

**COMMUNITY AT
LOOSE ENDS**

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COMMUNITY

Community and the Limits of Theory

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Jean-Luc Nancy begins *The Inoperative Community* with the following words:

The gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, which possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer (by virtue of some unknown decree or necessity, for we bear witness also to the exhaustion of thinking through History), is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community.¹

All writing of this time, he suggests, answers in some way to this testimony, or is gathered in it. *What is said in our time* is the absence of community.

I believe this is true. And I would like to think we were meeting here out of a sense of urgency and distress prompted by our attention to this testimony of the epoch. But I have to admit that I don't think this testimony is generally heard in this community (by which I refer to a specific academic community and to the academic community in general). And if I, for one, have been grateful to accept the invitation to address the topic of community in this setting, it is out of a sense of distress at a general absence of distress, and with only the faintest intimation that as someone teaching and writing in the university, I am answering to what is being said in our time. I do indeed think that what is being said is the absence of community, and I agree with Jean-Luc Nancy that a *response* to this testimony — one that truly exposes itself to it in its historical character as testimony *of our time* — will constitute in itself the opening of another thought of community. But I do not think that the academic discourse passing under the name of "theory" today (and I will use the term in this loose sense to designate generally all critical

analysis of the forms of cultural or social representation and all reflection on that analysis itself) constitutes a thinking response to this testimony.

There are, of course, many exceptions to this judgment, but I would say that the very discursive structure of “theory” as it is practiced in the university today contributes to muffle or even foreclose the testimony of the absence of community. Exceptions occur when this structure breaks down, or when it is pushed to its limits—when for some reason or other it exposes its limits. But when theory stays within its limits (and this is no less true of interdisciplinary theory), it does not hear and it does not say the absence of community. Only a kind of echo of its silencing can be heard in it. By virtue of this trace, its silence, too, belongs to the testimony of which Nancy speaks; and in this way Nancy’s statement is not at all belied by the empty speech of theory. But the volume of its speech and its ubiquity in the university certainly make the testimony exceedingly difficult to hear. And I think we should be aware of the risk that this colloquium may not improve the situation—though it will be doing something if it spreads at least a sense of distress at the absence of distress.

Now, I would reiterate that if I think the language of theory silences the testimony of the absence of community, it is because the very structure of theoretical discourse prohibits it from being a language of community (I’ll return to this in a moment). But I want to note as well—if only in passing, though I think the point should not be forgotten here—that if theoretical discourse in the academy is marked by an absence of distress about the absence of community, this is also for sociopolitical and institutional reasons. If time permitted (or if I had the means to do it quickly and effectively), I would want to say something about the place of theoretical discourse in the university, whose technical organization promotes or at least favors theory’s silence. I would want to add a few words in turn about the isolation of the university in the United States from a larger sphere of cultural activity and about the way in which the academic disciplines concerned with culture tend to be cut off from any general public debate about the historical situation of U.S. society. I would want to say something about how the “culture of professionalism,” a kind of simulacrum of community, fills the void created by this separation, and how a critical analysis undertaken apart from any ongoing engagement in public debate (or marginalized in that debate, as Said puts it in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*) will inevitably empty out—for if the criteria for a selection of topics for study and for an evaluation of research are generated solely within the sphere of academic discourse, this discourse can represent only itself.

With all of this, I would want to be saying something about the institutional conditions of what I might call the loss of the object (*die Sache, la Chose*) in the practice of theory and criticism in this country today, and I would want to relate this loss to its sociohistorical conditions: namely the place of the university in a larger cultural context where we also glimpse something like a loss of the

object—the object being history. In other words, I would want to relate the absence of distress in the discourses of theory to the absence of community as it manifests itself most immediately in our culture and sociopolitical institutions. But, again, a sociohistorical analysis is required here that goes beyond my current means: one that is grounded in an analysis of our political institutions, but that is also capable of moving to a level of reflection we find in Heidegger's meditation on *Technik*, and thus at the historical level, or at the level of the question of Being. Because what we are dealing with, once again, is the loss of the object: existence in its historicity and materiality. Or perhaps not its loss, because, as my friend Rodolphe Burger once said during a visit to this country: "There's a hell of a lot of *Dasein* here." Not its loss, then, but a repression of what Nancy might call its communication, so powerful that the forces of homogenization in the dominant culture remain unsettled by it.

The qualification I have just made about the loss of the object in the culture in the United States should also be made about theoretical and critical discourse in the university. While I can't quite give up my adherence to the statement from which I started, I sense also that it indulges in what Jean-François Lyotard might term piety. It would be misleading to suggest that the voice of community (which today says the absence of community and is thus calling for another thought of community) is not speaking in all sorts of ways and at all sorts of sites in the field of theory. The problem is rather that in general it is not heard as such and meditated upon as a testimony of community and as saying something about our historical situation. It would also be misleading, indeed it would be misguided, to suggest that the only discourse contributing to the struggle to liberate the communication of existence in its historicity and materiality is one that seeks to effect that communication. We cannot do without theory: that is to say, we cannot do without a *representation* of our sociohistorical situation and we cannot do without the forceful representation of political positions. But if we limit our understanding of critical discourse to its representational or interpretive function, then we cannot conceive of its political import outside the bounds of what Richard Rorty has called "edification."

To illustrate what I am saying about the limits of theoretical or critical discourse when it limits itself to the task of interpretation (even when "interpretation" is understood as being always the interpretation of other interpretations), I would like to pause over Rorty's definition of this term, "edification." The notion is perhaps somewhat simplistic (for "pragmatic" reasons, we might say), but nevertheless extremely revealing about pragmatic assumptions concerning language—assumptions that inform, I believe, a large portion of theoretical and critical activity in this country, and thus contribute to inhibiting reflection on community as Nancy has tried to define the term. (If time permitted, it would also be appropriate to show how these assumptions inform Rorty's "liberalism"—I leave the term to its ambiguity—and his apology for North

American socioeconomic institutions; but I would also have to add that the same assumptions inform more severe and more progressive cultural criticism.)

Rorty uses the term “edification” in his volume *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (357–72)² in order to designate the function of philosophy in a “post-philosophical context” (that is, after the collapse of foundational philosophy)—a context in which philosophy would no longer hold a privileged point of view in the search for a community’s self-representation, but would join literature and the other discourses of culture in what Rorty calls a “conversation.” “Edification” has a dual meaning in this postphilosophical perspective. It designates: (1) the elaboration of the best possible representation of a community’s historical situation and goals, and (2) the critical practice of demonstrating that this representation (like all representations) is only a possible representation. Accordingly, Rorty recognizes two modes of edifying philosophy: the “hermeneutic” and the “therapeutic.”³ By the former, Rorty refers to a practice of interpretation conceived roughly on the model of Gadamerian dialogue and consisting of a movement between the “incommensurable” discourses of a culture or cultures. The discourses of a culture are “incommensurable” not in principle, according to Rorty, but rather, if one may say so, by lack of principle—that is to say, by reason of the lack of criteria with which one might evaluate the truth-claims of one discourse in relation to another. We have, for example, no transcendental vantage point that would allow us to arbitrate between the descriptions of man provided by anthropology, by cybernetics, by philosophy, or by literature. Nor do we have any justification, in Rorty’s view, for arguing that such discourses are irreducible to one another or in principle incomparable; by “incommensurable” Rorty means simply that no comparison is possible in the sense that each discourse could be evaluated in relation to a common measure furnished by a formal analysis of language or a theory of representation. A hermeneutic passage between discourses is possible, therefore, even a synthesis—but this synthesis does not provide the truth of the discourses in question. Its truth-value will be determined solely by consensus in the light of its internal cohesion and its extension: the quantity of data it allows us to account for. Hermeneutics is therefore a way of “seeing how things hang together” without seeking their rational grounding—a weaving of discourses at the service of the community’s tasks of self-definition (or self-formation: *Bildung*) and self-affirmation.

Rorty’s definition of the second mode of edification, what I am calling “therapeutic philosophy,” is in fact contained in that of the first. “Therapeutic philosophy” represents the critical moment in edification that renders possible the work of hermeneutics as a conversation between incommensurable discourses. It conducts the critique of representation that liberates hermeneutics from the constraint of reference and recalls to this same hermeneutics that its representations are historically conditioned interpretations that are always subject to revision. In this critical function, therapeutic philosophy is always “secondary” or “para-

sitic" in relation to the production of representations in the hermeneutic process. It serves merely to keep the conversation open by "denaturalizing" any language or discourse that threatens to impose itself as the language of nature itself—the language that gives access to things in their truth. It serves to protect against any epistemological or foundational temptation, and consequently the style proper to it is satire, parody, and aphorism. For Rorty, the heroes of this style are Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Derrida.

Rorty thus defines (and seeks to contain) the critique of the metaphysics of representation developed in modern Continental philosophy as the "negative" moment within the dialectics of edification (a hermeneutic activity opened and kept in motion by a therapeutic auto-critique—the latter always in the service of the former). But to do so he must leave aside everything in this critique that would bring into question his essentially instrumentalist view of language and the pragmatist assumption that the horizon of human linguistic activity is that of the communicable meaning established in consensus by free subjects. Those familiar with the "therapeutic" texts in question will recognize that what Rorty leaves aside is thus nothing other than the key elements of the philosophy of language elaborated in them: in general, all thought of the historical (and ontological—in Heidegger's vocabulary, "historial") conditions of the production of meaning and of the subject's signifying activity. Rorty accepts the notion that language is constitutive of experience, but he understands this to mean that the subject constitutes the meaning of its experience—not, as the "therapeutic" authors suggest, that language is in some sense *constitutive of the subject*. In a word, Rorty would save from the critique of representation the subject of representation itself.

We see Rorty's effort to limit the thrust of the critique of representation in a passage in which he attempts to group Wittgenstein and Heidegger together as examples of therapeutic edifying philosophers. Rorty has named Nietzsche and Heidegger and is discussing how such authors are attacked by traditional philosophers for not practicing "philosophy":

The problem for an edifying philosopher is that *qua* philosopher he is in the business of offering arguments, whereas he would like simply to offer another set of terms, *without* saying that these terms are the new-found accurate representations of essences. . . . He is, so to speak, violating not just the rules of normal philosophy (the philosophy of the schools of his day) but a sort of meta-rule: the rule that one may suggest changing the rules only because one has noticed that the old ones do not fit the subject matter, that they are not adequate to reality, that they impede the solution of the eternal problems. . . . They refuse to present themselves as having found out any objective philosophy. They present themselves as doing something different from, and more important than, offering accurate representations of how things are. It is more important because, they say, the notion of "accurate

representation'' itself is not the proper way to think about what philosophy does. . . . Whereas less pretentious revolutionaries can afford to have views on lots of things which their predecessors had views on, edifying philosophers have to decry the very notion of having a view, while avoiding having a view about having views. This is an awkward, but not impossible position. Wittgenstein and Heidegger manage it fairly well. One reason they manage it as well as they do is that they do not think that when we say something we must necessarily be expressing a view about a subject. We might just be *saying something*—participating in a conversation rather than contributing to an inquiry. Perhaps saying things is not always saying how things are. Perhaps saying *that* is itself not a case of saying how things are. Both men suggest we see people as saying things, better or worse things, without seeing them as externalizing inner representations of reality. . . . We have to drop the notion of correspondence for sentences as well as for thoughts, and see sentences as connected with other sentences rather than with the world. (*Philosophy*, 370–72)

Rorty's point here is fairly clear. The therapeutic edifying philosopher is one who carries out the critique of representation and applies it to his own critique—seeking to avoid setting in place a representation of the true nature of representation. Rorty acknowledges that these philosophers think they are doing something other and more important than representation, but since Rorty wants to avoid suggesting that there is any positive dimension to their activity, he limits his examples of this "something other" to the production of a nonthetic declaration—a simple *that* (as in the case of Heidegger), or a speaking that would have only to make us understand that it is just speaking and that words draw their meaning from other words and not from their relations to things. (I'll return in a moment to this neutralizing gesture.) In the paragraph that follows the passage I have just cited, Rorty concludes by asking what attitude is appropriate before a philosopher that refuses to posit anything: "How do we know when to adopt a tactful attitude and when to insist on someone's moral obligation to hold a view?" And he responds that we never know: "This is like asking how we know when someone's refusal to adopt our norms (or, for example, social organization, sexual practice, or conversational manners) is morally outrageous and when it is something we must respect (at least provisionally). We do not know such things by reference to general principles" (372). So in the case of therapeutic edifying philosophers, as in our political context, our decision will depend on the situation and on our social needs. In a moment of social crisis, it may be that we cannot tolerate the behavior of an edifying philosopher, just as we cannot tolerate the behavior of a social deviant, but the preferable situation in Rorty's eyes is to seek conversation rather than exclusion (and Rorty presupposes that conversation never, in principle, implies violence).

Now, it is interesting to see how Rorty's liberal attitude is strained when he enters into an overtly political discussion and when it comes to dealing with authors like Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard. Once again, he refuses to their use of language any positive dimension, but he finds no useful therapeutic dimension in their writing. He argues that research that takes on the accents of the tragic or the sublime and seeks to expose the precariousness of a regime or order of meaning by putting into play the possibility of transgression or transcendence can only be seen as responding to the personal and idiosyncratic needs of the individuals who undertake it.⁴ For Rorty, the social bond—which he thinks of essentially in terms of identification (Foucault gets bad marks for a failure to identify) and such notions as “shared confidence” and “shared hope”—has its source in and develops with the conversation that unfolds in the horizon of a consensus of communication. This conversation is guided, he says, by the desire to achieve a social harmony in which a society “affirms itself globally,” though without seeking to found itself. One might ask, I think, whether the desire for “global affirmation” is finally separable from the desire for auto-foundation. (The connection here is the concept of will—the fundamental trait of the modern subject of representation: Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is invaluable here, and particularly as it reflects upon his own statements in his “Rectoral Address” of 1933.⁵ I would note too that if we bring together Rorty's statements on hermeneutics as *Bildung*, and consider Rorty's faith in our freedom to change our representations, we see that we have to do in his thinking with all the basic traits of the subject of metaphysics: freedom, imagination, will. Once again, an attentive reading will show that Rorty employs the critique of representation to shore up the subject of representation.) In other words, one might ask whether his notion of consensus does not finally participate in the phantasms of identification and unification at work in the modern forms of tyranny.

But I am less interested here in the dangers of Rorty's notion of consensus than I am in the nature of what he chooses to marginalize or neutralize with his aggressive dismissals of discourses with a political agenda that seek to interrupt or exceed the horizon of signification. And I would like to suggest that what Rorty is combatting in the name of consensus (which he calls at one point, “the vital force” of a culture [“Habermas, Lyotard et la postmodernité,” 196]) is the ethical dimension of a writing practice that works at the limits of representation—and ultimately another thought of the grounds of community.

I am using the word “ethical” here in the light of Wittgenstein's “Lecture on Ethics,” in which Wittgenstein considers the possibility of what I might call an “ethical language” or a language that expresses what he calls his ethical experience par excellence.⁶ This experience is one that recurs, he says, every time he tries to grasp what is meant by ethical value. “The best way to describe it,” he writes, “is to say that when I have it, I wonder at the existence of the world” (8). The experience, in other words, is the same experience Heidegger tries to express

in the phrase “that there are beings, and not nothing”—and there is textual evidence suggesting that when Wittgenstein meditates on the possibility of an ethical language, he is in fact meditating on Heidegger’s claims for this very phrase.⁷ Heidegger had suggested that when the phrase “that there are beings, and not nothing” comes to us in the uncanny experience of the Nothing, it gives the possibility of saying “is”—and thus a relation to ourselves, to others, and to everything that is. The phrase itself, he said, marks the very possibility of signification, and gives the “is” (“*Das es seiendes ist*”) in an originary fashion—it says the possibility of significant language, and thus, in a sense, gives language itself. Heidegger will later call such an event the speaking of language. Now, it is to such an event that Wittgenstein himself points when he offers the hypothesis that the only possible expression of the miraculous fact of the existence of the world is the presentation of language itself: “I am tempted to say that the right expression *in* language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not any proposition in language, is the existence of language itself (“Lecture on Ethics” 11). The “correct” expression for the experience of the fact *that there is something* would be the expression provided by the existence of language itself—or, in other words, the presentation of the fact *that there is language*. When language gives itself as such, there is a saying of Being—the fact that there is something rather than nothing.

Wittgenstein does not go as far as Heidegger—he does not suggest, as does Heidegger, that such a saying would mark and remark the opening of our relation to what is, and play in some sense a constitutive role in this experience. In other words, he does not suggest that ethical language (if such a thing could be achieved—and Wittgenstein is not sure it could be, though he expresses admiration for all attempts) would be the condition of ethical experience. But he does say something that anticipates Heidegger’s later turn to the work of art and the language of poetry as the site where the event he is describing presents itself or remarks itself (in other words, as the site—or a site—where language remarks the fact of its existence). He says, near the beginning of his lecture, that much of what he will have to say about ethics might normally fall into the realm of aesthetics. He says this in part because he designates his ethical experience as sublime, but also because he is meditating on something like a sublime use of language: he is meditating on the possibility of presenting what properly speaking cannot be presented because it is the condition of all presentation or representation.

Let me go back now to Rorty. When Rorty cited Heidegger’s “that” as an instance of a “therapeutic” edifying language, he was pointing to what both Wittgenstein and Heidegger were attempting to define as a language at the limit of signification. But he left aside entirely the question of what happens when a discourse works at that limit; he left it aside because Rorty finally cannot entertain seriously language that is not representational—its value for him is at best

“therapeutic.” So he left aside, or simply could not see, Heidegger’s (and Wittgenstein’s) suggestion that when a discourse produces in some manner the “that,” it is saying something of language itself—that the essence of language is speaking by remarking the very possibility of signification or representation.

If time allowed, I would try to explore some examples of the kind of strangeness that marks a discourse when it produces the equivalent of Heidegger’s “that.” I would point to Blanchot’s notion of language becoming an image of itself, and try to describe the properly sublime character of some of his fiction. I would point to Derrida’s notion of the “*retrait*” of metaphor that remarks the fundamental metaphoricity of Being itself. I would dwell upon what Nancy calls “voice,” and I would be tempted to consider in the light of this notion the strange authority that characterized some of Paul de Man’s work, and particularly his extraordinary verbal performances. Each of these examples points to ways in which language might address us or claim us when it “speaks”—and will perhaps give some sense of what I will finally have wanted to suggest by saying that only a criticism that is held by language can be said to be answering to the writing of community as Nancy defines it.

A critical or theoretical language that is *held* by language, I want to suggest, is one that answers to the speaking of language—that answers to what it is about a text or discourse that remarks the fact of language and thereby says the possibility of its own representing or signifying. This saying, of course, is not itself a signifying. Once again, what is said is the possibility of signification. Nancy defined such a saying in *Le Partage des voix* as a *hermeneia*: an annunciation of meaning that is originary because its speaking is the opening of meaning—a singular articulation of the communitary logos (which *is* only in its articulations). So criticism that is held by the language of a text, for example, is thus one that answers to the text’s own *hermeneia*—it allows itself to be claimed by what constitutes the singularity of the text. And I would like to suggest that any effective criticism—that is to say, a criticism that becomes political in the sense defined by Nancy in *La Communauté désœuvrée*—is one that answers by effecting in its turn a *hermeneia*.

If we follow Nancy’s argument concerning the singularity of any act that says the possibility of signification (and Nancy is in strict conformity with Heidegger on this point), then we would have to acknowledge, in fact, that any criticism or interpretation that exposes in a text the *hermeneia* of that text, its saying of the opening of meaning it effects, is itself a *hermeneia*. It could not be the simple reception and re-presentation of the address of the text it reads, but must produce in its turn, and in response, a singular speaking of language. It must divide the *logos* in its turn. There could be no opening to the opening of meaning that did not itself articulate meaning in an originary fashion.⁸ Heidegger would put it this way: The response to language that brings language to speak must be thought as anticipatory—both receptive, and, I would say, *provocative*. The response to lan-

guage has of necessity a performative dimension—it provokes the address. So any criticism that answers in this sense to the writing of community will be in its turn the writing of community.

I approached the task of writing this paper by asking myself the following question: If theoretical discourse silences the testimony of the absence of community, what language would respond to this testimony and answer thereby to the political reality of our time? What would a politically effective language *be* in the disciplines that concern most immediately the majority of those of us here: the disciplines concerned with the forms of cultural representation, and more particularly literature, conceived in a large sense? I hope that the response I want to offer will be intelligible now. It is essentially the same one Benjamin gave to Martin Buber when Buber asked him to contribute to his journal *Der Jude* (and thus engage in “political writing” in the usual sense of the term).⁹ Politically effective language, Benjamin responded, is one that acts in language and by language: not as an instrument or means for the communication of some signified content, but rather as a kind of intervention in language by which the essence of language itself is brought into play. Now, Benjamin’s terms for such a language would seem to lead away from any properly political reflection: he speaks in his letter of its “mystery” or “magic,” and invokes his concept of “pure language.” But what he is referring to, I believe, is the same thing Heidegger refers to when he speaks of the essence of language and the effort to bring it to speech. Once again, when language itself is brought to speak, as Heidegger understands this event, it gives itself as the site where our relation to what is is defined: our relation to ourselves, to other human beings, and to everything that is. It gives itself, in other words, as the site where the always communitary definition of what it means to be is articulated. This is the articulation of what I called at the outset the object or the thing: existence in its historicity and materiality—and it is constantly being articulated in multiple and always singular signifying acts. To engage in that process, if only in the process of remarking it, is a political act—it is to attend to the voice of the community and to make it heard. But as we have seen, there is no simple remarking or observation of this process. To engage with the process is to intervene in it. When theory or criticism answer to language, they become a practice: the writing of community.

Notes

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 1.

2. See Chapter 8, 357–72. In these remarks on Rorty’s notion of “edification,” I am drawing from work presented in my essay “Freiheit der Interpretation im liberalen Amerika,” trans. Thomas Kleinbub, in *Tumult* (Munich: Klaus Boer, 1987), 125–32.

3. I use these designations for heuristic purposes, and should note that the distinction between “hermeneutic” and “therapeutic” is effectively lost when Rorty undertakes to distinguish between

“edifying” philosophers and “systematic” philosophers in the pages from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) to which I have referred. But the distinction is nevertheless necessary to Rorty’s effort to marginalize or neutralize the more radical dimension of the critique of representation, and can be seen at work throughout his readings of the “edifying” philosophers. In the light of Rorty’s reference to a literary or poetic dimension in “edification” (360), “interpretive” may be preferable to “hermeneutic.” But I retain the latter term because “edification” is proposed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* as a translation for *Bildung* as Gadamer has defined the term. The term “therapeutic” is used in the introduction to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (5–7). For Rorty’s notion of “edification” in a “post-philosophical” culture, see also the introduction to *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xiii–xlvi.

4. I am moving quickly in this passage through material contained in “Method, Social Science, Social Hope” (*Consequences of Pragmatism*, 191–210), “Solidarité ou objectivité,” (*Critique*, 39, no. 439, 923–40); “Habermas, Lyotard et la postmodernité,” (*Critique*, 40, no. 442, 181–97); and “Le Cosmopolitisme sans émancipation: en réponse à Jean-François Lyotard” (*Critique*, 41, no. 456, 569–80). All of these essays, but particularly the last, offer perspectives on Rorty’s thought of community and points to the political dimension of his project.

5. Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* (Breslau: Korn, 1933). In his essay “Solidarité ou objectivité” (939), Rorty cites approvingly Hans Blumenberg’s effort to distinguish *Selbstbehauptung* (“self-assertion”; translated in French as “auto-affirmation”) from *Selbstbegründung*. But I would argue that Rorty’s reliance on a notion of will renders this distinction problematic.

6. I have discussed Wittgenstein’s “Lecture” (published in *Philosophical Review*, 74, 3–27) in an unpublished essay, “*Qu’il y à le langage . . .*:Heidegger, Derrida.”

7. I refer to Friedrich Waismann’s transcription of remarks made by Wittgenstein on December 30, 1929, translated in their entirety (that is, with the references to Heidegger restored that were omitted in the original English translation) by Michael Murray in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 80–83. The phrase from Heidegger appears in “What Is Metaphysics?”, a text that circulated widely in 1929.

8. Thus while the criticism I am describing will be held by the language of a text, it will not simply submit to it. I use the metaphor of a “hold” in order to counter the common (supposedly Nietzschean) notion of the “freedom” of interpretation. But it will be apparent that the initiative taken by the writing I am describing also calls for a new notion of freedom.

9. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe cites much of this letter in the introduction to Walter Benjamin, *Le Concept de critique esthétique dans le romantisme allemand* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 11–13.