Ghost Machine or Embedded Intelligence ?

Archi-Texture & Mnemo-Technique

by

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"The Last Word," as Sanford Kwinter has had it in *ANYTEN*=**mech in tecture** on "the mechanical in the electronic era," may also be a first attempt at **memory**.**inc**: "such matter may be said to possess a greater or lesser amount of **embedded intelligence**," namely, as Kwinter puts it **mech in tecture**=matter of fact: "a set of instructions **accumulated** over the ages (through the **application** of tools and **controlled** processes) and **incorporated** into this matter as a kind of permanent and continually **reactivated** 'memory' [...]."

Memory surfaces, hesitatingly, "as a kind of" and in quotation marks; indeed, otherwise it might not come up at all: it needs to be called up, called upon, and addressed like the Muses, whose mother actually was Memory, the Greek goddess *Mnemosyne*, to be called and recalled, called upon and recited. What sounds, and is meant to sound **mech**-**in**-**tecture**-like is recalled and recited as a matter of >memory< – both, bracketed: ["memory"], and called upon: >Memory< [!]. The graphics of computerized writing programs are barely able to keep up with the interlocking processes of "accumulation," "application," "control," "incorporation," "reactiva-tion" (Kwinter's series of "memory" features.) How come, we can't help, and barely realize, that we enter the "electronic era" memory-wise? Is there, still, a ghost in the machine -- the ghost of an even older era than the Cartesian episteme, haunting the subject-soul with an even older, and more objective, memory? Turned inside-out, the grammar of the mechanical, which once upon a time put the soul into the machine and had it work mechanically, exposes the memory of grammar and grammar as memory.

Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchnison, 1949); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage 1974).

The **mech** within the **tecture** reveals, as its grammar, an archi-texture and a mnemo-technique. "Accumulation," "application," "control," "incorporation," "reactivation" are, to a greater or lesser degree, adaptations from the mnemotechnical lexicon, "embedded," as its "intelligence," into the mechanics called memory. "Embedded intelligence" took care of the "soul" and turned it into a ghost, a haunting whose many returns remained this soul's only lot. Kant's dissatisfaction with memory's purely mechanical nature, as well as his critic's Hegel satisfaction with the same mechanics' role in establishing "thought," are equal proof of memory's uncanny, hardly acknowledged part in modern philosophies of the mind; its hidden but efficient work on, or underneath, the threshold of consciousness and reflection.

Kant, *Anthropology* (1798), [I] § 34; Hegel, *Encyclopedia* (1830), §§ 452-64.

Ironically enough, the ancient art of memory was most aware of its artificial nature; far from being "natural," artificial memory was supposed to work naturally, as second nature. Like art in general, memory had to conceal its art in order to be the more efficient. Likewise, competent speakers need not to be reminded of the grammar they are using; it would only confuse them. Those who have learned a foreign language through grammar have succeeded, precisely, as soon as they need no longer to be reminded of the rules they follow when they speak. In the same way we may seem to remember naturally while we are actually associating things according to rules, whose conscious application would be part of, not to say basic for, learning, the "learning of learning." Freud's discovery of the unconscious was a re-discovery of the mnemo-technics of – besides that street-car named desire – the "embedded intelligence" named memory.

It is part of Freud's hidden historicism that his mnemotechnics – that is, psycho-analysis –, in re-investigating the site of memory, leaves its history in the dark; what counts in the story of psyche is nothing but the outcome and come-out of the "subject" as subjected to history. Memory's embeddedness – i.e. memory as this embeddedness of "intelligence" – escapes, precisely, the intelligence embedded within it. Most notably, it eludes mentalistic explanations; thus memory is "certainly not," as the sharpest critic of mentalisms, Wittgenstein, in a shrewd remark has put it,

"the mental process which, at first sight, one would imagine." What makes us mistake it for some mental process is our "imagining," taking it, at first sight, for what it rather causes, its effect, namely, mental processing of the "data" embedded. Which leaves us with the elusiveness of the embedding structure, memory, and the self-effacing of the embedding *qua* structure.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 79; Edward Casey,
Remembering (Bloomington IA: Indiana UP, 1987), 88: "just when we think we are becoming clear about the basic structure and forms of human memory, it still manages to elude us."

The ancient art of memory has faded over the ages into a quite appropriate forgetting of what it once, against the grain of memory's elusive character, had brought into a manageable technique. As a mnemo-technique, the old art of memory had a very precise conception of the self-effacing mechanism operative in memory's processing (from "accumulation" to "reactivation" in Kwinter's list). Architecture's fundamental suitability to exemplify the imagining part of the processing makes a neologism like archi-texture the most congenial pseudonym for the embedding of structure that is memory. But what makes it, as the pre-condition of embedding, "textural" from the beginning (in the sense of an "arché"), is the structure "writing," a structure whose exemplary instance is writing. The point here is not that writing "fixes" words but is the fixing performed by words and thus the *arché* and structure of memory's embedding intelligence.

Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago UP, 1978), 224: "Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to it self [is conscious of itself]. 'Memory' or writing is the opening of that process of appearance itself."

The mnemo-structure – archi-texture enabling mnemo-technique – exemplified by architecture is a double system of places and files: a topology to arrange files to be called up. The traditional "image" of this doubling is, no wonder, the image. It is important to note that this image is no literal, mental image but the metaphor for the imagining structure (*eikon* in Aristotle); thus its most persuasive exemplification is a real picture and a memory palace's most persuasive example a museum of pictures. What is highly misleading in imagining such pictorial imagery, however, is the mentalist deception of an eidetic memory to be reactivated in mental images.

Those images present us with a most persuasive illustration of the process, while obliterating the enabling apparatus. What is crucial is not the mental state of the image but its place-value in the strictest sense, its opening up of (mnemonic) space. Within the topology of that space and its, so to speak, pictorial dimension, a two set "filing system" of places and superimposed images operates.

Richard Sorabij, *Aristotle on Memory* (Providence RI: Brown UP, 1972), 3: "it is more appropriate to speak of them as images **for**, rather than as images **of**, what is remembered."

The linking and relinking of files embedded in/as memory does not only presuppose some kind of space; it "spaces" in that it creates space, organizes and reorganizes space. Mnemotechnical spacing has been chronically underestimated in modern times as, at best, taking advantage of some naturally given mode of imagining or perception, while the mode of perception, space, is the result rather than the given of mnemotechnics. This is true both for the techniques of placing and the consecutive imaging. More or less obvious examples are the more or less mythically invested imaginary topographies, whose *genius loci* serves as ghost in all kinds of cultural machines. One of the most persistent is the medieval conception of the "holy land." Maurice Halbwachs has recognized it as the fundamental model for any imaginary construction of collective memory.

But as mnemotechnique uses images *for*, rather than *of* something, it establishes places *for*, rather than *of* something. Thus, it is not landscape that offers perspective, but rather perspective that produces "landscape" in the first place. The construction of landscape, a cultural super-imposition par excellence, applies perspective and by no means takes it from nature. Mnemo-technically, the new perspective shows the same spacing which had already organized the older legendary topographies, and it reveals, as Erwin Panofsky once made clear, the same paradoxical setting that informs, and troubles, the mnemotechnical double of "spacing" and "imaging," in short, the "media" of memory.

Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte* (Paris: PUF 1941), developed in *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992); Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic*

Form (New York: Zone Books 1992).

Memory.**Inc** offers some advanced examples of mnemotechnically guided research. Characteristically, these examples come first of all from art historians; architectural and pictorial space lends itself more easily, though also misleadingly, to a technical investigation. The inter-textual analysis of mnemonic super-impositions are less photogenic. Even though they are closer to writing, there the reverse misunderstandings of an identical tradition of *topoi* and their imaginary investment is paramount. Again, imagination's metaphorical eye, the melancholic I's eye, rather than memory's invisible mechanics get into focus and, finally, melancholically, mixed up. Borderline mnemonics notwithstanding, this "space" is no space in our heads or minds, nor the representation of some space outside our heads or minds. Rather, the spacial metaphors of illustrating memory represent and "reflect" mnemonic embeddedness of "space" as space in our concepts of mind and intelligence.

Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1979); to be applied to Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Middle Ages* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1953); Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago IL: Chicago UP, 1966).

Walking through this issue – a mnemonic technique of old – we encounter first a sample of memory places, then aspects of mnemonic mediality. As places, Saint Benoît sur Loire and San Francesco d'Assisi are ans arbitrary choices; they are the paradigms of a thousand years of Western European memory formation. Their exemplary role and singular importance makes them irreplacable mnemonic instances in themselves. The very particularity of these instances is of a mnemonic quality; it reveals, in its non-generalizable nature, the perhaps most important feature of memory, which connects it with mourning, that is, its indebtedness to specific events and embeddedness within specific cultural contexts.

All indiscriminate use of "memory" is ideologically biased precisely to the extent that it forgets, even forcloses, the act of discrimination constitutive of all memory. This is why forgetting is sometimes easier and maybe even wiser; but this is also why justice is an irreducible desire inherent in memory and the call for justice keeps it alive. The uncommon desire to be happily

forgotten would presuppose that justice was done, the last judgement performed. To do justice to memory in an issue on memory can only mean to do justice to every instance and condition of memory, its singularity, as in memory's most crucial test, mourning.

Anselm Haverkamp, A Kaleidoscope of Mourning, *Pequod* 35, Special Issue "In Mourning Wise" (New York University, 1993), 13: "Like rhetoric's art of memory, rhetoric's ways of mourning have been forgotten; they have been denounced for being just rhetoric. As the absolute other of rhetoric's art, mourning was and still is the art at memory's hidden center."

While memory may be everywhere the same, its content and pre-text must be seen as fundamentally different; it actually **is** difference. In mourning, this difference manifests itself as incommensurable loss; in memory the collective dealing with such losses becomes imperative and part of a particular community's identity. Such exploitation is to be answered in the name of memory, but it is obviously not enough to invoke its multicultural concern; this is bound to remain, by definition, a split affair. The survival of the mnemonically fittest cannot be the goal of a community's politics, and the liberal distribution of memorials is no solution. Thus, the learning from other memories rather than the establishment of one's own memory, indeed, the "incorporation" of the memories of others into one's own cultural embeddedness, may be imperative. Put the other's way round, we will have to learn, in the "learning of learning" that is memory, how to read and re-read the crypts and the encryptions of cultural "intelligence."

Saint Benoît's transference of St. Peter's crypt, the "citation" of this crypt's cryptic structure (not to forget its name), presents us with a first step of abstraction, in which mnemonic structure is constituted. Gerhard Vinken's reconstruction shows for the first time how mnemonic "spacing" consists of an inclusion of time within space, the transfer, more precisely, of a time-space cell called "crypt." It keeps accessible what it cryptically enshrines in the in the paradoxical structure of a mnemo-fetish. St. Bendect's relics offer themselves be (almost) touched and yet remain withdrawn through the veils of a multiple transference. The next step, to be inspected in the successor site (San Francesco, the Franciscan founder's burial place, following the older Benedictine order's model), adds a second-order technique; it develops the second of the two-set order of spacing and filing (or encrypting). As Jean-Philippe Antoine points out, the invention of

perspective is by no means due to a greater pictorial "realism," but a means of mnemonic filing qua imaging. Here, the older metonymic order of touch and displacement, operative in imaginary topography is superseded by, and conserved in, the detailed "perspectivism" of mnemonic imagery. As illuminated crypts, these images visualize, in a revision, the mnemonically en-crypted inscription of tradition.

Later times would counter a growing density of sedimentation with a deepening of forgetting. The prominence of new sites, notably the city, Paris or Berlin or New York, would produce new modes of visualization, while the mnemonic doubling of spacing and filing would work as effectively as before. Komar & Melamid's account of the Lenin and Stalin Mausoleum shows the persistence of motifs but, more importantly, the mnemonic machine's routine over the ages. What makes this instance the superb example of its kind is the amount of unintended irony, mnemonic satire, that turns this monument into a Freudian super-slip of gigantic proportions. More important, however, than the mausoleum's caricature of a mnemonic site is the well adapted pictorialism of a modern public sphere, say, of court houses and schools in America. Justice and education, the desire for memory and the necessity of learning, are key for memory's hidden work on myth. As we learn from both, Jane Malmo and Mike Kelley, the amount of blindness and repression that goes into the mythical construction of these sites is immense. Law's violence puts memory's desire for justice in an awkward position; a deeply seated experience, it shys away from mnemonic illumination. It is trauma in its modern insistence that brings memory back to where it began, beyond the economy of a culturally induced forgetting called "history," the most effective of Mnemosyne's nine daughters.

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), 13: "For History to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; [...] that history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurence."

Memory then, maybe, has to rethink its terms. The curvature of mnemonic space, maybe, takes a new turn. Or is it that the old turns need another thorough revision? Simone Barck's assessment of Berlin's Grosse Hamburger Strasse is memorable in that it traces the marks of tolerance and

terror left in this street, a sedimentation of mixed memories unlike in any other city. The turn from tolerance to terror leaves us with a superimposition of terror on tolerance that perverts the optimistic order of cultural superpositions, of tolerance following terror, as in Mnemosyne's scheme of cultural relief. An old story though, the return of the repressed. Walter Benjamin, between his Berlin childhood and Paris exile, did more than any other, with the exception perhaps of Freud, to reinvestigate this story before history. The texture under consideration is the city, the technique applied is writing: writing the scene of memory that is the city. Writing out the latency, the insistence within memory as well as the resistance to memory, Benjamin's *Berlin Chronicle* embodies (what Freud might have called) an archeology of memory; the archeology, more closely, of mnemotechnics qua embedded intelligence of writing.

The reading performed with all possible cunning by Carol Jacobs reveals the writing of a ghost-writer; Benjamin "reactivates" (Kwinter's list, for the last time), the old art in a most uncanny manner. It is as if *Mnemosyne* were speaking herself; recalled in writing, the art of memory bespeaks its fatal embeddedness, proves it in writing. Berlin, far towards the East called Middle Europe, is a city of citation, Benjamin its theoretician. More or less conscious of mnemonic technique, his theory centers on the "dialectical image," mnemonic imagery whose dialectics consists, precisely, in that its "imaging" works through writing. Contemporary photographies of his places, the *Tiergarten* with Queen Luise, offer weak illustrations of what, in fact, is not to be seen but to be read in Benjamin's writing. Pictures may offer an aura, while reading – far from actually getting hold of a thing – meditates the time encrypted in its trace.

Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk* [*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5], ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), Konvolut M.16a.4: "In the trace we get hold of a thing. In the aura it takes possession of us."

Benjamin's work, like Freud's, is to be taken as state of the art; but is it the art's last statement? The fate of **mech in tecture** beyond mnemo-technics seems uncertain. What does the age of the computer to memory, what does it add to the mnemotechnics of embedded intelligence? There is a lot of recall in the Media-Lab, spacial translation of the Saint Benoît type, for example. Sandy Baldwin is helpful in pointing out the crucial points of such unclaimed transferences. More

radical than the many unreflected uses of "space" in media studies, a revolution of possible spacing was well underway in the development of perspective since the Renaissance. The geometry of perspective recalculated by Wolf Kittler gives an idea of how mnemonic "space," as metaphor of containment, transcended, and keeps transcending, the borderline of mere imagination. Thus Plato's metaphor "Ho Theos geometreî," God thinks geometrically, was translated by Augustine into God's memory as the horizon of all containment. The constant need to exemplify and apply in controlled processes what is contained, incorporated in memory, in terms and under the condition of images, is more than ever on bad terms with a geometry that lends itself less than ever to an "imaging" of memory.

The marvellous historical compromise of Renaissance perspective was able to keep a highly refined balance between the application of San Francesco and the advanced abstraction of Massacio's and Brunelleschi's *Trinity*. The structure of the Holy Ghost informing this machine remembers an event beyond time and space. Similarly, also Mandelbrot's "fractals" remember, however faintly, their geo-metrical pre-text (the coastline of some homeland). Insofar, Mandelbrot's performance is not so far from Lenin's mausoleum; it rivals with the Trinity as Lenin does with San Francesco. Art, if anything (since "God turned bureaucrat") might prove to be the art of memory's ally as before. We leave the "Last Word" to someone whose words, reciting mnemonic tradition, are only meant to supplement his actual pictures. What these pictures x-ray-like bring to the fore and almost ghost-like raise are those lost: the dead encapsulated of old in the mnemostructure of texts, now given up and evaporated on our screens of unmediated vision.

Salvatore Puglia is a memory artist in the strong sense; he exhibits what is thematized in art, the double structure of intelligence: an embeddedness to be de-crypted, to be thought. To be **thought of**, however, is not to be saved; to be saved in memory means to be saved *after* drowning; saved from ruin, ruined. "Mourning the stranger" is the mnemonic crux of Puglia's pictures, a "loose-saving" [*perdresauver*] commemorating the unsaved and mourning the unidentified: "anonymous bodies and sentences nobody could sign now." Art's impossible project of old, that is, re-membering the dead in order to bury them. The inaccessible crypt of what is to be thought of,

but never controlled by this or any other art's design, contains a "foreign soul." In Hegel's powerful image, this soul is buried in a pyramid, that strange geo-metric symbol of anticipated immortality, mnemonic enclosure of a corpse covered with unreadable writing – "the pyramid into which a foreign soul is placed and stored" (*Enzyclopedia*, § 458). Puglia's transparent pictures like Benjamin's dialectical images are from this place.

Jacques Derrida, Sauver les Phénomènes – pour Salvatore Puglia, *Contretemps* 1 (Spring 1995): "Voila, n'est-ce pas, l'*eidos* de ce qu'il faut penser: le *perdresauver* à la fois, en un seul nom [...]."