque period is for Benjamin the place where history is secularized and where the temporal process settles into a spatial image” (Untranslatables 13).
In the final analysis, the range of life must be determined by the standpoint of history rather than that of nature, least of all by such tenuous factors as sensation and soul.

For the range of the living must ultimately be delimited on the basis of history and not of nature, without mentioning such unstable notions as sensitivity and soul.

For from the History/Story, not form the Nature of, to-be-silent of such staggering/fluctuating/varying as Sensation/Feeling and Soul, is latest the Circumcircle of Life to determine/define.

Because of the history, not of the nature, let alone from such fluctuating as sensation and soul, is the radius of life finally to be determined.  

4.14: Daher entsteht dem Philosophen die Aufgabe, alles natürliche Leben aus dem umfassenderen der Geschichte zu verstehen.

The philosopher’s task consists in comprehending all of natural life through the more encompassing life of history.

From this arises the philosopher’s task, which is to understand all natural life on the basis of the more comprehensive life of history.

Hence emerges to-the Philosopher the Task, all-natural Life from the most-extensive/comprehensive of the History/Story to understand.

Hence arises the task of the philosopher, to understand all-natural life from the more comprehensive history.  

4.15: Und ist nicht wenigstens das Fortleben der Werke unvergleichlich viel leichter zu erkennen als dasjenige der Geschöpfe?

And indeed, isn’t the afterlife of works of art far easier to recognize than that of living creatures?

And isn’t the continuing life of works incomparably easier to recognize than that of creatures?

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304 Life and living should be thought from the radius of history (natural-history) and not as biological definition.

305 “More comprehensive” but never total. More comprehensive in being like translation and the Fortleben—a perpetual transcendental but speculative double infinity, shifting in meaning and significance through history with each ripening—a play between relevance and strategy.
And is not at least the Fortleben of the Works incomparably much lighter to recognize [erkennen] than that of the Creations/Creatures [Geschöpfe]?

And is not at least, the living-on of the works incomparably easier to recognize than that of creatures?

4.16: Die Geschichte der großen Kunstwerke kennt ihre Deszendenz aus den Quellen, ihre Gestaltung im Zeitalter des Künstlers und die Periode ihres grundsätzlich ewigen Fortlebens bei den nachfolgenden Generationen.

The history of the great works of art tells us about their descent from prior models, their realization in the age of the artist, and what in principle should be their eternal afterlife in succeeding generations.

The history of great works of art knows about their descent from their sources, their shaping in the age of the artists, and the periods of their basically eternal continuing life in later generations.

The History/Story of the great Artworks knows their Descent from the Spring/Swell/Source, in the Time-Age of the Artists and the Period their grounding eternally Fortlebens at/with/in the successive/subsequent Generations.

The history of the great artworks knows their descendance from the springs, their formation in the age of the artists and the periods of their, in principle, eternal living-on in the successive generations.

4.17: Dieses letzte heißt, wo es zutage tritt, Ruhm.

Where this last manifests itself, it is called fame.

Where it appears, the latter is called fame.

This latest names/calls/means, where it obviously-treads/emerges/outcrops [zutage tritt], Fame/Rumor.

306 “Geschöpfe”: Ge-schöpfe feels closer to Creation, as in the Creation/Creature.


308 Easier to recognize in that to re-cognize is the only experience of the “creatures,” as Mitteilung.

309 Zohn adds in “tells us.” That is, “history . . . tells us . . . about.” There is no sense of “us” being told here. “We” are not present in this sentence. The “history knows” irrelevant of humans. Maybe, it “knows” in the sense of a monadic knowing—the total history expressed as a fragment, distorted, and erased but implied as a fragment.
This last, where it visibly treads, is called fame.\footnote{How does “Fame” relate to “Geschichte?” The latest re-cognizing of the “create-ure/ion” as the ‘living-on’ is the Fame—to tell of, and to starve. But the German does not have the notion of starve. The German might be closer to Rumor. Maybe similar to Rumor in Shakespeare’s history plays—an organizer, a guide, a historian; the “Fame” being a nearly arbitrary possibility brought about through the chance fashion of a moment producing a desire towards the original.}

4.18: Übersetzungen, die mehr als Vermittlungen sind, entstehen, wenn im Fortleben ein Werk das Zeitalter seines Ruhmes erreicht hat.

*Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when a work, in the course of its survival, has reached the age of its fame.*

*Translations that are more than transmissions of a message are produced when a work, in its continuing life, has reached the age of its fame.*

*Translations, which more than Conveying [Vermittlungen\footnote{Zohn’s translation as “transmission” fails to grasp a possible critique of Hegelian mediation. Weber discusses said mediation in other texts of Benjamin’s work. “Universal mediation reduces every present to a moment of “differentiation” or of “alteration” in a process of totalization that will never simply be present, except as the reflected-anticipated medium of the future perfect. And this Hegelian universalization of the medium, qua mediation, also suggests how and why certain discourses on, and practices of, the “media” could today have come to supplant or to supplement religious discourse in its more traditional forms. For the Hegelian notion of mediation as an infinite process of becoming other in order to become the same, presents a strategy of safeguarding finitude from an alterity, and from a future that would not come full circle as a return of the same” (Weber 37).} are, arise/emerge, when in the Fortleben a Work the Age-time its Fame reached has.*

*Translations, that are more than mediations, arise, when in the living-on, a work has reached the age of its fame.*\footnote{To reach the age of its fame seems to be a moment when the Geschichte can be realized in a highly meaningful re-cognized manner. I imagine a work could have multiple moments of “Fame.” It would seem un-Benjaminian to assume that reaching “Fame” is only once. Benjamin’s essay itself has been re-cognized in different manners to highlight different aspects. Hence, Fame is not a matter of Truth or correct understanding, but rather a moment of Re-cognition that enacts the translatability in an experiential manner.}

4.19: Sie dienen daher nicht sowohl diesem, wie schlechte Übersetzer es für ihre Arbeit zu beanspruchen pflegen, als daß sie ihm ihr Dasein verdanken.
Contrary, therefore, to the claims of bad translators, such translations do not so much serve the works as owe their existence to it.

Hence, they do not so much serve the work’s fame (as bad translators customarily claim) as owe their existence to it.

It /they serves therefore not both this, as bad Translators it for their Labor [Arbeit] to claim tend, than that they/it him/it their Being [Dasein] owe [verdanken].

Translations therefore do not serve it, as bad translators claim to maintain their labor, as owe their existence to it.313

4.20: In ihnen erreicht das Leben des Originals seine stets erneute späteste und umfassendste Entfaltung.

In them the life of the originals attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding.

In them the original’s life achieves its constantly renewed, latest and most comprehensive unfolding.

In them reaches the Life of the Original its always renewed latest and most-comprehensive/far-reaching Unfolding.

In them the life of the original314 reaches its always renewed, latest and most extensive unfolding.315

Paragraph 5:

5.1: Diese Entfaltung ist als die eines eigentümlichen und hohen Lebens durch eine eigentümliche und hohe Zweckmäßigkeit bestimmt.

As the unfolding of a special and high form of life, this process is governed by a special high purposiveness.

As the unfolding of a special, high form of life, this unfolding is determined by a special, high purposefulness.

313 Steven Rendall makes a point of the significance of “diesem” and “ihm.” That the indication is “fame.” Zohn opts for “work” alone. The emphasis on “work’s fame” tracks. It would seem though translatability is essential feature of the ‘work’, which allows for the possibility of translation and possible fame, the translation serves the Geschichte and Fame surrounding the work.

314 This “life” is the Zusammenhangen of origin-continued-living-living-on, i.e., the Geschichte.

315 The forms of this unfolding in Benjamin: an aniconism, fragments, deep history, fabulation, archives.
This Unfolding is as that of a peculiar\textsuperscript{316} and high life through a peculiar and high purpose-like-ness determined.

This unfolding is as a peculiar and high life\textsuperscript{317} determined through a peculiar and high purposiveness.\textsuperscript{318}

5.2: Leben und Zweckmäßigkeit—ihr scheinbar handgreiflicher und doch fast der Erkenntnis sich entziehender Zusammenhang erschließt sich nur, wo jener Zweck, auf den alle einzelnen Zweckmäßigkeiten des Lebens hinwirken, nicht wiederum in dessen eigener Sphäre, sondern in einer höheren gesucht wird.

The relationship between life and purposiveness, seemingly obvious yet almost beyond the grasp of the intellect, reveals itself only if the ultimate purpose toward which all the individual purposiveness of life tends is sought not in its own sphere but in a higher one.

Life and purposefulness—the connection between them seems easily accessible but nevertheless almost escapes knowledge, disclosing itself only where that purpose, toward which all the particular purposes of life tend, ceases to be sought in its own sphere, and is sought instead in a higher one.

Life and purpose-like-ness—their seemingly more-palpable and yet nearly the Knowledge/Recognition privative Zusammenhang develops/opens-up/becomes-accessible only, where that Purpose, towards/on the all single Purpose-like-ness of the Life work/actualize-towards, not in-turn in its peculiar Sphere, but in a higher-one sought-after/searched shall.

Life and purposiveness—seemingly more-palpable and yet near privative knowledge\textsuperscript{319} of their nexus opens itself only, where\textsuperscript{320} that purpose, towards which all the peculiar

\textsuperscript{316} “Eigentümliche-” peculiarity, individual, specific, idiosyncratic. The word in various forms is used four times in the essay, all in paragraph 5.

\textsuperscript{317} Repeatedly translated as “form of life.” The implication of ‘form’ is there, but the word is not. In the German it seems “This Unfolding” is a “High and Peculiar Life.” This would imply that “This Unfolding” is a mode-form, like the slippage of translation between mode-form in paragraph 3; this slippage becomes clearer with the concept of “Darstellungsmodus.”

\textsuperscript{318} Does this relate to Kant’s aesthetic ‘judgment’ of beauty, that which treats the object as a realization of “purposiveness without purpose?” Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck. [Weber offers a comparison of Kant and Benjamin around this concept on pages 39-40 of Benjamin’s -abilities; Berman in his commentary offers the same in a condensed form (Age 102).] Purposefulness of Life is not knowable objectively; but is intuited, maybe as Sehnsucht. Like Zusammenhang of translation/original, in paragraph 5 there is an intimate-distance being implied and represented between life and purpose.

\textsuperscript{319} “Entziehender Erkenntnis”: a re-cognition by a marked absence.

\textsuperscript{320} This “where” marks a location of the privative encounter of the Zusammenhang, the intimate-distance. “where” is a time/space that all peculiar “Purposiveness of Life” desires towards, and yet is a location that
purposiveness of life actualize-towards\textsuperscript{321}, shall be sought-after not in-turn in its own sphere, but in one higher.\textsuperscript{322}

5.3: Alle zweckmäßigen Lebenserscheinungen wie ihre Zweckmäßigkeit überhaupt sind letzten Endes zweckmäßig nicht für das Leben, sondern für den Ausdruck seines Wesens, für die Darstellung seiner Bedeutung.

All purposeful manifestations of life, including their very purposiveness, in the final analysis have their end not in life but in the expression of its nature, in the representation of its significance.

All purposeful phenomena of life, as well as life’s purposefulness itself, are in the final analysis purposeful not for life, but for the expression of its essence, for the representation of its significance.

All purpose-like [en] Life-apparitions/phenomenon/manifestations as their purpose-like-ness in-general are latest End purpose-like [] not for the Life, but for the Expression of its Essence for the Darstellung of its Bedeutung.

no ‘purposiveness of life” can be actualized in/as, or has yet to be so. What begins to stand out is the ‘staging’ occurring in the “Task” essay overall. It is as if a peculiar form—(im)possible peculiar representation (intimate-distance) marks History/ Geschichte and the possibility of a privative encounter intuited as a Sehnsucht—through which several actors/concepts/signifiers take digressive turns staging.

This “where” privatively marks an X beyond life; the purposiveness of life indicates beyond/over life to an extreme “where.” Rhetorically in Benjamin such “wheres” are often prelapsarian or post-Messianic (the where/when of the absolute-translation that has, nor can be, realized), but “wheres” must always be understood as rhetoric for they are themselves ‘purposeful life-apparitions.’ That is each “where” takes a Darstellung, Mitteilung form in its emergence that is coded by the specific historical moment. The extreme of rhetorical “wheres” allows for a disruption and re-cognizing.

\textsuperscript{321} “hinwirken”: the echo of “wirken” is here, as in “verwirklicht.” Work-towards works as well.
All purposive appearance-of-life, such as their purposiveness in general, are in the latest ends not purposive for life, but for the expression of its essence, for the presentation of its denotation.

5.4: So ist die Übersetzung zuletzt zweckmäßig für den Ausdruck des innersten Verhältnisses der Sprachen zueinander.

Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages to our answer.

Thus, translation ultimately has as its purpose the expression of the most intimate relationships among languages.

So is the Translation in-the-end/recently purpose-like for the Expression the innermost Ratios/relationships the Languages to-one-another.

323 “Lebenserscheinungen”: not phenomena. “The sense of an indication by one thing of another, which latter precisely does not appear. Erscheinen (to appear) is thus paradoxically a ‘not-showing-itself,’ which implies that ‘phenomena (Phänomene) are never appearances (Erscheinungen),’ and that one therefore cannot explain the first term by means of the second, since on the contrary Erscheinung, insofar as it is an indication of something that is not shown by means of something that is shown, presupposes the notion of Phänomen” (Untranslatable 286).

This “appearance” is implication of an emerging, a literal-appearing in history, in a specific/peculiar form. In relation to the previous sentence, the implication is “peculiar Purposiveness of Life” which has been brought into the present in a privative representational form/mode. This paragraph also relates back to the first paragraph and the idea of the genre of the human. Maybe best articulated by Agamben’s notion of form-of-life and bare-life.

324 “Letzten Endes”: Gets translated as “in final analysis.” But motif is more of a paradoxical ultimate-end again and again.

325 “Ausdruck” carries the weight of the “encounter” the “bumping-up-against” in that “druck” has this ‘im-print’ implication, etymologically meaning “pressure, violent impact, rebound, hostile encounter” (Kluge 62).

326 “Darstellung”: re-presentation, staging, performance. There is an active aspect to this that is closer to Presentation, but one that implies not indexical. The mythic/messianic absolute-translation would be a full embodiment of the Truth of the text and the inner-most iterability. But peculiar/singular translations (within human history and language) are only ever Darstellung.

327 The “purpose” of Appearances of Life is towards the Darstellung of ‘its’ denoting. Understanding “Bedeutung” as the Expression of (un)translatability or in this case iterability in-general (i.e., Essence), the “purposiveness” of Life is only-always as a privative Darstellung, with the intuited (im)possible actualization towards a higher form/mode. It is somehow the intimate “purpose” of life itself, and yet only ever with the distance as the “purpose” of Darstellung Life in peculiar forms/appearances.
So, ultimately the translation is purposive for the expression of the inner relation/ratio of languages to one another.328

5.5: Sie kann dieses verborgene Verhältnis selbst unmöglich offenbaren, unmöglich herstellen; aber darstellen, indem sie es keimhaft oder intensiv verwirklicht, kann sie es.

It cannot possibly reveal or establish this hidden relationship itself; but it can represent it by realizing it in embryonic or intensive form.

Translation cannot possibly reveal or produce this hidden relationship; however, translation can represent this relationship, insofar as it realizes it seminally or intensively.

It can this conceal Ratios/Relationships self impossible reveal, impossible production; but represent, by-doing they it germinative or intensive actualized, can they it.

This hidden relation/ratio itself is impossible to-reveal, impossible to-restore/produce; but translation can present it by germinaly329 or intensively actualizing it.330

5.6: Und zwar ist diese Darstellung eines Bedeuteten durch den Versuch, den Keim seiner Herstellung ein ganz eigentümlicher Darstellungsmodus, wie er im Bereich des nicht sprachlichen Lebens kaum angetroffen werden mag.

328 This “Verhältnisses” alludes back to paragraph 4 sentence 4: “this nexus is so much more intimate, as it denotes nothing more for the original itself.” [The “intimacy of the connection” stands in inversely proportional relations with “the Original” revolving around “denoting” for the Original.] The intimate-distance of the Translation/Original is like the intimate-distance of the Purpose/Living.

“Verhältnisses”, to grasp the connection to “relations” or “ratio” we have to reach back to teutonic meanings of haldan implying “keeping together through watching” cognate with English herding. This carries a similar significance of Zusammenhang expect with a ‘ratio’ implication; If Zusammenhang (insufficiency) marks the un-experienceable-linguistically intimate-distance, Verhältnisses marks the “Human” Darstellung form.

This “inner-ratio/relation” is of course the (un)translatability, or (un)iterability in-general.

329 Berman points out that a “germ” is a fragment image, carrying a monadic logic: “it conceals a reality that does not yet exists (and yet is already in existence)” (Age 106).

330 The play between “herstellen” and “darstellen.” Is the hidden relation, (un)translatability, impossible to “produce?” it seems clear it is impossible to restore. If “untranslatability” is ultimately a Darstellung for some (un)conditional possibility that transcends and inwardly-verses, then translation can never restore X that is fragmented and fractured in the act/necessity of translation. It is a nonsensical task. It cannot be produced or restored by translation, but maybe translation darstellen X—translation performs/re-presents/stages this hidden-ratio.
This representing of something signified through an attempt at establishing it in embryo is of so singular a nature that it is rarely met with in the sphere of nonlinguistic life.\footnote{Zohn’s version has a significant erasure of “seiner Herstellung ein ganz eigentümlicher Darstellungsmodus.” In doing so the emphasis is taken off a “peculiar mode-of-presenting,” which arguably is the main emphasis of Benjamin’s essay.}

In fact, this representation of the intended object by means of an incomplete form or seed of its production is a very special mode of representation seldom to be encountered in the domain of non-linguistic life.

And indeed, is this Re-Presentation [Darstellung] a Denoting [Bedeuteten] through the Trying [Versuch]\footnote{This “Versuch” carries the experimental nature of the essayistic. Translation is an essayistic mode. An impossible trying that (ineffectually) actualizes as a Darstellungsmodus.}, the Germ its Production a quite/all peculiar RepresentingMode [Darstellungsmodus], as it in-the Reach of-the not linguistic Life barely encounter [angetroffen]\footnote{The root “treffen” marks the encounter, like the tangent touched fleetingly. We can trace an echo of the privative “encounters”: Ausdruck, treffen, Klingen,} may be.

And in-deed, this staging of a denoting\footnote{“Denoted”: using donated feels/seems awkward, but it engages the material aspect of marking, and its awkwardness forces an encounter by the reader.} through the attempt, the germ of its production,\footnote{Only ever an attempt, such can never be restored/produced only ever a staging-production-as-performance.} is quite a peculiar mode-of-presenting, as it may hardly be encountered\footnote{Assuming the “germ” cannot be “encountered” in non-linguistic life for it is untranslatability and/or pure-language.} in the domain of non-linguistic life.

5.7: Denn dieses kennt in Analogien und Zeichen andere Typen der Hindeutung, als die intensive, d. h. vorgreifende, andeutende Verwirklichung.

In its analogies and symbols, it can draw on other ways of suggesting meaning than intensive—that is, anticipative, intimating—realization.

For in analogies and signs non-linguistic life has types of reference other than intensive, that is, anticipatory, intimating realization.
For this knows in Analogy and Signs another Type of there-Allusions/thither-denoting/thither-pointing, than the intensive, i.e., anticipatory, in-detour/misused actualization.337

For this [domain] knows in analogy and signs other types of indicating338, than the intensive, i.e., anticipative, misdetouring actualization.339

5.8:—Jenes gedachte, innerste Verhältnis der Sprachen ist aber das einer eigentümlichen Konvergenz.

As for the posited innermost kinship of languages, it is marked by a peculiar convergence.
— This imagined, inner relationship among languages is, however, a relationship of special convergence.
— that commemorating/thinking [gedachte], innermost Ratio/Relationship of Languages is but that of a peculiar Convergence.

337 “Vorgreifende”: pre-grasping. “Andeutende Verwirklichung”: the root “deutende” comes from the Latin “detutor” – i.e., to misuse, or pervert, and also implies detour, as in digression. Hence translation as a distorted-actualization, as representational-mode, that attempts [Versuch] a pre-grasping of l’avenir (Derrida) moment/space when the germ [(un)translatability] will be re-veiled—a re-veiling that (im)possibly promises a revealing of an intimacies of languages in-general and re-veil history/Geschichte.

338 “Hindeutung”: seems to antiquated. Hin- + deutung. Implies pointing towards, indicating, but also a moving interpretation. Or maybe even off-interpretation.

339 This is a description of translation: “misdetour Actualizing” “Andeutende Verwirklichung.”
5.9: Es besteht darin, daß die Sprachen einander nicht fremd, sondern a priori und von allen historischen Beziehungen abgesehen einander in dem verwandt sind, was sie sagen wollen.

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340 Quote from *Untranslatable*:

In an influential lecture delivered at Harvard University in 1980 and published later in the posthumous collection of essays entitled *Aesthetic Ideology*, Paul de Man proposed an interpretation of the relationship between Erinnerung and Gedächtnis in Hegel that challenged the traditional view. De Man approaches Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics and in particular the crucial distinction between symbol (Symbol) and sign (Zeichen) by way of the account of Erinnerung and Gedächtnis in the Encyclopedia. De Man starts with the following description of the interaction between thinking (Denken) and perception or intuition (Anschauung): “Thought subsumes the infinite singularity and individuation of the perceived world under ordering principles that lay claim to generality. The agent of this appropriation is language.” A corresponding movement is discerned by de Man on the level of representation in the transition from recollection to memory in the Encyclopedia. For de Man, in contrast to Bergson, there is memory only without recollection: “memory effaces remembrance (or recollection),” he argues, “just as the I efface itself” by entering into or being appropriated by the generality of language. “The faculty that enables thought to exist,” de Man continues, “also makes its preservation impossible.” Thus, he concludes, Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics are “double and duplicitous”: they represent the efforts of Gedächtnis and the order of the sign to preserve aesthetics by effacing the singularity of Erinnerung that is the basis of Hegel’s symbolic concept of art. Thus, the famous statement by Hegel—“art for us is a thing of the past”—could be translated on the basis of de Man’s interpretation as “Erinnerung for us is a matter of Gedächtnis.” On the occasion of de Man’s death in 1983, Jacques Derrida delivered a series of lectures later published as *Mémoires for Paul de Man* that were in part an extension of the reinterpretation of Erinnerung and Gedächtnis just sketched. Derrida is especially interested in elaborating an affirmative dimension to de Man’s critique of Hegel. “We are quite close here,” Derrida observes at one point, “to a thinking memory (Gedächtnis) whose movement carries an essential affirmation, a kind of engagement beyond negativity, that is to say, also beyond the bereaved interiority of introjection (Erinnerung): a thinking memory of fidelity, a reaffirmation of engagement.” Thought, Derrida writes, is not “bereaved interiorization; it thinks at boundaries, it thinks the boundary, the limit of interiority.” Thus, for Derrida, thinking affirms itself at the limit of Hegel’s distinction between Erinnerung and Gedächtnis. (*Untranslatables* 646-647).

“Comembrance” is trying to grasp something between remembrance and commemoration, a process of remembering, and memorialization.

341 The indication as “the remembrance” is but one [staging] of the peculiar convergence. As various re-translation through time mark peculiar-convergences, mis-detours Actualizing, in the form of a commemoration to the original and (un)translatability. The “peculiar convergence” would be the various Geschichte, the moments of Fame as historically specific mis-detours. The peculiar-convergence must be (un)translatability, a non-linguistic-structural possibility-différance. Peculiar marks a non-resemblance convergence.
This special kinship holds because languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express.

It consists in the fact that languages are not alien to each other, but a priori, and independently of all historical connections, related to each other in what they want to say.

It consists therein, that the Languages one-another not foreign, but a priori and from all historical References/Reconnections apart one-another in that akin are, what they say want. \(^{342}\)

It exists therein, that the languages are not foreign to one another, but, a priori and apart from all historic bindings, are cognate to one and another, in what they mean. \(^{343}\)

**Paragraph 6:**

6.1: Mit diesem Erklärungsversuch scheint allerdings die Betrachtung auf vergeblichen Umwegen wieder in die herkömmliche Theorie der Übersetzung einzumünden.

With this attempt at an explication, our study appears to rejoin, after futile detours, the traditional theory of translation.

With this attempt at an explanation the discussion seems clearly to have come out, after futile detours, at the traditional theory of translation.

With this Explanation-attempting seems allthings the contemplating/viewing in unavailing/useless/pardonable/forgivable\(^{344}\) detour again in the conventional Theory of Translation a-to-flowed.

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\(^{342}\) There is a necessity in the other translations to interject and move commas in order to produce sense.

\(^{343}\) Languages are only “foreign” in mis-detours, but in the domain of non-linguistic, non-human-history, languages cognate in an intimate manner, via untranslatability. Rather, this takes the form of a mythic desire/staging of pre-lapsarian, as in the case of “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” where a non-linguistic, material, immediate pure-language existed, or/and a post-Messianic language-to-come of similar description. Untranslatability is the non-instrumental medium (albeit in a conceptual, i.e., instrumentalized, form); in the act of translation such a non-instrumental medium is felt as resistance or not felt at all (not seen), it manifests in translation in distortions.

\(^{344}\) “Vergeblichen”: unavailing, useless, vain. Yet, also implies Pardon, which reaches back to the Greek and Latin. “The Greek suggignôskein [συγγιγνώσκειν] and Latin ignoscere are compounds of verbs meaning ‘become acquainted with’ (gignôskein [γιγνώσκειν], noscere); yet the two paradigms are antithetical: the Greek understands the pardon as shared knowledge (sun, ‘with’), whereas in Latin ‘pardon’ belongs to the register of ignorance and the refusal to know (in-, no doubt privative).” (Untranslatables, 737).
With this attempt at explanation, admittedly, it seems the tracking\textsuperscript{345} in unavailing detours\textsuperscript{346} have flowed again into the conventional theory of the translation.

6.2: Wenn in den Übersetzungen die Verwandtschaft der Sprachen sich zu bewähren hat, wie könnte sie das anders als indem jene Form und Sinn des Originals möglichst genau übermitteln?

If the kinship of languages is to be demonstrated by translations, how else can this be done but by conveying the form and meaning of the original as accurately as possible?

If the relationship among languages is to demonstrate itself in translations, how could it do so except by conveying the form and sense of the original as accurately as possible?

If/When in the Translation the Kinship/Relationship of the Languages themselves to preserve/keep has, as/how could they/it the other as whilst those Form and Sinn/Sense of the Original possible exact over-convey [übermitteln]?

\textsuperscript{345}“Betrachtung” is untranslatable: it is bringing together various notions of “to think” “to observe” “to gleam” and “to strive.” It traces back to Latin “tractare,” Teutonic “trahtôn,” Greek “δέρκομαι,” and even Sanskrit “drç.” (Kluge 365). Lacking an English equivalent, I am drawn towards “excogitating,” “observing” “treating,” “tracting”; these last two being etymologically closest and yet antiquated. “Tracking” seems to imply the observing and stiving, but only carries the “thinking” connotation marginally.

Such a “Betrachtung” and “Trachten” could relate to the essayistic Darstellung form-mode Benjamin describes in the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue,” i.e., the “Traktat.” Both share a digressive, detour, attempting quality. The form-mode Benjamin offers as the most appropriate for philosophical investigations is the Traktat, which has the “absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure” (\textit{OGT} 28). Benjamin’s choice of a double negation—“absence” “uninterrupted”—enacts this interruption. The Traktat is a form of interruption, i.e., fragmenting; it is a representation of Benjamin’s ideal mode of philosophical contemplation: tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object. This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation (\textit{OGT} 28). Moreover, there is a similarity between the “futile detours,” the Traktat, and what Benjamin will name the “interlinear translation.” All attempt to be a kind of digressive, interruptive, and iterative-presentation form-mode that consistently calls attention to their own fragmented, supplementary nature. The interlinear gestures through the literal movement back and forth between two or more languages, often on the level of individual words. The Traktat form-mode gestures through its iterative interruptive digressive method of re-presentation. And the “Betrachtung” as “futile detours” likewise performs/stages privative encounters with “untranslatability”—thus far as detours to “form/mode” “unforgettable” “translatability” conceptions of “life” “history,” etc. All these detours are futile attemptings to encounter the unencounterable.

\textsuperscript{346} The implication is “the mediations” have taken the form of detours, pardonable, i.e., privative knowledge.
If in the translation the affinity of languages has to actualize-itself\textsuperscript{347}, how can it do so other than to over-convey the form and sense of the original as precisely as possible?

6.3: Über den Begriff dieser Genauigkeit wüßte sich jene Theorie freilich nicht zu fassen, könnte also zuletzt doch keine Rechenschaft von dem geben, was an Übersetzungen wesentlich ist.

To be sure, that theory would be hard put to define the nature of this accuracy and therefore could shed no light on what is important in a translation.

Of course, the traditional theory would scarcely be able to define this concept of accuracy, and thus could give no account of what is essential to translation.

Of the Concept/Begriff this Accuracy realize/know itself those Theory of-course not to touch/grasp, could also last but no Accountability/Reckoning of the give, what in Translation essentially is.

Of course, this theory cannot grasp beyond the concept of this precision realizing-itself\textsuperscript{348}, so ultimately could not give a calculation of what is essential in translation.

6.4: In Wahrheit aber bezeugt sich die Verwandtschaft der Sprachen in einer Übersetzung weit tiefer und bestimmter als in der oberflächlichen und undefinierbaren Ähnlichkeit zweier Dichtungen.

Actually, however, the kinship of languages is brought out by a translation far more profoundly and clearly than in the superficial and indefinable similarity of two works of literature.

In truth, however, the relationship among languages shows itself in translations to be far deeper and more definite than in the superficial and indefinable similarity of two literary texts.

In Truth/Sooth but testify/witness/vouch itself the Kinship/Relationship of Languages in a Translation far deeper and more-determined/set than in the superficial/thoughtless and indefinable Similarity two Dichtung/thick-literature.

\textsuperscript{347} “Bewähren” can be thought of as a connation of real/actual. The implication here is lost in time, maybe, but the “affinity” must attempt (and fail) to actualize itself, must strive to accomplish, to ‘know by experience’ to ‘undergo.’

\textsuperscript{348} “wüßte sich” maybe relates to “sich . . . bewähren.” The “affinity between languages” realizing itself, and then this affinity as “precision realizing itself.” But it cannot grasp. So, the idea is that the theory cannot grasp beyond the delusion that precision will actualize the affinity when it cannot. The theory cannot grasp the “essential” the “translatability” – the “essential” of the precision is the translatability, which conservative notions of mitteilung fail to see. The delusion of clear and distinct equating to exact meaning.
In truth however the affinity of languages is witnessed in a translation far deeper and definitive than in the superficial and indefinite similarity between Dichtungen.

6.5: Um das echte Verhältnis zwischen Original und Übersetzung zu erfassen, ist eine Erwägung anzustellen, deren Absicht durchaus den Gedankengängen analog ist, in denen die Erkenntniskritik die Unmöglichkeit einer Abbildtheorie zu erweisen hat.

To grasp the genuine relationship between an original and a translation requires an investigation analogous in its intention to the argument by which a critique of cognition would have to prove the impossibility of a theory of imitation.

To grasp the true relationship between original and translation, we must undertake a line of thought completely analogous, in its goal, to those taken by critical epistemology in demonstrating the impossibility of a reflection theory.

By/to the authentic/lawful/echte Ratio/Relationship between Original and Translation to conceive/grasp is a Consideration anzustellen, their Intention/Intent quite the thought-process/train-of-thought analogous is, in which the Cognitive-critique/critical-cognition of the Impossibility of an Image-Theory/Imitation-Theory to-prove/show.

In order to grasp the legitimate\(^{349}\) affinity between the original and the translation,\(^{350}\) a consideration is to be contrived, whose intention is quite analogous to the lines-of-thought in which the cognitive-criticism has to prove the impossibility of an image-theory [of knowledge].\(^{351}\)

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\(^{349}\) “Echte”: coming from the root of “Ehe” implies marriage, law, understood though God/Matrimony this moves towards ‘genuine.’ In the English “genuine” or “true” would seem to imply a natural-enough connection. I hesitate to mark the “affinity” between the Original and translation as such. It is not to say it is not “natural(ish)” but rather the “affinity” which one may “grasp” is not going to be “natural” in any conventional sense, but rather will be grasped in a historical staging. Hence, “legitimate” implies that ‘authenticity’ while holding it in tension with a historical ‘legality;’ thus, marking this “affinity” as suspended between “natural” (assuming the negative materiality, i.e., speculative) and the “historical” (assuming the here-now staging, i.e., transcendental).

\(^{350}\) This “affinity” harkens back to the “law” decreed in translation in paragraph 3. Translatability as ‘law’ permits and demands translation.

\(^{351}\) This sentence is requesting the “considering of a contrivance” – the thinking through of and as a Darstellung. A ration is staged: (the intention of) “Original to Translation” is-like “Cognitive-Criticism proving impossibly of Image-Theory.” To “prove an impossible” is a negative potentiality encounter. Cognitive-criticism can at best prove the failure of Image-Theory or Mimetic-theories of Knowledge, this is done as an experience of negation. Just as the “affinity” is experienced as the failure of the Translation to Mimetic-inscribe the Original; translation by its nature is to alter through/into another language. But of course, the “contrivance,” the Darstellung, is the Ratio here: the juxtaposition between Translation Theory and Erkenntniskritik, a phenomenological philosophy/method at the time developed by Husserl.

In the latter, it is a question of showing that in cognition there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if this were to consist in imitations of the real; in the former, one can demonstrate that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original.

Just as in critical epistemology it is shown that there can be no objective knowledge, or even the claim to such knowledge, if the latter consists in reflections of the real, so here it can be shown that no translation would be possible if, in accord with its ultimate essence, it were to strive for similarity to the original.

Shall therein shown, that it in the Cognition/Knowledge no Objectivity and even not once the Claim/Entitlement thereon give could, if it in Images/Reflection of the Actual exists/insist/persist, so is here provable, that no Translation possible were, if it Similarity with the Original its latest Essence to/for/by/according strive/seek-for would.

If it is shown therein that in the recognition there is no objectivity and thereafter not even the right to claim such if it consists in reflections of the actual, then it could be proved here, that no translation would be possible, if it were to strive for similarity with the original in its ultimate essence.\(^{352}\)

“For Husserl, philosophy is still Erkenntniskritik, as distinct from the ‘ingenious and methodical work of the individual sciences’ (Logical Investigations) and assigned to the elucidation of the essence of the concepts of thing, event, cause, effect, space, time, and so on (ibid., II.15). However, this Erkenntniskritik is understood in the new sense of intentionality. In the first of the Logical Investigations, we find Erkenntnislehre, Erkenntnistheorie, and Erkenntniskritik used to refer to any approach distinct from empirical psychology, biologism, and skepticism. Phenomenology, for its part, bases its critique of knowledge in a completely different way, relying on a pure ontology of experience. Although the continuing use of the term Erkenntnistheorie reveals Husserl’s retention of a large part of Kant’s approach to the constitution of objectivity, it is in this new perspective of the phenomenological method that he uses the word.” (Untranslatables 270-271).

The intention to prove the impossibility of an Image-Theory, through a “pure ontology of experience,” which would presumably be a negative-experience, a privative-potentiation, the phenomenological reduction. This is the same for the transcendental but speculative experience that Benjamin develops, though with the important caveat of chance and only “attempting,” only even insufficiently “proving.” Hence, just as Erkenntniskritik ‘proves’ the impossibility of Image-Theory through phenomenological reduction, grasping the “affinity” between the “Original and Translation” should be in the mode/form of a contrivance with the same intention. For example, such as the insufficient Ratio of the sentence itself.

\(^{352}\) Since there is no epistemological basis for a non-distorted objective knowledge, no “true” mimetic-inscription between \(X = “X,”\) than likewise there is no translation that is a mimetic-inscription of the
6.7: Denn in seinem Fortleben, das so nicht heißen dürfte, wenn es nicht Wandlung und Erneuerung des Lebendigen wäre, ändert sich das Original.

For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living the original undergoes a change.

For in its continuing life, which could not be so called if it were not the transformation and renewal of a living thing, the original is changed.

For in its Continuing-living, that such not mean/call might/should, if it not Change and Renewal the Livelying were, alter itself the Original.

original. The “lawful affinity” between original and translation, —analogous or maybe allegorical to an epistemological relation between X and “X”—is not a mimetic-inscription but rather something like an “affinity” of difference, or “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten.” The “similarity . . . in its ultimate essence” is only problematic when it is assumed that such is occurring in a Knowable and indexical manner. In “On the Mimetic Faculty” (1933), translated by Edmund Jephcott, an unfolding of this might be found: “As is known, the sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by the law of similarity was comprehensive; it ruled both microcosm and macrocosm. But these natural correspondences are given their true importance only if we see that they, one and all, are stimulants and awakeners of the mimetic faculty which answers them in man” (SW 2.2, 720). If in a prelapsarian state a natural-correspondence/affinity existed (and still exists but is possibly inaccessible in its entirety by humans), the “importance” of such correspondence for humans is their ability to “awaken” a decayed or transformed faculty. For our purposes here: “Every word—and the whole of language . . . is onomatopoeic” (SW 2.2, 721); there is some natural mimetic-inscription, an onomatopoeia, but it is not as supposed by conventional translation-theory or conventional philosophy that assumes a “meaningfulness.” Rather what is “similar to the signified at [all words’] center” (721) is a “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten”: a simultaneously non-sensuous and non-sensical similarity. This “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” is the “Affinity” covered over by conventional theories of translation. This could arguably be a form-mode of “mimesis,” but it is a non-sensuous/sensical mimesis. Benjamin goes on to argue that this “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” establishes the ties between all material-forms and “what-is-meant” (what-is-said, written and what is meant, and between spoken and written), i.e., between mimetic and semiotic elements of language, with the semiotic being the “bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears” (722). Moreover, Benjamin states, “language may be seen as the highest level of mimetic behavior and the most complete archive of unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” (722). In relation to the “The Task of the Translator” essay, one could argue ‘translation’ is the ultimate attempting “to read what was never written” i.e., the “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” (722). Benjamin argues that it is “not improbable that the rapidity of writing and reading heighten to fusion of the semiotic and the mimetic in the sphere of language” (722); and as such I think it is not improbable that the halting-unfolding of translation as mode-forms of reading and writing function to defuse the mimetic and semiotic in a manner that allows the unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten to flash up, i.e., to read what is yet to be written.
Because in its living-on, which could not be called that if it were not for the change and renewal\textsuperscript{353} of the living-things, the original changes itself.\textsuperscript{354}

6.8: Es gibt eine Nachreife auch der festgelegten Worte.

Even words with fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process.

Established words also have their after-ripening.

It gives an After-ripen also the fixed/determined Words.

There is an after-ripening even of the fixed words.\textsuperscript{355}

6.9: Was zur Zeit eines Autors Tendenz seiner dichterischen Sprache gewesen sein mag, kann später erledigt sein, immanente Tendenzen vermögen neu aus dem Geformten sich zu erheben.

\textsuperscript{353} “Wandlung und Erneuerung”: there is a tension here, change and renewal. Both imply a carrying-forward of what was/is to what could-be, but with alteration; however, “re-new” carries a slightly different weight: to make new again. What is this “new?” For it to be as-if like the original-composition, to tap-into the Dichtung, the thickening-literariness of composition? “New” is not the God-logos of creation or even the prelapsarian doubly pure Adam-naming—The things commune with Adam in a material manner (i.e., pure-legibility) and Adam names in an act of uber-translation (i.e., pure-inscriptibility.) But rather, in this postlapsarian state human naming becomes both fetishtic babel and yet also marking communicability as language. Dichtung is a special mode of such naming that “mimics” the Adamic pure-translation, in a manner that emphasizes the unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten between X and “X”. Thus, the translation’s “renewal” mimics this mimicking in an even-more-secondary manner tapping into the unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten.

\textsuperscript{354} This is likewise described in the 1933 essay: “it must be born in mind that neither mimetic powers nor mimetic objects remain the same in the course of a thousand years” (SW2.2 720). This truly undermines any Universality—even the transcendental changes. In the sense of Original/Translation, this harkens to the diachronic shifts in language significance; A Shakespearean sonnet in the original-english signifies differently now than it did in its day of composition. However, the treatment of original/translation signification over time is highly different—translations become refuse, and originals are re-translated. When a 21\textsuperscript{st} century English audience reads Hamlet, it is in Shakespearean English, when the French read a 21\textsuperscript{st} translation of Hamlet it is in 21\textsuperscript{st} century French, thus the something of the text continues living-on.

\textsuperscript{355} Much has been written on Nachreife. The emphasis is on a slightly over-ripeness; like a banana that is not yet blackened but a little-too mushy. Though “ripe” for language would seem to imply fame/fashion—a word that from an exclusive-yet-popular fashionability (i.e., a little ambiguous and in that free to fit relevantly to context) has just-this-moment-passed into a state of populous-acceptance (i.e., the waning of ambiguity and in that stagnancy that is no longer purely-relevant.) It should be remembered that a banana is at its most nutritious in a little-too-mushy state; but here the banana has become a thing of human consumption—food. Likewise, the “populace-acceptance” state of language is probably the most beneficial for a human-centric-social-nutrition, but in that the Word as living has become food for human consumption.

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The obvious tendentiousness of a writer’s literary style may in time wither away, only to
give rise to immanent tendencies in the literary creation.

What might have been the tendency of an author’s poetic language in his own time may
later be exhausted, and immanent tendencies can arise anew out of the formed work.

What at-the Time an Author’s Tendency his/its/their thickeningliterary Language may
have been, can later done/finished is, immanent Tendencies to-be-able-to/to-impel new
from/to the What-is-Formed\(^ {356}\) itself to arise/levy/change.

What at one time may have been an author’s tendency for dichterischen language, can
later be ruined\(^ {357}\), immanent tendencies can rise-up anew from then formed.\(^ {358}\)

6.10: Was damals jung, kann später abgebraucht, was damals gebräuchlich, später archaisch
klingen.

What sounded fresh once may sound hackneyed later; what was once current may
someday sound archaic.

What once sounded fresh may come to sound stale, and what once sounded idiomatic
may later sound archaic.

What at-a-time young, can later used-up/second-hand, what at-a-time
common/conventional, later archaic clinks/clangs.

What was then young, later is used-up; what was then common, later clangs\(^ {359}\) archaic.

6.11: Das Wesentliche solcher Wandlungen wie auch der ebenso ständigen des Sinnes in der
Subjektivität der Nachgeborenen statt im eigensten Leben der Sprache und ihrer Werke zu
suchen, hieße—zugestanden selbst den krudesten Psychologismus—Grund und Wesen einer
Sache verwechseln, strenger gesagt aber, einen der gewaltigsten und fruchtbarsten historischen
Prozesse aus Unkraft des Denkens leugnen.

\(^{356}\) “Geformten”: similar in style and meaning to Ge-meinten, what-is-meant. Thus, implying that in the
“rising-up anew” translation something like an original dichterischen is formed.

\(^{357}\) The idea of this sentence, plays in with Benjamin’s notion of “ruins.” From the ruins springs anew.
The “living-on” is contingent on the “renewal” of what was once living but became “ruin.”

\(^{358}\) This “immanent tendency” the mode-form of thick-literariness is “renewed.” Once again, this mode-
form is not pure-prelapsarian-translation, but a decayed and-yet (non)similar translation, unsinnliche
Ähnlichkeiten.

\(^{359}\) “Klingen”: the weight of this word is in being an “encounter” word and/as onomatopoeic. It is highly
performative as such; its unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten and semiotic implications correspond in an obvious
experiential manner.
To seek the essence of such changes, as well as the equally constant changes in meaning, in the subjectivity of posterity rather than in the very life of language and its works would mean—even allowing for the crudest psychologism—confusing the root cause of a thing with its essence. More precisely, it would mean denying, by an impotence of thought, one of the most powerful and fruitful historical processes.

To seek what is essential in such transformations, as well as in the equally constant transformations of sense, in the subjectivity of later generations rather than in the inner life of language and its works, would be—even granting the crudest psychologism—to confuse the ground and the essence of a thing; or, putting it more strongly, it would be to deny, out of an impotence of thought, one of the most powerful and fruitful historical processes.

The Essential such Changings as well the similar steady/constant the Senses/Sinnes in the Subjectivity the Later-Birthed instead in the peculiarest Life of Language and its Work to seek/strive/find, would-call—conceded/be-up-to self the crudest Psychologism—Ground and Essence a Thing/Matter/Case confuse/mistake, severely speaking but, the vastest and fruitful historical Processes from Inability/NonCraft the Thinking deny.

To seek the essentials of such changes, as well as the equally steady [changes] of the senses\textsuperscript{360}, in the subjectivity of the post-birthed\textsuperscript{361} instead of in the peculiar life of

\textsuperscript{360} I believe the “Sinnes” is conceptually the same as the “Semiotic” in “Über das Mimetische Vermögen.”

Diese Seite der Sprache wie der Schrift läuft aber nicht beziehungslos neben der anderen, der semiotischen ein. Alles Mimetische der Sprache kann gehört, der Flamme direkter, nur eine Art von Träger in Erscheinung treten. Dieser Träger ist das Semiotische. So ist der Sinnzusammenhang der Wörter oder Sätze der Träger, ein dem erst, blitzartig, die Ähnlichkeit in Erscheinung tritt. (GS 2, 213)

This side of Language (including Script [writing]) runs/operates but not(without) a related fate with the other, the semiotic side. All Mimeticness of Language can be heard, like the Flame directly, only as one Type of Bearer emerges/appears. This Bearer is the Semiotic. So is the Meaning-Nexus of Words or Sentences the Bearer, to which first/only, likeLightening, the Similarity emerges/appears. (my translation)

But this aspect of language . . . does not develop in isolation from its other, semiotic aspect. Rather, the mimetic element in language can, like a flame, manifest itself only through a kind of bearer. This bearer is the semiotic element. Thus, the nexus of meaning of words or sentences is the barrier through which, like a flash, similarity appears. (SW 2.2. 722)

“The essentials” corresponds with the mimetic understood as unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten, and the “Sinnes” corresponds to the Semiotic—both of which are in a state of steady change.

\textsuperscript{361} What is the relationship between the subjectivity and the work? Is to be “nachgeborenen” implying born after the moment of ripeness or born after the moment of Dichtung? The idea of “Nach-Geboren-en” implies something like an after-birthed (in past-participle form, hence already done but after something
language and its works, would mean—conceding even the crudest psychologism—confusing the ground and essence of a thing, more strictly speaking, denying one of the most forceful and potent historical processes due to impotent thinking.


And even if one tried to turn an author’s last stroke of the pen into the coup de grace of his work, this still would not save that dead theory of translation.

Even if one were to consider the last stroke of the author’s pen the work’s coup de grâce, that would not suffice to save this dead theory of translation.

And wanted one also of the Author last/latest Pen-stroke to-the coup-de-grace of the Work makes, it would that dead Theory of Translation but/nevertheless not rescue.

And even if someone wanted to make the authors’ last stroke-of-the-pen the coup-de-grace of the work, it would still not rescue that dead theory of translation.

other). This has a clanging echo, though slightly later than, with Nachreife; to be birthed-after a moment. Moreover, “subjectivity” in the sentence seems to imply human. Human/subjectivity is an after-birthed. Similar to the pre-lapsarian narrative there is a tripart structure occurring: God – Adam – Modern-Human || Mother – Birth – After-Birthed || (maybe) dichterische Dichtung– Original – Translation. The subjectivity appears to be a process of generalization as well—for it is juxtaposed with the “peculiar” life of works i.e., singular manifestations unfolding. Human-subjectivity is implied to be the afterbirth of textual-discourse. If human-subjectivity is the by-product of an-other historical and potent process, why would one seek understanding/knowledge in the by-product?

Confusing the semiotic-bearer and the mimetic-essence.

I mark the play between potent and impotent in Benjamin and in a longer tradition: “All force is originally un-force.” As Daniel Heller-Roazen quoting Agamben quoting Aristotle explains:

“What Aristotle then says is, ‘if a potentiality not to be original belongs to all potentiality, then there is potentiality only where the potentiality not to (be or do) does not lag behind actuality but, rather, passes wholly into it as such.’ Impotentiality is not effaced in the passage into actuality. On the contrary, actuality is itself nothing other than the full realization of impotentiality. Actuality shows itself as an impotentiality turned back upon itself: a potentiality capable of not being and, in this way, of passing into the act.” (Untranslatable 1132).

The “actuality,” the “semiotic” the “after-birthed” bears.carries the untranslatability, the unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten, the (in)potentiality, the affinity between all languages/works/lifes.

If Benjamin’s understanding is a double-sided growth and renewal (both the Sinn and the Bedeutung, the Semiotic and non-sensuous-Mimetic) than a theory of translation of some stable meaning transcribed between languages with stable meanings would be dead.
6.13: Denn wie Ton und Bedeutung der großen Dichtungen mit den Jahrhunderten sich völlig wandeln, so wandelt sich auch die Muttersprache des Übersetzers.

For just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well.

For just as the tone and significance of great literary works are completely transformed over the centuries, the translator’s native language is also transformed.

For as Tone and Bedeutung of the greatest Thick-literary with the Centuries complete change/vary, so changes itself also the Mother-Languages of the Translator.

For as tone and denotation\textsuperscript{365} of the greatest Dichtungen change over the centuries, so changes also the mother-tongue of the translator.\textsuperscript{366}

6.14: Ja, während das Dichterwort in der seinigen überdauert, ist auch die größte Übersetzung bestimmt in das Wachstum ihrer Sprache ein-, in der erneuten unterzugehen.

While a poet’s words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to perish with its renewal.

Indeed, whereas the poetic word endures in its own language, even the greatest translation is destined to be taken up into the growth of its language and perish as a result of its renewal.

Yes, while the LiteraryWord in of its survival/overlatest, is also the greatest Translation determined/fixed in the Growth/Development of-their Language en-[ter], in the renewed under-go.

\textsuperscript{365} This is a location where my implications about “Bedeutung” waver. For here, it seems “Ton” would be the Mimetic aspect and “Bedeutung” closer to the semiotic in implying meaning. Though maybe Ton and Bedeutung in my English translation reveal this complexity: Tone and Denotation—the tone reversed yet present, in a play that borders on Saussure’s fertile thinking around anagrams, which in Benjamin as a “voix acousmatique sous les mots” is prevalent, rather as a certain playing with sounds and echoes (Nägele’s work comes to mind) and/or that which is inherited in grammars and/or the voice a-topos, of the Commemoration of God/nowhere. They echo and bear each-other in a rhetorical/grammatic manner that performs the intimate-distance, the intense-entanglement between/and-of them.

\textsuperscript{366} Seemingly separate yet both involved in the historical process of transformation and renewal.
Yes, while the thick-literary-words overlasts\textsuperscript{367} in its-own [language], even the greatest translation is certainly, in entering the growth of its language, in the renewal goes-under.\textsuperscript{368}

6.15: So weit ist sie entfernt, von zwei erstorbenen Sprachen die taube Gleichung zu sein, daß gerade unter allen Formen ihr als Eigenstes es zufällt, auf jene Nachreife des fremden Wortes, auf die Wehen des eigenen zu merken.

Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own.

Far from being a sterile similarity between two languages that have died out, translation is, of all modes, precisely the one called upon to mark the after-ripening of the alien word, and the birth pangs of its own.

So far is it remote/afield, of-the two died-away/dead Languages the deaf/torpid/empty Equation to be, that precisely under all Forms their/its as Peculiarity(?) it to-falls, on that After-ripen of the foreign Words, to the Labor/Pain of one’s-own to mark.

Translation is so far afield from being the torpid equation of two died-away languages, that among all forms falls-upon it the peculiarity,\textsuperscript{369} to mark the after-ripening of the foreign words, [to mark] the labor of its own.\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{367} “Überdauert”; to endure, to continue to last. To overlasts is the state of all ‘great’ literature; in such literature one willingly returns to an antiquated language without (usually) protest because the heft of the Dichtung. i.e., Shakespeare adapted to modern dialect always seems a little silly, and yet when the language is maintained (to an extent at least) one is willing to except a contemporary setting in Shakespeare’s plays, like Baz Luhrmann’s \textit{Romeo and Julie} (1996).

\textsuperscript{368} The syntax is odd due to the “ein-” [ein-, in der erneuten unterzugehen.]. this “ein-” could imply “one” or imply the motion of the language as it enters into the growth/renewal/going-under. According to Antoine Berman, it could also be a kind of suffix to -gehen. As in “eingehen, in der erneuten unterzugehen.” Thus implying “two modes of disappearing” (123). If this is the case, I would argue this is a brilliant example of Darstellung; the “-gehen” at the moment of renewal—emphasized by the comma cutting off the “ein-”—disappearing “unterzu-.”

\textsuperscript{369} This “Eigenstes” shares the affinity of the “Eigentümliche” marked above. 1. The ‘peculiar’ unfolding of life/purposefulness in/as history; 2. The ‘peculiar’ Darstellung-mode, which is the historical staging of the denoted ‘germ;’ 3. The ‘peculiar’ convergence of the innermost affinity of languages. This “Eigenstes” is peculiar in being idiosyncratic and a momentary or (in the case of translation) a momentarily relevant manifestation as/of a potential historical unfolding.

\textsuperscript{370} Zohn and Rendall’s translation of the second “auf” as “and” makes sense in the parallelism of the sentence, hence both relate to “zu merken” but it could also imply the “marking” of the after-ripening of the foreign words in/as/on the labor of its own. Sure, translation marks both, but this marking is formed in the distance between the translation and the original, including the peculiar distance of aging which is marked as the labor.
Paragraph 7:

7.1: Wenn in der Übersetzung die Verwandtschaft der Sprachen sich bekundet, so geschieht es anders als durch die vage Ähnlichkeit von Nachbildung und Original.

If the kinship of languages manifests itself in translations, this is not accomplished through the vague resemblance a copy bears to the original.

If the kinship of languages manifests itself in translation, it does so otherwise than through the vague similarity of original and copy.

In in the Translation the Affinity/Kinship of Languages itself testifies/evince, so happens/occurs/betides it different/other than through the vague Similarity of Replica/Reproduction and Original.

If in the translation the affinity of the languages makes itself known [manifests itself], then it happens differently than through the vague similarity of ectype\(^\text{371}\) and original\(^\text{372}\).

7.2: Wie es denn überhaupt einleuchtet, daß Ähnlichkeit nicht notwendig bei Verwandtschaft sich einfinden muß.

It stands to reason that resemblance does not necessarily appear where there is kinship.

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\(^{371}\) “Nachbildung”; “ectype,” “copy,” emphasizing its secondary, imitated status. Think of difference between Urbild (archetype) and Nachbild (Ectype). Urbild/Abbild (model/copy), Gleichbild (a copy that is a good likeness), Nachbild (Ectype), which can be considered in light of the Hebrew terms in Genesis (sêlêm \([םלמ]\) demût \([דומע]\)). “Let us make man in our image, as our likeness” (1:26). Sêlêm comes from a root meaning ‘to carve’ and designates a sculpted figure for use in a cult—what prophets call an idol; demût means ‘to be similar’ designates a copy. Moreover, ‘in’ implies a stability, whereas ‘as’ implies a similarity. The implications being that the Affinities of Languages is not mimesis as equivalence; but maybe could be unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten—not Zohn’ and Rendall’s “vague-Similarity,” which may be mistake as equivalence, but a “non-sensical Similarity.” If “vague Similarity” is supposedly between the Ectype and Original than “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten” is between ectype-original and pure-language-untranslatability.

\(^{372}\) In this paragraph there is a possible play between “in general” überhaupt, and the “narrower usage.” This difference will be implied repeatedly in the paragraph: pain/brot, intentions, religious language. In general, there are two simultaneous implications: first, there is the intention of a signification within individual-historical-languages (German, French), arbitrary, in-line with Saussure, and intending to signify (not a thing in itself) established/inherited referents (signifiers themselves); and second, a higher intention of each languages privative encounter with Language-as-such or Pure-Language, which is only ever presented/staged in the first form-mode. To say again: each peculiar historical language is a mode-form of referential intentions that also presents in privative fragments another intention of an intentionless-language, (similar to what was described in relation to Tone and Bedeutung above, near nonsensical similarity). It should be marked again that for Benjamin both of these (specific and in-general) are varying, changing, renewing—∞ actuality and/as infinite potentiality and/as infinite actuality, etc., transcendental infinity and speculative infinity.
For it is clear that kinship does not necessarily involve similarity.

Such/how it than/for/because at-all makes-shine/becomes-clear, that Similarity not necessarily for Relationship/Kinship/Affinity itself a/one-found must.

How is it to illuminate in general, if similarity must not necessarily be found with affinity itself.

7.3: Und auch insofern ist der Begriff der letzten in diesem Zusammenhang mit seinem engern Gebrauch einstimmig, als er durch Gleichheit der Abstammung in beiden Fällen nicht ausreichend definiert werden kann, wiewohl freilich für die Bestimmung jenes engern Gebrauchs der Abstammungsbeziehungen unentbehrlich bleiben wird.

The concept of “kinship” as used here is in accord with its more restricted usage: it cannot be defined adequately by an identity of origin between the two cases, although in defining the more restricted usage the concept of “origin” remains indispensable.

In this context the notion of kinship is in accord with its narrower usage, to the extent that in both cases it cannot be adequately defined by similarity of origin, although the concept of origin remains indispensable in defining the narrower usage.

And also in-so-far is the Concept of the latest in this Zusammenhang with its narrower/more-intimate Usage/Use/Application unanimously/one-vote-y, than it through parity/sameness/uniformity of Descent/Linage/Ancestry, in both Events/Falls not sufficiently defined become can, although admittedly for the Determination/Destiny that narrower/more-intimate Usage/Use of the Event/Descent-Concept indispensable remains will.

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373 from Untranslatables: “Einleuchten (illumination). In this case, the prefix ein- indicates a movement of internalization toward the “living source” constituted, according to Meister Eckhart, by “the image of God in the depths of the soul” (daz gotes bilde in der sêle grunde), whereas Kant understands it in the sense of a unification” (108). The difference between concept and image, yet the-same.

374 Let us take this “in-general” literally as:

The negative conception of the noumenon, to which the terms ‘transcendental object’ (tranzendentales Objekt), ‘object in general’ (Gegenstand überhaupt), and ‘something in general’ (Etwas überhaupt) correspond. We cannot know the noumenon in any way; but if we wish to avoid Berkeleyan idealism, we must attribute to phenomena, as simple representations, the relation to something that is not representation but an ontological cause of intuitions. (Untranslatables 362)

What if to “illuminate in general” is to Represent an (ironic) “origin” (in the case of Benjamin a transcendental yet speculative)—an ‘illumination’ as a vacillation between Kant and Eckhart, between Transcendental but also Speculative, a unification but also a fragmenting. Benjamin’s sentence then becomes a more literal question—how to illuminate the Verwandtschaft in forms other than vague-similarities; how to illuminate the “in-general” of pure-language: a fragmenting and halting Darstellung.
And even insofar as the concept is finally unanimous with this nexus in its narrower use, it cannot be sufficiently defined through the equality\textsuperscript{375} of the descent in both cases;\textsuperscript{376} although admittedly, for the determination of that narrower use, the concept-of-descent\textsuperscript{377} will remain indispensable.

7.4:—Worin kann die Verwandtschaft zweier Sprachen, abgesehen von einer historischen, gesucht werden?

*Where should one look to show the kinship of two languages, setting aside any historical connection?*

— Wherein can the kinship of two languages be sought, apart from a historical kinship?

— wherein can the Relationship/Affinity of two Languages, seen-apart from a historical, sought-after be?

—Wherein can the affinity of two languages, expecting a historical one, be sought?\textsuperscript{378}

7.5: In der Ähnlichkeit von Dichtungen jedenfalls ebensowenig wie in derjenigen ihrer Worte.

*Certainly not in the similarity between works of literature or in the words they use.*

No more in the similarity of literary texts than in the similarity of their words.

*In the Similarity of Thick-Literature in-any-case/fall just-as-little as in of-those its Words.*

\textsuperscript{375} ‘Equality’ as implying qualitative identity or resemblance.

\textsuperscript{376} “Bedien Fallen”: in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” two falls/events are described in relation to language—the event/fall from the Garden of Eden where translation stopped being pure-mimetic inscription between name and material-essence, and the fall/event of Babel where translation became multiple and fragmented between languages. Thus, this first part of the sentence becomes oddly biblical: even if the Concept in-general and the specific Usage stand unanimous in a momentary nexus, still sufficient definition is denied due to the double fall.

\textsuperscript{377} “Abstammungsbegriff” is translated as “concept of origin” by Rendall and Zohn. But this is not “Ursprung.” Instead of a shared ‘origin’ the implication here might be a shared descent or fall. Though it could in a lesser extreme be more implication of “ancestry”; but “origin” seems off the mark. This is reflected in choices around “Verwandtschaft” as rather “kinship” or “affinity.” My choices may reflect a push into a different lexical and discourse. Yet, thinking through the differences between the original, Zohn/Rendall, and mine, allows a critic of origin, vs. descent. Stable notion of a first cause or unstable denoting of an immanent representing of history/consciousness.

\textsuperscript{378} The answer may be the first sentence of the entire essay, “Nirgends.”
In any case, in the similarity of Dichtungen just-as-little as in that of their words.  

7.6: Vielmehr beruht alle überhistorische Verwandtschaft der Sprachen darin, daß in ihrer jeder als ganzer jeweils eines und zwar dasselbe gemeint ist, das dennoch keiner einzelnen von ihnen, sondern nur der Allheit ihrer einander ergänzenden Intentionen erreichbar ist: die reine Sprache.

Rather, all suprahistorical kinship between languages consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet this one thing is achievable not by any single language but only by the totality of their intentions supplementing one another: the pure language.

All suprahistorical kinship of languages consists rather in the fact that in each of them as a whole, one and the same thing is intended; this cannot be attained by any one of them alone, however, but only by the totality of their mutually complementary intentions: pure language.

Even-more/rather be-based/founded all over-historical Affinities/Kindships of the languages therein, that in theirs each as whole in-each-case one and indeed the-same what-is-meant is, that yet/still none single/solitary of them, but only the Allness/Totality of their one-another supplementary Intentions reachable is: the pure Language.

Rather all suprahistorical affinity of languages therein is to be founded on [the principles], that in them each as a whole, in every case, means one and indeed the-same,

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379 The answer to the above question. Though “ebensowenig” seems to echo the “Gleichheit” semantically. ‘ebenso’ implying a kind of ‘equally.’ If this is more of a positive answer—“as little” vs. Zohn’s “certainly not”—then Benjamin is stating the possibility of illumination of similarity—both the vague-similarity of natural-historical languages to other natural-historical languages and the non-sensical-similarity between languages-of-humans and language-as-such, pure-language. Maybe the implication is an analogous similarity between the two types of similarities—just as various human languages carry vague similarities that both demand and deny translation; the connection between pure-language and languages-of-humans carries a similarity that demands and denies. This seems likely when considering Benjamin’s following staging of intentions.
which yet is reachable by no single one of them, but only the totality of one-and-another’s supplementary intentions: the pure language.

There is a definitional structure to this sentence. “All suprahistorical affinity of languages” means the same, yet this ‘means’ is only reachable through “Totality of Supplementary Intentions.” Pure Language as a Totality of Supplementary Intentions, the All Suprahistorical Affinity of Languages, i.e., “the-same.” Pure-language would have to be a theological/mystical aspect, but also the logical totality of a realm of a priori possibility.

I am reminded of Benjamin’s discussion of the “German Language” from his earlier essay “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man.”

For an excerpt:

the German language, for example, is by no means the expression of everything that we could—theoretically—express through it, but is the direct expression of that which communicates itself in it. This “itself” is a mental entity. It is therefore obvious at once that the mental entity that communicates itself in language is not language itself but something to be distinguished from it. (SW 1,63).

The “German language” represents a specific-historical manifestation of language/consciousness, it is not “that which communicates itself in it” (i.e., language as such). And yet, the “German language” in the sentence must be present in order to represent “that which communicates itself in it.” The italicization and quotation of itself, “itself” highlights the necessary (im)possibility of knowing and of representing, and thus also highlights a double infinity: “language as an infinitely extended field of possible utterances, and language as a mode of designation and intention capable of generating an infinite number of languages” (Caygill 15). It is in the relationship between a specific and “as such,” that the structural possibility of language as such represents itself, as that which communicates itself in a specific language.

There is a double intention at play: “Pure language,” as we will see, is without-intentions; for it is a fully-supplemented to the point of Allheit state; yet such is only ever re-presented as the fragmented peculiar intentions of each language. It is the Task of the translator to re-present and release the possible intentions in a sehnsucht striving for the fully-supplemented intentionless. Thus the “brot” and “pain” example to come in the Task of the Translator or the remarks on Origin from the Epistemo-Critical Prologue.

The being of ideas simply cannot be conceived of as an object of vision, even intellectual vision. For even in its most paradoxical periphrasis, as intellectus archetypus, vision does not enter into die form of existence, which is peculiar to truth, which is devoid of all intention, and certainly does not itself appear as intention. Truth does not enter into relationships, particularly intentional ones. The object of knowledge, determined as it is by the intention inherent in the concept, is not the truth. Truth is an intentionless state of being, made up of ideas. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it. Truth is the death of intention. This, indeed, is just what could be meant by the story of the veiled image of Sais, the unveiling of which was fatal for whomsoever thought thereby to learn the truth. (OTS 35-36)

Truth and pure-language share the same state of intentionlessness; and as such both only enter “intellectual vision” in here-now fragmented manifestations, in specific intentions—be them specific
7.7: Während nämlich alle einzelnen Elemente, die Wörter, Sätze, Zusammenhänge von fremden Sprachen sich ausschließen, ergänzen diese Sprachen sich in ihren Intentionen selbst.

Whereas all individual elements of foreign languages—words, sentences, associations—are mutually exclusive, these languages supplement one another in their intentions.

Whereas all the particular elements of different languages—words, sentences, structures—are mutually exclusive, these languages complement each other in their intentions.

During/Whereas namely all individual Elements, the Words, Sentences, Zusammenhange of foreign Languages themselves exclude/debar, supplement these Languages itself in their Intensions themselves.

While namely all the individual elements, the words, sentences, nexuses from foreign languages exclude each other, these languages themselves supplement each other in their intensions.382

7.8: Dieses Gesetz, eines der grundlegenden der Sprachphilosophie, genau zu fassen, ist in der Intention vom Gemeinten die Art des Meinens zu unterscheiden.

This law is one of the fundamental principles in the philosophy of language, but to understand it precisely we must draw a distinction, in the concept of “intention,” between what-is-meant and the way-of-meaning it.

To gain a precise understanding of this law, one of the most fundamental laws of the philosophy of language, it is necessary to distinguish, within intention, the intended object from the mode of its intention.

languages or concepts. Moreover, intellectual comprehension of pure-language and truth is intentional, while to experience pure-language or truth as-such requires a dangerously immersive experience. Translation and artistic creativeness toe-the-line of this immersion. In the most immersed forms one finds fatality and madness: the “unveiling of” the image of Sais is “fatal,” and the Hölderlin’s late translations which stand as examples of the “urorigin danger” of all translation, “enclosed in silence” or “[the] plung[ing of] the Meaning-Sinn from abyss to abyss, until it threatens in bottomless spokedepth itself to lose.”

Pure-language is not “the one and the same” but rather the means by which said is marked.

382 The individual graphic-material aspects exclude each other (the marks and traces), and yet the languages’ intentions (and thus failures) supplement each other towards the intentionless pure-language. In paragraph ten and eleven this is further exemplified with the idea of “fidelity/True” of translation and a mark-for-mark translation. As letter, as isolated letters/words/sentences difference in intention is denoted, i.e., untranslatability; while each language as a whole supplements the intention of each other—towards the intentionlessness of pure-language. Untranslatability and pure-language become negative and total rhetorical forms of an unnamable the-same.
This Law, one of the underlying/fundamental Language-Philosophy, exactly/precisely to grasp, is in the Intention from-the What-is-meant the Kind/Manner of Thinking/Meant to distinguish/tell-apart/differentiate.

To exactly grasp this law, one of the ground-legends of the philosophy-of-language, is to distinguish in the intention the what-is-meant from the manner-of-meaning.\textsuperscript{383}

7.9: In »Brot« und »pain« ist das Gemeinte zwar dasselbe, die Art, es zu meinen, dagegen nicht.

In the words Brat and pain, what-is-meant is the same, but the way-of-meaning it is not.

In “brot” and “pain” the intended object is the same, but the mode of intention differs.

In “Brot” and “Pain” is the What-is-meant indeed the-same, the Manner, it to mean, against-that not.

In “brot” and “pain” the what-is-meant is indeed the-same, the manner, to mean it, however, is not.\textsuperscript{384}

\textsuperscript{383} Weber in -abilities offers an in-depth distinction and discussion of these terms in Benjamin’s work:

. . . that between ‘the meant’ and ‘the way of meaning.’ Languages, he argues, are identical in what they mean: they all mean the same things, they all have the same ‘Gemeinte.’ What distinguishes them is the way they mean these things, their Art des Meinens. It is the relation of different ways of meaning, tied to the differences between and within languages, that constitutes the true object of the translator. The task of the translator consists, first, in relating the distinctive ways of meaning in different languages to one another, and secondly and correlativey, in bringing out what is ultimately “meant”—signified—by these different but related ways of meaning: namely, “pure language” itself. (71)

Likewise, de Man offers another explanation:

What are the linguistic reasons which allow Benjamin to speak of a suffering, of a disarticulation, of a falling apart of any original work, or of any work to the extent that that work is a work of language? On this Benjamin is very precise and offers us what amounts in very few lines to an inclusive theory of language. The disjunction is first of all between what he calls “das Gemeinte,” what is meant, and the “Art des Meinens,” the way in which language means; between; logos and lexis, if you want—what a certain statement means, and the way in which the statement is meant to mean. (“Conclusions” 86)

As I stated above: “Gemeinte” implies a messianic completely-supplemented-meaning. The “Gemeinte” is felt as a “Sehnsucht,” a longing not for a return, but for a departure towards something indeterminate; as well as a longing that is constantly renewing itself. Hence, the what-is-meant in a rhetorical form for Benjamin’s essay is pure-language. A kind of prosopopoeia of “nowhere” that stands-in rhetorically.

\textsuperscript{384} This is Benjamin’s example between what-is-meant and manner-of-meaning. This is a wildly concrete and misleading example. Let us push this further. What is the “what-is-meant?” Surely not real bread—
7.10: In der Art des Meinens nämlich liegt es, daß beide Worte dem Deutschen und Franzosen je etwas Verschiedenes bedeuten, daß sie für beide nicht vertauschbar sind, ja sich letzten Endes auszuschließen streben; am Gemeinten aber, daß sie, absolut genommen, das Selbe und Identische bedeuten.

This difference in the way-of-meaning permits the word Brat to mean something other to a German than what the word pain means to a Frenchman, so that these words are not interchangeable for them; in fact, they strive to exclude each other. As to what-is-meant, however, the two words signify the very same thing.

It is because of their modes of intention that the two words signify something different to a German or a Frenchman, that they are not regarded as interchangeable, and in fact ultimately seek to exclude one another; however, with respect to their intended object, taken absolutely, they signify one and the same thing.

In the Manner of Meaning namely lies it, that both Words of the German and French yes some Diversity/Variation denotes, that it for both not interchangeable are, in-deed itself latest End exclude/debars strives; in What-is-meant however, that it, absolutely arrested/taken, that Same and Identical denote.

In the manner-of-meaning namely it lies, that both words in the German and French each denote something passing-away, that they [the individual words] for both are not interchangeable, yes, ultimately striving to exclude each-other; but on the what-is-meant, that they, named-absolutely, denote the-same and identical.

7.11: Während dergestalt die Art des Meinens in diesen beiden Wörtern einander widerstrebt, ergänzt sie sich in den beiden Sprachen, denen sie entstammen.

Even though the way-of-meaning in these two words is in such conflict, it supplements itself in each of the two languages from which the words are derived; [. . . ]

that would be saying, the difference between languages is simply the “manner-of-meaning” i.e., different signifiers. And of course, in line with de Man (“Task” 87), the context shifts the “what-is-meant” if understood as a symbolic referent, arbitrary sign contextually value-laden. But if we take Benjamin’s sentence more-literal and unpack it as if a staging, then: “brot” and “pain” are different letters, which when combined signify different referents with different contextual signifieds and yet they are “the-same” in the intentionless aspects, i.e., the untranslatability. If we can imagine/experience the graphic marks as meaningless, as without-intention, then we see they are the-same, in “what-is-meant” i.e., pure-language. Arguably, what Benjamin is demonstrating in this sentence is the tensions of the two intentions: the intention of the individual languages, themselves infinite in contextual difference, and the intentionless pure-language/untranslatability, infinite but hidden by the complex intentions.

Zohn translates to “a German and a Frenchman” this is an interpolation of a human into a sentence about language – not what is meant to a person, but the language meaning themselves.

“Verschiedenes” meaning to pass-away, to differ, to death, to die. Each word marks a deceasing.
Thus, whereas these two words’ modes of intention are in conflict, they complement each other in the two languages from which they stem.

During/whereas to-such-an-extent the Manner of Meaning in these two Words an-other strive-against, supplements/complements it itself in both Languages, to-those it stems-from.

While, as the manner-of-meaning in both these words oppose each other, they extend/supplement each other in both languages, from which they originate.\textsuperscript{387}

7.12: Und zwar ergänzt sich in ihnen die Art des Meinens zum Gemeinten.

[ . . . ] to be more specific, the way-of-meaning in them is supplemented in its relation to what-is-meant.

And indeed, in them the relation between the mode of intention and the intended object is complemented.

And indeed supplements/complete itself in them the Manner of Meaning from the What-is-meant.

And indeed, the manner-of-meaning supplements itself to the what-is-meant.

7.13: Bei den einzelnen, den unergänzten Sprachen nämlich ist ihr Gemeintes niemals in relativer Selbständigkeit anzutreffen, wie bei den einzelnen Wörtern oder Sätzen, sondern vielmehr in stetem Wandel begriffen, bis es aus der Harmonie all jener Arten des Meinens als die reine Sprache herauszutreten vermag.

In the individual, unsupplemented languages, what-is-meant is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather, it is in a constant state of flux—until it is able to emerge as the pure language from the harmony of all the various ways of meaning.

In the individual, uncomplemented languages, the intended object is never encountered in relative independence, for instance in individual words or sentences, but is rather caught up in constant transformation, until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all these modes of intention.

At the single, the un-supplemental Languages name is their What-is-meant never in relative Self-sufficiency encountered, as at the single Words or Sentences, but rather in steady Vicissitude comprehend until it from/out-of the Harmony all that Manner of Meaning as the Pure Language here-out-to-tread able.

\textsuperscript{387} Is the implication that they originate from individual languages, or the meaning originates in the difference of the two manners?
In the individual, namely un-supplemented languages, the what-is-meant is never encountered in relative self-sufficiency, as with the individual words or sentences, but rather [encountered as] engaged in in steady changing, until it [what-is-meant] as the harmony of all those manners-of-meaning emerges-out as the pure-language.

7.14: So lange bleibt es in den Sprachen verborgen.

[Sentence omitted.]

Until then it remains hidden in the various languages.

So long it remains in the Langue hidden.

So long it remains in the languages hidden.

7.15: Wenn aber diese derart bis ans messianische Ende ihrer Geschichte wachsen, so ist es die Übersetzung, welche am ewigen Fortleben der Werke und am unendlichen Aufleben der

388 “anzutreffen”: another encounter word, implying ‘common’ ‘striking’ ‘encounter’—implying the privative encounter.

389 I believe the “anzutreffen” is being restated here indirectly. So, to encounter an individual language is to encounter “stetem Wandel.”

390 “Wandel”: walking, change, retrogression.

391 This supports the reading that the “meaning” is determined in the difference between languages. There are levels of comparison occurring.

1. The “un-supplemented language” i.e., English alone, or German alone, or French alone, i.e., not-in translation. In an individual language the “what-is-meant” is already in a state of flux of shifting contextual relations; until the meaning emerges as “pure-language.” This would imply that “pure language” here is not messianic, except allegorically; “pure language” implies a momentary stability of what-is-meant, through the harmony of “manners-of-meaning,” which here would imply the various contextual possible meanings. In a certain horrific form “pure-language” in such a state might imply a kind of fascistic relationship to a specific translation: like a state sanctioned “correct” translation of a text, at the suppression of other translations. But if the “pure” is more ironic, then it is only implying when a word reaches a kind of momentary stability, like fame it comes and goes.

2. The statement, “If, however these languages continue to grow . . . ,” is implying the possibility of a literary work growing “archaic” or “hackneyed” in its own language. It is only through translation that the literary work is “perpetually renewed life of language” – where words that become dead-metaphors in the original language, are revived in the translation.

392 Does the “it” refer to “pure-language” or what-is-meant, or both? Zohn omits the sentence entirely, fully hiding “it.”

393 The obvious verb of “hidden,” is supplemented/extended by “verborgen” as “to borrow” or “to lend.”

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Sprachen sich entzündet, immer von neuem die Probe auf jenes heilige Wachstum der Sprachen zu machen: wie weit ihr Verborgenes von der Offenbarung entfernt sei, wie gegenwärtig es im Wissen um diese Entfernung werden mag.

If, however, these languages continue to grow in this way until the messianic end of their history, it is translation that catches fire from the eternal life of the works and the perpetually renewed life of language; for it is translation that keeps putting the hallowed growth of languages to the test: How far removed is their hidden meaning from revelation? How close can it be brought by the knowledge of this remoteness?

But if languages grow in this way until they reach the messianic end of their history, then it is translation that is ignited by the eternal continuing life of the work and the endless revival of languages in order to constantly test this sacred growth of languages, to determine how distant what is hidden within them is from revelation, how close it might become with knowledge of this distance.

When/but/if however these/to-such-an-extent up-until-the messianic End of-their History/Geschichte waxes, so is it the Translation, which at-the eternal Continue-living of the Words and at the unending Reviving of the languages themselves ignite/inflame, always over anew the Assay of that hallowed/holy Growth of the Languages to render/make: how far their Hidden of the Revelation remote be, as presently it in the Knowing by this Distance/Excision would be-able.

If however these grow in-such-a-way to the messianic end of their history, so it is the translation, enflamed at the eternal living-on of the works and at the unending continuing-living of the languages, which performs always-all-over-again the trial on that holy growth of the languages: how distant are their hidden from the revelation, how present it may become in the knowledge by this distance.

**Paragraph 8:**

8.1: Damit ist allerdings zugestanden, daß alle Übersetzung nur eine irgendwie vorläufige Art ist, sich mit der Fremdheit der Sprachen auseinanderzusetzen.

This, to be sure, is to admit that all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages.

394 This is once again an a-topos; translation strives for such a location, but it is only theoretical, hence the hypothetical-conditional form of the sentence: if . . . then.

395 “The difference between true (‘high’) reality and empirical (‘low’) reality, between objective and subjective knowledge. Analogies can be found in the opposition between Greek gnōstēs/histor [γνώστης/ἱστώρ] and the opposition between German kennen/wissen” (*Untranslatables* 916).

Syntactically my translation is different from Zohn and Rendall, but they imply the same meaning. Translation is what attempts to bring about the hypothetical messianic end of history, which could be staged as a return to a pre-historic (prelapsarian) state.
To say this is of course to admit that translation is merely a preliminary way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages to each other.

There/here-with is though to-concede, that all Translation only a somehow pre-liminary\textsuperscript{396} mode is, self with the Strangeness the Languages out-a-other-to-set.

However thereby granting, that all translation is only a kind of provisional manner, to confront\textsuperscript{397} the foreignness of languages.

8.2: Eine andere als zeitliche und vorläufige Lösung dieser Fremdheit, eine augenblickliche und endgültige, bleibt den Menschen versagt oder ist jedenfalls unmittelbar nicht anzustreben.

An instant and final rather than a temporary and provisional solution to this foreignness remains out of the reach of mankind; at any rate, it eludes any direct attempt.

A dissolution of this foreignness that would not be temporal and preliminary, but rather instantaneous and final, remains out of human reach, or at least not to be sought directly.

An other as/than temporal and pre-liminary Solution this Strangeness, a blink-of-an-eye-instantaneous and definitive, remains to-the People fails/refuses/deny or is in-any-case immediately not to-strive-for.

Other than a temporal and provisional dis-solution\textsuperscript{398} to this foreignness, a blink-of-the-eye\textsuperscript{399} and final, [one] remains denied/unsayable to/by humans or is at-least not to be pursed im-mediately.\textsuperscript{400}

\textsuperscript{396} “Vorläufige”: vor-läufige. Literally something like a pre/post-burning. All translation (and the acts of) are as-if the pre/post-burning of the husk.

\textsuperscript{397} “Auseinanderzusetzen”: to deal with, to confront, to grasp. Aus ein ander zusetzen: “with an other to set.”

\textsuperscript{398} “Lösung”: Zohn choses “solution” while Rendall opts for “dissolution”; This opposing ambiguity is presented throughout the sentence— Lösung, versagt, unmittelbar. For those favoring invisibility of the foreign it is a solution, for those favoring a visibility it is a dissolution. Solution implying a homogenous mixture; dissolution implying an emacation. Two views of the same event.

\textsuperscript{399} This alludes to later concepts like, Jetztzeit, which in Benjamin’s vocabulary refers to the messianic effectiveness of an “at-present” in history; a “blink of an eye” instant, moment; A moment ripe with radical possibility—be it for revolutionary change and/or an encounter of bedeuten. The last section of this dissertation, on “La traduction—pour et contre,” will examine this connection.

\textsuperscript{400} “If Benjamin insists not simply that ‘impartibility’ is what constitutes language, but that it constitutes it ‘immediately’ (unmittelbar), it is in order to highlight the decisive relationship between two German words that sound and look almost identical although they mean very different things: between Mitteilbare (impartable) and Unmittelbar (immediate[ly]). The difference is decisive because unmittelbar means not
8.3: Mittelbar aber ist es das Wachstum der Religionen, welches in den Sprachen den verhüllten Samen einer höhern reift.

Indirectly, however, the growth of religions ripens the hidden seed into a higher development of language.

Indirectly, however, the growth of religions ripens into a higher language the seed hidden in languages.

Indirectly but is it the Growth of the Religions, which in the Languages veiled/draped Seeds one higher ripens.

But, mediately\(^{401}\) it is the growth of religions, which in the languages ripens the sheathed\(^{402}\) seed of one higher\(^{403}\).

8.4: Übersetzung also, wiewohl sie auf Dauer ihrer Gebilde nicht Anspruch erheben kann und hierin unähnlich der Kunst, verleugnet nicht ihre Richtung auf ein letztes, endgültiges und entscheidendes Stadium aller Sprachfügung.

Although translation, unlike art, cannot claim permanence for its products, its goal is undeniably a final, conclusive, decisive stage of all linguistic creation.

Thus translation, although it cannot claim that its products will endure, and in this respect differs from art, does not renounce its striving toward a final, ultimate, and decisive stage of all linguistic development.

Translation thus, although they in/on Duration their Formations/Structures not Claim raise/charge can and herein dissimilar the Art, repudiates not their Direction/Route/Way

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just ‘immediate[ly]’ but also, more literally, without means or instrumentality. Language, in short, is to be understood not as a ‘means to some other goal, but as the immediate possibility of being imparted: ‘This impartable is language itself.’” (Weber 117; the brackets are Weber’s, the italicization is my emphasis). Besides a Messianic revelation (blink-of-the-eye and final), an un-mediated encounter with the foreign, the non-instrumental, is prohibited or at least not yet available.

\(^{401}\) “Mittelbar” in tension with the previous sentences “unmittelbar”; thus, if unmediated is yet impossibly then mediated is our only manner.

\(^{402}\) “Verhüllten”: hidden is not quite right. It is more as if it is dressed up as other, cloaked—hence it is experience in a Mittelbar form. This is lost in Zohn and Rendall’s translation. Verhüllten foreshadows the image of the royal robe in this paragraph of the essay.

\(^{403}\) This “growth of religions” which ripens, I argue, speaks to an allegorical presentational manner. In a Mittelbar form is like religious texts where one does not mistake the rhetorical or poetic form of God for God-itself. This foreshadows why Benjamin holds up interlinear scripture as a good form of translation; forms of text where the Darstellung never lets one forget interpretation is occurring.
to/on one last, definitive and decisive Stage all Linguistic-
Coincidence/Aleatory/Construction.

So, translation, although it can lay no claim towards the duration of its structures and
herein is dissimilar from art, does not repudiate its right-of-way\textsuperscript{404} to the last, definitive
and decisive stage of all linguisticfadge.\textsuperscript{405}

8.5: In ihr wächst das Original in einen gleichsam höheren und reineren Luftkreis der Sprache
hinauf, in welchem es freilich nicht auf die Dauer zu leben vermag, wie es ihn auch bei weitem
nicht in allen Teilen seiner Gestalt erreicht, auf den es aber dennoch in einer wunderbar
eindringlichen Weise wenigstens hindeutet als auf den vorbestimmten, versagten Versöhnungs-
und Erfüllungsbereich der Sprachen.

In translation the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were. It cannot
live there permanently, to be sure; neither can it reach that level in every aspect of the
work. Yet in a singularly impressive manner, it at least points the way to this region: the
predestined, hitherto inaccessible realm of reconciliation and fulfillment of languages.

In translation the original grows into a linguistic sphere that is both higher and purer. It
cannot, however, go on living indefinitely in this sphere, since it is far from attaining it in
all parts of its form; but it nevertheless at least points, with wonderful penetration, toward
the predetermined, inaccessible domain where languages are reconciled and fulfilled.

In it/her grows/waxes the Original into one likewise higher and purer Air/Breath-Sphere
of Language upward, in which it admittedly not in Duration to live able-be, as it its such
by far not in all Dividings its Shape reached, on the it but nevertheless in one wonderful
insistent/intruding Manner/Way leastways points/alludes than/as on the predetermined,
failed/refused/denied/withheld Reconciliation- and Fulfillment-Realm/Area of
Languages.

In it [translation] the original waxes upwards into an as-it-were\textsuperscript{406} higher and purer
aerosphere, in which of course it is incapable to live for the duration, as it does not reach
there in all parts of its whole-shape; but even so, in a wonderful insistent manner it

\textsuperscript{404} “Richten”: to regulate, to direct, to judge. In noun form implying a direction, but also a right—like “its
Right-of-Way” and a “restriction.” Correlate this with “richtete” in 8.8—as “righted” implying to make a
path and judgment, as well as a divine-chance tinge.

\textsuperscript{405} “Sprachfügung”: Fügen: to-fit-together, to connect, to unite suitably, and also “fügung” as in a sense of
divine fate/chance. This is implying not just a linguistic-creation, but one that is something like ‘pure-
language’ in being a stage where all language is connected-suitably, i.e., all language is translated into
each other and vice versa. This higher, decisive staging strived for is a linguistic-construction and also a
chance happening. Translation strives towards such a nearly impossible, i.e., only possible by accident, by
an aleatory language event/thing/process or by Messianic revelation. Linguistic-coincidence might be a
better translation. The messianic chance co-incidence of original/translation.

\textsuperscript{406} “Gleichsam”: as-it-were, quasi, as-if. This is implying an “as-if” ideal image of things, an a-topos.
[translation] at-least points towards the predetermined, (always-already)-failed domain of Reconciliation- and Fulfillment of Languages.\(^{407}\)

8.6: Den erreicht es nicht mit Stumpf und Stiel, aber in ihm steht dasjenige, was an einer Übersetzung mehr ist als Mitteilung.

The original cannot enter there in its entirety, but what does appear in this region is that element in a translation which goes beyond transmittal of subject matter.

The original does not attain this domain in every respect, but in it lies that which, in a translation, is more than a message.

The reached it not with Stump and Stem, but in it stands the one, which to/by a Translation more is as a Mitteilung.

It is not reached with stump and stem, but in that which stands the-one, what in a translation is more than impartation.

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\(^{407}\) “Versagten”: preterite verb form, indicating an action at a determined moment in the past. Once again implying “failed,” but also “already failed-to-say” as an event in the past. The event of always-already failing-to-say. Present in 8.2 as well.

\(^{408}\) This is once again an a-topos, like “nowhere” “God’s Commemoration” and “Sprachfügung.”

\(^{409}\) Ambiguous implications. Does “es” imply the original, as Zohn and Rendall translate, or the higher-linguistic-sphere? Moreover, does “stump and stem” imply the entirety of the original, or is it implying a route [Richtung] by which translation is occurring? Is it that the original cannot enter this realm in its entirety, or that the realm cannot be reached through a method of “stump and stem?” The ambiguity can be marked in juxtaposing Zohn and Rendall’s translations—Zohn relates the missing second pronoun to the Higher- “region,” while Rendall relates the missing pronoun to the “original.” The ambiguity performs the always already failed either way.

\(^{410}\) The sentence form here implies that that which “steht” is more than “mitteilung.” And this is what can be in the “aerosphere” of “Sprachfügung.” “That which Stands” = “the elemental kernel” = “untranslatability” – the negative potentiality of what refuses and demands translation. Mark that this “what stands” is not named in the sentence except in a relational way to what it is more than, to what it exceeds—that which exceeds impartation, marked in ambiguity of the “es.”

What stands in a “root and branch” translation? What exceeds the impartation of a radical change? What stands in the midst of Benjamin’s sentence? Benjamin’s ambiguity in this sentence coincided with the literary-cliché nature of “Stumpf und Stiel” stages a vertiginous suspension. It is (at least seemingly) the only-means available to the translator to reach said “domain of Reconciliation- and Fulfillment of Languages” and yet it is that which refuses to be imparted through “stump and stem” that alludes to said domain. Such a phrase seems to stand and point as a Kernel of something essential that cannot be translated. Throughout the essay aspects “steht” as Kernels: the “—,” the untranslatable examples of Mallarmé and Pannwitz.
8.7: Genauer läßt sich dieser wesenhafte Kern als dasjenige bestimmen, was an ihr selbst nicht wiederum übersetzbar ist.

This nucleus is best defined as that element in the translation which does not lend itself to a further translation.

This essential kernel can be more precisely defined as what is not retranslatable in a translation.

More-precisely let itself this essential Kernel as the one determined/defined, what in itself not in-turn translatable is.

This elemental kernel can let itself be precisely defined as that which itself in-turn cannot be translated.\(^4\)

8.8: Mag man nämlich an Mitteilung aus ihr entnehmen, soviel man kann und dies übersetzen, so bleibt dennoch dasjenige unberührbar zurück, worauf die Arbeit des wahren Übersetzers sich richtete.

Though one may glean as much of that subject matter as one can from a translation, and translate that, the element with which the efforts of the real translation were concerned remains at a quite inaccessible remove, . . .

One can extract from a translation as much communicable content as one wishes, and this much can be translated; but the element toward which the genuine translator’s efforts are directed remains out of reach.

One namely from Mitteilung it to-take, so-much one can and this translate, so remains/stays still the-one untouchable backwards, whereupon the Work of the real/true Translator itself righted/aimed/judged.

\(^4\) One conception of the difference between translatability and untranslatability from Berman:

Just as translatability expresses a particular meaning inherent in the text—both its claim to universality and an essential lack which the act of translation is supposed to fill—untranslatability also expresses a particular meaning, a meaning that one might define as the text’s drive to particularity (uniqueness) and then assertion of its fullness (or self-sufficiency). \((Age\ 79)\)

That a translation manifests this “Kernel” would seem to be a near chance occurrence, such a Kernel points towards the Realm of Linguistic Reconciliation and Fulfillment. Thinking of “Stump and Stem” one could recognize the fragmentary and untranslatable nature of such.
One may namely extract as much impartation as one can and translate that, so yet remains behind that untouchable,\textsuperscript{412} whereupon the labor\textsuperscript{413} of the true translator itself is righted.

8.9: Es ist nicht übertragbar wie das Dichterwort des Originals, weil das Verhältnis des Gehalts zur Sprache völlig verschieden ist in Original und Übersetzung.

. . . because the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation.

It is not translatable, like the literary language of the original, because the relation between content and language in the original is entirely different from that in the translation.

It is not transferable like the ThickerWord of the Original, because the Ratio/Relation of the Content/Substance to the Language completely differing is in the Original and Translation.

It is not transferable\textsuperscript{414} like the Dichtung-word\textsuperscript{415} of the original,\textsuperscript{416} because the relationship of the urcontent\textsuperscript{417} to the language is fully different in the original and translation.

\textsuperscript{412} The untranslatable, the “unsinnliche Ähnlichkeiten,” these are untouchable; one can only touch the mediated Mittelbar (de)form. This echoes with the later image of the translating “touching” the original in only one point, at 11.6.

\textsuperscript{413} “Nonetheless, the German Arbeit points toward an entirely different area of meaning, related to the Greek orphans [ὀϱϕανός], the Latin orbus (deprived of), the German Erbe (inheritance), as well as Armut (poverty). To be an orphan is to be a child subject to harsh physical activity in order to provide for one’s own needs.” Untranslatable 1264). Labor has the aspect of pain and difficulty, the poverty and orphan status.

\textsuperscript{414} “Tragbar”: portable, wearable; setzung: set in place, to cause to sit. Rendell translate this “übertragbar” as translation. Zohn omits it all together. The difference is moving towards the Wörtlichkeit as a transferal of syntax.

\textsuperscript{415} The German “Dichtung,” as discussed in earlier paragraphs, carries a weight of density that is lost in the English and French. At the core of the word is a complex inter-nexus between fiction and reality, language, and consciousness.

\textsuperscript{416} The implication is that the “untouchables” is transferable in the original density? The “wie” is ambiguous. Does it mean that it is not transferable similar to or dissimilar to?

The Dichterwort has the ability to be/become übertragbar, while Translation is only ever Übersetzung.

\textsuperscript{417} “Gehalts”: there is a tension in translating this as “content” or even “substance” — for Benjamin seems to be referencing the Kernel of untranslatability. Moreover, in paragraph 2, and other essays, Benjamin uses “inhalt” to imply “content” in any “message” sense. Gehalt is not content in any binary sense of form/content. Just as the peel and the fruit deny a clear binary. This is implied in “Gehalts” connotation as
8.10: Bilden nämlich diese im ersten eine gewisse Einheit wie Frucht und Schale, so umgibt die Sprache der Übersetzung ihren Gehalt wie ein Königsmantel in weiten Falten.

Whereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds.

In the original, content and language constitute a certain unity, like that between a fruit and its skin, whereas a translation surrounds its content as if with the broad folds of a royal mantle.

Formed namely these in first a certain Unity as Fruit and Peel/Shell/Bowl, so encloses/surrounds the Language of the Translation their Content as a Royal-Mantle in widening enfoldings.

Forming, namely in the first a certain unity like fruit and peel, as the language of the translation envelopes its content, such as a King’s Cloak in widening folds.\footnote{A complex sentence, what is being referred to with “in the first”? The Dichterwort of the original or the relationship [Verhältnis] of the content [Gehalts] to the Language? The image might represent an immanent relationship between original and translation. Language and urcontent/substance [Gehaltes] are seemingly less far away from being in an image of natural unity in the original, a peel and fruit being two pieces of the same object; while in translation the distance is now between language and original; the urcontent/substance is now seen with a possibly more allegorical vision; the royal robe can only stand in an elective affinity with the body of the monarch; such an image is historical not natural.}

8.11: Denn sie bedeutet eine höhere Sprache als sie ist und bleibt dadurch ihrem eigenen Gehalt gegenüber unangemessen, gewaltig und fremd.

For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien.

For translation indicates a higher language than its own, and thereby remains inappropriate, violent, and alien with respect to its content.

For it indicates a higher Language than it is and remains thereby to their own Content opposite/vis-a-vis inadequate, violently, and strange/foreign.

For it [translation] denotes a higher language than its own, and thereby remains towards its own content inadequate, violent, and foreign.

8.12: Diese Gebrochenheit verhindert jede Übertragung, wie sie sie zugleich erübrigt.

“container” as well as “content.” The prefix “Ge-” throughout the “Task” essay points to the (im)possible realms of coincidence, pure-language, un-translatability, etc. Hence, “Gehalt” implies the inner-content, the truth Kernel, which is staged in/as/through the outer-content. Like an entangled peel-fruit, an over-ripe banana.
This disjunction prevents translation and at the same time makes it superfluous.

This fracture hinders any further translation, and at the same time renders it superfluous.

This Brokenness hinders/prohibits every Transmission, as/like it they for-alike/same-time becomes redundant.

This brokenness hinders any transfer, as it at the same time makes it redundant.


For any translation of a work originating in a specific stage of linguistic history represents, in regard to a specific aspect of its content, translation into all other languages.

For every translation of a work at a specific point in the history of language represents, with respect to a specific aspect of its content, translation into all other languages.

For every Translation of a Work of a set Time-point of the Language-story/history represents in-regrading a set Page/Concept its Content those in all left-over/remaining Languages.

For every translation of a work from a determined point-in-time of the language-history represents, regarding a determined side of its content, those in all left-over languages.419

8.14: Übersetzung verpflanzt also das Original in einen wenigstens insofern—ironisch—endgültigeren Sprachbereich, als es aus diesem durch keinerlei Übertragung mehr zu versetzen ist, sondern in ihn nur immer von neuem und an andern Teilen erhoben zu werden vermag.

Thus, ironically, translation transplants the original into a more definitive linguistic realm, since it can no longer be displaced by a secondary rendering. The original can only be raised there anew and at other points of time.

Thus, translation transplants the original into an—ironically—more ultimate linguistic domain, since it cannot be displaced from it by any further translation, but only raised into it anew and in other parts.

Translation transplants/grafts that-is the Original into an at-least in-so-far – ironically – more-definitive/ultimate Linguistic-Sphere, when/since it from this through/by no-whatsoever Transmission more to transfer/transpose is, but in it only always [already]again and an other Share/Division raised will become able.

419 Both Zohn and Rendall translate übrigen as “other,” but the meaning and implication is closer to “excess” or the “surplus” that remains.
Thus, translation transplants the original into at least inasmuch—ironically—a more-definitive language-area, as from this no more whatsoever is displaced by any transfer, but only-always can be raised into it anew and in other parts.

8.15: Nicht umsonst mag hier das Wort ›ironisch‹ an Gedankengänge der Romantiker erinnern.

It is no mere coincidence that the word “ironic” here brings the Romantics to mind.

It is not for nothing that the word “ironically” reminds us here of Romantic modes of thought.

Not for-nothing that here the Word “ironic” of Thought-Passage of the Romantics recalls.

Not for-nothing that here the word “ironic” recalls the thought-processes of the romantics.

In “Affirmative Strike” Werner Hamacher in a foot note on Benjamin’s “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” essay, offers a reading of the “monstrous” law of “irony.” For the tree of knowledge stands in the paradise of language “as an emblem of judgment over the questioner. This monstrous (ungeheure) irony marks the mythical origin of the law.” The law which forces the empty question of good and evil at the same time disallows this question; it is not only an ambiguous law, but the law of ambiguity itself, and thus the law (Gesetz) of the “monstrous irony” of language as such, in that it allows for speaking only by giving it over to “chatter” (Geschwätz) in that it permits no cognition that is not erroneous, and in that it turns all posittings into parodies of the unposited. But the tree of knowledge, this ambiguous sign of a colossal irony, though it is mentioned late in Genesis, stands as the possibility of parody in the paradise of language from the beginning, and there “awaits” the fatal question which turns pure imparting into an imparting of something. (1156-1157, fn46)

Likewise, it is only after the fall from a prelapsarian state where transferal becomes a stammering translation of all language, that the Original ironically is raised anew in translation, arguably due to its knowingly fragmented state. Hence, it is translation self-consciousness as a form that gives it this ironic ability to potentially raise anew the original. Berman describes Benjamin’s “intention of irony [as] to lighten our load – the load of meaning, to the benefit of something more elevated than mere play, to the benefit of the supreme liberty of language” (Age 207).

Zohn reads this as “other points of time,” Rendall as “other parts.” Zohn also introduces “the original” to cover for the various uses of “it”. Time is not mentioned in the sentence, but it could refer back. Logically it is an easy way to think about it. The “raised into it anew” could refer to the more definitive language domain. Which is a kind of virtual space, an allegorical space, where original and translation become characters of a more abstract situation and event.

“Erinnern”: “innern” implies a bringing into, something like “calls to mind.”

Once again romantic irony, as in the previous sentence, implying a self-consciousness of the text that thus attempts to overcome its own transcendental limitations through a disruption the invisibility of its
8.16: Diese haben vor andern Einsicht in das Leben der Werke besessen, von welchem die Übersetzung eine höchste Bezeugung ist.

They, more than any others, were gifted with an insight into the life of literary works—an insight for which translation provides the highest testimony.

The Romantics, more than any others, gained insight into the life of works of art, to which translation bears the highest witness.

These have before another Insight in the Life of the Works possessed/obsessed\(^\text{424}\), of which the Translation a highest Attestation is.

They possessed, before others, insight in the life of the works, from which the translation is a highest attestation\(^\text{425}\).

8.17: Freilich haben sie diese als solche kaum erkannt, vielmehr ihre ganze Aufmerksamkeit der Kritik zugewendet, die ebenfalls ein wenn auch geringeres Moment im Fortleben der Werke darstellt.

To be sure, they hardly recognized translation in this sense, but devoted their entire attention to criticism—another, if lesser, factor in the continued life of literary works.

The Romantics, of course, hardly recognized the significance of translation, turning their attention instead entirely toward criticism, which also represents a genuine, though narrower, element in the work’s continuing life.

Of-course/admittingly to-have it these as such barely/sarcely recognize/see, much-more their whole/entire Attentiveness of Criticism turns-towards/devote/turn, that to a if also lowest/smallest Moment in the Fortleben of the Work represents/displays/presents/performs.

Of-course they have hardly recognized them as-such, rather their whole attention\(^\text{426}\) was devoted to criticism, which itself also constitutes, even if lower, moment/momentum in the living-on of the works.

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composition or distance from the original in this case. As Benjamin will go on to say, this took the form of criticism in the romantics largely, such as Goethe’s \textit{Wilhelm Meister}; where criticism and fiction becomes inseparable, as the novel performs its own critique; this is also an important point for Benjamin’s Darstellung.

\(^{424}\) “Besessen”: could be an obsession or possession. This implies the texts “demand” and “prohibition” to be translated. A slippery passive-active place for the translator.

\(^{425}\) “Bezeugung”: attestation. The role of bearing witness, as a staging, i.e., Darstellung.

\(^{426}\) “Aufmerksamkeit”: ability-to-mark-ness
8.18: Doch wenn auch ihre Theorie auf Übersetzung kaum sich richten mochte, so ging doch ihr großes Übersetzungs werk selbst mit einem Gefühl von dem Wesen und der Würde dieser Form zusammen.

But even though the Romantics virtually ignored translation in their theoretical writings, their own great translations testify to their sense of the essential nature and the dignity of this literary mode.

But even if their theory was not much inclined to focus on translation, their great translation work itself was accompanied by a sense of the essence and dignity of this mode.

But if also their Theory of Translation scarcely/barely itself judge/points/sets/directs would-like, so went/goes but its great Translation-Work self with a Feeling of the Essence and the Dignity/Worth of the Form to-sameness.

But even if their theories were hardly directed towards translation, even so their great translation-work itself go-together with a feeling of the essence and dignity of this form. 428

8.19: Dieses Gefühl—darauf deutet alles hin—braucht nicht notwendig im Dichter am stärksten zu sein; ja es hat in ihm als Dichter vielleicht am wenigsten Raum.

There is abundant evidence that this sense is not necessarily most pronounced in a poet; in fact, he may be least open to it.

This feeling—everything points to this—need not be at its strongest in the poet; it may in fact play the smallest role in him qua poet.

This Feeling/Sentiment—thereafter points all to/brokenly—needs not necessarily in the Poet/Literary be-the strongest/thickest to be; yes, it has in him/it as Dichter maybe/possibly at the least Room.

427 To mark the Romantics use of term: “The literary absolute of the Romantics and of Hölderlin makes Gefühl the source of all poiêsis, all invention, and in the end all culture. Greek poetry, founded on the simplicity and purity of an originating Gefühl, becomes the mind’s holy site, against which the Hegelian dialectic eventually leads its antiparticularist crusade in the name of Vernünftigkeit—rationality.” (Untranslatables 359). Benjamin is returning to Gefühl, specifically Sehnsucht, but this is held in tension with a rigorous self-critical form, ironic form of interlinear translation with commentary.

428 Note that both Zohn and Rendall translate “Form” as “mode.” Even after correcting it in paragraph three, both revert back to shifting it in following paragraphs. This covers over Benjamin’s shifted meaning of the term, effectively veiling the rhetorical performance, and text-contained meaning.
This feeling – thereon points everything⁴²⁹ – need not necessarily be at the strongest in
the poet;⁴³⁰ yes, it has in him, as poet, perhaps the littlest room.

8.20: Nicht einmal die Geschichte legt das konventionelle Vorurteil nahe, demzufolge die
die bedeutenden Übersetzer Dichter und unbedeutende Dichter geringe Übersetzer wäre.

Not even literary history suggests the. traditional notion that great poets have been
eminent translators and lesser poets have been indifferent translators.

History certainly does not suggest that major translators are poets and minor poets are
mediocre translators, as is generally believed.

Not once the (hi)story lays the conventional prejudice near, accordingly the notable
[bedeutenden] Translator Poet/Literary and un-notable Poets/Literary low/small/trivial
Translator would be.

Firstly, not even history places the conventional prejudice⁴³¹ near, [i.e., that]
accordingly,⁴³² the notable translators are poets, and insignificant poets are lesser
translators.

8.21: Eine Reihe der größeren wie Luther, Voß, Schlegel sind als Übersetzer ungleich
bedeutender denn als Dichter, andere unter den größten, wie Hölderlin und George, nach dem
ganzen Umfang ihres Schaffens unter den Begriff des Dichters allein nicht zu fassen. Zumal
nicht als Übersetzer.

A number of the most eminent ones, such as Luther, Voss, and Schlegel, are
incomparably more important as translators than as creative writers; some of the great
among them, such as Hölderlin and Stefan George, cannot be simply subsumed as poets,
and quite particularly not if we consider them as translators.

Many of the greatest, such as Luther, Voss, and Schlegel, are incomparably more
important as translators than as poets, and others, such as Hölderlin and George, cannot
be adequately described solely as poets when the whole range of their work—and
especially their translations—is taken into account.

A Rank/Row/Row/Row/Row/Row/Series of bigger [ones] like/as Luther, Voss, Schlegel are as Translators un-
equal/dissimilar notable than as Poets/ Literaries, other under the greater, like Hölderlin

⁴²⁹ “Darauf deutet alles hin”: the breaking of hinteuten into “deutet . . . hin,” as a pointing. The manner in
which in translating I must unbreak the fissure, and that points to dieses Gefühl—Sehnsucht.

⁴³⁰ “Dichter” could be left untranslated to maintain my use of Dichtung, but in the context it is referring to
the poetic criticism of the romantics.

⁴³¹ “Vorurteil”: pre-judgement.

⁴³² Odd sentence structure. The “consequently” referring back to the Gefühl and Romantics as translators
that ‘captured’ said Gefühl, possibly in their “ironic” presentations.
and George, after/according-to the whole/full Range/Scope of their Creations/Shapings under the Concept of the Poet/Literary all not to-fasten/understand/grasp/touch. Particularly not as Translators.

A number of the greater ones like Luther, Voß, Schlegel are as translators are unequally more significant than as poets, others among the greatest, like Hölderlin und George, in-accordance with the whole scope of their creative-works cannot be contained under the concept of poets alone. Especially not as translators.

8.22: Wie nämlich die Übersetzung eine eigene Form ist, so läßt sich auch die Aufgabe des Übersetzers als eine eigene fassen und genau von der des Dichters unterscheiden.

Just as translation is a form of its own, so, too, may the task of the translator be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet.

Just as translation is a distinctive mode, the translator’s task may also be conceived as distinctive and clearly differentiated from the poet’s.

As namely the Translation an own Form is, so let itself also the Task of the Translator as its/a own grasp/touch/understand and exactly from that of the Poet/Literary distinguish/differentiate.

Namely, as the translation is a peculiar form, so too, let the task of the translator be grasped as a peculiar [task], and precisely distinguished from that of the poets.

**Paragraph 9:**

9.1: Sie besteht darin, diejenige Intention auf die Sprache, in die übersetzt wird, zu finden, von der aus in ihr das Echo des Originals erweckt wird.

The task of the translator consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original.

The translator’s task consists in this: to find the intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original can be awakened in it.

It insists/consists/exists/persists therein, that-one Intention in/to the Language, into the to-translate would/shall, to find, from the out in her the Echo of the Original awakened/aroused is/shall-be.

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433 Note Rendall’s choice of “mode.”

434 The parallel structure between “eine eigene Form” and “eine eigene [Task].” In addition, “peculiar” marks a uniqueness and individuality that is untouchable. Translation’s peculiarity is in its ironic presentation, and Wörtlichkeit of syntax.
Therein it [the task of the translator] exists, in finding the intention within the language, into which it is translated, from which the echo of the original awakens in it.


This is a feature of translation that basically differentiates it from the poet’s work, because the intention of the latter is never directed toward the language as such, at its totality, but is aimed solely and immediately at specific linguistic contextual aspects.

Here we encounter a characteristic of translation that decisively distinguishes it from the poetic work, because the latter’s intention never is directed toward language as such, in its totality, but solely and immediately toward certain linguistic structurings of content.

Herein lies a thorough distinguishing trait of translation, because its intention never goes to language-as-such, its totality, but solely unmediately towards certain linguistic nexus of content.

9.3: Die Übersetzung aber sieht sich nicht wie die Dichtung gleichsam im innern Bergwald der Sprache selbst, sondern außerhalb desselben, ihm gegenüber und ohne ihn zu betreten ruft sie das Original hinein, an demjenigen einzigen Orte hinein, wo jeweils das Echo in der eigenen den Widerhall eines Werkes der fremden Sprache zu geben vermag.

Unlike a work of literature, translation finds itself not in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one.

However, unlike a literary work, a translation does not find itself, so to speak, in middle of the high forest of the language itself; instead, from outside it, facing it, and without entering it, the translation calls to the original within, at that one point where the echo in its own language can produce a reverberation of the foreign language’s work.

The Translation but seems itself not as the ThickLiterary as-it-were in the inner MountainForest of Language itself, but-rather outside/beyond of the-same, him/it

\(^{435}\) “Zug”: trait, but with more of a moving event connotation, rather than a stable trait.

\(^{436}\) Translation is concerned with a “certain linguistic substance” i.e., the original, not ‘pure language,’ as arguably poetry is. And yet, ironically it is translation that attempts to bring the original into higher sphere.
opposites and without it/him to-enter calls-out they the Original in, on that-one single Place/Locus in, where in-each the Echo in the peculiar/own the Contra-Echo/Call a work of the foreign Language to give be-able.

The translation however sees itself, not like the Dichtung as-if-it-were within the mountain-forest of language itself, but outside the-same, opposite it and without entering it, it calls in-to the original, in-to at that unique point, where at-a-time the echo of one’s own is able to give the reverberations of a work in/as the foreign language.

9.4: Ihre Intention geht nicht allein auf etwas anderes als die der Dichtung, nämlich auf eine Sprache im ganzen von einem einzelnen Kunstwerk in einer fremden aus, sondern sie ist auch selbst eine andere: die des Dichters ist naive, erste, anschauliche, die des Übersetzers abgeleitete, letzte, ideenhafte Intention.

Not only does the intention of a translation address or differ from that of a literary work-namely a language as a whole, taking an individual work in an alien language as a point

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437 “außerhalb desselben”: Beyond the-same!

438 “Ruft”, from “rufen” meaning “to call out, to cry” “from the equivalent Middle High German ruofen, Old High German ruofan” (Kluge 291). Kluge connects this to “ruchtbar” through a similar etymology. Thus, this “calling-out” can be thought of as the moment of “notoriety” or Ruhm. All three connected back around “ruoft.” Thus, there is a complex relationship between this “calling out” and the “Fame” a text reaches.

439 “hinein”: the ‘hin-’ marks a movement. The italicize on both is my own, trying to imply the “movement.” Something like -ining. “hinein” is used when referring to movement away from the speaker’s location, and that herein is used when referring to movement toward the speaker’s location.

440 “Demjenigen”: used when further explication of pronoun is forth coming here.

441 Nägele in Echoes of Translation offers a reading of the echoing:

Benjamin’s syntax itself produces at this point the density of a mountain forest. What is called and what resonates poses some problems to the reading and translation of this passage, specifically at that unique place where, according to Benjamin, the echo is produced and where Benjamin enacts it in the echo of a double hinein . . . hinein, which, if one listens with an open ear for the phonetic resonances, can be heard not only as “into” but also as hin-ein (gone the one), or hi-nein (here no). (33)

This echo is present even further in the passage: darin . . . hierin . . . allein . . . innern . . . hinein . . . “ With “in” implying “inside” “into” “at” “by,” while the suffixes and prefixes, move from “dar” (there) “hier” (here) “alle” (all/everywhere) “-ern” (iterative implications, of “made-from”).

No one mentions the “gleichsam” implying something like quasi, and the “jeweils” which implies a historical dimension to this: when the work has reached the now-time of its Fortleben.
of departure—but it is also qualitatively different altogether. The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, manifest; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational.

Its intention is not only directed toward an object entirely different from that of the poetic work, namely toward a language as a whole, starting out from a single work of art, but is also different in itself: the poet’s intention is spontaneous, primary, concrete, whereas the translator’s is derivative, final, ideal.

Its Intention goes not only on something other than that of the Literary/Poetry, namely on a Language in-the whole of one individual Artwork in a foreign out-from, but/rather They/It is also itself an other: that of the Poet is naïve, first, vivid/graphic, that of the Translator derivative, latest, idea-liable Intention.

Its intention goes-(forth) on not only something other than that of the Dichtung, namely to a language as a whole from a single artwork in a foreign one[language], but [the intention] is also itself different: the intention of the poets is spontaneous, primary, intuitive, that of the translator is derived, latest, ideational.

9.5: Denn das große Motiv einer Integration der vielen Sprachen zur einen wahren erfüllt seine Arbeit.

For the great motif of integrating many tongues into one true language informs his work.

For the great motive of integrating the plurality of languages into a single true language is here carrying out its work.

For the great Motive an Integration of many Languages into one truly fulfilled his/its Work/Labor.

For the great motive of integrating the many languages into one true language fulfills the translator’s work.

9.6: Dies ist aber jene, in welcher zwar die einzelnen Sätze, Dichtungen, Urteile sich nie verständigen—wie sie denn auch auf Übersetzung angewiesen bleiben—, in welcher jedoch die Sprachen selbst miteinander, ergänzt und versöhnt in der Art ihres Meinens, übereinkommen.

This language is that in which the independent sentences, works of literature, and critical judgments will never communicate—for they remain dependent on translation; but in it the languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their way-of-meaning, draw together.

442 Implication of not finality, but continual-relevance and hence relativity.

443 “Like-ideas.” Of most importance here is that it is the translator, the derived that gestures to pure language, not an intuitive first act of creation. The “intuitive” is perceived of with a mythic originality, while the derivative is open to its secondary state.
In this integration individual propositions, poetic structures, and judgments never arrive at agreement (since they remain dependent on translation); it is rather the languages themselves that agree, complemented and reconciled with each other in their mode of intention.

This is but those/one, in which indeed the individual Sentences/Movements, Thickings/Poetries, Verdicts/Judgements can/could never notify/inform/communicate/understand—like them than/for also/too Translation reliant remain—, in which however the Languages themselves with-one-another/with-an-other, filled/supplemented and reconciled in the Way their Means/Opines/Utters, to over/above-one/a-come/reach/get/arrive/occur / to-agree444.

But this is the one [language], in which indeed the individual sentences, Dichtungen, judgments will never come-to-an-understanding—for they remain reliant on the translation—, in which however the languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their manner-of-meaning agree-with-each other.

9.6: Wenn anders es aber eine Sprache der Wahrheit gibt, in welcher die letzten Geheimnisse, um die alles Denken sich müht, spannungslos und selbst schweigend aufbewahrt sind, so ist diese Sprache der Wahrheit—die wahre Sprache.

If there is such a thing as a language of truth, a tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate secrets for which all thought strives, then this language of truth is—the true language.

If there is nevertheless a language of truth, in which the ultimate secrets toward which all thinking strives are stored up, at peace and even silent, then this language of truth is—“the true language.”

If another/different it but a Language of the Verity gives, in which the latest/final Secret, by the all Thinking toils445, tension-less and itself silently kept/preserved are, so is this Language of the Verity—the vérité Language.

If, in-another-way, however a language of truth exists, in which the latest secrets, which all thinking strive for, are kept tensionless and even in-silence, so is this language of the truth—the true language.446

9.7: Und eben diese, in deren Ahnung und Beschreibung die einzige Vollkommenheit liegt, welche der Philosoph sich erhoffen kann, sie ist intensiv in den Übersetzungen verborgen.

444 “Übereinkommen”: to come-together in a beyond sense.

445 “Müht from mühen”: “sich müht” to toil.

And this very language, in whose divination and description lies the only perfection for which a philosopher can hope, is concealed in concentrated fashion in translations.

And in fact, this language, in the anticipation and description of which lies the only perfection philosophy can hope to achieve, is concealed intensively in translations.

And exactly/just this-one, in whose/their Hunch/Inkling/Idea and Description of the single Fullcomness/Completeness/Thoroughness lies, which the Philosopher himself hopes-for can, it is intensive/deeply in the Translation hidden/veiled/concealed.

And just this [true language], in whose conjecture and description lies the single full-arrival, which the philosopher itself can hope for, is intensively concealed in the translation.

9.8: Es gibt keine Muse der Philosophie, es gibt auch keine Muse der Übersetzung.

There is no muse of philosophy, nor is there one of translation.

There is no muse of philosophy, and there is also no muse of translation.

There is no Muse of Philosophy, there is also no Muse of Translation.

There is no muse of philosophy, there is also no muse of translation.

9.9: Banausisch aber, wie sentimentale Artisten sie wissen wollen, sind sie nicht.

But despite the claims of sentimental artists, these two are not philistine.

They are not, however, philistine, as sentimental artistic folk would like to think.

Banausicaly/mechanically/mundanely however, like sentimental Artis they think/know want, are they not.

Banausic however, as sentimental artist wants to know them, they are not.

9.10: Denn es gibt ein philosophisches Ingenium, dessen eigenstes die Sehnsucht nach jener Sprache ist, welche in der Übersetzung sich bekundet.

For there is a philosophical genius that is characterized by a yearning for that language which manifests itself in translations.

For there is a philosophical genius, whose essential characteristic is the longing for the language that is announced in translation.

For/because there-is a philosophical Ingenuity, whose/their ownest/most-own the Sehnsucht according to that Language is, which in the Translation itself evinces/shows/testifies/expresses.
For there is a philosophical ingenium, whose most-uniqueness is the Sehnsucht for that language, which proclaim itself in the translation.

9.11: »Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême: penser étant écrire sans accessoires, ni chuchotement mais tacite encore l’immortelle parole, la diversité, sur terre, des idiomes empêche personne de proférer les mots qui, sinon se trouveraient, par une frappe unique, elle-même matériellement la vérité.«

(footnoted) “The imperfection of languages consists in their plurality; the supreme language is lacking: thinking is writing without accessories or even whispering, the immortal word still remains silent; the diversity of idioms on earth prevents anyone from uttering the words which otherwise, at a single stroke, would materialize as truth.”—Trans.

Left untranslated by Rendall.

The Language imperfect in that plurality, lacking the supreme: thinking being writing without accessories, nor whispering but tacit encore the immortal parole, the diversity, on earth, the idioms impede person/nobody to uttering/proffering the words which, otherwise would-find-themselves, by a strike unique, itself materially the verity.

[Should stand untranslated/untranslatable]

447 “Sehnsucht”: Zohn and Rendall opt for “longing” and “yearning” respectfully. In Gandillac, Blanchot and Berman’s French translation opts for “nostalgie.” The sense of a feeling and vague aspect of “Sehnsucht” are present in “nostalgia”; the difference is directional. “Nostalgia” is a desire for a return, which in some rhetorical presentations used by Benjamin is present—the prelapsarian garden being one; and yet, Benjamin “messianic end of history” “would seem to point to a future event; and yet, Benjamin’s use of “sphere of pure language” “nowhere” “God’s Commemoration,” and emphasis on a blink-of-an-eye encounter (stand-still) is seemingly non-temporal or uber-temporal, a-topos. Likewise, with “Sehnsucht” “the idea associated with it is primarily that of a departure” (Untranslatables 938). As such, “Sehnsucht” shares an affinity with “Mittlebare” as “Impartation.” Thus, Sehnsucht is untranslatable, implying a yearning nostalgia directed towards the future; a pain that is caused by an absence and manifests as a feeling and/or impulse; a desire to overcome this lack. In romanticism this takes the form of a yearning for the absolute, which perpetually begins-again (Untranslatables 938-940). It is not farfetched to say that Benjamin’s Darstellung is an enactment of Sehnsucht.

448 “Bekundet”: “note,” bear witness,” “announce,” and “tell” are all present in “kund”

449 In the position of indefinite pronoun “personne” could be thought of in slang as dropping the negation and thus “nobody.”

450 Benjamin left Mallarmé’s words standing untranslated in French in the original. Benjamin wrote in a 1936 dialogue: “Grenze der Übersetzung in der Prosa – Beispiele” [“Limit of translation in prose—examples”]. Examples are marked as a limit of translation in prose due to the distortion of translation. The Pannwitz’ example is the easiest to illustrate this point—we will look at it below. But the Mallarmé is equally interesting: on the level of content the affinity with Benjamin’s argument is clear. Due to a
9.12: Wenn, was in diesen Worten Mallarmé gedenkt, dem Philosophen streng ermeßbar ist, so steht mit ihren Keimen solcher Sprache die Übersetzung mitten zwischen Dichtung und der Lehre.

If what Mallarmé evokes here is fully fathomable to a philosopher, translation, with its rudiments of such a language, is midway between poetry and theory.

If what Mallarmé conceives in these words is rigorously applied to the philosopher, then translation, with its seeds of such a language, stands half-way between poetry and doctrine.

If what in these Words Mallarmé commemorate, to-the Philosopher strict to-be-measurable [ermeßbar] is. so, stands with their Seeds/Germs as-such Language the Translation midway between Poetry/Literary and the Teaching/Doctrine.

If, what in these words Mallarmé commemorates, is strictly (fully)measurable to the philosopher, so stands translation, with its sproutings of such-language, midway between Dichtung and Lehre.

plurality of language, the supreme is lacking causing a difficulty, and yet as Clive Scott reads in Benjamin:

Benjamin proposes that the ST [source text] and the TT [translated text] are conjoined in a mutual enterprise of self-transcendence, an enterprise who origins lie not in the ST itself, but in a pre-verbal source where, to use Mallarmé’s words, the “immortelle parole’ [immortal word] is “tacite encore” [still tacit], a tacit word ((TW)) that all languages seek to actualize. As in the Mallaremean sequence, a silence of pure, thoughtful latency begets a poem which tries to rebeget, to communicate, that founding silence which is “l’immortelle parole” or (TW). (Baudelaire 76).

This summarizable and paraphrasable aspect of the “example” is one side of the border [Grenze], what in the next sentence Benjamin associates with the “Lehre” aspect of translation; and yet, on the other side, beyond, is the Dichtung feel of Mallarmé’s in the French. The particular aural poetic qualities and rhythm unique to this arrangement of words in French; and a purposefully Dichtung Zusammenhangen like syntax, with clause, after clause, set together with commas. The Dichtung quality is a kind of morphing rhetorical play and the encounter with the limit of the meaning of the words—the reader experiences the continual impartation, going, halting, and always-already failed, in that the Sehnsucht feeling of trying to reach the “immortelle parole.” I would argue in the Zohn’s footnoted translation this quality is lost through a grammatization of the language. In Zohn’s defense the translation is footnoted, which seems a great example of how to allow an example to stand untranslated and still paraphrase; though, I would prefer a literal translation alongside the footnoted.

451 “Steht”: Another standing this one untranslated. The French stands in the midst of the German, untranslated since Benjamin put it there. Like the rock.

452 The emphasis on the root—Keim—being the action/perception of budding, an in-motion seeding; this disrupts a “Seed” in any sense as a stable “Origin.” Interestingly, tracing the root the emphasis is always after-the-event, not a stable “seed” but rather the offspring:
9.13: Ihr Werk steht an Ausprägung diesen nach, doch es prägt sich nicht weniger tief ein in die Geschichte.

Its work is less sharply defined than either of these, but it leaves no less of a mark on history.

Translation’s work is less prominent than doctrine’s, but it puts its mark on history no less deeply.

Its Work stands at/on/by Markedness/Imprintedness these by/after, but it imprints itself not less deep/low one in the History/Story.

Its [translations] work stands in markedness\textsuperscript{453} after these, nevertheless it mints-itself not any less deep on history.

Paragraph 10:

10.1: Erscheint die Aufgabe des Übersetzers in solchem Licht, so drohen die Wege ihrer Lösung sich um so undurchdringlicher zu verfinstern.

If the task of the translator is viewed in this light, the roads toward a solution seem to be all the more obscure and impenetrable.

If the translator’s task is regarded in this light, then the paths to its fulfillment threaten to become all the more impenetrably dark.

\textsuperscript{453} “Ausprägung”: aus-prägung. From-coinage/imprinting.
Appears the Task of the Translator in such-a Light, so threatened the Ways of-their Solution so all more-impenetrable to eclipse/darken.

As the task of the translator appears in such light, the ways to its resolution itself are threatened all the more by impenetrable darkening.

10.2: Ja, diese Aufgabe: in der Übersetzung den Samen reiner Sprache zur Reife zu bringen, scheint niemals lösbar, in keiner Lösung bestimmbär.

Indeed, the problem of ripening the seed of pure language in a translation seems to be insoluble, determinable in no solution.

Indeed, this task—that of bringing the seeds of pure speech to ripeness in translation—seems impossible to accomplish, determinable in no realization.

Yes/indeed, this task: in the Translation the Seeds of pure Language to Ripeness to bring, seems never solvable/soluble, in no Solution determinable.

Yes, this task: through the translation to bring the seeds of pure language to ripeness, appears never solvable, in no resolution determinable.

10.3: Denn wird einer solchen nicht der Boden entzogen, wenn die Wiedergabe des Sinnes aufhört, maßgebend zu sein?

For is not the ground cut from under such a solution if the reproduction of the sense ceases to be decisive?

And isn’t the ground cut out from under any such realization if the reproduction of meaning is no longer the criterion?

For/because will one such not the Soil/Floor/Bottom/Ground revoked/withdrawn, if/when the Reproduction/Rendering/Playback of-the Senses/Sense ceases/stops, decisive/authoritative/measure-giving to be?

For as such, shall not the bottom be withdrawn, if the giving-again of the sense ceases, to be measureative?

10.4: Und nichts anderes ist ja—negativ gewendet—die Meinung alles Vorstehenden.

Viewed negatively, this is actually the meaning of all the foregoing.

Viewed negatively, that is precisely the import of all the foregoing.

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454 Connection to echoing as wieder-gaben. Again-give. Echo of Widerhall.
And nothing other is yes/indeed—negative turned—the Meaning of-all the Before Standing.  

And really nothing other is – negatively turned – the meaning of all the preceding.

10.5: Treue und Freiheit—Freiheit der sinngemäßen Wiedergabe und in ihrem Dienst Treue gegen das Wort—sind die althergebrachten Begriffe in jeder Diskussion von Übersetzungen.

The traditional concepts in any discussion of translation are fidelity and license-the freedom to give a faithful reproduction of the sense and, in its service, fidelity to the word.

Fidelity and freedom—the freedom of rendering in accord with the meaning, and in its service, fidelity in opposition to the word—these are the old, traditional concepts in every discussion of translation.

Fidelity/Loyalty/Trueful and Freehood—Freehood of the sense-affinities/sense-corresponding-to Reproduction/Rendering/Playback and in their Service/Duty/Work Fidelity/True against/opposition-to[or]/towards the Word—are the old-fashioned Concepts/Terms in every Discussion of Translation.

455 “Vorstehenden”: “stehen.” The preceding standings – those aspects that have Stood in the midst of historical on-going translation as Kernels.

456 “Meinung”: implies meaning and opinion, it is a cognate with “Meinung” implying “thought,” “disposition” and “view” (Kluge 233). There is an ironic pun occurring here, Benjamin is implying that translation that mythically perceives itself as a restitution of meaning, is really a rendering of opinion. In opposition is a reflection on translation, which serves not as a theory of restitution but rather a reflection on pure-language as marked not by restitution but by the materiality of the letter, not meaning.
Trueth and freehood – freehood of the analogous-to-the-sense reproduction and in its service fidelity towards/against the word – are the old-traditional concepts in any discussion on translations.

10.6: Einer Theorie, die anderes in der Übersetzung sucht als Sinnwiedergabe, scheinen sie nicht mehr dienen zu können.

These ideas seem to be no longer serviceable to a theory that strives to find, in a translation, something other than reproduction of meaning.

They no longer seem useful for a theory that seeks in translation something other than the reproduction of meaning.

A Theory, the other in the Translation seeks/desires as Sense-Rendering/Rendering-of-Meaning/Reproduction-of-Meaning, seems it no more serves can/able-to.

To a theory, seeking in translation the other than rendering-of-meaning, they [above concepts] seem no more of service.

10.7: Zwar sieht ihre herkömmliche Verwendung diese Begriffe stets in einem unauflöslichen Zwiespalt.

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457 “Treue” correlates to allegiance, loyalty, fidelity, etc. But it should be noted, as a term signifying a mode of translation that follows the letter closely, at the expense of clear meaning, in translating it into English as “fidelity” “Treue” loses its own closeness to the letter. That is both Zohn and Rendall sacrifice the fidelity/Treue to the letter in the choice to translate “Treue” as “Fidelity.” In a weaker sense than other examples, “Treue” stands-out/in- the movement of the re-translations. For me, this places the two concepts and intentions in a tense suspension—The intention towards meaning or sense-for-sense aligns with “Freiheit” and the intension towards the letter or word-for-word aligns with “Treue.” I have attempted to enact a Trueth translation, through the abuse of the English language—making up new spellings. However, I also rely on Zohn and Rendall’s freehood in the interlinear re-translation, attempting the impossible—to be Treue and Freiheit through re-translation.

Such “Treue” is discussed in the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” in the often cited: “Truth, actualized in the round dance of presented ideas, eludes any kind of projection into the realm of knowledge” (trans. Eiland, Trauerspiel 4). Like Treue translation a presentation is the means by which a Truth is revealed/experienced, and this is at odds with the sensical brought about through domestication, grammatization, aligned with “Freehood” from the letter.

458 “Freiheit”: ‘freedom’ would be the obvious. “Freehood” is meant to be Treue to the German, and in doing so to estrange the meaning.

459 This is ambiguous, in a manner that has inverse meanings. Rendall and Zohn stand in tension—Zohn “to the word” while Rendell “opposition to the word.”

460 Sucht as a fragmented echo of sehnsüchtig, as the sucht, obsessive seeking.
To be sure, traditional usage makes these terms appear as if in constant conflict with each other.

Indeed, used in the conventional way, they are perpetually caught up in an irresolvable conflict.

Indeed/Although see their conventional Use these Concepts/Terms always in on indissoluble/insoluble dissention/Two-fissure.

Indeed, there conventional usage always sees these concepts in an unresolvable division.461

10.8: Denn was kann gerade die Treue für die Wiedergabe des Sinnes eigentlich leisten?

What can fidelity really do for the rendering of meaning?
What precisely can fidelity actually contribute to the reproduction of meaning?
Because/for what can just/straight the True/Fidelity for the Rendering/Reproduction of the Sense/Meaning actually perform/afford?

For what can exactly the fidelity for the giving-again of the sense actually achieve?


Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the sense they have in the original.

Fidelity in translating the individual word can almost never fully render the meaning it has in the original.

True/Fidelity in the Translation of a single Word can nearly never the Sense fully render/reproduce the it in Original has.

461 “Uaunlöslichen”: correlating with solution.
462 “Zwiespalt”: two-split. More than Rendall’s “conflict” a double fissure is implied.
Fidelity in the translation to the individual words can nearly never fully give-again the sense, it has in the original.

10.10: Denn dieser erschöpft sich nach seiner dichterischen Bedeutung fürs Original nicht in dem Gemeinten, sondern gewinnt diese gerade dadurch, wie das Gemeinte an die Art des Meinens in dem bestimmten Worte gebunden ist.

For this sense, in its poetic significance for the original, is not limited to what-is-meant but rather wins such significance to the degree that what-is-meant is bound to the way-of-meaning of the individual word.

For this meaning is fully realized in accord with its poetic significance for the original work not in the intended object, but rather precisely in the way the intended object is bound up with the mode of intention in a particular word.

For/because this exhausted/spent itself according-to its/Thick-Literary Denoting for Original not in the What-is-meant, but/rather wins this just/straight thereby, how/like the What-is-meant to the Art/Manner of Meaning in the certain/determined Words bounded is.

For this [the sense in the original], according-to its dichterischen denoting for the original, is not exhausted in the what-is-meant, but gains this exactly thereby, as the what-is-meant is bound to the way-of-meaning of the particular words.

10.11: Man pflegt dies in der Formel auszudrücken, daß die Worte einen Gefühlston mit sich führen.

People commonly convey this when they say that words have emotional connotations.

It is customary to express this by saying that words carry emotional connotations.

One habitually/cares/looks-after this in the Formula/Wording expressed, that the Words a FeelingTone with themself leads/holds/conducts/wields.

People habitually express this in the formula, that the words conduct an emotional-tone within themselves.

10.12: Gar die Wörtlichkeit hinsichtlich der Syntax wirft jede Sinneswiedergabe vollends über den Haufen und droht geradenwegs ins Unverständliche zu führen.

A distinction to note: Sinn is what is produced by Freehood from letter translations. Gemeinten is denoted with fidelity to the letter.

For if the translator focuses on the letter (i.e., not free), restitution of meaning is threatened. If the translator has nothing to do with the letter, this is Freehood. What is lost? The materiality of the letter is hidden in freehood. Hölderlin’s translation becomes an example of the fidelity to the letter.
A literal rendering of the syntax casts the reproduction of meaning entirely to the winds and threatens to lead directly to incomprehensibility.

In reality, with regard to syntax, word-for-word translation completely rejects the reproduction of meaning and threatens to lead directly to incomprehensibility.

At-all/Really the Word-for-Wordness/Literaliness regarding the Syntax throws/gives-birth/projects/casts any SenseRendering completely over the Heap and threatens straightway/straight-direction in the Ununderstandable/Incomprehensible/Unintelligible to lead/run.

Even the Wörtlichkeit⁴⁶⁵ regarding the syntax throws any rendering-of-sense fully over the heap and threatens to lead-straight in the ununderstandable.


The nineteenth century considered Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles monstrous examples of such literal-ness.

For the nineteenth century, Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles represented a monstrous example of this kind of literalness.

In-the nineteenth century stood⁴⁶⁶ Hölderlin’s Sophocles-Translations as monstrous Examples such Literaliness before Eyes.

To the nineteenth century Hölderlin’s Sophocles-translations stood before their eyes as monstrous examples of such Wörtlichkeit.

10.14: Wie sehr endlich Treue in der Wiedergabe der Form die des Sinnes erschwert, versteht sich von selbst.

Finally, it is self-evident how greatly fidelity in reproducing the form impedes the rendering of the sense.

Finally, it is self-evident that fidelity in rendering form makes rendering meaning more difficult.

To-what-extent/how much finite/at-last True/Fidelity in the Rendering/Reproduction of the Form that of the Senses/Meaning complicated, understands by itself [self-evident].

⁴⁶⁵ Weber translates as “word-for-word,” others as “Literal.” I have opted in this translation to let it stand untranslated—to allow it to present as is and means.

⁴⁶⁶ “Standen”: once again it stands as presentation of the untranslatable quality, however in Hölderlin this is “before the eyes” in a translatable form, a monstrous form but still translatable.
How much finally fidelity in the rendering of the form fully-hinders\textsuperscript{467} that [i.e., the rendering] of the meaning, is self-evident [understands/says/hears itself by itself].

10.15: Demgemäß ist die Forderung der Wörtlichkeit unableitbar aus dem Interesse der Erhaltung des Sinnes.

Thus, no case for literalness can be based on an interest in retaining the meaning.

Hence the demand for literalness cannot be deduced from the interest in maintaining meaning.

Accordingly/Matchingly-to is the Demand/Call of Literalityness undeducible/underivable/uninferable out/from the Interests of the Preservation/Conservation/Halting of the Senses/meaning.

Accordingly, to the demanding of the Wörtlichkeit is un-derivable from to that interest in the conservation of sense.

10.16: Dieser dient weit mehr—freilich der Dichtung und Sprache weit weniger—die zuchtlose Freiheit schlechter Übersetzer.

The preservation of meaning is served far better-and literature and language far worse-by the unrestrained license of bad translators.

The latter serves the undisciplined license of bad translators far more than it serves poetry and language.

This serves far more—certainly the Thick-Literary/Poetry and Language far less—the disorderly/undisciplined/unruly Freehood/Liberty worse Translators.

This serves much more—of course the Dichtung and language far less—the undisciplined\textsuperscript{468} freehood of bad translators.\textsuperscript{469}

10.17: Notwendigerweise muß also jene Forderung, deren Recht auf der Hand, deren Grund sehr verborgen liegt, aus triftigeren Zusammenhängen verstanden werden.

\textsuperscript{467} “Er-” implying completely to the point of conclusion, hence, “makes impossible” is closer than “makes difficult”

\textsuperscript{468} “Zucht”: (root) breeding, education, discipline. Root of “to draw” “to pull” “to lead.” Maybe translation “lead” or “drawn” by sense.

\textsuperscript{469} Bad by virtue of their pretensions, in contrast with the good translator who submits to the task. “Freehood” from “fidelity” to the letter. Freehood from the Letter’s tasking. Freehood is dedication to the restitution of meaning.
Of necessity, therefore, the demand for literalness, whose justification is obvious but whose basis is deeply hidden, must be understood in a more cogent context.

Therefore, this demand, whose justice is obvious and whose ground is deeply concealed, must necessarily be understood on the basis of more pertinent relationships.

Of-Necessity must so those Demand/Claim/Call, their Right on the Hand, their Ground/Reason very hidden lies, from more-cogent/convincing/compelling Zusammenhangen/Interrelationships understood be.

Hence, necessarily must that demand, whose right at hand, whose ground lies very hidden, be understood from more-compelling nexuses.

10.18: Wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen.

Fragments of a vessel that are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s way-of-meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel.

Just as fragments of a vessel, in order to be fitted together, must correspond to each other in the tiniest details but need not resemble each other, so translation, instead of making itself resemble the meaning of the original, must lovingly, and in detail, fashion in its own language a counterpart to the original’s mode of intention, in order to make both of them recognizable as fragments of a vessel, as fragments of a greater language.

How namely Shards of-a Vessel/Jar/Container to-around together-put allow/lets, in the smallest Particulars one-another to follow/succeed, but not so to equal/resemble have-to-be, so must, instead-of the Senses/meaning of the Original itself alike/similar to make, the Translation loving rather and down to-the Individuals inside whose Manner/Art of Meaning in the own Languages itself to-grow-up/to-cultivate/to-form, for so both like Shards as-a/of-a BrokePiece/BrokeShard a Vessel/Container/Jar, as BrokePiece/Fragment a greater Language recognizable/visible to-make.
Namely, as shards of a vase, to let itself be-fit-together, to follow one-another in the tiniest details, but not so to have resemble, so must, instead of rendering alike the sense of the original itself, the translation lovingly rather and to the last detail acquire-forms, its manner-of-meaning into its own language, so-as both like shards as fragments of a vase, are made recognizable as fragments of a greater language.


For this very reason translation must in large measure refrain from wanting to communicate something, from rendering the sense, and in this the original is important to it only insofar as it has already relieved the translator and his translation of the effort of assembling and expressing what is to be conveyed.

For that very reason translation must in large measure turn its attention away from trying to communicate something, away from meaning; the original is essential to translation only insofar as it has already relieved the translator and his work of the burden and organization of what is communicated.

Just therefore must it of/from the Intention/Intent, something with-to-share, of-the Sense/meaning to very high Mass foresee/refrain/disregard and the Original is their in

471 The “Gefäßes” implies “unified,” or “vat,” “cask,” “jar.” Aurally it is close to “vase.”

472 “Gleichen”: “to resemble,” “to be alike.” “Ähnlich” is similar to “a-like” and yet carries a poetic implication, as-if “anti-like.” A-like implying similar and dissimilar.

473 Implication of “bis ins Einzelne hinein” is like “down to the last detail.” Such a detail may imply a monadic quality, or a base graphic quality.

474 Implying “to acquire,” but also “forming.” Hence a kind of two-way active-passive process. The translation acquires its form in the act of forming its own language in an insufficient affinity with the original.

475 Languages fitting together can only occur as fragmentation, through Wörtlichkeit. Instead of a mixture of two language into a mythical homogenous solution, Benjamin is viewing this as them completing aspects of each other—attempting to Gefäßes. Benjamin sentence presents as an example alike to Mallarmé’s—the various fragmented clauses running-on, through ambiguous “its” and fitting together in a shifting presentation of Trueth. Zohn grammatizes through his translation going so far as to split the original into multiple sentences; both Zohn and Rendall eliminate the confusion of the multiple “its” and fill in the possible referent.

476 “Absehen”: ambiguously implying “to foresee” and “to disregard”
this only insofar essentially, as/than it the Toil and Order of-the With-to-shared-be\textsuperscript{477} the translator and his Work already to-relieved has.

Therefore, precisely must it disregard/foresee the intention, to-impart something, of sense to a vast extent, and the original is essential to it only insofar, as it has already released/relieved the translator and their work from the toil and ordering\textsuperscript{478} of the imparted.

10.20: Auch im Bereiche der Übersetzung gilt: en archê ên ho logos, im Anfang war das Wort.

In the realm of translation, too, the words En archei en ho logos [“In the beginning was the word”] apply.

En arche hen ho logos, in the beginning was the word: this is also valid in the realm of translation.

Also in-the Areas/Reach of Translation pertains: en archê ên ho logos, in-the Start/Beginning was the Word.

Also, in the realm of translation applies: en archê ên ho logos, im Anfang\textsuperscript{479} war\textsuperscript{480} das Wort [, in the beginning was the word].\textsuperscript{481}

10.21: Dagegen kann, ja muß dem Sinn gegenüber ihre Sprache sich gehen lassen, um nicht dessen intentio als Wiedergabe, sondern als Harmonie, als Ergänzung zur Sprache, in der diese sich mitteilt, ihre eigene Art der intentio ertönen zu lassen.

On the other hand, as regards the meaning, the language of a translation can-in fact, must-let itself go, so that it gives voice to the intentio of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of intentio.

\textsuperscript{477} “Mitzuteilenden”: with-to-shared-one.

\textsuperscript{478} Implying something like “trouble” and “regulation” or “discipline.” To be released from the ordering, the grammatization, of the imparted of the original. Released from domesticating senseful translation of content at the expense of form.

\textsuperscript{479} “Anfang”: anfangen. An- (up/on) -fang (catch/capture/improve/do-well/calm-down/slapped, embrace/hold/grasp). On-hold. Up-Embracing. Just as “archê” implies more than a temporal/spatial, “beginning” implies an organizational impetus—Anfang hints at more than an origin in a conventional sense, and towards a shifting “center” conception of origin.

\textsuperscript{480} “War”: past tense. as-if indicating, at the start of everything language was already past-tense, The-Word predates Anfang.

\textsuperscript{481} Creating a three-language translation, not translating the German, but adding the English, these three now touch point to point. They \textit{stand} together as an interlinear translation.
On the other hand, the translation’s language can, indeed must free itself from bondage to meaning, in order to allow its own mode of intentio to resound, not as the intentio to reproduce, but rather as harmony, as a complement to its language in which language communicates itself.

Against-that can, indeed/yes must the Sense opposite/across-from their Language itself go let, in-order not whose/its intentio as Rendition/Reproduction, but/although as Harmony, as Supplement to-the Language, in the this itself imparts, their own Art/Manner of the intentio to-ring-out to-allow.

However [language] can, yes must, let itself go vis-a-vis the sense, in-order to let ring-out its own manner of intentio, not as a rendering of sense’s intentio, but as harmony, as supplement to the language, in which it imparts itself.482

10.22: Es ist daher, vor allem im Zeitalter ihrer Entstehung, das höchste Lob einer Übersetzung nicht, sich wie ein Original ihrer Sprache zu lesen.

Therefore, it is not the highest praise of a translation, particularly in the age of its origin, to say that it reads as if it had originally been written in that language.

Hence reading a translation as if it were an original work in the translation’s own language is not the highest form of praise, especially in the age when the translation is produced.

It is therefore, before all in-the Age/Era their Emergence, the highest Praise/Extol/Fame483 a Translation not, itself as an Original their Language to read.

It is hence, particularly in the time of its emerging, not the highest praise for a translation, to be read itself as-if the original were in its language.

10.23: Vielmehr ist eben das die Bedeutung der Treue, welche durch Wörtlichkeit verbürgt wird, daß die große Sehnsucht nach Sprachergänzung aus dem Werke spreche.

Rather, the significance of fidelity as ensured by literalness is that the work reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation.

On the contrary, the meaning of the fidelity ensured by literal translation is that the great longing for the completion of language is expressed by the work.

Rather is just that the Denotation of the True/Fidelity, which through Literalityness vouched-for shall-be, that the great Sehnsucht towards LanguageSupplemented from/out-to -that Works speaks.

482 There is a divide between the intention of sense (restitution of meaning) and the intention of language, or the intention of Treue syntactic translation.

483 “Lob”: implies fame, Ruhm. The fame of a translation should not be based on readability.
Rather it is precisely the denoting of fidelity, which shall be authenticated/guaranteed through Wörtlichkeit, that the great Sehnsucht after completely-supplemented-languages speaks out of the work [text].

10.24: Die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend, sie verdeckt nicht das Original, steht ihm nicht im Licht, sondern läßt die reine Sprache, wie verstärkt durch ihr eigenes Medium, nur um so voller aufs Original fallen.

A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully.

True translation is transparent, it does not obscure the original, does not stand in its light, but rather allows pure language, as if strengthened by its own medium, to shine even more fully on the original.

The real/true Translation is translucent, it conceals not the Original, stands it not in the light, but lets the pure Language, as penetrated/reinforced/amplified through their own Medium, only so full of the Original falls.

The real translation is translucent, it does not conceal the original, stands it not in the light, but lets the pure-language, as though amplified through its peculiar/own medium, fall all the more fully onto the original.

10.25: Das vermag vor allem Wörtlichkeit in der Übertragung der Syntax und gerade sie erweist das Wort, nicht den Satz als das Urelement des Übersetzers.

This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator.

This is made possible above all by conveying the syntax word-for-word, and this demonstrates that the word, not the sentence, is the original element of translation.

The power/ability of-all Literalness in the Translation of the Syntax and just its proves/shows/accords the Word, not the Sentence as the Urelement of the Translator.

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484 The translated language is present in the mode of longing for, and Darstellung a-topos, i.e., at a distance. The text is left in the mountain-forest, only the echo comes out. Leading to a contradictory task of translation: draw minutely close, thus marking and replacing anew an infinite distance to the original.

485 "durchscheinend" has been translated by Zohn and Rendall as “transparent,” implying a clarity and lack of obstruction. Berman in critiquing Gandillac’s French translation marks a similar issue, for “durchscheinend” implies something like “through-shining” but not transparent—closer to “translucent,” allowing light through but not shape (Age 181). Chantal Wright, in reference to Berman’s commentary, describes Benjamin’s idea of “translucent” as “like washi, the paper that is used for room dividers in traditional Japanese houses” (Age 181). This is apropos, for “translucent” implies that the medium is present as medium; the “translation” denotes its form.
Above all, this requires Wörtlichkeit in the transposition of the syntax and this precisely proves the word, not the sentence as the urelement of the translator.

10.26: Denn der Satz ist die Mauer vor der Sprache des Originals, Wörtlichkeit die Arkade.

For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade.

Paragraph 11:

11.1: Wenn Treue und Freiheit der Übersetzung seit jeher als widerstrebende Tendenzen betrachtet wurden, so scheint auch diese tiefere Deutung der einen beide nicht zu versöhnen, sondern im Gegenteil alles Recht der andern abzusprechen.

Fidelity and freedom in translation have traditionally been regarded as conflicting tendencies. This deeper interpretation of the one apparently does not serve to reconcile the two; in fact, it seems to deny the other all justification.

While fidelity and freedom in translation have long been seen as conflicting tendencies, it also seems that this deeper interpretation of one of them does not reconcile the two, but on the contrary denies the other any justification.

When True/Fidelity and Freehood/Liberty of the Translation since always as against-strive Tendencies regarded/considered were, so seems also these deeper

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486 Taking the last two sentences together: being Treue to the syntax allows translation to achieve a Übertragung, a transposition, of an element of pure-language. This “syntax” is not that of “the Satz” i.e., a grammatical logic, but rather a syntax involving the words, hanging-together [Zusammenhängen]. The word-for-word [Wörtlichkeit] fidelity to syntax. Thus: “For the sentence [Satz] is the wall before the language of the original, Wörtlichkeit is the arcade [Wörtlichkeit die Arkade].”

Benjamin cannot be referring to syntax as in the grammar of the sentence—i.e., subject, verb, object—which places a wall before the original. The implications of this wall being a blocking of the original—this must be a Wiley Coyote tunnel painted on the cliff type wall making the translation invisible and perceived of as-if the original. But rather this Übertragung of syntax is at the expense of a restitution of Sinn. Just as the “word” [Wörtlichkeit] denotes the materiality of the letter, the “syntax” denotes the materiality of the relationality [Zusammenhängen] of the letter(s). The graphic mark and the iterability in a transformative speculative-historical re-shuffling.
Interpretation/Thicker the one both not to reconcile, rather in-the
Contract/Opposite/Converse all Right the other to-arrange/agree-upon/to-deny/to-dispute.

If fidelity and freehood of translation since always as striving-against\(^{487}\) tendencies have
been regarded, so seems even this deeper denoting of the one does not reconcile the both,
but just-the-opposite arranges/disputes\(^{488}\) all rights of the otheren.

11.2: Denn worauf bezieht Freiheit sich, wenn nicht auf die Wiedergabe des Sinnes, die aufhören
soll, gesetzgebend zu heißen?

For what does freedom refer to, if not to the reproduction of the sense, which must
thereby give up its lawgiving role?

For what can the point of freedom be, if not the reproduction of meaning, which is no
longer to be regarded as normative?

Because whereupon refers-to/covers Freehood, when not on the Rendition/Reproduction
of the Senses/Meaning, the ceasing should, LawGiving/Legislative to be-called/named?

For whereupon does freehood refer/relate, if not to- the giving-again of the sense, that
should stop-hearing,\(^{489}\) to be called law-giving?

11.3: Allein wenn der Sinn eines Sprachgebildes identisch gesetzt werden darf mit dem seiner
Mitteilung, so bleibt ihm ganz nah und doch unendlich fern, unter ihm verborgen oder deutlicher,
durch ihn gebrochen oder machtvoller über alle Mitteilung hinaus ein Letztes, Entscheidendes.

Only if the sense of a linguistic creation may be equated with that of the information it
conveys does some ultimate, decisive element remain beyond all communication—quite
close and yet infinitely remote, concealed or distinguishable, fragmented or powerful.

Only if it can be posited that the meaning of a linguistic construction is identical with the
meaning of its communication, does something ultimate and decisive remain beyond any
message, very near it and yet infinitely distant, hidden under it or clearer, broken by it or
more powerful.

Alone if the Sense/ Meaning of-a LinguisticStructure identical set will-be may with the its
Mitteilung, so remains their/its all close and yet infinitely far, under it hidden or more-
clear, through/by it broken/crushed or powerfully beyond all Impartation out one Latest,
Crucial/Decisive.

\(^{487}\) “Widerstrebende”: going against the grain.

\(^{488}\) “Abzusprechen”: “off to speak” – implies both arranges, and thus denies, or denies through arranging.
Thus, a word standing in contraction. Meaning both to agree and dispute, to arrange and deny.

\(^{489}\) “Aufhören”: the ceasing is in relation to hearing. Off-hearing. Thus, a cessation of the Sprachen.
Only if the sense of a language-structure were allowed to-set identical with that which it imparts, so remains it entirely-close and yet infinitely-far, hidden under or even-clearer, more-broken or more-powerful, beyond all impartation, one-final, decisive. 491


In all language and linguistic creations, there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated; depending on the context in which it appears, it is something that symbolizes or something symbolized.

Beyond the communicable, there remains in all language and its constructions something incomunicable which is, depending on the context in which it is encountered, either symbolizing or symbolized; . . .

It stays in all Language and their Builds/Structures/Forms except to-the Impartation-ability a Non-Impartationable, a, indeed according to the Zusammenhang/Context/Interrelation, in the it encountered becomes, Symbolizing or Symbolized.

There remains in all languages and there shapings besides/apart from the impartible a non-impartible, a, depending on the nexus in which it is encountered, symbolizing or symbolized. 493

11.5: Symbolisierendes nur, in den endlichen Gebilden der Sprachen; Symbolisiertes aber im Werden der Sprachen selbst.

It is the former only in the finite products of language; the latter, in the evolving of the languages themselves.

490 The ge-brochen, implies a broken beyond repair, fully broken.

491 I read this string of clauses as an appositive of the “it.”

492 “Angetroffen”: an encounter word, “to come across” “to meet,” the root “treffen” – “to encounter,” “to affect,” “to strike.”

493 That is to say, non-impartation is symbolized as a fragmented presentation in the unfolding of language; but in here(now) shapings “it” [pure-language] symbolizes, i.e., it performs its impartation, folding-into-and-exceeding each possible meaning that lays “heavy and alien” (11.9). Thus, the intensive-ambiguity of “it” throughout the essay is symbolizing in recursive re-markings such as “Impartation,” “Sinn,” “Non-Impartation,” “pure-language,” etc., and “symbolized” as a “yet near privative Knowledge of the nexus” (5.2) [och fast der Erkenntnis sich entziehender Zusammenhang], an encounter of the lacuna, the experience of the fragment, the hanging-together suspended as/between and beyond the Sinn-Impartation.
. . . symbolized however in the development of the languages themselves.

Symbolizing only, in the finite Structures/Forms of Languages; Symbolized but in the Becoming of the Languages themselves.

Symbolizing only in the finite shapings of language; but symbolized in the becoming of languages themselves. 495

11.6: Und was im Werden der Sprachen sich darzustellen, ja herzustellen sucht, das ist jener Kern der reinen Sprache selbst.

And that which seeks to represent, indeed to produce, itself in the evolving of languages is that very nucleus of the pure language; yet though this nucleus remains present in life as that which is symbolized itself, . . .

And what seeks to be represented and even produced in the development of languages is that kernel of pure language itself.

And what in-the Becoming of the Languages itself presents/stages/performs/constitutes, yes produce/establish/make such, that is that Kernel/Core of the pure Languages itself.

And that which in the becoming of languages seeks to present, even to produce itself, that is the kernel of pure-language itself.

11.7: Wenn aber dieser, ob verborgen oder fragmentarisch, dennoch gegenwärtig im Leben als das Symbolisierte selbst ist, so wohnt er nur symbolisierend in den Gebilden.

. . . albeit hidden and fragmentary, it persists in linguistic creations only in its symbolizing capacity.

But if this hidden and fragmentary kernel is nevertheless present in life as something symbolized, it inhabits linguistic constructions only as something symbolizing.

If but this, whether hidden or fragmentary, yet currently in Life/Living as the Symbolized itself is, so resides it only Symbolizes in the Shapings/Imagings.

494 “Werden”: becoming, event, growth, happening, emergence.

495 The density of Benjamin’s text here marks a paradoxical event. The way a concept like “pure language” or “Nowhere” is a symbolizing in particular transcendental forms, i.e., has a kind of active function to denote towards the something it is symbolizing, while “pure language” or “nowhere” are symbolized in the speculative perpetual possibility of other unfolding. These two held in tension is what this interlinear retranslation attempts to mark.
But if this, whether hidden or fragmentary, nevertheless is presently in life as the symbolized itself, then it dwells only symbolizing in the shapings. 11.8

Ist jene letzte Wesenheit, die da die reine Sprache selbst ist, in den Sprachen nur an Sprachliches und dessen Wandlungen gebunden, so ist sie in den Gebilden behaftet mit dem schweren und fremden Sinn.

Whereas in the various tongues that ultimate essence, the pure language, is tied only to linguistic elements and their changes, in linguistic creations it is weighted with a heavy, alien meaning.

While this ultimate being, which is therefore pure speech itself, is in languages bound up only with the linguistic and its transformations, in linguistic constructions it is burdened with heavy and alien meaning.

Is that latest Essentaility, that one the pure Languages itself is, in the Languages only at/to Linguistics and their/its Changes/Alteration/Transformation bounded, so is it in the Shapings/Imagings afflicted/encumbered with the heavy and foreign Sense/meaning.

This latest essentiality, which is the pure-language itself, is bound in languages only to the linguistic and its changes, so is it in the shapings burdened with the heavy and foreign sense.

11.9: Von diesem sie zu entbinden, das Symbolisierende zum Symbolisierten selbst zu machen, die reine Sprache gestaltet der Sprachbewegung zurückzugezogen, ist das gewaltige und einzige Vermögen der Übersetzung.

To relieve it of this, to turn the symbolizing into the symbolized itself, to regain pure language fully formed from the linguistic flux, is the tremendous and only capacity of translation.

Translation alone possesses the mighty capacity to unbind it from meaning, to turn the symbolizing element into the symbolized itself, to recuperate the pure language growing in linguistic development.

From this it to release/give-birth/deliver/exonerate/absolve, the Symbolizing to the Symbolized itself-to-make, the pure languages shaped/fashioned the Linguistic/SpeechMovement/Motion to-back-to-won/win, is the vast/mighty-violence and one Fortune/Ability to Translate.

496 In the text here, Benjamin is attempting to mark out the unmarkable as such the text starts spiraling through vertiginous levels that could always be continued. Here: the kernel presents the non-impartible of “pure language” in fragmentated and covered form, i.e., the kernel of pure-language as a symbolic presentation of the untranslatable, the non-impartible, is symbolizing in the letters-words, as it attempts to be the symbolized. An impossible attempting.
To unbind it from this [Sinn], to make the symbolizing into the symbolized itself, gain-back the pure-language shaped by the language-in-motion, is the vehement\textsuperscript{497} and single potentiality\textsuperscript{498} of translation.

11.10: In dieser reinen Sprache, die nichts mehr meint und nichts mehr ausdrückt, sondern als ausdrucksloses und schöpferisches Wort das in allen Sprachen Gemeinte ist, trifft endlich alle Mitteilung, aller Sinn und alle Intention auf eine Schicht, in der sie zu erlöschen bestimmt sind.

In this pure language—which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages—all information, all sense, and all intention finally encounter a stratum in which they are destined to be extinguished.

In this pure language—which no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather, as the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every language—all communication, all meaning, and all intention arrive at a level where they are destined to be extinguished.

In this pure Language, the not more means/meant and not more expressed/imprinted, although/but as expressionless/inexpressiveness and creative/invention/fertile/potent Word that in all Impartation, all Sense/meaning and all Intention on/to/in one Stratum/Stint in which it/they to-go-out/extinguish are determined [destined?].

In this pure-language, which means nothing more and expresses nothing more, but as expressionless and creative Word that is in all languages what-is-meant,\textsuperscript{499} finally encounters all impartation, all sense and all intention on one stratum,\textsuperscript{500} in which they are determined to become extinguished\textsuperscript{501}.

\textsuperscript{497} “Gewaltige”: vast, huge, implying both space but also Gewalt—force and violence. The implication of a violence, maybe even revolutionary violence, in translation can be marked in the following sentences in translation potentiality to “unbind” what has been “bound.” The idea of violence is likewise marked by Samuel Weber in \textit{Benjamin’s -abilities}, page 43.

\textsuperscript{498} “Vermögen”: Weber makes an argument for “potentiality” (43). Fenves as “capacity/faculty” (207). This is a unactualizable potentiality, or at least currently unactualizable.

\textsuperscript{499} This is a prime example for the necessity of various translations for different terms. Zohn and Rendall tend to translate multiple words as “meaning” or “meant.” But a word like “Gemeinte” of pure-language is a messianic “meaning,” the “ge-” implying complete.

\textsuperscript{500} “Schicht”: implications of an event and location. Once again, another a-topos location, like “nowhere.”

\textsuperscript{501} “Erlöschen” can be heard as echoing in “solution” – “dissolution,” etc. The choice of “bestimmt sind” as “destined” or “determined” is striking. Destined takes on a teleological implication; while “they are determined” doesn’t imply as strong as a definitity, but rather that the Word is determined, not destined. The difference is slight but possibly paramount.
11.11: Und eben aus ihr bestätigt sich die Freiheit der Übersetzung zu einem neuen und höhern Rechte.

This very stratum furnishes a new and higher justification for free translation;
And it is in fact on the basis of them that freedom in translation acquires a new and higher justification.
And just from it/their confirmed/corroborated itself the Freehood/Liberty of the Translation to a new and higher Rights.
And just of/from this [stratum?] corroborates itself the freehood of the translation to newer and higher right.

11.12: Nicht aus dem Sinn der Mitteilung, von welchem zu emanzipieren gerade die Aufgabe der Treue ist, hat sie ihren Bestand.

. . . this justification does not derive from the sense of what is to be conveyed, for the emancipation from this sense is the task of fidelity.
Freehood does not gain its standing from the communication’s meaning; it is precisely truth’s task to emancipate Freehood from meaning.
Not from the Sense/ Meaning of the Impartation, from which to emancipate precisely/exactly the Task of the True/Fidelity is, has it their Duration/ Standing.
Not from the sense of the impartation, from which to emancipate it is just the task of the Treue, has its continuance.

11.13: Freiheit vielmehr bewährt sich um der reinen Sprache willen an der eigenen.

Rather, freedom proves its worth in the interest of the pure language by its effect on its own language.
Rather, freedom demonstrates in the translation’s own language what it can contribute to the service of pure language.
Freehood/Liberty rather proven itself to the pure Language will/willingness of/to the own.
Rather freehood proves itself for the sake\textsuperscript{502} of pure-language in its own.

11.14: Jene reine Sprache, die in fremde gebannt ist, in der eigenen zu erlösen, die im Werk gefangene in der UmDichtung zu befreien, ist die Aufgabe des Übersetzers.

\textsuperscript{502} “Sake of” implies a higher station for the translator, remembering “the road to hell is paved in good intentions.”

378
It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is exiled among alien tongues, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work.

To set free in his own language the pure language spellbound in the foreign language, to liberate the language imprisoned in the work by rewriting it, is the translator’s task.

That pure Language, the in foreign banned it, in the own to redeem/release, the im-the Work imprisoned by the Re-ThickLiterary to be free, is the Task of the Translator.

That pure-language, which is banished/captivated in the foreign, to-loose in one’s own, that which in the work is imprisoned, [and] in the re-Dichtung is set-free, is the task of the translator.  

11.15: Um ihretwillen bricht er morsche Schranken der eigenen Sprache: Luther, Voß, Hölderlin, George haben die Grenzen des Deutschen erweitert.

For the sake of the pure language, he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language. Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, and George have extended the boundaries of the German language.

To this end he breaks through the rotten barriers of his own language: Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, George have all extended the frontiers of the German language.

For its/their sake breaks its rotten/brittle Gates/Barriers/Crossings/Limits of the own Language: Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, George have the Confines of German expanded/extended/widened.

For this-sake he breaks brittle barriers of his own language: Luther, Voß, Hölderlin, George had the confines of German expanded.

11.16:—Was hiernach für das Verhältnis von Übersetzung und Original an Bedeutung dem Sinn verbleibt, läßt sich in einem Vergleich fassen.

--What remains for sense, in its importance for the relationship between translation and original, may be expressed in the following simile.

503 I argue such a space is allegorized in Benjamin’s ideal translation as “interlinear-version of the hallowed Text” (12.17). Or marked out in Benjamin’s call to take the language that “in fremde gebannt ist” in order to “zu erlösen” it through retranslation (11.13), i.e., the space between a word “imprisoned” by form and meaning and re-leased it to the possibility of other meaning.

504 “Schranken”: implying both a barrier and a crossing. The translator in breaking the transcendental limits of their here-now, opens a crossing to the speculative possibly of other, and/or the kernel of impartibility.
— What now remains for the significance of meaning in the relationship between translation and original can be easily summed up in a comparison.

— What hereafter for the Ratio/Relations of the Translation and Original in Denotation/Importance the Sense/Meaning remains, lets itself in a Comparison grasped/fastened.

— What hereafter remains for the relationship of the translation and original to denoting of the sense, let itself in a comparison be grasped.

11.17: Wie die Tangente den Kreis flüchtig und nur in einem Punkte berührt und wie ihr wohl diese Berührung, nicht aber der Punkt, das Gesetz vorschreibt, nach dem sie weiter ins Unendliche ihre gerade Bahn zieht, so berührt die Übersetzung flüchtig und nur in dem unendlich kleinen Punkte des Sinnes das Original, um nach dem Gesetze der Treue in der Freiheit der Sprachbewegung ihre eigenste Bahn zu verfolgen.

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point-establishing, with this touch rather than with the point, the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity—a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux.

Just as a tangent touches a circle fleetingly and at only a single point, and just as this contact, not the point, prescribes the law in accord with which the tangent pursues its path into the infinite, in the same way a translation touches the original fleetingly and only at the infinitely small point of meaning, in order to follow its own path in accord with the law of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic development.

Like the Tangent of the Circle fleetingly/fugitively and only in one Points touches/brushed and like/as it/ well this Touch, not but the Point, the Law prescribes, after which it continues to Infinity their straight Trail pulls/drag/draws, so touches the Translation fugitively and only in the infinitely small Points of the Sense/meaning the Original, to after the Laws of True/Fidelity in the Freehood/Liberty of the Speech/LinguisticMovement their own Trail to track/follow/pursue.

Just as the tangent touches the circle fleetingly and only in one point and just as this touch, but not the point, prescribes the law, according to which it is pulled further on its just path to the infinite, so touches the translation fleetingly, and only in the infinitely

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505 “Punkte”: Benjamin pluralizes this one and leaves the second point singular. A grammatic mistake or purposeful absurdity? A singular Points. Singular Plural.

506 “Rühren” as root implies a movement that stirs less than a tactility.
minute points-of-sense, the original, in order to follow its own path according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of the linguistic-motion.  

11.18: Die wahre Bedeutung dieser Freiheit hat, ohne sie doch zu nennen noch zu begründen, Rudolf Pannwitz in Ausführungen gekennzeichnet, die sich in der »krisis der europäischen kultur« finden und die neben Goethes Sätzen in den Noten zum »Divan« leicht das Beste sein dürften, was in Deutschland zur Theorie der Übersetzung veröffentlicht wurde.

Without explicitly naming or substantiating it, Rudolf Pannwitz has characterized the true significance of this freedom. His observations are contained in Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur, and rank with Goethe’s notes to the Westöstlicher Divan as the best comment on the theory of translation that has been published in Germany.

Without naming or grounding it, Rudolf Pannwitz has characterized the true significance of this freedom in certain passages of his book Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur which, next to Goethe’s remarks in the notes to his Westöstlicher Divan, must be by far the best thing published in Germany on the theory of translation.

The Real Denotation of this Freehood/Liberty has, without its but to name/naming yet to found/justify, Rudolf Pannwitz in Execution/Implementation flagged/market, the itself in the “Crisis of European Culture” finds and those next-to Goethe’s Sentences in the Notes/Tones for “Divan” lightly/easily the Best should be, what in Germany on the Theory of Translation published/released has-been.

The real denotation of this freehood, without naming nor establishing/justifying it, Rudolf Pannwitz marked in statements, found in the “Crises of European Culture” and which next to Goethe’s sentences in the notes for “Divian” may easily be the best, which have been published in Germany on the theory of translation.

11.19: Dort heißt es: »unsere Übertragungen auch die besten gehn von einem falschen grundsatz aus sie wollen das indische griechische englische verdeutschen anstatt das deutsche zu

There is a lack of an object here. Zohn adds in “commentary,” Rendell “thing.” But I think the object refers back to the “marked” – i.e., Goethe’s notes and Pannwitz statements as the best markings of “the real Bedeutung of this freehood.”

507 Freedom of linguistic-motion is different from the Freedom of translation. Sprachbewegung: implying an unfolding of language in space-time, made heavy with historical intentions.

Samuel Weber has one of the most concise readings of this image:

namely, that the translation which follows “syntactical literalness” pursues a course that leads it to touch fleetingly—glancing off—the meaning of the original and then to follow the trajectory that results. The angle of that trajectory is determined by the tangential encounter of two different languages at a singular historical time and place. The vector that results from this tangential encounter involves the interplay of the different possible meanings of the original text and of the translation. That interplay results not in a single meaning but rather in a difference of meanings, which, like a difference of opinion, signifies precisely through its disunity. (93)

508 There is a lack of an object here. Zohn adds in “commentary,” Rendell “thing.” But I think the object refers back to the “marked” – i.e., Goethe’s notes and Pannwitz statements as the best markings of “the real Bedeutung of this freehood.”
verindischen vergriechischen verenglischen, sie haben eine viel bedeutendere ehrfurcht vor den eigenen sprachgebräuchen als vor dem geiste des fremden werks . . . der grundsätzliche irrtum des übertragenden ist dass er den zufälligen stand der eignen spräche festhält anstatt sie durch die fremde sprache gewaltig bewegen zu lassen, er muss zumal wenn er aus einer sehr fernen spräche überträgt auf die letzten demente der sprache selbst wo wort bild ton in eines geht zurück dringen er muss seine sprache durch die fremde erweitern und vertiefen man hat keinen begriff in welchem masze das möglich ist bis zu welchem grade jede sprache sich verwandeln kann sprache von sprache fast nur wie mundart von mundart sich unterscheidet dieses aber nicht wenn man sie allzu leicht sondern gerade wenn man sie schwer genug nimmt.«

Pannwitz writes: “Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a mistaken premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . . The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own, he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language. It is not generally realized to what extent this is possible, to what extent any language can be transformed, how language differs from language almost the way dialect differs from dialect. However, this last is true only if one takes language seriously enough, not if one takes it lightly.”

He writes: “our translations even the best start out from a false principle they want to germanize Indie Greek English instead of indanizing, graecizing, anglicizing German, they are far more awed by their own linguistic habits than by the spirit of the foreign work [ . . . ] the fundamental error of the translator is that he holds fast to the state in which his own language happens to be rather than allowing it to be put powerfully in movement by the foreign language, he must in particular when he is translating out of a language very distant from his own penetrate back to the ultimate elements of the language at that very point where image tone meld into one he must broaden and deepen his own language through the foreign one we have no notion how far this is possible to what degree each language can transform itself one language differentiates itself from another almost as one dialect from another but this happens not when they are considered all too lightly but only when they are considered with sufficient gravity.”

There Says/Names/Calls it: “our Transmissions even the best go out from a false principle they want the indian greek english germanized instead the german indianized greekized englishized, they have a much importanter reverence of their-own language-usage than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . the fundamental error of the transferor is that he chancily stands with the own language held-fast instead of through the foreign language violently letting-move, he must especially when from a very foreign language transfer to the last demontia of language itself where word image tone into one regressively-penetrating he must his language through the foreign expand and deepening one has no concept in which masses the possible is to what grade each language itself transforms can language from language almost only as dialect from dialect itself
differentiated these but not when one they alltoo lightly however exactly when one they difficult enough take.”

There it calls: “our Transmissions even the best go out from a false principle they want the indian greek english germanized instead the german indianized greekized englishized, they have a much importanter reverence of their-own language-usage than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . the fundamental error of the transferor is that he chancellily stands with the own language held-fast instead of through the foreign language violently letting-move, he must especially when from a very foreign language transfer to the last demontia of language itself where word image tone into one regressively-penetrating he must his language through the foreign expand and deepening one has no concept in which masses the possible is to what grade each language itself transforms can language from language almost only as dialect from dialect itself differentiated these but not when one they alltoo lightly however exactly when one they difficult enough take.”

Paragraph 12:

12.1: Wie weit eine Übersetzung dem Wesen dieser Form zu entsprechen vermag, wird objektiv durch die Übersetzbarkeit des Originals bestimmt.

The extent to which a translation manages to be in keeping with the nature of this form is determined objectively by the translatability of the original.

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509 The Pannwitz example if translated literally stands as an example of untranslatable. Zohn’s choice to grammaticize the translation leads to a complete loss of the rhetorical example quality of the citation and means the opposite of what is rhetorically meant.

A similar grammatization in translation occurs in Maurice de Gandillac’s French translation, which in turn influences Blanchot’s reading and subsequent interpretation, and own essay on translation. Blanchot’s explanation of the Pannwitz is illuminating.

This statement or claim is dangerously seductive. It implies that each language could become all other languages, or at least move without harm and all sorts of new directions; It assumes that the translator will find enough resources in the work to be translated in enough authority in himself to provoke this sudden mid mutation; Finally, it assumes a translation free and innovative to such an extent that it will be capable of greater verbal in syntactic literality, which would, in the end, make translation useless. (Friendship 60)

In a translation that grammatizes the Pannwitz an interpretation of a teleological notion of translation is brought forward. This is the opposite of what Benjamin is implying. Pannwitz’s example is purposefully abusing German grammar in such a way that makes any clear translation a violation of the rhetorical function. So even if one could grammatizes Pannwitz’s words to bring forward the idea of a mythically capable translator and mythical realm where “all language become all other languages,” such a mythical conception is actively deconstructed by the very untranslatability of the passage.
To what extent a translation can correspond to the essence of this mode is determined objectively by the translatability of the original.

How far/wide a Translation to-the Essence/Bring this Form to correspond-to able, become objective through the Translatability of the Original determined.

How far a translation to the essence of this form is able to correspond, can be determined objectively through the translatability of the original.

12.2: Je weniger Wert und Würde seine Sprache hat, je mehr es Mitteilung ist, desto weniger ist für die Übersetzung dabei zu gewinnen, bis das völlige Übergewicht jenes Sinnes, weit entfernt, der Hebel einer formvollen Übersetzung zu sein, diese vereitelt.

The lower the quality and distinction of its language, the greater the extent to which it is information, the less fertile a field it is for translation, until the utter preponderance of content, far from being the lever for a well-formed translation, renders it impossible.

The less value and dignity its language has, the more it is communication of meaning, the less is to be gained from it for translation, up to the point where the overpowering weight of that meaning, far from being a lever for producing a translation fully in accord with its mode, makes the latter impossible.

Each lesser Worth and Dignity its Language has, each more it Impartation is, all-the lesser is for the Translation with-it to win, until the fully/complete Overweight/Preponderance that Sense/ Meaning, far remotely, the Leverage a formfull Translation to be, this foiled/thwarted.

The less worth and dignity its language has, the more it is impartible, all the less there is for the translation to gain, until the complete overweight of that sense, far-off, [from] being the lever of a fully-formed translation, thwarted this.

12.3: Je höher ein Werk geartet ist, desto mehr bleibt es selbst in flüchtigster Berührung seines Sinnes noch übersetzbar.

The higher the level of a work, the more it remains translatable even if its meaning is touched upon only fleetingly.

The higher the work’s constitution, the more it remains translatable, in the very fleetingness of its contact with its meaning.

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510 “Ent sprechen”: to-speak-between.

511 “Formvollen”: formfull.

512 Does this imply that it makes impossible the impartibility, or makes impossible any fertile translation, i.e., there is nothing to gain? Pure impartibility would not need translation; maybe numbers would be the seemingly translation-not needed information.
Each higher a Work mannered/constituted [geartet] is, all-the more remains it itself in fugitively/fleeting Touch its/their Sense/Mea

ing still translatable. (Literal)

The higher a work is mannered, all the more it remains itself, in fleeting touch [with] its sense, still translatable.

12.4: Dies gilt selbstverständlich nur von Originalen.

This, of course, applies to originals only.

This is of course true only of original works.

This pertains self-evidently only from/on Originals.

This pertains self-evidently only from the original.

12.5: Übersetzungen dagegen erweisen sich unübersetzbar nicht wegen der Schwere, sondern wegen der allzu großen Flüchtigkeit, mit welcher der Sinn an ihnen haftet.

Translations, in contrast, prove to be untranslatable not because of any inherent difficulty but because of the looseness with which meaning attaches to them.

Translations, on the contrary, prove to be untranslatable not because meaning weighs on them heavily, but rather because it attaches to them all too fleetingly.

Translation against-that proves/renders/shows.turns itself untranslatable not due-to the Severity/Gravity/Heaviness, but due-to the all-too greater Fugitiveness/Fleetingness, with which the Sense/Mea

ning for you adheres/clings/be-liable.

Translations however prove themselves untranslatable not due to the heaviness, but due to the all-to great fleetingness, with which the sense clings to them.

12.6: Hierfür wie in jeder andern wesentlichen Hinsicht stellen sich Hölderlins Übertragungen, besonders die der beiden Sophokleischen Tragödien, bestätigend dar.

Confirmation of this as well as of every other important aspect is supplied by Hölderlin’s translations, particularly those of the two tragedies by Sophocles.

“Geartet”: the implication is close to Rendall’s “constitution.” The root “Art” implying “mode” “way” etc., But it also appears here possibly in an adverb/verb form, something like “to have become like,” implying an aesthetic quality. Hence this is referring to dense Dichtung; and paradoxically because its mannered-ness resists translation, Dichtung is more demanding of translation than “information.”

The “unübersetzbar nicht” is ambiguously placed. Hinting at the Zusammenhangen just outlined in the Pannwitz quote.
For this as for every other essential aspect, Hölderlin’s translations represent a confirmation, particularly his translations of the two Sophoclean tragedies.

Herefor like in each other essentialities Hindsight/Respects sets itself Hölderlin’s Transmissions, particularity those of/the both/two Sophoclean tragedies, confirming/affirming [Darstellung?]. 515

For-this, as with each other essential regard, encounters itself in Hölderlin’s transmissions516, especially both the Sophoclean tragedies, present a confirmation. 517

12.7: In ihnen ist die Harmonie der Sprachen so tief, daß der Sinn nur noch wie eine Äolsharfe vom Winde von der Sprache berührt wird.

In them the harmony of the languages is so profound that sense is touched by language only the way an aeolian harp is touched by the wind.

In them the harmony of languages is so deep that meaning is touched by language only in the way an Aeolian harp is touched by the wind.

In them is the Harmony of Languages so deep, that the Sense/meaning only yet as an Aeolian-Harp from Wind from/of the Language touched would-be.

In them is the harmony of languages so deep, that the sense shall yet only touch the language like an Aeolian-harp by the wind. 518

12.8: Hölderlins Übersetzungen sind Urbilder ihrer Form; sie verhalten sich auch zu den vollkommensten Übertragungen ihrer Texte als das Urbild zum Vorbild, wie es der Vergleich der Hölderlinschen und Borchardtschen Übersetzung der dritten pythischen Ode von Pindar zeigt.

Hölderlin’s translations are prototypes of their form; they are to even the most perfect renderings of their texts as a prototype is to a model, as can be aptly demonstrated by comparing Hölderlin’s and Rudolf Borchardt’s translations of Pindar’s Third Pythian Ode.

515 “bestätigend dar”: it is hard to tell if this is a typo, or transcription error. “Bestätigender” maybe, or “dar.” As shorthand for Darstellung. Rendall’s inclusion of “representation” seems to be due to taking this “dar” in tow.

516 Indicating a Wörtlichkeit and Treue syntaxial translation.

517 The use of syntax here is of note: to imply the “confirmatory” in two directions, thus confirming and destabilizing all due to the use of a specific comma. Each essential aspect of translation encounters itself in Hölderlin’s transmissions, and both Sophocles tragedies confirm this, and are confirmatory of those encounters. Both tragedies are confirmations of the essential respects, and encounters.

518 It should be noted the sound that an aeolian-harp makes would be hard to think of as “music” in any tonal sense. They tend to be strange and ethereal, foreign.
Hölderlin’s translations are prototypes of their mode; they are related to even the most fully realized translations of their texts as a prototype is related to a model, as a comparison of Hölderlin’s and Borchardt’s translations of Pindar’s third Pythian ode shows.

Hölderlin’s Translation are Archetypes/Ur-Images of their Form; they restrain/to-halt itself also to the completely/full-come-stand Translations their Texts as the Archetype/Ur-Images of the Model/Exemplar, as it the Comparison/Collation the Hölderlin and Borchardt Translations the third Pythia Ode by Pindar shows/renders/signs.

Hölderlin’s translations are archetypes of their form; they behave to the most-fully transmission of their texts as the archetype to the role-model, as the comparison of Hölderlin’s and Borchardt’s translations of the third Pythian ode by Pindar points-at.

12.9: Eben darum wohnt in ihnen vor andern die ungeheure und ursprüngliche Gefahr aller Übersetzung: daß die Tore einer so erweiterten und durchwalteten Sprache zufallen und den Übersetzer ins Schweigen schließen.

For this very reason, Hölderlin’s translations in particular are subject to the enormous danger inherent in all translations: the gates of a language thus expanded and modified may slam shut and enclose the translator in silence.

For that very reason they, more than all others, are inhabited by the monstrous and original danger of all translation: that the portals of a language broadened and made malleable in this way may close and lock up the translator in silence.

Just therefore dwells/stays/lives in them before others the immense and primal/original/springing-off-point Risks/Dangers/Threats/Jeopardy all Translation: that the Gates/Door of one so expanded/extension and through-prevailed/reigned Languages to-fall and the Translator into Silence shut/closes.

Just therefore dwells in them before others the enormous and uriginal danger of all translation: that the door of such an extended and thoroughly-prevailing language close and the translator in the silence be-shut.

12.10: Die Sophokles-Übersetzungen waren Hölderlins letztes Werk.

Hölderlin’s translations from Sophocles were his last work; . . .

The Sophocles translations were Hölderlin’s last work.

The Sophocles-Translation were Hölderlin’s latest/last work.

The Sophocles-translations were Hölderlin’s last work.

12.11: In ihnen stürzt der Sinn von Abgrund zu Abgrund, bis er droht in bodenlosen Sprachtiefen sich zu verlieren.
. . . in them meaning plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language.

In them meaning plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language.

In them falls/plunges the Sense/ Meaning from Abyss to Abyss, until it threatens in bottomless Language-depths itself to lose/shed.

In them plunges the sense from abyss to abyss, until it threatens in bottomless speakedepth\textsuperscript{519} itself to-lose.


There is, however, a stop.

But there is a stopping point.

But it gives/passes a Halt.

But it gives a halt.

12.13: Es gewährt es jedoch kein Text außer dem heiligen, in dem der Sinn aufgehört hat, die Wasserscheide für die strömende Sprache und die strömende Offenbarung zu sein.

It is vouchsafed in Holy Writ alone, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow of language and the flow of revelation.

It is, however, accorded only to holy scripture, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed dividing the flow of language from the flow of revelation.

It granted is however not Text except the hallowed, in which the Sense/ Meaning ceases/ deafen has, the watershed for the torrential/streaming Language and the torrential/streaming Revelation to-be.

It grants it though in no Text except to the hallow [one/text], in which the sense has deafened\textsuperscript{520}, to be the watershed for the streaming language and the streaming revelation.

12.14: Wo der Text unmittelbar, ohne vermittelnden Sinn, in seiner Wörtlichkeit der wahren Sprache, der Wahrheit oder der Lehre angehört, ist er übersetzbar schlechthin.

\textsuperscript{519} “Sprachtiefen”: “Spach” would be the preterite form. A past-perfect aspect of speaking. Implying something enclosed and already. Not speaking in process, but almost a spoke-law-depth.

\textsuperscript{520} “Aufgehört”: “deafen” to imply the cessation of hearing; being shut in silence.
Where the literal quality of the text takes part directly, without any mediating sense, in true language, in the Truth, or in doctrine, this text is unconditionally translatable.

Where the text belongs immediately to truth or doctrine, without the mediation of meaning, in its literalness of true language, it is unconditionally translatable.

Where the Text Unimpartionable/immediately, without from-impartation/mediating Sense/Meaning, in its Literalness of the true/verity Language, the Verity/Truth/Sooth or the Teaching/Doctrine listened-to/belong-to is it translatable as-such/absolutely/simply-bad/unmodified.

Where the text immediately, without mediating sense, in its Wörtlichkeit of the real language, the truth or the doctrine is heard\textsuperscript{521}, it is translatable absolutely-as-such.\textsuperscript{522}

12.15: Nicht mehr freilich um seinet-, sondern allein um der Sprachen willen.

To be sure, such translation no longer serves the cause of the text, but rather works in the interest of languages.

No longer for its own sake, but solely for that of the languages.

Not more admittedly for its- but all for the Languages -will/intention/sake.\textsuperscript{523}

No more for its-, but solely for the languages’ will.

12.16: Ihm gegenüber ist so grenzenloses Vertrauen von der Übersetzung gefordert, daß spannungslos wie in jenem Sprache und Offenbarung so in dieser Wörtlichkeit und Freiheit in Gestalt der Interlinearversion sich vereinigen müssen.

This case demands boundless confidence in the translation, so that just as language and revelation are joined without tension in the original, the translation must write literalness with freedom in the shape of an interlinear version.

\textsuperscript{521} “Angehört”: listened implied. A motif of hearing once again echoes.

\textsuperscript{522} Syntax and floating “in” – “where in the text,” becomes “where the text . . . in its . . . “ Each clause is marking a location in the text, where a direct, unmediated, Wörtlichkeit of pure language, doctrine and truth are heard as a deafening of meaning. The sound of nowhere.

\textsuperscript{523} Susan Stark translated this line as “In such case translations are called for only because of the plurality of languages” (88), in her study \textit{Behind Inverted Commas}. I mention this as it is a baffling sentence. Benjamin seems to have broken the word “Seinetwillen” as in “um seinetwillen” (for its will/ for its sake). In doing so Benjamin has created a “seinet-,” An oddity vacillating between and suspended in its break-, “sein” “seine” “seiner” [to-be, to-feel, to-exists, its, his].
With regard to this text such boundless trust is required of translation, that just as language and revelation must be united in the text, literalness and freedom must be united in the form of an interlinear translation.

This/Its/Him towards/across-from/opposite is such boundless/limitless Trust/Confidence/Reliance from the Translation required/demanded/challenged, that tensionless as in that Language and Revelation so in this Literalityness and Freehood/Liberty in Shapings/Forms/Encounters of the Interlinear-Version unite/unify must.

Towards this requires borderless trust of the translation, that as the tensionlessness in language and revelation must unite so must this Wörtlichkeit and freehood in the form of an interlinear-version.

12.17: Denn in irgendeinem Grade enthalten alle großen Schriften, im höchsten aber die heiligen, zwischen den Zeilen ihre virtuelle Übersetzung.

For to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true above all of sacred writings.

For in some Degree/Degree contains/includes/halts all great Scripts/Writings, in the highest but the hallowed, between the Lines of their/its virtual Translation.

12.18: Die Interlinearversion des heiligen Textes ist das Urbild oder Ideal aller Übersetzung.

The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation.

The syntactical placement of “daß spannungslos” (free-of-tension) produces so much tension between meaning and fidelity. The seeming meaning would have to be that as language and revelation unite in the original, treue and freehood must unite in the form of the interlinear-version, both being free-of-tensions, in a fully intensive relationship.

524 “Gestalt”: implies whole-shape, as well as the notion of an encounter or halting, to-feign, to-set, etc.

525 “Ihm” is referring back to letting the will of language take over.

526 “Vertrauen”: reliance, trust, give and accept.

527 The syntactical placement of “daß spannungslos” (free-of-tension) produces so much tension between meaning and fidelity. The seeming meaning would have to be that as language and revelation unite in the original, treue and freehood must unite in the form of the interlinear-version, both being free-of-tensions, in a fully intensive relationship.
The Interlinear-Version of the hallowed Texts is the Ur-Images or Ideal of all Translation.

The interlinear-version of the hallowed texts is the archetype or ideal\textsuperscript{528} of all translation.


\textsuperscript{528} The interlinear hallowed text Benjamin has in mind is something like the Talmud, which includes commentary, original and (sometimes) translation all in one form. According to D.M. Rodgers, “The Talmud has an interpretative form in both its construction and its comprehension. The format allows multiple meanings, translations, and interpretations to coexist, creating a sense of dialogue between the text and the reader. The Talmud is a living text that continues to be open to interpretation. The layout of the Talmud presents an immediate visual impression that combines with its literary aspect” (264).

In a later dialogue on translation Benjamin also mentions the medieval translation-commentaries on Aristotle as another ideal form. This medieval Aristotelian translation gesture to supplemental nature of the translation— and hence, to the “Fortleben” or “Sur-vival” or the living-on” of language. The translation, with varying ink colors, the marginal notes below and to the side of the text. And then of course the marginal notes on top of said marginal notes. Benjamin looks back for a form that is free of the exclusions of positivism. Such translation forms deny a mythic singularity of meaning; and makes the difference of language and interpretation a presentational aspect of the form itself. Such form allows for the striving towards pure-language, while making omni-visible the untranslatable.
Section Three: Afterwords, a happy sketch of an unfinishable work

To end this dissertation, I offer a brief cumulative afterwards, which looks forward to a future project. Writings about Benjamin’s theory of translation revolve around “The Task of the Translator,” composed in 1921. Though this essay is the most direct and complete statement on translation, the topic of translation continued to interest Benjamin throughout the 1920s and 1930s. One of the other more direct writings on translation is from 1936, titled “La traduction—le pour et le contre.” Though some similarities exist between the 1921 and 1936 essays, Benjamin’s materialist aesthetic turn is present in the later essay: “pure-language” has become “happiness”; “form” has become “Technik”; “Ruhm” has become “now-of-recognizability.” Such a shift allows for a re-cognizing of retranslation as a form. Hence, I turn lastly to the 1936 fragment on translation. I offer three sections: 1) some general notes on the text’s history and possibility of collaborative authorship; 2) an essay offering a close reading and speculative imagining of the central image of the fragment; and 3) a retranslation commentary of the 1936 fragment.

A few notes on the text and possibility of collaborative authorship:

“La traduction—le pour et le contre” is a fragment. The essay, made up of a fragmented dialogue and fragmented list, was translated into English by Edmund Jephcott for Harvard’s Selected Works. The text was unpublished and unperformed during Benjamin’s lifetime. The originals are written in Benjamin’s hand on:

2 sheets each 20.5x13.5 cm, written in two columns on the front, and 1 sheet approx. 18x13.5 cm, back of a Paris hotel letterhead (various notes and a drawing on the front). (GS VI, 729, my translation)
The text was found in sections. First the dialogue was found among Benjamin’s Paris papers and archived in Frankfurt, and then at a later date during the “systematic indexing and transcription work on Benjamin’s estate” another sheet of paper containing the list/sketch was found with the same style writing and same ink and paper (GS VI, 729, my translation).

The text was identified and contextualized in January of 1971, when the philosopher Günther Anders wrote to Gretel Adorno:

In the year 35 or 36 I drafted a (German) dialogue with Walter about philosophical problems of translation - a conversation that we hoped to broadcast on the radio. I don’t own a copy of it. Could you tell me where, if at all, this manuscript could be tracked down? [January 28, 1971, G. Anders to G. Adorno.] (GS VI, 729, my translation)

Gretel Adorno was quite ill, and so Rolf Tiedemann responded:

The only thing [in the Benjamin Nachlass in Frankfurt] are two handwritten sheets containing the fragmentary draft of a dialogue on philosophical questions of translation. Only you can decide whether this text has anything to do with what you are looking for. The sheets are undated but could very well have been written around 1935 or 1936 based on the type of writing and type of paper. I am sending you photocopies and a transcription of the two leaves. If I understand your explanations correctly, however, a more or less complete text must have been created at that time, for which the pages I am sending you could at best represent a preliminary stage. Possibly the definitive and complete text is

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529 The archival history of the fragments themselves is available in Band VI of Benjamin’s Gesammelte Schriften, pages 729–730.
available in the German Central Archive. [I. 5. 1971, R. Tiedemann to G. Anders] (GS VI, 729, my translation)

A more complete version is yet to be found among the German Central Archive. Anders responded that he believed this to be an initial draft of the dialogue they developed for a Paris radio station that never aired:

Yes, the pages [ . . . ] have to do with the dialogue between Benjamin and me [ . . . ]. The deja vu experience was already convincing after reading the first three words. I assume that after our initial briefing Benjamin sketched out the problems that had arisen - and this sketch now appears to be the manuscript you sent me. It is very strange that Benjamin did not identify the dialog partner - I could no longer decide today which statements came from him and which came from me, and all the more so since there were often certain similarities between his and my works.530 – After 35 or 36 years, I can no longer report with certainty how often we – Benjamin and I worked on this work and how far it progressed at the time . . . “ (GS VI, 730, my translation)

Having read and translated the text, I mark a lingering uncertainty as to Anders’s involvement with this fragment. I get a sense of this uncertainty in Tiedemann’s letters to Anders (above) and in addition, in Jephcott’s comment in in the Selected Writings, which states “perhaps in collaboration with . . . Günther Anders” (SW 3, 251). Though a collaboration is uncertain at best, it is possible that conversations on the topics occurred. I do not wish to negate Anders’s own

530 After having read the dialogue as it stands, the notion that a “conversation” is being presented is a stretch; the dialogue resembles that of a Platonic “conversation,” where Socrates speaks at an interlocutor, whose function is to ask rhetorical questions and be argued against. That being said there are similarities in Benjamin and Ander’s works and thinking.
intellect, however it is hard to place him in 1935-1936 in dialogue with Benjamin. As I will unpack below, there is a sense of Anders being a bit of a “prince consort” to Hannah Arendt [Hannah Stern in 1935-1936] during his exile in Paris. Anders is at best mentioned as a part of the group around Benjamin in Paris, more often as Arendt’s’ husband, and more often still not mentioned at all:

beginning [in] 1936, a small circle of German emigres had formed around the two of them [Benjamin and Arendt]. Meeting for regular discussion evenings in Benjamin’s living quarters, the group included Fritz Fränkel, painter Karl Heidenreich, lawyer Erich Cohn-Bendit, Heinrich Blücher, and Chanan Klenbort, a colleague of Arendt’s at a Jewish aid organization” (Eiland 580).

At least in the early months of 1936, I would imagine Anders was also present to some of those meetings.

**Günther Stern/Anders:**

Anders was born Günther Stern (1902-1992), a second cousin to Benjamin. According to Professor Harold Marcuse’s website-biography, Anders studied under Heidegger and Husserl,

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531 Günter Anders, born Gunter Stern is mentioned only once in Benjamin’s translated and published correspondence, in a letter from 1913. Hannah Stern (Arendt) is mentioned a handful of times, though largely after 1938. Through cross referencing various biographies, letters, etc. I have attempted to trace Benjamin and Anders trajectory, to see if such a collaboration took place when and where it could have occurred.

Benjamin’s closeness with Arendt during their exile in Paris is well documented. Anders and Benjamin less so. Eiland and Jennings write: “Benjamin had come to know Arendt through her first husband, Günther Stern [Anders], while they all lived in Berlin; Stern and Benjamin were distant cousins” (580). Benjamin and Arendt became quite close during their time in Paris; much more so than it would seem Benjamin and Anders did in regard to any intellectual correspondence. One would imagine that such writing might have occurred around this time. Arendt and Anders marriage was rocky before 1933 but become exponentially so in exile. According to Samantha Rose Hill in her biography of Hannah Arendt, “Stern [Anders] left for America in June of 1936” (77), without Arendt. They would divorce in 1937.
completed his dissertation in 1923, and like Benjamin had his habilitation rejected, specifically by Adorno at Frankfurt University. Shifting to journalism, Stern took the name “Anders” to mean “different” or “defiance” as a Berlin editor. Anders married Hannah Arendt in 1929, and they emigrated to Paris (like Benjamin) in 1933, as Hitler took power. Anders moved to the United States in summer of 1937, eventually lecturing at the New School. He returned to Europe in 1950 becoming a well-known philosopher and activist of the 1960s antinuclear movement (Harold Marcuse). According to Christian Fuchs, Anders is known for his philosophy of critical pessimism, and “the Promethean gap; the gap between what humans can produce with the help of technologies and the capacity of imagining the negative effects these technologies can have” (Fuchs 582).

**Anders and Benjamin:**

In a 1985 interview, Anders describes his relationship to Walter Benjamin:

For me, Benjamin was not part of the Adorno circle, he was my second cousin, whom I knew since I was one year old. I cannot say that we did philosophy together in Paris. We were first of all anti-fascists, second to this we were anti-fascists, and then we were also anti-fascists. We may also have done some philosophy *besides* this, but you have a wrong image of our emigration if you believe that we had the time to sit together and speculate. Adorno and Horkheimer may have had time, because they were financially secure.

*(Interviews, 102) (John Muller “Hollywood, Exile”)*

This claim seems off for what is known of Benjamin’s time in exile. Just taking Benjamin’s works which have been translated into English and collected in the *Selected Writings* volumes, the entirety of volumes 3 and 4, as well as around a third of volume 2.2 were written while Benjamin was in exile. And yet, any sort of “in the street” activism is not documented of
Benjamin at this time. Moreover, one of the copies of “On the Concept of History” was given to Anders, who—based on his correspondence with Arendt, and Bertolt Brecht’s diary entries—did not think highly of the text. From Brecht’s diary: “In an entry dated to August 1941, Brecht records the news of Benjamin’s suicide and that he was reading Benjamin’s final text, which Günther Stern has handed to me with the remark that it was opaque and confused [dunkel und verworren]” (Bertolt Brecht, Arbeitsjournal, ed. Werner Hecht [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973], 1:294). (John Muller “Hollywood, Exile”)

However, there are similarities in their philosophical works. Anders published La Catacombe de Molussie in 1936, which is described as an “anxious exploration of modernity carried out in almost equal parts . . . theoretical and literary.” In addition, Anders published an essay in 1936 titled “Pathologie de la Liberté: Essai sur la non-identification.” Thus, the notion of a collaboration should be considered. Anders characterizes his own works from this time period—highly influenced by Adorno—as “a ‘negative anthropology’, in which the ‘specifically human’ is defined not by any positive quality or essence, but rather through the human’s ‘non-specificity’ and ‘estrangement from the world’ (Weltfremdheit), traits, which force us into fashioning ourselves and the world we are part of with the help of artifice” (Anders, translated by and cited by Christopher Muller, “Anders, Gunther”). Anders has a negative-anthropology, but it opens onto an affirmative human-ability. In contrast, though Benjamin does strive for a non-instrumental technology and places a revolutionary potential in self-presenting techniques, this
striving is never overcome, and the possibility of an awakening is a matter of happenstance; one
has always-already fell back asleep.\textsuperscript{532}

\textsuperscript{532} The difference between them may be analogous with the tension in Benjamin’s unconventional
“Marxism.” For explication, I turn to *The Arcades Project*:

First, [this research] will demonstrate how the milieu in which Marx’s doctrine arose affected that
d Doctrine through its expressive character (which is to say, not only through causal connections);
but, second, it will also show in what respects Marxism, too, shares the expressive character of
the material products contemporary with it. [N1a,7]

Benjamin denies a position or framework free of the “milieu” or “material products” in which any
doctrine arises; as such, any community, human-ability, or methodology developed in opposition to a
here-now, like capitalism—such as communism, critical-consciousness or historical materialism—would
be products of the same here-now. Both the images and theories of revolution and fascism are dream-
worlds, phantasmagorias sprung from the same “milieu” and “material products.” Due to the limitations
of human cognition/language, one cannot abstract a framework from a particular transcendental infinity
and use it outside of all transcendental infinities. There is no objectively true, or timelessly revolutionary
methodology, (including all the preceding and proceeding.) One is always already still within the
phantasmagoria. And yet, there are of course privileged forms of resistance, due to privileged forms of
technique, at any given here-now. Marxism and a materialist Darstellung of history is a cunning strategy
for Benjamin. The problem lies with phantasmic faith in a telos and necessity seemingly always at the
expense of the “refuse of history.” And hence, Benjamin again turns to the question of presentation, of
Darstellung, to overcome progress:

A central problem of historical materialism that ought to be seen in the end: Must the Marxist
understanding of history necessarily be acquired at the expense of the perceptibility [Anschaulichkeit] of
history? Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened graphicness <Anschaulichkeit> to the
realization of the Marxist method? The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle
of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely
cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total
event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as
such. In the structure of commentary. (Refuse of History) [N2,6] \textsuperscript{(AP 461)}

The issue at hand, for Benjamin, is a tendency in Marxist’s understanding [Verständnis] to cover over the
“Anschaulichkeit” of history. Eiland and McLaughlin translated “Anschaulichkeit” as “perceptibility” and
“graphicness.” The root “schauen” cognates with English “showing.” I would add something like
“vividness.” Hence, Benjamin is arguing that the Marxist understanding covers over history, somehow
deadens its vividness. This is the equivalent of the “bad translator” creating invisible translations, where
an opaque aura of mythic transparency, totality, and necessity is cast. What Benjamin proposes instead is
“the principle of montage”—i.e., the bringing together of fragments, of moments of history presented in
texts (in a broad understanding of text), a Wörtlichkeit of moments into an elective affinity in order to,
“Die Konstruktion der Geschichte als solche zu Erfassen. In Kommentar Struktur” \textsuperscript{(GS V, 575). [To grasp
the construction of history as such. In commentary structure.”] What Benjamin proposes is a Marxist lens
combined with a performative Darstellung, not to reveal History, but to reveal “the construction of history
as such.” This is accomplished in “cunning” Zusammenhangen-forms with commentary, i.e., the bringing
Benjamin went into exile at the same time as Anders—March of 1933. Between 1933 and 1935 Benjamin spent time throughout Europe, with a stay in Paris between October 1933 to early summer of 1934. In April 1935, Benjamin returned to Paris where he would more or less stay (with shorter trips around Europe) until 1940. It is in October of 1935 until October of 1936 that Benjamin lived in apartment 23 Rue Benard, which is where the group of emigres would meet “for regular discussion evenings in Benjamin’s living quarters” (Eiland 580). The dialogue is not mentioned in any letters from the time. Thus, I believe “La traduction—le pour et le contre” was most likely composed between October 1935 and May 1936.\(^{533}\) I imagine that, based on the fragment that survives, in 1934 or 1936, at a café or in Benjamin’s quarters, Benjamin and others (Anders present) were having conversations about translation and the possibility of a French radio dialogue; after which Benjamin put the ideas developed into his own Benjaminian dialectical image, with a list/sketch of possible expansions.

Together of fragments combined with commentary, where the differences of situations (linguistic, historic) are thematized:

Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. [N1a,8] (AP 460).

Benjamin refers to such forms in his later works as “happy” and “cunning,” which will be explored further along.

\(^{533}\) I once read, but can no longer find where, that Benjamin and Anders (and Arendt) lived in the same hotel or building in Paris, possibly Hôtel Soufflot. This would have most likely been between March and October of 1934, based on “Chronology 1927-1934” in the Selected Works vol. 2.2, crossed referenced with the information available about Anders and Arendt around this time. Thus, it is possible that the dialogue could be from this earlier period; the significance of this for me is what texts by Benjamin are contemporaneously being worked on. Part of the dating has to do with the hotel paper the dialogue is drafted on, but what hotel is not readily available. Thus, ultimately, I err on the side of the extensive archival work present in the Gesammelte Schriften.
Retranslation and Benjamin’s 1936 dialogue: from telos to now

Antoine Berman throughout his career developed and outlined what has become known as “retranslation.” Utilizing multilingual-forms and commentary, retranslation foregrounds the previous translations alongside the source language text, attempting to keep the translation visible as a translation. Moreover—through a reading of Lawrence Venuti’s conception of translation as ethnocentric violence and his connecting it to Althusser’s symptomatic reading (Invisibility 21)—one could think of retranslation commentary as marking such distortions of the source text as present in previous translations not out of a desire to correct; but as a means of indicating symptomatic limitations and delimitations from the historical moment of translation, and the current translator’s own position. This is a critical potential in retranslation commentary.

However, Berman’s retranslation theory is influenced by (and influences Berman’s readings of) Goethe’s linear progressive notion of translation (Foreign 58-59); as well as (arguably a misreading of) Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”; where Berman develops a system of translation out of the motif of “ripening” reaching a Kairotic moment. Thus, Berman’s “retranslation hypothesis” suggests that each subsequent translation is an improvement upon the previous, reaching its pinnacle in retranslation and commentary form (“retraduction” paragraphs 25-28) (Age 25). And “suggests” should be emphasized. Berman’s hypothesis has gotten a bit of a bad reputation. As Berman’s theory of retranslation spans and changes over decades, a characterization of it as purely teleological is a bit reductive. Nonetheless, in Berman there is a general sense of an improvement with each subsequent translation, and a notion of a retranslation form as the moment of Kairos brought about through said previous translations. This ideology of

534 A summary can be found in the section titled “Retranslation a la Berman” in this dissertation.
progress is what I am interested in eliminating. I believe there is a chance too that rereading “retranslation” through Benjamin’s “now-of-recognizability” (instead of pure-language and fame) will clear up Berman’s suggestions, allowing a more complex historical conception of retranslation to present itself. Thus, a re-configuration of Berman’s retranslation marks the distortions of Berman, as well as attempts to mark my own distortions.

If Benjamin’s language around translation in 1921 (arguably) carries implications of progressive telos, as interpreted by Berman,\(^5\) Benjamin’s language around translation in 1936 is markedly atemporal and non-linear. And yet, the conclusions of both essays call for translations which are formally multi-lingual with self-conscious commentary, i.e., a “glückliche Form der Übersetzung” (“Traduction”, line 26).

An Elective Speculation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>“La traduction - le pour et le contre”</th>
<th>Andrew Brooks</th>
<th>Selected Works translation by Edmund Jephcott</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Als ich vor paar Tagen bei den Bouq(u)nisten vorbeikam, fiel mir zufällig die fr(an)zösische Übers(etzung) eines d(eu)tschen philos. buch in die hände</td>
<td>As I a few days ago passed-by the Bouquinisten, the French translation of a German philosophy book fell into my hands by chance.</td>
<td>As I was passing an open-air bookstall a few days ago, I came across a French translation of a German philosophical book.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) I argue this is a problematic reading; one that does not quite comprehend the rhetorical play of Benjamin’s work. In more direct moments: “Ja, diese Aufgabe: in der Übersetzung den Samen reiner Sprache zur Reife zu bringen, scheint niemals lösbar, in keiner Lösung bestimmbar” (10.2). [Yes, this task: through the translation to bring the seeds of pure language to ripeness, appears never solvable, in no resolution determinable.] Though “ripening” is a major motif in the essay, in paragraph 10 Benjamin directly undermines the motif when he aligns such thinking with translations which focus on “reproduction of Sinnes.” Possibly paragraph 10 can be read as going so far as to say the negation of ripening understood teleologically is really the meaning. “Und nichts anderes ist ja — negativ gewendet — die Meinung alles Vorstehenden.” (10.4). [And really nothing other is – negatively turned – the meaning of all the preceding.] Moreover, I point back to, as a stay against Berman’s reading, the 1921 essay which frequently use a-topos rhetorical locations (“nowhere,” “god’s remembrance,” “purer linguistic sphere,” etc.) as well as grammar and rhetoric in a manner that is purposefully untranslatable throughout; each of these holds at bay any linear progressive reading and systematization of translation as a maturation process.
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I leafed therein, just as one leafs books on the quai, seeking out the passages that had often and thoroughly occupied me—what a surprise/over-rushing/quickening.

Leafing through it, as one does with books on the quais, I looked for the passages which had often engrossed me.

What a surprise—the passages were not there.

You mean, you didn’t find them?

Oh yes, I found them all right.

But when I looked them in the face, I had the awkward feeling that they no more recognized me than I did them.

The translation is, as far as I know, very esteemed.

Certainly not incorrectly.

And no doubt with good reason.

the horizon and the world around the translated text had itself been substituted, had become French.
Following this event, the dialogue consists of, first, a discussion about Humboldt’s theory of language: where one is “always under the ban of one’s mother tongue” which is then contrasted to a discussion of Nietzsche’s “abuse of language” (neologisms), framed as a means of critiquing the German nation. Lastly, Benjamin offers comments on translation as a technique and a strategic “happy” form of translation. But momentarily let’s focus on just this opening passage, where a flâneuring “I” awakens in a moment of reciprocal non-recognition with a text, in what Benjamin calls a now-of-recognizability, bringing about a significant shift in the experience of the world.

Such a now-of-recognizability is described by Benjamin in various writings from the 1930s. In some passages it has a subjective quality of awakening: “the moment of awakening would be identical with the ‘now of recognizability;’ in which things put on their true surrealist—face.” [N3a, 3] (AP 463-464). Also, such moments are described in relation to history:

Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it “the way it really was.” It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it. For both, it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it. ($W$ 4, 391)

The image of the “I” on the “quai” in a now-of-recognizability is, for speculative and contextual purposes, a mix of subjective awakening and historical flashing up of the past. To present the
heft of the image, two moments from Benjamin’s life can be brought into an elective affinity—
Paris of 1913 and Paris of 1936.

In summer of 1913, 20-year-old Benjamin voyaged for the first time to Paris. In a letter
written shortly after returning to Berlin, he recounts the flâneur-like experience as being in an
altered awareness akin to that of children: “I have only an awareness of having lived intensely
for fourteen days, as only children do . . . By the time I left Paris, I was familiar with its stores,
the advertisements in lights, the people on the Grand Boulevard” (C 27).536

In fall of 1936, 45-year-old Benjamin, in poor-health, is an exile in a Paris where “his
daily experience of the French xenophobia that seemed to deepen with every month was
exacerbated by more pointed anti-Semitic encounters” (Eiland 495).

During his vacation to Paris in 1913 and the surrounding months, Benjamin was reading
Nietzsche. Specifically, he alludes to Thus Spoke Zarathustra in at least two essays written in
support of the Wyneken youth movement which were written days after his return from Paris.
Young Benjamin’s conception of Nietzsche is formed by Gustav Wyneken. According to
Howard Eiland, Benjamin’s interpretation of Nietzsche at this time carried:

an explicit elitism: a cult of genius, a concept of the leader, a distinction of the ‘higher
man’ from the ‘rabble’— all expounded with the sort of philosophical pathos one finds in
Nietzsche, but without any of Nietzsche’s philosophical irony . . . the life of true culture
is oriented not toward happiness but toward heroism in the form of self-overcoming, the

536 The section of the letter ends: “but Paris is behind me as such a wonderfully consummated experience,
that I felt no dissatisfaction, but much more the joy that . . . everything had come to a happy conclusion.”
Reading the letter in 2022, knowing Benjamin’s trajectory with Paris into exile and fleeing to suicide, the
irony is striking.
victory over nature . . . his [Wyneken] own thinking is shot through with the nineteenth-century vitalism that would feed so many reactionary ideologies in Germany in the years to come. (26)

The weight of 1913 Benjamin’s usage of Nietzsche under the influence of Wyneken’s vitalism, is felt in the essays written after Paris— (“Romanticism” and “Experience.”) In these essays, heroic unreflective action is spurred on by a “call from spirit” out of “dreams of youth” (SW 1, 4-5) progressively leading to ideal self-affirmation cited as Zarathustra’s wandering come to an end, understood not as death but as “manhood” (SW 1, 5) and given the title “Ubermensch-Jugend” (“Romanticism” 104). 537

This is a world apart from 1936 Benjamin’s view, and the world’s use of Nietzsche. James MacFarland argues that “the years between 1929 and 1933 pushed Benjamin into exile . . . [and] Such a situation demand[ed] new thinking strategies and alliances. From [then] on Benjamin and Nietzsche communicate under the sign of exile” (173). As marked, for one example, in such epigraphs from Benjamin’s Arcades Project exposé of 1939:

This seeking for my home . . . was my affliction . . . . Where is my home? I ask and seek and have sought for it; I have not found it. -Nietzsche, Also sprach Zarathustra (AP 20)

Hopefully, this little biographical foray will offer some heft to the “moment of awakening” when the “I” on the “quai” experienced a reciprocal non-recognition with a French translation of Nietzsche. Now in exile Benjamin’s relation with Paris and Nietzsche had significantly shifted;

537 Tucker Edwin, in writing about Benjamin’s later works discusses a fascist/vitalism (which Benjamin in the 1930s is writing against) that I will argue we might see at root in this early interpretation of Nietzsche. Tucker’s characterization: “Fascist/vitalist aesthetic expression, then, must naturally seek a less cognitive avenue, namely, intuited, and immediate action. The perpetual unreflective, intuitive act or series of acts performed in the service of aesthetic myth” (71).
the flâneuring child’s dream experience of Paris alluded to in the casualness of the opening lines give way to the weight of the exile’s endangerment.

And yet, to mark one more complexity in the image: note the second-hand “Nietzsche” German to French translation, which “falls into” his hands—an object with a history of its own. Speculatively, the object in question is likely from around the turn of the century—Anthony Pym marks 1900 as the peak of the first wave of French Nietzsche translations that began in 1894 (119). The most likely French translator of Nietzsche that could fall into 1936 Benjamin’s hands is Henri Albert; though not the first French translator of Nietzsche, he is by far the most comprehensive and popular between 1894 and 1930, (the next wave of French translations not starting until 1930) (Schrift 22).

Marilyn Gaddis Rose writes, as we have already seen, that “a translation proclaims that this is what the work in question meant to that translator on the date he or she declared the translation finished. It marks an understanding that is time-bound or ideology-cued” (7). Such as with the “passages” that do not recognize the “I,” a translation has its own sight, its own worldview. And thus, the 1898 Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra sees with a 19th century French worldview, as cued by the translator Henri Albert, a neoroyalist with certain strands of nationalism present in his worldview.538

538 Anthony Pym argues that the French Nietzsche epitomized by the translator Henri Albert is strikingly in opposition to “Germanic Culture” (119) and is, therefore, “non-German” (120); Pym marks a shift in the association of Nietzsche “from left-wing socialist milieux to right-wing circles that most explicitly opposed German Culture and made much of Alsace-Lorraine, exploiting a localist cause for nationalist purposes” (120). That is to say, the translations carry with them an ethnocentric violence of neo-royalism, within which, from a retrospective view, one can see the seeds of a building militant nationalism—[like with action française. Reino Virtanen offers a compelling reading of Nietzsche’s early influence despite much public disavowal: “But if the essential element of Becoming could, by abstraction, be removed

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In the 1913 essay “Experience,” Benjamin quotes a short phrase from Thus Spoke Zarathustra entitled “Der Wanderer.” For the sake of speculation, what if this is a passage sought for by the “I” in the French secondhand text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Der Wanderer</th>
<th>Le voyageur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man erlebt endlich nur noch sich selber.</td>
<td>on finit par ne plus vivre que ce que l’on a en soi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one experiences in the end only oneself.</td>
<td>One ends up living with no more than one has in oneself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the difference between “wandering” and “voyaging”—the difference implied in agency and destination: between voyage and exile. The choice marks a historical-ideological finitude of the text, a worldview of the passage. When the “I” of the 1936 narrative “leafs” through Albert’s translation, he (speculatively) sees “Le voyageur,” instead of “wanderer”; he sees “living” and “self-actualization” instead of “experience” and (possibly) loneliness/death.

How Nietzsche’s works were manipulated and used by the Nazis is well documented; but certain French interpretations of Nietzsche’s work also, according to Reino Virtanen, had an influence on the far right nationalistic philosophy in France (196).

And so, the worldview of the 1898 French...

from Nietzsche’s thought, there would remain a body of ideas similar in many respects to the Maurrassian philosophy” (196).]

And of course, to flip to post-World War one and Germany, the use of Nietzsche by the Nazi’s is well known. Starting in 1894 but reaching grotesque levels in 1933, Nietzsche’s sister and her husband “ideologically instrumentalized the philosopher’s work . . . likened [it] . . . to a racist and nationalist vision of the world, which rather corresponded to that of her husband and was used [after 1933] by the German Chancellor and Nazi party’s propaganda machine” (Ponzi 59). Specifically German fascism misappropriated “Thus Spoke Zarathustra”; according to Mauro Ponzi, there is a racialization of the uber-menschen, and “the ‘will to power’ was interpreted as the prevalence of the strongest over the weakest” (Ponzi 63).

That section of Zarathustra ends in tears, laughter and yearning for lost friends.

Said influence on turn of the century right philosophies then influenced the fascist and collaborative regimes of the 1930s and 1940s.
translation is possibly in a problematic affinity with the worldview of 1913 Benjamin; both of which may be read as what James McFarland (referring to certain influences around Benjamin) describes as early sites from which “darker nationalistic and antisemitic tendencies [would] metastasize [] through” (McFarland 22).

This is the heft of the image: a dreaming flâneuring “I,” confounded and silent staring into a text, experiences an atemporal rattling—in a moment of non-recognition—as the text confounded and silent stares back with the eyes of a 19th century dreamworld. And in this non-recognition all is wrinxled.

It is almost a paradox that this function becomes manifest in all its clarity at the moment when the hero is completely passive, when tragic time bursts open, so to speak, like a flower whose calyx emits the astringent perfume of irony. Not infrequently it is in moments of complete calm—during the hero’s sleep, as it were—that the fatality of his time fulfills itself, and likewise the meaning of fulfilled time in the tragic fate emerges in the great moments of passivity: in the tragic decision, in the retarding moment, in the catastrophe. (OTS 263)

This is a moment of revolutionary potential, when “every age [can attempt to] strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it” (SW 4, 391). This is a

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541 The reality of Benjamin’s relationship to such sites is more complex and as McFarland says, “not straightforward” (22)—there is less doubt about the sites he was around and influenced by Wyneken and the youth movement specifically, which starting with WW1 turned militaristic and nationalist.
moment when a potential to re-cognize self, world, and text has been brought about through an experience with translation.542

This is likewise the potential of retranslation reconfigured through this dialectical image:
1) retranslation awakens the translator/reader out of the dreamworld of a stable “I” and text i.e., out of subjective interpretation mistaken as truth founded on (unreflective mythic) equivalence;
2) retranslation reveals the worldviews of early translations, in attempts to re-cognizes its own limited worldview; 3) in doing so, retranslation opens the source text up to the possibility of anew interpretation, anew543 worldview, understood as worldview.

**Re-reading the Dialogue:**

There are few differences between my translation and Edmund Jephcott’s—one could think that such a source text is then not in need of translation. But paraphrasing Benjamin: “no translation is for the reader.” Restranslation is a form/mode of reading as immanent critique. For retranslation maintains a tension between recognizing its own historical-ideological finitude and

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542 For one instance, Burnham offers a reading of Nietzsche’s use of ambiguity in Part one section 15 of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* where “the ambiguity forces a German readership to confront the dangerous and creative problem of their own identity as a people and their relationship with the ancient world, and to do so quite separately from the nationalism and militarism of the New German State” (57). Thus translation practices that alleviate ambiguity for the sake of clarity disrupt said potential.

543 These “anew” imply a bricolage-esq process within a historical tradition. Any such “anew” possibility is always a re-configuration. We might think of this in terms of neologisms. Benjamin famously disliked neologism describing them as “an abortive naming in which intention plays a larger part than language, [and] are lacking in the objectivity with which history has endowed the major formulations of philosophical observation” (*Origin*, Osbourn, 37). The worldview can be re-configured, made anew out of what is already present.
yet striving for an (knowingly impossible) ideal significance of the source text, while marking distortions and points of contradiction. To offer an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walter Benjamin</th>
<th>Andrew Brooks</th>
<th>Edmund Jephcott</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich blätterte darin wie man eben in den Büchern am Quai blättert, suchte die Stellen heraus, die mich oft und ausführlich beschäftigt hatten—welche Überraschung.</td>
<td>I leafed therein, just as one leafs books on the Quai, searching out the passages that had often and thoroughly occupied me—what over-rushing/quickening.</td>
<td>Leafing through it, as one does with books on the quais, I looked for the passages which had often engrossed me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Stellen waren nicht da.</td>
<td>The passages were not there.</td>
<td>What a surprise—the passages were not there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that Jephcott shifted the dash-phrase: “—welche Überraschung” to “What a surprise—”

This seemingly simple movement disrupts the heft of the dialectical-image being presented. I argue this “—” [dash] marks the now of the “now-of-recognizability,” the moment of awakening. To situate our thinking, in the *Arcade Projects* Benjamin has an often quoted aphorism:

> In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning flashes.

> The text is the long roll of thunder that follows. [Nl, l]

When Jephcott shifted the “—”, he disconnected the now-of-recognizability from the lightning and attached it to the thunder. He disconnected the “—” from a description to an explanation:

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544 Benjamin’s notion of immanent critique is vaguely transcendental in seeking a criterion for judgment or meaning but doing so according to Caygill in the “traces of the absolute left in [each particular] experience or work” (Caygill 34) i.e., there is no universal-timeless criterion, but particular finite criterion does exist. And the immanent critique “is speculative in acknowledging that both it and the work or object being judged are transformed by their encounter” (35). But, of course, for Benjamin and many theorists, like Berman, all translation is a form of immanent criticism: “What the original text calls for with all of its strength, so that the meaning immanent in its translatability can come into being, is the act of translation (Age 79). However, with retranslation as Chantal Wright writes, “the translator does not come to the text unaffected by earlier readings . . . But acknowledge[es] the influence of previous translations” (Age 25).
from presentation—to explanation. Moreover, the “Überraschung” is slightly different than the English “surprise.” “Über-raschung” implies “over-rushing” and thus in Benjamin has implication of an atemporal moment. Furthermore still, “rasch” (the root) implies “rustle” and “rattle.” Thus, if à la Humboldt (mentioned further in the dialogue) language “occupies” one extensively, the moment presented here as “—” marks the over-rushing, a-temporal, rattling of that occupation. A moment when anew world, I, text, is wrixled. (In the experience of the text, one sees they have already been occupied by the seeds of fascism. And hence, the necessity of a radical self-consciousness of the language that occupies us now.)

However, the “roll of thunder” is possibly the more important aspect for Benjamin. The “roll of thunder” is the dialogue and all that unfolds, a presentation of the moment of lightning as cunning.545 And, cunning is what Benjamin states is necessary for such an awakening. “This genuine liberation from an epoch has the structure of awakening in the following respect as well: it is entirely ruled by cunning” [G1, 7] (AP 887). “Only with cunning, not without it, can we work free of the realm of dream” (AP 907). Cunning was lacking in 1913 Benjamin’s reading and usage of Nietzsche—where Eiland wrote he was “without any [understanding] of Nietzsche’s philosophical irony” (i.e., without comprehension of the meaning produced through rhetoric in Nietzsche and thus without interpretation, likewise by being so influenced by Wyneken). A lack of cunning, according to Tucker Edwin’s reading of Benjamin, is what allows

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545 Benjamin’s “cunning” is anti-Hegelian in its lack of a progressive notion and any stable universal history; instead, Benjamin’s cunning is presenting thinking-anew in hopes of a re-configuration, a now-of-recognizability. Not leading towards anything. It must be non-instrumental: the synthesis is only ever a question, not a statement. In calling attention to itself as elective, as not outside the determining factors of a here-now, a cunning text attempts to be useless for the purposes of mythic necessity, transparency, telos—to stable readings and stable meanings. In doing so, a cunning text attempts to compel a critical reading—as Benjamin writes of Kafka’s use of gesture: “to try to derive such a meaning from them in ever-changing contexts and experimental groupings” (SW 2.2, 801). Such is the attempting of the interlinear retranslation-commentary.
fascist myths to propagate, (see footnote 9). Peter Fenves in * Arresting Language* writes that Benjamin’s earlier works on language (up to “The Task of the Translator”) are attempting to “outline the fractured structure of paradise” while the texts that follow are tasked with “discovering, inventing, and cataloguing the cunning techniques of the collective ‘no one’ who turns, instead, into an inconsistent plurality” (226). This is another strand in this “dialogue” that needs to be reconfigured. For the “I” on the quais strikes me as such a collective “no one”; “I” is a fiction representing Benjamin but also the German Jewish Exile in general.

Cunning—arguably—could be a presentation, a form/mode of translation. The problem faced by the “I” on the quai and the translator is how to awaken and not fall back into a dangerous dream state (be it the illusion of flâneur instead of exile, or the illusion of an instrumental and complete translation instead of fragmentation and impossible necessity. A momentary possible solution is retranslation as a presentation of cunning. Such a form is described by Benjamin in the 1936 essay: “a happy [glückliche] form of translation [now understood as a technique] [is one in which] the commentary takes/gives accountability of itself and makes the fact of the differences of language-situations a theme” (“Traduction” my translation).

“Happiness” [like “pure-language” in 1921] is understood as an a-topos, a rhetorical presentation, marking/causing a striving of an infinite task of translation. And, according to Jans Sieber’s reading of Benjamin, “technique” is a non-instrumental medium common to people and nature alike. “Making a non-instrumental use of technique means to freely use it in order to playfully and constructively give shape to [a] world oriented towards the idea of happiness” (Sieber). When Benjamin writes “translation is a technique” whose “happy” form is multilingual and self-conscious commentary, this is an imagining of cunning as Darstellung, aiming
for an estranging moment (now-of-recognizability), for a presentation of an unstable plurality of meaning in a speculative historical context.

This is retranslation with commentary seen not with a progressive teleological worldview, but with an emphasis on retranslation as a non-instrumental technique presenting itself as cunning, striving for an atopos happiness—striving for an estranging reconfiguration that momentarily opens a potential for collective yet plural communing, i.e., a current delimited and limited worldview of happiness.
Retranslation-Commentary: “La traduction—le pour et le contre”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Walter Benjamin</th>
<th>Literal</th>
<th>Andrew Brooks</th>
<th>Edmund Jephcott</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Als ich vor paar Tagen bei den Bouq(um)inisten vorbeikam, fiel mir zufällig die Übers(etzung) eines</td>
<td>As/when I before/ago pair/some/few days at the Bouquinisten go-by/come-past/come-by, fell me random/accidentally/</td>
<td>As I a few days ago passed-by the Bouquinisten, the French translation of a German philosophy book fell into my hands by chance.</td>
<td>As I was passing an open-air bookstall a few days ago, I came across a French translation of a German philosophical book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

546 Translated from Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften Band 6, pages 157-60.

547 The “chance” quality of the event stands out here. First, “vorbeikam” implies a chance in-passing movement. While “fiel mir zufällig” contains a double accidental quality—“fell” at “random.” This chance event will lead to a profound shift in perception and experience a few lines down, when the “I” character experiences a failure of recognition. This brings to mind Lukács’s “The Metaphysics of Tragedy,” from 1910, an essay Benjamin was very familiar with (referenced in the Trauerspiel study):

The essence of these great moments is the pure experience of self. In ordinary life we experience ourselves only peripherally—that is, we experience our motives and our relationships. Our life ordinarily has no real necessity, but only the necessity of being empirically present, of being entangled by a thousand threads in a thousand accidental bonds and relationships. But the basis of the whole network of necessities is accidental and meaningless; everything that is, could just as well be otherwise, and the only thing that seems really necessary is the past, simply because nothing more can be done to change it. But is even the past really necessary? Can the accidental flow of time, the arbitrary displacement of one’s arbitrary point of view vis-à-vis one’s lived experience, change the essential nature of that experience? Can it make something necessary and essential out of the accidental? Can it transform the periphery into the center? It often seems that it can, but that is only an illusion. Only our momentary and accidental knowledge makes something rounded and changeless of the past. The smallest modification of that knowledge, such as any accident may occasion, sheds new light upon the “unchangeable” past, and suddenly, in that new light, everything acquires a different meaning and actually becomes different. (Lukács 180)

Similarly, Benjamin writes in the Trauerspielbuch:

It is almost a paradox that this function becomes manifest in all its clarity at the moment when the hero is completely passive, when tragic time bursts open, so to speak, like a flower whose calyx emits the astringent perfume of irony. Not infrequently it is in moments of complete calm—during the hero’s sleep, as it were—that the fatality of his time fulfills itself, and likewise the meaning of fulfilled time in the tragic fate emerges in the great moments of passivity: in the tragic decision, in the retarding moment, in the catastrophe. (263)

Both passages mark a passivity—of the “hero” asleep, or the accidentality of the dream-world “necessities.” The “great moments” are “passive” or “accidental,” chance affairs, which come with profound shifts in one’s comprehension of the present and past—i.e., an a-temporal rattling. And yet, this passivity is strategically staged by Benjamin in the dialogue and explicated by Lukács in his text. Moreover, given the nature of the dialogue, as a particular form of Darstellung, or presenting/staging,
Benjamin’s reading of Brecht’s epic theater is also of note here. As Weber writes in his reading of Benjamin’s “The Author as Producer”: “[Benjamin] noted that Brecht’s staging of the Zustand recurs to ‘the great and venerable chance of theater—that of exposing the present [die Exponierung des Anwesenden]. The future of theater consists in this ability to expose the goings-on of being-present: des Anwesenden’” (105). Like the interruption and separation of the epic theater (Weber 111) attempting to bring about a “great moment” of awakening to the present, the dialogue is staging a “great moment” for the reader (or listener) in allegorical form of the “I” on the quais. If such an encounter and awakening occur for the reader is seemingly as much a chance affair as if the audience is affected by theater, and if (if a real “I” event occurred) Benjamin really did have such a moment on the quais. Benjamin’s dialogue presents such a “chance” “great moment [of] the pure experience of self” in a dream-world of the “hero” narrative through a failed encounter with known passages, which the “I” expected to have a mutual “erkennen.”

This “chance” moment is present in my own current translation and event of translating: a series of random “decisions,” that when examined reveal both an intricate Zusammenhagenn of accidentals and meaningless chances (a long personal narrative of random deaths, jobs, etc. leading me into various sites where Benjamin was being discussed), as well as truly systematic and institutional reality (white privilege in America, once again the specifics being personal but having to do with access to government subsidized student loans) and the awakening out of a dangerous hero narrative with the “great moment” of recognizing the intricateness between the two, the narrative of the past and the reality of the oppressed in the present. Translation is such a chance experience of “great moment [of] the pure experience of self” in a dream-world of the “hero” narrative (mythic equivalence and transparency) through a failed encounter with known passages, which the “I” expected to have a mutual “erkennen,” and instead finds untranslatability, and the impartable.

But, at this point, what is of interest is the “chance” element, which has such immense potential to alter “everything.” In Benjamin’s dialogue the “accident” is a confrontation with a “changed” text, i.e., a translated text. The “unchangeable past” is represented in the dialogue as the German passages that had so “often and thoroughly occupied” the “I.”

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548 Note the repetition of “book” words throughout the dialogue—the literal Bücher, Bouquinisten, Stellen, but also the less direct play on “Blatt” in blättern. This play foreshadows a mention of Humboldt’s theory of language that is present in the dialogue further down “that every[one] during all of his life stood under the Ban of his mother-tongue.” The actions of the “I” are that of books, of pages. What is self? What is action if we are under the ban of native language?

In addition, there is an allusion to the image of the flâneur here. The language used by the “I”—”couple days ago,” “passing by,” “fell into my hands,” “leafing through as one does.”—mark a casualness of tone,
that gives one the image of the flâneur. In “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” from 1937-1938, Benjamin writes:

> The crowd is not only the newest asylum of outlaws; it is also the latest narcotic for people who have been abandoned. The flâneur is someone abandoned in the crowd. He is thus in the same situation as the commodity. He is unaware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him; it permeates him blissfully, like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the flâneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity immersed in a surging stream of customers. (SW 4, 31)

Though the language of commodity is not present in the 1936 dialogue, the implications of the flâneur as someone abandoned, distracted, delusional is present. If the “I” is the German-Jewish exile in Paris of 1936, then this flâneuring on the Quai is a “narcotic . . . compensant[ing] him for the many humiliations.” This drugged experience being another motif of the “hero’s sleep” mentioned earlier.

549 Again, a foreshadowing allusion to Humboldt’s language theory. The “passages” “oft und ausführlich(ich) beschäftigt hatten” the “I.” The “beschäftigt” implies an activeness, busy, as well as an employed, occupied, and in the context of “ausführlich” (implying extensive, and thoroughly) the verb implies “engrossed,” like Jephcott’s choice. There is a clear sense of the language embodying the “I.”

550 The dash represents the moment when a failure of recognition, of finding the passages and the passages finding the “I” leads to a Wrixling of “everything.” This “Überraschung” is slightly different than “surprise” in regard to the etymological connotations. “Über-raschen” implies to “over-rush” and has the implications of an excessively short and lively moment, similar to English “surprise.” Moreover, “rasch” (the root), has a derivative of “rascheln,” which is closer to the Anglo-Saxon “rœscetung” and would imply something like “rustle” and “rattle.” Thus, if a la Humboldt language “occupies” us extensively, the moment presenting here as “—” marks the rattling of that occupation—a moment where an over-rapidness is brought about by the absence of the passages of recognition causes a rattling of “self.” This “over-rush” indicates the momentary, the nowtime, of a dialectics at a stand still—neither recognize neither—causing the world to alter. The question raised is what is encountered in the “— welche Überraschung” and now what?
But as I looked them in the face, I had the painful feeling,

But when I looked them in the face, I had the awkward

POSIBLE PHONOCRUNAL PLAY. “GESICHT” AND “GESICHT SAH.”

“GESICHT, NEUTER, ‘SIGHT, COUNTENANCE,’ FROM MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN GESIHT, OLD HIGH GERMAN GISIHT, FEMININE, ‘SEEING, VIEW, DREAM, SENSE OF SIGHT,’” (KLUGE 116).

“GESCHICHTE, FEMININE, ‘ OCCURRENCE, NARRATION, TALE, HISTORY,’ FROM MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN GESCHIHT, OLD HIGH GERMAN GISCHT, FEMININE, ‘EVENT, OCCURRENCE, CAUSE OF AN EVENT, DISPENSATION’” (KLUGE 115).

If à la Humboldt language occupies us, then Gesicht, sah, and Geschichte (self, perception, and history) are intertwined.


THE PRESENCE OF A “BODY” AND QUESTION OF “SELF” AS “I” BECOMES RELEVANT HERE. I AM REMINDED OF GERHARD RICHTER’S WALTER BENJAMIN AND THE CORPUS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

Self [is understood as] relat[ing] to what is historical through the technologically and aesthetically mediated moment of shock. . . . If, therefore, Benjamin thinks the body as one of the names of ‘the function of the historical present within the human being’ (SW 1,395) then the history to which the body ultimately belongs is one precipitated by shock . . . [Benjamin] suggests that the human body in modernity is experientable and citable for and as history only in painful grimaces and
erratic convulsions. As a body in pain, it both belongs and does not belong to history. That is to say the body belongs to history most fully when it is not embodied by it, when it is exiled from it. Our body, then, names our simultaneous inscription in, and exile from, history. (68-69)

A complexity appears here once again, as above, the “body” and the “human being” are seemingly different aspects. To say that in the “shock” of being exiled from history/story is when the “body” is most belonging to history, implies that at the chance great moment when an a-temporal rattling perhaps occurs, the “human being” is awakened to the inscriptions of history as body and body as history.

Between the pain of not being able to read nor be read by familiar passages—i.e., to being disembodied by privative experience of language—and the pain of being exiled from history, the narrator of the dialogue awakes suspended in an a-temporal moment of over-rush, a “—” marking an interruptive fissure from the dual implications of Geschichte and a “self” who, exiled from Geschichte, is momentarily awakened from the dream of the flâneur to the exiled body—the loss of a “Gesicht” to defacement—unnamed in exile, and in that exile a chance a-temporal “—”: the possibility of revolutionary potential to alter the narrator’s perception, experience, Geschichte.

This all speaks to the central metaphors of awakening and the dialectical image in Benjamin’s work from this period.

Is awakening perhaps the synthesis of dream consciousness (as thesis) and waking consciousness (as antithesis)? Then the moment of awakening would be identical with the “now of recognizability” in which things put on their true – surrealist – face. Thus, in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life’s supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening. (AP N3a, 3)

Yet, this “synthesis” should not be taken too seriously. For one cannot stay awakened; it is an a-topos synthesis aimed for but is only ever a chance happening; taking the cunning form of a dialectics at a standstill. “This genuine liberation from an epoch has the structure of awakening in the following respect as well: it is entirely ruled by cunning” [G1, 7] (Ap 887). “Only with cunning, not without it, can we work free of the realm of dream” (AP 907). Benjamin’s “cunning” is anti-Hegelian in its lack of a progressive notion and any stable universal history, instead Benjamin’s cunning is presenting thinking-anew in hopes of a re-configuration, a now-of-recognizability. Not leading towards anything. It must be non-instrumental. The “synthesis” is only ever an interruptive question, never a statement. As was argued in the opening essay, this “cunning” speaks to a Darstellung, a presentation and staging of such a moment of awakening, be it in an image form like the dialogue here, or likewise conceptually: as can be seen when Benjamin contrasts Humboldt with Nietzsche, further along in the translation.

553 ‘This is “das Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit,” [the now of knowability/recognizability], when the “passages” in loss of recognition, loss of fetishistic “thingness” and thus personified, become re-cognizable, re-knowable. Samuel Weber marks such moments as anewed readability:

the now of knowability—das Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit—is also the moment in which readability parts company with determinate meaning and knowledge, not by dissolving its relation to it, but
ebensowenig wie ich sie erkenne.  
woeful/truculent/met  
iculous/penal/AWK  
WARD/torturous  
Feeling they  
recognize/know/see  
me just-as-little as I  
them  
recognize/know/see

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Von welchem Philosophen sprechen Sie eigentlich?</th>
<th>Of which Philosopher speaking You actually/proper?</th>
<th>Of which philosopher are you speaking of actually?</th>
<th>Which philosopher are you talking about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ich spreche von Nietzsche.</td>
<td>I speak of Nietzsche.</td>
<td>I am speaking of Nietzsche.</td>
<td>I’m talking about Nietzsche.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sie wissen, daß . . . ihn übersetzt hat.</td>
<td>You know, that . . . it translated had.</td>
<td>You know that . . . has translated him.</td>
<td>You know that -- translated him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Die Übersetzung ist, soviel ich weiß, sehr geschätzt. (Could be wrong about who is speaking here)</td>
<td>The translation is, as-far-as I know, very valued/esteemed/assumed/supposed</td>
<td>The translation is, as far as I know, very esteemed.</td>
<td>As far as I know, the translation is highly thought of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sicher nicht zu Unrecht.</td>
<td>Safely/Surely/Certainly not to wrong/injustice</td>
<td>Certainly not wrongly.</td>
<td>And no doubt with good reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Aber was mich an den Stellen, die mir vertraut gewesen waren, befremdete, war nicht ein Mangel der Übersetzung sondern etwas, was vielleicht sogar ihren Vorzug dar-stellt:</td>
<td>But what me in the Passages/Encounter, who/that/the familiar/close/intimate/trusted been was/had, disconcerted/alienate/d/estranged, was not a Lack/Manque of-the Translation rather something, which/what perhaps even You/Your/It Merit/Preference/Before-</td>
<td>But what estranged me in the passages, which had been trusted to/of me, was not a lack of the translation rather something, which perhaps even re-</td>
<td>But what disconcerted me about the passages that had been familiar to me was not a deficiency in the translation but something which may even have been its merit:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

by acknowledging the irreducible immediacy—the Un-mittel-barkeit—of its medium of language to be the greatest-ability of all. (Weber 19)

As was indicated in the opening essay to this section, such a moment is a possibly profound re-reading of passages in Nietzsche’s’ late 19th century French translations, and the seeds of exile and fascism always-already present in one’s Zusammenhangen(s).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Train/Precedence Presentation:</th>
<th>presenting their precedence:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Der Horizont und die Welt um den übersetzten Text selbst war ausgewechselt und selbst französisch.</td>
<td>the horizon and the world around the translated text itself was changed/altered/exchanged/wrixled and itself French.</td>
<td>the horizon and the world around the translated text had itself been substituted, had become French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Die Welt um einen philosophischen Text herum scheint mir die jen-seits aller nationalen Charaktere befindliche Welt des Gedankens zu sein.</td>
<td>The world around a philosophical text seems to me to be that which is to be found beyond all national character, the world of thought.</td>
<td>The world surrounding a philosophical text appears to me to be the world of thought, which exists beyond all considerations of national character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Es gibt keine Gedankenwelt, die nicht eine Sprachwelt wäre, und man sieht nur das an Welt, was</td>
<td>There is no [it gives none] Thought-World, that not a Linguistic-World is, and one sees only that/the at/? World, what through the</td>
<td>There is no world-of-thought, which would not be a language-world, and one see only in the world what through</td>
</tr>
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554 “Darstellung” is central to Benjamin’s work.

Darstellung is the embodiment of their method. Darstellung as re-detour—that is the methodical character of the Traktats. Sacrificing the uninterrupted course of intention is its first hallmark. Enduring the thinking always springs anew, roundaboutly it goes back to the sake itself. This unrelenting taking-a-breath is the most proper Daseinsform of contemplation. (from “Epistemo-critical Prologue, my translation).

Darstellung should be thought of less as a consistent style and rather as the use of presentation/form in disrupting mythic thinking via revelatory encounters that do not fall into an infinite task or a faith in teleological futures, but rather stay suspended as re-detours. In this work the suspension is in intensive “dialectics at a standstill.”

555 “Vorzug” has the meaning of merit, but also a certain temporal order like “precedence.” In Benjamin’s essay this relationship of present to past seems relevant. Thus, the sentence gains a dual meaning. 1) The merit of a translation in disconcerting the reader; 2) the alienation as a presentation of that which precedes the ability to translate or maybe even precedes language it-self.

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<tr>
<th>Seite</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Übersetzung</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sie meinen das im Sinne Humboldts, der überzeugt war, daß jeder zeit seines Lebens unterm Banne seiner Muttersprache stünde.</td>
<td>You mean that in the sense of Humboldt, who was convinced that every time of his life stood under the spell of his mother tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sie sei wirklich die Sprache, die für ihn denkt und sieht.</td>
<td>It is really language, who for him thinks and sees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Glauben Sie wirklich, daß Neologismen, wie sie Nietzsches Sprache auszeichnen, eine</td>
<td>Do you really believe that neologisms, such as Nietzsche’s language, have real</td>
</tr>
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</table>

557 But here “language” is present as a translated book, existing in history as a used copy—an object with a history.

558 A lengthy discussion of Humboldt is found in section one of this dissertation. For our purposes here: This speaks to a “prison house of language” understanding; Humboldt’s “Banne seiner Muttersprache” marks a transcendental limit that for Humboldt was un-transversal. In the dialogue, Benjamin disrupts this conception with an image of the now-of recognizability, and Nietzsche’s abuse of language. Moreover, in 1925 Benjamin wrote a fragment, unpublished in his lifetime, “Reflections on Humboldt”:

[Humboldt’s] interest in language is confined to language as part of objective spirit (In Hegel’s sense). One could say that insofar as the poetic side of language cannot fully be penetrated without contact with a realm that we may, if need be, call magical . . . this side of language is one that Humboldt fails to penetrate at all. (SW 1,424)

Though Benjamin may theorize language as structuring one’s perceptions of the world, and even a kind of “Ban” held in relation to language, Humboldt seemingly denies the possibility of a freedom from said language; Benjamin does not close the door to a material ‘magical’ correspondence, to the poetic speculative side of language denoting towards potential other(s).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>English (expanded)</th>
<th>English (expanded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Eine gedankliche, weil eine historische.</td>
<td>An intellectual/thoughtual, because an historical.</td>
<td>Thinkingly, because historical.</td>
<td>Intellectual, because historical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Wenn Nietzsche die deutsche Sprache glänzend mißbraucht, so rächt er sich dafür, daß nie-mals eine deutsche Sprachtradition - es sei denn in der dünnen Schicht der literarischen Expression - wirklich zustande gekommen ist.</td>
<td>When Nietzsche the German Language brilliantly/gleamingly misused/abused, so revenge he itself/himself for-that/in-return, that never a German Language-Tradition—unless [it be than] in the thinnest/flimsiest Layer/Sheet/Seam/Stratum of the Literary Expression—really to-come-about is.</td>
<td>When Nietzsche gleamingly misuses the German language, he is revenging that a German language-tradition—unless in the thinnest sheet of literary expression—never really came about.</td>
<td>When Nietzsche brilliantly misuses the German language, he is taking revenge on the fact that a German linguistic tradition never really came into being—except within the thin stratum of literary expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Die Freiheiten, die die Sprache ließ, nahm er sich noch ein-</td>
<td>The Freedoms, that/which the Language let/allowed/Stopped/</td>
<td>The freedoms, that the language allowed, he himself took-up once-and-</td>
<td>He took double the liberties allowed by language, to rebuke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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559 The “neologisms” being a form of “the gleaming misuse” of language, are historical. Nietzsche’s neologism exists within a historical tradition, in historical objects, books. This is quite a statement from Benjamin, who shied away from neologisms, describing them in his 1926 *Trauerspielbuch* as “an abortive naming in which intention plays a larger part than language, [and] are lacking in the objectivity with which history has endowed the major formulations of philosophical observation” (*OTG*, Osbourn, 37). And yet, due to Nietzsche’s importance in the philosophical tradition, the iterations of his neologisms throughout the tradition cause a terminological quality and thus become overtly historical. One could argue that the neologisms are always already historic for any meaning to be assigned, so this lack of objectivity is relative.

560 “Glänzend”: “gleaming.” This implies a purposeful calling attention to, a Darstellung quality.

561 If Humboldt is presented in the dialogue as “the ban of the mother tongue” then Nietzsche is placed against, as the abuser of language. As was marked in a previous section: Nietzsche was a master of catachresis. “A rhetorical effect can be achieved by redirecting the addressee’s attention to the substitutive character of a catachresis thus creating an awareness that it is a metaphor after all” (Sloane 88-89). Catachresis is a misuse of language that calls attention to itself as a misuse of language.
mal, um sie ihr vorzuhalten. | Ceased, took it/he him/itself yet again, around they/it his/it to-hold-up/to-hold-against-to-last/to-keep-halted. | again, to hold them against it. | it for permitting them.

| 22 | Und der Mißbrauch der deutschen Sprache bedeutet letzt(l)lich die Kritik an der Unfertigkeit des deutschen Menschen. | And the abuse/misuse of the german Language indicates points-to lastly/ultimately the Criticism of the Unfinishedness/Incompleteness of the German Peoples. | And the misuse of the German Language indicates lastly the criticism of the unfinshedness of the German people. | And misuse of the German language is, finally, a critique of the unformed state of the German person. |

| 23 | Wie kann diese Sprachsituation in eine andere übersetzt werden? | How can this language-situation in-to another translated be? | How can this language-situation into an other be translated? | How can this linguistic situation be translated into another? |

| 21 | Das hängt - so erstaunlich es klingen mag - von der Art ab, in der die Übersetzung eingesetzt wird. | That hangs—so astonishingly it sounds/rings/clink/clang may—by/from/on the Art/Kind/Method/Way/Mode, in which the translation set-in/employed/appointed shall-be. | That hangs—as astoundingly as it may clang—on the kind/way in which the translation shall be employed. | That depends-astonishing as it may sound-on the manner in which translation is used |

562 Within the transcendental here-now Ban, there is a potential for abusing the language.

563 Nietzsche’s catachresis, be it irony, neologisms, etc., is a cunning attempt to bring about what he in “History in the Service and Disservice of Life” terms a Begriffsbeben—translated variously as “earthquake of ideas,” “conceptual upheaval” and “concept-quake”—which designates the arrival of a mad science that disrupts faith, health, and security of a society grown static—i.e., unfinishedness. [This “Unfertigkeit” is possibly indicating the stasis of a “people” (and only those designated as “people” by said society) grown comfortable in dream states,. Jepchott’s “unformed” seems more nationalistic than I get from “Unfertigkeit.”]

Thus, if Humboldt’s theory of language places an impenetrable “ban of the mother tongue” (prison house of language), then Nietzsche in his cunning use of language, his Darstellung, offers a conceptual-upheaval potentially altering the “mother tongue.” Benjamin is, as usual, setting both against each other to potentially bring about a “great moment,” a now-of-recognizability. but by contrasting the transcendental rigor of Humboldt, with the speculative Nietzsche—his use of catachresis—Benjamin has once again established a transcendental yet speculative frame.
As always, there is a complexity in Benjamin’s notion of technique. In Benjamin’s texts, technology can be fascist and/or revolutionary, and in addition “technique” marks a non-instrumental medium.

For instance, “The Author as Producer” (and surrounding texts composed in 1934) argues that certain techniques in art carry revolutionary potential, through tactics like Brecht’s gestus, which “has a pedagogic function and not just the character of a stimulus. It brings the action to a halt, and hence compels the listener to take up an attitude toward the events on the stage and forces the actor to adopt a critical view of his role” (SW 2.2 585). This brings about the “demand to think, to reflect on [one’s] position in the process of production” (SW 2.2.779), opening up the possibility of a new experience.

And yet, a text like “the Author as Producer” should be set alongside “Franz Kafka. On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death,” likewise written in 1934, in which, instead of clarity, the gesture leads to an uncertainty:

Only then will one come to the certain realization that Kafka’s entire work constitutes a code of gestures which surely had no definite symbolic meaning for the author from the outset; rather, the author tried to derive such a meaning from them in ever-changing contexts and experimental groupings. The theater is the logical place for such groupings. (SW 2.2 801)

For Benjamin, Kafka’s technique, as gesture, does not bring one to an understanding of one’s position in the “process of production,” or one’s position at all in a stable manner. Rather one is compelled to continually re-think a meaning that refuses to stabilize, and in doing so gestus in Kafka marks a non-instrumental technique. And yet, his tactic (passive or active) of “gestus” is an instrumentalization of the non-instrumental. (Note that such gestus is a marked as theatric. This correlates to the conception of Darstellung I have been presenting. The reading as commentary of certain words standing in the text as untranslatable due to the function in the text would be such a gestus.)

For Benjamin, technique is the non-instrumental medium—that can be utilized by humans (and nature) in various forms such as translation. For Benjamin throughout the essays of the 1930s, there are two forms of technique, as Jan Sieber summarizes:

‘First technique’ is intrinsically related to mythical power relations, regardless of whether it expresses the mastery of man by nature (in prehistory) or the mastery of nature by man (in modernity). The origin of ‘second technique’ resides in play through which human beings ‘by an unconscious ruse, [ . . . ] first began to distance themselves from nature’ (SW 3, 107). (Sieber Technique)

These two forms of technique correlate to fascism and communism, war and revolution, in the “Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility.” Once again, as Sieber paraphrases:

Fascism tries to organize the masses without changing the relations of property. “It sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses – but on no account granting them rights” (SW 3, 121). Consequently, fascism is also interested ‘in keeping secret the true functional character of technique’. Emancipatory revolutions, on the other hand, ‘are innervations of the collective – or,
As an example of a fascist-esq translation, I am reminded Lawrence Venuti’s descriptions of the English language translators of the 19th and 20th centuries (and continuing today), of an imperialistic ethnocentric violence brought about through domesticating practices (19-20). While “revolutionary” translation corresponds to foreignizing translation, which “in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations” (Venuti 20).

And yet, it must be noted that this “revolutionary” technique must strive towards an (im)possible non-instrumental technique. The technique of what Benjamin calls a “happy translation” brings about a chance, and disrupts myths of mastery; it strives for a non-instrumentality while always failing to do so. It does this through a thematizing difference in language situations. In the chance occurrence that it does compel an awakening in the reader/writer, such a state is difficult at best to maintain, if not impossible, for one always falls back asleep; one always is swept back up in the crowd:

Betrayed by these last allies of his, Baudelaire battled the crowd— with the impotent rage of someone fighting the rain or the wind. (SW 4, 343)

Thus, a retranslation-commentary in the present form is one that enacts a foreignization, thematizes differences, and attempts to mark events of gestus in the text.

565 Both translation and commentary are here marked as “Techniken.” This brings us back to the statement by Peter Fenves in Arresting Language, where he writes that Benjamin’s earlier works on language (up to “The Task of the Translator”) are attempting to “outline the fractured structure of paradise” while the texts that follow are tasked with “discovering, inventing, and cataloguing the cunning techniques of the collective ‘no one’ who turns, instead, into an inconsistent plurality” (226). These techniques combined form the “happy form of translation” (S26), which “take/give accountability of itself and performs the fact of the differences of language-situations” (S26). Retranslation-commentary is such a cunning Darstellung technique.
<table>
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<th>Seite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Diese glückliche Form der Translation, which strives to raise their techisch subervient function to a self-standing Artform.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

566 To be a “self-standing” translation would be to have an invisible translator, to be monolingual, where literally the translated text stands alone, neither interlinear, nor in a visible relation with the original and the subjective interpretation of the translator.

567 “Glückliche”: implies both “happiness” and “happenstance” or “chance/luck.” This affinity between “happy” and “chance” is present in both German and English. As a motif, “happiness” is present throughout Benjamin’s writing, possibly because of its dual political and theological dimensions. Jans Sieber offers a concise summary:

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Such happiness, as the kernel of technique’s political dimension and as aim of all worldly practices, is not a state, not an end, but rather what, in history, always anew and again will have been lost. Happiness as the political a-telos of technique is at the same time the a-topos of the world created in and through technique, it corresponds to that non-place in the world where what exists in the world is not yet. Happiness is humanity’s infinite task to which technique is the medium. (Sieber “Technique”)
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Translation is such a technique that strives for “happiness”: like the “pure-language” of “God’s Commemoration” functioning as an a-topos; happiness carries a more political tone. (Though there are plenty of examples of Benjamin’s use of “happiness” in a theological tone from his time in exile too: “Er will das Glück: den Wider streit, in dem die Verzückung des Einmaligen, Neuen, noch Unge lebten mit jener Seligkeit des Nocheinmal, des Wiederhabens, des Gelebten liegt” (GS B6, 523). [He [the Angel] wants happiness: the striving against, in which the rapture of the non-recurring, new, yet un-living lies with the bliss of the oncemore, having-again, of the lived.] Thus, “happiness” is both secular and theological.)

This “happy form” of translation, as Benjamin goes on to say, is “being lost” in the current age. Benjamin writes in the Arcades Project “Commemoration can make what is unfinished (happiness) into something finished and what is finished (suffering) into something unfinished” (AP 471) (trans. Weber’s -abilities 336n9). “[Commemoration” is nearly synonymous with translation, remembering the a-topos of “God’s Commemoration” in “The Task of the Translator.”] For Benjamin a “happy form” of translation is an unfinished form; a form that through “performing the fact of differences in language situations” reveals an always unfinished quality. In contrast, Benjamin’s “modern times” translation is that of monolingual texts, where the translator is rendered invisible, and the text is endowed with an aura of mythical transparency through the ethnocentric violence of domesticating translation practices. The other side of “glückliche” is “luck” and/or “chance;” it speaks to the (im)possible Messianic event, striving for a future
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Übersetzung, die im Kommentar Rechenschaft von sich ablegt und das Faktum der verschiedenen Sprachsituation mit zum Thema macht, ist der Neuzeit leider in wachsendem Maß verloren gegangen.</th>
<th>which/who in-the Commentary takes/gives accountability of itself and makes/performs the fact of the differences of language-situations a/as theme, is the New-Time unfortunately in increasing measure lost/wasted/doomed went.</th>
<th>acknowledges its own role by means of commentary and makes the fact of the different linguistic situation one of its themes, has unfortunately been on the wane in modern times . . .</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 Sie hatte ihre Blüte in einer Epoche, die von den Aristotelesübersetzungen des Mittelalters bis zu den zweisprachigen kommentierten Klassikerausgaben des sieb-zehnten Jahrhunderts reicht.</td>
<td>It had its Bloom in an Epoch, which reached from the medieval translations of Aristotle to the seventeenth-century bilingual editions of the classics, with commentaries.</td>
<td>The period of its flowering extended from the medieval translations of Aristotle to the seventeenth-century bilingual editions of the classics, with commentaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Und gerade weil die Verschiedenheit der Sprachsituation zugestanden war, konnte die Glückt through a commemorating of what was, in the hope of a redemptive Geglückt a-topos (prelapsarian) in the now.</td>
<td>And precisely/exactly because of the Diversity/Difference of Language- And precisely because the differences of the language-situation were conceded.</td>
<td>. And just because the difference in linguistic situation was acknowledged, the translation could .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

568 Moreover, set against the early sections of the dissertation, we should also consider Sieber’s reading of Technik in Benjamin. As stated in the prevision essay: “Happiness” [like “pure-language” in 1921] is understood as an a-topos, a rhetorical presentation, marking/causing a striving of an infinite task of translation. And, according to Jans Sieber’s reading of Benjamin, “technique” is a non-instrumental medium common to people and nature alike. “Making a non-instrumental use of technique means to freely use it in order to playfully and constructively give shape to world oriented towards the idea of happiness” (Sieber). When Benjamin writes “translation is a technique” whose “happy” form is multilingual and self-conscious commentary, this is an imagining of cunning as Darstellung, aiming for an estrangement moment (now-of-recognizability), for a presentation of an unstable plurality of meaning in a speculative historical context.
Übersetzung wirksam, zum Bestandteil der eignen Welt werden.

Situation concede/admit/granted was, could the Translation effective/ly, to-the Ingredient/Constituent/Element/continuance-part of-their/own/peculiar World will/.

could the translation become working, a constituent\textsuperscript{569} of its own world.\textsuperscript{570}

become effective, a component of its own world.

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29 Aber allerdings scheint mir die Anwendung dieser Technik auf poetische Texte überaus problematisch.

But all-things seem/appear to-me that application/usage of this Technik on/to Poetic Texts above-all/extremely problematic.

But all that aside, the application of this Technik to poetic texts seems to me highly problematic.\textsuperscript{571}

All the same, to apply this technique to poetic texts seems to me highly problematic.

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\textsuperscript{569}“Bestandteil”: “be-” (-signify touching, changing state) + “stand” (standing, position, status, stand) + “teil” (part, divide, split). “Bestand” (stock, portfolio, continuance, duration, truce). A “working translation” is one which is a constituent of its own world—standing as part of, and a part from. “Constituent” is “formative,” is what “goes to compose,” has “the power to frame or alter a constitution,” is “member” “body” “act,” is “the common part of any two or more complex forms or constructs” (OED)].

\textsuperscript{570}This cunning Darstellung attempts to hold the transcendental spell of the mother tongue suspended with the speculative possibility of a conceptual upheaval; that is potentiality bringing about a painful encounter with the non-instrumental, and thus changing to our perception, experience, knowledge, language, thus “constituting . . . its own world.”

\textsuperscript{571} . . . maybe . . .
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75-83.


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