KNOWLEDGE AND MEMORY:

THE

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE WRITTEN WORD

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KNOWLEDGE AND MEMORY: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE
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To my parents

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge and Memory: The Institutionalization of the Written Word deals with the relation between institutions and knowledge. More specifically, it deals with the effects of writing on the organization and institutionalization of memory. I show how the conception of memory as a written trace (as something made manifest in archives, documents and books) changes the relation between the subject, time and space to yield new paradigms of knowledge.

I begin by tracing the emergence of the written word from its origins in the Greek alphabet in order to show how the birth of the unified, rational self is a product of the spatial projection of speech onto the written page. I then discuss how the spatialization of language relates to the linguistication of space by considering four technological developments in the medieval practise of reading: the art of memory, indexes, signatures and copies. I show how the self is discovered as someone who reads into his own heart as if it were a text and how the newfound literate conception of knowledge as textual dissemination separates the self from his self-knowledge. I end by investigating the logic of institutions which gain power on the basis of a textual organization of knowledge. In particular, I consider how textual canons give professional bodies monopoly over discourse through a disciplinary division of knowledge, resulting in a society which is increasingly dependent on its experts to give it a sense of direction.

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Introduction

Knowledge and Memory: The Institutionalization of the Written Word deals with the relation between institutions and knowledge. More specifically, it deals with the effects of writing on the organization and institutionalization of memory. I show how the conception of memory as a written trace (as something made manifest in archives, documents and books) changes the relation between the subject, time and space to yield new paradigms of knowledge.

In Chapter One, I consider the major phenomenological and ontological differences between a memory organized around oral traditions of storytelling and the organization of memory that follows the alphabetization of language as the written word. I begin by showing how the economy of oral memory requires that thought, speech and language be inseparable and how the fact that the past cannot be separated from the present precludes the idea of the self as a unified, rational subject. Then I show how phonetic writing separates all three to yield a) the concept of language separate from embodied speech and gesture, b) a separation of discourse from reality to yield the concept of pure thought not tied to the ephemerality of speech, and c) the change from a memory that is embodied and hence both communal and personal, to a memory that exists outside the person. Finally I demonstrate how the idea of the self as a thinking subject and the mind as substance is inextricable from the creation of topics of discourse. In other words, I relate the creation of the unified, rational self to the spatial projection of speech onto the written page.

In Chapter Two, I consider how this spatialization of language is intimately related to the linguistification of space. I focus on four technological developments: the art of memory, indexes, signatures and copies. I begin by showing how the rebirth of literacy in Medieval Europe results in the discovery of the literate self as someone who gains self-knowledge by reading into his own heart as if it were a text. Through the interaction of the various arts of memory and the new scribal and bureaucratic technologies, this newfound textual self is exteriorized onto the written page. I argue that this new page layout leads to a new conception of the text as a mirror of the mind, resulting in new practises of reading and a new literate conception of knowledge as textual dissemination. Once the text is lifted from the page, reality becomes perceived as text. I try to demonstrate why the exteriorization the self onto the written page can only be understood within the framework of a new conception of knowledge as textual description by describing how the written word becomes a constituent element in the increasing legal society of medieval Europe. Finally, I end by arguing that this new bureaucratic constitution of the self, coupled with the dissemination of the freely circulating text, results in an increasing estrangement of the knower from knowledge. This estrangement, in turn, serves to usher in a new type of thinker on the European scene -- the professional intellectual.

In Chapter Three, I investigate the relationship between a disciplinary division of knowledge and the 'depoliticization' of the intellectual into professional bodies by considering the new power of the modern, rational state. In particular, I show how the textual organization of the archive as a library reorganizes both social space and the ideas

that circulate in it. Law is a particularly salient example of how the written tradition promotes the autonomy of the legal institution and redistributes social space based on new notions of truth and self-identity. I argue that institutional power takes the form of a disciplinary division of knowledge whereby each discipline attempts to achieve autonomy based on defining their own methods and textual canons. This professional monopoly over knowledge, by estranging the self both from knowledge and self-knowledge, results in a society which is increasingly dependent on the authority and moral power of its experts to give it a sense of direction. I end by considering two separate but related tensions produced by institutions which achieve autonomy on the basis of textual authority. The first tension concerns the relation between orthodoxy, the segregation of knowledge in the hands of an elite, and the moral universalism of bureaucratic rationality. The second tension arises out of the separation between knowledge and practice which produces both the problem of an amoral application of knowledge and the need to justify the economic rationality at the heart of an institution's intellectual autonomy.

I conclude by considering how the estrangement of the self from knowledge relates to the logic of institutional organization, in particular its relation to the written word. In particular, I show how the loss of institutional legitimacy does not so much contribute to the fragmentation and loss of self-identity as it presupposes it as a condition of its own autonomy and authority. I end by considering how the Western understanding of the individual as a series of texts to be read is threatened by this new disciplinary division of knowledge which results not only in the estrangement of the self from self-

knowledge but also in a retrograde, closed culture of knowledge where the practise of reading is once again reduced to the activity of an elite few. This caste literacy endangers the integrity of knowledge as well as the reproducibility of cultural identity, the only context in which this knowledge can find its moral and practical sense.

Chapter 1: The Written Word

1.1 Oral Memory

Prior to history there is myth. Myth is the narrative that exists before writing, before the spoken word is made letter. Belonging to peoples without writing, myth is the narrative that constantly reinvents the past, holding it together as a communal memory without leaving behind a trace of words for the historian's archive. Although opinion's regarding the difference between prehistory and history vary, it is generally assumed that prehistory concerns primary oral cultures, cultures without writing. Oral cultures leave prehistory once they have a record of words at their disposal. Until then, they rely on myths and oral narrative as the major means of organizing cultural memory. Before the chronological time of the historiographer, there exists the time of mythic memory -- time when memories well up from within men's souls and not by the external force of written reminders.

For the early Greeks who possessed no writing, this mythic memory was personified in the figure of Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses. The earliest of the goddesses, Mnemosyne refers to the fuller form of memory as an active remembrance or recall, a meaning lost with the modern word for memory, which derives instead from the Latin 'memoria'.[1] According to Hesiod, a poet who has received the gods' blessing can approach Mnemosyne's wellspring of remembrance and drink from those clear waters "the remains of past lives that Lethe has washed from the feet of the departed".[2] Possessed by Mnemosyne, the poet shored up Greek society in reciting the genealogies of

gods and men, the deeds of the heroes and the fortunes of the people. Memory is the cement of oral cultures, the condition of continuity between the world of the living and the dead and therefore the reproducibility of all knowledge. It is only when the fugitive evanescence of the spoken word is pinned down as a visual letter that the historian can replace the storyteller and turn the myths of prehistory into a potential historical source.[3]

It is difficult for a literate mind to imagine a world where words exist only as sound. In a truly oral culture, such as that of archaic Greece, the spoken word is not experienced as "simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent".[4] As a temporal event, the sounded word only exists as it is going out of existence. It leaves behind no trace, no residue to which tradition can refer, no subject matter that can be passed on. As opposed to writing, speech neither travels very far nor preserves much of anything. It only exists as a verbal transmission between real persons and thus cannot be separated from either the individual person or the collective body in which its meaning resides. Oral speech cannot exist independently from action, the behaviour and expression of bodily presence that is always found in face-to-face encounters. As a consequence, meaning in an oral situation can only be ratified in a series of concrete situations. Meaning is always concrete and always contextual. This means that the denotative meaning of words cannot be distinguished from their connotative context. Vocal inflections, tone, pitch, facial expressions as well as physical gestures all combine to make every particular speech act an effect of the body.

If speech is an effect of bodily activity, this implies that the contents of speech cannot be distinguished from its expression. Encounters in oral societies are rich in ritual

and ceremony. The various forms of corporeality, rhythm, dance and rite all coexist heterogeneously and express in a polyvocal way the meaning of the intended communication. Without a distinction between content and expression, sound cannot be emancipated from emotional utterance to become a logical thought, a linguistic proposition that collects ideas into a single whole and denotes them by a series of unequivocally defined words. In contrast to our literate conception of language as an independent, verbal whole, a system whose structure and contents can be completely and sufficiently encapsulated in our dictionaries and grammar books, oral speech never exists in a simply verbal context. Oral speech is embedded in concrete action and connotative expression. It only takes place as a public, social performance inseparable from the "total existential context which always engages the body".[5]

Given the ephemeral nature of speech, how do oral cultures maintain an enduring sense of identity and reproduce the communal store of knowledge which defines them? The exigencies of an oral noetic world, its need to maintain cultural continuity and reproduce knowledge, require that speech be memorable despite its evanescence. Since successful retention is achieved by repetition, oral memory is maintained by ritualized utterances. Proverbs, epithets, alliteration, assonances and other formulaic expressions all register the need for oral thought to be highly memorable. But precisely because oral memory *is* unwritten, oral peoples need to supplement these ritualized utterances by various mnemonic devices. One of the most common ways to prevent the leaking of communal memory is to fix utterances to the body. The drummers of the Lokele tribe in Zaire who fit their sayings to the beat of the tom-tom drums as well as Serbian

folksingers who tell their tales to the strum of the *gusla*, both rely on bodily rhythm as a mnemonic device.[6] Another way to remember speech patterns is to associate utterances with symbolic objects. The Luba memory board or the Maori tally stick both serve as memory aids stimulating a repetition of words and patterns of sounds by association. As symbolic objects they do not designate a single sound or meaning but trigger a whole range of stock words and phrases that the storyteller then weaves into a song.

Oral cultures have their own distinct economy of memory which effects the way that this remembered knowledge is conceptually processed. According to Milman Parry, there are "two heterogeneous processes by which social continuity is preserved: the flow of prehistoric epics that are never repeated word for word; and history that is built on the bedrock of words".[7] Parry found that in the twenty-seven thousand or so hexameters that make up Homer's poems, there are twenty-nine thousand repetitions of two or more words.[8] Use of a given epithet was determined not so much by its precise meaning as by the metrical needs of the passage in which it turned up.[9] The power and meaning of oral poems are conveyed more by rhythm and melody than by the semantic content of individual words themselves. Indeed, the concept of individual 'words' and 'language' has no place in the oral context where words cannot be pried from their meaning as determined by the metrical needs of the passage being performed. As Illich and Sanders emphasize, thinking itself is considered an activity or performance because there is "no distinction between speaking (and the language in which we speak) and thinking (and the language in which it is clothed)".[10] So long as memory takes the shape of publicly recollected performance, thought and speech cannot be separated.

This difference between thought based on mnemonically structured verbal utterances and thought based on texts effects both the content and structure of received knowledge. In both oral and literate cultures, the ability to recall and bring readily to the mind those things that you claim to know, is a fundamental characteristic of knowledge. But in oral cultures where there is no line of continuity outside of the mind, no text or page available to 'look things up', reproducing or verifying a line of thought becomes a crucial aspect of the cognitive process. The only way to retain a laboriously worked out thought is to shape it into mnemonic patterns. Only a thought that is constituted out of ritualized utterances is eminently repeatable. Thoughts that are not repeatable risk becoming nonthoughts; borne adrift in the endless flow of the passing present. For thought to be preserved as abiding knowledge it must:

> come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulatory expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the dual, the hero's helper, and so on), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind easily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall.[11]

According to Ong, fixed, rhythmically balanced expressions and repetitions form the substance of oral thought. Without a line of continuity outside the mind, oral discourse is always threatened by its evanescence. In contrast to the linear plotting of literate discourse which presupposes that the reader can 'backloop' or 'recheck' parts of discourse that may have escaped him, oral thought maintains continuity by redundancy and copiousness . Verbose, fulsome, exuberant expression, so typical of the oratory style in many cultures, is a direct consequence of the acoustic limitations of oral speech.

Redundancy and repetition demonstrate the unique relationship of oral thought with time. Oral thought is eventful. Immanent to speech, thought exists more as the relation between the statement and its repetition than in any direct correspondence between the statement and the world. This anticipation of meaning as a repetition of the past implies that meaning, for oral thinkers, is not found in an object but between the event and its recurrence. The overwhelming need for repetition as a means of cultural preservation means that the only thought that is remembered is the one that repeats itself in the future. Since knowledge is both hard to come by and easy to lose, intellectual experimentation is inhibited. In this sense, oral cultures are homeostatic and conservative.[12] The integrity of the past is subordinated to the demands and concerns of the present because any ideas or thoughts which cease to be useful or hold interest actually do pass away into oblivion. Cultural identity is maintained because oral societies live very much in a type of eternal now - the feeling that things have always been exactly this way because anything different from the present state of affairs has always already been forgotten. Homeostasis, however, does not mean that oral societies do not experience change. On the contrary, the very dialectic of memory and forgetting means that oral societies are open to successive deformation, appropriation of new truths and constant evolution. Oral societies are open-ended precisely because the acoustic laws of memory mean that change goes unperceived. The fact that speech has to be memorized in order to be preserved means that "something new must occur as a partial echo of something already said: It is a difference contained in the same".[13]

The reason why oral societies are structured around the eternal present is because they rely exclusively on personal memory in maintaining cultural identity. Communal memory as the sum of individual memories means that memory only resides through personal identification with tradition. The past has no other place to exist except as a perpetual reincarnation in the living body. A part of life, the past is continually recreated as the eternal present rather than as a historically reconstructed representation. As Pierre Nora puts it, memory "insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts which suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic".[14] Memory as something personal and affective is profoundly conservative as well as conveniently forgetful. Sloughing off irrelevant details, the present imposes "its own economy of past remembrances in a case of structural amnesia".[15] But even though communal identity is only maintained in personal memory, this does not mean that it is idiosyncratic. Recollection, as practiced by an oral community, is a "meaningful configuration of selected, negotiated events around a 'loci' of memory".[16] A locus of memory consists of *topoi*, the Greek term which means both the places and topics where memories converge. The *topoi* of oral cultures can either be concrete spaces (memory boards, staffs, necklaces) or the events and actions of a story. In either case, these spaces of memory endure outside of time as types of mental architecture or thought-structure rather than as temporally conditioned experiences. They are the cultural spaces around which individual memory revolves.

So long as communal identity only exists through personal memory all critical powers are concentrated in maintaining a close relationship between personal

identification and tradition. Since an affective relationship with cultural heritage is the best way of keeping memory alive, critical distance between the individual and his community is strongly discouraged. Until thought can be disengaged from collective memory, the 'I' as an independent, rational subject cannot be born. A personal, individual identity as opposed to a communal role requires finding a unique place for oneself. As long as the 'loci', the topics around which past events structure present memory remain tied to the body, thought processes cannot be separated from communal memory. It is not until communal memory can be established outside of consciousness that memory becomes a topic separate from the individual; a topic the individual can speak 'about' from his own unique place as a self-reflective, critical individual.

To conclude, the way in which an oral culture preserves knowledge also effects the nature and content of that knowledge. Oral thought cannot exist independently from cultural practice. In this sense, it suits highly particularized societies in which linguistic meaning is inseparable from the concrete situation in which it is embedded. In such highly regionalized societies, knowledge is neither considered an end in itself nor a body of truth independent of activity but is organized around the rest of life. Due to the high level of repetition and the structural amnesia of codified knowledge, new knowledge cannot be attained through an incremental increase in the store of old knowledge (knowledge being forgotten as soon as it is not used). Aside from its source in practical life itself, new knowledge is most often esoterically acquired from other powers and is linked to madness, inspiration or possession.[17] In either the esoteric or exoteric case, oral knowledge is nonconceptual in the sense that it cannot be abstracted as a pure 'concept'

independent of the operational reference in which it is experienced. Both Havelock and Ong refer to the work of Luria, the Soviet psychologist who discovered the absence of categorical thinking in nonliterates as well as the narrative way in which nonliterates preserve memory. The preferred form of memorization is ritual, repetition and narrative which assist personal memory partly through conferring pleasure to the body. Finally, the inseparability of communal knowledge from personal memory also effects the relation between the individual and knowledge. There is no clear-cut distinction between knower and known because no matter how personal the knower's memory may be, the content, the language in which it is expressed, is communal.[18] The empathic identification between the individual and tradition so necessary for the preservation of oral culture means that the individual insistently relies on external sources of knowledge, even of him or herself.[19]

1.2 Writing and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet

Writing does not concern any and all symbols, any semiotic mark but only a certain kind of symbol, the written sign.[20] During the 50 odd millennia that human beings have populated the earth, symbols have been used to encapsulate human experience, belief and knowledge.[21] By contrast, the first script or writing system is a relatively recent invention, not having developed until the Sumerian script in Mesopotamia around 3500 BC. Writing systems develop when symbols turn into signs each having a "single, discrete and unequivocal meaning".[22] While the polyvocal nature of the symbol cannot be understood apart from the connotative context in which it is

used, signs convey meaning that is narrow, precise and discrete. Writing results when signs form a code in which new signs with new meanings can be added to represent not only pictures but discursive components as well. Script in the sense of true writing cannot only consist of pictures or representations of things but must also be a "coded system of visible marks...whereby a writer could determine the exact words that the reader would generate from the text".[23]

Many scripts have developed independently of one another from the first beginnings of writing in Mesopotamia but literacy cannot be identified with any one of them. Although it presupposes writing, literacy cannot be reduced to it. According to Havelock, literacy is a "social condition which can be defined only in terms of readership".[24] So long as reading requires thought, the need to link a sign with its extratextual conceptual meaning, the task of deciphering writing restricts it to a status of craft, a specialized skill only available to a small elite. It is only when a wide reading public evolves that literacy restructures the primary modes of thought and organization of an entire society.

All scripts, with the exception of the phonetic alphabet, require extratextual input in order to be read. They presuppose familiarity with the extratextual content of ideas, the code which will unravel the representation in order to make it meaningful. Havelock has formulated the following general law governing the operation of all types of scripts: "the range of ambiguity in decipherment stands in inverse ratio to the range of possible coverage supplied by the content".[25] In other words, recognition of the meaning of a given script is a function of the reader's familiarity with its content. If you want a reader

to recognize what you wanted to say, it is better to minimize what was being said by referring the reader to the familiar themes and rhythms of oral expression rather than to risk being misunderstood. Script-based cultures still live in a world of connotative expression where the meaning of the sign is brought out by vocalized expression and not by the correspondence between sign and sound. The perception of signs may be visual, but the triggered memory remains acoustic. So long as language is connected to the verbal and musical rhythms intended to invoke the familiar, it is tied to an oral mnemonic groove which places severe restrictions on the verbal arrangement of what could be said or thought.[26]

The alphabet, on the other hand, functions the other way around. The reader can afford to be silent because it is the alphabet which speaks. It records sounds and it is only through sounds that it provides meaning. According to Havelock, the Greek phonetic system was the first true alphabet because it was the only one to achieve concurrently the three conditions for literacy: a widespread coverage of linguistic sound, a limited number of letters that made it easy to memorize and a lack of ambiguity because there was no choice in represented sign, no sign doing double or triple duty.[27] These three conditions paved the way to the fourth, namely the introduction of an educational apparatus that would teach children the alphabet, allowing them to interiorize a textual consciousness before they become entrenched in an oral mindset. A fully formed phonetic alphabet was invented only once, around 700 BC on the basis of a Semitic or Phoenician script that was developed in the second millenium before Christ (c. 1400) and subsequently perfected by the Greeks.[28] In adopting the Semitic script, the

Greeks took four of the Semitic letters that had no counterpart in the Greek language and changed them into sounds indicating vowels. They borrowed from the Phoenicians the analysis of the consonant as a theoretically separate component of speech, but added to it signs for vowels, thus creating a fully comprehensive script that allowed the entire word to lie before the mind's eye on the page. But according to Havelock, it was the Greek analysis of sound rather than its invention of signs for vowels that truly revolutionized writing:

> The Greek system took a leap beyond language and beyond empiricism. It conceived the notion of analyzing the linguistic unit into its two theoretic component, the vibrating column of air and the mouth action imposed upon this vibration. The former could exist by itself in language, as in exclamations like "Ah". The latter could not. It was therefore an abstraction, a non-sound, an idea in the mind. The Greek system proceeded to isolate this non-sound and give it its own conceptual identity in the form of what we call a "consonant.[29]

The result was a new script that became the first to almost completely assimilate the world of sound to visual script. More importantly, it became the first script to require no guesswork, no special knowledge to decipher the visual signs into their intended acoustic sounds. By releasing the memory burden off of the mind, the alphabet opened vast potentials for new forms of thought. Rhythm no longer inhibited the visual rearrangement of signs. This led to the treatment of the sentence as a manipulable artifact, whereby sentences were no longer considered as part of personal memory but as something which lay outside the mind to be used as needed. In addition, the conprehensiveness of the Greek alphabet allowed it to be more remote from the vocal world than any earlier script could be. Achieving what was unthinkable for the oral world, it could write out things that no one had ever heard before.[30] The written

unfamiliar sentence *qua* artifact could be preserved for future use, thus allowing a novel idea to be retained and reused in the development of new lines of thinking. Finally, the alphabet promoted intellectual development because it recorded a discourse of sounds rather than ideas. This 'unthinking' aspect of reading, its automatism, is precisely what made it so revolutionary for thought.

1.3 From Oral Plenum to Visual Surface

For Havelock, the Greek example is pertinent not only because the Greeks had, through what was properly fortuitous occurrence, discovered the alphabet, but also because there was a long period of resistance to the alphabet after its invention testifying to the strengths and continuation of sound oral tradition. This long period of resistance demonstrates the slow and uneven process of transition from oral to literate thought. Since the Greeks always had control over their own language - both in its oral and written manifestation - this resistance cannot be explained so much by social as by psychological pressure. As recent colonial history demonstrates, oral societies are extremely vulnerable to impact by literate ones. Oral societies with oral forms of government can be supplanted by a literate administration in a matter of decades, hence promoting the misconception that literacy spreads rapidly. In Ancient Greece, however, literacy was not a type of foreign rule (craft knowledge wielded by an elite, homegrown or otherwise, over a marginalized, illiterate population). Instead Greece provides us with a written record of the slow encroachment of literate modes of thinking on a well-established oral society. From recording the first known oral 'texts' in written form - those of Hesiod and

Homer - to the development of Platonic speculative philosophy as a full-fledged literate art (albeit in occasional self-denial), Greece offers us unparalleled insight into the resistance and development of what Havelock styles the alphabetic revolution.

One explanation for this psychological resistance to orality lies in the use of our senses. The shift from an oral-acoustic communication to the visual world of the letter privileges different senses and hence different ways of processing the world through our perceptions. Acoustic communication relies on the ear as the privileged *sensorium* and so reflects the characteristics of sound. One primary characteristic is the relation of sound to interiority. As Ong explains, hearing can register the interiority of that which is producing its sound without any sort of violation. A saxophone sounds different from an oboe, a solid wall when tapped sounds different than a hollow one because sound registers the internal structure of its source. Unlike sight which only deals with surfaces and hence separates the observer from what he views, sound "pours into the hearer".[31] Vision illuminates surfaces which can only be seen from one perspective at a time, while sound surrounds us from all directions. We are immersed in a world of sound, separated from the world by vision.

Perhaps what is most characteristic about sound is its ability to completely immerse us in the world while at the same time preserving the interiority of human consciousness. Our feeling that our body is a frontier between ourselves and the world, that we cannot get 'into' someone else's consciousness does not preclude our sense of being continuous with the external world. Acoustic communication of cultural knowledge means that memory always lies on the border between self and other.

Meaning does not lie outside the body as something written on the page but is corporeal, lived, continuous with the body as its sound. At the same time, thinking, in so far as it is acoustically governed, occurs as an event or performance in the public world. By virtue of existing as sound, this public world does not spread out before us, but surrounds us, effecting the way we in which we grasp existence itself. For oral cultures, "the cosmos is an ongoing event with man at its center".[32] This union of voice and cosmos, man's feeling of being in the center of the universe, breaks apart once vision becomes a privileged way of gaining knowledge. With the advent of writing and then print, we begin to refer to the world as something out there, 'laid' out before the eyes as a surface, like an atlas or visualized page just waiting to be explored.[33]

The impact of sound on ways of thinking is not restricted to preliterate Greece but is shown to persist even in semi-literate cultures with a high degree of residual orality. The experience of Ancient Greece is corroborated with the residual orality of Medieval Europe, an orality which lingered a good few decades after Europe was reintroduced to the literacy it had lost with the fall of the Roman Empire. According to Illich, pre-university European monasteries were called dwelling places of munchers and mumblers, a reference to the prodigious repetition which accompanied monkish reading practices. Monks that mumble, Illich explains, "translate the sequences of letters directly into body movements and patterned nerve impulses".[34] They do not think of reading as a silent, reflective practice but as a "carnal activity" whereby the "reader understands the lines by moving to their beat, recapturing their rhythm and thinking of them in terms of putting them in their mouth and chewing".[35] Thinking involves rhythm rather than shape,

temporal rather than spatial forms, a body reverberation rather than abstract idea. Before the voice is subordinated to writing, knowledge means literally the incorporation of the outer world into the body. Quoting Bernard of Clairvaux, Illich emphasizes the way in which wisdom does not concern gathering evidence about things outside the body but transforms the very interiority of the body itself: "Enjoying their sweetness", Bernard says about the Scriptures, "I chew them over and over again, my internal organs are replenished, my insides are fattened up and my bones break out in praise".[36] A semi-literate monk such as Bernard of Clairvaux demonstrates well how tenacious an oral mindset can be even within a rapidly evolving literate world. Learning to read can be a deeply traumatic process since reliance on the spoken word as a means of garnering meaning about the world also effects the concepts of that knowledge and the sort of reality it transmits. As long as meaning is orally preserved, knowledge involves incorporating meaning into the interiorized consciousness of each person. It is a process of harmonization, of getting it together rather than of dissecting and analyzing.[37]

A fully literate consciousness, on the other hand, enhances the eye as the privileged way of gaining knowledge. One consequence of the alphabet as a visualization of speech is the violation of the corporeal materiality of oral language. With phonetic writing, linguistic utterances no longer make reference to or emit from the body of a particular speaker, but become free-floating and autonomous statements. What makes oral speech radically contextual - its reliance on gestures as well as its emphasis on the generic as easier to remember than the specific - is lost with the spatialization of the word on the page. When the word becomes a visual sign, thought is purified of the

flow of speech and the contingency of context to become a permanent image and a disembodied abstract idea. The alphabetic visualization of speech produces a cleavage between the meaning of words and the flow of speech in which they are expressed. It allows us to think of the 'idea' of language and thought as something distinct from the body, with qualities of its own. The alphabetic visualization of speech tends to "represent sound itself as a thing, transforming the evanescent world of sound to the quiescent, quasi-permanent world of space".[38] It increases our tendency to think of words as signs, as quiescent, thing-like objects and not as sounded events moving through time. The more that sound is represented as a thing, the more easily it can be mapped onto the objects of the world as a label. Redirecting the eventful flow of speech onto the space of the page fosters the assumption that language transparently reflects the world. Since phonetic writing is assumed to merely translate spoken words, it becomes natural to assume that speech also stands in a one-to-one correspondence with things in the world.

Writing encourages a spatial rather than temporal ontology because the reading eye is spectatorial, an unblinking incarnate eye that is no longer deeply dependent on bodily memory to read what is on the page. Phonetic writing not only liberates the eye from its subordination to the rest of the body, but it also reduces the body itself to being one more object in the visual field. Gone is the oral man's conception of knowledge as a harmonization of the external world with the human interior. With writing, an inner consciousness has been forced outward. Rather than hearing the voices of the past, the eye now increases searches for evidence from the Latin *e-videre* which literally means

what has been seen with one's own eyes.[39] There is a shift in the balance of trust from the communal voices of the past, incarnated in the living body of the speaker to visual evidence which exists outside and independently of the perceiver's body, especially in the new form of the document.

1.4 Separation of Knowledge from the World

The ability to read speech visually in its alphabetized form, rather than hearing it pronounced orally, irrevocably changes the structure of language. Once language is rid of the memory burden, a different syntax comes into being; a prosaic syntax of factual statement rather than a poetic syntax of rhythm and narration. This change in syntax includes an increased emphasis on the general name or substantive noun rather than the proper names of specific agents who populate oral narrative. In contrast to oral speech, where ideas are always expressed in the form of short narratives of what we do (justice explained through the example of a just man, such as Achilles, doing a just deed) writing favors the general idea (justice as a topic with a series of definitions). Written description is no longer exclusively a function of narration, of describing specific agents in specific situations, but also includes conceptualization. Havelock gives the example of Aristotle who describes 'man' not by narrating what he does but by "linking 'him' as a subject to a series of predicates connotating something fixed, something that is an object of thought or a property, not an action".[40] This increasing practice of linking a general name with a series of predicates requires a change in the use of the verb 'to be'.[41]

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According to Havelock, the narrative structure of oral knowledge means that knowledge itself is time-conditioned. There is no such thing as a timeless present because the tenses of language (past, present, future) are all used to describe an act occurring within the temporal sequence of narrative. Havelock claims that as Greek writers become more literate, there are less uses of the verb 'to be' in its past and future tenses (belonging to a narrative description of an event that 'was' or 'will be') and more uses of the verb 'to be' in the present tense as a 'timeless', logical connection. Once the verb 'to be' becomes a logical connector, past tenses are no longer the "part of actions performed in memorized narration, but the part of historic fact, which now exists fixed in the mind of the present".[42] Accompanying this new theoretic construct of knowledge as the true statement, abstracted from context and holding for all time as a logical truth, was the invention of history as a prosaic rather than poetic enterprise. Narrative is used less and less to dramatize the powerful and mobile presence of personalities. and more and more to place events within a historical context, a context which, because it is past, presumably also holds for all time. The Greek literate revolution takes place when 'being' as a form of syntax begins to replace poetic narration, the language of 'becoming'. Being as an abstract truth is predicated on the separation of the past and present by the written page.

This change in linguistic syntax results in a change in the Greek concept of knowledge. As Havelock has shown, most of Plato's epistemology can be interpreted as an effort to supplant the rhetorical, mobile, sensuous world of oral narration with an abstract model of thought. From the implicit nexus or general ethos of social behaviour

expressed through the concrete situations of narrative plot arose a concern with the explicit rule, isolated from time, place and circumstance -- all the vagaries of the event. At the same time, writing allows the topic as an abstract category to take the place of the person. Writing precipitates the many events occurring in a story out of their situational context by gathering them together under a general heading or topic. The many episodes exhibiting a certain virtue (for example, justice exemplified through a series of just men performing just acts) would now be assumed under a common name or definition (for example, Justice as an abstract topic). The plurality of dramatic situations is increasingly reduced to one identity or topic covering all possible poetized instances.

According to Havelock, Being, this self-identity of objects of knowledge with themselves, are a product of a literate syntax. In order to remain isolated from context and identical only with itself, this new abstract object of thought as a topic or subject matter can only be expressed in analytic statements which hold true for all time. Principles, properties, laws, categories and topics are timeless because they do not describe specific situations or actions. Abstract objects of thought just 'are'. They cannot "share in the syntax of process and time", a factor reflected in their syntax which excludes tenses of the verb 'to be'.[43]

Once knowledge expressed through the event-time of narrative becomes knowledge expressed as the Being of self-identical topics, it becomes abstract. Knowledge ceases to be tied to either concrete and visual examples or the plurality of narrative episodes. As developed by Plato, this new paradigm of knowledge takes on the non-epic properties of the sheer idea (abstraction, self-identity and timelessness) in direct

contradistinction to the properties of oral narrative (with its concrete and visual example, plurality of episodes and emphasis on temporal progression). Finally this change in the expression of knowledge also effects a change in its form. From the indefinite narrative organization of oral knowledge (of events that follow each other in an indefinite series of 'and', 'and') arises the Platonic idea of a definite, complete world of knowledge coextensive with the self-identity and internal logic of abstract thought (of categories that divide up experience in sets of 'either/or' propositions). Indeed the condition of defining knowledge as an abstract object of thought is that it must be definite. Principles, laws and topics qualify as the new paradigm of knowledge not because they act as a random, heterogeneous collection, an endless series of aphorisms and performative scripts, but because they constitute a system. Accompanying this new unity of the abstracted object of thought is the Platonic belief in the unity of knowledge as a whole. The world of knowledge is no longer an endless event-series, the encyclopedism of oral thought which links it in associative fashion the plurality of acts and events. Instead, the various abstract objects of thought do not relate to each other in an open-ended narrative but in internal and necessary logical relations. For Plato the world of the known "must be a system and a system as such is closed".[44] Once the object of thought is one, so too is the unity of the known world, even if total integration requires thousands of minor hierarchies, thousands of different often conflicting categories which only fit together through stratification.

1.5 Separation of Knowledge from the Knower

So far I have tried to show how writing breaks up the oral world by producing a cleavage between the knower and external reality. Now I want to show how writing acts to produce a cleavage between the knower and himself. This results in what is arguably Greece's most important contribution to Western civilization -- the discovery of the *psyche* as an autonomous, intellectual entity independent of both cosmic life and society. According to Havelock's theory of Greek literacy, the concept of selfhood or soul as we understand it today has its beginnings in fifth century ancient Greece and results from the alphabetic separation of language from the individual speaker.[45] But if this concept of selfhood or soul so familiar to the Western tradition has a specific historical genesis, what was there before the self and how did the alphabet contribute to transforming this pre-selfhood individual into a subject which thinks, is capable of moral and scientific cognition and exists as a unique essence independent of both cosmic life and society?

In oral cultures, the subject manifests himself only through activity. Coming to life as a performative weaving of the communal patchwork of myths and tales, the oral 'I' only exists in the "doing or the telling, as the suffix comes to life only when it modifies a verb".[46] The oral 'I' has no personality or convictions apart from the patterns of action he either performs himself or identifies with in an oral performance. Between events the 'I' is extinguished but not dead.[47] Not having the language that allows him to express himself independently from oral tradition, the oral 'I' exists as a living potential, the pure difference between past sayings and future recallings, between himself as already gone and yet to come, held together in the act of anticipation. An 'I' whose personal

convictions can only be expressed in a communal voice, defines himself not through a stable self-identity but by activity. He only exists in the discontinuous present of events and not as a self-identical autonomous substance. As long as thought remains tied to communal memory, the individual does not exist as one identity unique to himself but as a plurality of characters, a never-ending performance which is the result of his identification with the myriad characters of a myriad performative scripts. The oral noetic world maintains itself through *mimesis*, the retention of society's precious hoard of exemplars through as complete a self-identification as possible. Since mimesis is a unitive activity that does not encourage the separation of knowledge from the knower, it inhibits the condition for producing the 'subject' as a thinker independent from his 'object' of thought. A socially well-integrated oral individual is never single but always plural, the sum of his manifold self-identifications with the various moral and political exemplars of his day.

Phonetic writing destroys self-identification with oral tradition by separating the act of thinking from oral activity. Once language is separated from the speaker by writing it can be visually rearranged into an object of thought. This separation, in turn, serves to separate the knower from language, the *logos* in which all knowledge resides, bringing him into sharper focus as the source rather than medium of utterance.[48] Separated from the mnemonic pressures of oral tradition, this new self can reflect and critically think on his own existence as an object of thought. Once the self stops identifying itself with an endless series of moods and events, it can start to speak, think

and act in independence of what it can remember. It can define itself independently of tradition, finding its reasons for activity in itself rather than in imitation.

This new self is necessarily rational because the only self that gains autonomy from the activity and mimesis of oral tradition is the one that defines himself as an independent thinker. This rational self 'sees' cultural knowledge as an 'object' and not just something which can be seen or felt. In other words, the autonomous self is rational because it is only identified as a 'subject' in relation to the 'object' which it, as subject, knows. Whereas the oral 'I' only exists in the discontinuous present or activity, of events that are always either gone or yet to come just like sound itself, this new thinking self exists in the "static relationship between the knower and the 'true' statement".[49] The self *qua* rational thinker exists in the same syntax which makes up the logical present of the text. His existence as an autonomous entity is conditioned by the language of Being rather than becoming.

If thinking is the defining property of this new self then learning, as the process through which thinking is made manifest, is also part of this emerging self-identity. As Plato's whole Republic demonstrates, learning is not restricted to teaching the soul how to think and become a self-governing entity, but also extends to institutional aspects of education. The role of formal education in the Greek world only becomes an issue once both the self and knowledge become separate from the communal tradition of which they are a part. We only begin to need to 'learn' as opposed to 'imitate' once knowledge is separated from cultural practice, when it is no longer lived but must be taught. It is only when knowledge is written down that educational institutions gain their first real social

power in so far as "literacy is the necessary ground of learning as it contrasts with 'lore' which is learning's oral antecedent".[50] How well a society's knowledge base is transmitted becomes increasingly dependent on how many people can read. This involves a whole apparatus of educational tools designed to initiate children into literacy when they are still young enough to assimilate reading as an automatic mechanism. The exoteric and theoretical nature of literate knowledge means that it exists independently of either subjective or practical experience. It is a function of schools and scriptoria, of a certain group of people who consider knowledge as an end in itself, the product of a certain specialization in the work of the mind.

Another, equally fundamental reason why education is so important is because a unified self is created at the expense of a unified communal identity. Learning, the ability to formulate new thoughts by breaking down the aggregative, unitive holism of the oral world, splits man away form his cultural identity as found in communal memory in order to unify him as a rational subject. The paradox is that although learning may call for integration it cannot bring about that integration because by alienating the self from communal identity it has also destroyed the identity of which that self was formally a part. By allowing the self to forget the mnemonic grooves of communal language, writing allows the self to speak as a knower and not an imitator, a thinker and not an actor. This, in turn, serves to destroy the memory of oral tradition which exists only as a performance; the sum total of individual actors identifying with the characters that they have each retained in their individual memories. Since it is tied to the living potential of an interior, human consciousness, oral memory cannot be taken apart and dissected

without being destroyed. Oral memory, like the personal memory in which it is preserved, exists only as a whole. It is an aggregative, unitive memory which cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts.

The text as residue fragments the unity of communal identity by separating past from present. Once texts are written, they just lie there, over and done with, a thing of the past. The past no longer traffics with the present, in a dialectic of recalling and forgetting shaped by the demands of current political and practical life. Instead, writing helps the past achieve the same immortality as a corpse which "cannot die for it has already passed through death, the ultimate change".[51] By separating thought from life, writing also separates the 'thinking soul' from its existence as a body. This emancipation of the subject from the lived body, since it also entails his emancipation from oral memory, destroys the oral tradition as such. Unlike oral memory which is never repeated word for word, writing only records the past as a verbatim transcription. The past is now preserved in an endlessly, recyclable, verbatim repetition rather than as a creative reenactment which differs in each performance.

This change in the way the past is communicated also changes its content. A trace only exists as the particular memory of a particular voice or point of view that it has encrypted. Texts destroy the communal fabric by recording a few people's thoughts for posterity and not the communal memory as a whole. Meaning no longer resides in the open-ended, communal, event-structured narrative but in the closed body of a text. It is the expression of a dead past, of a writer who has "produced a body of work because he has 'executed' his work (...execute from the Latin *ex* and *sequi*, at root means to follow

through to the end)".[52] The 'essence' of the past is no longer defined as a potentially repeating event. Instead it is a past that eternally returns because it always stays the same. As immortal as a corpse it cannot change because it has passed through death as the greatest change of all.

If reading constitutes us as subjects then we must return to that constitutive moment to understand who we are and how we came to be. For the early Greeks as well as Medieval Europeans, reading was an activity that was done aloud. During the nascent stages of literacy, the reader approached the text not as if it encrypted the author's silent voice but as if it was still a part of the oral tradition in which his mind moved. The text was the dead trace, the residue of a speech that was once orally given and that now had to be breathed back to life, made present by the reader's voice. But in the act of approaching the text as if it contained the voice of another, the reader found himself "occupied, appropriated not by the words of another but by words that were always there, without belonging to anyone".[53] The act of reading would have startled the early literate precisely because his voice was not possessed by another (a familiar enough condition for a prolific repeater and performer). In reading, the early literate lends his voice to an element of communal memory (the mnemonic grooves in which his mind moved), only to have his voice dispossessed by something that was never on the order of a voice -- the written artifact as a sign of somebody else's ideas. When writing "appropriates our voice in the act of reading it, it constitutes us as subjects, for reading enacts our relationship to something outside us".[54] This 'outside' consists of words which, *qua* visible artifacts, exist outside of bodies in the form of permanent topics of discourse. We are constituted

as subjects only by reading, precisely because reading is what enacts our relation to a permanent body of knowledge, separating us from our communal identity so that we appear as 'knowing' subjects. To understand the Greek discovery of both the self as knower and the object of thought as knowledge, it is necessary to go back to reading as the constitutive moment in which we made the transition from being immersed in the acoustic world of speech to becoming wielders of language and therefore unified, thinking subjects in our own right.

Endnotes

[1] Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 15. Henceforth cited as Illich and Sanders.

[2] Ibid., p. 14.

[3] Ibid., p. 5.

[4] Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 32. Henceforth cited as Ong, *Orality*

[5] Ibid., p. 67.

[6] Illich and Sanders, p. 6.

[7] Ibid., p. 16.

[8] Ibid., p. 18

[9] Ong, *Orality*, p. 21.

[10] Illich and Sanders, p. 19.

[11] Ong, *Orality*, p.34.

[12] Ong, *Orality*, p.46

[13] Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.73. Henceforth cited as *Muse*

[14] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History" quoted in Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, "Audacities of Memory" in *Luba Art and the Making of History*, Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts eds., (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1996), p.30.

[15] Ong, *Orality*, p. 49.

[16] Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, "Audacities of Memory", *Luba*, p.38.

[17] Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 153. Henceforth cited as *Interface*.

[18] Havelock, *Muse*, p. 70.

[19] Goody, *Interface* p. 157.

[20] Ong, *Orality*, p.84.

[21] Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "Symbols in the Prehistoric Middle East: Developmental Features Preceding Written Communication" in *Oral and Written Communication*, ed. Richard Leo Enos, (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 17.

[22] Ibid., 26.

[23] Ong, *Orality*, p. 84.

[24] Eric Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 57. Henceforth cited as *Literate*.

[25] Ibid., p. 71.

[26] Ibid., p. 76-80.

[27] Ibid., p.61.

[28] Illich and Sanders, p.10

[29] Havelock, *Literate*, p. 80-81.

[30] Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 39. Henceforth cited *Vine*.

[31] Ong, *Orality*, p. 72.

[32] Ibid., 73.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Illich, *Vine,* p. 54.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p. 57.

[37] Ong, *Orality*, p. 72.

[38] Ibid., p. 81.

[39] Walter Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 134. Henceforth cited as *Interfaces*.

[40] Havelock, *Muses*, p.105.

[41] Ibid., see chapt. 10

[42] Ibid., p. 109.

[43] Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 226. Henceforth cited *Plato*

[44] Havelock, *Plato*, p. 220.

[45] Havelock, *Muse*, p. 120.

[46] Illich and Sanders, p. 72

[47] Ibid.

[48] Havelock, *Muse* p. 114.

[49] Ibid., p. 115.

[50] Ong, *Interfaces*, p. 300.

[51] Ibid., p. 235.

[52] Ibid., p. 239.

[53] Wlad Godzich, afterword, *The Postmodern Explained* by Jean-Francois Lyotard, (Sidney: Power Publications, 1992), p. 132.

[54] Ibid., p. 133.

Chapter Two: The Text

2.1 The Art of Memory

By Classical times, memory has been divided into two sorts: natural memory which is "born simultaneously with thought" and artificial memory which is strengthened by art and discipline.[1] This essentially Platonic distinction differentiates between esoteric recall and the reproductive, exoteric learning of a written text by heart. Memory no longer bubbles forth from the creative waters of Mnemosyne but has become an art, a discipline, a trip to the storage room of the mind. Before the phonetic alphabet bound the oral flow of speech to visually rearrangeable rows of script, the concept of a mind as a storage which 'held' perceptual sensations was not possible. For the oral bard, his memory devices are not signs that hold ideas in the mind. Instead the various boards, staffs, sculptures and beads exist outside the body as a type of multireferential iconography which does not symbolize thought as much as it stimulates and provokes it. Perception of these memory aids is what triggers thought by connotative association. This means that the oral (story) 'line' of thinking is not reproduced by reminding ourselves of the signs of our ideas, but is composed, improvised in a performance that is never repeated word for word. There is not yet the separation of perception and memory which occurs once words become signs for perceptions already experienced and 'held' in the mind in the form of ideas.

In terms of Western culture, by the fifth century BC the preliterate bard was succeeded by the new art of public speaking. Ironically, the first place where the effects

of literacy were experienced was in the service of oral delivery. Rhetoric is the term

coined for this "new non-oral art by which a public speaker prepares within his own mind

the sentences which he wants to utter in public on some later occasion".[2] As public

speaking developed, the rhetor wanted to memorize not only the structure of his

arguments but also the details of the speech and metaphors that he had carefully prepared

in advance.

The art of memory as a symbolic labeling of speech acts was created in the fourth

century BC by sophists and developed into a type of reading by late Roman antiquity.[3]

According to the three extant memory treatises (the anonymous Ad Herennium, Cicero's

De Oratore and Quintillian's Instituto Oratoria), the art of memory involves imprinting

the interior of a building onto the mind. Memory can be trained by selecting locations in

this mental building, forming images of the facts to be remembered and storing these

images in their proper location. When it came to retrieving the images, the arrangement

of the locations would ensure that the facts were remembered in the right order. The art

of memory, then, includes both places (*loci*) and images. A locus is any place easily

embraced by the memory, a "house, intercolumner space, an arch or the like".[4] An image

can be a figure, mark or simulacra (*formae, mark, simulacra*) of the object we wish to

remember. The images by which the various speech acts were to be remembered were

stored in the 'places' that had been memorized in the building. They served as symbols

or emblems by which memorized phrases were attached and ranged from simple

emblems (such as a goat or a sun, a branch or a knife)[5] to the full fledged exemplary

character (images of gods and men and even personified virtues).[6] Whenever the rhetor

wished to recollect his speech, he would move through the rooms of his memory palace, retrieve the images he had stored in each of the rooms, and so recollect the memorized formulations he had associated with these emblems. The linear sequence from room to room would ensure a linear sequential movement from idea to idea and from image to image.

Two crucial points need to be emphasized if the art of memory is to be properly understood. First, even though the art of memory relies on the visual metaphor of writing, it assumes that reading is an oral activity. Symbols and icons may be 'written in the mind' but only as aids to jog oral memory and not as equivalents to letters, the meaningless string of shapes that translate phonetic sound. Although the unique contribution of this mnemotechnic was to put visual architecture at the service of oral delivery, writing still serves as a metaphor rather than actual description of the process. This is evident in the fact that images serve to earmark whole passages by their image and shape; passages which will then be retrieved by the psychomotor innervation of the tongue.[7] This dual capacity of images to earmark both passages and words means that the art of memory consists of both the memory of things and the memory of words. 'Things' are the subject matter of the speech while the 'words' are the language in which the subject of the speech is described.[8] The memory of things (*memoria rerum*) assumes that words serve as description, as the 'clothing' of thought while the images constitute the thought-content. Language is reduced to a contingent means of description while the importance of images increases until they become ciphers for actual mental ideas themselves.

The second crucial point concerns the permanence of the architectural *loci*. Memory training is only expedient if the same set of *loci* are used again and again. It is the very permanence of the architectural *loci* which permits both the retention of the written trace and its erasure to make room for new impressions: "images, like letters, are effaced when we make no use of them, but the backgrounds [*loci*] should abide".[9] As Yates points out, the very word 'topics' as used in dialectics derives from these mnemonic *loci* which act as both the places and topics where memories converge.[10] The places are not the memories themselves but act as compartments which allow images to be detached from oral narrative and regrouped by virtue of association or logical argument. Cicero describes these places as wax tablets upon which the letters of memory are written.[11] They form the "very special storehouse constituted by the alphabet: a *corpus* of forms without meaning in themselves, but determining meaning by selection, arrangement, actualization".[12] Topics as places in the mind serve either as empty compartments, grids that divide up discourse into empty forms in order to group together arguments by association, or they serve as stereotyped propositions, the hackneyed phrases of the old oral memory that remain convincing during an argument because of their familiarity.[13] Before rhetoric would render itself obsolete by the sixteenth century (by privileging thought content over words) it would bequeath this architectonic image of the memory palace both to the schematic layout of the manuscript page and the later printed book.

Memory is important to consider because the way we recall, and hence organize our mental and cultural space, also affects the nature of what we recall. In particular,

different ways of preserving memory encourage different relations between language, thought and reality. A topographical conception of memory presupposes a topographical conception of language. Oral memory, the memory of rhythmically grooved speech turns into topics of discourse by the reduction of sound to visual elements. Phonetic writing transcribes sounds by reducing words to thing-like labels which serve to dissociate the name and the thing. Once the word is represented by the sign, there is a tendency to think of the word as a label, a marker which designates but does not constitute the substance of the thing. One reason for the development of nominalistic theories of language in Western thought may well be this reduction of the heard world of sound to quiescent, visual space, which minimizes the role of language in structuring the world and the categories through which we perceive.

This exteriority between language and reality also relates to the split between language and thought. Icons or images, the memory of things, serve as ciphers for mental ideas only by reducing words to the description, the 'clothing' of thought. As the contingent 'clothing' of thought, language now points to a truth outside of itself. This denotative assumption that language points to a truth outside of language (a truth that precisely because it is outside language can act as an external marker against which competing descriptions of reality can be corrected and judged) is inseparable from the idea of thought as something 'held' in the mind of the utterer. Language as contingent description points both to an external truth and to internal 'beliefs' held in the mind. Herein lies the self-destructive nature of rhetoric. By positing this distinction between memory of things and memory of words, rhetoric reduces the whole role of language in

constituting meaning to an ornament, a color, a descriptive flourish that always comes *after* the idea. By the sixteenth century, rhetoric is rendered obsolete by the "promotion of a new value, *evidence* (of facts, of ideas, of sentiments), which is self-sufficient and does without language...or at least claims to no longer use language except as an *instrument*, as a mediation, as an expression".[14]

Finally, placing memory outside the lived body, whether in the permanent space of the page or the immobile architecture of thought, changes the role of memory in mental life. Memory no longer derives from the primordial waters of Mnemosyne; a source of maternal, even maritime indeterminacy, that can be rendered meaningful in any number of ways. Now memory functions as an identification of an idea. It consists of classification, of finding a space for every image by dividing up space. Thinking is no longer part and parcel of the simultaneous layers of meaning, the polyvocality of oral memory, but involves the identification of ideas by redistributing them in space. Since written thought only describes ideas through syntactical linear order, it ends up separating the qualities or attributes of objects from the objects in which they inhere. It disperses those qualities which actually occur simultaneously in real life onto the linear space of the page.[15] Thought fixes abstract boundaries for these linearly dispersed descriptions by gathering them together under common 'places', headings and topics. Further, in the same way that mental ideas now have an identity fixed by boundaries, so too individuals are increasingly defined by existential boundaries around the self. The separation of the self from communal memory relies on an "inner distance from the community"[16] discovered through this new topography of the mind. In other words, the

popping out of a transcendental truth from the linear chain of writing also interiorizes the self through the creation of inner space.

By the time of the Middle Ages, this image of the mind as archive is interiorized to become the image of the soul. Scholasticism interprets the art of memory not primarily as a rhetor's learning device but as a faculty of every soul. As artificial memory is switched from rhetoric to ethics, it achieves a moral triumph. Memory is no longer a mere 'technique', but a crucial means of retaining moral images in the mind and so considered necessary for the exercise of prudence (one of the cardinal virtues).[17] This new conception of the soul, construed in the shape of a memory palace and burdened with an unerasable conscience, will now be open to textual analysis. The rhetorical device and the new topography of mind it implied, "provided the foundation for a new activity, confession, the verbal manifestation of a secret kept in one's heart".[18] It is only when past thoughts and deeds become literally unforgettable that the individual heart and mind can be read in a new examination of conscience. The self is burdened with a soul, a permanent record of its own past, at the same time as it is emancipated from the past of a communal and oral memory.

2.2 Indexes and Commonplaces

As I have explained above, our meaning of topic derives from the meaning of *topos* or *locus* as a place in the mind. For Aristotle, the notion of *loci* was clearly epistemological. In his Rhetoric he distinguishes between the notion of places as 'commonplaces', headings which provide material for any and all subjects, and as

'special' places, headings which offer material concerning individual subjects such as law or physics.[19] The term *loci* covers a wide range of meanings, deriving from the three successive definitions of the term 'topic' in antiquity. Topics can either refer to a method (a collection of commonplaces of dialectics), a grid (such as the different compartments of a memory palace) or a storehouse (an archive of consecrated themes obligatorily employed in the treatment of any subject).[20] The historical ambiguity of the term derives from the fact that it refers both to commonplaces as empty logical forms, common to all arguments, and to commonplaces as the stereotyped, hackneyed propositions of common opinion. It is this interchangeable meaning of topic as both discursive place and stereotyped commonplace which led to the invention of the index. The index combines the oral commonplace tradition of reiterating and embellishing the already known with the logical division of discourse into places or topics by the space of the mental text.

According to Ong, one of the earliest interactions between the ancient oral world and the new visual world of writing and later print took place in the index. As an intensely visual management of the noetic store, the index breaks down narrative into the 'places' or 'topics' of a text. Illich claims that there is a strict analogy between the invention of the 'word' and syntax' in Ancient Greece and the 'index' and 'text' in the Middle Ages. The index is a pivotal innovation responsible for both the "emergence of selfhood understood as a person" and the "emergence of 'the' text from the page".[21] How does the *index locorum* as a redistribution of cultural space (the oral commonplace tradition) by the space of the text serve to decisively separate the individual from mnemonically structured knowledge? How does this new independent self relate to the

index's origins in the ancient art of memory, especially regarding the architectural analogy of memory as a locus or ark in the mind? If the notion of the archive as a place in the mind is so crucial to the development of the index, why did the index itself have to be invented before the power associated with an exact record of memory was actualized? Finally, what role did the index as an exteriorization of a mental archive play in giving the *real* archive symbolic value and therefore allowing it to be used as a source of power?

The reason why early medieval readers had no need for the index is because they, like ancient rhetoricians, indexed texts in their mind. Medieval schoolmen 'printed' books before the invention of the mechanical process of printing, by "scanning texts and accessing 'through the imagination' the pages imprinted on their minds".[22] It was Hugh of St. Victor, widely regarded as the most influential twelfth-century teacher of biblical studies, who revolutionized the ancient art of memory by interpreting it as a faculty of the soul. In his Didascalion, Hugh tells his young students that "knowledge is a treasury (*thesaurus*) and your heart is a strongbox (*archa*).[23] Echoing the Gospel of Matthew's claim (VI 21) that "where your treasure is, there will your heart also be", Hugh interprets the heart as an ark or treasure-chest of precious information, thus turning the art of memory into a moral virtue.

Monastic reading, unlike the later scholastic reading, presupposes the art of memory. It does not involve flipping pages to find out what one is looking for, but instead involves contemplating the text by imprinting it onto the treasure-chest of the heart. The layout of the early medieval book is not so much structured by subject matter as it is by the order that is found in the reader's heart. According to Illich, Hugh's

greatest innovation was to change the internal architecture from an arbitrarily constructed memory-palace to a "historical-relational model".[24] It is the medieval reader's task to "insert all that he reads at the perspective point where it all belongs in the *historia* between Genesis and Apocalypse".[25] Thus, it is the reader's task not to impose order on the story but to find himself within the sacred *ordo* of eschatological time. The reader finds himself in the homeland of the text only once the self is constructed in the image of the Book. By changing the arbitrary architectural model of memory palaces into the historical-relational model which imprints the order of the Book onto the treasure chest of the heart, Hugh constructs the soul as something to be discovered through reading. For Hugh, the monastic cloister as an inner *"cloastrum animae* or soul's cloister"[26] becomes the metaphor for the "recollection of the reader in his own interiority"[27] After Hugh, the self that is constructed as an ark, a treasure-chest, in short as a scrutable text, will no longer be defined communally but architecturally as someone with an inner space to be read.

2.3 Exteriorization of the Self onto the Page

According to Illich, a series of technological innovations around the year 1150 irrevocably changed our practice of reading. Before 1150, reading still moved within a monastic mindset. Visual signs were considered traces of utterance, a recording of speech that prompted both the visual and aural memory of the monastic reader. Reading was a meditative, ruminating activity still performed aloud. The monk would supplement the visual signs on the page with his own aural recollection and mental indexing. These

mnemonic devices would allow him to meander through the book, focusing on key themes which would be highlighted by the commentaries, glosses and illuminated drawings all designed to stimulate his own internal memory. Allowing the sequence of text to determine his own exposition, the monk approached the book as if it were a unified whole, constituted out of endless commentaries that were "strung together like beads on someone else's narration"[28]

There was little distinction between text and commentary because there was no coherent idea of the author as someone who wrote out his own works. Writing techniques were such that it was difficult to distinguish between the scribe (who produces copies), the compiler (who adds to what he copies but nothing out of his own mind), the commentator (who only comments to make the original intelligible) and the auctor (who dictates his own ideas but only by relying on other authorities).[29] By 1150, the invention of the alphabetic index accompanied by other innovations brought about the scribal revolution that changed the whole practice of reading in the West.

Scholastic reading begins when the text changes from being a record of speech to a record of thought. The reliance of the alphabetic index on a "trivial sequence rather than concrete events to order subject categories"[30] was crucial to this move. It was accompanied by a series of other inventions - indices, library inventories, table of contents, chapter headings - "all engineered to search and find in books a passage or a subject that is already in the mind".[31] Visual signs became symbols of mental concepts only once the index cannibalized the body of living tradition by offering random access to the text, an access based not on narrative but on topics compiled on the editor's whim.

Once the textual corpus was dismembered by alphabetically organized subject headings, books could begin to reflect the author's line of thought. Mentally organized, preconceived patterns of 'knowledge' held in the mind's eye are now projected onto the page. There is no longer any sacred *ordo* that the reader can put himself in since the author now "chooses a subject and puts *his* order into the sequence [of commentaries] of which he will deal with its parts".[32] Reading increasingly becomes silent because the visual architecture of the author's thought was something that could not be heard but had to be seen. The writing surface has become a thought process and no longer a record of speech. This new text-mind relationship which would later be the foundation of the print revolution was inextricable from a new conception of thinking as textual abstraction.

But before the text could be thoroughly detached from its concrete manifestation as book, the letter had to be detached from "its millennial bondage to Latin"[33]. Monastic reading may have presupposed that letters were traces of speech but the speech that the letters recalled was not a living, vernacular dialect. Instead, it recorded the sounds of a dead language. For almost one thousand years, Latin letters were only considered to be able to translate the sounds of one language, the Latin one. Only once the alphabet was seen for what it was - a trivial sequence of shapes translating the universe of heard sound - did the idea dawn that all people use language when they speak and that this language could be written down.[34] Before the alphabet was applied to vernacular tongues, speaking was considered a performance and not the 'spelling' our of own thoughts as they were written in the mind. The alphabetization of dialects produced the idea of 'a' language, a content of speech called 'thought' that could be poured from one vernacular

speech into another.[35] This new literate language changed, in turn, the relationship between the text and the world. With the detachment of the text from the concrete object, nature ceased to be something that was read but became something to be described. Thought became a series of abstractions performed on the text rather than the world. Nature had to be textually described before it can be thought about. It now lay before the textualized consciousness like a great blank, an endless vista of meaningful surface to be decoded.

A good example of this new interaction between text, mind and experience is found in the early renaissance work of Textor, cited by Ong. Textor's work entitled 'Cornucopia' is a prodigious attempt to catalogue all things that can be found in great abundance under specified places or headings. While the sweeping ambition of Textor's project - "to precipitate out of all classical texts all the suicides, haircuts, sleepy people, astrologers, worms and whatever so that each class can be grouped together in space"[36] - strikes us today as completely absurd, his method, which consists of placing bits of text side by side in spatial relations, can be considered proto-scientific. His method, in fact, is that of rhetorical induction: he proceeds from particular examples to generalized conclusions and from these conclusions he draws new examples. To better understand what Textor does, it is useful to compare the Greek and Latin etymologies of the term 'example'. Textor combines the Greek etymology of example (*paradigma*) as a showing or pointing out, always associated with light, with the Latin etymology of example (*exemplum*) as a selection, excision, and textual recombination of narrative. He excises and redistributes textual bits by 'seeing' analogy, similitude and paradigmatic relations

between instances. In this way, he redistributes the textual world of 'commonplaces' into new spatial configurations based not on the normalcy of their claims (the norms of behaviour they seek to impose) but on their normativity (how much they relate or conform to the general law that they themselves produce).

Despite the absurdity of Textor's project, it reveals how induction as a scientific method derives from the rhetorical use of example as a discursive structure, itself a product of the visual management of the oral noetic store. The scientific concern with examples as empirical samplings of data as the only real evidence for proof-positive knowledge, cannot be separated from the increasing concern with textual particulars. The inert, extratextual world of 'fact' which modern science presupposes is a textual construct based on a new text-based representation of thought. By redistributing the world of sayings into the world of facts, the index also acts to separate the world of observable phenomena (as 'abstractly' managed) from the ethical roots of *exempla* as edifying stories, commonplace truisms or other performative narratives admitting of moral lesson. As oral thought breaks up into visible units under the visual economy of the index, so too does the unified world as a story to be told or book to be read. Science as the induction of universal laws out of observable phenomena separates from the moral sphere, thus inducing a new relation between the self and knowledge. Knowledge is no longer tied to self-knowledge, but consists of impersonal facts and evidences. Gone is the conception of places (*topoi, loci*) as vague regions that are simultaneously in the mind and in the physical world.[37] By the time the printing press arrived, knowledge would be

identified only on the thousands of written surfaces where "a 'unit' of thought and a verbalization could be pinned down".[38]

To briefly recapitulate the aims of this chapter, I have tried to show how the twelfth-century discovery of the self as someone who has self-knowledge is conditioned by the act of reading. By reading their own souls as if they were texts, sensitive monastic readers such as Hugh of St.Victor, paved the way for a new type of reading - reading the text as if it were the product of the mind. The index played a crucial role in the move from monastic to scholastic reading. By breaking up the narrative chain, it precipitated the text, as the product of subjects already 'held' in the mind, from its embeddedness in commentary. Commentary no longer followed the sequence of narration but imposed its own order on the text. In this way, the text was separated from its concrete existence as object to become what Illich calls an "abstract architectural phantom"[39] of the author's mind, thereby also changing the relation between thought (as text) and the world. I would now like to see how knowledge becomes separated from self-knowledge once it is encapsulated in the freely circulating text. I would like to see how the text leads to a new organization of social space accompanied by the creation of a new man, the intellectual, for whom knowledge is no longer a spiritual journey leading to self-knowledge but a profession.

2.4 Reality as Text

Once the original 'places' in the mind become physical places on the page, knowledge becomes a function of mapping boundaries. Since the world now has to be

textually described before it can be talked about, there is a huge increase in the number of documents supervening in everyday life. Clanchy describes how between 1250-1350, a period coinciding almost exactly with the invention of the index, the number of formal charters increased almost 5 fold to total several million charters in England alone (almost 5 charters for every piece of describable property).[40] People discovered that before objects could be owned, they first had to be described on parchment, 'held' in the mind rather than physically possessed.[41] Once the world became text, only description could appropriate it. As Illich and Sanders note:

> Thousands of topographical descriptions have come down to us from this period; boundaries became effective through these descriptions: 'From the old oak tree along the stream as far as the big rock and thence in a straight line uphill to the wall...' This appropriative description of reality began as a jurisprudential method before it became the foundation of natural sciences.[42]

Objects that are 'held' in the mind's eye can only be possessed through description. Language is increasingly put to the service of perception.

Once the world is perceived as text, the creation of the text as an image of boundaries around 'ideas' in the mind entails the creation of boundaries in the extramental world. Writing isolates thought on the written surface, presenting "utterance and thought as uninvolved with all else, somehow self-contained and complete".[43] Even more than writing, print encloses "thought in thousands of copies of a work of exactly the same visual and physical consistency".[44] In the same way that textual closure produces the impression that a system of thought is self-contained and complete, so too this same closure implies that the world we now grasp through description is similarly self-enclosed. As Ong notes, print is "curiously intolerant of *physical* incompleteness".[45] A

printed text "can convey the impression, unintentionally and subtly, but very really, that the material the text deals with is similarly complete or self-consistent".[46] Insofar as writing encourages the mind to feel itself 'closed off', contained in its work, knowledge becomes increasingly self-contained. Knowledge, like the world, can be summarized (or mapped) in the textbook (or atlas) and therefore considered as something self-sufficient and complete with no exchange with anything outside of itself.

The separation of image and word effected by the new textual layout, changes language from the proverbial, often enigmatic formulas meant to invite reflection, to language as the description of a visual 'field' of knowledge. In contrast to the copious verbosity of residually oral manuscripts, catechism and textbook are paradigmatic transmitters of knowledge in a literate culture. Whereas manuscripts relayed wisdom through illuminated pages whose script is inextricable from its glosses and images, "catechisms and textbooks presented 'facts' or their equivalents: memorizable, flat statements that told straight-forwardly and conclusively how matters stood in a given field".[47] As marginal glosses get pushed out into their own proper place as a separate commentary, as the destabilizing potential of images is brushed aside by the controlled prose of 'just the facts', so too the text closes off knowledge from the world by making the world in the image of the text. This is, after all, precisely what closure does: knowledge appears self-contained only if it is completely mapped over the world it purports to describe.

2.5 Signatures

By the late Middle Ages, the written word in Europe had gone from being a "mysterious embodiment of the Word of God" to "being a constituent element in the mediation of mundane relations".[48] In the increasingly legal society of medieval Europe, trust, possession, property and power all became functions of the written text. By the thirteenth century, transmission of rights or property no longer signified an action, an oath sworn in conjunction with the tangible object or sign upon which it was conferred. Instead, "word and sign collapsed into the written statement" as the document itself became "an instrument of witness".[49] But what was required for this shift in trust from the given word to the sealed document? And more crucially, how did documents change from being records of spoken events to being performative acts in and of themselves?

Even after writing was introduced into the administrative life of early medieval Europe, oral testimony was considered more trustworthy. Before charters became common place in England, people preserved the "memory of title to property in the object which symbolized its conveyance".[50] Objects such as cups, rings and symbolic knives were often attached to charters as symbolic mementos. This use of tangible objects, such as swords or goblets, as symbols of the transaction or oath undertaken, presupposes an oral organization of memory. So long as writing remained the written remainder of an oral event, its "sealing with a signet ring or a signature was an emphatic confirmation of the oral event it described; but not yet its authentication" .[51] Like tangible objects, seals and signatures were considered relics, symbolic messages from the past that recalled the memory of the donor's will in a way that no writing ever could.

These symbolic objects served the same function as did the props in the ancient and medieval memory palaces. Just as swords served as images of things in the mental building, so too real swords functioned like symbolic images "holding the memory of the event in the mind as if they were letters".[52] Only slowly did the seal change from a "thing (*res*) into the substitute for a person's signature".[53] With the legal instrument or institution of the signature, documents were no longer a mere addendum to events in the extratextual world. They become performative actions in their own right, making things happen independently of the eventful, nontextualized, extramental world.

But what does it take to collapse the "sign and word into the written statement" in order to produce the signature as a legally binding artifact? Before documents inspired trust, oral testimony was the preferred form of authentic witness. An oath as the ceremonial giving of one's word is a spoken promise, a "kind of emphatic utterance that occurs among all peoples".[54] It requires both the oath-taker and the witness to be physically present in order to behold and maintain the memory of the event. This personal memory of the witnesses is inextricably tied to communal memory. Deeply embedded in custom, oral testimony as a collective affair. Based on the idea of a special power attached to verbal formulae, a certain ritual association between words and gestures, the truth or intentional meaning of the oath is a function of a collective belief in its power. An oath is constituted simultaneously as a future-oriented promise and a conditional curse. The utterer physically makes his whole tribe party to his promise, and even puts his entire lineage up as a pledge: "may lightening strike him, may the devil take him away, may his wife bear him a crippled child if he is lying".[55] The veracity or truth-

value of the oath is not something that can be made visible on paper because it is incarnated on the living body of the speaker. Both in its form and content the oath emanates from, and refers to, a body. As a future-oriented promise tied to custom, and thus the living social body, it does not extend beyond the bounds of living memory - the memory of the oldest living person in the group. As a conditional curse, the oath is incarnated on the speaker's body, its truth a function of its capacity to act upon the individual involved.

The written signature differs from the oral oath in that it implies the "actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer".[56] It substitutes for the person by retaining the intentions of the signer even in his absence. Given that the written signature substitutes for the person by allowing the signed document to circulate in his absence, how does this change both the form and nature of the attestation? In terms of form, the signature is always singular. Unlike the seal or the cross, it is personalized and handwritten. Even more unlike the seal or cross, which function as symbolic objects establishing the validity of a paper record of a past event, the signature derives its legal force from the actual 'preparing of the parchment'. The drawing up of the document no longer serves as a written remainder of an oath taken in the past, but becomes the event described. Yet despite the fact that the signature draws its binding force from this singular event it is also, *qua* written sign, subject to the structural requirement of legibility. In order to be read in our absence, the signature "must have a repeatable, iterable form".[57] Thus, although the signature is personal and unique, holding in memory the consent given on a particular occasion, it only substitutes for the self in its capacity to be reproduced. The

signature only acts as a sign of 'character', capable of pointing to the individual as the source of its truth or consent, if it is always signed the same way.

The new textual self who arises in Western Europe at the same time as the legal validity of the signed document (c. 1180)[58] gives consent to the written document in the name of his own character. No longer do we have an oral oath taker making a promise, an *affective* statement whose truth value lies in the future, in the power of bringing about the conditional curse put up as a pledge. Now we have the signer express consent to a written document drawn up in his name, a document which will travel far and wide in his absence, and maintain his one-time consent as a generalized commitment, a type of debt to the past rather than an affective, future-oriented promise. In contrast to the oral oath, whose veracity is incarnated in the living person and whose power exists only as a collective belief, the chief characteristic of the signed document is that the statements in it are not true in themselves but only have truth in law.[59] The legal force of the signature puts trust in the sealed document rather than the validly given word, engendering a growing tension between custom and legality. Good faith is no longer placed in the orally expressed promises of a living person vis-à-vis his community, as seen by God's witness, but in the consent of the signer to his legal obligations as textually defined.

2.6 Copies

This rise in the power of the legal document also led to new methods of authentication, the most important of which was the copy. For a document to inspire trust, it was necessary for both the person issuing it and the recipient to keep a copy for

their own records. Indeed the decisive innovation in twelfth-century England was not so much the copy but the notion of the third copy (the 'foot of fines') to be preserved in the archives.[60] While the notion of the copy has its prototypes both in Europe and elsewhere, it was not until the invention of the triplicate form that keeping a record for archival storage became the general rule rather than exceptional practice. For the first time, the copy was used not only to ensure the self-sufficiency of documents as instruments of witness but also to allow them to stand alone as guarantee. In addition, it "gave individuals the opportunity to have transactions kept on permanent record in the royal treasury";[61] an important step for the rise of both individualism and the individuating power of bureaucracy. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, records are a notable step in the transition from memory to the written record, because documents have the tendency to create more documents in their own image.[62] The proliferation of documents leads to a new conception of space and time both in terms of knowledge and social organization.

The archive changes the nature of textual authority by providing knowledge with a new space in the library. Both the archive and library have a common origin as *archa*, the treasure chests where "together with sacred books and relics of the saints, documents came to be mixed in with cups, rings, wooden staves, knives and other symbolic objects which retained the memory of past events".[63] Within a residually oral economy of memory, books and documents were not considered texts but treasures. Indistinguishable from any other valuable object, they were dispersed in various 'hiding' places which made consultation difficult. The combined result of the scribal revolution (which made exactitude in copying a possibility) and the invention of the catalogue (c. 1176), flushed

documents out of their hiding places and rearranged them on the library shelf.[64] With the catalogue, the archive changed from being a 'special' place (hiding place) to a means of organizing books. The increased trustworthiness of legal documents, largely achieved by placing a copy in the public archive, was paralleled by this new organization of knowledge as a series of texts in a library.

However, as Illich and Sanders point out, there remains a fundamental difference between the "copy of a book whose original remained in the monastery and the making of a copy whose 'original' left the chancellory".[65] Book copying, on the one hand, serves to further entrench the authority of the original text by making it possible to verify and reproduce verbatim a quote from a theological authority. The copying of the legal document, on the other, serves in some sense to render the original obsolete. Legal validity, unlike the validity of a theological authority, consists of two copies being identical to one another. The criterion of validity is the identity between two copies rather than the relation between the original and copy. With the book, it is the original which certifies the copy as a faithful reproduction, while in legal documents it is the identity between two copies that certifies a document as original and not forged. Book copying is produced as a dissemination of an original source, while legal documents are performative acts in themselves whose validity relies on each party receiving an identical copy while preserving a third copy, rather than any sort of original text, for the archive.

By the twelfth and thirteenth century, the need to certify the identity between two documents becomes more important. The authenticity of a charter now relies on its ability to be identifiable (remain identical) forever. This meant not only placing

documents in a new archival space but also within a new sense of time. As documents proliferated, and with them forgeries, the only way to settle disputes about authenticity was to write the precise date of issuance. But even as late as the thirteenth century, documents were rarely dated. If they happened to be dated, the dating was not chronological but with respect to a notable event: a wedding, a visit of some sovereign, a death of a notable personality. As Clanchy notes, this reluctance to give uniform dates was difficult to overcome because "dating required the scribe to express an opinion about his place in time".[66] Profoundly tied to oral memory, a medieval sense of time was affective, personal and aggregative, grouped around great events, most notably that of the birth and resurrection of Christ. For the monastic mind, time was not an ordering principle of meaning but itself subjected to the meaningfulness of God's order which knowledge was meant to reveal. In the High Middle Ages, the monopoly of the Church over Europe, combined with the Church's conception of eschatological time, meant that "history had stopped and the Church had become triumphant".[67] It was not until the thirteenth century with the massive production of charters and the need to keep them identifiable over many copies, that methods of dating became less self-conscious. Notaries no longer worried about placing "so trivial a proceeding as a change in ownership of a piece of farmland in direct relation to the birth of the Lord".[68] Through this new dating method, the "history of salvation was charted as the history of the world".[69]

These new essentially bureaucratic concepts of space and time had a profound effect on the form and content of authoritative discourse. Even as late as the monastic

reader, authoritative discourse still took on an oral form. Authority derived from the *auctoritas* which was a "sentence worthy of repetition".[70] Authoritative discourse was weaved out of these "sentences which created precedents and defined reality" precisely in their capacity as endlessly reiterated repetitions.[71] These statements stated obvious truths not because they were original observations made by a noteworthy thinker or because there was thought to be some sort of inherent correspondence between the statements and the world, but because, being repetitions, they had become "disembedded from this or that particular discourse" to become "a free-floating statement".[72] In the oral *auctoritas*, performance and repetition is what creates precedents and defines reality. Creativity and performance have not yet been separated into an 'original' version and its verbatim repetition. Although deriving from an author, the oral *auctoritas* is institutionalized by being disembedded from discourse. Its power lies not in its attachment to a particular source of production but in the fact that it is a free-floating and eminently repeatable statement. Verbal authority, if the paradox be permitted, is completely intertextual in a pretextual age.

It is only with copies and the catalogue that the idea finally dawns that the thought-content of a book can be duplicated independently of the book as symbol, that the text is a product of the author's mind and not inherent in the book as concrete object. It is only with copies and the catalogue that the treasure-chest of books becomes the circulation of texts. Copies, and especially print, decisively separate the text from the book by enclosing "thought in thousands of copies of a work of exactly the same visual and physical consistency".[73] Identity as a criterion of legal validity serves as the

intellectual prototype for both printed matter and modern science. Once print ensured the complete reproducibility of text, scientific reliability was defined as the exactly repeatable visual statement. The whole uniqueness of Western science lies in this "conjunction of exact observation and exact verbalization: exactly worded descriptions of carefully observed complex objects and processes";[74] a conjunction fostered two hundred years earlier by the new paradigm of knowledge as a reproducible text.

Copying, and later print, changed our attitudes towards the book and hence intellectual work more generally. Especially after print, a book was sensed to 'contain' information - scientific, fictional or other. Truth is no longer a function of creative performance but of publication. Authority lies in the finalized, completed text as a closed 'unit' of work circulating in thousands and thousands of identical copies. According to Ong, this sense of textual closure gives rise to "romantic notions of 'originality' and 'creativity' which set apart an individual work from other works, seeing its origins and meaning as independent of outside influence, at least ideally".[75] This is a far cry from the intertextual medieval manuscript. Once truth becomes a function of publication, of 'making public', authoritative discourse takes the form of a closed work, as independently and originally conceived as possible. The various technological developments in the book changed its symbolic value, leading to a new use of the text. The symbolic value of these technological advances led to a greater interiorization of reading and so contributed to the transition from the oral world of mimesis to the literate world of dissemination.

This new conception of knowledge as an authored, published 'original' text changes our ideas of both truth and the social space in which it evolves. The dissemination of copies and the increased circulation of text encourages an open culture of knowledge. It liberates the book from the closed culture of the monastery, a residually oral culture which hoards its books as if they were treasures, thus opening up the circulation of knowledge. With the copy, knowledge could travel far and wide while remaining the same. In this way, the new text liberates knowledge from monastic confines as well as centralizes it over vast tracts of space by relating all copies to their productive and reproductive center - the original source. Dissemination of knowledge, through the duplicated text, also produces the conception of the original as a precedent setting, 'history-making' document to be carefully guarded in the archive. With the added help of bureaucratic dating methods which secularized salvational history through the enforcement of chronology, knowledge increasingly concerned the progress of truth in time. Copies simultaneously encouraged the conception of knowledge as an activity which knew no boundaries, as well as putting emphasis on 'originality', on intellectual labour and thus on a new type of specialization in the work of the mind.

Knowledge as a text to be disseminated became the tool of a new kind of thinker - the profane intellectual. This new type of man was the university man who "recognized the necessary link between knowledge and teaching"[76] According to Le Goff, the intellectual as a writer, reader and teacher relied on the book as the basis of instruction, a tool in the nascent university workshop. As Le Goff explains, the intellectual arose with the town because the specialization of tasks also led to the specialization in the work of

the mind.[77] The medieval town, the university and the intellectual all flourish under this new concept of knowledge as dissemination, production and discovery. Modern conceptions of both knowledge and the knower as a professional man are only intelligible within the institutional framework of a new legal and bureaucratic organization of society into the urban town.

2.7 Knowledge, Text and Town

The distinguishing feature of the medieval town was a newfound political unity based on work. The medieval town possessed its own law and autonomy of administration. It included all men under this law as citizens and allowed them to participate in the electing of administrative officials. This citizenship was not just defined by a set of legal rights but also by the capacity to work and produce and thus participate in the medieval economy. Power was no longer restricted to a noble, ruling class but also took the form of corporations and guilds, unions and fraternities, all designed to promote the economic and political privileges of merchants and craftsmen.[78]

In many ways, the medieval town results from the redistribution of cultural and social space brought about by the increased truth value and circulation of text. Knowledge of writing revived Roman law and so introduced the medieval town to the concept of law as a canon of written rules. Administrative autonomy was largely achieved through the perceived truth value of written evidence whose authority was bolstered by innovations in the organization of the archive - chronological dating, accurate copying, proper indexing and the signature. Most importantly, the concept of

citizenship itself was predicated on the textual construction of the self as an inner text to be read. For the first time, cities were not exclusively ruled by aristocrats whose identity was tied to an inherited social status, but were also controlled by people whose self-identity was defined by the thoughts they think, the intentions they have and the work they do. A city inhabited by citizens led to a new sense of unity and fraternity amongst men who could now be considered as each other's peers. The Western intellectual was born in this context of textually defined urban space. As a specialist in the written word, his knowledge of law, his teaching of the liberal arts and on occasion even mechanical arts, made him crucial to the productivity of the town. According to Le Goff, the intellectual revolution is inscribed in this twelfth century urban development and cannot be understood without it.[79]

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for the new role of the intellectual was the change in status of the book from hoarded treasure to useful tool. As a tool, the book became an "industrial product and commercial object".[80] It was geared to ease the reader's consumption and digestion of knowledge. Consultation was made easy, reading was more rapid and knowledge circulated more. As book circulation augmented, knowledge was increasingly estranged from the individual's understanding of the known. In response, the number of masters and students greatly increased as people sought to link knowledge to personal understanding through the university system. The origin of the intellectual as someone who considers knowledge to be paid work arises out of this increasing gap between knowledge and understanding caused by the proliferation of the autonomous text.

This idea that knowledge can be transmitted and enlarged upon goes counter to the archaic belief that knowledge is a gift from God and as such cannot be improved. Ecclesiastical officials frequently slandered intellectuals as 'pernicious sellers of words' partly due to this belief that knowledge is a *fait accompli*, that we already know all that there is to know because it is encapsulated in God's book.[81] Moreover, this conception of knowledge as work fundamentally challenges the long-standing assumption (deriving from Aristotle) that the only true knowledge is contemplative knowledge, that knowledge knows best the things that change the least. Orthodox medieval epistemology (partly operating under the assumption that it had access to all the books ever written) assumes that knowledge is over and done with, that truth is already a given of the world and that it only needs sufficient contemplation in order to be understood. The intellectual, on the other hand, believes that knowledge is not a finished product of the closed book but an ongoing discourse taking place in history and time. In contrast to the aristocratic contemplator, the "town intellectual indeed felt like an artisan, a professional man".[82] In redefining knowledge as an art or a technique "relating to making or doing", he extended it to include "any rational or just activity of the mind applied to the manufacturing of instruments, both material and intellectual".[83] This rehabilitation of the spiritual and temporal value of work implied a necessary link between knowledge and practice. Knowledge was industrious 'making' and not contemplative passivity. This new role of knowledge in ensuring a productive economy helped unify the different castes in the city as well as to give the intellectual a social role as a professional, productive man.

Arising out of this urban framework, the scholastic method defined thinking as "a profession whose laws were minutely fixed".[84] What makes this method so congenial to applied knowledge is that scholasticism advocates the interpretative bracketing of material reality into objects of thought defined through sequestration and segmentation. Abstraction, as Illich notes, was not even an issue for early twelfth century thinkers who, following Boethius, confused the meaning of abstraction as a separation of ideas from reality with the meaning of abstraction as a mental bracketing.[85] Once scholastics reintroduced the idea of abstraction as formal sequestration, they paved the way for a nascent disciplinary division of knowledge. Objects of thought were no longer considered as givens of the world but as methodological constructs defined in and through bracketing. Each field defined its objects according to the demands of their method, the way for instance, a "foot is put into parentheses by a mathematician who only considers it as a measure of length".[86] Once abstraction developed, the close reading of the text, the *lectio* upon which scholasticism was based, turned into an object of knowledge and a problem to be solved. The 'lectio' turned into a 'questio' the moment the intellectual challenged the text, developing from a passive reader to an active thinker.[87] Problematics or problem-solving replaced exegesis as the focus of knowledge, making the intellectual attuned to problematic events in the real world and to how his knowledge was applied. This division of knowledge into different objects of thought, each with their own proper method of analysis, produced new objects of thought, new fields of inquiry as well as new methods and technologies to deal with them.

Endnotes

[1] Illich and Sanders, p. 26.

[2] Illich, *Vine*, p. 41.

[3] Ibid., p. 42.

[4] *Ad Herennium*, III, xvi. 29-xvii.30, trans. H. Caplan, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

[5] Illich, *Vine*, p. 41.

[6] Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), p. 21.

[7] Illich, *Vine*, p. 42.

[8] Yates, p. 9.

[9] *Ad Herennium*, 30-xix.31.

[10] Yates, p. 31.

[11] Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E.W Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942) II, lxxxvi 353-355.

[12] Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), p. 65.

[13] Ibid., p. 67.

[14] Ibid., 43.

[15] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 91.

[16] Illich, *Vine*, p. 24.

[17] Yates, p. 67.

[18] Illich and Sanders, p. 28.

[19] Ong, *Interfaces*, p. 149.

[20] Barthes, p. 65-67

[21] Illich, *Vine*, p. 25.

[22] M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to the Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 172.

[23] Quoted in Clanchy, p. 172.

[24] Illich, *Vine*, p. 38.

[25] Ibid., p. 33.

[26] Ibid., p. 45

[27] Ibid., p. 82.

[28] Ibid., p. 99.

[29] Barthes, p. 30.

[30] Illich, *Vine*, p. 114.

[31] Ibid., p. 104.

[32] Ibid., p. 99.

[33] Ibid., p. 119.

[34] Ibid., p. 73.

[35] Illich and Sanders, p. 52.

[36] Ong, *Interfaces*, p. 168.

[37] Ibid., 166.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Illich, *Vine*, p. 119.

[40] Clanchy, p. 50.

[41] Illich and Sanders, p. 35.

[42] Ibid., p. 36.

[43] Ong, *Orality*, p. 132

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 133.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., p. 134.

[48] Illich and Sanders, p. 32.

[49] Ibid., p. 38.

[50] Clanchy, p. 38.

[51] Illich and Sanders, p. 42.

[52] Clanchy, p. 38.

[53] Illich and Sanders p. 43.

[54] Ibid., p. 33.

[55] Ibid., p. 34.

[56] Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.328.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Illich and Sanders, p. 38-39.

[59] Clanchy, p. 305.

[60] Ibid., p. 68.

[61] Ibid., p. 69.

[62] Ibid., p. 70.

[63] Ibid., p. 156.

[64] Illich and Sanders, p. 40.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Clanchy, p. 301.

[67] Le Goff, Jacques, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), p. 52.

[68] Illich and Sanders, p. 41.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Illich, *Vine*, p. 13.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ong, *Orality*, p. 132.

[74] Ibid., p. 127.

[75] Ibid., p. 133.

[76] Le Goff, p. 62.

[77] Ibid., p. 5

[78] Max Weber, "The Distinctive Features of European Cities and the Rise of the West" in *Max Weber on Capitalism, Bureaucracy and Religion*, ed. Stanislav Andreski (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 142-143.

[79] Le Goff, p. xiv.

[80] Ibid, p. 86.

[81] Ibid., p.95.

[82] Ibid., p. 62.

[83] Ibid.

[84] M.D Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas D'Alquin*, quoted in Le Goff, p. 86.

[85] Illich, *Vine*, p. 120.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Le Goff, p. 90.

Chapter Three: Institutions and Knowledge

3.1 Professionalization of the Intellectual

By the end of fourteenth century, the feverish activity of the intellectual in his university workshop had ground to a halt. The scholastic tendency towards abstraction, so crucial to the development of applied science, degenerated into endless quibbling over verbal definitions, formal logical rules and ways to further divide and subdivide conceptual categories.[1] The intellectual rigor of the scholastics, so invigorating a few decades earlier, became mere abstraction, empty verbiage, a moribund and pedantic caricature of formal thought. Instead of preserving the medieval intellectual's spirit of knowledge as craft, scholastics became the first great managers of knowledge, busying themselves more with matters of organization rather than with the research and dissemination of new thought content. The scholastic search for complete control over the development of thought resulted in almost total separation of form and content, producing the first intellectual technocracy.[2] Scholasticism fell into desuetude by losing all contact with evolving history and change. Abstraction severed theory from practice, science from technology and knowledge from teaching, thus leaving the intellectual with no real work to justify a paid position.

The working scholar left the workshop of the city to become a leisurely gentlemen of the court.[3] This new intellectual milieu involved the "protection of the powerful, bureaucracy and material wealth".[4] As the intellectual moved from the city to the princely courts of the newly emerging states, he became inextricably tied to the rising

power of the state. Because its authority was based on expert officialdom and rational law, the modern state required the services of an educated, literate elite.[5] But although the authority of the state was largely exercised through literate skills, it made use of intellectuals only by exiling them from the source of power. As de Certeau points out, the sclerosis of the university was followed by a "depoliticization of intellectuals".[6] Knowledge was "no longer a question of conviction, of a war between the great bodies...(the army, the university, the church etc);[7] instead its goal was 'neutrality' and the production of anonymous, specialized discourses by a team of 'gentlemen' scholars. With the increasing specialization of political, erudite and ecclesiastical institutions, intellectuals are exiled from power by the formation of professional bodies.[8] As de Certeau further observes, the birth of disciplines is linked to the creation of learned circles and Academies. This milieu, as Le Goff explains, is that of the group, of the closed circle where knowledge is once again considered a lofty treasure rather than a tool. It signifies a recoiling, a withdrawal of contact with the masses and, above all, a break between knowledge and teaching.[9]

I would like to investigate this relationship between a disciplinary division of knowledge and the 'depoliticization' of the intellectual into professional bodies by considering the new power of the modern, rational state. With the breakdown of the monopoly and religious unanimity of Christendom into the diversity of European states, a "knowledge was needed to take up the slack of belief and allow each group or country to receive a definite distinction".[10] This new literate knowledge, coupled with the printing press and growing lay literacy, became a tool of unification and division in the new

nation state. Here I propose to look at how the state with its new class of bureaucratic administrators evolved (at least formally) out of the reintroduction of Roman law into western Europe. I want to see how legal reasoning and its reliance on an archival form of knowledge changes our ideas of truth and relevant evidence. I also want to see how this archival shape of knowledge and the ideas about truth that it promotes becomes a means of creating, maintaining and characterizing social division. Finally, I want to see how a textual organization of knowledge becomes a tool for the unification and division of the state. Framed in this way, law becomes a particularly salient topic because through it emerges what is perhaps the most unique aspect of the European state -- the exercise of power and redistribution of social space through the authoritative discourse of certain forms of knowledge.

3.2 Law and the Bureaucratic Organization of Knowledge

In Europe and elsewhere, the difference between law and custom is ultimately defined as the difference between what is written and what is not. To codify custom means to "set it down in writing before proclaiming it as law".[11] Thus, although the term law has a range of meanings, all laws act as written codes, as a formalization of norms and rules otherwise implicit in customary behaviour. One crucial difference between law and custom is that law as a textually organized field of knowledge presupposes the use of the past (of precedent) as a conceptual category. Unwritten or customary law is inseparable from the memory of the oldest living person and so exists in the eternal now of a homeostatic present. Quietly passing over obsolete laws and imperceptibly adjusting

itself to new norms, customary law is always flexible and up to date. It involves nothing less than the eternal youth of communal memory; a memory that keeps itself young in the belief that it is old, sloughing off the past in a kind of structural amnesia.[12] In oral cultures verbal precedents are "either forgotten or merge into future judgments"[13] and so do not constitute a separate category of their own. Written law, on the other hand, formalizes this changing homeostasis which is customary behaviour (the habit or body memory of a group of people) by storing it outside the body in an archival vault. Writing 'fixes' rules into long-lasting immutable form. Once memories get shelved one behind the other in the archive, etiolated customs and old judicial decisions can no longer be forgotten. Instead they are reworked and reorganized to form the set of interpretations and commentaries that constitute the legal corpus. It is this corpus rather than any intrinsic authority of the court that provides the European judge with the authority to make decisions.

This passage from a notion of justice as something implicit in customary practice to the explicit creation of a legal text, fundamentally changes the nature of rules and therefore the relationship between rulers and ruled. Writing only 'fixes' laws by abstracting them from the context in which they are embedded. Whereas oral customs are generally transmitted through proverbs and other edifying phrases of a formulaic kind, written law summarizes this contextually bound type of reasoning into an abstract (or abstraction). Proverbs turn into codes and customary behaviour into legal protocol, as the past begins to occupy its own space as the written corpus of legal tradition. This abstraction from context also results in an increasing universalization of rules. Formal

rules, precisely by their elimination of particularities, can extend their range through both space and time. This formalization and universalization of rules is directly related to the use of the past as precedent. A precedent may ostensibly make reference to a particular event but it is reapplied to the present only as a general principle. Indeed the separation of past and present imposed by the written text is directly responsible for the three major types of legal reasoning: argument from analogy, inductive reasoning which seeks to derive a general proposition from particular propositions of the same kind, and deductive reasoning which groups given circumstances into types and from these types derives the applicable rules by which the circumstance is to be governed.[14]

Through the legal text, the past is no longer treated as a memorable narrative of events but as a category which assimilates every novel situation, decision or change to a collection of decisions that has already been made. In contrast to oral cultures, where change is imperceptible and so always receptive to the new, cultures with written law can only make explicit changes from the conceptual framework already in place. In properly functioning legal societies, change is orderly but only at the expense of reducing all change and difference to past precedents and therefore historically entrenched ways of perceiving the world. Through law, history as a prosaic enterprise replaces the affective power of communal memory. Representation of the past becomes an intellectual and secular production which reorganizes the present based on the present's own interpretations of history. This tendency is especially notable with the European discovery of Roman law which, being dead law, was from the beginning estranged from living tradition. Roman law compelled the "systematic study of principles" giving

jurisprudence "its character as a science for the interpretation of comprehensive statutes".[15] It is by virtue of being dead that Roman law exists as a complete body; a corpus of knowledge or law that can be generalizable over many communities and promulgated by the state. Death as the most definitive 'pastness' of a subject matter makes a corpus of knowledge comprehensive and therefore authoritative.

This split between living tradition and comprehensive science also gives rise to the partial autonomy of law from the rest of society. Notions of rightness or wrongness are no longer implanted in the person, a part and parcel of one's own self-understanding, but exist as positive doctrine, a 'field' of knowledge cut off from the people. The legal profession as a body of literate specialists trained to manage this new knowledge had fully emerged by the thirteenth century. Ethical self-understanding was increasingly displaced by a corporate form, eventually resulting in a separation between those who made the rules (the experts) and those who merely followed. This distinctly literate type of expertise means that authority lies neither in the inherited status of individual people nor in the text *per se* but in the "conceptual framework of the law as defined by thinkers-about-the-law".[16] An elaborate institutional framework of lawyers, scholars, philosophers, reporters and publishers - a whole army of commentators and scribes - formalizes legal action into various 'fields' of knowledge, thereby changing both the form of ruling and the content of rules. Once knowledge becomes the domain of literate specialists, the foundation of a discipline cannot be separated from its social institution. As de Certeau puts it, a 'discipline' only functions by being "at once the law of a group

and a law of a field of scientific research".[17]   The same push towards organizing the archive into fields of knowledge "organizes society and the 'ideas' that circulate in it".[18]

Under this legal 'field' of knowledge arise new concepts of truth. The first and most important contribution of legal rationality is in the idea of truth as noncontradiction. As knowledge accumulates in archives, it needs to be summarized. Putting different texts and different points of view side by side means that contradictions difficult to spot in oral discourse are easily pointed out and become readily resolvable by means of commentaries and arguments.[19] Contradictions are not only more obvious and more exact when placed side by side but they also take on a new social importance. Disciplines, as the attempt to create a consistent set of true claims about an object, grow out of this endless labour of commentaries and arguments all aiming to resolve contradiction. But more importantly, noncontradiction as the new paradigm of authoritative discourse asserts its power through a new conception of the self.

Opposing this new notion of truth as noncontradiction is also a new notion of the lie. The Western idea of the lie as a false statement made with the intent to deceive, arises out of the (textual) possibility of non-contradiction. In an oral world, where all statements occur as events in time, a person's oath is his truth. While the oral world knows of infidelity, broken promise, betrayals, perjury, slander, false witness and false prophecy, it does not yet know of that "opposition to an abstract 'truth' that is essential to what we today call a lie".[20] It is not until textual bits can be abstracted from their context in discourse and placed side by side that a person can "detach thought from speech and contra-dict it".[21] It is only after thought becomes separate from speech, that a person can

intend to deceive, that is say something that he or she does not think (*contra - dicere*). This new rational conception of truth as noncontradiction as well as the notion of the lie as a kind of self-contradiction, join forces in the new legal system. In the thirteenth century, Continental canon law makes the "judge into a reader of the accused man's conscience, an inquisitor into truth and torture the means by which the confession of truth is extracted from the accused".[22] Once law defines authoritative discourse as one without contradiction, truth becomes the outer expression of inner meaning only accessible to the self.

This new interiorized soul is constituted partly out of the rational conception of truth as noncontradiction and partly out of changing ideas of relevant evidence. As Goody explains, legal proceedings involving the use of written evidence employ a closer definition of relevance because they can examine and scrutinize documents for contradiction before the actual case comes before the court.[23] In addition, greater control over evidence as well as a narrowing of the areas of dispute are all easier with written testimony.[24] The use of the past (as precedent) to legislate the future means that law is increasingly concerned with temporal notions of truth, the establishment of truth in time. This is closely connected to the idea of written evidence and a profane notion of knowledge not as affective memory but as a collection of properly organizing facts, unconnected to the greater nexus of kinship and family ties and as indifferent as possible to personal interpretation. By storing knowledge over the long-term, writing greatly enables people to surmount the "homeostatic adjustment that holding it in memory often involves".[25] At the same time, however, the form and longevity of the written record

tends to neglect the greater networks of communal identity in favour of pinning rights and responsibility on the individual.

According to Goody, one of the most revolutionary aspects of writing occurred in the change from a society governed by inherited social status to a society governed by the contract. Although oral societies do have contracts, the absence of the written record places a limit on the range and variability of oral contracts".[26] Written contracts, on the other hand, gain a far greater flexibility because they redefine the contract as a type of interaction that occurs between legal 'persons' rather than kin. By preserving a transaction in the long-term memory of writing, contracts are less open to feigned forgetfulness or misinterpretation. They also serve to narrow the area of transaction, drawing the contract out from the rather nebulous realm of kinship obligation. Like the legal precedent, both the specificity of terms and the individuation of the contract result from the tendency of writing to abstract. The elaboration of the contract through 'abstraction', the drawing up of an 'abstract' or summary, the struggle for clarity in expression and the emergence of notaries to authenticate the document, all follow the general trends of the literate revolution.[27]

Even more crucially, contracts contribute to alienating the rights and properties of kinship groups by reinscribing them in the terms of a literate corporation. In order to summarize transactions such as registrations of land on administrative lists, "writing strips the social relationship of its complicating context and 'murders to dissect'".[28] Complex arrangements which usually involve a whole network of rights and obligations "often have to be summed up in a single entry in the register that attempts to allocate

across communities (through the lateral affiliation between individuals) and down to the individual (by specifying the most minute details and specifics of the people involved). Literate organizations extend through space and time by defining the individual as a series of texts.

To summarize, the accumulation of texts into archives encourages the division of knowledge into fields of expertise. These fields of expertise maintain partial autonomy from the rest of society by creating new concepts of truth, concepts which gain some of their authority by defining the self in their own image. Authoritative discourse as the production of an institutional field of expertise creates the self as a legal person, a self whose identity is defined more by a memory of affiliations (the debt or contracts he or she holds) rather than through any sort of genealogical memory of filiation. This brings us back to the role of knowledge in redistributing social space. So far I have shown how the passage from filiation to affiliation is achieved by means of authoritative discourses of knowledge that are produced by a literate elite. I would now like to show how institutional fields of knowledge which derive from an elite are also used to enforce a sense of caste amongst those affiliated. This sense of caste can have a detrimental effect on society as society becomes increasingly dependent on the elite's 'esoteric' knowledge to provide it with a sense of direction.

3.3 Professional Bodies of Knowledge

A professional can be defined as a certified specialist who lives off his work. His competence derives from the mastery of a particular discipline and it is something that he

alone, *qua* institutionally affiliated professional, can provide. It is his latter aspect that gives professionals their particular authority: they are regarded as possessing a monopoly of competence in their particular field of knowledge.[30] But specialization alone does not make a professional. The professional is someone who is not only a specialist but a specialist who possesses autonomy in his field. This autonomy is not intrinsic to the skills he provides or the services he renders but derives from the autonomy of a particular field of knowledge. The professional presides over a body of knowledge that is coherent and self-contained, reposing on a cognitive basis of rules, laws and techniques which constitute both a discipline and a practice.[31] His autonomy derives from the almost esoteric inaccessibility of his knowledge to the layman, while his authority derives from the fact that his knowledge somehow corresponds to objective reality, or the 'true' nature of things. There are, then, two different issues at work here. First, how does a professional discipline constitute a coherent, integral and self-contained domain of knowledge as a condition of its autonomy? Second and related, how is the power, privilege and authority of this knowledge based on its putative claim to objectivity, its claim to refer to a 'natural' state of things, objective reality in itself?

As I have already tried to explain with the example of law, the founding principles of a self-contained domain of knowledge lie in the segmentation and interpretation of the textual archive. An autonomous field of discourse consists of a series of selective interpretations, exercised on the archive by a team of experts. By isolating or 'abstracting' a system of principles and an elaboration of rules out of this textual archive, the professional caste creates an autonomous field of knowledge, defined

in accordance with the self-identity of the topic it deals with. New combinations of textual bits are gathered side by side into a redistributive labour which justifies itself on the basis of new criteria of truth such as noncontradiction and a new argumentative structure of thought aimed at the resolution of problems. But this only serves to beg the following questions: How do we create a self-identical object of thought out of a morass of conflicting texts? And how do we maintain the necessary universality of a self-contained field of knowledge (which is only self-contained insofar as it is comprehensive) when faced with so many potentially contradictory interpretations? In other words, how does this institutionally produced knowledge pass itself off as an objectively true representation of reality when texts are intrinsically polysemous, open to any number of interpretations and combinations?

In order to answer these questions, I want to take a closer look at the form that knowledge takes once it is considered a circulation of texts. As I have already tried to explain in Chapter two, the separation of the text from the book as object is a product of the space of the library. Made in the library's image, knowledge takes on the form of the ultimate library, the library of libraries: the encyclopedia. The textual encyclopedia, however, must be differentiated from the encyclopedism of oral thought. The Greek sense of the encyclopedia as an *enkuklios paideia*, an 'education which embraces the active circle of knowledge', is not commensurate with the literate conception of the encyclopedia that we get in the seventeenth century. The modern day encyclopedia as the compilation of texts written by various experts is the outcome of the new textual organization of knowledge. It can be defined by the following three characteristics: its

claim to universalism, its division of knowledge into alphabetically organized branches of knowledge or topics, and the fact that it functions as a dictionary of subject-matter rather than a dictionary of words.

Knowledge is only truly encyclopedic insofar as it is universal. What makes the modern day encyclopedia so innovative is its claim to eschew all forms of particularism by defining the same object through as many different viewpoints as possible. Beneath the perspectivism of the encyclopedia lies a belief in the conception of knowledge as a map. As an ideal cartography, the encyclopedia would deliver knowledge out of all the particularities and partialities of one-sided viewpoints by displaying it under all its categories. It would be, as D'Alembert states in his Preliminary Discourse, "a kind of world map which is to show the principle countries, the positions of their mutual dependence".[32] The totality of knowledge, the coherence and justification of the encyclopedia, lies in the hypothesis of a gaze without a face, a spectatorial eye that is not attached to a body and therefore a particular viewpoint or perspective on the world.[33] But as D'Alembert points out, the articles in the encyclopedia can only be this or that map, a reduced version of the *mappemundi*. Objects of thought are only articulated through being placed in more or less proximity to one another, presenting different points of view depending on what perspective the eye is looking from. In this way, we can image as many different systems of knowledge as there are projections of the world map.[34] Each of these individual maps, d'Alembert claims, "will be the different articles of the Encyclopedia and the tree or systematic chart will be its world map".[35]

A disciplinary division of knowledge presupposes the encyclopedia as the 'universal' system of knowledge out of which it carves out a particular map, a particular description of the topic it deals with. It imposes, to reiterate D'Alembert's image, a tree-structure of knowledge on the world map of the ideal encyclopedia. A tree or a root begins with a topic and proceeds to its branches by further and further division. For example, when we use D'Alembert's chart of knowledge, we start with a division of human science into history, poetry and philosophy. We then subdivide history into natural and civil. Natural history itself is divided into three branches, respectively defined as the uniformity, deviations and uses of nature. We can either begin at the root, the first principle which defines history as a substantive noun or self-identical topic, and work our way down to the branches and subdivisions. Or we can begin with the subdivisions, for example history defined as the uses of nature and trace it to the more comprehensive category of natural history, itself a subdivision of history proper which is the first principle (the root) of the tree. The topic of history acts as a root which gathers together all the branches making them one object of thought. In this way, history acts as a signifier which groups together a plurality of examples into a unity through stratification.

It is division which enables each autonomous discipline to remain impervious to conflicting and contradictory interpretations. The ideal encyclopedia as a totality of all knowledge presupposes an indefinite series of interpretations which also implies contradiction. Although the encyclopedia represents a global ideal, every interpretation as soon as it asserts itself is vulnerable to contradiction. Every partial interpretation

presupposes the encyclopedic organization of knowledge as the totality of all possible interpretations, a totality it renounces as soon as it asserts itself as an autonomous discourse, self-contained and complete within its limited universality. Competence in a discipline can be defined as the tracing of a particular tree, an arborescent structure already in place.[36] Although each profession makes progress, it makes progress only by referring back to the same description of its object of study. In other words, it makes progress by remaining blind to the possibility of other interpretations, other descriptions that world can fall under.

This brings us finally to the third characteristic of the encyclopedia -- the fact that it constitutes itself as a dictionary of things in contradistinction to the dictionary of words. The metaphysical underpinnings of a disciplinary division of knowledge are nowhere more evident than in the encyclopedia's uneasy relationship to the word dictionary. Topics which organize the encyclopedia into branches of knowledge are themselves products of linguistic definitions, of substantive nouns which become logical entities only in relation to the predicates which define them. It is only by treating the encyclopedia in terms of a dictionary of words that we can understand the essence of the subject matter in question and therefore create a discourse around it. In a society of institutionally affiliated specialists, a monopoly of competence is achieved through the power of linguistic definition. Language only has this type of power in a world shaped by the one thing metaphysical worldviews tend to forget: The role of writing in separating words and things which is what conditions the discovery of the language and syntax of Being. The semantic competence of a professional speaking in the name of his

discipline differs from the semantic competence of those who are able to speak their native language competently. Whereas the competence of native speakers consists of going from saying to saying, repeating, imitating and performing all the speech acts that reproduce a given culture, professional competence relies on establishing some sort of one-to-one identity between the statement and the external world. Identity is achieved through referring to the self-identical topic, the subject matter which unifies the discipline by making it comprehensive, capable of mapping over the world without remainder.

3.4 Institutions and the 'Real'

The complicity between a disciplinary division of knowledge and institutional unity runs deep. It derives partly from the fact that arborescent structures of knowledge are made in the very image of Western bureaucracy. Bureaucracies, like libraries, are structured around an organized collection of texts. These texts separate communal memory from the individual by transforming memory into the long-term, centralized history of documents. Gone is the old communal memory which, as the sum of individual memories, is at once plural and unified. Its unity has been irrevocably fragmented by the secular and critical production of history, by the thousands of documents that divide and subdivide knowledge into ever more narrow specializations, based on an endless reconstruction and representation of the past. Determination of what is known, the very thing that furnishes a community with cultural identity and distinctiveness, has been definitively separated from the individual by a whole series of

affiliative, professional bodies deriving their authority from 'scientific' knowledge. For the last four centuries, this scientific knowledge has included amongst its traits the "production of autonomous, linguistic artifacts (with its own special languages and discourse), with an ability to transform the things and bodies from which they had been distinguished (a reformation or revolution of the surrounding world according to textual laws)".[37] This means that institutional power is not only defined in terms of competent discourse but also insofar as it rearranges reality in its own image. To see how autonomous discourse restructures reality, I would like to turn to the second question I posed at the outset of this discussion, viz., how the particular tracing of each discourse manages to give the illusion that it represents reality despite its nature as a limited universality.

One way that literate organizations promote orthodoxy (the reproduction of a privileged canon of texts) is by claiming that this orthodox interpretation actually represents reality. By speaking in the name of the 'real', institutions naturalize themselves, making it seem as if they were always and self-evidently the natural order of things. In this way, power accredits discourse by functioning as a guarantee of reality itself. Institutional authority is preserved through the semblance of unity between thought and being, the individual subject and the perceived world. This semblance of unity is achieved by textual closure, that is, by means of a discourse that is both univocal and linear as well as being circular and retrospective.

Early literature consisting of puns, alliterations, maxims and aphorisms was still considered an ebullient record of speech and not the mirror of a concept of thought. It is

only once the stress, speed, loudness, pitch and intonation of the speaking voice are fully effaced by the written text, that scientific discourse is born. The authority imputed to scientific discourse results from the effacement of the speaking voice from the text, which is achieved by adopting and preserving a fixed tone throughout. This fixed tone, as Ong points out, corresponds to a fixed point of view.[38] The scientific author speaks not in his own voice but in the name of a particular point of view, a particular topic, a particular standpoint or place on the map of knowledge. Instead of the intertextual 'echoing of voice within voice' which characterizes even residually oral writing, scientific discourse displaces the polyvocal expressiveness of the speaking self by speaking in the name of his subject matter.

In this way, two conditions need to be satisfied for univocal discourse to occur. First, the fixed tone only occurs by speaking in the name of a fixed point of view. Such an unwavering perspective is produced only once the text is perceived as a self-enclosed, complete work of the author as the mirror of his thought. In other words, the fixed tone presupposes the concept of the author as one who creates and is responsible for the text. It presupposes a particular locus of production, which ties the autonomous circulation of scientific knowledge to an 'original' source. However, scientific discourse can only qualify as authoritative insofar as the author speaks not in his own name (as a subjective, expressive individual) but in the name of the institutionally ratified topic or subject matter he is dealing with. This requires the disappearance of the author from the text as someone who is always already absent. The only voice which satisfies the condition of being both from nowhere (buried in the text) and having a fixed position (emanating from

the author as an institutionally sanctioned 'spokesperson') is one that speaks in the name of subject matter. A univocal text needs an author to send it off (the condition of having a fixed point of view and being a self-contained, 'finished' text) but it only circulates and counts as knowledge by virtue of its anonymity. Scientific discourse dissimulates the fact that it originates from a particular person, someone who is affiliated with a particular institution, by speaking in the name of topics of subject matter, in the authoritative voice of knowledge which belongs to everyone and no one. The institution unifies itself through the absence of the speaking voice. Knowledge is no longer a question of convictions, of a war between partisan bodies but has become a 'neutral' discourse of scientific reports which derive their autonomy from the anonymity of univocal discourse. Univocal discourses defend their discipline through the production of discourses that seem to be universally true because they are unconnected to a specific place of production, a specific person or group of people.

de Certeau summarizes this relationship between the putative universality of discourse and its particular locus of production, the events or set of events that condition its possibility, as the relation between coherence and genesis.[39] Genesis involves the specific conditions or events that determine what kind of sentences are going to count as true or false, while coherence refers to the rules and procedures which elaborate the sentences into a body of truth. Institutional power as a representation of reality is only maintained so long as it can close the gap between genesis, the fact that it originates from a place of production (a recruitment, a profession, a business), and coherence as that which makes knowledge self-contained, complete and therefore universally applicable in

its domain. In other words, institutional power is based on its ability to produce certainty, its ability to pave a highway, so to speak, out of the doubts, dead-ends and straying off-course that mark the potholed path of research.

Aside from univocal discourse, the other major way in which texts represent reality is by reorganizing time. Scientific texts reverse the order of events in reality by following a chronological order in exposition. Whereas scientific research always begins within a certain institutional apparatus wherein the desire for a certain solution works its way back to define the problem, the text always "takes the oldest point as the beginning".[40] It prescribes from the "beginning, what is in reality a point of arrival or even what could be a vanishing point in research".[41] As de Certeau further points out, while research is interminable the "text must have an ending and this structure of finality bends back upon the introduction, which is already organized by the need to finish".[42] This means that the authoritative discourse of science is based on the structure of the linear plot. While the linear plot of the scientific report passes itself off as a documentary discourse, a faithful witness which records events 'as they happen', it reorganizes their time frame through narrative retrospectivity. Literate works such as scientific reports have the same posterior slant that is normally found in the literary work whose " story hangs back in time from its conclusion".[43] Scientific results are written up in the text not in the groping, uncertain manner that characterizes actual cognition but as a recognition, the *denouement* of a full-blown linear plot structured back from its climactic end.

It is the paradoxical nature of linear narrative to produce a univocal discourse only by complete circularity, writing up what is observed without remainder. A linear

discourse functions only by constructing a perfect circle to link observation and report. It is this circularity between the object of thought and description that creates an impression of exact correspondence between the linear nature of elements in discourse and the "referential order, the chronological order in the world to which this discourse refers".[44] We assume that the linear order of discourse refers to the chronological order in the world because language has taken the shape of a chronological plot, making discourse seem to map onto the world, coextensive with the categories that divide the world up. The restructuring of events in the shape of a chronological plot is what conditions the perfect circle between observation and report, the circularity that is required to make knowledge map onto the world without remainder.

The performative power of institutions lies in their ability to make texts represent the real through univocal discourse, chronological narration and textual closure. This representation of the real is only convincing if knowledge seems to map over the world without remainder. In other words, the performative power of the institution lies in its ability to produce certainty, a certain knowledge that is (ironically) achieved through the entirely fictional device of linear plot. In this sense, it can also be said that authoritative discourse fulfills the destiny that Hegel had predicted for it, spreading rationality (certain knowledge) through institutions until rationality becomes coextensive with reality, thus making knowledge absolute. However, this certainty of authoritative discourse, this Hegelian ambition to invest more and more of the world with rationality, is predicated on the separation of knowledge and practice. The complete circularity between genesis and coherence, observation and report is incommensurate with the daily workings of concrete

research. A completely coherent discourse is only absolutely certain of itself because it is "located outside the experience which gives it credibility, it is separated from passing time, oblivious to the flow of everyday labour".[45]

3.5 Institutional Stratification and Universality of Thought

The power of institutions is based not only on the logic of the text but also in the way that the text is used to structure the division of labour. This redistribution of work occurs both within the institution and between the institution and society. Throughout Western history and across the great institutions of the church, state, law and politics, the relative independence of written tradition from lived experience has promoted the autonomy of literate organizations which have developed their own literary corpus and their own bodies of specialist knowledge. This specialist knowledge is the basis not only of institutional autonomy but also of the moral power that institutions exert. Literate organizations claim hegemonic domination over the rest of society because they promote universally applicable norms which can extend beyond the local groupings of particular cultures. Institutions, however, can only organize the universalism of their claims out of a tradition of commentary and interpretation of text. This labour of interpretation is the work of a literate elite, a group of affiliated experts capable of disinterring conceptual continuity out of a morass of texts. In other words, universalistic institutions produce the generalizability of their 'mission statements' only by means of an orthodoxy of some kind, the ritualization of thought into an accepted and reiterated canon. Orthodox

interpretation is what assures the autonomy of the elite, allowing them to remain gatekeepers of a canon that they themselves have proclaimed as the privileged truth.

But what is the relation between orthodoxy, the segregation of knowledge into the hands of an elite few, and the putative universalism of the institution which is, after all, its only claim to legitimacy? As we have already seen, the literate caste is responsible for the reproduction of orthodoxy based on a legal model of thought. As a form of interiority, legal thought deals with reality as a collection of texts. It holds no traffic with the world as actually encountered in practical experience -- a world that is in flux, crowded with bodies and punctuated by events. This separation of knowledge from reality forms the basis not only of the epistemological privileging of institutionalized forms of thought, but also of the institution's claim to moral legitimacy.

Freed from the demands of everyday concrete situations, thought gains from this division of labour a power and self-sufficiency that it could never have on its own. The institutional division of labour, by separating knowledge from practice, gives thought its autonomy, its ability to sanction reality as if it arose from the interiority of thought itself. At the same time, the institution gains from this autonomy of thought what is most essential to its legitimacy, namely consensus. Institutions give thought its interiority and completeness (its ability to represent reality, defining the real because it is unequivocally true). They further allow knowledge to take on the autonomous power or development proper to pure thought, allowing thought to exist as if by its own sanction. Thought, in turn, provides this institutional interiority and autonomy with a form of universalism and therefore a legal and moral claim to authority. The institution's moral authority and

hence its legitimacy derives from the universality of thought, itself deriving from the segregation of knowledge into the hands of a specialized elite. The modern bureaucratic state can now define itself in true Hegelian fashion as the rational and reasonable organization of a community unified by appeal to the universal consensus of thought.[46]

3.6 Inherent Contradictions of the Professional Institution

Before I turn to pointing out some of the ideological tensions inherent in the institutional organization of knowledge, I feel a caveat is in order. Reason *per se* is not the problem with modern Western society. Institutionalized organizations of knowledge such as universities, research centers and other professional bodies *can* and *do* produce innovative work. What I want to argue is that while a disciplinary organization of knowledge helps isolate objects and problems from their context in order to better analyze and resolve them, too much specialization mitigates against any type of integrated thought. More importantly, this lack of integrated thought serves to consolidate the power of professional bodies by increasingly putting them in the role of 'managing' the rest of society. The real problem is our tendency to believe in reason for reason's sake, and the subsequent dedication of the whole elite to this rational ideology. A rationality that justifies itself on the basis of being disconnected from reality and that merely seeks to perpetuate the world in its image, is deleterious for both knowledge and self-knowledge. Bureaucratic rationality is detrimental to knowledge because it tends to exert its power and moral authority through the reproduction of pre-established models of thought rather than through the unsystematic (but no less rational) creativity of practical

experience. It is detrimental to self-knowledge because it estranges the self from his own self-knowledge by an army of experts. Through their moral authority, these experts keep us in a state of dependence so that we need to make reference to their own expertise as a means of defining our identities. We can neither take responsibility for ourselves nor our knowledge because it lies outside of us, encapsulated in thousands of written canons that are not ours to examine. In this way, professional bodies, much like the scholasticism of former times, reproduce a certain orthodox epistemology, designed to perpetuate the feeling of caste amongst the elect and establish autonomy by means of exclusion.

Institutions promote their moral claims to legitimacy through orthodoxy, the establishment of a canon of texts. But orthodox interpretations, as partial interpretations that have been generalized, inevitably result in discrepancies. One such notable discrepancy is between the universalistic basis of orthodox injunctions and their inapplicability to particular contexts. Recognition of this discrepancy can give rise to dissent groups.[47] As the outcome of various kinds of cognitive dissonances (such as between orthodox interpretations and universal truth or between universal laws and particular situations), dissent crystallizes into a tradition of its own. Alternate texts which contradict and undermine the putative universality of orthodox interpretation accumulate into a critical, analytic discourse of dissent. Bureaucratic organizations, by invoking the claims of universal knowledge, unify their affiliation only at the expense of producing a marginal, heretic text alongside their centralizing mission statements. The same tendency of the written record to formalize rules and privilege orthodox interpretations also produces the accumulation of contradictory texts that renders

cognitive dissonance explicit, thus leading to a rationally justifiable and ideologically cogent tradition of dissent. In this way, the boundary delimiting a certain field of knowledge always relates to an outside and is established through a process of exclusion. It centralizes itself by producing its own margins. Since the very identity of this field of knowledge is based on exclusion, change is not easy to assimilate. As Goody points out, because the literate institution is based on accepted dogma, changes take the "form of a break-away movement...the process is deliberately reformist even revolutionary, rather than the process of incorporation that tends to mark the oral situation".[48]

How do institutions maintain their unity when change takes the form of dissidence, heresy and break-away movement? And how do they maintain their legitimacy, considering that dissent which is passed on in a "philosophical, critical and radical tradition"[49] is not very congenial to the universal consensus through which institutional authority is justified? One way in which institutions maintain their unity and sense of legitimacy is by interiorizing all the marginalized discourses as just one more autonomous field. Institutions inoculate cognitive dissonance by a disciplinary division of knowledge which isolates each field from the other by making it seem to exist in a kind of limited universality. Such a division in knowledge supports the hierarchy of the literate elite and legitimates the institution as a form of rationality by allowing each field to achieve the semblance of unity between thought and reality. As Wlad Godzich explains, the disciplinary perspective "permits each discipline to function as if the problem of fragmentation did not arise since the concepts that it mobilizes and the

operations it performs are adequate, if not isomorphic, to the object -- an elegant variant of the Parmenidean concept of the identity between thought and being".[50]

Institutions do not so much produce fragmentation of social and personal identity as they presuppose it. Fragmentation occurs when the textual archive takes the place of communal memory. Communal memory, *qua* embodied memory, is immanent in personal memory. It is at once plural and unified, a one and a many. It is a whole that exists as a part alongside other parts. Its very immanence, the fact that it is just a personal memory alongside other personal memories, is what makes it whole. Writing fragments this communal memory by inscribing the tribal enyclopedism of oral thought onto thousands of documents. Each of these documents, in turn, make up an autonomous discourse, a field of knowledge that posits itself as a self-sufficient whole only so long as it remains blind to its nature as a partial interpretation, a particular description of the world. Fragments are part of a irretrievably lost whole (the way communal unity is irretrievably lost once it is textualized) while division takes place in a *presupposed* whole. A disciplinary division of knowledge presupposes a whole that is the sum of its parts. But *qua* sum, this whole does not exist *in* any of its parts (the way communal memory does) but over and above its parts. It is a transcendental whole, a whole which unifies its divisions, not by being *in* any of them, but by subordinating them all to itself as a higher unity. The disciplinary perspective is blind to the problem of fragmentation because fragmentation, the lost whole, is what allows them to posit a new whole, the transcendental whole that organizes them in a top-down, hierarchical manner. What unifies the disciplines is not knowledge but the institutional body itself. This new

centralizing power of the whole is hierarchical because the "only way that it can recombine what it isolates is through subordination".[51] Through such division, institutions maintain their illusion of consensus and therefore a semblance of unity. Rationality provides the institution with consensus only by being divided into fields of univocal discourse -- each blind to the other as a necessary condition of their univocality and claim to truth.

But the more the institution resolves its internal schisms by further and further subdivision, and by consequence greater and greater centralization, the more it loses its sense of legitimacy. The monopoly of competence that each division claims for itself is predicated on a separation between knowledge and practice. Knowledge is maintained by privileged specialist groups while the implementation of these pre-established models are left to the laity. One consequence of this separation is the devaluation of technology or 'applied science'. The specialist produces a formalized 'abstraction' of his knowledge and as such is only concerned with the coherence of his theories, while the worker is charged with implementing this scientifically approved plan, obliged to follow high command with no input in the matter. The result is that neither specialist nor worker feel a sense of moral responsibility for what they do. Institutionalized knowledge separates itself from practice and hence from the morally responsible implementation of this knowledge. It does so precisely on account of its ambition of creating autonomous discourse which, as I have already explained, takes place only within a universalistic framework. In this way, both pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself and the devaluation

of practice leads to moral aimlessness on the part of institutionalized experts and hence to a morally indifferent application of knowledge to life.

Finally, the division between elite knowledge and manual labour means that the elite no longer partakes in the primary process of production. Institutions maintain their autonomy by relying on a literate caste, a trained body of practitioners which has to be maintained, clothed and fed at the expense of the community. Thus, professional bodies require not only intellectual autonomy but material autonomy from the rest of society as well. Institutional alliance is consolidated through both conceptual and economic rationality. Economic rationality is attained through many forms, the most common of which include endowment, accumulation of landed property, taxation and trade.

While economic rationality is crucial in providing the institution with the autonomy it needs, it often results in an ideological tension within the institution itself. On the one hand, the representation of reality under the aegis of universal laws provides the institution with the rational consensus which holds it together. Agreement is achieved because reason is seen as reflecting the nature of reality itself. This 'natural' reason, however, remains compelling only if it is free to discover laws without interference from other social sectors or utilitarian demands. Reason, after all, cannot be used as a means to something other than reason, because that would imply that there was a higher authority than reason itself. Institutions maintain their sense of legitimacy, their sense of representing a true and natural order, precisely because their foundation does not lie in society at large but in the capacity of reason to 'represent' the world as it is. But on the other hand, autonomous thought also relies on economic rationality necessary to

maintain its literate elite. This means that the development of reason relies on something other than pure reason; namely the accumulation of property and wealth.

To conclude, the very processes which grant institutions moral authority on the basis of the knowledge they happen to have result in two ideological tensions. The first tension arises because orthodoxy, the segregation of knowledge into the hands of an elite, can only establish itself through a policy of exclusion which, in turn, gives rise to a heterodox countertradition. Achieving its unity through a canon of accepted dogma, the literate institution is unable to absorb the marginal discourses of dissent . These instead accumulate in the form of heresies, break-away movements and critical countertraditions, all of which undermine the authority as well as moral universality of bureaucratic rationality. The second ideological tension is most often experienced as an internal schism within the institution and arises when the very knowledge which justifies the authority of the institution as a unity of consensus is used with moral indifference and applied to any end whatsoever in a way which undermines this moral authority. This undermining of moral authority is further exacerbated by the textual division of labour which forces the literate elite to rely on economic rationality as a means of maintaining epistemic autonomy. The economic rationality at the heart of institutions contradicts its autonomy which is based on the universalizabililty of its truth claims and not on some sort of prudential economic calculus.

Finally, it is crucial to realize that these ideological tensions or institutional 'crises' are also reflected on the individual level in the form of a fragmentation and loss of self-identity. The self which has been unified and discovered through the act of

reading has now, with the increasing bureaucratic organization of knowledge, become a fragmented collection of institutionally sanctioned texts. The rational self who had previously relied on learning as a process of self-discovery, now relies on the learned discourse of others whose power derives from their professional expertise in deciphering the self to him or herself. In other words, the creation of an autonomous field of knowledge is achieved through the consolidation of specific social groups each of which extend themselves through lateral alliances of affiliation insofar as they construct the self in the image of their own knowledge. Each group writes the self as a text, inscribing personal identity into a set of needs that only their particular profession can meet. Further, by encouraging a restricted circulation of texts, professional castes not only endanger the literate conception of the self and self-identity but also the social memory, the cultural knowledge in which this self can be thought to exist. The same institutionalization of knowledge which separates the self from self-knowledge also relates to the separation of knowledge from social memory, a memory whose reproducibility in a literate age is crucially dependent on how many people can read and the access they have to the texts which define them.

Endnotes

[1] Le Goff, p. 152.

[2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] Ibid., p. 162.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Max Weber, "The State and Business Enterprise" in *Max Weber*, p. 150.

[6] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia Universtiy Press, 1988), p. 60.

[7] Ibid., p. 68.

[8] Ibid., p. 61.

[9] Le Goff, p. 165.

[10] de Certeau, p. 26.

[11] Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 129. Henceforth cited as *Logic*.

[12] Clanchy, p. 296.

[13] Goody, *Logic*, p. 137.

[14] David M. Walker, *History of Law: Oxford Companion to Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 1039.

[15] F. Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, quoted in Goody, *Logic*, p. 164.

[16] Goody, *Logic*, p. 141.

[17] de Certeau, p. 61.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Goody, *Logic*, p. 162.

[20] Illich and Sanders, p. 84.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 85.

[23] Goody, *Logic*, p. 153.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 174.

[26] Ibid., p.145.

[27] Ibid., 146-7.

[28] Ibid., p. 155.

[29] Ibid., p. 155.

[30] Sam Weber, *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 25.

[31] Ibid., p. 26

[32] Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc), p. 48.

[33] Robert Mauzi, "Encyclopédie" in *La Grande Encyclopédie*, 1973 ed. (Paris: Librarie Larousse). My translation.

[34] D' Alembert, p. 48.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 12.

[37] de Certeau, p. xxvi.

[38] Ong, *Orality*, p. 135.

[39] de Certeau, p. 44

[40] Ibid., p. 86.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 87

[43] Ong, *Interfaces*, p. 247.

[44] Ong, *Orality*, p. 147.

[45] de Certeau, p. 88.

[46] Deleuze and Guattari, p. 375.

[47] Goody, *Logic*, p. 15-16.

[48] Ibid., p. 10.

[49] Ibid., p. 19.

[50] Wlad Godzich, forward to *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* by Michel de Certeau, trand. Brain Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. ix.

[51] Deleuze and Guattari, p. 433.

Conclusion

My aim has been to elucidate certain aspects of the relation between institutions and knowledge by examining the role of writing and reading in organizing memory. Throughout I have tried to keep two points in mind. The first is the contribution of writing and different practices of reading to the structure and definition of the self in textual terms. The second aspect concerns how the restructuring of the self as a layer of texts is inextricable from a bureaucratic and hence institutional conception of knowledge. From the beginnings of phonetic writing in Ancient Greece, the Western individual has been constituted by reading. Writing fragments the oral economy of memory by creating a separation between thought, memory and speech. This separation is responsible for the transition from an oral, communal memory of mimesis to a literate conception of knowledge as the abstract topics of discourse. The Western individual discovers himself as a thinking, unified, rational subject through the act of reading which, for the first time, enacts his relation to something outside himself -- the written sign as an artifact of somebody else's ideas.

With the rebirth of literacy in Medieval Europe, this literate self is discovered as someone who has self-knowledge, who reads into his own heart as if it were a text. Through the interaction of the various arts of memory and the new scribal and bureaucratic technologies, this newfound textual self is exteriorized onto the written page. The text becomes a mirror of the mind, leading to new practices of reading and to the literate conception of knowledge as textual dissemination. Once encapsulated in the

freely circulating text, knowledge becomes separate from self-knowledge. The fruit of this separation is the intellectual who is the first professional knower or specialist in the work of the mind.

The depoliticization of the medieval intellectual accompanied by the rational, legal bureaucracy of the new nation-state, gives rise to a further professionalization of knowledge. The archival organization of knowledge as a library of texts organizes both society and the ideas that circulate in it. For the first time, the power of the state and its institutions is exercised almost entirely through the forms that knowledge takes. Law is an especially good example of how the written tradition promotes the autonomy of the legal institution and redistributes social space based on new notions of truth and the redefinition of the self in terms of this new textual knowledge. The relationship between autonomous discourse and power results in a disciplinary division of knowledge where each discipline attempts to achieve autonomy based on defining their own methods and textual canons. Reality is increasingly defined in the image of rational discourse wielded by a closed group of professionals who have a monopoly of competence in their field.

I argue that this division of knowledge reinforces a sense of caste amongst the professional elite at the same time as it completely estranges the self from his self-knowledge. This fragmentation of self-identity into a series of diverse zones, a collection of institutionally sanctioned texts is precisely what gives the expert as the major figure in our society such power. The experts 'read' our texts, decipher us to ourselves, so that we pay them to give us self-knowledge. We are estranged from self-knowledge and thus from our own literate identity as thinking, rational selves. By imputing moral authority

to the expert we become alienated from our own ethical self-understanding and our own sense of personal responsibility. Even worse, this moral authority is precisely what the professionals lack through their blind pursuit of epistemic autonomy and ever more specialized fields of knowledge. Bureaucratic rationality functions by separating knowledge from the sphere of human practice, making it seem as if the world is coterminous with rationality's own development, and thus separates ourselves *qua* institutionally defined texts from our role as historical agents.

I believe that expressing concern with the survival of the literate or reading self is not just a case of misplaced nostalgia, a conflation of the human being with his particular manifestation in a certain epoch. The literate self may well be an epoch-specific phenomenon but I have taken pains to point out that what we have today is not just the disappearance of the literate self but also its subversion by the institutional professionalization of knowledge. An institutional construction of the self as a series of scientific discourses is not just a sleight-of-hand production, an inexorable process of rationality spreading itself through reality but the historical product of specific groups of people with specific interests. This historicity is dissimulated by a disciplinary division of knowledge whereby each discipline marks a necessary rebeginning, a recreation of virginity based on new interpretative canons, new representations of the past. More than the straightforward disappearance of the literate self (induced by the surfeit of televised images or the secondary orality of an electronic postliterate age), we also have professional groups which define the self precisely by displacing the self from the knowledge that defines him. Even within this new postliterate age, the preservation of

knowledge in Western culture remains a function of the written word. We as individuals may cease to read, to define ourselves in textual terms, but only at the expense of having other people read for us, objectifying the knowledge that constitutes us as subjects. Before we can answer the question of whether the text has been superseded, we should ask who is reading the text and how.

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